1-1-2014

Provocation In The Political Theories Of Plato, Rousseau And Nietzsche

Aaron Martin
Wayne State University,

PROVOCATION IN THE POLITICAL THEORIES OF PLATO, ROUSSEAU AND NIETZSCHE

by

AARON MARTIN

DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Graduate School

of Wayne State University,

Detroit, Michigan

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

2014

MAJOR: POLITICAL SCIENCE

Approved by:

_____

Advisor   Date

_____

_____

_____

DEDICATION

This is as much my family's as it is mine: my parents, Rich and Lynn, and my brothers,

Ian and Nathan—and Jon, too.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

A   Plato. 1997. "Apology," in *Plato: Complete Works*. John M. Cooper, ed. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co.

AC   Nietzsche, Friedrich. [1888] 1977. "Anti-Christ," in T*wilight of the Idols; and the Anti-Christ*. Walter Kaufmann, trans. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

BGE   Nietzsche, Friedrich. [1886] 1966. *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*. Walter Kaufmann, trans. New York: Vintage Books.

C   Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. [1782a] 1953. *The Confessions of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*. J.M. Cowen, trans. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Ch   Plato. 1997. "Charmides," in *Plato: Complete Works*. John M. Cooper, ed. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co.

Cr   Plato. 1997. "Crito," in *Plato: Complete Works*. John M. Cooper, ed. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co.

DOI   Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. 1987. "Discourse on the Origin of Inequality," in *The Basic Political Writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*. Donald A. Cress, trans. and Peter Gay, intro. Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company.

DSA   Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. 1987. "Discourse on the Science and Arts," in *The Basic Political Writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*. Donald A. Cress, trans. and Peter Gay, intro. Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company.

E   Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. [1762] 1979. *Emile, or On Education*. Allan Bloom, trans. New York: Basic Books.

EH   Nietzsche, Friedrich. [1887, 1888] 1969. "Ecce Homo," in *On the Genealogy of Morals—Ecce Homo*. Walter Kaufmann, trans. New York: Vintage Books.

GM   Nietzsche, Friedrich. [1887, 1888] 1969. "On the Genealogy of Morals," in *On the Genealogy of Morals—Ecce Homo*. Walter Kaufmann, trans. New York: Vintage Books.

Gor   Plato. 1998. *Plato's Gorgias*. James H. Nichols, Jr., trans. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Publishing.

GS   Nietzsche, Friedrich. [1882] 1974. *The Gay Science*. Walter Kaufmann, trans. New York, NY: Vintage Books.

L   Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. [1763] 1990. "Essay on the Origin of Languages," in *Collected Writings of Rousseau Vol. 7*, John T. Scott, trans. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England.

NE   Aristotle. 1980. *The Nicomachean Ethics*. William D. Ross, ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

PG   Nietzsche, Friedrich. [1873] 1962. *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greek*. Marianne Cowen, trans. Washington: Regnery.

Ph   Plato. 1997. "Phaedo," in *Plato: Complete Works*. John M. Cooper, ed. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co.

Pol   Aristotle. 1984. *Aristotle's Politics*. Carnes Lord, trans.. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

R   Plato. 1991. *The Republic of Plato*. Allen Bloom, trans. New York: Basic Books.

Rh   McKeon, Richard. 1941. "Rhetoric," in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*. New York: Random House.

RSW   Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. [1782b] 1979. *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker*. Charles E. Butterworth, trans. New York: New York University Press.

SC   Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. 1987. "On the Social Contract," in *The Basic Political Writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*. Donald A. Cress, trans. and Peter Gay, intro. Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company.

TI   Nietzsche, Friedrich. [1888] 1977. "Twilight of the Idols," in *Twilight of the Idols; and the Anti-Christ*. Walter Kaufmann, trans. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Z   Nietzsche, Friedrich. [1883] 1933. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Walter Kaufmann, trans. London and New York: Dent and Dutton.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Dissertation Introduction

All enduring works of political theory are provocative. To make such an assertion is not, however. It is a rather unremarkable statement to suggest great philosophy provokes, but what does this mean? By what standard can provocation as a concept be measured? Additionally, by what framework can its rhetorical significance, both in style and substance, be assessed? Provocative rhetoric has its origins in the first theoretical treatises whose intentions are to transform both humans and regimes.

My dissertation describes a specific terminology for the concept of provocation, and applies it to three theorists: Plato, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Friedrich Nietzsche. These three have been chosen because they all come from distinct philosophical eras and represent contrasting views about what it means both to be human and the meaning for which we are here. They all employ similar language and address similar subject matters— e.g., pity and self-control—to come to, in some instances, totally opposite conclusions about the true nature of humans and thus, by extension, societies and governments.

I examine the authors' use of provocative language as a strategy for incorporating the concept of provocation itself into the overall philosophical program from which they base their theories of provocation. In other words, since, as Aristotle argues, that "rational desires are those which we are induced to have" (*Rh* 1362), Plato, Rousseau and Nietzsche choose words that are meant to persuasively appeal to the audiences' emotions in order to unlock the inner deliberate capacity for the dispositional transformation they seek from their

political audience. From this framework, I look at the authors not only as theorists, but also as strategists whose explanatory methods purposely include the language of provocation. In this way, the concept of provocation has multiple dimensions—one is rhetorical, the other is substantive.

As a tactical measure to most persuasively articulate their respective substantive messages, the theorists identify and engage antagonistic interlocutors and audiences whose flawed natures and dispositions can be argumentatively connected to the cultural and political problems facing the theorists themselves as well as society at-large. But to make such an antithetical case that resonates is no easy task, as they are attempting a reversal of many deeply cherished values that have come to be culturally revered and politically supported. One used most often is the invocation of "God" and "other-worldliness" as a conduit for defending the status quo, although, for the theorists, its conventional appeal is an *absurd*—and/or disingenuous use whose rhetorical inclusion represents fear-mongering meant to prey on the unsuspecting in order to induce that targeted group to take some (in)action that perpetuates the calamitous conditions to which the theorists are reacting. The difficulty for the theorists lies in the attempt to use rigorous argument and theoretical "evidence" to combat what sinisterly-motivated, opportunistic provocateurs have been successful at accomplishing—inciting zealotry or inducing laziness, both of which can easily lead to political injustice and illegitimacy.

As such it is important to focus on the concept of provocation in political theory. First, theorizing politics is, in a sense, an act of provocation, in that it is intended to incite

(*OED*). For Socrates, to act justly amounts to resisting provocation (*Cr* 34); Rousseau argues against inequality to free us from provocation; and Nietzsche views his work as the provocation necessary for change (*EH* 332).

Thus the concept of provocation takes on many forms. To help organize the different dimensions and categories of provocation, I turn to a selected body of work that discusses the concept. I begin by introducing provocation in terms of the way in which Ludwig Wittgenstein presents the concept "games" within language—it is, just as different kinds of games share certain similarities with other ones, the concept of provocation, too, has in Wittgenstein's terminology family resembles. For instance, provocation is the act of provoking, but to *incite* is similar but not the same as *urging*. An act of provocation that is meant to incite a response that amounts to war, as we see in Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War*, where he writes, "nor are we making war against them without having received signal provocation" (38), differs from Aristotle's use of provocation, where in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, his use of provocation means to urge on, stimulate a friendly audience in an effort to show how sound political decisions are derived.

A survey in the literature reveals an important feature that despite the different uses of the conceptual language of provocation, a more common theme—similar to Wittgenstein's "seeing what is common" (34)—that emerges throughout the various writings is the relational dimension that provocation requires. For instance, in Martin Heidegger's "The Question Concerning Technology" provocation serves as a conceptual tool by which we as humans ought to see ourselves relative to developing technology and, by extension,

each other. That is, "since man drives technology forward, he takes part in ordering as a way of revealing" (6). For Heidegger, provocation becomes the mechanism for properly understanding the potential threat technology now poses to our existence. The fact that approaching technology now bears with it a responsibility suggests, for Heidegger, a new way to consider the role of technology in our lives and, equally important, a reconsideration of humanity. Essentially, Heidegger employs provocation to help reveal to us the "truth"— that is, it serves as a developmental resource so that it becomes possible to acquire a new disposition that re-orientates our world-view. For Heidegger, "technology is not demonic, but its essence is mysterious," which requires an appropriate response to emerging technologies so to avoid, in all reality, human extinction (18). He contends that by reducing our perceived centrality to being, in an ontological sense. This lowering of what is now an undue inflated sense of self-importance is achieved through the kind of reflection provocation can foster, if properly channeled. Provocation thus not only helps to explain the essence of technology but our human condition as well. And as provocation involves the act of "calling forth" and "bringing" to light the possibility to see "truth" and the ability to discern "reality," we are in a better position to then make better decisions about how to deal with and employ technology—a view that secures us from the dangers inherent in the ambiguity and mystery surrounding our relationship to technology.

Ultimately, Heidegger's use of the concept of provocation is meant to serve as the revealing agent of truth. Similarly, for Ralph Waldo Emerson, provocation is a means by which we come to possess the disposition to act as "[w]e ought" (64). Heidegger develops

the concept of provocation relative to technology; Emerson does so in the context of spirituality. For Heidegger, an improper disposition could lead to the misuse of technology, whose consequences could mean the end of life, Emerson equates a wrongly disposed person who is susceptible to, in a sense, "near-sighted" forms of provocation as essentially a life that is "ridiculous" and "comic[al]" (67). Conversely, Emerson prefers provocation to reveal "truth," as he suggests: "But when the mind opens and reveals the laws which traverse the universe and make things what they are, then shrinks the great world at once in a mere illustration and fable of this mind. What am I, and What is? Asks the human spirit with a curiosity new-kindled, but never to be quenched." Again, provocation is described as developmental guide that, for Emerson, allows one "to say—'I love the Right: Truth is beautiful within and without for evermore.'" Specifically, it is intuition in conjunction with a proper disposition that prompts Emerson to assert: "Truly speaking, [intuition] is not instruction, but provocation, that I can receive from another soul" (66). Again, overlapping among the treatments of the concept of provocation involves the acquisition of intellectual and emotional resources that allow for provocation to be of benefit to us while resisting another provocation – ones that, as Aristotle suggests, prevents from responding to (political) situations rightly (*Rh*). And the consequences are monumental in terms of transferring these skills—or lack thereof—to the political realm, in that being susceptible to sophistic or despotic rhetoric inhibits our ability to maximize that which is possible for us to experience in this life.

French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu discusses how acts of provocation (re)produces the political conditions whose effects—either by persuasion or force, whether perceived or real – perpetuate a power structure that is to the benefit of the political provocateurs and the detriment of those occupying a "habitus" with little, if any, influence and power in the public sphere. For Bourdieu, "as perceptual dispositions tend to be adjusted to position, agents…tend to perceive the world as natural and to find it much more acceptable than one might imagine, especially when one looks at the situation of the dominated through the social eyes of the dominant" (1990: 130). Political provocation, for Bourdieu, involves battling and, in a sense, winning the "war of words" and thus proprietorship over the significance of words and their agreed-upon meanings, like the value of "titles" or academic degrees for legitimately exercising decision-making authority, which become symbolically powerful, and then, in that the unsuspecting "misrecognize" the symbolism for actual, conflate that for real power—power whose legitimacy would otherwise be awarded without any attachment to bloodline or college level attained. The effect is one that has changed the way of making the world, thus reproducing, for Bourdieu, unjust power relations (1990: 137). Provocation's power is one of accepted "utterance" (1991: 170)—that is, provocation, like for Heidegger and Emerson, remains a resource, but in Bourdieu's treatment, one not to induce change for the better but to perpetuate hierarchal class structure.

Again, theorizing politics—at least for Plato, Rousseau and Nietzsche—is an act of provocation, in that it is meant to undermine and challenge the prevailing order. And their theories are acts of provocation that also employ rhetorical provocation to substantiate their

theoretical claims—that is, the three chosen theorists utilize a language intended to initiate or incite or induce a change from the status quo, one comparable to Emerson's notion of provocation. But the three theorists—like Bourdieu's political actors—are engaged in a linguistic battle in which the limits of language create problems, particularly interpretative ones. Richard Rorty, I argue, effectively shows the kinds of problems language poses for theorists such as Plato, Rousseau and Nietzsche. In *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity, and Solidarity*, Rorty argues that a metaphysician like Plato, who is in part reacting against the democrats who executed Socrates, ultimately fails in his project, given its proposed universal applicability, as evidenced by Plato's own abandonment of the theory of the Forms (Kraut 1997). Plato seeks to rely upon a language—that is, language as a medium to communicate substantive ideas—that turns out to be insufficient for adequately and thereby successfully present and describe the philosophical doctrine(s) he wishes to advocate for (Rorty 75), which, according to Vlastos, creates for Plato his "metaphysical paradox" (Vlastos 1997). But, according to Rorty, for an "ironist" such as Nietzsche, "there is no such thing as a 'natural' order of justifications between logic and rhetoric," which, in turn, provide some insight as to why Nietzsche more readily recognizes the limits of his methodological resources (although that is not to say I am suggesting Nietzsche is without a definite theory, as I will discuss at length later—he just admits there is no failsafe way to insure its delivery as he truly intends).

My analysis of the theorists' intentions and the different interpretive tools to most accurately assess their motives for putting forth such provocative claims, which cannot

always be definitively known, and is an essential feature for why I identify these three to be among the most provocative theorists. The inconclusively of their theoretical postulates thus provides ample ground for wide-ranging and often times conflicting interpretations of their philosophies. To help synthesize varying and competing interpretive views, I incorporate a number of scholarly experts in the field of political theory throughout my treatment of the three major theorists I have chosen as exemplars of being provocative. And to take the interpretive analysis one step further, the concept of provocation extends to the scholarly field, in that one can use the vast bodies of work Plato, Rousseau and Nietzsche have left behind to, and perhaps intentionally, make provocative arguments themselves. I address some of the ways in which, as well as the opportunities for and likelihood of, different readers use—and have used—these three theorists for pursuing and furthering their own theoretical agendas for, say, publication and career advancement (Melzer 2007), although we ought to be cautious in such an assessment unless formidable evidence exists. That said, it is safe to say that Nazi scholars such as Baumler usurped Nietzsche for an evil program with no regard for honesty or truth (Kauffman).

With such context in mind, I now outline for how I layout the dissertation. Chapter 2 begins by defining the concept of provocation and tracing some of the etymological development of the connotations associated with provocation, most importantly the ones relating to the sphere of politics. First, provocation necessitates a relational dynamic between some subject and object: provocation, as some phenomenon, cannot occur in a vacuum—the event requires a provocateur to introduce upon a provokable subject

something that creates a reaction. That said, I elaborate on the fact that a provocative act does not inherently suggest intentionality. Provocation can be incidental, although it is most commonly taken as deliberate, which introduces into the analysis the element of interpretation. Provocation is conceptually amoral, and can be used for either positive or negative purposes, but similar to it taking on a deliberative connotation, it has evolved into a concept viewed with sinister motivation for its, as defined by those interpreters with the influence and power that get to determine moral intent. Not surprisingly then, provocation—and specifically political provocation—challenges the legitimacy of the conventional status quo. It is deemed as threatening and thus defined as "wrong." But for the political provocateurs who like Plato, Rousseau and Nietzsche, "right" and "wrong" as socially accepted definitions have been inverted, thus consequently giving rise to their theoretical projects which include strategies to contextualize political concepts—ones like "justice" and "legitimacy"—from an alternative perspective where an internal change in personal disposition and then an external orientation in the political culture will produce new—and superior—definitional meanings for the ways in which justice is recognized and applied.

Chapter 2 also makes the argument as to why Plato, Rousseau and Nietzsche make such interesting cases studies, in that conducting a systematic study of the various kinds of provocation in theorizing politics is a relevant and consequential endeavor. The goal is that, in placing special emphasis on the language of provocation, we not only as readers of political theory but also as members of civil society, whose structures have taken shape partly as a result of theorizing political formations, will be able to separate harmful

provocative rhetoric from beneficial ideas. Doing so will equip citizens with the necessary analytic tools to recognize what might be called "dangerous" theories, specifically those with the intent to arouse the worst appetites within people for the benefit of the articulator. The theorists all elaborate on protecting their preferred political groups from some tyrannical ambition, whether it is the democratic mob who, for Plato, put Socrates to death or the political opportunists who prevented Rousseau from fulfilling either his obligations as a citizen or his solitary dream as a man. In the latter, Rousseau criticizes governments— namely, corrupt and decadent monarchies of his day—that have exacerbated "extreme inequalities" (*DOI* 42), which, in the name of some perverse notion of "duty", force—rather than, say, compel—people to become unnecessarily and illegitimately dependent on others whose relational asymmetry produces personal disunity and public discord. Rousseau's political solution theorizes how to best accommodate inevitable societal restraints with natural inclinations for independence.

For each of the theorists, I examine the interpretive reception of their theoretical proposals in terms of the rhetorical choices that underlie the philosophies themselves. For instance, when certain discussions take the form of *ad hominem* arguments, I consider to the extent, if any, the intensity of tone becomes a distraction from the merits of the argument, and whether the strategy for taking such a chord prevented the substantive message from reaching a larger audience, in that the targeted audience representing the theorists' antagonist could not move beyond the personal vitriol the theorists feel for them, e.g., Nietzsche's "European and American species of *libres penseurs*. I am much more

profoundly at odds with them, as incorrigible blockheads and buffoons" (*EH* 275). Also important to the success of theoretical assumptions is whether or not the audiences have been *persuaded* to take action—that is, whether or not those who have acted on behalf of the theorists' provocation did so while remaining true to the theorists' intentions, or whether the action taken was inconsistent—willfully or not—with the theorists' intent. Such a discussion also necessarily considers the role ambiguously articulated theories as well as imprecise or vague language—compounded by interpretive problems inherent in translating texts—have on interpreting the theorists' "true" meaning(s) of their work. Plato, Rousseau and Nietzsche's "real" theories of politics are among the most highly disputed—and thus contributing to them and their writings as among the most highly provocative. I maintain that a dissertation like this is important for providing a framework for evaluating the kinds of rhetoric used to supplement arguments—in which are provocations themselves—for different ideological regimes, ones in which the theorists' would have endorsed themselves —perhaps, that is, in that they have in large measure lost the ability to control their own narrative.

In Chapter 3, I detail the specific types of provocation and the degrees to which these types of provocation induce reactions, as located in the primary—and secondary— texts. The concept of provocation will be divided into four dimensions, which serve as the basis from which I approach the analysis of each theorist's works. They are: (1) the provocateur, or theorist and/or his protagonist, being of a particular nature, who provokes; (2) the provokable, or theorist's interlocutor and/or his antagonist, possessing a particular

disposition, which makes him susceptible to being provoked; (3) provocation whose response is mirth-provoking—that is, laughable or absurd; and (4) the provocation whose response induces irritation and/or anger, up to and including retaliation and execution.

I discuss the first dimension of provocation relative to a second dimension of provocation, which evaluates the type of response induced and the degree of intensity to which the person provoked responds, specifically with respect to how the theorists' interlocutors and/or textual examples are either (pre)disposed to use provocation or likely prone to succumb to advancements of provocation. Based on the dynamics of particular relations based on provocation—the act itself coupled with the interpretation for which it was done—the second dimension links back to the first dimension a range of corresponding reactions, ranging from comic laughter (if considered counter-intuitive but harmless) to annoying (if deemed abstractly unnerving) and up to retaliatory anger (if assessed literally anarchical).

Building into that dimensional approach to analyzing the provocation of the theorists and their works, the second section of Chapter 3 incorporates into my methodological framework six ways in which the dimensions of provocation are illustrated throughout the three's systems' for which they have sufficiently shown the validity of their criticisms as well as the logical rigidity of their substantive arguments. All three theorists, in some form, react to, confront and then use provocation in the attempt to construct a historical and cultural narrative by which to induce personal and social change and then political reform. They are identified as six categories—or thematic narratives—that provide the illustrative platform to

contrast themselves and/or their protagonist with their negative-interlocutor and/or antagonist. Overall, these six that I have located in their writings provide examples, both textually and contextually, of how the rhetoric captures the essence of what they mean their theories to convey. That by drawing sharp, poignant contrasts—contrasts that links outdated notions about important philosophical concepts to their interlocutors—between the rightly and wrongly provokable type of person, the theorists can present the most forceful argument to not only win this struggle over the proprietorship of what the true meanings and definitions of politically important terms are but moreover to provoke positive change in the lives of the segment of their audience that they view as capable of positive change. The following are short, specific examples of each.

The first proposal by which they separate themselves is a criticism for caring about what other people think. The theorists point out that it is both wrong and counterproductive to attempt to gain good social standing in a society corrupted by the kinds of people whom respect is wanted.

The second one is more of a subtle attack that implies a contrast between their intent and their message. Here, they represent the vessels by which their philosophies appear, yet they describe themselves as ironic, light-hearted, and capable of accepting their own futility. This latter is a freeing exercise. The second one employs a rhetorical tactic that seemingly pokes fun at themselves, and—when they, and all of them do, use this kind of language, they are luring their interlocutor or intended audience into likewise believing the theorists are merely average. To go deeper, this is just one more way in which they are

inverting traditionally held meanings. One of the strands that permeate throughout all six of these criticisms draws a distinction between the theorists' natures and those whose dispositions they are criticizing. The theorists seem to be embracing their shortcomings—some through their self-deprecating humor, others through their light-heartedness, both of which are attitudes not typically held by those admired. However, for the six, this lifts burdens carried by others unnecessarily.

The third way in which they separate themselves pivots from the second, in that they depict themselves as advantaged in terms of being free or more natural. The third shows them to be transcendent as they do not hold grudges and cannot be bothered with what others make ordeals about which they view as sheer pettiness. Their pursuits are more philosophic, in part, because they are not distracted with base desires that control most people. They are able to accomplish such great feats—while still recognizing their limitations —and live an existence that is preferable to that of their interlocutors because, unlike them, the theorists do not misinterpret—or "misrecognize"—their standing and place.

Fourth, the theorists attempt to show that those whom they are critiquing have failed to grasp a proper sense of the state of their human condition or their role within the universe. This carries a religious connotation. They deceive themselves and overestimate their meaningfulness and centrality with respect to some eternity, as evidenced by the way in which they invoke and appeal to a higher authority and believe themselves to be justified in speaking on behalf of God (although for Socrates this is inverted, but to the same effect). Their contrast is an effort to discredit their own sense of virtue, which is contradicted by their

actions. By undermining their assertions, they point out how, in fact, their interlocutors or antagonists either fail to live according to what they purport. Their continual undermining of them and exposing their deficiencies via the examples they use, the theorists' use of provocative rhetoric, as supported by evidence, add further support by the contrasts they offer.

The fifth is similar to the fourth. The theorists expose their targeted group for their exaggerated and inflated claims about intelligibility and insightfulness and rigor, which are but fraudulent and misguided to justify their leadership or success or fame, when in reality it is just them having duped at best an unsuspecting and naive group of people and at worst a dumb and base mob.

The sixth and last form I identify culminates in the theorists' social criticism by contrasting themselves not with specific kinds of people but with the time they share with their contemporaries. They suggest they are from another time, at some points from the past, before descending into the vulgarity of the present, at other points from the future, available to the theorists who have left their times behind for some imagined improvement over their day. This always brings them to assess the deterioration of their society more objectively and with greater perceptibility as they have not been tricked into believing the rationalizations for justifying what is really the prevailing illegitimate ruling structure. If the conventional mode of thought embraces progress they nostalgically recount a better point in history, although disagreeing sharply about which points. Some reference points are hypothetical, others eternal or beyond this life.

In the third and final section of Chapter 3, I give a general overview for the way in which their theoretical projects develop as they are analyzed through the prism of provocation. I describe the set of circumstances to which the respective theorists are reacting. The theorists argue that they are the ones provoked, who then take to writing to present alternative theories that sufficiently counter the conventionally accepted views of society in terms of legitimacy and justice with a response equal in rhetorical force to the level of which the theorists see the pervasiveness of social corruption. Their theories represent a rejection of their contemporaries' rationalization and legitimization of accepted cultural and social norms, and which the politics continues to reproduce and reinforce—that is, all three theorists introduce an individual or a group who embodies the personal flaws that created and continue to reproduce, as they understand it, the societal conditions which ought to be recognized as degradation and thus a state of affairs that run counter to a (more) natural human state. To that end, the theorists' intentions for using provocative rhetoric are viewed as a means not only to frame the relevant philosophical problems, but to provide a sound methodological explanation—that is, urging people to pursue a truer, more natural life, as opposed to continuing to fall victim to sophistic types of provocation responsible for the condition in which their respective societies find themselves, which introduce into the analysis the criterion by which the theorists and their texts get interpreted. In each case, I find their eventual argument, which is, in part, an attempt to take traditionally held concepts and views, and reinterpret them to have the inverse meanings of these terms become accepted.

The overarching goal of the theorists is to, essentially, win this rhetorical debate and, in believing to have successfully (re)claimed proprietorship over the rightful usages of important terms—ones like, "naturally" and "rightly" (e.g., what it means to be rightly disposed, which then implies a temperament that can properly discern between what is and is not "natural"). They then begin to offer an alternative conception of human nature, a logical necessity before which any political proposals would be interpreted as just, so they contend—that is, the theorists intend model a political regime to mirror humans most naturally and correct for acquired contradictory inclinations that manifest into anti-social attitudes and behaviors.

After introducing the concept of provocation and constructing my methodological framework in which I attempt to explain the provocation in Plato, Rousseau and Nietzsche, I apply Chapters 2 and 3's analyses to the individual theorists themselves, beginning with the historical Socrates, in that I have positioned him as—in terms of the Western philosophical tradition—the original political provocateur. In Chapter 4, I go on to discuss how Plato, in the dialogues of the *Apology, Crito, Phaedo* and *Charmides*, introduces us to thinking about concepts in a particular way—e.g., attitudes toward this life and the next as well as definitions like "temperance" and "wisdom"—whose reconceptualization in the works presented prior to the *Republic* work to further the justification for those proposals made in the *Republic*.

I start to frame the discussion by referencing end notes made by Allan Bloom in his translation of the *Republic*. First, Bloom discusses how "all uses of the word apology in the

Republic refer to this event" (*R* 97, FN 1). This note clarifies how the word apology is used in reference to the "event" of Socrates' trial in which he must defend himself against the allegations of corrupting the youth and not believing in the gods. I intend to show that Plato is a strategist and that Socrates is a strategic character whose provocation is systematically captured and fit into the works to make the most forceful argument, both substantively and organizationally.

The second endnote sets the stage for the substantive narrative. Bloom notes, "This is part of the old quarrel between philosophy and poetry" (*R* 136, FN 15), in which "Socrates is turning the ridicule not only on comedy but on poetry as well," thus supporting Plato's wishes to take important concepts and invert their meanings (*R* 136). For Plato to eventually make the case for the ideal city, he must first show the deficiencies of the actual city, and he can only do this by demonstrating the flawed way in which its people live personally. This is why he must expose their flaws by delegitimating traditionally held social and cultural norms and thereby making legitimate their ideas about the associated concepts they have come to justify.

Socrates does this by engaging in the dialectic exchanges where he reels them in to eventually show them of their own ignorance. Once deflated, Plato shows that the interlocutors must now reckon with Socrates' seriousness. This is not to suggest that Plato is misappropriating the historical Socrates; Plato does, however, structure his positive philosophical argument in a particular fashion—framing the written *Dialogues* that continually builds concept by concept toward the a political structure consistent with the

theory of the Form. For instance, when Adeimantus, one of Socrates' interlocutors, pushes

back, demanding, "What would your apology be [for] hardly making these these men

happy?" (*R* 97). Plato uses Adeimantus' rhetorical complaint here to further the process of

laying out the merits of Plato's proposal to engage in the pursuit of the Ideal, first privately

and then publicly.

Chapter 5 begins by describing Plato's incorporation of the literary character,

Socrates, who as a rhetorical figure in the *Dialogues*, is used for the credible vehicle by

which to deliver his prescription for why one should live the philosophical life, and how one

would go about leading such a life. This chapter builds off the previous by putting those

ideas concerning the best life—one of philosophy—found in the earlier Dialogues to work in

the *Republic*. Plato employs his multi-faceted strategy—employing the credible Socrates,

committing to and being capable of living philosophically, which is in contrast to what is

prevalent, using provocative rhetoric to invert concepts' meanings in order to win the

struggle over what is deemed "true," in the effort to discredit the current city and thereby

propose a new political state, one where philosopher kings rule. In terms of method, Bloom

comments, "those who play, say you'll tell me this too" (*R* 254). Part of the strategy is to

construct the dynamic of the conversation by asking questions that get the anticipated

answer to continue directing the progression of the argument. In terms of style, Bloom

maintains, "Socrates uses ambiguous sentences" (*R* 164). This note not only reinforces the

strategy to use the interlocutor as a means for furthering the argument, but it also

underlines how ambiguity as a stylistic choice allows for the flexibility to maneuver and

constantly adapt to the fluidity that comes with these rhetorical exchanges when trying to push the conversation in a certain direction—one that culminates in successfully persuading the many to cede power to the philosophical few. Therefore, according to Plato, as argument is the tool of philosophy and there is nothing worse than developing a distaste for argument, Plato attempts to make resonate the political scenario, where contrary to the current system, legitimate political authority comes from philosophical rule.

Protest is not only expected but needed for this theoretical strategy to succeed in its purpose. Although seemingly antagonistic at first, the provocation is meant for positive change. It is to their benefit, and Plato casts Glaucon to play the role of interlocutor who is ultimately willing to be persuaded. The purpose of this exercise is to transform people in order to create laws which are not in accordance with nature but are also possible—a sharp contrast from what ordinary men who resist these teachings do, i.e., put to death the very men who they should put in charge, e.g., Socrates.

In spite of the rhetoric having such negative consequences in real-life for the historical Socrates, it provides, especially in the *Republic*, the theoretical framework to challenge poetry and make the case for censuring the poets, one reason being to ensure the kind of upbringing in which children do not develop an emotional disposition that is susceptible to provocation, the implications of which weaken the city's resolve. Hence, Plato wishes his city not to respond to suffering with overt expressions of emotion.

Chapter 6 develops Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whose theoretical arc culminates in *On the Social Contract*. Unlike Plato who opposes democracy, Rousseau uses his rhetoric to

support a political system whose legitimacy rests on popular sovereignty via contractual consent. They both, however, use rhetoric that deals with democracy in that it is a discussion that occurs because of an earlier one about the nature of human beings and what system is most conducive to people's (more) natural state, specifically with respect to what they are capable of handling in terms of governance, e.g., participation in the decision-making process.

Despite Plato and Rousseau's worlds being fundamentally different, they address those issues that they are reacting to with similarly provocative rhetoric, while couching the rhetorical language and the argument in utopian (or dystopian) discourse. Dealing with man's susceptibility to political provocation spans all of the selected theorists' rhetoric, although Rousseau rejects Socrates and Plato's rationalism, allowing, rather, for emotion to help guide man's behavior. For Rousseau, to properly understand human development, he points to man's sympathetic nature to account for human preservation, not solely rationality, which, as he argues, "isolates" man from one another (*DOI* 54).

However, this emotion, "rightly" understood in the Aristotelean sense of the term, facilitates the necessary compassion to which humans owe their existence (*Rh* 1422). On the other hand, this emotion rejects the Hobbesian conception of man as the target. Much of the beginning of his theory supports the framework from which I am working—that is, Rousseau like the others, theorizes to counter some explanation for how man has been constructed by some other, inferior conception—something in which he also engages—in order to argue for some disagreeable individual state and social order.

Plato intends to set up a system that censures: such indoctrination prevents the kind of disposition from emerging in children, one that pities the suffering, as it would leave the state vulnerable. This vulnerable disposition is why Plato wishes to denounce the poets like Homer, whose two-fold effects comprise flipping Socrates from comedic to serious and breeds a type of person conducive to the maintenance of a legitimate and just political scheme.

Rousseau argues, however, that such vulnerability binds us as humans. He traces it back to the state of nature and then pinpoints the beginning of inequality in order to account for how current institutions have become corrupt. This corruption is reinforced by disparities among citizens because of what society has come to value culturally, i.e., vices masquerading as virtues (*DSA* 16). These differences ought not to be given attention, nor do they warrant merit. For example, possessing the ability to draw attention to oneself should not demand attention from others and it is not necessarily admirable. He advocates for a reversal of that which motivates us—more substantive and virtuous pursuits, such as material simplicity. He does so through a systematic criticism of what drives contemporary human behavior, placing its origins when people began to become increasingly idle and gathering around to do nothing more than share in one another's company. Underlying this, Bloom notes in Book 3 of the *Republic* where he comments how Renaissance thinking credited the dissemination of knowledge as leading to decent regimes (where before it was merely coincidental).

However, despite others in hindsight—e.g., J.L. Talmon—who blame Rousseau for giving rise to revolutionary totalitarianism, Rousseau, although provocatively pessimistic, is a critic of contemporary notions about the link between knowledge and progress, which is in part how I approach the rhetoric he employs in order to compel people to rethink any sense of superiority desired to feel when comparing themselves to others, including the less civilized savages, a group whom he often not only defends but praises, if only to further slight bourgeois society. Rousseau uses the language of duty and virtue to expose the lack of virtue and their fleeting sense of duty to others, as evidenced by the institutions that are responsible for educating children. This is the heart of his challenge—and it works: Rousseau manages to frustrate and provoke the reactions of bourgeois societies in a host of countries. His goal, at least at the end in terms of his contrarian nature, finishes as a political treatise that remains consistent to his examination found in his previous *Discourses*, if not found in his personal life and the behavior he demonstrates, all of which run contrary to the practices of his day—e.g., remaining in "good social standing" being a primary one, something he admonishes but admits succumbing to the same temptations throughout much of his life. I call attention to this not to try to reconcile these but to merely show how they contribute to his provocative nature and his provocative style and method, which are used to put forth the most credible case for his theoretical analysis and his political recommendations. Part of his provocative style consistently goads and dares his reader to challenge his postulates and assumptions, which are true and consistent with nature and allowable by God in order to

almost make the assertion that it is irrefutable, both in terms of the arrangement of the argument and the substantive argument itself.

Another characteristic relevant here is the rhetoric that captures his outrage at those who might challenge him, sometimes prefacing potential reactions with what appears to be a manufactured outrage. This indignation becomes a tactical threat of rhetorical provocation for Rousseau, in that might serve others well to tread cautiously or think twice before doubting the merits of his analysis. Thus, this examination deals with Rousseau as a theorist, who puts forward a theory that also contextually incorporates his provocative personality as a tactical resource in order to convey the most forceful argument possible. Interestingly, however, doing so introduces another connotation of provocation: Rousseau's conduct often seems to contradict the theoretical postulates that so passionately fill his pages. For example, Rousseau gives us *Emile*, his treaty on education, after abandoning his own children, rationalizing his decision because they would be better of receiving an education from the state (*C* 333).

Chapter 7 locates the provocation of Friedrich Nietzsche. He is less political than Plato and Rousseau, yet his philosophy is, in many ways, a critical response to their political theories. Also important is while not overtly political, part of the deployment of provocation can be usurped for political goals. Nietzsche, like the previous selected theorists, feels provoked—only he is provoked to a significant degree *by them*. He responds to them in various ways when analyzing and explaining the consequences of Plato in terms of the real-world repercussions of having been exposed to Plato's philosophical rationalism. Nietzsche

also attacks philosophers, like Hegel and Kant, from the position that they, unlike Nietzsche, harbor ulterior motives and use substandard methods to achieve fame as opposed to uncover (lower case-t) truth. Nietzsche's attack also has a religious angle, referring to Platonism as Christianity for the masses (*BGE*), which reflects his contempt for a third group, proponents of democracy and equality, likened to, as I put it, politically religious Kantians.

Therefore, he hates Rousseau for these very reasons. For Nietzsche, Rousseau's vanity and idealism are addressed in the harsh rhetoric that Nietzsche uses to describe both groups as what is now referred to as "Nietzschean types" (Thomas). It is meant to frame the attack on the actual principles to which this philosophical and religious type purport tpo adhere and subscribe—one being democratic compassion, for instance. These are all unnatural and against man's first instincts, and which his challenge is meant to undermine so that he can reintroduce for consideration politically relevant terms, as he sees them—one like aristocratic nobility. Nietzsche believes he can discredit the belief system by exposing the hypocrisies of religious socialists by contrasting what they say with how they actually live (the reason for proclaiming the death of God), all of which as I contend, is part of what Nietzsche intends his re-revaluation to accomplish. He can then show how terms' meanings should be redefined back to their original and correct way, in contrast to the inverted conceptions prevailing throughout the society to which Nietzsche, on his terms, unfortunately belongs. Who he is talking about is not just German or even European culture but mankind in-general since Socrates, with which Plato, Socrates' documenter, has saddled us—that is, the despicable condition we find ourselves in misguidedly clamoring for ascetic

idealism. Nietzsche is a critic of modernity and contemporary "man," where his Zarathustra becomes the embodiment of the alternative—one who does not merely cope with the harshness of reality but, more so, frees himself from the psychological shackles with which cultural over-pitying and unrestrained suffering have enchained us and thus giving birth to his last man, a fearful and pathetic nihilist.

Nietzsche's rigor and skepticism combat these by offering an alternative and providing the relief that comes from perspectivism via experimentalization. He wants others to be forced to confront their contradictions and hypocrisies through his rhetoric. And as Rousseau attempts to trace inequality back to egocentric tendencies and as Plato attempts to change attitudes about Socrates in terms of being serious, Nietzsche attempts to undo their work by attacking their very philosophical cores, as their lives are the conduits from which their theoretical analyses flow. His forceful rhetoric—including the language of "war"—is meant to penetrate the indoctrination of more than two millennia rationalism and idealism. Nietzsche is not concerned with converting all whom his writings reach, for he sees no hope for change in the irrational descendants of Socrates. This sense of pessimism contributes to his disdain for "modern men" who falsely rationalize some self-importance by participating in the self-congratulatory conversation regarding other-worldly rewards while continuing to descend into further and further states of mediocrity.

Rather, Nietzsche wishes to speak directly to those noble spirits who, by penetrating his aphoristic style, are rewarded with the space ward of the bad conscience and realize their potential. These types are made aware of how the creation of the bad conscience

came into existence as a man-made invention, although has managed to infect the political culture with notions that privilege intention over consequence, suffering over sublimation and justice over power. Nietzsche feels it is necessary to engage in such *ad hominem* arguments because doing so is the only way to express the dire condition from which the artists must break free. He wants the idea of eternal recurrence not to be a hellish one, as it is such for the common man who wants "heirs" and to believe that God is still alive, despite having been killed by the same people who unjustifiably demand right after right in "His" name and on "His" authority (*Z* 322).

I conclude the dissertation with Chapter 8, which begins with a summary of the power struggle over the relational and perceptual dimensions of provocation. The actors engaged in a relationship based on and furthered by provocation make strategic appeals to various audiences to justify a continuation of acts of provocation or prevent more from happening, often using mechanisms of existing power to that end, like the Athenian jurors did in the case of Socrates' trial found him guilty of corrupting the youth and sentenced him to death. I then review how returning acts of provocation between two or more actors can escalate quickly in that the respective sides either never trusted the other's motives or at some point lost trust in one another, at which point interpreted provocative acts to be deliberate and sinister. And given the advancement in technological warfare, the opposing sides turn to the world-audience to try to convince other nations of a characterization of the provocative relationship whose narrative draws support for that particular depiction and condemnation for the competing version.

For specificity, I cite two contemporary examples, one international and the other domestic. The first discusses the provocative relationship between the United States and President George W. Bush's "Axis of Evil." Using my model I trace the progression of provocation between the U.S. and Iraq, which culminated in the second Iraq war and the death of Saddam Hussein. I also include the evolving cases of Iran and North Korea, asking if the recent adversarial relationship with Iran can turn into a friendlier one as well as considering the increasingly seriousness with which the U.S. approaches North Korean acts of provocations. The second scenario I evaluate is former NSA contractor, Edward Snowden, who is embattled in a struggle with his fellow Americans and the Government over whether or not—based on what is the original act of provocation, the surveillance program or the leaking of classified documents—he is a traitor or civil libertarian champion. I conclude the discussion by briefly tying Snowden back to the theorists as provocation continues—both in positive and negative forms—in a world very different than Socrates', as liberal democracy, as I contend, has won the argument.

CHAPTER 2

Conceptualizing Provocation

Introduction: Definition[1] and Etymology[2] of the Conceptual Language of Provocation

I began my dissertation with the following assertion: all enduring works of political theory are provocative. It was at that point I asked, "What does it mean to be provocative—and to use provocation, both stylistically and substantively?" The *OED* includes in the multiple definitions of *provocative* as "inciting, giving rise to a specific state or condition." Further, the English word comes from the Latin word *provocativus*, which means "having the quality of provoking [or] having the quality of calling forth." As such, provocation requires a subject and an object. Provocation cannot occur in isolation, nor can one be provocative in a vacuum. To be provocative inherently requires engagement between at least two entities: a subject, or provoker (hereafter referred to as provocateur), and an object, or that which is provoked, whose nature—or temperament—is provokable. The French word *provocateur*, which is the most commonly used term to identify the initiator of the original provocation that is used in English, shares with the English usages their Latin origins, but the Latin form has a Greek predecessor. The Greek word *paroxunein* means "to goad [or] to render acute." Another form of the conceptual language in Greek is *paroxuno*, which means "to [literally] sharpen [or] to [figuratively] incite," as in how one might "sharpen" one's mind or incite to "action," respectfully. Similar to the various Latin forms that share the prefix *provo-*, the

---

[1] All definitional reference come from the Oxford English Dictionary (*OED*): www.oed.com.

[2] All etymological references come from Tufts University's Perseus Digital Library (*PDL*): www.perseus.tufts.edu.

Greek words—here, *paroxumein* and *paroxuno*—share the prefix *paro-*. *Paro-* means "beside [or] near," which further underscores the point that provocation is relational in nature (*PDL*).

Another feature of the concept provocation in definitional terms has to do with intentionality. The *OED* states that in addition to "giving rise to a specific state or condition," provocation, in general, "caus[es] anger or another strong reaction, esp[ecially] deliberately." As such, provocation can either be deliberate or incidental. It tends, however, to denote that the provocateur has identified an object to use the provocation *against*—or even *for*, as will be shown. However, in terms of intentionality—that is, whether it was necessarily meant—provocation makes references to the various origins of that initial provocative act. For instance, some activity whose "abstract properties in the external world"—e.g., natural occurring phenomena—can take the form of an act of provocation, as experienced by an observer and thus potentially be perceived by that observer as a provocative active. In turn, the observer is made to conclude that he is no longer just an observer but the recipient. As provocation is relational—although not always intentional—much of how that initial act of provocation is interpreted by the object, whether real or merely perceived, further emphasizes the fact that the object's nature or temperament plays an important role in how one perceives motive and thus processes meaning. For instance, a religious person may interpret a natural occurring event—e.g., an earthquake, tornado or drought—as a deliberate provocation to alter the course of previous patterns of behaviors, usually ones considered by that religious person as immoral. Although an important note—

that is, this notion of perceived versus real intentionality as provocations whose origins are defined as "abstract properties in the external world"—in that it comes up in the theoretical writings of Plato, Rousseau and Nietzsche; most provocations, especially those not associated with the external world but with the mind and in society, are deliberate in nature.

Now that I have noted that provocation is not only relational, in that it requires a subject to engage an object, who—because of that object's susceptibility to being provoked —responds to some initial act of provocation. In addition, similar to the fact that provocation generally assumes some level of intentionality, to be provocative—and notice the actual characterization of the definition—means to "caus[e] anger or another strong reaction." The concept of provocation, which intrinsically requires an object to interpret the act as provocative in some form—which, in turn, is generally determined by the contextual make-up of the nature, temperament or disposition of the object provoked—tends to induce anger in the object. This is a historical accident in the etymological sense. Provocation was not always more closely associated with a negative response. As such, provocation is inherently ambivalent in ethical or moral terms. In fact, another definition of the term *provocative*, as listed in the *OED* states, is one that is meant to be used as "an incentive [or] stimulus." Just as provocation is a concept whose connotation has taken on a decidedly negative tone, its origins can be traced back at least to Plato's *Fourth Epistle* where, in Greek, the term *paroxusmos,* which is used, in effect, to mean stimulating to do good. In other words, despite the etymological evolution of provocation, or to be provocative, to presumptively—or by default—refer to an act or behavior associated with some sinister

motive that is deemed threatening or challenging, the term's origins include acts of provocation to be taken as positive, as well, thus making provocation, at least inherently, morally ambivalent and ethically neutral.

In light of the fact that the conceptual language of provocation includes, among others, the above observations which include the following: (1) the object or recipient's temperament or disposition, which generally determines the interpretive response; (2) the response as one predominantly marked by anger, thus implying that the original act of provocation as sinister and seditious, at worst, or threatening and challenging, at best; and (3) the actual motive or intent for using provocation as not necessarily antagonistic or immoral in nature—or even neutral, for that matter—but meant for positive and productive ends. With these points in mind, provocation involves two additional considerations, both of which entail this relational feature of the concept. First, provocation is generally accepted as threatening suggesting that the status quo—that is, in political terms, the overarching governing structure is commonly perceived as legitimate and exercises of power as just— puts at odds the provocateur with the prevailing thought of his or her contemporaries. That is, there is fundamental disagreement over the true—or truer—meanings of what terms like "justice" and "legitimacy" entail and how they manifest themselves socially and culturally. As to the second point, one very important reason for such disagreement over the "proper" or "rightful" conceptions of justice and legitimacy is the degree to which they differ in their natures and temperaments, which, from the provocateur's point of view, only reinforce why the acts—which are provocation for positive ends—can seem so undermining to the current

political scheme. For the provocateur, it is necessary—even a moral (or "immoral," for Nietzsche) endeavor—to engage in this struggle to wrestle away (and, in some cases, back) from those who hold proprietorship over the meaning of what amounts to just acts and legitimate exercises of power.

As I have attempted to establish, provocations—in terms of linguistically describing them as activities—can appear as abstractions in the world, although my dissertation will address the alternative ways such provocative acts are dealt with, such as the way in which these activities are referred to relative to the mind. Related to these alternative ways, I discuss provocation mostly with respect to its use as intentional—that is, as a manifestation of the external world into which one injects himself—e.g., Socrates—into the storyline of some phenomena occurring externally or beyond human (or animal) interactions or relations. It is in such terms wherein one uses provocation intentionally to appeal to one in sensory terms that I add another definitional feature: provocation also means "to incite," which is to suggest that provocation, in many instances—and particularly with respect to the important and relative texts of Plato, Rousseau and Nietzsche that I use to theorize—is a rhetorical instrument employed strategically to induce not just any condition of change, but a specific"one felt by the intended object—one as the anticipated result for which that specific form of provocation took. For instance, provocation has a medical connotation, as well. The *OED* refers to it in this sense as "the eliciting of a physiological or pathological response, esp. an immune response; spec. the deliberate eliciting of a response as a diagnostic procedure" (provocation test). Thus as a medical professional would use a

provocation test to induce a reaction, a provocateur who is conducting political theory attempts to elicit some intended emotional response from some identified political community. The goal of this activity of provocation meant to incite change begins with inducing that identified political community to be provoked to a particular or, in other words, an alternative and competing course of action endorsed by those who are the real and/or perceived beneficiaries of the prevailing thought which, again, reproduced the status quo, specifically with respect to the ideas about what constitutes justice and legitimacy. In sum on this point, provocation, as it "induces" in order to "incite" the object or recipient, serves as a strategically designed appeal meant to capitalize on the emotional disposition of the identified object(s)—or political community—whom the subject as provocateur wishes to result in some subsequent course of thought or (re)action.

As just alluded to, the conceptual language of provocation—for my purposes, primarily, that is, although remaining consistent with the forms it takes in its definition— suggests that the theorists are not just provocateurs making provocative statements, but also thoughtful and deliberative strategists whose political theories as philosophical projects are ones of provocation. That is, their writings—which, to a significant degree, are a reflection of their lives—are inherently ones of provocation, in that both their stylistic, tactical and methodological choices as well as the overarching and substantive political theories are ones "promt[ing]" and "urging (a person) [or political community] to an action [or] state." In addition, if one were to accept this premise—and is the one on which I base my analysis—it behooves us to read these—and other theorists, political and otherwise—as

well as to view to anyone with (even seeming) political ambitions as political provocateurs, even if, at least initially, not through a lens with seditious motives, although always with healthy and informed skepticism, which is what I intend, in part, for my dissertation to provide a framework for doing.

Similar to the fact that no one can ever with total certainty and definitive accuracy know another's true motivations for using provocation, their words—if not outright reveal them—provide significant clues, both textually and contextually, especially with the aid of having considered the multiple forms provocation takes definitionally. That is—and keeping in mind the strategy factor—provocation seeks to elicit any number of types of responses that that prior provocative act (which includes the written word) results in. First, in one sense, provocation can appear to be a paradoxical term in that an object can attempt to provoke the subject to inaction. However, such an instance implies that the previous condition or state was one action. The theorists of my concern would characterize such a case as an unjust political regime successfully using provocation to induce a "lull[ed]" state or a condition in which that ruled population no longer actively engage, demanding of its leaders a sufficient level of responsiveness. Conversely, however, provocation includes that which is "thought-provoking." As the theorists argue, their specific forms of provocation are designed to foster the kind of deliberation of a political community that would "persuade"—or "force"—leaders to rule more fairly and justly. Again, all of these terms are disputed as to what counts as fair and just, which has led to the political conditions that the theorists are reacting to and, given their defiant positions, have been deemed as

threatening and challenging. Part of their projects in conceptual terms of provocation are meant "to pique" the interest of a potentially similar-minded political community and "to unlull" or "to energize" them.

However, given the inevitability of the negative response from those currently wielding political power, the theorists attempt to employ the aspects of provocation that are directionally oriented. These are listed in the *OED*. In addition to provocation "giving rise to a specific state or condition," includes inaction in that it is meant to serve as the mechanism by which the object goes from an active to a passive state. In other words, it goes from a state that another provocation intends to re-awaken or "to unlull" or to reinvigorate or "to [re-]energize." Also, to provoke to change means "to incite [or] to urge [a person] to an action or to a reaction."

Thus, with respect to the different results—"action" and "reaction"—I begin with the latter, "reaction" before addressing the former, "action." As aforementioned, the object of the provocation is expected to react negatively. For example, a political elite who is a beneficiary of the status quo would react negatively in that the perception of the motive for the use of the provocation by the subject, or provocateur, would likely be interpreted as "challenging [and] threatening," and therefore a "seditious" act. That is, the first kind of reaction the theorists encounter in terms of deploying provocation as a strategic component —or components—of the overall theoretical project.

Another reaction that is urged upon the subject is to learn from the provocation. This time the subject is one of the theorists, or provocateur, and has identified as a friendly

subject. The intent for the use of the provocation is for the benefit of the provocateur, who by engaging with his friendly interlocutor, learns from the interaction, much in the way the Socratic method is a tool for personal—i.e., philosophical—growth and development. For example, Socrates seeks out a sympathetic ally who through conducting a discussion that includes cross-examination and refutation of each party's initial positions, old ones are solidified as good ones or new ones are identified and replace previously held conceptions that have been shown to be inferior. Thus, Socrates and, perhaps "incidentally," his interlocutor have become wiser, which amounts to more philosophical, as Socrates has defined what wisdom means although many of his fellow Athenians never accepted this definition. The point is that the exercise is primarily for the benefit of Socrates' intellectual pursuits. However, it is one that requires a subject, but a subject that must react to Socrates' initial provocation directed at the subject. In such an instance—and I intend to discuss this at length in the chapter on the historical Socrates—Socrates goes from being the subject, or provocateur, to ultimately the object, or the provoked, as the result of the exchange of provocative ideas with that first subject, or Socrates' friendly interlocutor.

Now, in terms of a subject, or for my purposes, the theorists, are using provocation "to incite" not a reaction against the subject, whether negative or positive, but an action that is directed away from the theorists acting as provocateurs. Of the multiple directions these can take, I focus on two, primarily—those incitements which are acted upon by the subject internally and externally, or, in a sense, redirected to a third-party, meaning elsewhere from within or back at the original subject. In the former, the subject internalizes

the provocation, interpreting it as something positive in order for personal development. This type of "action" is similar to the one Socrates primarily used, but its main objective is concerned with triggering growth in the subject. A good example of this form of provocation is Nietzsche's writings on sublimation, a term which entails overcoming some personal defect or external obstacle to channel that suffering into the creation of something beautiful. Similarly, Rousseau discusses it in terms of internalization. And as provocation can "irritate [or] annoy [and thus] anger" in the figurative and emotional sense, much in the same way a medical provocation-test can cause discomfort in the physical sense, the result is the increased health—the kind of health felt not only physically but Platonically as well, in that the health of the soul (re)produces other healthy states, both figuratively as well as politically, as in political states territorially.

While thinking about political improvement, provocation meant to induce "action" by the subject's objects in order to be turned toward action in the political sphere is the last type of action. This one is intended to articulate a necessary set of conditions for a more "just" and "legitimate" government—one that the political elites who have been identified as friendly and sympathetic to a system of rule that define those important and relevant concepts like "justice" and "legitimacy" in terms of what is currently perceived as so threatening, in that the regime in power are, in fact, unjust and illegitimate, at least how Plato, Rousseau and Nietzsche perceive things as they are now to be. This is, in large part, the reason—among others that I have alluded to, such as the struggle over proprietorship over the "rightful" meanings of terms and concepts and the related fact that there can never

be any definitive ownership over them, either the concepts or the theorists—I have selected these three to analyze in great depth in terms of their projects—as reflections upon themselves as humans—being ones of provocation in terms of the definitions of the conceptual language of being provocative and to provoke. It is at this point that I discuss what makes Plato, Rousseau and Nietzsche so interesting for examination and why they are of so much relevance and importance on the matter of political theory as provocation.

Uses of Conceptual Provocation of Interest and Relevance: Plato and Socrates, Historical and Platonic

The following section details some of the important reasons that make Plato, Rousseau and Nietzsche's political theories among the most provocative, which also allows for an explanation of the concept of provocation. Specifically, I explore political provocation's rhetorical use that seeks to advance substantive theories of provocation. I also assess their theories, comparing and contrasting them—as well as other modes of provocation, both theoretical in nature and on-the-ground. In *Process and Reality*, Alfred North Whitehead makes the provocative assertion:

> There is no point in endeavouring to force the interpretations of divergent philosophers into a vague agreement. What is important is that the scheme of interpretation here adopted can claim for each of its main positions the express authority of one, or the other, of some supreme master of thought—Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Locke, Hume, Kant. But ultimately nothing rests on authority; the final court of appeal is intrinsic reasonableness ... The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato. I do not mean the systematic scheme of thought which scholars have doubtfully extracted from his writings. I allude to the wealth of general ideas scattered through them. His personal endowments, his wide opportunities for experience at a great period of civilization, his inheritance of an intellectual tradition not yet stiffened by excessive systematization, have made his writing an inexhaustible mine of suggestion. (39)

In addition to just the pervasive use of the language of provocation in Plato, Rousseau and Nietzsche, there exists in their writings—and lives, more so than many of the other great theorists and enduring theories—other features that include the function of provocation. For one, they were—and, in some cases and to varying degrees, are still—read to be challenging, which is a key feature of provocation, both in their displays as well as effect on elite audiences and thus consequential in real-world terms.

Consider Whitehead's most remembered sentence of the above passage: that "the safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato." Although such a claim might be rightfully regarded as an exaggeration, the fact that it has received so much attention, particularly criticism, not only puts the statement into the category of provocation but more importantly provides the opportunity to pause and consider it on the merits. In doing so, one is inclined—if not to accept the statement outright—to ponder Plato in terms of what all of his writings—based in part on "[Plato's] inheritance of an intellectual tradition not yet stiffened by excessive systematization" which is a reference to his mentor, Socrates, whom because of this will be considered alongside of Plato—have resulted in: Aristotle's response to both the historical Socrates and theoretical Plato; Aquinas' invocation and adaptation of Aristotle; scholasticism; Rousseau's reaction to scholasticism and Platonic metaphysics; Nietzsche's criticism of each of the prior mentioned, not withstanding Aristotle's aristocracy but including his "commonsense," whose analysis contributed to American neopragmatist, Richard Rorty's thinking (74). In some ways, even more than a half century after the fall of

German nazism, political theory (Arlene Saxonhouse) continues to respond to Plato (Karl Popper) vis-à-vis what the Third Reich took—dishonestly so—for their own evil (Heidegger) purposes, even using unfinished and unpublished notes that Nietzsche lost control over after his career-ending collapse into insanity the last decade of his life, thanks to his anti-Semitic and Nazi sympathizer sister.

I begin with Plato because—despite the lack of agreement not only with regard to the (more) real meanings behind his works and how his thought should be approached—of the overwhelming consensus that he (and by extension Socrates) has had on philosophical thought and subsequently on social action and political change. However, ought Plato—and Socrates—be taken so seriously almost two and a half millennia later? In his interpretive essay included in his translation of the *Republic*, Allan Bloom posits that "it behooves us to study the *Republic*. For it is the first book which brings philosophy 'down to the cities'...We will learn that the establishment of political science cannot be carried out without sacrifice of the...interests of most men" (1991: 310). Thus, if we have not—and essentially cannot, in that if one were to even accept Whitehead's position that "ultimately nothing rests on authority"—come to an agreement on any single overarching philosophical interpretive approach to the field, but at least have conceded—and with ease—that Plato has played a most significant role in the Western philosophical tradition, there is another consensus: that self-determination is a most just and legitimate political construction, whose mechanisms are those of the basic democratic sort.

That said, Plato seems less relevant in theorizing a contemporary politics. Our modern thinking has totally reversed what seemed so intuitive to him in democratic Athens —that is, the interests of the many ought to be sacrificed for the interest of the few, those philosophical types. Bloom continues: "[T]hese sacrifices are so great that to many they do not seem worthwhile; [even] civilized [Athens] thought it better to sacrifice philosophy [i.e. Socrates] rather than face the alternative he presented. This is why philosophy needs an apology; it is a dangerous and essentially questionable activity" (1991: 310).

To be provocative means to be dangerous or to be perceived as such, anyway. Socrates certainly was that. He was increasingly felt to be more and more threatening to Athenian social norms and political values, escalating to the conviction of the capital crime of corrupting the youth. This provoked Plato to write, something Socrates never did. It is to Plato that we owe the portrait of Socrates we have come to most view and know. This portrait introduces another set of issues in terms of what makes Plato—and Rousseau and Nietzsche—among the most provocative and relates to a subtle point I take Whitehead to be making in that passage where he inserts right after footnote conclusion, "I do not mean the systematic scheme of thought which scholars have doubtfully extracted from [Plato's] writings"—that is, these three, are hidden from us. Granted, no closure can ever be achieved, but these three operate behind a mask. I will discuss Plato's mask at length when I treat the dialogue form as Plato's method in terms of such a medium as a provocative choice while bearing in mind the following statement by Plato scholar Charles Kahn (1981: 305): "The Socrates of the dialogues is an ambiguous figure, at once Plato's historical master and

his literary puppet." Important here is this concept of how ambiguity—in that it creates opportunities for wide (mis)interpretations—as integral to their philosophical projects contributes to (seeming) paradoxes. In addition, it is with the concepts of ambiguity and paradox in their connection to provocation—as it is pervasive throughout my chosen theorists—that make them of interest, and I do so by turning to Rousseau, the most contradictory of the three and arguably of any other major political theorists.

Uses of Conceptual Provocation of Interest and Relevance: Rousseau

I have chosen to analyze Rousseau for multiple reasons, first of which is the amount and intensity of the language of provocation he uses, both in his theoretical and reflective— i.e. autobiographical—writings, perhaps only second to Nietzsche. At the end of his *Confessions*, Rousseau speaks of his contentious relationship with his contemporaries, one defined by each side provoking the other, often unintentionally. Setting aside intentionality, he comes to characterize the strained relationship: "No matter what place I might choose for a refuge, clearly could not safeguard myself against either of the two methods which had been used to export me, the first of *inciting*[3] the population against me by underground intrigues, and the second of expelling me by naked force without offering any reasons" (*C* 597). This passage is reminiscent of Socrates' antagonistic relationship with his Athenian contemporaries, which is another reason for selecting Rousseau—in that, Rousseau, the provocateur, shares many of the personal qualities Socrates embodied. Also, although Rousseau and Plato sharply differ as to the possibilities of metaphysics, their philosophical

---

[3] Emphasis mine.

styles are similar—one being, given the paradoxical statements, the difficulty with which any real certainty about their true(r) meaning with respect to their philosophical doctrines is all of which we can be really certain about. That is, there is not only an utter lack of agreement about their proposals—plus the plausibility of them, even despite their attempts to suggest otherwise—but people (scholars and politicians alike) have interpreted them as arguing for fundamentally opposite and incompatible political systems.

At bottom, the real Rousseau cannot be both a totalitarian and a liberal, for communitarianism and individualism—that is, Rousseau himself, in his heart and mind, cannot be both, in any real terms. One reason for their paradoxes—perceived as such, anyway—goes to the ambiguity located in their works as it relates to a choice to write esoterically. To this point, Melzer writes of Rousseau: "The ancient writers, Rousseau emphasizes, are the true masters of this [esotericism] technique of energizing incompleteness...[and in] sum, the right kind of obscurity energizes the right kind of reader by making him active and responsible" (2007: 1024).

Now, in terms of setting up Rousseau's similarities with Socrates, I turn to a passage authored again by Melzer located in his article about Rousseau's *Mission*, which I will tie in to why in discussing provocation, Rousseau—relative to Socrates—makes such a good candidate to consider. Melzer argues:

> If Rousseau the pessimist had no hopes for the revolutionary or progressive transformation of Europe, the question remains why he wrote in so radical and dangerous a manner. One might respond that he simply spoke the truth as he saw it, regardless of consequences...[For] Rousseau…given the extreme and permanent decadence of his times, it was no longer dangerous to speak with perfect openness. (1983a: 304)

In this light—and bearing in mind Rousseau's concluding sentiments in the *Confessions*—

Rousseau, like Socrates, drew the ire of his fellow citizens. Rousseau was also thought to be

dangerous, which as the introduction to the *Confessions* makes note of, "[Rousseau]

ventured into a society in which he did not belong ...The fatal *Emile* was already at the

printers"—and because of its reception as one of provocation—he could no longer rely "on

the good will of princes" in that "he had clumsily allowed himself to *antagonize*[4] them (*C*

11). To this end, the parallels between Socrates and Rousseau regarding the social toll their

respective philosophical missions are striking, and are among the many reasons their

provocations are both interesting and important to examine.

And just as Socrates was in need of an "apology," which Plato felt compelled to

make, so too does Rousseau—for his equally "outlandish" way of life. Rousseau's, however,

is made by Rousseau himself, which only exacerbates both of the ways he is provocative,

first in the way he shares with Plato—that is, producing a system of thought whose distance

creates conflicting reports about meaning—and second in how his theoretic prescriptions,

like Socrates', create such controversy, as their contemporaries, under the current

understanding of accepted social norms and cultural values, cannot reconcile their—

Socrates and Rousseau's—lives with their theory for a just politics.

In the above mentioned *Emile*—his theoretic production for a just educational

doctrine—Rousseau seeks to instill a disposition in a student, who as an abstraction,

resistant to succumbing too quickly to the passions that are the source of their weakness

---

[4] Emphasis mine.

and subsequent detrimental state—specifically, a position of victimhood and servitude, of which both are perpetuated by structural inequality. For Rousseau, equality for "all"—with the interrelated issue of liberty—is the central theme of his political thought. However, for a set of political conditions to provide for relative equality—which is absolutely necessary for any "legitimate" government to provide for—to be maintained, an engaged citizenry must exhibit the type of qualities his student, Emile, acquires, doing so through an education that prioritizes learning by experience and not from books.

Now, as if the preceding theories turned policy prescriptions were not provocative enough already for those elites who made up most of Rousseau's/ up Rousseau's mostly first audience of readers, the fact that Rousseau—and by his own repeated admission—was in real-life the antithesis of Emile. Rousseau advocated for Emile to not dwell upon imaginary things (*E* 208)—and even praised the "savage" (e.g., a Native American Indian) for having prolonged developing such a vivid imagination (*DOI* 46), yet wrote in several places the sentiment he recognizes in himself:

> My love for imaginary objects...ended by disillusioning me with everything around me...which seems so gloomy and misanthropic ... [I]t arises from my too loving heart...which find no living creatures akin to them, and so are forced to feed upon fictions. I...have indicated the origin...of an inclination which has modified all my passions, and restrained them by making use of those very passions to curb themselves. (*C* 48)

To add further fuel to their displeasure at his obvious hypocrisies, Rousseau essentially blames modern men—of whom he is a contemporary—for his personal deficiencies that, one, prevent him from the civic responsibilities he requires of everyone and, two, for becoming the *contagonist* (as I label him, contextually-speaking with respect to

his conduct that undermines his textual theory) that he now is. As such, just as Socrates "plague[d]" (*A* 26) his peers, Rousseau continually takes contrarian positions to the prevailing thought of the day—a time to which he preferred not to belong; he says, distancing himself and yet back-handedly faults them, "I know my own heart and understand my fellow man. But I am made unlike any other I have ever met; I will even venture to say that I am like no one in the whole world. I may be no better, but at least I am different" (*C* 17). Tracy Strong similarly describes it:

> [Rousseau] is often blamed or praised for [a very wide range of political positions] ... This is odd … Hobbes, the man, tends to be excused … I want to claim here that Rousseau in fact sought the kind of direct responsibility...[which] has led many writers to attack him personally. He wrote so as to require response of his readers... [and] for well-worked out philosophical and political intentions … As Rousseau would have hoped, Kant was so moved by Rousseau's writing that his life was changed…similar to…the Bible...[for an]…'interpretation' was a way of protecting oneself, of distancing oneself...To know what a book means, one has to know, says Rousseau, what it is to know the person who wrote it … Contemporary men cannot, it appears, see that author for what he is, at least not without help. Precisely the reasons that he is misunderstood will be the reasons that he needs to make his presence available to his readers. (1994: 8, 9, 11)

Therefore, because of Rousseau's inflammatory rhetoric, the devastating criticisms of the decadence that surrounds him, and his bombastic delivery; he is vulnerable to interpretive opportunism and leaves himself open to equally forceful judgment, all of which he shares with another provocateur whose project is one of provocation—Nietzsche, perhaps only a bigger critic of his so-called modernity is he of Rousseau. I turn to him now to in brief further explain him to be such a good fit with Plato and Rousseau, in part, because of the amount of attention they receive from Nietzsche.

Uses of Conceptual Provocation of Interest and Relevance: Nietzsche

The third and final theorist I analyze shares many of the characteristics of the others. That said, although Nietzsche uses similar types of language as Rousseau, he uses if for entirely different political ends—and often, directs it at Rousseau. For Nietzsche, Rousseau is the embodiment of democratic values and modern cultural decadence, despite Rousseau's own criticism of modernity and although modernity is seen vastly differently between the two. Nietzsche asks rhetorically of Rousseau—and to which Nietzsche immediately follows with the answer: "[W]here did [Rousseau] really want to return to? Rousseau, this first modern man, idealist...who needed moral 'dignity' in order to endure his own aspect: sick with unbridled vanity and unbridled self-contempt ... I hate Rousseau even in the Revolution" (*TI* 113). What appears from this passage is two-fold, for my purposes here. First, we see a trend emerging with my chosen philosophers regarding the condescending tone in which they voice their grievances with the culture of which they are a part, each longing for a time passed: Rousseau for a pre-civilized state, which he calls the "Golden Age" and Nietzsche for pre-Socratic, Hellenic age (he calls Socrates the first decadent) when aristocratic noble values flourished. Related to this tone, their sneering rhetoric is one that continually uses the language of provocation. For instance—and as we shall see in the chapter on Rousseau—Rousseau, despite employing such "dangerous[ly]" provocative rhetoric, which was previously alluded to in the Melzer (1983a) piece, did not intend for his works to used for political revolution, as they were by the likes of Robespierre. A similar case

can be credibly made for Nietzsche whose works were fodder for a revolutionary-style

political takeover led by Hitler.

Regardless of their true intentions—as well as their efforts to control the narrative

and thwart others from misappropriating their meanings—the language of provocation—

e.g., the rhetoric associated with war—is constantly used, particularly by Nietzsche, who like

Plato, can make his meanings similarly difficult to penetrate. Also, Nietzsche would have it

no other way. That said, however, Nietzsche uses aphorisms in favor of the dialogue, which

Nietzsche harshly criticizes. That is, all of their meanings are relatively hard to ascertain

compared to, say, a Machiavelli or a Hobbes, but for Nietzsche, they are so for completely

different reasons, which make his project an honest one and the others' projects dishonest.

With this in mind, the historical Socrates and the Platonic dialogue, Nietzsche laments

earlier in the *Twilight of the Idols*:

> [H]onest men do not carry their reasons exposed in this fashion. It is indecent to
> display all one's goods ... Wherever authority is still part of accepted usage and one
> does not 'give reasons' but commands, the dialectician is a kind of buffoon: he is
> laughed at, he is not taken seriously. —Socrates was the buffoon who got himself
> taken seriously... It is not only the...anarchy of his instincts which indicate decadence
> in Socrates ... Everything about him is exaggerated...caricature [and] at the same
> time hidden ... —I seek to understand out of what idiosyncrasy that Socratic
> equation reason = virtue = happiness derives: that [most bizarre] of equations
> and...has...the instincts of the older Hellenes against it. (*TI* 41)

Therefore, like Socrates and Rousseau, Nietzsche chooses a vernacular that is

counter-intuitive—and thus becomes provocation—which, for Nietzsche, serves an

additional purpose: it not only delivers his contrast but also underscores the purpose of

contrasting himself with his contemporaries and their era with a preferable one but also as a

subtle confirmation of his theory of decadence, much in the same vein as Strong's assessment of Rousseau, specifically where noting that "[p]recisely the reasons that [Rousseau] is misunderstood will be the reasons that he needs to make his presence available to his readers" (1994: 11). However, like Plato, Nietzsche's method as medium is essentially the Socratic dialectics captured in writing. This is not just an inferior form of communicating philosophy—not to mention that, for Nietzsche, Plato's theory of the form, which was the substance attempting to be delivered by his adaption of the Socratic style— but also is beyond paradoxical in nature and incomprehensible, thus making it disingenuous. Nietzsche's style and method as medium are admittedly difficult as even he recognizes: "(I obviously do everything to be 'hard to understand' myself!)—and one should be cordially grateful for the good will to some subtlety of interpretation" (*BGE* 39). The difference between himself and Plato, whom Nietzsche is a great "skeptic" of, and between himself and those unable or unwilling to grasp his true meanings is that Nietzsche and his 'friends' are honest and intellectually rigorous while the other two are either ignorant (e.g., the democratic and/or religious "herd") and disingenuous liars (Plato, Hegel as well as political opportunists, e.g. the anti-Semitic *Reich*), or both.

Again, provocation involves vagueness and ambiguity which, in turn, may be or, at least, seem paradoxical. Then, the paradoxical invites interpretive errors, based upon others' preconceived notions and dispositions susceptible to misguided and/or ill-informed provocations. Provocation results in misconstrued understandings of what, for instance, Nietzsche really meant when using the language of war, like when in one aphorism—which a

single aphoristic thought ought never be considered in isolation—he says, "Above all, war. War has always been the [sound judgment] of every spirit which has grown...too profound; its curative power lies even in the wounds one receives" (*TI* 31). Also, prior, in the *Gay Science*, "Everything abstract wants to be read as a prank against poetry and as with a mocking voice ... Thus there are thousands of delights in this war...War is the father of all good things; war is also the father of good prose" (*GS* 145).

As a theorist and provocateur, Nietzsche writes esoterically, but his philosophy, which builds to his perspectivism, is one that is, in terms of Whitehead's earlier comments, reasonable, in that it reveals what is true(r), unlike the metaphysician's and Christian's assumptions that there exists within the realm of the knowable, capital-letters: Truth, Beauty, etc. In that such a philosophy challenges the accepted standard of conducting intellectual research by the "academic chairs," Nietzsche is provocative. He says himself that he is no man, but "dynamite!" (*EH* 326). And remaining true to being a self-identified "immoralist"— and thus in like fashion being provocatively contrarian—like the *contagonist*, Rousseau who blamed Europe for much of his personal shortcomings, Nietzsche declared in perhaps the single most provocative statement made in a philosophy text that "God is dead"—and moreover, was murdered by those who proclaimed to serve him. On this matter, Nietzschean scholar, Walter Kauffman, has noted:

> Nietzsche realized belatedly that his coinage 'the will to power,' instead of being provocative, might be pleasing to those Germans who would think of nothing but the Reich—and [re:] *The Will to Power*. A book for thinking, nothing else...'I wish I had written it in French so that it might not appear as a confirmation of any [reich] aspirations' ... The passage is reminiscent of the pathetic 'Above all, do not mistake

me!' in the preface of *Ecce Homo*. Nietzsche begs his readers to keep in mind that he does not write to endorse a course of [political] action. (248)

Nietzsche lost control of his own message, however, just as Rousseau did and Socrates, which is why Plato in large measure embarked on his mission of the Ideal. For him, the stakes are high. And when the stakes are (perceived to be) high—although for each of the theorists, who are in large part responding to the previous one(s), what the stakes are and which ones ought to be raised and lowered are completely different—provocation is at work. To that end, provocation appears in the most enduring works of political theory, because it exists—and is happening—all around us everyday.

CHAPTER 3

Framing Provocation

2 Dimensions of Provocation: Introduction

The intent for this dissertation is to evaluate Plato, Rousseau and Nietzsche whose theories can be explained as projects of provocation. As such and having constructed a methodological framework from others' work on the concept of provocation, I attempt to present their theories as political strategies meant to provoke their audiences to, at least, conceptualize an alternative—read: more natural, just, legitimate—politics from the current ones of their respective contexts. To do this, and specifically to explain the many types of provocation, both real and theoretical that they are addressing and then deploy themselves, both rhetorically and substantively, I have categorized these various forms of provocation and apply them to their overarching philosophical principles. These principles define—or, at minimum, point to—their preferred political structures, as maintained by a particular regime-type and reinforced by a conducive political culture. These members possess a certain disposition that (re)produces the culture supportive of the politics of which the theorists are so critical. Thus, within all of their most significant works, patterns about the concept of provocation have emerged. These patterns have helped organized my discussion of the theorists—and their political theories—as important provocateurs whose theoretical insights have been read by later thought leaders—e.g., Rousseau on Jefferson.

For my purposes of analysis, the first dimension of provocation, as I have termed it, builds on the terminology used in the *OED* that defines it to suggest that provocation is

relational in nature which means that the concept requires a subject and an object, or a provocateur's use of some mechanism of provocation on something which is provokable, likely another person. This first dimension goes beyond identifying the actors and describes the types of dispositions of those who predict and determine the reasons for being provocative and for being provokable. In other words, using the theorists' works themselves, I attempt to answer two questions. First, what about the make-up, qualities, or natures that exist in the theorists that can adequately account for them deciding to engage in the act of political theorizing as well as their systems for attaching to others the label of provocateurs to whom they believe merits a response? Second, what qualities or characteristics make the object of provocation susceptible to a particular act as a form of provocation? This, in turn, begs a further question: Given the fact that a criterion is assumed for judging others as having provokable natures, what kinds of provocations ought to be employed to provoke the ideal response to make possible the change (in disposition) for that ultimate outcome, say, in the form of political reform?

Just as the first dimension of provocation builds upon the conceptual definition of the term, the second dimension builds upon first. Based upon having found in their texts answers to the above questions about the types of dispositions that describe the participants in a relationship whose connection is provocation, we can see, or measure, escalation and in some cases, predict the first, then the next, and the following reactions, beginning, perhaps with a harmless chuckle that either ends there or can escalate, depending on the particular circumstances, and ending with, say, private vigilantism, legal

retribution, or, more positively, political improvement. Much of this hinges on the dispositions of the actors, whose motives as they are perceived by the other, which, again, so often can be predictors of whether the audience is receptive to be persuaded for considering and then working toward the alternative that the theorists' works argue on behalf of. Otherwise, as it was in the high-stakes case of Socrates, it is met with forceful resistance and served as the basis, in large part, for Plato's attempt to fix the politics by offering a process for personal, or philosophical—and thus, ultimately, political—transformation.

Dimension 1 of Provocation: Relational

As previously indicated, a provocateur is one who agitates and lacks subjection to authority. In order for one to attach to this characterization other qualities with a more negative connotation—e.g., "seditious" in motivation—one is making the assumption that the authority is in possession of the moral authority to chastise the behavior of athe said provocateur. Conversely, if one were suspicious of the authority itself, the motive of the provocateur might be interpreted as honorable. However, putting aside the merits of each sides' position—again, which are caused by disputes over which values ought to be privileged (e.g., order over liberty)—and understanding the specific habits and temperament that make up a provocateur's disposition, I argue that one begin to see into the cultural attitudes that have not only shaped the theorists' respective social perspectives but also compelled them to engage in cultural criticism and ultimately political theory.

A framework allowing us to access their projects as strategies for conceptualizing and using provocation, it becomes possible to provide a criterion for judging whom the theorists portray as their protagonists (and antagonists) in terms of their tendencies toward using and reacting to provocation. That is, we can compare parallel traits the theorists share among themselves (e.g., Socrates and Rousseau's disdain for ostentation), the ones the theorists' protagonists—as extensions of themselves—display (e.g., Nietzsche on Goethe or his Zarathustra) as well as, in negative terms, those textual examples of antagonists (e.g., Rousseau on Voltaire or Nietzsche on Luther) and contextual antagonistic audiences (e.g., Rousseau on European high society or Nietzsche on contemporary anti-Semites). These examples reveal insights into how the theorists' think dispositions determine—for better or worse—the course of action after some original provocation—real or perceived—which, in turn, helps to shape the strategy for producing a new theory of politics. Cornel West speaks of Emerson's project similarly:

> The primary aim of Emerson's life and discourse is to provoke; the principle means by which he lived, spoke and wrote is provocation ... For Emerson, the goal of activity is not simply domination, but also provocation; the *telos* of movement and flux is not solely mastery but also stimulation. Needless to say, the centrality of provocation and stimulation in a discourse is the product of and helps reproduce [the] culture … Provocation and stimulation constituted rhetorical strategies of sustaining some sense of the self. (25-6)

Now, in parallel fashion, the theorists attribute to themselves—either overtly in textual references or come to appear contextually—particular traits that put them and their protagonists at an advantage in their ability to discern good from bad types of provocation so that they react appropriately when confronted with someone or something else's

provocation. These identified or alluded to qualities, which make up the theorists and/or their protagonists overall general disposition. Conversely, their targeted antagonists not only lack these but possess the opposite ones—for the contrasting types the same terms hold totally different meanings (e.g., friendship). The theorists intend to make tactical use for drawing such sharp contrasts, in that the theorists anticipate their criticisms will become familiar to those with whom they are criticizing—and will undoubtedly become enraged by the characterizations as made from such unfamiliar beginning assumptions about, say, what it means to be friends. And to the theorists' point, their identified antagonists' reaction will only further prove the argumentative point about good and bad dispositional provokability. They are using rhetoric to goad them into responding that will make good on the theoretical claims about needing to channel provocation into productive outlets for the benefit of society, all of which the political system—in conjunction with the political culture—creates and maintains. (And all of this comes through in how they all depict, what I count as, six (6) types of "plot-lines" in which the narratives—which are the subject of the second part of the methodological framework from which I interpret them to be, at different types and under different conditions, both provocateurs and the provoked.)

That is, they view themselves, as do their supporters as provocateurs, who in having utilized their dispositional resources that allow them to see and thus reveal to others the possibility for choosing an alternative and better way forward or return to a more natural and more real existence, as they envision such a politics, relative to society and culture, making good on. Also, they see their theories as the articulations of a more ideal set of

conditions, very much in the same manner as Edward Snowden views his "contribution" as advancing what he believes to be, and has defined as *America*. In a parallel context, they see themselves as those compelled to act—or react, as it were, the predicament they and their contemporaries find themselves in and continue to make worse, which provocation can be the mechanism by which transformation can occur, similar to as Heidegger envisions for it—that is, provocation as the tool by which we re-orientate ourselves to approach technology, in that technology is so high-stakes for humanity now—to function as. Heidegger writes:

> So long as we represent technology as an instrument, we remain transfixed in the will to master it. We press on past the essence of technology ... The essence of technology is in a lofty sense ambiguous. Such ambiguity points to the mystery of all revealing, i.e., of truth ... The irresistibility of ordering and the restraint of the saving power draw past each other like the paths of two starts in the course of the heavens. But precisely this, their passing by, is the hidden side of their nearness. When we look into the ambiguous essence of technology, we behold the constellation, the stellar course of the mystery ... Human activity can never directly counter this danger. Human achievement alone can never banish it. But human reflection can ponder the fact that all saving power must be of a higher essence than what is endangered, though at the same time kindred to it. (22)

While keeping in mind West's interpretation of Emerson's emphasis of stimulation over mastery, the take away is that to create the conditions for a superior politics, those necessary to bring about the change—even if the only available change is within, as would be the case in the most corrupt regimes—must embody the characteristics the theorists find in themselves. These characteristics provide them with the right orientation by which to assess the nature of things as they are. They do so continually by drawing sharp contrasts between themselves and the allies, whether members of, apologists for or even complicit in;

the status quo. In addition, these types can often be recognized by how they, as either a St. Paul, a Rousseauean democrat or a German fascist, respond to the theorists' provocations, which can vary depending on the scenario portrayed in the writings of Plato, Rousseau and Nietzsche. It is here I turn to this second dimension of provocation which provides the frame by which they can be assessed along with their counterparts as provocateurs as well as provokable for the eventual goal of understanding their philosophically substantive tenets through the prism of political provocation.

Dimension 2 of Provocation: Perceptual

Before contextualizing by offering many specific examples, these dimensions of provocation emerge in parallel ways among the theorists and across their works. I briefly want to list the prevalent ways individuals and types who appear in their works react and to whom they, in turn, respond. Much of the formatting of their works is structured as responses to various phenomena and modes of thought that have taken us to the most recent condition, which the theorists feel they can no longer ignore. Upon that first provocation, whatever it may be, the object provoked interprets it as something positive, is persuaded by the message, and then uses it as a catalyst for personal growth and potential change in the public sphere, depending on what is available and possible, given the social context. Both in the theoretical works as well as more broadly, as the *OED* indicates, the provocation is more commonly received negatively.

In that provocation is almost always a challenge to traditional and commonly held modes of accepted intuitive thinking, the object of the provocation is inclined from the

beginning to approach its message with skepticism and resist the change it seeks. Based upon the specific provocation, one can react negatively in many different forms. If the provocation is perceived as non-threatening, one might laugh and dismiss it as ridiculous. Now, if the exact same act were made, and still be non-threatening in terms of possible consequences but interpreted as maliciously conceived from the provocateur, the degree to which the provocation was met with resistance would increase tonally, and the dismissive attitude toward it would be accompanied by scorn.

What I am attempting to construct is a scale by which to link types of acts of provocation with types of reactions to those corresponding acts. As the acts are perceived to be increasingly threatening, the reactions are met with greater seriousness and thus resisted with an equally greater force. That is, if one looks at the theorists' dispositions relative to their theoretical adversaries, as they lay it out in their texts, one can show how a certain type of provocation made by Rousseau is met with ridicule, a parallel provocation in Nietzsche draws a similar response, and this is the case across all the theorists' and works. This consistency helps one to understand the multiple aspects of the concept of provocation, particularly as a core element and function of their theoretical projects.

The next section cites the specific scenarios which the theorists react to as well as construct to illustrate this relationship between provocateur and the provoked, who because of their different dispositions, react to provocations differently, positively or negatively, and to varying degrees, based on the level of perceived threat. Also, upon illustrating the dynamics, the theorists can then use the narrative established to base a

substantive analysis which is transferrable to the political sphere, which remedies through a new politics, culturally and structurally, the deficiencies in the dispositions and orientations that the theorists believe they have accurately and successfully portrayed in contrasting themselves—and their protagonists—with their opposition, as they define them, although all of whom, in some form, are allied with status quo thinking and thus wrongly understand—or "misrecognize," in Bourdieuean terms—themselves, their social place and role and the nature of their humanity, specifically regarding their inevitable mortality. Bourdieu writes:

> Symbolic power—as a power of constituting the given through utterances, of making people see and believe, of confirming or transforming the vision of the world and, thereby action on the world and thus the world itself, an almost magical power which enables one to obtain the equivalent of what is obtained through force (whether physical or economic), by virtue of the specific effect of mobilization—is a power that can be exercised only if it is recognized, that is, misrecognized as arbitrary. This means that symbolic power does not reside in 'symbolic systems' in the form of an 'illocutionary force' but that it is defined in and through a given relation between those who exercise power and those who submit to it, i.e., in the vary structure of the field in which belief is produced and reproduced. What creates the power of words and slogans, a power capable of maintaining or subverting the social order, is the belief in the legitimacy of words and of those who utter them. And words alone cannot create this belief ... Symbolic power, a subordinate of power, is transformed, i.e. misrecognizable, transfigured and legitimated form of the other forms of power. (1991: 170)

Exposing this is a first step to broader cultural and social transformation, which comes later in their strategies for articulating a superior political theory. This superior theory is more natural and thereby less arbitrary than those regime structures currently in place. I now show how they intend to accomplish this in six identified contexts that appear, to varying degrees, in and throughout the three theorists' works.

6 Categories of Provocation: Introduction

The following section consists of six illustrative narratives, or, categorical scenarios when applying the dimensions of provocation that I described in the previous section. These six categories highlight descriptions of various dynamics between those actors whose relationship is one based upon and is driven by provocation. I discuss them because they draw help to explain their projects as ones whose cores include the element of provocation, in that the categories, or illustrations, tie in the dimensions of provocation and provide a context by which to assess the situations described by the theorists. They do so in two ways: first, by describing as dire and detrimental and second, by setting up for them to, in explanatory terms, make the argument for their systematic approach. As we shall see, for their systems to be accepted as positive forms and uses of provocation, it requires an audience that is differently disposed that the one, in general, now. The audience comes to be persuaded to accept a new conception of certain terms' meanings and associations, terms like justice, legitimacy and distributive fairness, whose definitions are fixed, but their applications are disputed. This is opposite to the contemporary prevailing notions, as they are reflections of those who, although in power,are, unlike the theorists, of the wrong disposition, or wrongly disposed, in terms of their uses of and susceptibility to provocation, specifically those of the "irrational" sort. Although the purposes differ, the Aristotelean observation is picked up over and over again by the strategic Plato, Rousseau and Nietzsche; Aristotle asserts: "[This] line of argument is founded upon the various senses of a word. Such a word is 'rightly' ... Rational desires are those which we are induced to have;

there are many things we desire to see or get because we have been told of them and induced to believe them good" (*Rh* 1422, 1363).

For each of the six categories, which appear separately and differently, i.e., not sequentially as I have listed them, throughout each of their body of work, I give a short description of the individual illustration. Then, I account for how it appears in terms of the narrative contrasts that the theorists' are creating to best substantiate their harsh social criticisms of culture and the politics that (reinforce) the norms worthy of such provocative rhetorical attacks. In addition to the three writers, Plato, Rousseau and Nietzsche—although the historical Socrates is almost exclusively familiar to us because of Plato, notwithstanding the ever so small but ever so contrasting view by Aristophanes—Socrates heavily influences Plato, and to a still significant amount, Rousseau and Nietzsche. Therefore, I include Socrates, as he is presented in the *Apology*, in that this Socrates is (the most) historically accurate, as opposed to the figurative protagonist of the literary Plato, which as an issue, I will revisit for more elaboration in the following two chapters.

Category 1—Reputation: Overview

Part of the theorists' mission is to win (back) meanings of terms, and in order to succeed, they engage in a war of words, where the victor holds in possession proprietorship over what these terms, or, concepts look like. For instance, in the case of the political notion of "legitimate ruling authority," Plato believes legitimacy lies with his philosopher-kings; for Rousseau, legitimacy comes through (social) contractual consent; and for Nietzsche, more

definitively than with whom, legitimacy does not rest with the "Socialist rabble," to be sure

(*AC* 191). Bourdieu makes the case:

> The categories of perception, the systems of classification that is, essentially, the words, the names which construct social reality as much as they express it, are the crucial stakes of political struggle, which is a struggle to impose the legitimate principle of vision and division—is, that is, a struggle for the legitimate exercise of the theory effect. (1990: 134)

Despite the theorists' differences as to where legitimate rule rests, they all make the

parallel case for the reasons that their respective political environments fail to properly

distribute justice, on their terms. The first reason is that those in control fail to see reality.

Instead, they are consumed with appearance, the appearance of keeping up the facade of

maintaining a good reputation and of keeping in the good social graces of others. The

problem is, those with whom they are concerned are corrupt and ignorant for real and true(r)

justice. The theorists, however, do not especially care for what most believe or think of

them. That is because they find most ordinary people lacking integrity, partly because they

care about this reinforcing social standing. This in turn, makes them slavishly susceptible to

flattery and blinds them to the deterioration of society all around them. The theorists, on the

other hand, stand by their principles and are unaffected by the fashionable sentiments of

the day. Furthermore, given their view of ordinary people, they do not care if they are liked

and even pride themselves as unpopular and misunderstood, which is only natural, in that

the masses misunderstand much about the contexts in which they exist.

Category 1—Reputation: Socrates, Contextual Discussion

During the proceedings of his trial, there is a point at which he has admittedly begun to antagonize his jury. At this point, Socrates oddly chooses to chastise those who hold in their hands the power over his life. For Socrates, however, this means only his physical life. Socrates refuses to show them deference, as he ascribes to a wholly different idea as to what counts for justice. This idea is not so easily seen and surely not prevalent throughout Athens, which constituted much of the reason for his (would-be) continued "philosophizing," which could be interchanged with the term "proselytizing," no matter if, as he promises, "I have to die a hundred deaths" (*A* 16). In addition, to explain their fundamental differences, Socrates' devaluation of the temporal life contrasts with most people's intuitive view that life is among the most cherished of things, something to be held onto at nearly any cost. However, not for Socrates and to a large extent, because of his following comments at his defense:

> I have never lived an ordinary life. I did not care for the things that most people care about ... I thought that I was really too strict in my principles to survive if I went in for this sort of thing... I tried to persuade each one of you not to think more practical advantage than of well-being in the case of the state or of anything else. What do I deserve for behaving in this way? Some reward, gentlemen, if I am bound to suggest what I really deserve, and what is more, a reward which would be appropriate for myself. (*A* 21)

Not surprisingly, he was convicted of the capital punishment of corrupting the youth and atheism, which is ironic because he repeatedly defends his mission in religious and moral terms. Socrates' religious devotion forms the basis of the contrast he makes between himself and democratic Athens. They cannot even begin to agree what justice is and never do. For Athens, justice was served as he downed the hemlock in a single draught. As a

consequence, Plato tries to present Socratic justice in a more palatable manner, one more likely to result in persuasion instead of force, although he too, in the *Republic*, presents his literary protagonist, Socrates, as a model for achieving justice—and more specifically, a political justice known when one is to "take away reputation" (*R* 44).

Category 1—Reputation: Plato, Textual Example

[I]t's not easy for the best pursuit to enjoy a good reputation with those who practice the opposite.   But by far the greatest and most powerful slander...comes to philosophy from those who claim to practice such things— ... that, 'most of those who go to it are completely vicious and the most decent useless,' and I admitted that what you say is true. Isn't that so?' ... 'First, if it's present to your mind, truth guided him, and he had to pursue it entirely and in every way or else be a boaster who in no way partakes of true philosophy' ... 'So then, won't we make a sensible apology in saying that it is the nature of the real lover of learning to strive for what is... (*R* 169)

Category 1—Reputation: Rousseau, Textual Example

I would note how much that universal desire for reputation...which devours us all...how much it excites and multiplies the passions; and by making all men...enemies... I would show that it is to this ardor for making oneself the topic of conversation to this furor to distinguish oneself which nearly always keeps us outside ourselves, that we owe what is best and worst among men, our virtues and vices, our sciences and our errors, our conquerors and our philosophers, that is to say, a multitude of bad things against a small number of good ones. (*DOI* 78)

Category 1—Reputation: Nietzsche, Textual Example

'For many reasons I may take pleasure in the good opinion of others: perhaps because I honor and love them and all their pleasures give me pleasures... —but all that is not vanity' ... The noble human being must force himself, with the aid of history, to recognize that, since time immemorial, ...the common man was only what he was considered: not at all used to positing values himself, he also attached no other value to himself (it is the characteristic right of masters to create values). (*BGE* 261)

Category 2—Expectation: Overview Using Plato, Contextual Discussion

At certain points located throughout their writings, usually as a prefacing tactic before making a later point, the theorists describe themselves counter to their rhetorical adversaries as ironic although their versions of irony differ, particularly Socrates' and Nietzsche's, as I will show, are light-hearted and at times jovial. Simply, they have found joy in life from having properly understood and more importantly embracing that which is actuality, both in relative and absolute terms, mortal futility.

Such an experience is liberating, they want to express. This freedom is not without license, however. To not take oneself so seriously is not to be unserious. The issue is one of provocation, in that what makes one prone to laughter reveals the health of one's being. For instance, laughter is something of which Plato is so often critical. Plato scorns laughter when it accompanies an inferior disposition that finds funny a "naked woman practicing gymnastics for the sake of the best, 'plucks from his wisdom an unripe fruit for ridicule,' and doesn't know—as it seems—at what he laughs or what he does" (*R* 136). Also, Plato champions the self-deprecating humor that largely defines the ironic Socrates. This is so because Socrates, the other theorists, and their similarly disposed listeners have figured out how to maneuver about happily on earth, despite the largest of shortcomings; that is, the inevitability of death. They do more than lament or even cope, they channel it, as Nietzsche has, where his predecessor, Thomas Hobbes, who was born the twin of fear, were wrong; note Kaufmann's footnote commentary:

> In despite of that philosopher who, being a real Englishman, tried to bring laughter into ill repute among all thinking men—'laughing is a bad infirmity of human nature,

which every thinking mind will strive to overcome" (Hobbes) [41]—I should actually risk an order of rank among philosophers depending on the rank of their laughter...' [41: Hobbes is evidently thinking quite literally of laughter while for Nietzsche laughter represents an attitude toward the world, toward life, and toward oneself.] (*BGE*)

The theorists embrace their intrinsic limitations, those that cannot be mastered, like physical decay and death. Such recognition provides them the ability to engage in mirth-provoking behavior, in part, because they see themselves as a bit ridiculous, especially relative to the masses' unfounded grandiose beliefs they hold for themselves. I suggest that highlighting this part of their overall personality is, in part, a rhetorical tactic in the tradition of provocation used to lure in an otherwise skeptical audience. It is a disarming mechanism by which to take would-be detractors off their defenses to put them in the frame of mind most conducive to receive the theorists' message, as they are strategists. They are doing so by keeping in the tradition of Aristotle, who in *The Rhetoric*, advises, "We must also take into account the nature of our particular audience" (*Rh* 1356).

The idea is, given their perceived gifts, if the theorists can accept a person's/their limitations, so should others, particularly those who in failing are contributors of the degradation of the contemporary social order. That said, however, and to which I previously alluded, they remain steadfast in their serious attitudes toward approaching those aspects of life they can control, namely self-improvement. However, they respectively conceptualize that activity, as it is different for each. To recap, they believe themselves to be principled, disciplined and temperate models which others ought to emulate.

In sum, at times, the theorists cast themselves as willing to appear foolish as a disarming mechanism in order to eventually expose those whom they are critical of possessing the same inherent traits, which they ought to realize and accept. Upon doing so, it frees them to take seriously what the theorists do. Thus, they use appearance as a pedagogical device to reveal the truth. The truth is the proper orientation toward the world where one is light-hearted and even a little self-deprecating about his/her futility and deadly earnest about achieving maximum potential. The implications of that process of provocation are politically constructive in nature, as they, for Plato, set the necessary social conditions for the administering just policies, which so happen to be opposite from those suffered by Socrates under the current regime and which Plato's *Republic* seeks to rectify:

> Then we weren't giving laws that are impossible or like prayers, since the law we were setting down is according to nature. Rather, the way things are nowadays proves to be…against nature … Therefore…no practice of a city's governors…belongs to woman because she's woman, or to man because he's man; but the natures are scattered alike among both animals (*R* 178)

Category 2—Expectation: Socrates, Textual Example

> [P]eople dread [death] as though they were certain that it is the greatest evil, and this ignorance, which thinks that it knows what it does not, must surely be ignorance most culpable. This…is the degree, and this the nature of my advantage over the rest of mankind, and if I were to claim to be wiser than my neighbor in any respect, it would be in this—that not possessing any real knowledge of what comes after death, I am also conscious that I do not possess it. (*A* 15) … What do I deserve for behaving in this way? Some reward, gentlemen, if I am bound to suggest what I really deserve, and what is more, a reward which would be appropriate for myself. (*A* 15, 21)

Category 2—Expectation: Rousseau, Textual Example

> For us—ordinary men who heaven has not distributed such great talents and whom it does not destine for much glory—let us remain in our obscurity. Let us not chase

after a reputation that would escape us and which, in the present state of things, would never return to us what it would have cost us, even if we had all the qualifications to obtain it. What good is it to seek our happiness in the opinion of another if we can find it in ourselves? (*DSA* 21)

Category 2—Expectation: Nietzsche, Textual Example

[T]hat Hebrew died too early whom the preachers of slow death honor; and for many it has become a calamity that he died too early ... Perhaps he would have learned to live and to love the earth—and laughter too ... He died too early; he himself would have recanted his teaching, had he reached my age. Noble enough was he to recant... Immature is the love of the youth, and immature is hatred of man and earth ... Tell me: how did gold attain the highest value? Because it is uncommon and useless and gleaming and gentle in its splendor; it always gives itself ... Uncommon is the highest virtue and useless; it is gleaming and gentle in its splendor... (*Z*)

Category 3—Deviation: Overview with Contextual Discussion

On the one hand, the theorists approach themselves with a sense of irony and do not take themselves so seriously, which allows them to be joyful although their joy is a harnessed type, tempered by moderation, perspective and reason(ableness). They possess a confidence others tend to lack. For the theorists, however, they see through the others' prejudicial delusions of grandeur and focus on remaining serious about matters that warrant rigorous study and reflection, thus freeing them to maximize their philosophical potential which includes the activity of responding to self-deceptive "haughtiness" that comes to culminate in theorizing a new politics that is transformative, in that it would provide the social and cultural conditions for extraordinary (Plato) sublimation (Rousseau and Nietzsche). As such, the implied contrast between what differentiates their senses of humor—the theorists' willingness and ability to access human triviality in absolute terms versus the others' false sense of superiority—exposes both parties equally. However, the revelations are

opposite: the theorists' natures are honest where the masses are shameful (which reinforces the extent to which they hide theirs by ridiculing that which should not be).

The outcome of this takes us to the third illustrative narrative found in the theorists' works; that is, by exposing themselves and revealing the social facades others take seriously (and by implication, exposing the others), they become the embodiments of a natural human, which is to their advantage, as they construct nature to be. Put differently, in having freed themselves from, first, the social expectations of remaining in good social standing (because the motivations lie in vanity and flattery) as well as from, next, the self-inflicted and culturally constructed burdens of always appearing serious and solemn, as if life demands from us our levity, the theorists reclaim a free, more natural way of life, which puts them at an advantage over others—they can transcend the contempt others hold for them and release themselves from holding petty grudges to which others cling.

Of importance here is that the theorists see themselves as more natural although when appropriate, as some circumstances, in varying degrees and what manner, depending on the individual theorist, they must return provocation with provocation. As critics of the current political structures and whose legitimacy rests upon acquiescence or, at least, tacit approval of a majority comprised of participants of the aforementioned behaviors disapproved of and disavowed by the theories and the theorists, respectively. As models for a more natural condition, they intend to link dispositions to politics. All political regimes are artificial constructions made by humans to incentivize and disincentivize behaviors. The goal is to construct a kind of politics that, in terms of provocation, encourages and reinforces the

good and transforms and suppresses the bad. However, people, including and most especially the theorists, disagree about what consists of and amounts to the good and bad in us. One profound similarity exists in their analysis, however: all attempt to ground their conceptions of justice as (the most) accurate reflections of what is "natural," what most resembles "nature." It is an argumentative resource they all draw upon and claim about themselves to describe the inferior state even if, as Plato attempts, suggesting the existence of an Ideal, with a capital-i relative to a less artificial, less arbitrary, or a more naturally assembled set of customs and policies.

The reality is, for the theorists and the motive for theorizing, the systems to which they belong and of which they are products represent a deviation from a (more) natural, (more) just, fair(er) state, as they are reflections of the deviated and departed, decrepit and decadent dispositions of the power elite.

The inflamed, impassioned and irrational temperaments which induce men to certain acts "prove" the theorists' cases for them, the evidence being: Socrates is forced to drink the hemlock; Plato is forced to make an apology; Rousseau is forced to suffer the ridicule he likens to Socrates' cup; and Nietzsche is forced to retreat as a hermit does to the forest. All repercussions of that first act of some provocation were forced upon them to which in turn they felt forced to respond in kind by writing a theory of the "(more) natural." Although each conceive of the "natural" differently, the parallel is that they intend to contrast their lives (as persons and pursuits) and their corresponding political theories with those currently at the helm of political control, where injustice abounds as the mechanisms for justice are

implementations of a corrupted value social structure. In this way, the theorists present their theoretical writings as political scenarios that better recreate a more natural state, in that what is deemed to be (more) natural and similar to the etymological evolution of the conceptual terminology of provocation assuming a more negative connotation assumes the elevated status of better, superior and preferential. The term natural is given deference, which means to suggest that for one to argue against nature, one assumes the burden of proof for having to make the argument against the "natural." It has been done, and Christianity has been enormously successful in defining natural in negative terms and doing so even more forcefully by invoking morality as a way of conceptually approaching its contextual meaning.

Category 3—Deviation: Socrates, Textual Examples

> This...is the degree, and this the nature of my advantage over the rest of mankind, and if I were to claim to be wiser than my neighbor in any respect, it would be in this —that not possessing any real knowledge of what comes after death, I am also conscious that I do not possess it ... For my own part I bear no grudge at all against those who condemned me and accused me, although it was not with this kind intention that they did so, but because they thought that they were hurting me; and that is culpable of them. (*A* 15, 26)

Category 3—Deviation: Plato, Textual Examples

[The Platonic Socrates of *The Phaedo*:] It is natural that these people whom you speak of should act in that way, Crito...because they think that they gain by it. And it is also natural that I should not, because I believe that I should gain nothing by drinking the poison a little later—I should only make myself ridiculous in m own eyes if I clung to life and hugged it when it has no more to offer. (*Ph* 96) ... 'But which of the current regimes do you say is suitable for it?' ... 'None at all,' I said, 'but this is the very charge I'm bringing; not one city today is in a condition worthy of the philosophic nature.' (*R* 176)

Category 3—Deviation: Rousseau, Textual Examples

[P]ity is a natural sentiment, which, by moderating in each individual the activity of the love of oneself, contributes to the mutual preservation of the entire species. Pity is what carries us without reflection to the aid of those we see suffering. Pity is what in the state of nature takes the place of laws, mores, and virtue. (*DOI* 54)

Such is the natural and inevitable tendency of the best constituted governments. If Sparta and Rome perished, what state can hope to last forever? If we wish to form a durable establishment, let us then not dream of making it eternal. To succeed, one must not attempt the impossible or flatter oneself with giving to the work of men a solidity that things humans do not allow ... The body politic, like the human body, begins to die from the very moment of its birth, and carries within itself the causes of its destruction. (*SC* 194)

Category 3—Deviation: Nietzsche, Textual Examples

And if the lambs say among themselves: 'these birds of prey are evil; and whoever is least like a bird of prey, but rather its opposite, a lamb—would he not be good?' there is no reason to find fault with this institution of an ideal, except perhaps that the birds of prey might view it a little ironically and say: 'we don't dislike them at all, these good little lambs; we even love them: nothing is more tasty than a tender lamb.' (*GM* 44)

[I]nequality of rights is the conditions for the existence of rights at all. —A right is a privilege. The privilege of each is determined by the nature of his being. Let us not underestimate the privilege of the mediocre. Life becomes harder and harder as it approaches the heights ... A high culture is a pyramid: it can stand only on a broad base, its very first prerequisite is a strongly and soundly consolidated mediocrity. (*AC* 191)

Category 4—Centrality: Overview with Contextual Discussion

A fourth type of rhetorical scenario of the theorists is a criticism grounded in what they find to be if not (only) a disingenuous and/or hypocritical invocation, then, a misguided and/or unmerited invocation of religiosity to rationalize their authority. The theorists happen to see through the leader's scheme. These elites, some of whom actually have successfully deceived even themselves into believing they have the authority to speak on behalf of the

gods/God where the gods/God, if one were inclined to extend to the gods/God authorial intentionality, have/has chosen to remain silent. However,   these elites have anointed themselves the mouthpiece of the gods/God to interpret sacred doctrines for political explanatory purposes that, for the theorists, conveniently reinforce policies favorable to the regimes whose enforcement mechanisms actually run contrary to the very scriptures the elites cite to justify their wrongful practices.

Within this context, the theorists intend and they expect to discredit them. That is, the theorists, in different ways, contend that they can prove, to the extent that theorizing allows, that the leaders, whom the theorists label as opportunists, at least within the sphere of politics, misrepresent what virtue truly is. The theorists attempt this in a couple of ways. One method is to wrestle away from them the assumptions by which they make their religious claims that they channel for exercising, in the name of the gods/God, political justice, or injustice, on the theorists' interpretation. They set out to accomplish this by pointing out their gross contradictions, hypocrisies and spiritual shortcomings, which is meant to strip them of any credibility of further references to dogmatism. The goal is to discredit their claims by lowering the religious stakes that have made political obligation one of religious duty.

In different rhetorical presentation, the theorists mean to, and similar to the previous categories' tactics, lay out a sound and what should be convincing argument for—at least as currently practiced—their religions' politics-driven evolution and incoherent applicability to things beyond the pulpit, such as society, culture and government. To be successful, the

theorists effectively invert commonly held conceptions about virtue and morality. The stakes are high for their audience as their eternal soul is on the line, as the elites would like them to believe. The task seems almost insurmountable but is absolutely necessary, in that because the general public believes itself to be so central in the make-up of the universe.

The theorists contrast themselves and by extension their visions of justice, with the appearance of justice as it applied contemporaneously, in that its seeming quality is the attempt, a laughable one at that if it were not so destructive, to apply religious dogma, attained via revelation, to this-worldly political circumstance. The result has been repeatedly shown to be inequitable in real-terms but deserving in moral and abstract terms and, per the gods'/God's earthly mouthpieces, on the gods/God's command as part of their/His eternal plan, which requires the unwavering and unfettering trust and believe everyone.

Category 4—Centrality: Socrates, Textual Examples

Socrates' version of religious duty is so foreign to Athenian practice that his accusers neglect to characterize it as blasphemous. Instead, they charge him with outright atheism, one of the counts against Socrates:

> As for your prospect of convincing any living person with even a smattering of intelligence that belief in supernatural and divine activities does not imply belief in supernatural and divine beings...it is outside all the bounds of possibility ... I do not feel that it requires much defense to clear myself of [his] accusation. What I have said already is enough. (*A* 13)

This is a result, in part, of him leveling against his fellow Athenians with that inflated sense of spiritual access to the gods in terms of what they conceive as "their" wisdom: "[R]eal wisdom is the property of God...that human wisdom has little or no value. It seems to me

that he is not referring literally to Socrates...as if he would say to us, 'The wisest of you men

is he who has realized, like Socrates, that in respect of wisdom he is really worthless.' (*A* 9)

Category 4—Centrality: Plato, Textual Example

The Republic is an attempt to correct for the injustice administered in *The Apology*.

Bloom's footnote is noteworthy here:

> The sailor...each supposing he ought to pilot...claim it isn't even teachable and are ready to cut to pieces the man who says it is teachable ... And sometimes, if they fail at persuasion and other men succeed at it, they either kill the others or throw them out of the ship ... Besides this, they praise and call 'skilled sailor,' pilot,' and 'knower of the ship's business' the man who is clever at figuring out how they will get the rule, either by persuading or by forcing the shipowner, while the man who is not of this sort they blame as useless. So...don't you believe that the true pilot will really be called a star gazer, [6]...and useless to them by those who sail on ships run like this? [6: 'studying the heavens' was a serious [charge]; astronomers tended to be atheists and were accused of so being...it is not casual that this speech is presented as an apology.] (*R* 168)

Category 4—Centrality: Rousseau, Textual Example

Rousseau uses the language of provocation to help to account for the third thematic

category of provocation: "[H]ow man sees everything in God; how the soul and the body are

in harmony with one another, like two clocks, without communicating." (*DSA* 12)

Category 4—Centrality: Nietzsche, Textual Examples

> 'Good' is only what little people call good ... And today 'truth' is what the preacher said, who himself came from among them, that queer saint and advocate of the little people who bore witness about himself: 'I am the truth.' (*Z* 266) ... [O]ur educated people of today, including the Christians of 'educated' Christianity [have] no cause for amazement...among these ruins [that is] the taste for the Old Testament ... —perhaps he will find the New Testament, the book of grace, ...more after his heart (it contains...musty true-believer and small-soul smell). To have glued this New Testament...to the Old Testament to make one book...as 'the book par excellence'...is perhaps the greatest audacity...that literary Europe has on its conscience. (*BGE* 65)

Category 5—Intelligibility: Overview with Contextual Discussion

A fifth dynamic that surfaces in the theorists' thought is similar to the previous one. Where the fourth sought to expose the illegitimacy and arbitrariness of monarchal argumentative premises based on the dogmatic and unchallengeable appeal to the 'divine rights of kings,' often supported with religious cohorts, this type of narrative that the theorists construct focuses on exposing the fraudulent bases for and the processes by which the elites whom the theorists' oppose derive their superior reasoning and intellect. For those elite leaders, their superior reasoning and intellect justify their decision-making and distributive power.

The theorists identify multiple parties in their analysis on this matter. Two of the parties appear to be their audience, one positive and the other negative. The former consists of those like-minded, and the latter consists of the power elite toward whom the theorists direct their criticism. The third group is incidental, in that they embody the general public who have been, essentially, duped into trading a superior condition for which to live for a lesser one, one in which the elite leaders thrive at the expense. The problem is not necessarily a distribution of resources, especially not for Plato and Nietzsche, but with respect to the leaders' dispositions and inclinations. They prefer a differently-motivated governing body, one that unsurprisingly shares many of the characteristics the theorists and their protagonists possess. The theorists present a pessimistic tone for what they aspire to in terms of the plausibility for transformation. This is so, to a significant degree, because of how badly the deception has seeped into the general public's psyche.

The theorists are indicting these self-proclaimed intellectual leaders on multiple counts. First, the theorists attempt to show that they lack the intellectual resources and skill-set as they point to various instances in which their decisions resulted in a worse condition. Related, the theorists connect how these elite leaders attempt to cover up their deficiencies by conflating the real and measurable policies, which the theorists deem as failures with counterfactuals. That is, like the religious leaders, the theorists manage to continue holding onto power by confusing the many into accepting the status quo as the superior alternative to a falsely invented abstraction, and in the process, they have come to believe their own deceptions. For the theorists, this makes them lacking in both integrity and depth. The fact that these leaders have not admitted their failures and, in many cases, can no longer do so exposes them, too, as lazy and weak, which is partly the reason why the elites constantly use certain tonal language—e.g., poetic for Plato, inspirational for Nietzsche—to divert attention from the substantive merits and the actual outcomes. The theorists, in turn, color their commentary with the provocative language of mocking exasperation in explaining and contrasting the type of knowledge and wisdom practiced by their targets with themselves. Much of the difference lies not only in their ends but also in the initial assumptions of the terms' meanings, as evidenced by the disagreement in the manifestation of the expressions of knowledge and wisdom.

Socrates' mission is to destroy the traditional conception of wisdom. Unlike the others, who as we shall see argue for alternative orientations for understanding the instances in which wisdom has been truly exercised, Socrates' negative characterization of

wisdom amounts to a confession of ignorance, for all practical purposes. Only upon such recognition can one begin to become philosophical which in a seemingly paradoxical way can one begin to know about what one can be certain. Socrates himself is certain that what others are certain about, e.g., their confidence is themselves, have been shown and will remain in dispute. For Socrates, the problem is that his negative certainty is especially in Nietzsche's analysis, equally dogmatic and without empirical proof. That the contrasts are parallel in that they all attack a specified audience that the theorists believe to demonstrate false-conceit whose repercussions have been devastating for the society and culture, but those "wise men" identified in each of the individual theorists are wholly different, some of whom are the targets of the later theorists. Even Plato begrudges Socrates for engaging in this kind of behavior, as Rousseau does Plato, and as Nietzsche does all of them.

Category 5—Intelligibility: (Historical) Socrates, Textual Example

I want to explain to you how the attack on my reputation first started ... Why does he not use plain language? I am only too conscious that I have no claim to wisdom, great or small. So what can he mean by asserting that I am the wisest man in the world? He cannot be telling a lie; that would not be right for him ... I went away to interview a man with a high reputation for wisdom, because I felt that here if anywhere I should succeed in disproving the oracle and pointing out to my divine authority. You said that I was the wisest of men, but here is a man who is wiser than I am. (*A 7*)

Category 5—Intelligibility: (Platonic) Socrates, Textual Example

Neither would we ourselves be attempting to do things we did not understand-- rather we would find those who did understand and turn the matter over to them —nor would we trust those over whom we ruled to do anything except what they would do correctly, and this would be that of which they possessed the science...'when we say what a good thing it would be to know what one knows and what one does not know?' ... But in spite of the fact that the inquiry has shown us to be both complacent and easy, it is not a whit more capable of

discovering the truth. It has, in fact, made fun of the truth to this extent, that it has very insolently exposed as useless the definition of temperance which we agreed upon and invented earlier. (*Ch* 88, 95)

Category 5—Intelligibility: Plato, Textual Example

'[T]he poetic man also uses...phrases to color each of the arts. He himself doesn't understand; but he imitates in such a way as to seem, to men whose condition is like his own and who observe only speeches, to speak very well. He seems to do so when he speaks using meter, rhythm' ... 'Won't we assert that these men delight in and love that which knowledge depends, and the others that on which opinion depends? Or don't we remember that we were saying that they love and look at fair sounds and colors and such things but can't endure the fact that the fair itself is something?' ... 'So, will we strike a false note in calling them lovers of opinion rather than lovers of wisdom. And will they be very angry with us if we speak this way?' ... 'No,' he said, 'that is, if they are persuaded by me. For it's not lawful to be harsh with what's true.' (*R* 283)

Category 5—Intelligibility: Rousseau, Textual Examples

[If one]...supplements uncertain chronicles with philosophical inquiries, one will not find an origin for human knowledge corresponding to the idea that one wants to form of it. Astronomy was born of superstition, eloquence of ambition, hatred, flattery, lying...even moral philosophy, of human pride. Thus the sciences and the arts owe their birth to our vices; we would be less in doubt about their advantages, if they owed it to our virtues ... 'What do the writings of the best known philosophers contain? ...each crying from his own place on a public square, 'Come to me; I alone do not deceive?' ... These then are the wonderful men on whom the esteem of their contemporaries was squandered during their lifetimes, and for whom immortality was set aside after their deaths! (*DSA* 10, 18)

But not everybody is capable of making the gods speak or of being believed when he proclaims himself their interpreter [which is laughable] ... [A]ccording to Plato, a king by nature is such a rare person ... Surely then it is deliberate self-deception to confuse the royal form of government with that of a good king ... These difficulties have not escaped the attention of our authors, but they have not been troubled by them. The remedy, they say, is to obey without a murmur. God in his anger gives us bad kings, and they must be endured as punishments from heaven. No doubt this sort of talk is edifying, however, I do not know but that it belongs more in a pulpit than in a book on political theory. (*SC* 164, 186)

Category 5—Intelligibility: Nietzsche, Textual Examples

What provokes one to look at all philosophers...half mockingly, is not...how often...they make mistakes and go astray; in short, their childishness and childlikeness—but that they are not honest enough in their work, although they all make a lot of virtuous noise... They all pose as if they had discovered...their real opinions through...divinely unconcerned dialectic (as opposed to the mystics...who are more honest and doltish—and talk of 'inspiration'); while at bottom it is...a hunch...a kind of 'inspiration'—...a desire of the heart that has been...made abstract —that they defend [what]...they have sought after the fact. They are all advocates who resent that name... and very far from having the courage of the conscience that admits this...to mock itself. (*BGE* 12)

Man himself had become God's greatest blunder; God had created for himself a rival, science makes equal to God—it is all over with priests and gods if man becomes scientific! Moral: science is the forbidden in itself ... Science is...the germ of all sins, original sin. This alone constitutes morality. —'Though shalt not know' ... Man shall not think. (*AC* 176)

Category 6—Residency: Overview with Contextual Discussion

A sixth and final, for my purposes, narrative that I categorize to assess the contrasts made in order to more forcefully draw distinctions between what the theorists' embody and what those with whom the status quo and current conditions resemble. As the theorists argue, there are the reasons for the further deterioration of society whose political culture is most culpable. Specifically, this criticism is one that pits the theorists against their contemporaries by associating themselves with a distant context and environment, spatially and/or temporally. Temporally speaking, the theorists align themselves with another type of personality, one that resembled a time-past when justice was defined more naturally and applied appropriately. This reference is the kind of historical analysis they all conduct when describing the opposition as decadent and deviant, e.g., Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* and Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals*.

In addition to historicizing the account to describe progression, regression, on their terms, they theorize about a future place where the values and dispositions promoted by the theorists flourish. In this sense, it re-establishes many of the qualities that defined those historical points for which the theorists are so nostalgic. The social and political structures, as a manifestation of the members' rightly provocative and provokable temperaments and natures, are ordered in such a way that reflects the overarching philosophical principles, e.g., philosophically-driven political rule by philosopher-kings for Plato, liberty from equality for Rousseau. When the theorists' analyses remain centered in the present, respectively, they identify their philosophically-represented homes in places far removed that their actual residents, e.g., Athens for Socrates, Germany for Nietzsche. For instance, Nietzsche's protagonist, Zarathustra, dwells in mountainous caves (*Z* 18); and to the ears of his fellow Athenians, Socrates speaks as "if [he] were from another country" (*A* 4).

A longing contempt fills their literary voices when forced to acknowledge the same physical space and age that the theorists occupy with their contemporaries and adds rhetorical force to their disparaging attacks on what their philosophical adversaries point to and call social advancement or cultural achievement. Their provocative message means to agitate and vex and to yet awaken people from the lulled state they have been lured and coaxed into by the power elites who perpetuate an earthly existence in which people aspire to merely cope. Although the theorists' friendly audiences, those with whom they identify and sympathize, greatly vary according to their political ideology, in each case, despite the seemingly insurmountable odds for real, on-the-ground action, which is not the sole

objective for having theorized a new vision of politics, anyway, for the theorists, it is of vital

concern, as it is who they are, to distinguish the figurative locales of where the they feel at

and call "home." It is far removed from the institutions that maintain the status quo, the

norms and mores that have forced the theorists to flee to write from afar.

Category 6—Residency: Socrates, Textual Example

One thing, however, I do most earnestly beg and entreat of you. If you hear me defending myself in the same language which it has been my habit to use, both in the open spaces of this city—where many of you have heard me—and elsewhere, do not be surprised, and do not interrupt ...[A]nd so I am a complete stranger to the language of this place. (*A* 4)

Category 6—Residency: Plato, Textual Examples

And [he] interrupted and said, 'What would your apology...Socrates, if someone were to say that you're hardly making these men happy, and further, that it's their own fault—they to whom the city in truth belongs but who enjoy nothing good from the city as do others, who possess lands, and build fine big houses, and possess all the accessories ... [A]nd all that's conventionally held to belong to men who are going to be blessed? (*R* 97)

Then we weren't giving laws that are impossible or like prayers, since the law we were setting down is according to nature. Rather, the way things are nowadays proves to be...against nature ... '[F]oreseeing...we were frightened; but...compelled by truth...that neither city nor regime will ever become perfect, nor yet will a man...before some necessity chances to constrain those few philosophers who aren't vicious, those now called useless, to take charge of a city, whether they want to or not.' (*R* 135, 176)

Category 6—Residency: Rousseau, Textual Examples

I foresee that I will not easily be forgiven for the side I have dared to choose. Running head on into everything that men admire today, I can expect only universal blame ... Thus I have taken my stand. I do not care about pleasing either the witty or the fashionable. There will always be men destined to be subjugated by the opinions of their century, their country, their society. (*DSA* 1)

[Strong on Rousseau:] [Rousseau] has seen himself as he is. Whereas others cannot see the author of these books, he can … The paradox intended is that a book that is filled with singularities about one person is to be a portrait of that which is human … The usefulness of this work…is that it may allow at last the beginning of the study of the human being… [Re:] the Confessions…to be painting a portrait of home…is to say that he is home and that no one else is. (1994: 12-3)

Category 6—Residency: Nietzsche, Textual Examples

I flew too far into the future: dread overcame me, and when I looked around, behold, time was my sole contemporary. Then I flew back toward home, faster and faster; and thus I came to you, O men of today, and in the land of education ... I was amazed, you men of today. (*Z* 119) ... At this point I shall not suppress a sigh. There are days when I am haunted by a feeling blacker than the blackest melancholy—contempt of man. And so as to leave no doubt as to what I despise, whom I despise: it is the man of today, the man with whom I am fatefully contemporary. (*AC* 161)

[S]laves of the democratic taste and its 'modern ideas' ... [T]hey are unfree and ridiculously superficial ... Without the pathos of distance which grows out of the ingrained difference between strata—when the ruling caste constantly looks afar and looks down upon subjects and instruments and just as constantly practices obedience and command, keeping down and keeping at a distance... (*BGE* 54, 201)

5 General Points at which to Analyze Provocation: Introduction

In the last section of chapter three, I give a general outline of proceeding chapters that discuss the theorists themselves. I construct my analysis of their contexts as one largely defined by relationships built around provocation (dimensions of provocation) as well as the incorporation of provocation into their thought and explanation. I do this by looking at their most significant writings that explicitly use the language of provocation as well as the places that make reference to provocation (categories of provocation) in theorizing an alternative and superior politics. In addition to a textual analysis of the theorists' catalogues, I supplement my argument with a wide range of some of the leading academic scholars on the theorists themselves as well as areas on philosophical rhetoric, interpretation and

methodological strategies. This scholarship includes competing theories about how to best approach the interpretive process, which, in turn, adds to their work the possibility of introducing another dimension of provocation—that is, extending the discussion of provocation to the scholarly community. To illustrate this point, a leading authority on Rousseau, Tracy Strong, in his book, *The Politics of the Ordinary*, concedes: "I cannot attempt to account for the diversity of opinions on Rousseau by suggesting that such and such an interpretation 'gets him right'—or wrong. What…Rousseau gives us [is]…our language for politics and personhood…I want to therefore read Rousseau in such a way that our questions appear as his concern" (1994: 2).

Without delving too deeply into this area, as it is beyond the scope of this dissertation, I do make reference to the most striking cases, as there exists, to a degree, interpretive trends that come into and fall out of scholarly fashion about the most prominent theorists, such as the three I have selected. This is important to refer to, as there is a parallel that can be applied to the political setting where it is important for citizens to be able to recognize the various places from which provocation originate: scholarly experts, media, etc.

The theorists represent three vastly unique philosophical traditions, particularly regarding their differences on what the proper nature of the activity of philosophy ought to be as well as the expectation for what it can contribute to our lives. However, all have in common the concept of provocation as part of their overall theoretical projects. Thus, I attempt to layout out their respective projects as ones of provocation in order to compare their parallel applications of provocation as well as the instances where the concept appears

similarly. The dimensions and categories of provocation previously introduced appear differently from one theorist to the next. For example, to make the most plausible case for his rhetorical strategy, Rousseau uses the fourth thematic category, which criticizes his theoretical opposition for thinking they are smarter than they actually are, to frame the terms for fair and accurate accounting of the historical record. For Rousseau, using conjecture to establish the initial assumptions on which to build just political obligation is credible. Nietzsche's genealogy relies more heavily on the narrative described in category three. For example, Nietzsche explains the result of European nihilism through the lens of the invention of morality whose promise is a false one although, on his opponents' terms, a highly effective one. In what follows is the general format the next chapters take, to the extent the differences in the three permit.

Point 1 of Analysis: Circumstantial Origins

I start each of the chapters on Plato, Rousseau and Nietzsche by contextualizing the individual circumstances that contribute to the eventual decision to engage with their contemporaries and take to writing their social criticisms and then philosophies which include political theoretical proposals, to varying extents. For the theorists, the detrimental situations to which they are responding have begun, in real-terms, obstructing the theorists and their allies from living the types of meaningful existence that would otherwise be more readily available to them if not for the corruption, decadence and injustice pervasive all around them.

Socrates is forced to defend himself in court, to which Plato forces the literary Socrates to speak at the beginning of the *Republic*. Rousseau sees himself as the victim of an oppressive condition of real and perceptually-sanctioned conditions of inequality from which he cannot escape. To set the record straight, he writes in his *Confessions*: "No matter what place I might choose for a refuge, clearly could not safeguard myself against either of the two methods which had been used to expel me, the first of inciting the population against me by underground intrigues, and the second of expelling me by naked force without offering any reasons" (*C* 597).

Similar to Rousseau's assessment of society's imposition is Nietzsche's. However, where Rousseau laments his persecution from a position of inferiority, as, in Rousseau's view, domination is arbitrarily constructed socially. Rousseau recalls past relationships he mistook for real friendships and the friction it later caused when writing: "I overstepped the limits and conceived a friendship for them, of a kind only permissible between equals" (*C* 483). Nietzsche's indignation for the so-called "strong races of northern Europe" comes from a self-anointed, aristocratic-like sense of superiority. In feeling the societal effects of democratic idealists' "decrepit product of decadence" (*AC* 140), Strong writes, "Nietzsche's task, as he sees it imposed upon him, is to destroy those prejudices that keep men from acknowledging their conditions" (Strong 1975: 53).

In my dealings with these theorists as political provocateurs, Socrates represents the original provocateur, whose mission originated with the oracle, who assigned him with properly defining wisdom. As his mission ended in his conviction, Plato, upon assessing the

injustice toward the philosophical Socrates, intervened to prescribe a newly disposed leader. Although sharing with Socrates an understanding of and duty to justice, Plato takes to writing and creating a dynamic between teacher and student less antagonistic than the historic Socrates. Thus started the Western philosophical tradition of writing as a communicatory device to create a learning environment most conducive for managing the tone of the debate, so ensure that the interlocutors' response to the provocation were positive ones and where growth and understanding, in turn, led to a recognition of a just regime ruled by Socratic-like philosopher kings who no longer minded their own businesses but were provoked to a political course of action.

Rousseau and Nietzsche's works are similar, if one were to view, in methodological terms, their criticisms similarly to Socrates' negative assessment of the general Athenians' cultural disposition and their political theoretical agendas as responses to those determinations similarly as Plato's was to Socrates'. On this reading, one can connect the natures of their projects whose features and components, in terms of the concept of provocation, back to the initial contexts to which they were induced to respond in writing. To reinforce the positions from where Rousseau and Nietzsche launch their rhetorical attacks, Rousseau's attack is from below, as intuitively supportive of democratic equality and Nietzsche's is from above, as a fierce opponent of democratic "mediocrity." Furthermore, Rousseau makes self-referential inclusions of how Nietzsche might characterize it as being "all-too-human." Rousseau is confident but mindful of his many shortcomings and is careful to make mention of them, so as to not present a distorted picture of the truth. He writes in

his *Confessions*, "Deluded by my stupid conceit, I thought that I was born to destroy all [these] deceits" (*C* 388). However, Nietzsche's attitude toward himself lacks any hint of uncertainty. The two, however, have in common a shared devotion to the truth, something both of whom think they have on their side.

In addition, this commitment to integrity and honesty drives much of their work, as the devastating blow of the poor understanding of virtue, though differently conceived among the theorists but similarly critical of the prevailing assumptions of their respective cultures. As such, Nietzsche reflects back on and anticipates his role for confronting the ills of his age: "I know my fate. One day my name will be associated with the memory of something tremendous—crisis without equal on earth, the most profound collision of conscience, a decision that was conjured up against everything that had been believed ... I am no man, I am dynamite! (*EH* 326). It is their characters, their rightly provocative and provocable natures, coupled with their duty to the truth, that makes their writings necessary and honorable. As such, their characters define the nature of their theoretical projects, which employ a number of rhetorical strategies that include the various categories of provocation, and thus their philosophical doctrines and complimentary political theories, all of which are assessed throughout the chapters.

Point 2 of Analysis: Frameworks of Rhetorical Strategies

Given the contexts that provoked the theorists to return provocation with provocation—except for the historical Socrates, who initiated that first act of provocation and to whom Plato (among the many Athenians, some friends and others enemies) is

reacting—they supplement their social and cultural criticisms with chosen rhetorical strategies. These strategies carry in them their respective interpretations of the unfolding of events leading to the deterioration of the conditions prevalent in society, on their terms. As descriptions of history, their analyses appeal to certain assumptions that they identify as the right and, importantly, fair ones from which to analyze the situations and thus provide a favorable lens from which to then contextualize their postulates so as to logically progress to a proper and favorable conclusion, reached systematically (again, on their terms), from the frame they construct for how to account for the historical record and what are the best examples to support such an accurate interpretation of those unfolding of events.

For example, Socrates' main philosophical objective is to improve his own soul. This self-perfecting endeavor means to become a more reasoned or rational being, who is less emotional, and thus less concerned with physicality. Although a seemingly solitary activity, achieving such philosophical rationality requires other participants to engage in the back-and-forth question and answer, which has come to be known as the Socratic method. As Socrates' primary goal remains inwardly-focused, and thus his concern for others' internally enhanced philosophical "capacity for human excellence" is secondary or incidental, as Dobbs puts it, the "operation of dialectical argument [can] inevitably deteriorate into eristics (as happened between [him] and Thrasymachus)" (265).

Consequently, Socrates' confrontational style of fearless questioning, which riles many to anger and leaves others in bewilderment, remains a key and necessary component of his rhetorical strategy that makes possible the condition for "get[ting] rid of the body and

contemplat[ing] things by themselves and the soul by itself" (*Ph* 49). Others' condition, even if in a worse state than before, is seemingly, for Socrates, merely a byproduct of the argumentative process that privileges the outcome of his own self-perfection. All else is provocation's incidental collateral damage and remains a driving force to the more cultivating and therapeutic approach Plato takes in abandoning Socratic oral argument in favor of an "investigative strategy," in Dobbs's terminology (275). This strategy captures in writing the exercise of "establishing a city in speech," in order to eventually unearth true, as opposed to the appearance of, justice, as defined by those members belonging to and comprised of such a regime.

Once the theorists identify a rhetorical strategy by which to frame the terms of the debate and choose to engage interlocutors or audience members, the theorists select concepts pertinent to their criticisms and thus seem precisely tailored to analyze within their strategic framework by which to build upon their beginning argumentative premises and initial postulates. On my terms, Plato's theme of justice applies. In response to Socrates' failures, in a larger context beyond Socrates himself, Plato creates a nurturing environment that fosters the necessary reception for differently defining the meaning of justice and thus producing an acceptable inversion of justice as it is certainly practiced and applied to cases.

Similarly, and as alluded to in this section's introduction, Rousseau's overall rhetorical strategy includes a conjectural appeal in which he couches the argument for changing—that is, inverting the behaviors that correspond to virtuous acts and those that correspond to immoral ones. Rousseau seeks to wholly alter the prevailing view of his day as to what

counts as progress, intending to show that attitudes and behaviors commonly associated

with advancement actually represent regress and devolution. The opposite is that the falsity

of any attempt as serious that links modernity to morality, on Rousseau's definitional terms

for "virtue" and "vice," serves as the strategic reference points to rhetorically prove his

version of morality. Rousseau writes:

> Everywhere I see immense establishments where youths are brought up at great expense to learn everything but their duties ... Without knowing how to separate error from truth, they will possess the art of making them unrecognizable to others by means of specious arguments. But they will not know the meaning of the words magnanimity, fair-mindedness, temperance, humility, courage ... One no longer asks whether a man has integrity, but whether he has talents; not whether a book is useful, but whether it is well written. Rewards are showered upon the wit, and virtue is left without honors. (*DSA* 16, 17)

Although from the opposite end of the ideological spectrum, where morality drives

politics, the narrative character of Nietzsche's assessment of moral and ethical values shares

real analytic parallels with Rousseau's in that Nietzsche's genealogy provides the basis for

which he "stand[s] all valuations on their head" (*BGE* 75). The reversal he seeks is our

understanding of concepts as they should be conceived, as they once were, before the

historical conflation of their meanings. Nietzsche's strategy attempts to delineate the

conflations and re-articulate their original and true(r) definitions and meanings; he writes:[5]:

"([I]n modern Europe) the concept 'punishment' possesses...a whole synthesis of 'meanings':

---

[5] Kauffman makes note of on this issue, as well in his footnote of Nietzsche's analysis in [*BGE*]: "What Europe owes to the Jews? ... [T]he grand style in morality, the terribleness and majesty of infinite demands, infinite meanings ... We artists among the spectators and philosophers are—grateful for this to the Jews." [21] [21: ...probably alluding to Nietzsche's own ambitions. He is hoping to initiate a "revaluation" comparable to that ascribed to the Jews in section 195: they are his model. Of course, he does not agree with the values he ascribes them...] (*BGE* 185)

the previous history of punishment...finally crystallizes into a...unity that is hard to

disentangle [and] totally indefinable. (Today it is impossible to say for certain why people are

really punished. [O]nly that which has no history is definable.)" (*GM* 80).

Now, in terms of provocation as a means by which to reveal the truth, the theorists

choose concepts—Socrates' wisdom-ignorance, Plato's real-seeming justice, Rousseau's

virtues-vices/progress-regress and Nietzsche's revaluation of values—to begin to delineate

or conflate so that properly understood meanings of such terms, coupled with correctly

orienting a person who has gained a rightly provokable disposition, can set the necessary

conditions for an alternative politics, an improvement upon the status quo's distribution of,

on their terms, "so-called" justice. The conditions are, at this point, reflections of those

distorted notions the theorists have begun to, via the disentangling process, return their

applications to the original and true(r) sense of the terms' meanings, which, in turn, requires

a specific methodology for success, one particular to the respective theorist's project and

one discussed next in terms of chapter development.

Point 3 of Analysis: Transformation of Dispositions

Next for development involves a discussion related to certain features in the

dimensions of provocation, specifically regarding the impact the subjects and objects'

disposition have on the outcome of engaging each other, whose relationship can best be

characterized as a chain of provocations in which one action induces a reaction and so forth.

This characterization suggests that the specific type of reaction depends on how the object,

at that particular point in the chain of events, e.g., the theorist's interlocutor, is instinctually

inclined, whether this instinct/inclination is natural or acquired, say, socially, to react, either perceiving the provocation as intended for positive change or intended maliciously in order to prove some insulting argumentative point. The fact is that particular expression of provocation often means to accomplish both: to bother the interlocutor as well as to achieve a productive outcome.

Having earlier identified the reversal that occurred (e.g., virtue for Rousseau, value for Nietzsche, both artificial human acquisitions), which led to what is generally considered intuitive to that context, although unnatural and deviant, as well as the reason for internalizing the provocation negatively, the theorists as educators adopt a pedagogy that takes into consideration their student-audience as they currently are. Additionally, to the extent possible, the respective pedagogical approaches attempt to provide the student-audience with the necessary skills to make possible reversing that first inversion back to a (more) natural state, in the definitional sense of provocation—that is, to be personally transformative and thus to lay the cultural groundwork for political reconfiguration.

The linchpin for achieving a successful orientation that allows for acting "rightly" is predicated upon obtaining proper levels of reason and emotion when confronted to make a choice on which astute deliberation determines if what follows is good or bad. Based on the theorists' understanding of and attitudes toward all of these components, each of the theorists look entirely different in terms of the levels of emotion, nature, duration of deliberation.

Socrates' pedagogical negativism is largely the product of his refusal to believe such an education that effectively transfers philosophical knowledge is even possible. This belief is reinforced in the similarly repeated disclaimers, like the one in the *Republic* where Socrates admits (although for Platonic purposes) his inability to teach: "I seem to be a ridiculous teacher, and an unclear one" (*R* 71). Melzer also confronts the problem at the intersection of philosophical knowledge, transference and esotericism:

> [T]hen it really is an open question whether [genuine philosophy] is teachable. Wisdom cannot be told. The central paradox of philosophical pedagogy…is: how can one transmit from the outside what can only grow from within? Is there something that one can do for a person that will somehow make him do everything for himself? … This means (among many things) that it must take its start from where the student is, from what he believes right now, and proceed through an internal critique. One cannot begin abstractly from first principles or from a general statement of the big questions … Thus, his education must begin by lighting up and then questioning…the foundations of the life that he is already living. (2007: 1021)

Plato does try to "begin abstractly from first principles," however; but he and Socrates agree that emotions are impediments to sound decision-making and thus need to be squashed:

> 'Haven't you noticed how irresistible and unbeatable spirit [33] is, so that its presence makes every soul fearless and invincible in the face of everything? …. Where will we find a disposition at the same gentle and great-spirited? Surely a gentle nature is opposed to a spirited one.' [33: The word here is *thymos* [which] is the principle or seat of anger or rage.] (*R* 52)

Rousseau and Nietzsche respond to Plato critically. For example, Rousseau appeals to a natural solution to rectify the social ills resulting from human passions by relying on a proper harnessing of emotions, arguing that "[r]eason is what engenders egocentrism, and reflection strengthens it...[and] turns man in upon himself ... Philosophy is what isolates him

and what moves him to say in secret, at the sight of a suffering man, 'Perish if you will; I am safe and sound'" (*DOI* 54). Bloom writes of Rousseau and Nietzsche: "Sublimation as the source of the higher psychic phenomena, as the explanation of that uniquely human turning away from mere bodily gratification to the pursuit of noble deeds, arts, and thoughts, was introduced by Rousseau … Nietzsche…first introduced the term" (1978: 146). Nietzsche makes a similar attack on Socratic (and Platonic) rationalism although his reliance on emotions is a version wholly opposite than Rousseau's, which Nietzsche attacks with equal disdain. For Nietzsche, a properly disposed—that is, a naturally instinctual and superiorly inclined—person "overcomes" himself and the impositions of others by practicing the gay science and not by engaging in inferior pedagogical methodologies of his predecessors. Kauffman notices of Nietzsche on this matter:

> Nietzsche did not want philosophy to be less scientific than this but rather more so; only he had in mind the 'gay science' of fearless experiment and the good will to accept new evidence and to abandon previous positions, if necessary ... Where other critics of a philosopher might assume an oversight or error, Nietzsche frequently flies into personal attacks against what seems to him a flaw of character and a lack of intellectual integrity. (86, 90)

The point of practicing the gay science or, for Socrates, practicing death or, for Plato, the Form, is to put oneself and the student-audience into a position for the right conditions to emerge for real and actual, on their definition, progress, socially and ultimately politically. Of course, this takes a receptive audience, one that is persuadable, where persuasion comes from exposure to a new and provocative philosophy communicated by a chosen medium, which is the next matter of the theorists I discuss.

Point 4 of Analysis: Philosophical Provocation

I now look at their methods as mediums as their preferred communicatory vehicles to deliver their substance doctrines in the most effective and forceful way; that is, the means by which they anticipate will provoke the respective audiences as intended, some to good, others to be rendered moot and ultimately powerless. Thus, as the theorists are reacting to a certain social context, they, too, represent a departure from previous theorists to whom their substantive philosophies are not only responses, but also their chosen methods as mediums represent an improvement over the other communicative delivery systems. As that is the case, the intent for using such systems anticipates superior philosophical results and thus eventual political outcomes relative to what remains, for them, possible.

Based upon these suppositions, the theorists select to deploy their methods as mediums to control for interpretive variations, some admittedly inevitable, by readers in order to minimize inattentive errors and avoid blatant interpretive abuses while simultaneously not being so esoteric in the presentation that it fails to reach their intended audience. The goal of the medium selection, in part, is to distinguish between those readers who are capable of ascertaining the theorists' real meaning, to the extent possible. For instance, Plato identifies his preferred audience as the "extraordinary" ones. And for Nietzsche, they are his "higher men," or, when including himself among them, Nietzsche uses "we,"—and to which, Conway adds: "The Nietzschean 'we' thus comprises those select readers who are strong enough to contest the master on his own terms. | In order to create this vanguard, Nietzsche must actively cultivate readers who see through his stratagems and falsehoods, who treat him as irreverently as he treats his own philosophical

predecessors" (191-2). To use a biblical analogy, the method as medium selection means to separate the wheat from the chaff. The wheat comprises those audience members that the theorists liken to themselves in terms of the potential for obtaining a similarly disposed ability to resist (base and inflamed) emotionally-charged provocation and to channel reasoned pleas for the betterment of oneself and thus potentially the political culture.

Plato chooses the dialogue form; Rousseau, among others, the treatise as discourse (Morganstern 47) and even the novel and autobiography (Friedlander 1); and Nietzsche, the aphorism. Nietzsche maintains, "Whoever writes in blood and aphorisms does not want to be read but to be learned by heart... Aphorisms should be peaks—and those who are addressed, tall and lofty" (*Z* 40). Now, Rousseau seeks a more direct and intimate encounter with his audience (Strong, Salkever), but this is not so for Plato (Stone 90) and Nietzsche, each from different perspectives and with different motives, although both are meant to challenge the reader so as to increase intellectual capacity for discernment. The method of medium selection not only communicates their substantive theories but supplements them as well, in that their selection is meant to identify a specific reader as the target audience who, in turn, reflects the best person because that person has sorted through the linguistic challenges inherent in that particular method as medium. Thus, that person becomes representative of the political organization that defines and then accordingly distributes justice most fairly and truthfully and naturally. This is further shown in the theorists' chosen subject-matters that appear within the medium, similar to the way in which concepts' meanings were reevaluated within their respective rhetorical strategies.

Therefore, in working toward their overarching philosophical doctrines of which a set of logically reducible policy recommendations and prescriptions are transferable, the theorists substantiate their argumentative claims, as delivered on the page in the selected medium. They couch their theoretical positions in particular subject-matters treated in such a manner that coincides with their views of the most natural human experiences and that when illuminated against a political backdrop verifies and corroborates their two separate tracks of analysis, and brings them together under a single coherent system.

One topic that not only Plato, Rousseau and Nietzsche take on but so does nearly every major thinker, in some form, is human suffering. No one disputes that suffering is avoidable with respect to the human experience, but beyond that initial recognition and also that they all address it as a relatively integral component of how they have come to understand both natural and social personhood, the theorists rely on differing interpretations to best account for suffering. Because of its inevitability—as society assumes a certain cultural character for how to appropriately view and process suffering, as predicated upon that accounting—it ultimately falls on those installed political institutions, as reflections of those defined and accepted cultural mores and values, to manage suffering.

On the matter of the societal orientation for understanding the nature of and responding to suffering, the stakes are at their highest in terms of the way in which institutions are organized—in their capacities to compel and coerce—to react to the sight of suffering and thus (re)produce the cultural attitudes to either embrace or reject suffering. For the Platonic Socrates, suffering remains in the physical realm where a bodily urge "fills us

with...desires and fears...and a great deal of nonsense," such as "[w]ars and revolutions [which] are due solely to the body." (*Ph* 95). Plato stresses a life of moderation and a love for argument, as helped by good laws (*R* 242), to drastically reduce the temptation to excessively mourn, especially in public; Plato rhetorically asks to solidify his thesis, "[I]sn't it argument and law that tell him to hold out, while the suffering itself is what draws him to the pain?" (*R* 287). This is Plato preparing to unveil the culmination of his thought. Such an extraordinary person is the one who practices philosophy and thus resists emotions in favor of the pursuit of the Form, which can only be experienced by the most rationally disposed being, as evidenced in thoughtful and deliberative judgments. This is the person who ought to rule, in that only that person can separate justice from the appearance of justice. Plato's attempt to solve for human suffering in such a way is misguided and impractical, according to Rousseau and Nietzsche. For Nietzsche, it is delusional and destructive, psychologically. In Chapters 6 and 7, I trace back to Rousseau and Nietzsche's political views in terms of their views about distributive justice and mechanisms of enforcement are manifestations of their their understanding of the origins and the evolution of human suffering. Their differences on suffering, as well as pity and compassion, particularly regarding their naturalness, point to the different political constructs for which they advocate as social corrections for natural human suffering. They determine who is deserving of individual pity and institutional compassion and who is not. For now, the contrast is considered in sentiments toward pity from Rousseau and Nietzsche. Where Rousseau rhetorically asks us, "[W]hat are...mercy and humanity, if not pity applied to the weak [or] guilty?" (*DOI* 54), Nietzsche sincerely reminds

us, "'God too has his hell: that is his love of man' ... 'God is dead; God died of his pity for man' ... Thus be warned of pity'" (*Z* 90). Like Plato, these discussions build toward and lend argumentative rigor to the cornerstones of their overarching projects as well as interpretive implications once they have published their theoretical findings.

Point 5 of Analysis: Interpretations of Provocation

Within the chapters on the theorists themselves, I address some evaluations about taking interpretive liberties, as either unduly provocative or within the bounds of authorial rigidity. I also detail their principal doctrines that provide the basis on which they articulate their theories of politics. The standard to which they hold citizens accountable in terms of justifiable political obligation in the public realm can be seen as a derivative of what they deem existentially possible and argumentatively provable in (meta)physical terms—or not— and both of which remain consistent with their depiction of humanity, naturally and by acquisition, for which their version of a just politics best accommodates and compensates, respectively.

Socrates is, at most, minimally concerned with a new political arrangement. He is preoccupied with other-worldly aspirations whose rewards he, despite having no empirical basis for which to substantiate his claim, remains unequivocally certain about in terms of what awaits him after mortal death, in that he has devotedly practiced death, which is, for him, ironically what it means to live. Socratic philosophy is "[securing immunity for his soul] from its desires by following reason and abiding always in her company, and by contemplating the true and divine and unconjecturable...and that after death it reaches a

place which is kindred and similar to its own nature, and there is rid forever of human

ills" (*Ph* 67). Socrates' disregard for this-worldly pursuits and possessions and his seeming

neglect for the circularity of his moral dogmatism leave him vulnerable to the criticism based

on logical rigidity and consistency. This vulnerability is compounded by the certainty with

which he expresses this belief when asserting that "the soul is clearly immortal" (*Ph* 89).

Socrates, the Platonic literary figure, here, as representative of metaphysical objectivity,

frustrates Rousseau and enrages Nietzsche.

In response, Rousseau sets his philosophical standard at the level of authentic

sincerity (Strong 1994: 125). This is a decidedly pragmatic reconciliation of Platonic

metaphysics and religious fundamentalism. This provides the political maneuverability to be

inclusive of religious dogma while prioritizing political virtue (Melzer 1996: 354, 356), which,

for Rousseau, creates the necessary social conditions of (relative) equality to achieve the

liberty possible (Shklar 1978: 17). Nietzsche's philosophical projects crescendo to his

perspectivism. It is a rebuke of both Plato and Rousseau. He rejects Plato's metaphysical

claim of the Form that holds a thing-in-itself. He finds such a standard as unknowable,

incomprehensible, and as such, reprehensible, particularly for making available to Christians

the opportunity to co-opt its recognition of the Objective and emphasis on other-worldly

preoccupations. Nietzsche's perspectivism, ascertained through rigorous experimentation,

privileges excellence without burdening practitioners with the possibility of absolute

Perfection. Making Perfection available as a consequence instills an investigative culture

inclusive of intuition and resembling the religious rationality of the irrational Socrates.

So, where Plato sets the bar impossibly high and whose effects have, inevitably, manifested in a culture of accepting failure and thus mediocrity, Rousseau's standard of sincerity embraces pragmatic mediocrity, in that it stops short of truth-telling. This, for Nietzsche, and without concern of offending, reconciles instead of exposes. In turn, this exposes Rousseau as weak and afraid, as evidenced by Rousseau's own admission; Melzer writes:

> Based on the goodness and justice of God and the shocking prevalence of injustice and undeserved suffering in this world, he deduces the existence of the afterlife in which the good are compensated and the bad punished (Emile, 282-83). If there were no otherworldly settling of accounts, God would be unjust, which is impossible. Thus, the afterlife is a moral necessity. (1996: 354)

5 General Points at which to Analyze Provocation: Conclusion

Rousseau, unlike Nietzsche, writes with an overt political motivation grounded in a liberty only possible from equality and virtue. Despite Nietzsche's proclamation, as Nussbaum summarizes, "to be a political thinker, indeed an important political thinker" (1), Kaufmann argues that Nietzsche "was not a primarily social or political philosopher [but] primarily concerned about the realm of Absolute Spirit, i.e., art, religion, and philosophy" (123). Nietzsche loathes the state—particularly one with Rousseauean democratic tastes—for impeding Nietzschean artists, saints and philosophers from "willing to power," in that at the intersection of the state and culture of the democratic sort, the Rousseauean Christian anarchist (*AC* 191), under the contemptuous guise of civic responsibility and civility, latches onto the Neitzschean higher-man, preaching, "'Be like [us]! Become mediocre!'" (*BGE* 212). As such, that would-be higher-man, like Nietzsche himself,

cannot be understood in the socialist language of political discourse, so Nietzsche turns from politics to critical theory, from which a theory of politics can be construed—in terms of provocation. In Nietzsche's work, *Ecce Homo* (Latin for 'what man is'[6]), he unabashedly proclaims: "Have I been understood? —What defines me, what sets me apart from the whole rest of humanity is that I uncovered Christian morality. That is why I needed a word that had the meaning of provocation for everybody ... Blindness to Christianity is the crime par excellence—the crime against life" (*EH* 332). And with that, I turn to the political provocation of the historical Socrates.

---

[6] This sentiment is shared with Rousseau—both assertions of provocation. Similarly noted by Bloom: "Rousseau intends [for Emile] to show that only his understanding of nature and history can adequately describe what man really is, while cautioning his contemporaries against simplifying and impoverishing the human phenomena." (1978: 152) Each of the theorists think that they have gotten "nature" and "humanity" right—or at least better, which is at the core of what makes them so provoking.

CHAPTER 4

The Historical Socrates of Plato

Introduction: Socrates, the Original Provocateur

I have previously mentioned Professor Whitehead's characterization of European [Western] philosophical tradition as "a series of footnotes to Plato," (39) and I bring it up again not to express support for or opposition to the validity of the claim on the merits but only to raise a point concerning its inference important to my analysis: philosophy, and by extension, the practice of political philosophy, can be viewed as an ongoing debate and/or discussion. A theorist, in reacting to or being provoked by (a) philosophical predecessor(s), supplements, revises, rejects and/or replaces some previous theory that has captured the attention of the engaged philosophic community. On such a view and as I have previously made reference to, Nietzsche, in part, is a provocative response to Rousseau (and Plato); and Rousseau to (among others, e.g., Hobbes) Plato; and Plato to Socrates. If we are to grant to Plato, by sheer magnitude of impact, the status of beginning the tradition to which all else is footnote, what recognition is Socrates due, considering the fact that Socrates says, "Knowing nothing, what *could* I write down?" (Strathern 63).

In terms of philosophy as provocation, I place Socrates at the beginning. Now, of course, he can be shown as a reaction, as well, but, relative to the other philosophical greats within the political tradition and although Socrates was not your typical political commentator, his reaction is one without equal parallel. In other words, whom or what he was reacting to or against is not another human but seemingly a god. This refers to an

experience that is not confirmable in any empirical way, such as one can trace, say, Nietzsche to Rousseau. Thus, where Nietzsche thinks of himself as the political "bringer of glad tidings," (Nussbaum 1) the same title Jesus adorned, Jesus, like Socrates' appointment came not from another human (or himself, as Jesus or Socrates would admit) but through divine revelation. One has to take Socrates' word for it and in this way, I contend that because provocation, in dimensionally conceptual terms, is relational; Socrates assumes the role of original provocateur. Also, the nature of the relationship, help[ful or merely antagonistic, respectively, depends on which audience has Socrates' attention whether it be his student, Plato, or his eventual accusers, Anytus or Meletus, to name two, given their different orientations and thus their different interpretations of and accountings for Socratic provocation.

At his trial, before the jury and Athenian witnesses, Socrates admits as much, saying that "I made myself spokesman for the oracle" (*A* 9). Shortly after, he repeats himself, adding the following and confirms my thesis:

> It is literally true, even if it sounds rather comical, that God has specially appointed me to this city, as though it were a large thoroughbred horse which because of its great size is inclined to be lazy and needs the stimulation of some stinging fly. It seems to me that God has attached me to this city to perform the office of such a fly, and all day long I never cease to settle here, there, and everywhere, rousing, persuading, reproofing every one of you ... I suspect, however, that before long you will awake from your drowsing, and in your annoyance you will take Anytus' advice and finish me off with a single slap, and then you will go on sleeping till the end of your days, unless God in his care for you sends someone to take my place. (*A* 16-7)

This passage is rather long, but it contains several different and yet related points about Socrates' provocation. First, the fact that he has been summoned into court is a feature of

the conceptual language of provocation. The *OED* lists, as one definition of the transitive verb form, it to mean "[t]o invoke or supplicate; to call forth, call upon, or call for; to summon, invite." On this point, Socrates rebukes his accusers for having summoned him (*A* 12, 15) to court on what, in Socrates' views are trumped up and false allegations. As they are in a court of law, an earthly court, Socrates invokes another definitional connotation by "appealing to a higher ecclesiastical court against a judgment," as the above passage from the *Apology* indicates.

A third way Socrates uses the language of provocation is to identify himself as the fly that stimulates the horse that represents the lulled-to-sleep Athens, which Socrates on behalf of God cannot ignore or accept. As such, Socrates makes it his job to awaken them. If this work is not viewed skeptically enough in that it might initially appear as if Socrates' "rousing" actions, if nothing else, are motivated by benevolence. The extent to which he escalates the animosity toward him increases exponentially when Socrates is shown to be acting primarily out of self-interest, all the while taking his philosophical project seriously as it benefits him and, at least seemingly, finding others' perplexity toward his findings amusing and dismissing as non-serious their problems with him. Before arriving to the climatic end when the jury has secured enough votes for reaching a death sentence, the *Apology* starts with the aloof Socrates undermining his accusers' ability to properly understand him. Thus, he attempts to rig the proceedings in his favor by immediately exposing them as their brand of ignorance, in that it is ripe with false conceit as "most culpable," (*A* 26) and by inference,

they are the culprits in the case, not him. Socrates' opening statement to the court is as

follows:

> I do not know what effect my accusers have had upon you, gentlemen, but for my own part I was almost carried away by them—their arguments were so convincing. On the other hand, scarcely a word of what they said was true. I was especially astonished at one of their many misrepresentations; I mean when they told you that you must be careful not to let me deceive you—the implication being that I am a skillful speaker. I thought it was peculiarly brazen of them to tell you this without a blush, since they must know that they will soon be effectively confuted, when it becomes obvious that I have not the slightest skill as s speaker—unless, of course, by a skillful speaker they mean one who speaks the truth. (*A* 4)

His introductory comments bring to bear the first and most fundamental problem

between Socrates and his contemporaries, namely those detractors who come to take on

the additional role of prosecutor—and is returned to in the *Crito* dialogue, which

chronologically proceeds the events in the *Apology*, when, just before he gulps down the

hemlock poison on the court's ordering, Socrates shares his last moments with a few friends,

Plato records (on behalf of Socrates) the Socratic position on provocation relating to the

negative—e.g., forceful—kind: "So one ought not to return a wrong...to any person,

whatever the provocation is [knowing] there are...few people who think like this, and

consequently between those who do...and those...not there can be no agreement on

principle" (*Cr* 34).

In sum, Socrates and his interlocutors cannot engage in positive provocation

because, as the result of coming from and residing in different worlds, they cannot proceed

from some initially agreed upon point from which to continue. Consequently, no chance

exists, particularly for Socrates' interlocutors, for them to accurately ascertain, let alone

appreciate, Socrates' true intentions and thus his actual philosophical mission as beneficial, or in the very least, harmless. This is why they identify themselves and his student-youths as his victims, who "become annoyed, not with themselves but with [Socrates], and they complain that there is a pestilential [pernicious] busybody called Socrates who fills young people's heads with wrong ideas" (*A* 9).

They interpret Socrates' motivations not as religious, as Socrates portrays them to be, but for sophistic reasons, whose message, like Rousseau's—a parallel Steven Salkever notices—becomes inevitably misrepresented as paradoxically sinister rather than correctly taken for the good it intends to produce or, at least, harmlessly amoral; Salkever writes:

> The original Greek sense of the term [paradox] refers to a statement which is strongly contrary to the orthodox or received opinion … As a rhetorical device, the ability to defend the apparently indefensible might be taken as a sign of the virtuosity of the speaker … However, as the Platonic use of 'paradox' implies, the term may have a favorable connotation as well: it may point not to the brilliance of the speaker but to the inadequacy of contemporary orthodoxy. (Salkever 204)

That Socrates' relationship with his fellow Athenians originates from a religious experience suggests his main partner is not the Athenians but the oracle (or himself). As such, Socrates' efforts remain focused on improving his spiritual relationship with the gods. The apparent—in that, what is felt by his interlocutors—lack of attention paid to them produces states of anxiety and confusion, at minimum, and resentment and anger, at worst.

His Athenian peers see themselves as more than merely incidental characters; they believe themselves worthy of a higher status than the menial pawn in some Chess match Socrates is playing, especially a game in which they have been forced to participate without

ever having asked to be a part. For this reason, their misunderstandings turn to misrepresentations and end in returning Socrates' 'force' with forceful retaliation.

Instead of taking his interlocutors' concerns seriously by providing clarity by addressing those concerns, Socrates appears to make light of it, dismissing their perplexity as having "an amusing side" (*A* 19) and stripping from them any perceptual power the court is thought to conventionally give. Socrates says, "Neither Meletus nor Anytus can do me any harm at all; they would not have the power, because I do not believe that the law of God permits a better man to be harmed by a worse" (*A* 16).

Important here is that Socrates, on one hand, is deadly serious in his belief, in his religious conviction. On the other hand, he fails to be respectful for the tradition of remaining deferential to the authority of the courts. Instead, Socrates blames his condemnation on his refusal "to address [them] in the way which would give [them] most pleasure" (*A* 23). Socrates, in religious-based argumentation, blames their ignorance as lacking access to the truth of which he is most certain, despite the impossibility of any kind of proof. Socrates says that it is "literally" true that "God has specially appointed" him (*A* 16), which is why he "cannot mind [his] own business" (*A* 23). Thus, on my terms, this makes him the original provocateur, but in that his orders came not as those on the battlefield by a human general, despite his attempt to draw that parallel (*A* 15) "in every other way that any other divine dispensation has ever impressed a duty upon man" (*A* 19). Thus, his argument is circular. However, Socrates seems not to be affected, either of the insufficiency of the proof he purports as logical or that they fail to accept it. As for him, they cannot understand

him, for they are too emotional to grasp the meaning of his pursuit of pure rationality. While

his fellow contemporaries reside in Athens, he resides in the nonphysical realm, which is why

he lacks the reverence they desire of him and the fear of death he sees in them.

Socratic provocation is challenging to all the conventional ways to approach the

things most cherished—truth, humanity and identity. Socrates blows away their dearly held

answers and thus, to at least a majority of his Athenian jury, embodies the following

observation:

> [T]he source of unclarity is a desire to appear wiser…to surround oneself with a
> cultish air of mystery…and to shelter oneself from criticism. Voluntary obscurity
> arises from vanity at best, charlatanry at worst … All the sages of premodern
> cultures seem to share a belief in the ineffectiveness of open statements, the
> superficiality of direct communication. Wisdom, it seems, would not be so rare and
> difficult a thing if it could simply be 'told' by one person to another. (Melzer 2007:
> 1017)

The problem is that worse than neglecting to provide them with the guidance his

interlocutors seek from him, Socrates forces them to confront the question—to which there

is, by their account, no good answer, or for that matter, any empirically knowable answer

other than Socratic proof—they never asked. To them, Socrates' mission is a solution to a

manufactured problem, a problem Socrates forces upon them, but for whose sake?

The Participatory Requirement of the Dialectic Process

Now that I have introduced the historical Socrates as the original provocateur, whose

provocative relationship with Athenian polis provided the context for which Plato's theoretic

writings drew inspiration, I elaborate on a point I briefly alluded to toward the end of the last

section; that is, the consequential implication of his fellow citizens with respect to his philosophical mission originated by the oracle at Delphi.

Despite a rather counter-intuitive but albeit an inventive rhetorical gambit: Socrates —although a tactic he seemingly fails to fully commit to—predicts a reversal of fortunes for whom a guilty verdict would "really" serve as punishment. In offering and appealing to the counterfactual, Socrates says, "So far from pleading on my own behalf, as might be supposed, I am really pleading on yours, to save you from misusing the give of God," and furthermore, makes a prediction that " [i]f you put me to death, you will not easily find anyone to take my place." (*A* 16). Given the result, the irony was unsurprisingly lost on them. Not forgotten, however, was another Socratic invention—that sort of irony still attributed to the persona of the historical Socrates, although conceptually difficult to nail down with scholarly definitiveness.[7] That said, Gregory Vlastos hits upon the larger point:

> [Socrates] changes the word [irony] not by theorizing about it but by creating something new for it to mean: a new form of life realized in himself...as innocent of intentional deceit...as free of shamming as are honest games, though, unlike games, serious in its mockery, dead earnest in its playfulness, a previously unknown, unimagined type of personality, so arresting to his contemporaries and so memorable forever after...educated people would hardly be able to think of *ironia* without its bringing Socrates to mind. (1987: 84)

Pages later, Vlastos continues:

> The concept of moral autonomy never surfaces in Plato's Socratic dialogues—which does not keep it from being the deepest thing in their Socrates, the strongest of his moral concerns ... Socrates doesn't say that the knowledge by which he and we must live is utterly different from what anyone has ever understood or even imagined moral knowledge could be. He just says he has no knowledge, though

---

[7] There exists a wide debate about the best encapsulation of Socratic irony. (Vlastos 1978, Wolfsdorf)

without it he is damned, and lets us puzzle out for ourselves what that could mean. (1987: 95)

Socrates' overarching goal of philosophizing is to prepare himself for the non-physical. Reaching the philosophical achievement of total rationality—that is, experiencing a thing-in-itself, or the Form—differs from the process of reaching it, in that the developmental journey requires the relational activity of provocation, where the destination is a place of total isolation. This effect is parallel to another effect: "The effect of these investigations...has been to arouse against me a great deal of hostility, and hostility of a particularly bitter and persistent kind, which has resulted in various malicious suggestions, including the description of me as a professor of wisdom," Socrates recounts (*A* 9).

Socratic soul-care, or improvement of the soul, is the internally experienced transformative reward of the Philosophical condition. Paradoxically, however, the condition becomes possible only via external engagement commonly referred to now as the Socratic Method. At least, two participants refute and cross-examine previously held beliefs and positions in hopes of providing their validity or replacing them with rationally superior ones, a result rarely achieved, contributing to Socrates' interlocutors' bewilderment and compounded frustration.

Similar to Socrates' use of irony failing to resonate as intended, Socrates often fails to notice, or outright ignores, the worse condition the dialectics leave his interlocutors. The reason for this, as others have noted, and as do I, although from the perspective of the role of provocation—is that Socrates, as original provocateur, whose mission is religious in nature, has multiple audiences. His primary one, however, the one in which consumes nearly

all of his attention and concern, is, undoubtedly, himself. A contemporary parallel would be an evangelical Christian who believes the Holy Spirit lives within and, therefore, ought to take precedence over other human relationships, even familial ones.

As a devout practitioner of the God's command, Socrates makes sure to faithfully execute his religious duties by nurturing his soul no matter the incidental harm done to others, something for which Socrates assures others cannot be held accountable for and apparently not all too concerned with, which only provides further support for why he is so confident about something he cannot be entirely certain; that is, the afterlife. Socrates says to Meletus:

> [I]f I unintentionally have a bad influence, the correct procedure in cases of such involuntary misdemeanors is not to summon the culprit before this court, but to take him aside privately for instruction and reproof ... But you deliberately avoided my company in the past...and now you bring me before this court, which is the place appointed for those who need punishment, not for those who need enlightenment. (*A* 12)

One can also read Socrates' statement as another inference regarding his advancements toward Meletus, seeking him out—and from which Meletus sought refuge in avoidance, as Meletus had become all to privy of Socrates' real audience—himself, Socrates, not Meletus himself, a mere wall off which Socrates can bounce ideas in hopes of catching a glimpse of Philosophy, as reported in a different but applicable context by Plato in the *Republic* where Plato has Socrates defend Philosophy from the ridicule "pour[ed]" onto Her by men of another sort: "For, as I was talking I looked at Philosophy and, seeing her undeservingly spattered with mud, I seem to have been vexed and said what I had to say too seriously as though my spiritedness were aroused against those who are responsible" (*R* 215).

Socrates' Primary Audience as Himself to Improve His Own Soul

In the last section, I attempted to show that Socrates' primary audience is himself, or the oracle but not another person or group of people. In the relational timeline of provocation, after beginning as the oracle's object, Socrates then takes on the leading dual roles, both object and subject, where his interlocutors—although procedurally necessary cannot be assured of success themselves—are cast as secondary characters who function as potential third-party catalysts for helping to set the conditions for Socrates to most likely position himself to experience Philosophy if and when She makes herself available.

Therefore, for Socrates, practicing philosophy—which is an activity, not a technique —is the act of getting to know oneself. It is mostly, but not entirely, existential experience, as that inscription at Delphi "know thyself" suggests. In the *Charmides* dialogue, Socrates and his interlocutors try to find a find an acceptable definition of temperance, and although they fail, important here, for my purposes, is they hit upon qualities that the philosophically disposed person possesses—coming to knowing oneself and acting temperately. Socrates' student even likens them to being the same thing:

> That 'know thyself' and 'be temperate' are the same (as the inscription claims, and so do I) might be doubted by some, and this I think to be the case with those who dedicated the later inscriptions 'Nothing too much' ... As a matter of fact, this is pretty much what I say temperance is, to know oneself, and I agree with the inscription...at Delphi. [45] ... [That] we should rather urge one another to 'be temperate.' [45: ...the inscription was probably intended to mean something like, 'realize your mortal condition.'] (*Ch* 76)

Similar to self-knowledge, temperance, for Socrates, is mostly directed inward, but it has relational implications which are defined by the nature of the relationship between the two

(or more) actors. In other words, the relationship is symmetrical balance in terms of power relations, whether perceived or real, as it relates to Socrates' attitude toward cultivating his students and the extent to which transferring philosophical knowledge is even possible. Socrates plainly acknowledges in the *Charmides*, "I am examining the argument mainly for my own sake," to which Griswold concludes that "Socrates 'teaches' others insofar as he prepares the ground for them to...disabus[e] them[selves] of their firmly held opinions" (542).

I do not wish to overstate or make the inference that Socrates' is totally self-absorbed, however, only that his main objective lies within himself, where his intention—albeit interpreted differently by those who come to be his dissidents—is neither sinister or seditious nor are his uses of ironic gestures where he react in aghast or mocking tone. The ends for which he intends are not just for his "own sake, but also, perhaps, for that of [his] other intimates" and "that the inquiry...has very insolently exposed as useless the definition of temperance which we agreed upon and invented earlier. I am not so much vexed on my own account, but [theirs]" (Griswold 542, *Ch* 95).

However, in a traditional classroom setting, where the instructor researches the material for presentation during lecture, it is the teacher—as the result of his preparation—who ends up increasing his knowledge far more than do the students. Effective teaching forces the instructor to learn, but this is an unintentional consequence, albeit it a positive one. Again, in traditional education, good schools and good teachers are measured by

student success, which, recognizably, is the result of highly effective teachers, of which their

knowledge level is—albeit an important one—only a single factor.

Socrates' vision for engaging his student-interlocutors reverses this: he makes the

improvement—in this case, his soul—in that the measure for a successful classroom learning

experience, which is also a reason for such an *ad hoc* style Socrates' teaching has, an

observation Plato repeatedly expresses of Socrates' apparently flippant and casual

concessions of being a "ridiculous" teacher with an "artificial style." (*Ph* 83) Such an instance

appears in the *Charmides*, as well (note the editor's comment in his footnote):

> 'But Socrates...you are not conducting the investigation in the right way. This
> science does not have the same nature as the rest, any more than they have the
> same natures as each other, but you are carrying on the investigation as though they
> were all the same.' [47] [47: Critias is quite correct in distinguishing the second-order
> *techne*, temperance, from *technai* of the first order. Socrates does not agree with
> his distinctions among the latter, however, as he now proceeds to state.] (*Ch* 78)

Socrates views his mission, however, in ethical and moral terms, and paramount to

his overall world-view is to never commit harm—in Plato's *Crito*, Socrates says that "one

ought not to return a wrong or an injury to any person, whatever the provocation is" (*Cr* 34)

—but given such disparities in the social conventions in which Socrates and his

contemporaries are operating, we should not be surprised of suspicion directed toward

Socrates—and in that such skepticism is part of the definitional concept of provocation, their

attitudes about what counts as provocative behavior—good versus negative—are parallel

manifestations. And in addition, Socrates comes across—even as the Platonic literary

protagonist hero—as apathetic toward rectifying those strained relationships. This is so for

at least two reasons, I suggest: first, he believes the effort to be a futile one, in that the

severity of the reaction has heightened to a point where persuading back the audience to his side no longer exists, which—and for him, becomes proof of truth and a self-fulfilling prophesy—is attributed to their emotional, irrational preoccupation with physicality. As the dialogues depict, Socrates often fails to anticipate the effect of his provocation until after-the-fact—or, from Socrates' perspective, that anger as the all-too-typical result of failing to rightly assess the reasonable response. Belatedly, Socrates notices, "I am not so blind that I cannot see that you...have come to the end of your patience with my discussions ... You have found them too irksome and irritating, and now you are trying to get rid of them" (*A* 22).

Again—and similar to the point of clarification made above regarding the fact that Socrates is so obtuse that he lacks true concern for his interlocutors' well-being—Socrates does make predictions. These predictions, however, tend to be rhetorical strategies for controlling the narrative of the debate—he says prior to the previous quote, "I am going to tell you something else, which may provoke a storm of protest, but please refrain yourselves" (*A* 16). But despite his prefatory use of prediction, it is ineffectual in the end, which underscores his disinterest in any other conclusion than remaining consistent to his overarching objective—the virtuous life, as achieved by habitually practicing philosophy, even at the expense of violating social customs and cultural norms—e.g., exposing others' ignorance—and, worse, breaking man-made laws—e.g., corrupting the youth:

> A number of young men with wealthy fathers and plenty of leisure have deliberately attached themselves to me because they enjoy hearing other people cross-questioned. These often take me as their model, and go on to try to question other persons. Whereupon, I suppose, they find an unlimited number of people who think

that they know something, but really know little or nothing. Consequently their victim become annoyed, not with themselves but with me, and they complain that there is a pestilential [pernicious] busybody called Socrates who fills young people's heads with wrong ideas. (*A* 9)

The second reason for Socrates' neglect to either prevent or amend fractures in relationships, incidentally caused by the dialectic process of engagement is related to the first—that is, as Alexander Nehemas describes: "Socrates constitutes a peculiar figure, concerned primarily if not exclusively with the improvement of his own soul." (305) The outgrowth of this is another important contributor to what makes Socrates, in my determination, the original—and, perhaps, the most significant—political provocateur. Ironically, Socrates is not at all political—not, at least, in any conventionally-held sense of the word "political." And similarly ironic, Socrates' total commitment to improving his soul—and thus in "practicing death" (*Ph* 64), Socrates, paradoxically, is afforded the virtuous life—translates into an ambivalence toward his fellow Athenians who he swears his provocations are meant to—in addition to himself—help. On the Socratic method, Boghossian concludes:

Often as a consequence of sustained dialogue, one realizes that one did not know something that one thought one knew. …This realization is a pivotal step in helping make one's ideas clear, and in distinguishing truth from falsity, and yet it is hard to understand why one would believe that this discovery could be humiliating or shameful. ...Realizing that one does not know some particular fact has nothing to do with humiliation, shame or perplexity. It simply has to do with knowledge. (712)

However, because Socrates is more dedicated to himself, this is lost on his student-interlocutors—and as such, Socratic ambivalence—as I refer to it—leaves even his closest companions in a total state of confusion, which for the ironic, self-deprecating Socrates, even at the moment of his death, serves as both a teachable moment as well as greater

proof of the validity of his argument and philosophical mission—and from the opposite perspective, the reason for its physical end; the end of the *Phaedo* reads: "It is natural that these people whom you speak of should act in that way, Crito...because they think that they gain by it. And it is also natural that I should not, because I believe that I should gain nothing by drinking the poison a little later—I should only make myself ridiculous in my own eyes if I clung to life" (*Ph* 96). And it is here, I now turn to Socratic ambivalence.

The Ambivalent Socrates

In Nehamas' "What Did Socrates Teach and to Whom Did He Teach It?" article referenced above, Nehamas touches upon another important point that alludes to Socrates' apparent ambivalence, which makes him such a controversial—and thus provocative— figure. Nehamas incorporates an observation made earlier by Martha Nussbaum about pertaining to one possible consequence—even if an unintentional byproduct—of Socrates' fanatical pursuit of achieving the "good"—or, synonymously, the virtuous—life: that "with the things that...chance might give us or take away without any responsibility on our part, Socrates 'can't lose' in the game of life, because he does not care so deeply for the things that are subject to risk that their loss would be a serious loss to him" (Nehamas 280)[8].

Socrates' apparent apathetic demeanor toward his neighbors runs counter to the political culture of the fifth century. The aggregate good took much greater precedence over any individual gain. The political concept of liberalism had not yet been introduced— let alone conceived—into the lexicon—and yet Socrates embodied such an individualistic

---

[8] In reference to: Nussbaum 1991: 40.

attitude, even while, as he defends, his military service; Socrates says: "[W]hen the officers whom you chose to command me assigned me my position at Potidaea and Amphipols and Delium, I remained at my post like anyone else and faced death." (*A* 15)

Plato's *Republic*—or, the Ideal—constitutes, in large measure, a theoretical response to the Socratic-Athenian feud. Its solution aims to end the vicious cycle of returning provocation with more provocation. It attempts to re-direct—and largely suppress—"the unnecessary pleasures and desires...that are hostile to law and...but, when checked...with the help of argument...they are entirely [or nearly] gotten rid of" (*R* 251). If not—as was the case for Socrates—the safety of citizens is put at great risk—which is why, for Plato— Socrates' defender—we "must consider it most shameful to be easily angry with one another." (*R* 51)

To achieve this—and although a historical accident—Plato's theorizes a reconciliation between the historically quarreling politician and philosopher, so that to intellectually locate —and then install—a just regime, in that "not one city today is in a condition worthy of the philosophic nature" (*R* 176), those with a mature philosophical disposition, yet "now called useless"—and despite their natural disinclination—out of necessity, are *compelled*—in terms of the conceptual language of provocation—"to take charge of a city" (*R* 178).

Plato relies on a number of situations to develop his rationale—and simultaneously, his audience's temperaments and dispositions—for, essentially, making that which has been deemed condemnable decisions—i.e., Socrates'—into that which will be considered redeemable decision-making. The point is, throughout the *Republic*—which interestingly

enough, the term *republic*, in our modern vernacular, means "the common good" (*OED*)—

Plato articulates a novel—and more nuanced—explanation of truthfulness with the "noble

lie" and experiments with communistic values in the 'community of women'—all in the effort

to tie the interests of politics to the public; Dobbs says:

> The lie transforms conventional justice into an obligation of piety, fortifying a sense
> of belonging rather than merely appealing to a merely instrumental and reciprocal
> obligation ... Blood, as we say, is thicker than water; but earth is thicker than
> either." [while] "erotic idiosyncrasy undermines any prospect for friendship between
> men and women. Connubial communism may be necessary...because there are not
> sufficient safeguards against erotic idiosyncrasy in the sexual matings undertaken
> currently in the context of private family life, [respectively]. (271, 274)

Implicit in the above discussion is Socrates' ambivalence and the emotion it incites in

his and Plato's democratic rulers. Athenian democratic principles and republican values

demand participation or, conversely, reject misanthropy. In addition, Socrates' private

ambivalence viewed as political contrarianism, in Athens comes as a great slap to Athenian

political achievement. With historical Socrates, the embodiment of philosophical rationality

still in clear view, Plato uses the language of provocation to sum up the passionate zeal of

the democratic man:

> The same disease...which arose in the oligarchy and destroyed it, arises also in [the
> democratic] regime—but bigger and stronger as a result of the license ['out of the
> extreme of freedom']—and enslaves democracy. And, really, anything that is done to
> excess is likely to provoke a correspondingly great change in the opposite direction
> [like] in regimes. (*R* 240)

The psychological expectation that comes from democratic entitlement, in

conjunction with the privileging of the popular of the principled, dooms the character of the

democratic man, in that—just as with the political instability created—he is too emotionally

susceptible to mistake despotic propaganda for reasonable policy. Also, the fact that democratic politics institutionally solicits the opinions of immoderate, ordinary men—that is, "the unspoken premise of the Socratic assault on oratory was disdain for the common people of Athens [prone to] orators as practitioners of flattery" (Stone 92)—in turn, makes *a Socrates* physically at risk of democratic outbursts. The reason is, on the one hand, Socrates is viewed as meddling, and on the other, as misanthropic, thus accounting for the two charges brought against him, each stemming from a particular kind of provocative act. Where democratic theory cannot tolerate misanthropy, the kind of detachment indicative of a so-called "star gazer" (*R* 168; FN 6), the democratically-disposed man is dangerously susceptible to "supposing he ought to be pilot" [or, ruler] (*R* 168). In parallel fashion and because of the underdeveloped capacity to see sharply and thus respond discernibly, he "blames without knowing what he blames" (*R* 272).

Specifically, the democrat's knee-jerk reactions prevent him from properly identifying the truth. For example, he mistakes Socrates' religious convictions for atheism; commitment to philosophizing for pernicious meddling; the limitations of the dialectic process for ambivalence; and last, his orientation toward these as misanthropic. At bottom, Socrates, because of his slavish state, has set his expectations for what is possible much too high; that is, he demands instant results from the Socratic Method, only to fail to achieve philosophical status. As a result, his inflated sense of self-worth, as perpetuated by democratic principles, demands a false justice, according to Socrates. As such, "justice"—and similarly, "duty," "political" and "friendship"—as rightly understood and correctly defined have taken on

inverted meanings associated with those base democratic tendencies, resulting in the misfortune the Platonic Socrates, using the language of provocation, observes in *The Phaedo*: "No greater misfortune could happen to anyone than that of developing a dislike for argument ... Misanthropy is *induced*[9] by believing in somebody quite uncritically. You assume that a person is absolutely truthful and sincere and reliable, and a little later you find that he is shoddy and unreliable" (*Ph* 71).

Thus, in a society where flattery is demanded and conversely, honesty refused and thus reality rebuked; Socrates' aloofness, or perceived ambivalence, gets interpreted as a refusal to adequately help his interlocutors find knowledge. However, for Socrates the problem is that philosophy does not work in such a way—true knowledge cannot be taught or received, as it were a gift. Given this fact, as Socrates sees it, the level of his misunderstanding increases at an equal rate of the frustration it causes although he has done nothing wrong, and given his moral beliefs, he can make the reply, "I do not believe that the law of God permits a better man to be harmed by a worse" (*A* 16).

For example, in the case of impatient Alcibiades, a much younger student and friend of Socrates', who—in an exchange about the nature of Platonic *eros*, or love—is left to "wallow in self-deceit" because of Socrates' refusal. For Socrates, no pedagogical method exists—to "tak[e] any decisive action to dispel" Alcibiades' preconceived notions about eroticism as false, Alcibiades must figure out, without traditional pedagogical instruction— and most ironically—the meaning of (Socratic) love "the hard way, in a long night of

---

[9] Emphasis mine.

anguished humiliation," when, if only he were "looking to Socrates not as a guru but as a partner," he could have obtained knowledge about eros "for free" (Vlastos 1978: 89, 93).

The point is, along with Nehamas and Nussbaum's, Socrates' intellectualism, from which his method originates,   although virtuous in nature, by his account "produces an agnosticism or even cynicism which may, under certain circumstances, be correctly described as 'corruption'" (Nehamas 282). This occurs especially because of the diametrically opposite definitions of terms like "patriotism" and "loyalty" on which they—Socrates and others, whether Alcibiades or Anytus—base the concept "fair" and "just" behavior. Also, where justice is concerned, the state gets involved, in that when shaming, the kind used as a device in the Socratic methodological toolbox (Sanderman 435), gets processed as intended to maliciously induce humiliation, the engagement can escalate, especially in a democracy that preaches equity and prides congeniality—from a private miscommunication into public criminality. This escalation results from the self-reinforcing circularity of misaligned intention, expectation, method and outcome (from Socratic dialectics), all of which are driven by disposition.

That said, Socrates' unrelenting pursuit of seeking out interlocutors—all the while, wholly aware of their philosophical stuntedness and thus subsequent emotional volatility—as it is both mandated by the gods and necessary to his soul-care—and coupled with his negativism, it is no wonder Socrates, as provocateur, helps to solidify the dominant negative connotation that the conceptual language of provocation has taken on, particularly in the political sphere. It also suggests why, despite all of Socrates' declarations in court and

elsewhere, provocation has come to particularly imply deliberate intentionality. To a large extent, the problems of intentionality and determining meaning arise from the limitations of clear linguistic communication about important concepts, whose struggle becomes social, cultural and, important for my purposes, political, which I address next.

The Confusing Socrates—to the Point of Death

One can trace the fall or rise, if so inclined to accept Socratic Objectivity as the "view" of Socrates along a parallel plane of intensity of tonal reaction to the-just-prior act of provocation, whether from Socrates or his interlocutor. As Socrates' "cognitive moral psychology" (Kahn 1996: 73) denies any legitimate recognition to others' authorial control over their life-choices, where actions originated not from reason but emotion (a position that —and starting with Aristotle[10]—has been rejected and refuted), are simply errors made in ignorance, Socrates' "intellectualism" gets successfully caricatured as sophistic profiteering. This sophistic profiteering demands an "apology" (to which, as we shall see, Plato provides —with a provocative "technical" addendum). Furthermore, Socrates' accounting for the unfolding of events leading to his arrest becomes a self-(re)producing manifestation of his argument relative to the outcome. They mistake his morality for sophistry and thus confuse real justice for an illusory one subscribed to by Athens.

---

[10] "Of incontinence one kind is impetuosity [impulsive], another weakness. For some men after deliberating fail, owing to their emotion, to stand by the conclusions of their deliberation, others because they have not deliberated are led by their emotion...if they have first perceived and seen what is coming and have first roused themselves and their calculative faculty, are not defeated by their emotion... It is keen and excitable people that suffer especially from the impetuous form of incontinence; for the former by reason of their quickness and the latter by reason of the violence of their passions do not await the argument, because they are apt to follow their imagination" (*NE* 177).

The problem for Socrates is that the rhetorical sophistry of "making the weaker argument stronger," which Socrates "does not think that...what [his student-interlocutors] learn is specifically a technique" (Reeve 19), like the definitional concept of provocation, might, at best, be amoral, but certainly is not moral. Compounded by the fact that some find the act of dialectic persuasion "amusing," that which exposes others' ignorance seems to make less a spiritual quest and more a childish game, where the losers were more than shamed but humiliated.

On one hand, procedurally, Socrates comes across deadly earnest about the seriousness of his mission in terms of the eternal consequences. On the other hand, in all of his self-deprecatory glory, Socrates, ironically, appears to be a condescending elitist. Socrates' other-worldly preparation is a serious business whose success lies in the activity of improving one's soul. In contrast, his antagonists' focus remains not on the process but the outcome of achieving this-worldly recognition for a wisdom permanently unavailable to them and thus, "may have seen it this way because they were resistant to...following a line of reasoning no matter where it led [seeing] Socrates as trying to use verbal and logical trickery to confuse them. Ironically, they thought that Socrates was a Sophist" (Boghossian 715). In sum, they are confused by what they believe Socrates thinks to be serious and what not, in that the two sides represent inversions of the other.

Philosophizing is not a game. Comical, however, is their obtusely emotional resistance to accept what Socrates finds so glaringly obvious: earthly human futility. Moreover, for Socrates, the difference between the activity of philosophizing and a

technique for persuading is so glaringly opposite in terms of their moral character. That is, the former is and the latter not: who could ever combine the two into a single event!? The ferocity with which the accusations are levied surprise an unsuspecting—perhaps in his child-like naivety—Socrates, peculiarly, however, in that he, at the time of the trial, has reached the age of 70.

Examples abound where Socrates uses the language of disbelief for rhetorical affect to demonstrate his calling as both, moral and rational as well as innocent, even in the legal sense. In the *Apology*, (the historical) Socrates can be seen to rely on, at least, in part, situational irony (Wolfsdorf) and ironic gesture (Cook, Gellrich) to supplement his flabbergasted state: "I was bound to interview everyone who had a reputation for knowledge. And by dog, gentlemen, for I must be frank with you ... It seemed to me...that the people with the greatest reputations were almost entirely deficient" (*A* 8). In the *Gorgias*' assault on the sophistic rhetoric described above, (the Platonic) Socrates tries to steer the debate by reacting with such exacerbation to Gorgias' claims about (un)just speech: "[B]ut since a little later you said that the rhetor might use rhetoric unjustly as well, I was thus amazed and thought that the things said did not harmonize ... So then...by the dog, Gorgias, [what] is a matter for no little conversation, so as to examine it adequately." The English phrase "by dog" is translated to effectively capture the sentiment of astonishment. Another problem for the provocative Socrates is—and one very similar to his interlocutors' confusion about him, resulting from not correctly deciphering what Socrates takes seriously and what light-heartedly—the difficulty through which to navigate the times

emotions are acceptable. That is, Socrates' surprise turned indignation turned utter defiance traced throughout the *Apology*—the best portrait of Socrates, the person—reveals Socrates not necessarily hypocritical, but his impenetrability, which, in turn, contributes to the incitement created by his presence.

<p style="text-align:center;">*The Defiant Socrates*</p>

Socrates is certain of his moral exoneration but becomes less so legally in the *Apology*. As such and in terms of provocation as a rhetorical strategic deployment, Socrates, briefly, co-opts the language to which they are emotionally susceptible and to which he is foreign in order to make the most resonate argument (*A* 4). The problem is that Socrates seemingly fails to appreciate the irony of making use of emotions, both in gesture, or tonally, and substantively, especially since doing so potentially—given, in Socrates' view, their sophomoric readings of his work—undermines the credibility of his central message; that is, to completely detach from reason-preventing emotions.

Now, with respect to philosophizing, Socrates puts all of the emphasis on the procedural aspect, in that in doing so, the desired outcome, a philosophical disposition oriented toward metaphysical rationality, will organically come. However, here, in terms of demeanor as well as delivery and puzzling in its apparent contradiction, Socrates seemingly expects a rational decision to derive from an emotionally-laden plea, despite the fact that his appeal in "augment[ing] pure intellectual dialogue by calling upon his interlocutor[s'] appetites and desires"; his argumentative grounding, however, and although emotionally-based, is a superior use of it, in that "human motivators, such as shame, are so basic to the

human race that Socrates' appeals to them are not grounded in faith" (Sanderman 436). As such, it can lead to a reasonable outcome. Socrates quickly learns otherwise, realizing (yet again) that the jurors cannot be persuaded to his side, at which point the exchange takes a decidedly confrontational turn, where justice, in the Athenian mind, would come through force, not persuasion.

Thus, just as they interpret Socrates' self-proclaimed futility as self-congratulatory arrogance, they take his persona of child-like innocence for something more sinister; that is, "Socrates' use of mocking irony calls upon the interlocutor's emotions and sense of shame in a way that does not appear to be simply aimed at correcting false belief" (Sanderman 432). I suggest that his adversaries are ultimately proven right, not only on my reading through the lens of conceptual provocation but Plato's, as well (although that is not to equate Athens' criticism of Socrates with Plato's—an issue for elaboration next).

At the point in the *Apology*, when Socrates finally seems to appreciate the psychological toll his series of provocations has taken on his fellow citizens. Also, his rhetorical provocations, 'pure' as they were, could no longer affect the deliberative process to secure a conclusion favorable to Socrates, the legal defendant. However, he makes another argumentative inversion to, at minimum, let the record show, in addition to the caricature written in the *Clouds*, the political Socrates; that is, if politics were totally re-imagined.

Just as his rhetorical tactics have failed to be effective, in similar fashion and in subsequent order, his mode of convincing, the "elenctic examination" (Reeve 159) has

failed, too. That is, argumentatively superior and thus successful, the enchanting Socrates, whose seductive charisma as one of his "forces capable of changing people's minds" (Gellrich 285), sets the way forward for how the dialectic process unfolds, so long as the setting is conducive to Socrates' goal: to increase his "synoptic capacity," (Dobbs 275)— e.g., Plato's *Republic.* Socrates thrives in a friendly atmosphere, where just one or a few other companions and Socrates are: "is reciting everything...all the speeches of all the characters" (Saxonhouse 730). Soul-care is a rather intimate, or private, affair but certainly not a public one, where politics resides. Further, the elenchus aspect of cross-examination produces the best result due to, in part, the egalitarian atmosphere and symmetrical balance between the parties. Socrates must defend himself, using oral dialectics in front of a jury of 500.

However, Socrates believes "that everyone should care for the city by making its citizens as good as possible" (Sanderman 432) whose mission is performed by conducting traditionally thought of didactic examinations of each other's beliefs on issues of importance and relevance. Then one could, as does the Platonic Socrates in the *Gorgias*, argue that such a view of political participation—although a different sort than a general's, per se—is both new and superior, as it brings together philosophy and politics; Reeve summarizes Socrates in the *Gorgias*: "I am one of a few Athenians...who undertake the real political craft and practice of politics, the only one among people now" (Reeve 159). However, in the *Apology*, Socrates is not political or even apolitical. In fact, Socrates is found to be anti-political, and as with the prevailing connotation of provocation, in general, a charge whose

origins seem to be seditious in nature thus appropriately carries a heavy sentence upon conviction, as proved in Socrates' case.

That said, however, Socrates was not defeated, not even remotely, in his mind. Socrates, again, changes the rules in which the beginning judicial arguments were framed, from legal (and moral) to strictly moral. Toward the end of the trial, Socrates turns outright defiant, making clear the "true" narrative character of the events leading up to the sentencing. No longer able to win the legal debate—not that his intention was sophistic, although in their confusion, that point got muddled—Socrates shifts his efforts to winning the moral high ground, as he can no longer dictate the direction of the argument like he could in those more intimate and friendly elenctic encounters. It is as if Socrates blatantly *goads* to the point that they feel pressured into sentencing him to death, thus "proving" his point about the ineffectual ability to see and practice real justice. Both sides are using the authority bestowed upon them to judge, except Socrates comes from God, the higher, more legitimate one.

Conclusion

For Socrates, the problem is—and although a few moments ago he charged Meletus with being "not at all convincing" (*A* 13)—that, to the ears of the jury, Socrates' appeal rang hallow. Socrates turns that problem into an opportunity to re-define the narrative. His accusers have ultimately defeated Socrates by playing the court's game, but Socrates, one last time and in order to secure his credibility and thus his mission's validity, attempts to convince them of his sincere conviction, the same kind that Jesus would be successful at

producing in the convict tied to one of the other crosses, as evidenced in his new-found belief that surely Jesus was the Son of God.

Socrates, too, was a religious missionary who provoked his own martyrdom. Despite a lack of self-awareness, as highlighted in the *Gorgias*, in that, "[g]iven his often-admitted lack of knowledge and his denial that [Socrates] teaches...he could be understood, like [the sophistic rhetoricians], to produce nondidactic persuasion" (*Gor* 36), Socrates, the mortal, could be ironic, as well. Thus, while unconvincing as he might have been in proving his divinely-inspired provocation to be "literally true" (*A* 16), because of his failure to, as Aristotle writes, "define [his] terms and get at its essential meaning, and then use the result when reasoning the point at issue" (*Rh* 1422) as well as to persuade convincingly, even Plato, of the non-circularity of an "authority which can justify itself by its tried and true accomplishments on the other" (Nehamas 294). The historical Socrates was at his most convincing, and most ironically honest, while uttering his final words, "Crito, we owe a cock to Asclepius. Please, don't forget to pay the debt" (*Ph* 98).

Socrates spoke those words; Plato wrote them down. Athens no longer had a Socrates problem; it, however, became the problem, the one for which political science would attempt to solve. While, on my terms, the historical Socrates issues that first provocation that turned political, it was the Platonic Socrates—that is, Plato, the metaphysician—as the written response to the historical one, who was and, by far, remains to be responsible for the still ongoing series of theoretical provocations of political consequence. I now turn my analysis to the provocation of Plato, whose political theory, to a

large extent, was provoked by Socrates, Athenian democracy and the antagonistic

relationship between the two wholly different dispositions. I end my analysis of the historical

Socrates and transition to Plato with W.K.C. Guthrie:

> Socrates's statement [on '[t]he poets divinely inspired'] is plainly ironic, since his reason for making it is the inability of poets to understand their own productions. Nor could his best friends claim that he had a poetic side to his nature. But Plato had. He says much about poets, and his ambivalent attitude towards them can be largely explained by the internal conflict between his acquired devotion to the Socratic demand for 'rendering an account' of what you say and the re-emergence of his natural feeling that poetry had a value of its own, independent of its rational or moral content. (1975: 89)

CHAPTER 5

Plato and the Platonic Socrates

Introduction

Jean-Jacques Rousseau contextualizes the story of his life—and politics—in the 600-plus-page *Confessions.* Friedrich Nietzsche supplements the development of his thoughts and ideas in *Ecce Homo,* even titling one of his chapters, "Why I Write Such Good Books." Plato does nothing comparable to that Rousseau and Nietzsche provide for us about their lives and works. We have to extract it, almost exclusively, from Plato's philosophical work. The interpretive burden is much heavier to carry for Plato than for the more recent Rousseau and Nietzsche; W.K.C. Guthrie observes: "Reading the [Platonic] literature only shows how equally good scholars can disagree about the arguments because of our alien ways of thinking" (1978: 364). A related interpreted problem regarding Plato for contemporary readers within the Western philosophical tradition is that "[o]n a purely statistical basis, the huge majority of philosophical writings are cast in the style of treatises" (Griswold 531). Plato, however, relies on the dialogue form to communicate his ideas. His choice, and perhaps to the dismay of Socrates, brings Socrates' oral dialectics to the page in order to greatly increase the size of his student-audience body.

Now, in terms of provocation, I maintain that their overall theoretical projects are ones of substantive provocation, in that their philosophical systems serve as the mechanistic catalyst by which personal transformation (thus political reform) is induced, as consistent with their versions of what is (more) natural. In addition, provocation also takes various

tactical forms in articulating and arguing for the substantive claims, such as tone, style and method. Thinking about how the dialogue style is not external to what is being said, as a resource to locate the concept of provocation that another medium, say, the treatise, would fail to provide—can offer a substitute for what Plato did not say elsewhere or directly. That said, if we can be confident that it is achievable, despite the difficulties with which Plato leaves, like limited hard textual evidence, to make a solid interpretative case for the provocative intentions of Plato's work—as well as, although different from the interpretive matter of assessing outcomes and effects in terms of provocation—we must pull away from Plato the masks his works wear.

Much has been written about the relationship between Plato's choices, for example, written dialogue, and the substantive content of his message. One further difficulty to add has to do with the large volume of and the wide array of topics covered in Plato's body of work. It has led to diverse and often contradictory readings of the theories Plato was really putting forth, which extends the analysis of provocation to the interpreters of and commentators on Plato, in that where textual ambiguity exists and empirical evidence does not, there exists the opportunity for provocative theorizing. That said, however, there seems to be consensus about the premise from where these interpreters soon depart:

> [The] question: is the choice of the kind of style which a philosopher uses related in some essential manner to his philosophy? Or are the style (i.e., species of style) and content (i.e., what is being said) always external to each other? ... The author of a dialogue is hidden by or removed from his writings (since he does not cast himself as one of the characters), and so different rules of interpretation must govern the reader's effort to state. (Griswold 531, 533)

The point is, as does Plato's substantive theory wear a mask, Rousseau and Nietzsche's also wear masks, which results in no real consensus and which adds to the reasons for which they are provocative. However, unlike Rousseau and Nietzsche, Plato does not supplement his doctrinal claims with additional commentary about his personal views. In fact, much of the time, he removes himself further from us, his audience, by putting into the mouth of Socrates (his) philosophical and political points of view. The relationship between style and content in Plato's written dialogue form has a role in clarifying interpretation:

> [T]hat the close and continual relationship between the style and the content of his work may serve[d]...to elucidate his argument; and...that at certain points his style itself has a direct connexion with his philosophic thought. The essence of dialogue lies in the interaction of human minds. [So] it becomes natural to express all his thought in the form of personal utterance by one individual or another...and to work out its development in terms of progressive agreement between such individuals. (Tarrant 28)

Also, despite only having access to Plato's pure philosophy, clues about him as provocateur still emerge because of his choice of dialogue. As such, my method allows for me to assemble sufficient textual evidence that shows Plato to use the same kind of provocation—although not directly and to far different ends—as did Rousseau, who dared anyone to suggest that there was a better man (*R* 17), and Nietzsche, who titled another chapter in *Ecce Homo*, "Why I Am So Wise."

What follows is my chapter that develops the different dimensions and categories of provocation found in Plato's work, most significantly his famous political work, the *Republic*, whose protagonist is Socrates—although not necessarily the exact one in the *Apology*, which is what I discuss next, particularly with Saxonhouse's approach to the *Republic* guiding

my thoughts as Plato as provocateur. She argues that "given the diversity of narrative styles for his dialogues, Plato consciously chose how to frame the dialogues and I argue that that choice relates to the content of the dialogue just as much as the dramatic elements do" (730).

The Platonic Versus the Historical Socrates

At the end of the previous section, as well as in the previous chapters, I alluded to the different characters of Socrates: the historical figure and the literary character, the literal Socrates and the Platonic Socrates, respectively. Socrates was an actual person, again, who tells us nothing himself. As such, and to a larger degree than Plato, we lack any autobiographical or first-hand philosophical account about his life and thoughts. Therefore, he leaves behind no version to corroborate or counter someone else's interpretation of his behavior or views, not that he would concern himself too much with that, one way or the other.

The other Socrates is Plato's—his philosophical mouthpiece, of sorts. So, in that Plato chooses to deliver his content in the dialogue form and in which he never casts himself to make a speaking appearance, we are left to figure out when—and thus for what purposes—Plato is remaining true to his old friend and when he merely uses the Socratic persona to further his own philosophical agenda. That is not to suggest, however, that Plato disingenuously—and with sinister motivations—attempts to commit libel against Socrates. In short, we are left to our own interpretive devices to figure out where one Socrates ends and the other begins—a task that becomes murkier when forced to reckon with the fact that

there is no definitive agreement on the chronological ordering of the Platonic corpus. One's

approach for getting at Plato's true(r) intent—e.g., Kahn's pedagogical "reconstruction

based on developmental chronology" or Vlastos's noncommittal Plato that "examine[s] the

views attributed to Socrates in Plato's (early and early middle) dialogues" as Socrates' own

(Osbourne 4, 5)—will determine the specific natures of varying interpretations; that is,

whether seemingly contradictory philosophical claims ought to be reconciled or not, thus

leaving the readers of the dialogues the freedom—or rope—to figure out what Plato's mask

really sought to achieve in nurturing a mature and nuanced philosophical disposition in his

student-audience. Such is the strategic goal for removing himself and Socrates from the

audience who is forced to find the meaning in the dialogue and ultimately in themselves.

That said, my analysis of provocation has the luxury of not getting bogged down on

chronological ordering and which dialogues present a "faithful portrayal of the historical

Socrates." Plato is the theorist whose writings provoked the likes of Rousseau and Nietzsche

and many others to respond. Socrates would have never achieved the level of philosophical

fame, if any at all, if Plato had not documented his life. The point is, Socrates, the man,

inspired Plato, which is why I thought it important to include the previous chapter and did so

by operating on the following view of Kahn's (1996: 74): "[The Socratic literature] represents

a genre of imaginative fiction, so that (with the possible exception of Plato's *Apology*) these

writings cannot be safely used as historical documents" (1996: 74). For my purposes, this

places special emphasis on the parenthetical statement. Going forward, I examine the

provocation of Plato's political theory on the assumption that Socrates, particularly in *The*

Republic, embodies the Platonic character, serving the theoretical purpose of Plato, a position consistent with David Wolfsdorf's[11]; he writes:

> [I]n *Republic* I, Socrates narrates from a single unspecified location...[in that] Plato's intentions were ultimately not to represent historical events that actually occurred... [I]t should be appreciated that Plato was not principally concerned...to portray the historical Socrates as he actually was ... Of course, all literature, even the most realistic, is selective in the aspects of the fictional world it portrays. (181)

For my purposes, the *Apology* represents that series of provocations between Socrates, the philosopher—or, mirthful comic turned malicious convict—and Athenian democrat—or, ridiculer turned condemner, wrongly provokable—that makes necessary Plato's political apology, which comes in the form of the *Republic*. As Bloom notes, "Socrates' outlandish way of life and the consequences of his thought somehow injure the men and the regimes in existing cities; and from the various ways in which he is forced to make an apology" (*R* 97, FN 1). However, in terms of provocation, Plato not only offers an apology on behalf of Socrates, he seems to first make one for Socrates—that "outlandish" behavior, exhibited not only to his adversaries but his closest friends, as well, to which I turn for a short examination.

Plato Apologizing on behalf of *the Historical Socrates and* to *the Philosophical Socrates*

In the *Crito*, the dialogue whose conversation happens immediately after the verdict, Plato captures Crito's frustration with his friend for that 'outlandish' behavior mentioned earlier. Plato presents a scenario in which a bewildered Crito comes to understand Socrates' lack of concern for not only what others think of him but what others think about his friends.

---

[11] Saxonhouse's, too, is very similar (730).

To this end, Crito suggests that Socrates allow him to propose paying a fine in exchange for a reduced sentence in order to save Socrates' life and Crito's reputation. Crito says:

> '[A] great many people who don't know you and me very well will be sure to think that I let you down, because I could have saved you...and what could be more contemptible than to get a name for thinking more of money than of your friends? Most people will never believe that it was you who refused to leave this place although we tried our hardest to persuade you.' (*Cr* 29)

In true Socratic form, instead of seizing the opportunity to put off death, Socrates takes the opportunity to lecture Crito.

It is further evidence of the philosophical distance that not only separates Socrates from his enemies but his friends, as well. Socrates' life represents a third way, an alternative from the false-dichotomy of having to choose either "money" or "friends," in that real friendship between the philosophically disposed to reason transcends the ordinary way people think of what it means to be friends. Crito mistakes the appearance of friendship— i.e., buying Socrates' freedom—for real justice. For Socrates, who sees no value in the physicality of things, accepting the offer would be a far worse sentence, in that it would succumb to the ordinary urges that average men think is natural (*Ph* 96). Socrates cannot be persuaded by Crito because through the habit of practicing philosophy, Socrates has come to understand that by not drinking the poison, he would be trading one kind of unjust act for another. Socrates owes too much to himself to *not* die, which is a rather counterintuitive notion to his friends but serves to underscore his commitment to the practicing philosophy, or in other words, "practicing death" (*Ph* 64). In his failure to convince Socrates, Crito's emotions get the better of him, as he tries another angle—Crito turns the old rhetorical

tactic of Socratic shaming onto Socrates himself. Crito says: "'Really, I am ashamed...First there was the way you came into court when it was quite unnecessary ...Then there was the conduct of the defense ... And finally, to complete the farce, we get this situation, which makes it appear that we have let you slip out of our hands through some lack of courage and enterprise on our part'" (*Cr* 30).

In the *Phaedo*, the dialogue to be read after the *Crito*, Plato makes sure to return to this issue of "courage." In the *Phaedo,* the dialogue that records Socrates' death, Socrates inverts Crito's definition back to the natural way of conceiving of courage, saying that "courage and self-control as practiced by other people...you will find them illogical" (*Ph* 51). For Socrates, courageous acts as thought of by "othe[s]," in actuality, are examples of self-indulgence that arise from a cowardly fear of dying. This, for Socrates, explains the illogicality of that particular meaning associated with courage. As such, Socrates cannot be shamed into negotiating away his virtue for a longer stint in the physical body that seems to be the greatest inhibitor of living virtuously. Socrates is contemptuous of the desires that incline Crito to find necessary to ask, "What could be more contemptible than to get a name for thinking more of money than of your friends?" (*Cr* 29-30).

But Plato seems sympathetic to the plight in which Socrates has left Crito and his other companions, and Plato does not necessarily share Socrates' militant negativism, where the only way out is death. I argue that Plato's references to Socrates' behavior in the *Crito* and *Phaedo*—as articulated by those friends and colleagues Plato and Socrates admired and respected—not only serve to underscore Plato's disagreement with Athens but to begin

to show a separation from the confrontational demeanor of Socrates. That is, Plato continues to share much of Socrates' philosophical positions and keeps him as his main protagonists but changes the way for which provocation is used to benefit the citizen, as opposed to the private person. For Plato, philosophical provocation replaces the negativity associated with Socrates' embarkment as well as—and relatedly—takes on an additional feature. Plato seeks to create a new disposition from which provocation is met not with force, or even hesitation, but with an appreciation of and a use for the gift that is a person like Socrates to society—the disposition totally absent in the *Apology*, as indicative when Socrates warns them that he is "really pleading on [their behalf] to save [them] from misusing the gift of God [and that] it is literally true, even if it sounds rather comical" (*A* 16).

Plato apologizes for Socrates—that is, to those Socrates (unnecessarily) "plagued" (*A* 26), not to Athens, however, who unjustly returned one provocation—i.e., Socrates' mirth-provoking irony—with a disproportionate provocation—i.e., retaliatory force. Thus, Plato apologizes for Socrates' mirth-provoking behavior to those persuadable to Plato's side—Glaucon, for example (Dobbs 271)—who find Socrates so comical and ridiculous that it detracts from the merits of the substantive content, while simultaneously making an apology to the Platonic Socrates, the metaphysician, —for what Athens allowed themselves to do. On the one hand, Plato's departure from Socrates is both a stylistic and a technical, or mechanistic one—and comes as a result, to a significant degree, from the problem Guthrie understands Plato to be quarreling with; that is:

> [H]ow does one know what one does not know? ... It is reasonable to conclude that Plato, by temperament a philosopher rather than a practical moralist, having under

the personal influence of Socrates enthusiastically embraced the Socratic code, is beginning to subject it to a more dispassionate examination and to find its philosophical implications genuinely puzzling (1978: 163).

Plato introduces into philosophy something that Socrates had denied ever possible—which, in turn, contributed to Socrates' provocative militant moralism, philosophical negativism and argumentative circularity and whose implications were enormous: "The elenchus described in the *Apology* is a testing of persons, not of propositions...[And] his lack of *techne* is demonstrated by his inability to give a coherent account of what he knows and what he does [not]" (Kahn 1996: 97). Thus, Socrates appears as non-serious and slanderous. Plato's mission—and unlike Socrates', in that it is philosophically motivated and not divinely inspired—in *the Republic* is to make the rational Socrates serious—and the Platonic Socrates taken seriously. In this way, Plato becomes a political provocateur; that is, in order for philosophy to become a serious solution for Athenian political injustice, poetry and the poet—philosophy's rival—must be effectively shown to be the truly hostile one toward good governance. The detrimental effect of poetry on the citizen—with its counterpart for producing emotionally erratic dispositions, tragedy[12]—must come to be the object of ridicule. Kuhn writes, "As a political thinker [Plato] had to contrive a remedy to supersede the tragic catharsis. This political or educational trend in his philosophy shows him as a rival and, in a certain way, as a follower of the tragedians" (26).

---

[12] Stevens: "In our discussion of Plato's exclusion of envy from the divine nature we referred in passing to Aristotle's statement in the tenth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics* that the highest virtue and the highest happiness consist in contemplative activity, and that such activity is the only kind of action assignable to the gods" (1948: 183).

On such a view, Plato challenges both the political status quo as well as Socrates, in that "the aim of [Platonic] dialectic will be to provide criteria of answerhood" (Meyer 181). That said, however, on the other hand, Plato sets out to redeem Socratic rationalism that recognizes objectivity in standards by "reinterpreting the Socratic elenchus as the preparation for constructive philosophy" (Kahn 99) or, put another way, by "finess[ing] the Socratic elenchos and invent[ing] an entirely human *techne* of lawmaking" (Blyth 17) in order to apply a new political science that makes achievable the opportunity to know—and thus implement—real justice.

<div align="center">

Persuasion and Provocation

</div>

Near the end of the last section, I made the assertion that Plato, via the *Republic,* becomes a political provocateur. Plato seeks a new politics vis-a-vis personal transformation, and although, unnatural, political action arising from philosophical thought, must occur if justice is to be experienced by those deserving such an extraordinary encounter. For Socrates and because the practice of philosophy necessitates engagement, the private experience of intellectual thought only coincidentally became political. Then, the intemperance and audacity so pervasive throughout the political class created the inevitable conditions for which to infringe upon the philosophical expressions of a Socrates.

That said, if philosophy cannot escape politics—which, for Plato, it cannot—then he sets out to create a new set of conventions. These two new modes of convention, which work symbiotically with each other to reproduce each other, will foster and maintain a stable and mature political culture, as the established legal processes and outcomes are reflections

of the decision-makers'—and average citizens'—dispositions. Therefore, the first convention

is psychological in nature; that is, what is thought of as conventionally appropriate must

change, specifically, and most importantly, relating to current levels of power. Power will—as

it must—change hands. Plato anticipates the force of the resistance—or, the hesitancy to

even consider resistance—his proposal receives initially; at the beginning of Book IV of the

Republic, Adeimantus objects and demands:

> 'What would your apology, Socrates, if someone were to say that you're hardly
> making these men happy, and further, that it's their own fault—they to whom the city
> in truth belongs but who enjoy nothing good from the city as do others, who
> possess lands, and build fine big houses, and possess all the accessories...and all
> that's conventionally held to belong to men who are going to be blessed?' (*R* 97).

Adeimantus' highly charged, knee-jerk reaction is analogous to both the difficulty

and necessity of finding a societal solution for preventing such emotional outburst from

occurring—and which will inevitably lead to another Socratic-type execution. To accomplish

this, Plato must install an additional change in convention complimentary to the first, which,

again, is the psychological reprogramming of properly understood behavior becoming of a

mature, reasoned adult. The second newly conceived condition is structural; that is, the

institutional mechanisms that cultivate such a dispositional reorientation and foster the

conditions for which peace and stability endure. The task for Plato becomes how to

convince the non-philosopher-citizen to hand over his political power to someone—or a few

—like Socrates the provocateur, whose motivations are widely and highly viewed with

skepticism and suspicion and thus whose actions are deemed as useless and unpatriotic or

vicious and treasonous.

Plato's answer for what triggers the psychological process from which the conceptual change begins to occur regarding the specific attitudes and actions associated with what is conventionally accepted as legitimate and just lies in his theorizing an education of provocation; that is, the exercise of (re)imagining a new political dynamic, where beliefs and resources are differently—and paradoxical to "the current regimes" and "cit[ies] today"—held. (*R* 176) That "therapeutic" process (Dobbs 266), as a pedagogical strategy, does deceive and censure, even if it is not an ordinary one. However, according to Plato—in that the lie is noble and the censure principled—what emerges is, finally, "a condition worthy of the philosophic nature" (*R* 176). This means that they have become rightly provokable.

Plato's substantive political philosophy comes to us from the dialectically-crafted the *Republic*. Just as Glaucon and Adeimantus are the Platonic Socrates' student-audience, we are Plato's by participating in that blending of style and content. Plato intends for the *Republic* to make possible the opportunity for which to seize and thus experience Platonic conversion, the results of which include a most important political implication; that is, "[n]either would we ourselves be attempting to do things we did not understand—rather we would find those who did understand and turn the matter over to them" (*Ch* 88). We first have to become (more) persuadable to not just heed but to be willing to even hear Socrates' words.

Forced to Speak, Socrates Does Do Hesitantly

Before creating the conditions that put a person in position for Philosophy to reveal herself, one has to have honed the philosophical talent for living virtuously, or more

specifically, for exercising proper discretion, thus, in Aristotelean terms, enabling that person with the power to know when and how to act, as practiced by "the good-tempered man [who] tends to be unperturbed and not to be led by passion, but to be angry in the manner, at the things, and for the length of time, that the rule [of the mean] dictates" (*NE* 96). Therefore, where Socrates stopped short of directly linking the "moral excellence" to sound policies, Plato—and Aristotle—extend the discussion to governing. Good laws arise from good-natured, well-tempered individuals, who, as Aristotle says: "[Abstain] from bodily pleasures...[f]or moral excellence is concerned with pleasures and pains…Hence we ought to have been brought up in a particular way from our very youth, as Plato says, so as both to delight in and to be pained by the things that we ought; this is the right education" (*NE* 32).

For Plato then, of great importance is the implementation of the kind of education policy that will not only produce good leaders but whose values will disseminate throughout the broader culture. The curriculum, with the support of broader but similarly-focused laws, eliminates the role of art—namely, music—in our lives because of the passions it generates within us. By outlawing the arts and thus sheltering the youth from the harmful effects of music and poetry, future generations will never have to fight the tendencies to find pleasure in self-indulgent behaviors, which ultimately make us unhealthy. Instead, from the beginning, the youth are put on a path to take pleasure that causes no subsequent irritation; that is, they never have to unlearn how to be wrongly provokable. As they mature into reasonable adults—receptive to rational argument—a Socrates would never cause them any psychological discomfort or emotional pain to which irrational people pay back with physical

aggression, whereby increasing the psychological toll their total lack of restraint over their own lives places upon them (Kraut 210). One step further, such a Socratic message, regardless of delivery or tone, as one of philosophical rationalism, would actually serve as the guiding principles from which laws are written; in addition, as they are just laws and promote reasonable behavior, they also help to secure a stable and prosperous future.

In the *Republic*—both in form and function—can be found the provocation of Plato that he means to serve as a model for which we can apply to our own lives and our cities. In the language of provocation, Socrates goes from being forced to speak, to speaking with such hesitation because of the seemingly paradoxical message, to finally being compelled to govern. In parallel, we—Plato's student-audience—are forceful with Socrates at first, even threatening him if he were to otherwise mind his own business rather than to amuse them with his ridiculous story. Plato begins the *Republic*:

> A moment later Polemarchus came along with Adeimantus, Glaucon's brother, Niceratus, son of Nicias, and some others—apparently from the procession. Polemarchus said, 'Socrates, I guess you two are hurrying to get away to town.'
> 'That's not a bad guess,' I said.
> 'Well,' he said, 'do you see how many of us there are?'
> 'Of course.'
> 'Well, then,' he said, 'either prove stronger than these men or stay here.'
> 'Isn't there still one other possibility...our persuading you that you must let us go?'
> 'Could you really persuade,' he said, 'if we don't listen?'
> 'There's no way,' said Glaucon. (*R* 3-4)

Finally, however, for those like Glaucon—having made themselves available to discover the revelations of the provocations of Plato—after begging Socrates "in every way...not to give up the argument" (*R* 45), they are persuaded to accept their rightful place within the political hierarchy, and concede authority to the rightful rulers, the lovers of justice, who

must—and, in the end, will—accept responsibility of governing, thus resist the temptation to "study the Forms without interruption" out of political necessity, not natural inclination (Kraut 212).

Listening to the Platonic Socrates

The success of Plato's political project rests upon the willingness of philosophers—like a Socrates—to break from the activity of contemplating things in themselves to help rule. On the other hand—and as opposed to the Athenian context—average citizens must forfeit the claim to any legitimate right to rule and thus the distributive property and benefits previously enjoyed. Plato has to show that such conditions can be made possible, as Plato continually reassures his student-audience that they are not "giving laws that are impossible or like prayers, since the law we were setting down is according to nature" (*R* 135).

He must present the conditions under which the lives of everyone improve. That is, it becomes safe for philosophers to practice philosophy and thus worthwhile to compromise their time in order to engage politically. In other words, those would-be philosopher-kings are brought back into the physical place in which their bodies reside. If they do not, justice cannot prevail—and as such, those past and current failures of leadership will result in the deficient policies that perpetuate a culture hostile to dialectic reasoning, a necessary component for improving one's philosophical capacity. Equally important, Plato is tasked with stripping the common masses' attachment to private property. It must be transferred to

the public domain, where all the members of the community share a stake in protecting both the philosopher and the ordinary person.

In bringing together the interests of everyone, although a historical accident, Plato thinks he can politically solve for the formerly irreconcilable orientations that put at odds the philosopher and the city—that is, the historical Socrates' all-consuming, other-worldly focus that got him accused of "religious innovation" (Blyth 15) and the non-philosopher's debilitating "irrationality of their unwillingness to face the fact that they must die" (Bloom 1991: 368). Their proverbial common ground is the literal common ground under them—to which they all belong. In that sense, the different members of society—based upon their specific role, whether shoemaker, guardian or ruler—no longer view themselves as threats, which, in turn, frees them up—if not to tend to philosophy, at least, from their unruly emotions that historically disrupted those philosophical pursuits by those who are better positioned to know justice. As such, they, too, reap the benefits. That said, however, the city still needs protection from potential exterior threats. Thus, for Plato—as a practical matter, something with which Socrates was not concerned—all emotions are not to be eliminated. Beyond the implausibility of totally ridding emotions fully anyway, it is not desired, in that such a culture of detached ambivalence would leave the city vulnerable to attack, similar to the way in which unchecked emotions put the city at risk for internal strife and even civil war. Such is the reason that makes necessary censure and lies, albeit noble, in that it is not a deception against the soul (*R* 56).

Plato attempts to recalibrate different types of people's dogmatic coping mechanisms—that is, to more closely align Socratic other-worldly certainty with the typical human's lack for existential answers—so as to prevent the likelihood for difference in such high-stakes beliefs to "inevitably deteriorate into eristics" (Dobbs 265)—or, that subject-matter has been stripped of its ability to wrongly provoke. Where Plato lowers the perceived stakes associated on purely religious matters, in like manner, he makes a metaphysical appeal, but with a political and thus earthly motivation—that is, to argue for a perfect standard, as set by the Form or Ideal, to which philosophical rulers—in that they are best equipped of which to conceive—implement in the form of political justice least removed from and most imitative of the Form of Justice.

As a political theorist, Plato has to make Socratic rationalism effectual and palatable while offering a positive alternative to Socratic negativism. To do so, Plato can appear to come across as trading one tyrannical regime for a totalitarian one. I suggest, however—albeit a highly relevant and consequential debate it is to have had on the substantive matter of Plato's specific politics—more impactful for and applicable to society is his provocation, at least, in terms of receiving interpretive privilege. If I am not wrong, his individual policy prescriptions—particularly the ones that are indoctrinating and thus ironically enfeebling—matter minimally if, on his terms, the developmental cognitive goal is achieved. The politics will work itself out so long as the stakes of other-worldly importance have been proportionately reduced to an acceptable degree, at which point—and in no longer over-exaggerating one's universal centrality thus making room for rational consideration of things

—"her understanding and emotions gain her entrance into a world of completely harmonious objects, and so she possesses the greatest good there is" (Kraut 212). Otherwise, she is no longer wrongly provokable, which, in turn, allows her to better control not just herself but the direction the next provocation takes, such as a politically beneficial one, either for herself or the community at-large.

Plato Correcting and Controlling

Given that the written dialogue form presents a contextualization of the argument (Cook 116), Plato, "the consummate dramatic artist" (Dobbs 268)—having chosen it as his method as medium, which is in itself a mechanism meant to provoke—is attempting to capture onto the pages all the forms provocation takes—e.g., stylistic, mechanistic, substantive—to help minimize any potential misapplication by those unpersuadable and to maximize the potential development by those willing to be persuaded. I take Plato's, "As those who play say...you'll tell me this too" (*R* 254), to suggest that the answer—the metaphysical one—exists. Plato cannot tell the answer, though—he can, however, help, to which Kuhn succinctly puts: "Plato was not interested in dramatizing the human event of paramount importance, the change of heart, but rather in bringing it about by initiating a dialectical process in the mind of the reader" (13).

In addition to using numerous definitional terms to convey certain actions and reactions within a relationship where provocation has social and thus political implications, for example, when Plato has Socrates say to Glaucon "that a man who is by nature erotically disposed toward someone care for everything related" (*R* 168)—Plato's use of stylistic

choices in narrating constantly directs his readers toward the correct side of the argument, such as inserting grammatical particles to suggest where the reader should pause. To that quote, Bloom footnotes, "Socrates...uses an ambiguous sentence...to affect Glaucon's response...Socrates constantly uses words with a sexual or military connotation... predisposing him to certain answers by appealing to his...passion" (*R* 164, FN 1).

In terms of theorizing his politics from a perspective that privileges provocation in offering up an interpretation of Plato's rhetorical strategy and philosophical doctrine, it is Plato, not Socrates, and it is his readers, not Glaucon. Furthermore—and in using the definitional terminology of provocation in ascending order connoting intensity—where in the *Republic*, Plato identifies the origin of the major social problem and its consequence— that is, "if all of you had...persuaded...from youth onwards...each would be his own best guard, afraid that in doing injustice he would dwell with the greatest evil," people would not consider their reputations when trying to determine what real justice is (*R* 43). As the problem exists—and to which the effects are real—Plato proposes his alternative: "But if we are somehow going to persuade them that no citizen ever was angry with another and that to be so is not holy, it's just such things that must be told [to the] children right away...and as they get older, the poets must be compelled to make up speeches for them which are close to these" (*R* 56).

The take away is—and to the points regarding interpretive privilege and perspective —the education policy option outlined in the *Republic* is less the educational manual than the dialectic *Republic* itself. Plato's strategic rhetorical deployment of carefully chosen words

—those members of Wittgenstein's linguistic family—depicting forms of provocation and types of—and to varying degrees—"rational" and "emotional" responses, I argue, is not only an effort to guide reactions to and feelings about the content but double as the content itself, that content being the continual increasing of the capacity for synoptic reasoning for which philosophical dialectics facilitates.

Reconciling Nature and Convention

For the dialectical Plato, a central function of rhetorical provocation intends to show that useful and helpful forms of provocation can be—and must be made—safe from and protected against misguided or ill-conceived allegations. Plato thinks he can present a resonate jurisprudence—and again, as his characters "[a]ren't giving laws that are impossible or like prayers, since the law we [a]re setting down is according to nature" (*R* 135)—that will expose the prejudicial nature and detrimental impact of the bias against Socratic provocation. At the same time, Socratic rationalism—and thus Socrates' more naturally-disposed philosophical orientation, to which, we recall at his defense, he owes his "advantage over the rest of mankind" (*A* 15)—will be vindicated.

This attempt to right-size expectations for what is best attainable through a particular set of political contrivances—and whose rhetorical appeals are grounded in "what is (more) natural" and mirrored in "nature"—as an argumentative tactic, parallels the one to bring back (or down[13]) into the city the philosopher and non-philosopher's focus—and thus their allegiances, for the security, stability and harmony that follows. That is, Plato depicts a

---

[13] (*R* 3; Bloom 1991: 310)

political alternative in terms of what is, at least, "(more) natural"—or the "least unjust"—as the best correction for the natural hostility between politics and philosophy. Therefore, because of his disassociation with corrupt politics and the intimate one with rational contemplation, the (more) natural Socrates becomes a legitimate candidate for rule and thus opens the door for the opportunity to present the case for justice in accordance to the Form.

The natural human tendency is to behave anti-socially (Kraut 209), and as we live under an unjust regime, the fix has to be—and has to be convincingly shown to be—a closer representation of nature, where nature is the mirror image of the metaphysical standard for which to strive. However, there is much disagreement about what is (more) natural, in that no definitive evidence can prove his metaphysical claims. Politically motivated, however, Plato pushes forward, looking for a way to portray the good life as connected to the Form; that is, by persuasion from a love of rational argument. For the closer one gets to the Form, or the Ideal, the more harmonious and happier life becomes—of which one of the multiplier effects is the benefit of improved social relations, as that internal harmony (re)produces throughout the political culture. For this to occur, we must possess the love for argument and have acquired the necessary deliberative skills to exercise discretion and judgment, both of which depend on good laws—laws that promote reasonable behavior; Bloom writes: "[Plato's] Socrates focuses on the contents of poems, thereby implying that the other elements of poetry are only accessories used for the purpose of better conveying a theme or a teaching. ...Everything in the city stems from the beliefs of those who hold power and

are respected in it. If poetry is so powerful, its character must be a primary concern of the legislation" (1991: 351).

Now, with the Platonic Socrates back in the city, the dynamic of the provocation-based relationship between philosopher and non-philosophers has changed into "is a leisurely discussion among cultivated, friendly men" (Bloom 1991: 308)—as they are no longer institutionally-sanctioned adversaries, in that the philosophically-based educational methods have had a transformative effect: "[O]f the unnecessary pleasures and desires...that are hostile to law and...come to be in everyone; but, when checked by the laws and the better desires, with the help of argument...they are entirely [or nearly] gotten rid of...while in others stronger...ones remain" (*R* 135).

To validate such laws, Plato refers to the man, in Book 10 who, after losing his son, shows self-restraint in public by not allowing himself to be overcome with grief (*R* 287). I now turn to develop Plato's criticism of the types of people emblematic of the too-emotionally-disposed, as they are too provokable to responses that create the political conditions ripe for injustice.

Censoring Suffering

For Plato, too long has the glorification of misery and suffering been part of the human experience—the way with which it has been dealt in society has contributed to a culture that conflates justice with appearance, justice with physical strength. In that Greek tragedian tradition—and from which Socratic rationalism represents the first intellectual break—"suffering cannot be explained away as a perspective illusion dissolving in the light

of a deeper insight" (Kuhn 23). Where Greek tragedy highly dramatized the confrontation and struggle with human suffering, Plato sought to use his newly-installed political levers to de-legitimize the cultural entertaining of such so-called realities, as they helped to inflame the passions of those who also happened to wield political power. These democratic rulers —as hearers and fans of such tear-jerking poetry—proved insufficiently rational to deliberate on matters to which the concept of justice is appealed.

As with the feeling of anger, censure may not completely eliminate suffering, but, for Plato, the political provocateur, it can change the cultural attitudes toward it to a negative view. Socrates says in the *Republic*: "For...if our young should seriously hear such things and not laugh scornfully at them as unworthy speeches...with neither shame nor endurance, [they] would chant many dirges and laments at the slightest sufferings" (*R* 66). Real political justice comes only after those philosophically-disposed rulers have assumed the right to apply it consistent with the knowledge acquired from having developed the capacity to reason. That virtuously-applied knowledge of real (political) justice could only ever be revealed by imitating the Form of Justice. Poets like Homer, however—with all of their rhetorical maneuvers and lyrical characterizations—depict events and scenes of suffering and elation in such a way that intends to rouse the emotions of the audience who then

transfer the theatrical pity[14] they experienced into the real-world, which, in turn, manifests itself in circumstances that call for philosophical seriousness.

Such is the source of Plato's political animosity toward the similarly-impassioned spirits of the poet and democrat—Plato has Socrates ask of the non-attending Homer: "'Dear Homer, if you are not third from the truth about virtue, a craftsman of a phantom, just the one we defined as an imitator...and able to recognize what...make human beings better or worse...tell us which of the cities was better governed thanks to you...? What city gives you credit for having proved a good lawgiver and benefited them?'" (*R* 282). Of course, there isn't one, or, at minimum, not one that has the right to, by Plato's criterion for judgment. That criterion—or standard—is the Form. Even for Plato and although he goes much further than Socrates, it is far easier to prove the null.

Conclusion

Theorizing provides that opportunity to make a wholly satisfactory case for the philosophical principles from which to the conditions for political justice. Not to diminish the importance of the contributions theory, but in that much of theorizing consists of making elaborations about the counter-factual—and with the intellectual freedom of never being proven wrong empirically—Plato's overarching metaphysics, on which his political regime is constructed, demands that his word be taken, just as Socrates' negativism was so matter-of-

---

[14] Stevens: "Plato does not actually name pity in the list, but, as I have pointed out elsewhere,14 his reference to the enjoyment which the spectators of tragedy take in weeping (48 A) shows that he has in mind the emotion pity. And just as the spectator of tragedy enjoys weeping and therefore is both pained and pleased, so the spectator of comedy enjoys the emotion of envy under circumstances which make it a kind of unrighteous pain, and thus experiences a mixture of pleasure and pain." (1948: 177)

fact asserted. Plato, I argue, was provoked—incidentally—into becoming a political theorist out of necessity to save the future of his first love—metaphysics. He had to find a pedagogical method to make Socratic rationalism not only more palatable—which is, to a large degree, the reason for his political works—but workable. In this regard, Plato—probably what would have been much to the chagrin of Socrates—gives us written dialectics as a developmental tool by which to potentially experience that which he maintains in the *Republic*, at least, is available—the Forms. Vlastos interprets Plato's position:

> [The Forms] are incomparably the most rewarding to the mind of all the things to which it can turn in its search for truth, for their natures are logically perspicuous, or can be made so with adequate training in dialectic... Their physical instances are, by contrast, intellectually opaque and shifty. They do not display their intelligible structure on their sensible surface (1997: 187).

Experiencing the Form, however, like Socrates' conversion at Delphi, is similarly religious. Moreover, Plato reserves it for the most extraordinary humans,—those very few capable of ascertaining the Truth behind the esoteric mask of philosophical discourse. Another interpretive difficulty—and, on my reading, a big factor for Plato eventually abandoning the theory of the Form[15]—lies in the inherent problems of language. Despite the insistence from metaphysicians like Socrates and Plato, "that there is really only one...true description of the human situation, one universal context of our lives" (Rorty 28)—one which still applies to us today equally so as it did two-plus millennia ago; there has been no widespread, initial agreement on the terms of that debate, linguistically or substantively, when it comes to politics or much else, for that matter.

---

[15] In the end, Plato abandons the theory of the Form—at least the pursuit for a successful articulation of it.

What Plato has left us with—despite his attempts to theoretically reconcile Socrates and Athens—and what makes him so provocative to this day, is that by voiding any contingency with respect to deliberating on legal cases, he raises the definitional standard (and thus political stakes) for justice to mean the achievable Objective Justice. Consequently, all else is something less than real justice. This is what made philosopher-kings so critical and would put the Enlightenment so at odds with him, to whom I turn now to that era's most provocative political theorist, Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

CHAPTER 6

Rousseau

Introduction: The Contextual-Historical Original Provocateur

Perhaps if eighteenth-century, Genevan political theorist, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, could have—and I use "could" and not "would" because I am almost entirely certain that Rousseau could not have helped himself—heeded his own words, "For us—ordinary men who heaven has not distributed such great talents and whom it does not destine for much glory—let us remain in our obscurity" (*DSA* 21). Rousseau could have avoided the tumultuous relationship between himself and much of his European contemporaries. Instead, Rousseau replied to the Academy of Dijon's solicitation for responses to the question, "Has the restoration of the sciences and the arts contributed to the purification of mores, or to their corruption?" (*DSA* 2). So, if one were to become sympathetic to Rousseau on a human level, it is possible that the Academy's provocative question initiated the relationship. However, in that the question was an open letter to the public and not just the position Rousseau argued but the tone he took, it seems more plausible that Rousseau—on a personal and stylistic level and not in substantive terms here—is the instigator for the ensuing exchanges traded between Rousseau and his critics, of whom he, too, is critical.

That said, Rousseau identifies himself as a victim of the oppressive inequality resulting from the moral decay for which the arts and sciences are in part responsible. Rousseau's was clearly the minority opinion, running counter to the prevailing point of view of the day. Much of what it means to be provocative entails voicing the counter-argument to

the more accepted one dominant in society. As such, Rousseau is contrarian. That is not to suggest, however, that Rousseau was being contrarian just for the sake of being so. In other words, I argue, that Rousseau genuinely held the view he expressed. In addition, provocateurs tend to believe that it is their ethical duty to make sure that the "truth" is heard—that the status quo does not, at least, go unchallenged.

Rousseau, however, was not so naive not to anticipate the ire that his answer would draw from his contemporaries. Rousseau prefaces his first discourse: "I foresee that I will not easily be forgiven for the side I have dared to choose. Running head on into everything that men admire today, I can expect only universal blame ... I have taken my stand" (*DSA* 1). Similar to Bloom's analysis of the political hostility the majority of men in Antiquity felt toward Socratic philosophy—which is why it needed an apology—Rousseau's first discourse as well as his future writings were met with equally forceful retaliatory anger. He observes, "Among us, it is true, Socrates would not have drunk the hemlock; but he would have drunk from a cup more bitter still: the insulting ridicule and scorn that are a hundred times worse than death" (*DSA* 10).

Just as Socrates knew of "truth"—i.e., the falsity in the claim to possess human wisdom—Rousseau, too, in self-deprecatory fashion, backhandedly insults those of the opposing view, in that to hold such a view means to live in self-deceit. With the same level of irony as Socrates, Rousseau seems to articulate his criticism of others' certainty for things with an equal level of confidence, constantly reminding—at times pleading with—his audience to acknowledge his total honesty and truthfulness to describing the truth. At the

very beginning of the first discourse, just after restating the question he was to answer—"Has the restoration of the sciences and the arts contributed to the purification of mores, or to their corruption?" (*DSA* 2)—Rousseau rhetorically asks his own, only to give the answer immediately: "Which side should I take in this question? The one, gentlemen, that is appropriate to an honest man who knows nothing and who thinks no less of himself for it" (*DSA* 2).

For me, in terms of provocation as the privileged interpretive category for analyzing his theoretical project of which Rousseau the man is part, Rousseau—in being provoked to respond to the question raised by the Academy and to which the answer comes in the form of his critical reaction to society and culture— on a personal level, assumes the role of the original provocateur to whom the relational subject consists of the Academy and those of the opinion that the sciences and arts contribute to moral betterment of man.

The Textual-Theoretical Original Provocation

In theoretical terms, Rousseau names that original provocateur, to whom Rousseau gives the title, "the true founder of civil society." Before that, man—in a more natural condition and thus a more natural man—did not carry on close and long-lasting associations with others, and thus men were not in relationships hardly at all, let alone ones started from some single act of provocation and continued by returning provocations, whatever the nature of the provocations, positive or negative or a combination of good and bad ones. As such, that original man of civilization—in having "enclosed a plot of land [and saying] this is mine" (*DOI* 60)—did not provoke what would have been the proper response. It is not so

much that at this point people were wrongly provokable, and in that provocation requires as

subject and an object, they were not provokable at all, in that they were "simple enough to

believe him" (*DOI* 60)—or put another way, did not refute and challenge him. This in itself is

to suggest that they did not view his intentions (being that they were sinister or, at the very

least, benevolent) with the appropriate level of skepticism, and obviously so because their

condition would not have previously equipped them to—no one ever "pulled up the stakes

and cried out to his fellow men: 'Do not listen to this impostor'" (*DOI* 60).

That first provocation—the claim to private property, in which the state was thusly

formed to recognize as legitimate—became the mechanism used "by the rich as a means of

enslaving the poor" (Melzer 1983b: 644). What followed was the installation and production

of a culture of provocation whose origins Rousseau pinpoints as the time in which humans

physically and psychologically transition into society from the state of nature, and when

"[p]eople grew accustomed to gather in front of their huts [as] true children of love and

leisure...want[ed] to be looked at" (*DOI* 60). In addition, and in conjunction with the

development for the faculty to reason and thus the 'desire to know' and to discover

meaning, human hope and expectation were introduced into the emerging cultural psyche,

the effect of which "was the first yoke they imposed on themselves without realizing it and

the first source of evils they prepared for their descendants" (*DOI* 63). In other words, the

invention of intention accelerated the evolution of the sociable man and all the conventions

that come with civility. Bloom writes of Rousseau's insights on this historical juncture at which

humans are increasingly separating themselves from their (more) natural condition: "[An

infant] cannot stop it from raining by crying, but he can make an adult change his mind. …

With the possibility of change of wills emerges the justification of blame and hence of anger.

Nature does not have intentions; men do" (1978: 142).

For Rousseau—and coupled with the advent of property 'rights'—when people

began to look self-reflexively at the world, they then wished for recognition from others for

their knowledge, as they had demonstrated a superior level of talent for intellectual

reasoning, setting them apart, comparatively, from what is ordinary or common, a concept

which can now take on a pejorative connotation. For Rousseau, "each one [of them] claimed

to have a right to [esteem], and it was no longer possible for anyone to be lacking it with

impunity" (*DOI* 64). This culture effectively necessitated that each person "show himself to

be something other than what he in fact was" (*DOI* 67). The inadvertent acquisition of

socially-driven vanity—that is, this new psychological dependency for flattery along with the

obligation for reciprocating—brought with it, in addition to disunity and immorality,

"incipient inequality," each having a multiplier effect on the others (*DOI* 68). Grant writes of

Rousseau, "Economic dependence does threaten integrity, so one must seek to acquire

economic self-sufficiency. Cultivating simple tastes is essential" (Grant 436). As such,

Enlightenment-era Europe culture lauded ostentation—materially and philosophically.

Rousseau felt compelled to expose the frivolity and hypocrisy of the socially fashionable,

who achieved such fame for claiming the opposite—those, ultimately for Rousseau, like

Voltaire (*C* 399) and the *Holbach* clique (*C* 532).

The so-called enlightened champions of scientific progress, for Rousseau, battled with—as he admitted doing, as well—severe "*amour-propre*, which [in] mak[ing] comparison, is never content" (*E* 213); that is, suffering from always the yearning for vain-glory, except that Rousseau, he thought, had enough integrity and honesty to admit as much, to which he credits the decision of withdrawing from society in favor of solitary dreaming. However, Rousseau drew from his life experiences and personal relationships, e.g., those based on socially and economically unequal terms, to develop a new and radical theory of politics, one "that it boils down to the two principal objects, liberty and equality" (*SC* 170). Liberty and equality are in opposition to what he sees all about, dependence and oppression.

Dependence and Decadence

The natural state is no longer an option, but, for Rousseau, a more natural one—e.g., a more just and free one—is theoretically imaginable, and can serve as the model for which decay is slowed in those few remaining republics, such as Geneva. To effectively present an available alternative, Rousseau first needs to contrast that preferable counterfactual with the current state of affairs, wherein the political culture remains one of increasing social dependence, the cause of which is moral decadence—that is, given that "[e]verywhere [Rousseau] see[s] immense establishments where youths are brought up at great expense to learn everything but their duties" (*DSA* 16). The overwhelming calculative tendency exists to prefer the appearance of justice over real justice, which, for Rousseau, establishes institutional equality through which political obligation ensures civil—not natural, in that it is

no longer available (*SC* 151)—liberty. For Rousseau, the choice is either civil freedom, although imperfect, or neither, the predatory condition to which a timid Rousseau has repeatedly acquiesced. Late in his life, he laments in the *Reveries*, "how they have made themselves dependent on me in order to make me dependent on them…move[s] me to real pity"[16] (*RSW* 80).

For Rousseau, a contributor of the culture of dependence, which he finds predatory and oppressive, is the doctrines of the modern day sages. His problem with enlightened metaphysicians is that in the philosophers' corrupt pursuit to achieve notoriety, they act not in the interest of truth, but out of self-interest for personal gain in the form of esteem and reputation—and thus further contributing to the deterioration of the strength that, one, binds political communities and, two, fosters individual self-reliance. In addition, philosophical doubt seeps into the psyche of the general citizenry, manifesting itself in a form of skepticism that undermines the shared and unwavering patriotism to the republic values and shared devotion to the civil religion that makes safe a people from falling victim to despotic ambition and misanthropic agnosticism. For Rousseau, the stakes could not be higher. Melzer writes: "Where citizens and patriotism no longer exist, republican government becomes impossible and despotism inevitable" (1983a: 302).

Rousseau pessimistically comes to learn the degree to which they seek to impose themselves on him and the degree to which he is susceptible to their victimization. As such, Rousseau the man combined with Rousseau the theorist attempts to free himself and man

---

[16] Butterworth picks up on what is at work for Rousseau here; noting that "[Rousseau] wants to explain how he can follow his own inclinations and et not be blamed for doing so." (RSW 204)

in the abstract from the culturally psychological and the economically political prisons in which others put the weak and the weak put themselves. Rousseau remembers in the *Confessions*:

> I could no longer see any greatness or beauty except in being free and virtuous, superior to fortune and man's opinion, and independent of all external circumstances. Although false shame and a fear of opprobrium prevented me at first from acting on these principles and from openly defying the conventions of my age, my mind was made up from that moment, and I only delayed the execution of my resolve until such time as contradiction provoked it and rendered it victorious. (*C* 332)

Provocation As Imposition and Victimization

To free himself (including from himself, as he, too, is not internally unified)—and to theorize political liberation for all—Rousseau must find a way in which to overcome the culture of imposition. Rousseau repeatedly acknowledges his own susceptibility to being provoked numerous times throughout his life that resulted in a worse situation than if he would have only resisted the temptation to compulsively react. He puts partial blame on that time during his childhood "when my senses were aroused my desires took a false turn"[17] (*C* 306). However, as he is looking for a political fix, he ultimately turns the focus of his criticism on "our absurd civil institutions...which merely gives the sanction of public authority to the oppression of the weak and the iniquity of the strong" (*C* 306).

For Rousseau, the political culture perpetuates man's weakness while the political institutions capitalize on that weakness. Rousseau's solutions are multi-faceted and must work in tandem. Society has to recognize—as he has—their status as victims and work

---

[17] Rousseau here is referring to a childhood spanking that "would determine my tastes and desires, my passions" (*C* 25).

toward instilling cultural values—ones that promote self-sufficiency. This, however, needs the assistance of a public policy about which he theorizes in *Emile*—education and fiscal reform to educate children in accordance with nature "to learn in detail, not from books but from things" (*E* 184) and to implement taxation in accordance with conventional equality, in that "[n]o society can exist without exchange, no exchange without a common measure, and no common measure without equality" (*E* 189). Such ideas provide the theoretical basis for which to redefine justice and replace the absurdity of Rousseau's Europe, where "the real welfare of the public and true justice are always sacrificed to some kind of apparent order, which is in reality detrimental to all order" (*C* 306).

The problem, as Rousseau understands it, is that the so-called beneficiaries of structural inequality fail to recognize that they are prisoners of the systems and thus to themselves. Rousseau begins *The Social Contract* by identifying that type: "He who believes himself the master of others does not escape being more of a slave than they" (*SC* 141). They too—despotic tyrants, "political sermonizers" (*SC* 183) and 'enlightened' intellectuals —need to undergo a transformational experience that forces them to confront their internal disunity so that the conditions for political reform are viable (theoretically, at least, for the pessimistic Rousseau). For instance, Rousseau frequently attacks those *hyperrationalist* philosophers. In contrasting the philosophical man of society with the "savage [who] lives in himself," which, for Rousseau, insulates him from caring about useless talents in nature such as being a good dancer, the modern philosopher, is outwardly concerned (*DOI* 80). Additionally, however—and as an impediment to political justice through virtue and duty—

his metaphysical disposition does not insulate himself as does the savage's but rather, isolates himself and to negative ends, both personally and subsequently publicly; for Rousseau, "Reason is what engenders egocentrism, and reflection strengthens it...[and] turns man in upon himself ... Philosophy is what isolates him and what moves him to say in secret, at the sight of a suffering man, 'Perish if you will; I am safe and sound'" (*DOI* 54).

Rousseau knows that we cannot return to a state of nature. He would rather not, anyhow, in that "[we] ought constantly to bless the happy moment that pulled [us] away from it forever and which transformed [each of us] from a stupid...animal into an intelligent...man" (*SC* 150). In order for a just regime to come about, there must be a change in what compels us to engage one another—that is, relationships cannot any longer be defined as provocations of impositions, in which renders Rousseau—and, by extension, the citizens/society—"incapable of performing a good deed under compulsion," Butterworth notes (*RSW* 202). Rather—and with the help of just and impartial laws—the people become inclined not to retreat inwardly as the metaphysician does but to act naturally authentic, as motivated by a sense of decency and pity, although within a social context. In other words, they act out of patriotic duty as a citizen and not out of a sense of undue obligation, in which what begins as a pleasurable act, but (for Rousseau) "having gradually become a habit, [becomes] inexplicably transformed into a kind of duty...soon felt to be annoying" (*RSW* 74). In sum, social engagement within a politically just context—but with the available power to enforce and coerce when needed—brings together engaged

citizens to ensure substantive equality, thus, in turn, fostering social bonds of authenticity

and not of obligation and victimization.

<p align="center">*Rousseau, the Contagonist*</p>

Although an engaged citizenry is critical for the maintenance of republican

legitimacy, a severe tension exists between that type of general disposition and the

propensity for anti-social—i.e., personally selfish and publicly detrimental—behavior most

people exhibit, including Rousseau, as evidenced in handing over his children to the care of

the state. Recognizing that he "may have been mistaken, Rousseau—"look[ing]upon

[himself] as a member of Plato's *Republic*"—demands empathy from would-be critics,

rationalizing that "since [his unstated reasons] were strong enough to seduce [him], they

would seduce many others" (*C* 333).

An apologist for himself, Rousseau is demanding that his apology be accepted—and

that he would be forgiven. Just as Socrates was no model for Rousseau's time, neither is he

a model for a Socrates (*DSA* 10). Shklar writes: "Being no Spartans in Sparta we are best

when we listen to conscience and evade situations that stimulate ill will in us [and...[t]o reject

conscience is to suffer the most painful of all the frustrations that repressed instinct can

inflict, remorse" (1969: 66). Rousseau, the person, cannot help himself. He is too easily

susceptible to provocation; for Talmon, "Rousseau was one of the most ill-adjusted and

egocentric natures [falling] prey to the conflict between impulse and the duties…because

never in accord with himself" (38-9). However, Rousseau, the theoretician, believes that he

can transfer the nature of his personal shortcomings and misgivings—of which, he assures,

plague many others, too—in order to construct abstractions to which can be applied to existing cases.

Plato apologizes for Socrates, the historical provocateur and then casts the Platonic Socrates as his theoretical protagonist. Rousseau apologizes for himself, the contagonist and then casts the Rousseauean Legislator to reconcile man and citizen, so that for Rousseau—in terms of the strategy for provocation's use—one will no longer have "to avoid situations which place our duties in opposition to our interests" (*C* 61), in that, as Shklar succinctly puts it: "our emotional drives are reoriented entirely to express themselves in love of the republic" (1969: 73).

For Rousseau, emotions are natural and cannot be eliminated, and as such, one such as *a Plato* ought not try to suppress them. The goal is to set the cultural and political conditions for successfully delaying not the emotions that Nature has given humans but the inflamed passions to which civil society introduced them, and then to ensure that all sentiments to which one is inclined are rightly channeled into the political sphere for the maintenance of a healthy republic. Rousseau's second discourse contends, "Nature, in giving men tears, bears witness that she gave the human race the softest hearts" (*DOI* 54)— of which, according to Rousseau, his was among those with the most tender of hearts. Rousseau says of himself, "There was never...a creature of our kind with less vanity than ... My strongest desire was to be loved by everyone who came near me" (*C* 25). Whatever trouble the yearnings of his heart got him in throughout his life, his heart also contributed much to his work, if only to direct his theoretical cause in locating where real justice lies: "I

know my own heart and understand my fellow man. But I am made unlike any other" (*C* 17).

Flawed as he was—which, to a large degree, forced him to flee his fellow contemporaries,

and "[f]rom his lonely and vulnerable position outside all human society, supported by no

parties and attacking all of them, Rousseau in a sense invited the enmity of all

mankind" (Melzer 1983a: 309)—Rousseau was committed to being intellectually honest, in

spite of the (seeming) paradoxical nature of him that contributed to him "seeming so foolish

and strange in public [and] of acting unlike other people" (*C* 61).

Rousseau, the vagabond, "has no functions to fulfill" as a citizen (Shklar 1969: 68)—he is a

social outcast. Driven away, alone in solitude, Rousseau continued to fixate, as he continued

to work on his great system, and the self-described victim of jealous people, who resented

him for the delight he discovered alone—"the idleness of solitude is delightful because it is

free and voluntary," he says (*C* 592)—Rousseau's writings and life, if only incidentally in his

eyes, "did not fail to provoke the mob and incite them" (*C* 592). Rousseau, the thinker,

continued to provoke as well, drawing upon his interactions and communications with

"[t]hose who reproach me for my many inconsistencies" (*C* 592), in his autobiographical

writings to supplement his system of justice in his political works, such as the *Social Contract*

and even the *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*.

The issue is, Rousseau engaged in political theory—despite the fact that, for him,

philosophy is socially dangerous. Strauss writes of Rousseau, "science and citizenship are

indeed irreconcilable, but that society can afford to tolerate a few good-for-nothings at its

fringes, provided that they are really idle" (1947: 478). But just as Rousseau acknowledges

that he is not the master of his own destiny (*C* 373) when it comes to the timing of the publication of his *Confessions*, similarly he ought to have considered that he does not get to outright control the definition of 'idle'—and as that was the truth, his fiery, provocative rhetoric "supplied Robespierre" (Shklar 1978: 22) with theirs at the onset and during the French Revolution, as well as a litany of more recent scholarly interpreters—Talmon, for one —who argue that: "[I]n marrying this concept with…popular sovereignty, and popular self-expression, Rousseau gave rise to totalitarian democracy [and] coupled with the fire of Rousseau's style, lifted…intellectual speculation into that of a great collective experience… [birthing] modern secular religion…as a passionate faith" (43).

Rousseau's political system seeks to rid the charged rhetoric of provocation as a legitimate form of political communication, in that it can likely fracture one's allegiance to the general will (Abizadeh 563). Rousseau's works, however, are filled with the language of provocation, but before looking at his political theory itself in terms of provocation, I now discuss his strategic use of and implications for rhetorical provocation relative to his overall theoretical project that seeks outs—although seemingly paradoxically and certainly ambiguously—the conditions for which even the "wretched" among us can experience as a result of the stylistically and substantively provocative theory by, as Shklar describes Rousseau, "the Homer of the losers" (1978: 24).

Rhetorical Use of Force and the Conceptual Language of Provocation

Throughout Rousseau's life—as he was especially prone to falling victim of others' provocation that resulted for him the inferior position. Rousseau, in his own words, tells of

how others were successful in "forcing me into a state of obligation against my will" (*C* 342). By nature, Rousseau was gentle, even timid—and lacking the fortitude to resist others' entrapments—Rousseau gives those like him—and all of us, in that just law is blind—the *Social Contract*, which becomes the theoretical basis for which to construct a new political process that results in far fewer personal dependencies and much greater equality because, as Shklar writes, "[the social contract] alone depersonalizes, and so moralizes obedience" (1978: 14).

So, where Socratic rationalism seeks to suppress all emotions attributed to personal bodily urges for moral—but non political—purposes, Rousseau means to harness the passions to the benefit of the public sphere, so that "it provides politics with the force to motivate...[and this] virtuous domestication of the passions allows Rousseau to envision a form of speech proper to modern republican citizenship" (Abizadeh 571). Rousseau is re-orientating us so that the various forms that provocation take—e.g., dispositional and rhetorical—are directed at pursuing a different understanding of justice—one that is real, in that all come to embrace the equality that exists for the potentiality of being the recipient of sinisterly-motivated provocations, whether in word (e.g., superior debate) or deed (e.g., punishment).

For Rousseau, the general will, as rightly performed, functions to eliminate the dominant form of provocation—that is, the illegitimate use of physical force and psychological manipulation that rendered pervasive states of dependency. The impartiality of the general will strips from would-be political oppressors the opportunity to force their

individual wills on others, thus preventing real inequality and curbing the need to always compare, which, in turn, creates the necessary social conditions for citizens to take on an internally unified disposition—one in which people's inclinations and duties are consistent with one another—a process whose cultural effect keeps the citizenry rightly orientated toward the goal of sustaining an equitable and fair distribution of resources as well the application of justice. In essence, the transformation from man to citizen corrects for the ensuing slavery that came from that first provocation of staking claim to a piece of earth—and to which Rousseau corrects the apologists for such an act. Rousseau writes of Aristotle:

> Aristotle...had also said that men are by no means equal by nature, but that some were born for slavery and domination ... Aristotle was right, but he took the effect for the cause. Every man born in slavery is born for slavery ... If there are slaves by nature, it is because there have been slaves against nature. Force has produced the first slaves; their cowardice has perpetuated them. (*SC* 142)

That previous right to force amounts to slavery—and unjust governments keep them in their chains, deliberately. To free man, Rousseau argues that we must accept trading "natural liberty (which is limited solely by the force of the individual involved)" for a "civil liberty" that the general will grants (*SC* 151)—and although not ideal, it remains the best of all available options, only even if "[t]he aim is to train men to 'bear with docility the yoke of public happiness'" (Talmon 42). And for Shklar, Rousseau's "[p]rotection is not freedom, but it certainly may feel just like it" (1978: 17).

But one might pose the question as to the possibility that Rousseau's advocacy for the general will as the arbiter for deciding what justice is merely trades one illegitimate form of force for another, only instead of culturally-sanctioned obligation it becomes state-

sanction totalitarian in nature. Rousseau most (in)famously mandates in *On the Social Contract* that "in order for social compact to avoid being an empty formula, it tacitly entails the commitment —which alone can give force to the others—that whoever refuses to obey the general will will be forced to be free" (*SC* 150). On my reading, Rousseau's rhetorical provocations seeks to provide a new way of thinking about the appeal for and exercise of acts of provocation—one that situates rightly provokable citizens in relation both to themselves and their fellow citizens. But as he argues that the limitations of linguistic expression prevents him—and anyone—from perfectly articulating the intention for which the theory of provocation itself can be applied. That is, inherent in his thought—and thus inevitably his writing—is "dominated by a highly fruitful but dangerous ambiguity" (Talmon 40). That said, however, Rousseau believes himself to be better equipped—rhetorically and perspectively—to present himself—and thus relatedly his theory—as one of provocation indicative of Plato's in the Fourth Epistle—that is, provocation for positive purposes, although for Rousseau, a form that culminates in mature political deliberation that rightly discerns good from bad rhetorical and acts of provocation, which applies, for Rousseau, to his entire readership, whether political actors or intellectual thinkers. On this point, Kavanagh argues on behalf of Rousseau: "Although the critics distort Rousseau's meaning [via] a judgment made in a paroxysm[18] of self-exculpation[19], the basic motivation [i.e.] the fear of [revolutionary] violence…is [central in] Rousseau's political thought" (142-3).

---

[18] *Paroxysm*, or violent outburst (*OED*)

[19] Self-exculpation, or clear from guilt or shame (*OED*)

Rousseau's anticipation of his critics become, for him, proof of his argument—that is, their failure to understand the meaning of his provocation shows that the culture does indeed accept shallow interpretations of his theories as well as honor retaliatory acts against honest attempts at introducing new—and positive—forms of provocation. Rousseau's later theoretical works—i.e., the *Social Contract* and *Emile*—having failed to resonate with a persuadable audience set the conditions for the decision—whether it was his or the government's—to create distance between Rousseau and the rest of society, in that regardless if "if he had been a little less felicitous and a little more ponderous" (*DSA* viii), his novel uses for the terms "compel," "coerce" and "force" were taken to incite—another term within provocation's Wittgensteinean family of resemblances—revolution:

> Voltaire, then resident there and passionately meddling in local politics, took it to be a blatant intervention in the domestic constitutional struggles then at a feverish pitch. And when the Genevan Council of Twenty-Five condemned the Social Contract in June 1762, its principal reason was the same: in his *plaidoyer*, Geneva's attorney-general, Jean-Robert Tronchin, cited numerous passages as proof that Rousseau was retailing rebellious notions. (*DSA* xi)

As the *Social Contract* whose content can be read as related to his earlier discourses, Rousseau's political theory challenged the foundations on which the political system rested —that is, those with political power hold it legitimately as their rights have been derived law, natural law. As such, they found Rousseau so provocative not only for unconventional notions for what constitutes legitimate uses and acts of force and compulsion, but the premise from which they begin, which contributes to the harsh reaction against Rousseau's attempt to strip the argumentative force that proponents of natural law theory appeal to in staking their claim to legitimacy—a definition whose current application Rousseau wholly

disagrees with, and is what I look at next in terms of the provocation found in Rousseau's work.

Rousseau Challenges Natural Law Theory

In his preface to the *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, Rousseau asks on what basis does "moral or political inequality" exist—to which he begins his answer by questioning the premise that "nature [is] subjected to the law" (*DOI* 35). Rousseau intends to expose the weakness of the argument that those make to justify their sense of superiority and place of privilege by applying to themselves some laws found in the natural order of things—that is, natural law. The implication in asking, "Is that inequality authorized by natural law?" (Neuhouser 372), Rousseau strategically connects this political inequality to conventionality, thus separating it from what is (more) natural, and, in turn, adding to the conceptual meaning of it an element of arbitrariness.

In order for Rousseau to sufficiently strip the natural law theorists of their argumentative proprietorship over how the metaphysical truth supposedly supports their claim to the acceptability of this political inequality, Rousseau must successfully shift the argumentative burden of proof on them—that is, he has to show that their position does not have some natural permission to speak on behalf of Nature. For Rousseau, natural inequality is a separate matter and irrelevant to political inequality—and thus has no basis for which to extend the political context, but this is exactly what Rousseau sees natural law metaphysicians doing, and exposes the contingency and convention from which they rhetorically proceed. In order words, Rousseau is charging them with working backward—

that is, for Rousseau, these political beneficiaries, within their specific context, strategically but arbitrarily select a method whose "universal" data is led by their prejudicial conclusions that "prove" their case for keeping power. In reality, however, for Rousseau: "So that all the definitions [of 'law'] of these wise men...it is impossible to understand the law of nature and consequently to obey it without being a great reasoner and a profound metaphysician...men must have used enlightenment which develops only with great difficulty and by a very small number of people within the society itself" (*DOI* 34).

For Rousseau, within the context of political inequality, natural law metaphysicians lose any argumentative credibility for their rigid claim that out there exists 'universal agreement' but the fact is—and in terms of the language of provocation—"[i]t is not without surprise and a sense of outrage that one observes the paucity[20] of agreement that among the various authors who have treated it. Among the most serious writers one can hardly find two who are of the same opinion on [the true definition of natural right]" (*DOI* 34). Moreover, proponents of and apologists for some legitimate claim to natural rights as derived from natural law undermine their overarching theoretical goal when extending the argument to the political sphere and expose themselves as not more than intellectual opportunists in that they word the definitions of terms like the true 'nature of man' and 'law' not in earnest but "convenient[ly]". Rousseau writes:

> Writers begin by seeking the rules on which, for the common utility, it would be appropriate for men to agree among themselves; and then they give the name natural law to the collection of these rules, with no other proof than the good which presumably would result from their universal observance. Surely this is a very

---

[20] Paucity, fewness (*OED*)

convenient way to compose definitions and to explain the nature of things by virtually arbitrary views of what is seemly. (*DOI* 35)

Here, Rousseau's provocative challenge is meant to set the stage for his theoretical proposals by attempting to expose their systems for analysis as weak and their agendas as fraudulent, charges that both of which also support his criticisms of decadent society relative to the moral bankruptcy of those who view history as a story of progress, which, for Rousseau, is one of moral regress.

In sum, he wants to reframe the starting premises from which to analyze the developments leading to contemporary society, making the natural law metaphysicians work forward instead of backward. Rousseau feels that natural law metaphysicians got the theoretical ordering of, as Masters puts it, "[t]he foundation of social morality and justice" wrong. Rather, in that "Rousseau saw that it is impossible to account for the existence of civil society apart from the evolution and history of the human species," that foundation "is the 'nature of law' (i.e., the logic of obedience which is necessarily implied in any freely obeyed law)" (202). And as such, legitimacy and justice come through consent—and maintained by virtuous and dutiful civic participants.

Replacing Provocation (of Man) with Depersonalization (of Law)

Now, as Rousseau thinks he has sufficiently poked enough logical holes in the natural law theorists' chronology by discrediting their argument for placing the rationale for obligation and obedience to some power outside a specific political context—that is, for Rousseau, "[a]ll political power is dependent on publicly accepted, legitimating opinions" (Melzer 1980: 1026)—Rousseau can place political legitimacy within the confines

of a consenting community. That distribution of power becomes just "when" that citizenry—

even if only hypothetically—has agreed to the terms of the social contract—the terms of

which, although abstractly written to cover all, cover all *in that context*. For the pragmatic

Rousseau[21] understands that—despite the fact that all people carry the natural instinct for

self-preservation, which manifests itself in the sentiment of feeling pity—the amount of

liberty available is contingent on the conditions specific to certain political communities,

making some places freer than others. So for Rousseau, the emphasis ought to be on the

prevention of some—namely the rich—to "bend the law in their own favor" (Shklar 1978:

17).

That said, however, just as Rousseau finds the intellectual elite corrupt power

grabbers, who have usurped the dogmatism of the former religious leaders, Rousseau

pessimistically has to confront the reality that the average people, who have not only been

duped by political opportunists but fail to demonstrate the necessary decision-making skills

to enact fair, abstract law, both equal in its application to everyone and expansive in its

protection. In reviewing his life, Rousseau bemoans, "Why is it that, having found so many

good people in my youth, I find so few in my latter years? Has the race died out? I am

forced to look for them today in a different class from the one I found them in then" (*C* 144).

Predictably, Rousseau fails to find them, so he abstractly theorizes the political conditions—

and the necessarily disinterested Leader—for which to answer the question: "How will a

---

[21]Grant: "In politics, one must not seek perfection, but only the best that is possible. From this it follows that whether a policy is good or bad will vary with the particular circumstances of a nation and its people" (429).

blind multitude, which often does not know what it wants (since it rarely knows what is good for it), carry out on its own an enterprise as great as difficult as a system of legislation?" (*SC* 162).

For Rousseau, who in agreeing with Hobbes—and in terms of provocation, as Melzer conceives of it—man is too susceptible to the political provocations of opportunistic demagogues—that is, "[b]y inducing others [men] to follow them...[and thus threatening anarchy]...because they are too obedient....[and being] superstitious…the mass of men are followers, too easily led by rabble rousers…demagogic moralists, and…ambitious priests." (1983b: 635). And additionally, the common person is too short-sighted, in that, for Rousseau, "[e]ach individual...finds it difficult to realize the advantages he ought to draw from the continual privations that good laws impose" (*SC* 164) which necessitates that great Legislator's authorship of sound and impartial law that will rule supreme—and thus protect equally. "The state as a paternal savior was the only possible hope" (Shklar 1978: 17) to prevent what he lived, even as a boy—that is, "in every situation the powerful roque protects himself at the expense of the feeble and innocent" (*C* 42).

As slaves of history imprisoned in society, which started at the point when that original provocateur drove that first fence stake in the ground, Rousseau accepts the defeat of the natural self, as indicative of his—and everyone else's—failure to resist provocation. The answer, for Rousseau, lies in re-orienting that provokability toward the benefit of the state, where the greatest amount of freedom—albeit it minuscule in comparison to that of the savage, for instance—ensures, at minimum, a longer chain for feeble and innocent and a

much shorter one for the powerful rogue. Rousseau must work with what is available and adjust—i.e., lower—expectations accordingly; for Levine, Rousseau's "dilemma is obvious: there can be no state without the citizen, but the citizen cannot flourish without the state" (550).

The point is, Rousseau, the radical pessimist—and not the deliberate inspirational precursor to, say, a Robespierre—has not only to believe but make palatable the possibility for a change in disposition, so that from the perspective of each member of the citizenry, it is accepted that when "the opinion contrary to mine prevails, this proves merely that I was in error...If my private opinion had prevailed, I would have done something other than what I had wanted. In that case I would not have been free" (*SC* 206).

For this to happen, man must undergo a transformation that—in terms of the dimensions of provocation—redefines what provokes us and resets the levels of emotions when reacting. For instance, for legitimacy and security, Rousseau's citizen must be virtuous and patriot without being either aloof and misanthropic or fanatical and xenophobic. The social contract's legalism attempts to neuter the rich and clever political schemer while its religiosity means to equip the well-intentioned but ill-equipped commoner with the skills to act self-reflexively and citizen-like—that is, as Levin writes: "To admit the possibility of a social contract implies acceptance not only of the notion that political society can change, but also that it has been created and can be changed by man" (Levin 530). I now turn to Rousseau's attempt at marrying man and citizen, and the success of his theoretical project as one of political provocation.

Internalizing External Provocations

Rousseau never develops a foundational philosophical system in the way Plato does, but like Plato, Rousseau's theoretical analysis is also one of provocation, in that he intends for his theory to be transformative—that is, his social commentary, cultural criticisms and thus political recommendations are meant to force reflection, define the rightly provocable disposition so to create the conditions for personal reorientation and political reform, through which justice can foster liberty and equality. Rousseau, however, becomes increasingly pessimistic of the chances to, if nothing else, even save the few good republics remaining. For Rousseau, social cohesion has become too divided and cultural corruption to deep—and thus the political sphere has become an enabler of corrosion and generally unwilling and/or unable to re-establish virtue.

Such is the case in large part due from man's blind faith in foundational fundamentalism—both philosophically and religiously. That said, however, Rousseau does not deny objective truth—in fact, Rousseau, a Christian himself, believes in God. His provocative religious position is one that refuses entry of some religious absolution into the public arena, in that—and similar to the natural law metaphysicians—the externalization of religion makes people dependent on the self-anointed mouthpieces of other-worldly capital-t truths. Rousseau writes: "My reading of the Bible...had led me to despise the base and foolish interpretations given to the words of Jesus Christ by persons quite unworthy of understanding them. In a word, philosophy, whilst attaching me to what was essential in

religion, had freed me from the host of petty forms with which men have obscured it" (*C* 366).

At the same time, however, Rousseau—and without having to abandon the claim that "[r]eligion is a natural tendency of the heart" (Melzer 1996: 352) and that "[r]eligion...is part of the education to and of the human" (Strong 1994: 125)—avoids the tyrannical consequences of the other transcendental claims. Rousseau takes the approach of a "reasonable man," who, without denying the existence of objectivity in truth, has to recognize that man cannot with any definitively ever know it—and thus ought never to use religious stricture (or philosophical first principles) to suggest a universal application, which, for Rousseau, as a Catholic in Protestant Geneva, "has brought such cruel persecutions upon me" (*C* 366).

Conclusion

Rousseau's theory of politics attempts to eliminate that kind of persecution of which he felt at the hands of religious-types in the majority, and give it over to the state whose job will be to channel those deeply-held attachments into developing patriotic citizens, beginning with the Legislator whose task "is to create a new type of man [in that]...[i]t is not enough to change the machinery of government" (Talmon 49). In effect, Rousseau replaces traditional religious education with a new civic-minded religious program where the externalization of religious practice takes a new form of adherence to the general will. And just like the precedence the general will takes to the private will, the criterion for which religiosity is judged becomes insulated from the previous cultural standard of prosecutorial

conformity as Rousseau reserves judgment for internal review of sincerity of faith. As such, man has been transformed—in theory. But as religious was internalized, the general will was externalized, creating a new criterion for judging behavior—one whose standard "was to be social utility, as expressed in..the general will...as if it were a visible and tangible object" (Talmon 4).

That potentiality leads to the emergence of another conflict of interest—not between man and citizen but within the citizen himself. For Melzer, the citizen "will be torn in his desires between his genuine love for the city and his ineradicable love of himself"—and although different than Rousseau's compulsion to oblige others', e.g., the young boy's in the "Sixth Walk" of the *Reveries*, advancements to enter dependence induced relationships, which put Rousseau at odds with his natural inclinations—merely traded one force for another, only this time with the political instruments for enforcement, in that [p]atriotism can never be complete; men must be forced to be free and unified" (1980: 1030).

The question is—and one my model of provocation does not necessarily answer so much as assess the nature of the provocative quandary Rousseau got himself in—Was his political fix worth the cultural problem? That is, social man is desirous, just as Rousseau himself was—and remained so. But unlike the Plato who elevated some, i.e. the philosopher-king, above the law, Rousseau, in making law above man, society above individuality, Rousseau's fundamental theoretical linchpin disallowed him from exempting himself—and thus forcing him to conclude near the end of his life what Melzer neatly summarizes: "Ultimately, however, Rousseau found the unity attainable through virtue to be

imperfect … The ultimate invincibility of nature and of the natural self, which led Rousseau from patriotism to virtue, finally leads him to abandon the moral-political realm altogether and to turn to the perfect natural unity of the solitary dreamer" (1980: 1032). Much of what it means to be provocative lies in self-contradiction. Rousseau fits such a characterization, which infuriated Friedrich Nietzsche who "hates" Rousseau—and Rousseau's theory of political justice in its close relation with natural equality. I now turn to the provocation of Nietzsche—and in his theoretical works, a significant amount of which is a reaction provoked by not only Rousseau but Socrates and Plato, as well.

CHAPTER 7

Nietzsche

Invention of the Ascetic Ideal as Imposition on Nietzsche

The question is to determine what provoked Nietzsche to deliver such a vitriolic attack on society—and the political culture—that is, an overall one that is indicative of his work, the Untimely Ones, in which it was predicted that Nietzsche would "bring about a kind of crisis" (*EH* 278). Nietzsche is reacting to the societal implications of the effects caused by —and among other historical realities, like the spread of and belief in Christianity—Socratic rationalism and Platonic metaphysics, all of which—including the religious dogma of Christianity—claim such capital-t truth is out there. Considering the devastating toll the other-worldly focused systems have had contributing to the acceptance of human mediocrity, Nietzsche, both cultural critic and philosophic skeptic, begrudgingly retorts, "How could such a philosophy—dominate!" (*BGE* 123).

Nietzsche intends to present the harshest possible criticism of the ascetic ideal because he is trying to undermine philosophy's purported ability to successfully show that a metaphysical theory of knowledge—that is, an epistemology—can be representative of Truth, as if one could access such insight even if it were "out there," which, for Nietzsche, it is not, thus making a futile—and dangerous—exercise. Nietzsche hopes to accomplish this by calling into question people's unfounded certainty that they think benefits them from having given themselves meaning they previously lacked. For Nietzsche, it is fiction—"[man] alone created a meaning for things, a human meaning" (*Z* 60)—and as Thomas notes: "The

invention of 'knowledge' as the representation of truth is...one of the great rhetorical mistakes of modern thought...In its quest for certainty, the will has always been tied to a style of representation that Nietzsche argues has its natural connection in the ascetic ideal" (18). Their inventiveness of a false reality, which has taken over the culture of which Nietzsche and his 'higher men' are a part has become an unnecessary impediment to achievement, whether it be, for instance, self-overcoming or willing to power.

Nietzsche becomes the anti-ascetic in terms of what he—as opposed to the ascetic idealist whose most (in)famous example is Socrates—understand what asceticism to properly mean. For Nietzsche, it is running toward life, unlike for Socrates, it is a rejection of everything that pertains to this world. Such a denial of life itself provokes Nietzsche, assuming the provocative title of the anti-priest, responds to Socratic rationalism, which Nietzsche refers to it as, irrational rationality. Nietzsche traces religious martyrdom and cultural nihilism back to that first self-denier and self-deceiver, Socrates—and thus confronts him, as he does in the *Birth of Tragedy*, even doing so on Socrates' philosophical turf; Dannhauser depicts this within the conceptual framework of provocation, writing that "[o]ne concedes a good deal to Socrates merely by consenting to argue with him...The most obvious novelty of Birth of Tragedy lies in its presentation of a strange and new image of Socrates, a revaluation of the traditional image" (80).

Antagonistic Nietzsche Versus Accepted Cultural Asceticism

Nietzsche takes on Socrates as the inventor of this kind of philosophy and inquiry that seeped into the public sphere and whose consequences have been dire. Also, that

irrational rationalism made Socrates sick and has since infected so many since that even today, these modern men of a progressive culture, which for Nietzsche is wrong, naively and even perversely and cynically believe what that invention continues to purport. Thus, their affliction continues. Nietzsche writes:

> Only now that we behold the ascetic priest do we seriously come to grips with our problem: what is the meaning of the ascetic ideal?—only now does it become 'serious': we are now face to face with the actual representative of seriousness. "What is the meaning of all seriousness?'... His right to exist stands or falls with that ideal: no wonder we encounter here a terrible antagonist—supposing we are antagonists of that ideal—one who fights for his existence against those who deny that ideal. (*GM* 116)

But Nietzsche denies them this—or, at least, cannot remain silent and ignore their preposterous and dubious characterizations and belief systems. He attacks them for it.

At work is Nietzsche's intentions to expose their mediocrity, which they wrongly interpret as common decency and politeness. Nietzsche's criticism is meant to undermine the certainty in which they believe their lives have meaning. To do this is to challenge the possibility of attaining the standard that Socrates created and Christianity spread, which, in turn, has spiraled into a cycle of inevitable failure being redirected into misguided forms of retaliatory punishment on those who, like Nietzsche, never fell prey to such philosophical— turned religious—traps Nietzsche argues that the intellectually weak legitimate their place by having created a culture of mediocrity that views achievement with suspicion—thus making Nietzsche's point of view highly provocative, in that it challenges the psychological reconciliations made to feel as if they live consistently in terms of traditionally accepted cultural mores.

In order to get "beyond good and evil,"[22] Nietzsche attempts to discredit the notion of unified objectivity by, first, showing its incomprehensibility for which Ideal is the standard as arbitrary and absurd as well as how the fundamentally incompatible principles to which people make claim for living their lives have produced in them an incoherent ideology that has infected the political culture to the point of total perversity both intellectually and morally relative to the natural order of things, as Nietzsche has understood man's genealogical record of history. Opposite of the ascetic—consumed with other-worldly burdens—Nietzsche, in having psychologically liberated himself from cultural conformity of the masses, can confront—and thus overcome—the contradictions of the past and the struggle between conflictual inclinations, which, in turn, allows him to live joyously and think clearly and freely. His freedom—and thus understanding—coupled with his commitment toward improving *this* life—the only one—offend the vast majority of people (the philosophical community as well as Christian masses) unquestioning dogmatism.

Ironically, for Nietzsche, what elevates him above the societal status quo—whose champions are the historical Socrates and the Christian Jesus—is the pursuit of perfection—on this earth and not the promise of it in some next life. He takes his willingness to buck the past and accept the contradictions within as evidence for committing rigorously to improve. And as Nietzsche's philosophical skepticism is met with societal skepticism, he—as principled—returns their cultural provocation with the kind of rhetorical provocation sure to

---

[22] "In contrast to Plato, Nietzsche frames his new epistemology in what we might call an 'extramoral' or 'nonmoral' sense, carrying with it the connotations of moral transcendence, of being 'beyond good and evil'" (Thomas 38).

antagonize. The difference lies on which side if truth—not Truth; Nietzsche condescendingly

retorts, first in the *Gay Science* and then in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*:

> Wouldn't that be fair, given such overweening deviation on the whole? When I hear
> of the malice of others against me—isn't my first reaction one of satisfaction? Quite
> right! I seem to be saying to them—I am so ill-attuned to you and have so much
> truth on my side that you might as well have a good day at my expense whenever
> you can! .... [M]y words are small, despised, crooked words...I can still use it to tell
> hypocrites the truth ... Behind a god's mask you hide from yourselves. (*GS* 249, *Z*
> 123)

As Thomas notes: "[R]hetoric is a means to challenge the production of values; it offers a

critique that is separated from philosophical dogmatism and metaphysics" (38).

The Politics of Life and "Truth"

Nietzsche contrasts himself with whom he identifies as self-deceivers. He is referring

to those in a debilitating state of constant anxiety who are afraid of reality and what is

truthful—and not some version of truth they created and attribute to themselves in order to

give their lives, according to Nietzsche, false hope. They are contemplative, reactive and

wrongly disposed emotionally, including, for some of them, those whose contemplation

detach them from this-worldly life, as defined by their unnatural suppression of active

engagement with life. For Nietzsche, their philosophical (in)activity makes them weak.

Nietzsche, however, is strong—strong in the sense that he has correctly identified his own

mortality and the relative futility of it, while still embracing the aristocratic recognition of

place and legitimate position of his nobility and superiority relative to the herd-like masses

as well as the dogmatic rationalists. Both of whom, for Nietzsche, accept concepts as fact—

for instance, the socialists' proclamation of "equal rights for all" (*AC* 191)—and by which

now society at-large live, and thus continue to contribute to downward spiral of nihilistic decadence. Charles Adler on Nietzsche's reading of Paul Borget regarding nineteenth century European nihilism[23]: a "disgust with the world," identified "as the discrepancy between the needs of the modern age that accompany the development of civilization and the inadequacies of existing reality" (Muller-Lauter 41).

To force them to confront their "disintegration," if nothing else—in that their psychological state is being cared for and perpetuated by the democratic state—and subsequently free himself and his identified "higher men" from the cultural impositions that seek to inhibit Nietzsche and "friends" from creating self-expressions of excellence, beauty and truth—whose provocations' impact, at worse, remain only incidentally negative, where the provocations of the democratic-socialist state continue to be deliberately harmful to both the weak and the strong—in that, for Nietzsche, "[w]hile a weak state may kill off all dissenters, a strong state should be able to tolerate them" (Kauffman 251). People have come to naively accept as matter-of-fact that truth precedes history, which, for Nietzsche is false, and the success to which these inversions of actual reality have seeped into the (German) cultural psyche—and where law has become the (re)enforcement (i.e., torture) instrument (*EH*)—must be shown to be arbitrary and disputable, which, if accomplished, doubly "proves" his notion of truth. Wilcox writes: "Nietzsche holds [against Kant] that the categories we employ in interpreting the world simplify and hence "falsify" the world, that

---

[23] Referring to *nihilism*, Nietzsche writes in *Ecce Homo*: "Against all this the sick person has only one great remedy. I call it Russian fatalism...exemplified by a Russian soldier who...finally lies down in the snow. No longer to accept anything at all...to cease reacting altogether..." (*EH* 230)

our interpretation of the world is only one among many which are possible, and that we interpret the way we do because of human, very human valuations and conditions of life in the past and present" (156). For Nietzsche, Christianity, as Platonism for the masses (*BGE*), whose control over the socio-political dialogue is in need of an adequate response—that is, a second conversion that privileges, once again, this life. His response is Nietzschean irony as provocation: "What defines me, what sets me apart from the whole rest of humanity is that I uncovered Christian morality. That is why I needed a word that had the meaning of provocation for everybody...Blindness to Christianity is the crime par excellence—the crime against life" (*EH* 332).

Nietzsche's perspectivism is truer—in that it is rigorously skeptical and honestly pursued—than the self-deceivers' (metaphysical) religiosity that re-makes the world—in the claim that their version of things as the one Truth—in their own image, and essentially with their eyes shut. For Nietzsche, they cannot (both intellectually and psychologically) be truthful about the world and thus to themselves. This standard of objectivity was invented—as opposed to discovered—to help with those who could not otherwise deal with life as it was—and ought to be. Platonic 'knowledge' is insanely hopeful, and if it were not taken so seriously and accepted as fact so uncritically (recall Socrates' use of the concept *criticality* in the *Phaedo*), and afforded such undue consideration by the masses—who reinterpreted its principles into Christian values—would be laughable if the cost has not been so high. Nietzsche rhetorically asks, "[H]ave you ever asked yourself...how much the erection of every ideal on earth as cost?" (*GM* 95)—to which, he answers, in short, no. Nietzsche's contempt

of the credence extended to so-called wise, deliberative and contemplative men, all of whom, in their immature naivety, displayed a susceptibility to dangerous provocations[24]—coupled with the effect of its cultural dissemination—has made reason into a doctrinal inactivity instead of an experimental pursuit, determining conclusions before rigorous investigations, and ultimately producing a politics that caters to demagoguery; Nietzsche—using the conceptual language of provocation—notices: "In what strange simplification and falsification man lives!...How we have made everything around us clear and free and easy and simple! How we have been able to give our senses a passport to everything superficial, our thoughts a divine desire for wanton[25] leaps and wrong inferences!" (*BGE* 35).

Interpreting the Object of Provocation

For Nietzsche, 'absurd deliberation' weakens a person, in that a sense of paranoia fills that person. He creates intentionality everywhere, as if all actions were deliberate provocations directed at him for being in such a vulnerable condition. As such, that fear manifests itself into moralizing provocation, whose meaning of morality—and conveniently so, Nietzsche mocks—happens legitimize their failed attempts at acts of strength but comes with the promise of other-worldly rewards for such indifference toward action, which only further incapacitates them as well as incentivizes them to continue thinking instead of overcoming or willing. And worse, since threats from others who do not subscribe to their

---

[24]"The inactive, brooding, unwarlike element in the instincts of contemplative men long surrounded them with a profound mistrustfulness: the only way of dispelling it was to arouse a decided fear of oneself" (*GM* 115).

[25] Wanton, or "unprovoked" (*OED*).

definition of "reason" still exist—and to which they have lost their ability to defend themselves as well as the natural instinct to do so—they attach to any form of provocation that threatens them a newly invented connotation, "evil." At that point, the world—starting with Socrates (and then Jesus) and spread by the likes of St. Paul—loses perspective. No longer is an action assessed in terms of, say, good for me, bad for you, but Reason—or God —has determined prior that that once good act, as one that produced an amoral result, was immorally conceived and thus no longer just bad for me but evil of you. Such is our simplification—and our decadence.

So, in terms of the first dimension of provocation—the relationship between some subject and object—where the subject acted upon the object for a reason that lacked a moral quality, that act now gets evaluated not solely by the immediate parties but from an Objective interpreter. What I am suggesting is that by including an Objective standard, the rationalists and religious, as the once objects of other human subjects of aggression, make Reason and God—as they perceive or define It/Him, as it comports with their position relative to the previous object—the unquestioning and unquestionable object—and thus the framework by which to assess the nature of the relationship based on provocation. As such, Nietzsche seeks to undermine this—that is, just as Nietzsche confronts Socrates on his methodological terms—and as Cox writes: "Nietzsche thus reverses our...philosophical conceptions of the primacy of the subject ... [I]nstead of first positing a given subject who then acquires various perspectives and interpretations, Nietzsche maintains that interpretation is primary and that the subject is itself an effect of interpretation" (139).

Nietzsche intends to challenge their conception of the superiority of the subject—in that they have permanently filled that position with Reason or God to add a moral component that comforts and protects them. By doing so, Nietzsche privileges perspectivism over dogmatic revelation, so that the pursuit of knowledge and truth is a forward-moving process instead of an effort to conform the events of life—as it is a chain of provocative phenomena—with some first (unknowable) Principle(s), doctrinally retrofitted so that people no longer have to wrestle with life or improve their condition, in that everything has been solved for—that is, in the next life, where the good—now, the Good—is rewarded and the bad—now, Evil—is punished, for all eternity.

For Nietzsche, however, whatever certainty, hope and peace for which they intended their lazy dogmatism to work as a sedative for dulling the pain their asceticism causes, failed. That is—and in terms of the conceptual language of provocation—having been seduced into believing that faith in Another—and not will from within—empowers them to best cope with the reality of what the natural human condition truly is, they reversed their instinctual drive to dominate—and thus have inverted the (more) natural—and superior— meanings of concepts relating to human interaction. "Justice" has now become "justice for all," as if, on Nietzsche's terms, all are equally deserving of justice—and thus their slave morality rationalizes their condition of slavery, not just in relation to their incidental masters but also to themselves and, by extension, a culture of decadence that systematically seeks to assure that all are equal—for Nietzsche, equally repressed.

Nietzsche, the Immoralist

Now that Nietzsche has identified the original provocation—other-worldly morality—and reacted to the original provocateur—the ascetic priest—and has been provoked rightly, which manifested in his describing the different reactions to that provocation in terms of what has resulted, I now discuss Nietzsche as provocateur. Once the object of others' provocation—that first revaluation—Nietzsche assumes the role of subject whose theory is is meant to provoke a second revaluation—that is, as he who has been imposed upon as a result of that provocation sets out to change the dynamics of provocation to create a different set of conditions by which one accepts conceptual meanings, so he, the provoked, channels that and become the provocateur with respect to his project. He reacts against those who have furthered the original provocateurs' message. Thus, he acts on behalf of himself and those whom he seeks to liberate. Liberation can be (more easily) accomplished if a reversal or inversion of that original inversion is sown to be poignant in his analysis. His analysis, in turn, will resonate both stylistically but, more importantly, substantively. Thus, it will create a new kind of values that will establish the conditions for a new societal disposition. Such a disposition will bleed over from the cultural to the political and then hopefully back to the culture where art truly lives and resides.

Better and worse behaviors—as incentivized and disincentivized by institutional mechanisms—are indicators of dispositions that have been changed in tandem with this bigger societal change. Also, the greater number of people who behave badly—in Nietzsche's view—is indicative of the democratic state's—as it is the formation of

'democratic tastes'—which as we have seen benefits from their simplemindedness and confusion. This is why they mistake good for bad, right from wrong, and better for worse— all to their detriment, in that this is systematic and not incidental which mirrors provocation as a concept. This is so in part because they are linked. Nietzsche writes, "[E]very people...has invented its own language of customs and rights. But the state tells lies in all the tongues of good and evil; and whatever it says it lies—and whatever it has it has stolen...Verily, it beckons to the preachers of death" (*Z* 49).

They do this because they resemble the democratization efforts and democratic instincts as they are the democratic men who in their weakness and suffering which is glorified—as if that is a good thing, which Nietzsche mocks—fear strength. As they are paranoid and anxious, they will not only suffer in a way they cannot control in terms of the narrative, for it is defined differently from the way they conceive it to be. Nietzsche writes, "'He is so polite.' —Yes, he always carries a biscuit for Cerberus and is so timid that he thinks everyone is Cerberus, even you and I" (*GS* 213). Nietzsche recalls a better time— before Christ—which is opposite from their thought. For Christians, Jesus was sent because those times reflected a most sinful one. During this golden age of nobility, if justice was done, it was not forgiven in words and punished in terms of justice but repaid in equal measure, which ought to be admired. Nietzsche writes, "It was an age marked by the incapacity for bad manners: even an insult was accepted and returned with obliging words. perhaps our present age furnishes the most remarkable counterpart" (*GS* 112).

Instead, now, they do not react as they should, if at all, but recoil and condemn. In one sense, they turn the other cheek but, on the other hand, use an illegitimate system based upon slave ethos to get that eye which was taken from them. Their whole being—in terms of provocation—has been turned completely upside down which is why there needs to be such a reversal and a total revaluation. For Nietzsche, Jesus embodies this—and what has resulted in terms of the modern European Christians, in that they report to practice Christianity: But what does that mean, especially in terms of the original Christian, Jesus? That is, he is wrongly provokable, susceptible to the wrong kinds of provocation, and when provoked to the wrong ends, he reacts improperly. In fact, he provokes more, worsening the situation, as one ought to approach such events. Nietzsche writes, "This 'bringer of glad tidings' died as he lived, as he taught—not to 'redeem mankind' but to demonstrate how one ought to live...He does not resist, he does not defend his rights, he takes no steps to avert the worst that can happen to him—more, he provokes it" (*AC* 159).

Consequently, modern men are simple, and because their education is a reflection of these values, their education is no help to them in terms of not being more rigorous and, thus, less simple. Nietzsche writes, "[O]ur educated people of today, including the Christians of "educated" Christianity [have] no cause for amazement...among these ruins [that is] the taste for the Old Testament" (*BGE* 65). This is why Nietzsche must call out their education system, which is what Rousseau and Plato do as well, all from different points of view. As a result they too have become audacious in their provocative behaviors in having glued the two incompatible and incommensurable texts into a single, unified message—one that on

one hand returns an eye for an eye and on the other hand is to turn the other cheek. They

have a lack of skepticism and commitment to the hope that this must be true because they

need to believe that there is eternal salvation for them, if only they can make sense out of

this, so they just accept it, despite all the obvious contradictions. Nietzsche is hoping to

lower the stakes on one hand but in a sense keeps them high in terms of the importance of

the message which is why the rhetoric is so forceful and vitriolic.

Therefore, Nietzsche, who is differently provokable, must counter this provocation

with equal provocation—a rhetorical eye for an eye, of sorts. Kaufmann notes, "This is

Nietzsche's very deliberate antithesis to the Christian tradition, designed to give offense to

Christian readers" (338). Nietzsche not only chooses the most provocative words in terms of

the challenge of these notions as fact—as it seems that people conflate faith with fact, but

he also wants to show "moral" as what it actually is—some concept whose definition is

contingent upon a certain context and not one that is universal. His genealogy helps to

clarify how moral—despite being defined by God—differs as people and time change which

are at odds with each, which is why he as an immoralist, although striking to the ears of

some, means to more immoral than their moral is representative of a previous notion

associated with God. He is trying to show how people have been misled and wronged by

those who are actually opportunists that invoke God for their benefit, not theirs—which

makes them the worst kinds of people, far worse than any immoralist like Nietzsche.

The problem is, for Nietzsche, sometimes the rhetoric engulfs the message, but I am

not sure Nietzsche cares, in that he has written off so many. This is an indication of his

pessimism in terms of what is possible, which rings similar to Rousseau. Nietzsche attaches

and associates the term immoralist with saint or at least, his version of a saint. Saint is, a

term reserved for the most faithful of Christian commonly held. As an immoralist, he is

reducing the reverence of this and alternatively ascribing sainthood to the ultimate artist. He

assumes the role as the new bringer of glad tidings, similarly to the way in which he

characters the saint and immoralist. To cause an upheaval in their traditional modes of

referencing, he undermines and then can pivot to a new way for them to conceive things.

This new way instills and cultivates skepticism, rigor and attitude, all characterized by the

gay science. That said, his style is provocation but is one that reinforces a substantive

message defined by provocation as well: "Have I been understood? —What defines me,

what sets me apart from the whole rest of humanity is that I uncovered Christian morality.

That is why I needed a word that had the meaning of provocation for everybody... Blindness

to Christianity is the crime par excellence— the crime against life" (*EH* 332).

So, Nietzsche's mission is one of provocation, his overall strategy is to deliver the

message of substance, and provocation is an integral part of that substance. This message

of substance is similar to Emerson's and reminiscent of Socrates', in addition to the others, in

terms of provocation as being privileged and assuming a category of the highest ones in

politics. With this mission, Nietzsche like Socrates and Rousseau accessed a new way of

conceiving things. They were allowed to do this in that they possess something most if not

all do. They possess something that others like the previous theorists they are reacting to do

not possess. They also see the world differently from them. Their new way of conceiving things is an improvement:

> [T]hat we mostly lazily stick with our Christian inheritance, which we persuade ourselves is the 'natural' view to take. But...we realize that something is amiss, so we tinker around in an *ad hoc* sort of way, holding on to such concepts as 'rights' and 'equality'...ignoring others that we find inconvenient. The result...is a moral and spiritual vulgarity so depressing that [Nietzsche] has to stage a one-man, non-stop demonstration of exaltation. (*GM* 68, Ed.)

Nietzsche wants this confrontation with those who never confront what needs to be confronted. He wants a confrontation with those who never confront the truth anymore, and he hopes his words can serve as a trigger for that. This is, in part, his provocation. He is unconcerned and will remain uncensored in that as a philosopher, he is not only battling non-philosophers but also those who are held in high regard, for example, ones who like Hegel in similar fashion, lull the youth (Kaufmann 93).

True to his multi-front attack at all times, Nietzsche's point is that the religious, the intellectual and the political classes—although from different perspectives—are all enemies of Nietzschean high culture, which is why Nietzsche wishes to delink the intellectual and religious' uses of politics from culture, which explains why there is a link between the culture and the state. He objects to this relationship, as representing a view opposite of Hegel's. (Kaufmann 93) To accomplish this, he must win back proprietorship over the meanings of the concepts at work here. He will do so to force people to awaken from their slumbers and without regard for how people react. Thus, his stance will be adversarial in that the people, in typical form, will hunker down in a defensive crouch and instead of confronting themselves, will direct it toward people like Nietzsche. That said, Nietzsche does not care.

Like Rousseau, if he is going to be taken down, he is taking them down too, and, at least in terms of having confronted them.

Nietzsche's position is provocation. The times and his commitment to the truth necessitate it. Thus, to awaken some and disarm others, he exposes them, forcing them to, at least, have to even at face value consider the lies they have been told and have come to accept as truth. The priests have been told not to dwell upon or even dabble around in such areas that are reserved for those who will deliver God's true message for them. Nietzsche wants them to deal with this. He is doing this in the face of these academics and priests and wants their audiences to circumvent them. This has to do with the idea of the stakes, which he is reducing in substantive terms and raising on stylistic ones in order to catch their attention. However, it can be debated whether the strategy is an effective one, but again this has to be matched to his intent, if we want to, that is. Like the preachers of equality, they have all colluded into bringing about an age of nihilism whose last man is forcing the higher man into extinction. Nietzsche writes: "To me you [preachers of equality] are tarantulas, and secretly vengeful. But I shall bring your secrets to light; therefore I laugh in your faces with my laughter of the heights. Therefore I tear at your webs, that your rage may lure you out of your lie-holes and your revenge may leap out from behind your word justice" (*Z* 99).

All of life is about power, but the differences is in the types, in particular, what they intend to do with that. For the weak, because of their bad conscience, they have reworked the process and rigged the game for expressing power, so that it is no longer overcoming as

Nietzsche sees fit. Instead, it is the opposite. It is a retreat and not advancement, almost in the military sense in terms of his language and analogy and metaphor. For them, it is external which is why they obey laws:

> All men obey certain laws, and most of them obey laws that others command them to obey ... He also thought that the reason why people obey the laws others impose on them is that they want power. They believe that this is the way to get ahead and become influential and successful; they fear that an infraction of custom might cause society to retaliate and to diminish their power. (Kaufmann 250)

They believe that they can get ahead from obeying the law which brings in a couple of things. For example, it includes one's yearning for acceptance and good reputation because they care about what other people think about them. This also ties in the notion about pity and suffering and cares about conformity which underscores their timidity and fear of excelling. It is as if they are less afraid to fail than they are to succeed. In addition, this supports how they are differently disposed, as the weak versus the strong. They obey because their power comes from others' recognition and valuation of it in Christian/democratic terms. Doing so in conjunction with the bad conscience which is anti-instinctual makes them believe they are astonishing. This, in an ironic and sarcastic way, 'astonishes' Socrates, specifically, their crudeness and stupidity astonishes him. However, where they interpret being this kind of provocative as something positive, Nietzsche finds it absurd. Their "mastery" is one in which they have mastered how to seem: "[W]ho does not say a word or cast a glance in which there is no consideration and ulterior enticement [motive]; whose mastery includes the knowledge of how to seem...the genius of the heart who

silences all that is loud and self-satisfied, teaching it to listen; who smooths rough souls and lets them taste a new desire" (*BGE* 233).

Nietzsche is trying to win back what beauty means. This stands in sharp contrast with the noble man who does not deliberate for too long as that only suggests that one is overly contemplative and calculative which then suggests that he lacks the instincts that are natural, strong and assertive. This deliberation is not to be confused with reason or reasonableness, which Nietzsche thinks is right, so long as it is understood properly. This transfers into the political realm in that the noble man is not concerned with such rules. For Nietzsche, the noble ought not to be valued under such a structure. Self-perfection is a process that stands both outside of and against the state. Therefore, Nietzsche wants to reverse this so that power is viewed differently. Hence, power is—not with the masses who use the state, but instead, this power is one that does not need the state, which is a sign of real power. This stance assumes the intentions behind power are pure and that will result in productions and effects that are in line with these intentions, which as a rule, Nietzsche does not put value in. Nietzsche needs to communicate a condition by which they no longer see themselves as "wild," "free" and "natural." They are the opposite, the herd-like masses, that is:

> The origin of a condition in which feelings of displeasure...preponderate over feelings of pleasure, is the same as the origin of the "state." The state...is an imposition of form on the formlessness of wilderness humanity. The net effect of this imposition of form is the damming up of old instinctual drives forcing their sublimation into other modes of release. Whatever its specific cause...this is the basic patter of the sickness that Nietzsche associates with religion. (Murphy 82)

Because of their religious misunderstanding, they have given power to the state for its uses which only hurts them. "[I]f there should ever be a socialist state it would enforce an unprecedented iron disciple" (Kaufmann 191). For Nietzsche, it is a zero-sum game—he wants a "weak state" so that there can be a strong culture. He wants a weak state and a strong culture, in part, because it seems as if they are inseparable at this point:

> [I]f Nietzsche did have a plan for world government or even European unity he is not revealed it ... We may of course argue [of Nietzsche that] institutions reflect the will to power of a dominant group and this is all that is to be sought by way of justification. To look for more is to make the mistake of supposing that there can be something other then will to power at the back of political choices, that justice is something more then or other then will to power. (Nussbaum 4)

He wants to reverse the way in which the will to power is reflected so that what is dominant is what is rewarded. The point is, in this situation, everyone is oppressed. Again, Nietzsche does not give the masses any kind of out. Although Nietzsche does not do this in any substantial way, he argues that, at least, part of us could be free. The problem is that in provocative terms, he wants those in charge, those who are benefitting from the system, to just hand over power and return voluntarily to their role as slaves, in a sense. The weak will only be hurt, incidentally. The difference is that the weak rationalize their justice in terms of power that does not improve upon their lives in any real, measurable way. Such power also hurts the culture, but then again, these are the ones who are using provocation in terms of the argument about losing the culture war. Nietzsche wants institutions that make free a culture in which the noble can prosper.

> [Nietzsche] was concerned, above all, with the artist, the philosopher, and the man who achieves self-perfection—the last having taken the place of the saint. Particular actions seemed much less important to Nietzsche than the state of being of the

whole man ... They want eternal recurrence out of the fullness of their delight in the moment. They do not deliberate, absurdly, how they should act to avoid unpleasant consequences. (Kaufmann 322)

While the weak and the meek fear retaliation, they turn to the offensive as the best defense. Thus, they do not act what is naturally instinctual, but always absurdly deliberate and in schemes as to what is self-mastery and everything is reactionary. It is always them as a reaction, for that is how their identity is formed. This underscores why they think so intuitively about all that should be looked at in opposite terms. They, like Jesus, "do not resist," accepting death rather than to fight back. This is problematic. What is Nietzsche saying? It seems by implication that, on one hand, he mocks them for not fighting back, but on the other hand, he seems like the acts against them are not bad, which is a reason to think about his perspectivism. Like Socrates, their self-control is not noble. It is absurdly foolish, in that it is anti-life—their moderation is immoderate. It is immoderate in that it restrains. It is not one a self-control in which that restraint is used against wrong provocations but one that causes death, revealing that they have already accepted death and, thus, stopped living assertively long ago. Their misunderstanding provides the mechanisms of the state to control them and to coerce them to obey the laws which has made sheep out of them. They call this progress and civilization. In addition, this misunderstanding makes them value other people's opinions and how to seem which is their definition of success, which is similar to Rousseau's, which Nietzsche hates. Nietzsche writes: "It involves subtle and...noble self-control, assuming that one wants to praise at all... for in the other cases one would after all praise oneself, which offends good taste. Still this kind of

self-control furnishes a neat occasion and provocation for constant misunderstandings" (*BGE* 225).

While Nietzsche provokes to reveal their absurdity, they see it as offensive and thus threatening. This perspective causes them to take action and to protect themselves, and that is the difference in their tastes, one noble and the other democratic. Everything about their emotions and what provokes is backward. They retaliate when they should resist and resist and remain silent when they ought to defend themselves with force. They know nothing of self-mastery and in the process kill dissenters. They would not understand that those dissenters' voices could be elevating for the culture. Worse, they would find the dissenters offensive and sinful and would retaliate to thwart them.

The Last Man—Democrat, Socialist, Nihilist

In moral and, subsequently, political terms, Nietzsche nostalgically harkens back to a time long passed—before the moralist conceived of the bad conscience. Nietzsche wants to reverse the accepted perspective to reflect those Aristocratic values in hopes, albeit unlikely he pessimistically concludes, to once again culturally celebrate wills to power, as defined not by majority opinion but reserved for the greatest among us, in that the strong—not the weak—give meaning, even when it comes about the value of human worth, specifically intrinsic value. He also emphasizes that, whatever the consequence, an action ought not to be valued in terms of the evaluation as set by the slave. In contrast, when intentionality is favored or given privilege, the merits of the action are disconnected. Also, mediocrity is accepted, so long as the intentions were sincere and pure, as defined by them.To

complicate matters, intention can never truly be known with any real definitiveness, which allows for people to project and affords them the ability to rewrite the narrative as to the events surrounding the motivation, the action, the result and the repercussions. This scenario is similar and parallel to the concept of provocation in terms of the chain.

The problem is that one is at the mercy of one's own interpretation, and that interpretation is skewed, not in perspectival terms but by the fact that it is offered through their prism of the Ideal. Their prism of the Ideal is not empirical in any real way in that it is influenced by their position, a position that is representative of the herd mentality and which is protective and reactive. All of this is perpetuated because of the institutional recognition of intention as an important concept in determining justice. Also, because of equality, there is room for false equivalency in that people's opinions and positions and stories are not just influenced by intentionality, but also in that it is presupposed they are equal. It is easier to view ideas as equal and less prone to false judgment and misunderstanding than it would be if they were evaluating actions, almost exclusively, in terms of the consequence, the result and the product. However, they do not see the value of the consequence, the result and the product because in terms of living their lives and understanding the origins and manifestations of their actions, false judgment and misunderstanding are standard. Again, for Nietzsche, the noble person, who acts deliberately and without undo deliberation—because reasonableness is within him, is able to achieve greatness and to experience "beauty," not "Beauty."

This context leaves him vulnerable to being judged according to the standards of those who should not be judging. The democratic system advocates for them not to judge in that they have no authority. Nietzsche notices this dilemma when comparing the pre-Socratic times, before decadence started infecting populations. Kaufmann writes:

> [T]he overman does not have instrumental value for the maintenance of society: he is valuable in himself because he embodies the state of being for which all of us long ... 'The goal of humanity cannot lie in the end but in its highest specimens.' Perhaps there is no other more basic statement of Nietzsche's philosophy in all his writings than this sentence. (313, 149)

Nietzsche, despite that empirical facts do not seem to warrant history as progress, looks to the future to free himself of the dangers that exist today and can entrap him, if he is not careful.

> Nowadays it happens occasionally that a mild, moderate, reticent person suddenly goes into a rage, smashes dishes...insults everybody—and eventually walks off, ashamed, furious with himself—where? what for? ... I welcome all signs that a more virile, warlike age is about to begin, which will restore honor to courage above all. For this age shall prepare the way for one yet higher...—the age that will carry heroism into the search for knowledge and that will wage wars for the sake of ideas and their consequences. (*BGE* 225, *GS* 228)

Nietzsche's criticism attempts to counter what religion and Christianity have done, as in his referring to types. Murphy writes: "[I]t is clear that much of what Nietzsche was trying to say in his treatment of the Jews and Judaism was as much—if not more—about the German-Christian construction of modern European identity than it was about the Jews themselves" (106).

Nietzsche seeks out a new future, one which is more war-like and something opposite of today and more reminiscent that the Dionysian age, which would require a

different political culture. However, while his philosophy is directed at the individual whose desires reflect that of a "high and choosy soul," his politics do not leave open that possibility to too many people. He does not afford many the opportunity to capitalize on what he is advocating for and on what his teachings are. The point is, Nietzsche is talking to a crowd—presumably those like Goethe and Wagner (at one point)—who are likely not the ones who need him, so what is the point? Who is Nietzsche trying to reach, if not those people who could be the Goethean man—not just the artist and saint but the warrior? Also, would it not be advantageous to have more than fewer, so as to counter the masses, in that he sees what sheer numbers can do? However, that he seems not to be too concerned with this signals that he is interested in little else but fiery rhetoric rather than actual change.

When Nietzsche is ironic and contingent in his criticism, he is not so in terms of his politics, but rather, in terms of provocation. In other words, Nietzsche's works ought to be read by those with the desire and the inclination to become more naturally inclined to enlist in his army to resist the last man and to resist becoming the last man and crawling back to the cross. For Nietzsche, if one cannot be a saint, at least, he can be a warrior. If Nietzsche has any real, positive agenda in terms of political theory, the goal ought to be to maximize the number of potentially "great specimens." The greater the number is, the greater is the ability to influence the politics. This maxim undermines the role of government and extends power to the sphere of culture. Kaufmann writes: "Empirical facts do not seem to him to warrant the belief that history is a story of progress, that ever greater values are developed, and that whatever is later in the evolutionary scale is also *eo ipso* more valuable" (149). The

bar will be raised, and again failure will be internalized by those who cannot cut it, those who tend to be the masses. However, that number will be less likely to be mobilized in that they will recoil in their shame. "It is not actions that prove him—actions are always open to many interpretations, always unfathomable—nor is it 'works' ... [S]ome fundamental certainty that a noble soul has about itself, something that cannot be sought, nor found, nor perhaps lost ... The noble soul has reverence for itself" (*BGE* 228).

It goes back to restraint and Socrates in terms of the narrowness of their project and the specificity of their agendas, which is more about themselves than something bigger. Like the historical Socrates, Nietzsche was less political, as theorizing politics has been traditionally viewed, making them provocative, even politically so. Nietzsche must not have really been concerned with politics, as politics is traditionally viewed and to the extent I use the word tradition, they must undermine it using a familiar language as a reference point to ultimately use their language to discredit it and provide a different conception of politics, like their conceptions provide. Even if it is not overt, which it is not, as Nietzsche would prefer for culture to replace the role that the state plays now. The problem is that it generally interfered with any positive or constructive political culture. Regardless of what they argue, i.e., man defines society—not society defines a Napoleon.

Conclusion: Culture Versus State

Nietzsche's consideration of the state—and thus his political thought—is necessitated by his theory of culture, in that the democratic mob have wrestled away the mechanisms of political power not just from the cultural nobility—his aristocratic higher-man

—but, in turn, spread socialist equality—and thus by implication thwart those who, for Nietzsche, transcend politics. As such, the deterioration of society stems from culture having been reduced to serve the interests of the democratic state, where the fearful masses—who have managed to successfully tie together the notions of political legitimacy with popular sovereignty—impose widespread conditions of equality, an argument founded on the metaphysical principle of intrinsic human worth. For Nietzsche, however, the commoner is no Shakespeare, no Spinoza—in fact, Nietzsche, in true provocative form, makes the argument that the gulf separating the average person is greater between him and Leonardo than the one between him and a chimp (Kaufmann 151).

So, where democratic theory becomes the basis from which to construct socialist policies that benefit "all," the political cultural that emerges is one antagonistic to a higher culture that values real expressions of excellence instead of intrinsic worth that not only fails to exceed personal expectation but directs those few individual talents, as pooled with others—in "desir[ing] to find scapegoats" (*WP* 140) for their own self-contempt—to institutionally insure that no one can ever transcend the law—and thus their mediocrity. Such is the linchpin of democracy and socialism. For Nietzsche, the "Socialist rabble"—whom he hates the most—use "power politics" to derive some sense of power over their own misery by denying the opportunities of free cultural expression to Nietzsche's would-be higher-men. And since the "cultural state" is merely a modern idea," and with respect to the state and culture, where [o]ne thrives at the expense of the other" (*TI* 73), Nietzsche's politics of provocation means to de-legitimize the tenets of democratic political theory in order to

separate out culture from political culture. His presentation—although limited and ancillary, particularly in comparison to Plato and Rousseau—means to free the higher-man from the public sphere altogether, giving him instruction for how to, first, ward of those preachers of the "bad conscience" and of equality in order to, next, concentrate on the sublimation process for which to be Nietzschean great.

CHAPTER 8

Dissertation Conclusion

Introduction[26]

I conclude with a brief review of how paying provocation with provocation can begin

a long chain of provocations that eventually escalates into the most dangerous of scenarios,

particularly if the recipient of the most previous act of provocation interprets the subject of

provocation at that specific juncture—i.e., the provocateur—to have intentionally sinister

motivations. As I have shown, relationships between those whose interactions are

predominately characterized as provoking one another back and forth can quickly

deteriorate, leading to the stronger—i.e., the party with institutional authority, especially—

preventing the weaker, regardless of the original instigator, from further acts of provocation

by resorting to use the necessary political or legal enforcement levers at that party's disposal

as retribution. Take for example Rousseau who ultimately fled to Scotland to seek refuge at

the home of David Hume (*C*).

European authorities increasing impatience with Rousseau stemmed from in part

what they interpreted as revolutionary theory, regardless of Rousseau's competing claims.

Rousseau ended up being right on another related issue, however—revolution was just

around the corner, both in France and in the British colonies across the Atlantic Ocean. The

French revolution turned especially bloody. Today, however, whatever type of war—civil,

state against state or state against non-state terror organizations—technology has

---

[26] All references to news-related events and basic historical facts throughout chapter from
www.nytimes.com.

exponentially increased the possibility not just for a high number of troop casualties but total human annihilation. As such, the stakes for de-escalating increasingly hostile acts of provocation—perceived or actual—between two enemy groups have never been more critical. Socrates saw war. Plato observed the 30 tyrants. Rousseau feared the effects of technology. And Nietzsche warned of what Heidegger—author of the post-WWII essay on provocation, "The Question Concerning Technology"—had been, in the least, complicit in: the Holocaust.

To set up the final discussion of the chapter, where I provide contemporary examples of ongoing provocation in the world today, I review how acts of provocation are disputed as such—that is, whether or not some "initial" act was, one, intended to be provocative and, two, what the motivation was for acting in such a way that it was interpreted not only as an act of provocation but one with sinister and antagonistic motivations. On the world stage— where all countries and peoples have a vested interest in peaceful resolutions, so as to be protected from nuclear fallout—the disputing groups involved engage at first in a war of words vying to be recognized as the legitimate object of that subject's unjust and negative original act of provocation. And just as each of the theorists' analysis entailed a moral component, contemporary groups try to take the moral high ground in order to convince both domestic and international stakeholders and observers that that country's rhetorical enemy at this point would be responsible and guilty if the provocations turned from rhetorical to physical—on an infinitely greater scale than in the case of Socrates.

Escalation of Provocation

Nietzsche called Socrates a buffoon who got himself taken seriously—so seriously that his fellow Athenians sentenced him to die. What Nietzsche makes reference to is how provocation can escalate, and does so as those provocative behaviors are seen as increasingly provocative—to the point of retaliation ending in death. Thus, the stakes are high, especially because words of provocation that are used for figurative purposes—depending on the dispositions of the hearers—can be taken literally, as Nietzsche's use of "war" was. And war is the ultimate result of provocation. The technological capabilities available for military use makes engaging in provocative rhetoric with a potential adversary or adversaries consequential for the entire world, which is why when a country charges another with provocation, it characterizes the other's behavior knowing the international community plays, in a sense, an evaluative role in judging the nature of the relationship between the two (or more) countries competing to set the terms for how to characterize their dispute and responsibility for any future escalation.

In that the conceptual terminology of provocation has evolved into predominantly meaning deliberateness, and has also taken on a negative connotation, where the potential provocateur—although disputed in that either party denies the validity of the other's definition of, say, what "right" or "just" means—would come to be blamed as the instigator, and likely held responsible for starting the slide down the path to destabilization and ultimately violence. Thus, on the world stage, each side attempts to vie to be seen as occupying the position of the object and not the subject as it relates to the origin of the

dispute. This could escalate into all-out war if parties perceive the other's use of provocation becoming more and more threatening, so one has to protect itself—even if that means preemptively striking in order to protect its interest. Again, to be the provocateur means to be the instigator. Consequently, if the nature of the relationship between two countries is antagonistic with a real danger of war breaking out, the party that is defined as the initiator or aggressor will likely be held primarily responsible for the original provocation and thus, for practical purposes, starting the war. Regardless of how the terms are viewed by the third-party countries—or, in terms of provocation, the incidental audience—each of the two countries directly involved—at least in real-time as opposed to historical hindsight, which is largely dependent upon the outcome, if it were to descend into war—never identifies itself as the originator but continue to cast the other as the subject.

An example of this is the reason for the United States changing its Department of War to the Department of Defense. Doing so is an attempt to help frame the appropriate course of action—the initial one being a "reaction," on its assessment—as one favorable to all stakeholders as (most) appropriate, in a similar way to Aristotle's analysis of contentious relations; Aristotle observes in his *Nicomachean Ethics*:

> [I]t is no easy task to be good. For in everything it is no easy task to find the middle...anyone can get angry—that is easy...but to do this to the right person, to the right extent, at the right time, with the right motive, and in the right way, that is not for everyone, nor is it easy; wherefore goodness is both rare and laudable and noble. (*NE* 45)

Before identifying current examples, I believe it is helpful to provide context for how long two conflicting sides try to define the opponent as predator who is guilty of committing

that first act of provocation. As Plato records it in the *Apology* dialogue, at his trial, Socrates

tries to convince the jurors that his accuser, Meletus, "is a...selfish bully, and has brought this

action against [him] out of sheer wanton [unprovoked] aggressiveness" (*A* 13). In making use

of the language of provocation, Socrates intends to present himself as the victim. Implicit in

this assertion is that it is illogical for Socrates to be the defendant—and thus guilty—of a

crime when, on his account of the so-called criminal incident, Meletus was the true

perpetrator. But when Socrates fails to persuade a jury of his earthy peers, he, in true

definitional form of provocation—in that the *OED* includes "provocation" to also mean a

"request...to a higher authority"—invokes an authority superior to them, as to the legitimacy

of his conduct. In effect, Socrates is stripping them of any claim to legitimacy—on his

ranking—for the guilty verdict. It is also an implicit attack on the democratic jurors

themselves, in that he turns the trial on them, chiding the jurors for allowing the prosecutors,

Meletus (and Anytus), to rile them to so much anger—the kind Aristotle describes as

"[a]nger [which] seems to listen to argument to some extent, but to mishear it...[and] though

it hears, does not hear an order, and springs to take revenge" (*NE* 173)—whose implication

is for (democratic) Athens, in his words, a misuse of "the gift of God" that Socrates, on the

authority of the oracle, believes himself to be to his fellow Athenians. He adds, "If you put

me to death, you will not easily find anyone to take my place. It is literally true, even if it

sounds rather comical, that God has specially appointed me to this city" (*A* 16).

  In sum—as I jump two and half millennia to the contemporary world whose examples

of provocation remain strikingly similar to Greek antiquity—Socrates and his opposers

sought to characterize the other as the provocateur once the stakes became perceptually severe enough to warrant a capital charge. Similarly, today—in that a declaration of war is, in a sense, a capital charge on a mass level—those engaged in a war of words compete to "win" the argument of successfully defining the opponent as the aggressor and originator of that first provocation, regardless of which side shot first. Again, not until a treaty signing ceremony, anyway, will the two formally agree as to what that initial provocation was, thus each operating as the object of the other's provocative act, even if it were seemingly an unrelated and distant event or phenomena, thus providing the opportunity to appeal to some other—a higher, more legitimate—arbiter, whose sense of fairness, equity and justice, corroborates its respective narrative about the (more) truthful chain of reactions provoked proceeded from the actual historical record—and on the authority of, as often is the case, God or Duty or Morality.

Provocation on the International Stage: 9/11 and the "Axis of Evil"

On September 11, 2001, members of al-Qaeda hijacked four passenger planes and flew them into each of the two World Trade Center Towers in lower Manhattan, the side of the CIA headquarters just outside Washington, DC and into a field in Pennsylvania, killing more than 3,000 innocent civilians. In a world where no one can agree on much, everyone would—and has come to—agree that the world would no longer be the same after that day. However, the consensus seems to have ended on that one point. The September 11 attacks were certainly an act of provocation orchestrated by the al-Qaeda network's leader, Osama bin Ladin, a Saudi man running the terrorist organization in Afghanistan.

Along with his supporters and sympathizers, bin Laden cheered the success of the attack as a battle victory in a jihad they, unbeknownst to most Americans, had been fighting for many, many years. To their minds, it was a victory for them and for their radical brand of Islamic fundamentalism. The organization al-Qaeda claimed the attack was not the start of a war against the West but a response for an American military presence on Muslim holy land. For America, however, it was an unprovoked act of aggression made by religious zealots who have twisted the meaning of the Q'ran. A single scriptural passage can be interpreted wholly opposite whose meaning is one side's "good" and the other's "evil." The ideological adversaries, like the West and organizations such as al-Qaeda, do not agree on the nature of the origin of their antagonistic relationship, which has escalated into a global, never-ending war between paradoxically opposing views of and for humanity.

In the following weeks, the U.S. declared war, a war on terror that would be fought preemptively on enemy soil, and quickly invaded Afghanistan where the Taliban had been harboring al-Qaeda. Therefore, from the span of the early 1980s, when the U.S. supported bin Ladin's resistance of the Soviet Union's expansion into Afghanistan, the relationship devolved into being mortal enemies. The relationship, which began as one of convenience, soured into one of theoretical difference marked by figurative provocations and eventually descended into literal combat, each side claiming moral authority, casting themselves as the allies of what is Right, morally.

With the war in Afghanistan and the broader war on terror as the backdrop for the January 2002 State of the Union Address, President George W. Bush vowed to use all of the

U.S.'s military might to win this new war that had no official sponsorship of a traditional regime whose borders were defined. President Bush did, however, name three countries that the American government deemed to be state-sponsors of those terror networks whose headquarters were not in capitols but in caves. The nations were Iraq, Iran and North Korea —and were dubbed the "Axis of Evil," as their unelected and thus "illegitimate" leaders were provocateurs, not only in their own countries (Iraqi aggressor Saddam Hussein used chemical weapons on the Kurds in northern Iraq, for instance) but also on the world stage. Now, the world has become the battlefield on which America and its allies are fighting terror. As such, later in 2002, after presenting the international community with evidence of Hussein's stock piling of "weapons of mass destruction," which was a violation of international policy—America-led forces, provoked by Hussein's non-compliance with UN inspectors, invaded Iraq, quickly toppling the regime. Hussein's rule—and life—ended by public hanging after being dragged out of muddy hole and dragged into court.

The stakes over the war on terror had reached new heights, and the two other "Axes"—North Korea and Iran—who watched Hussein fall so rapidly, took notice. Also, as Pakistan had shown by becoming a nuclear power, would-be invaders could not be so easily inclined to go to war. That is, possessing a nuclear weapon, in fact, lowers the stakes, in a certain sense, from the perspective of a North Korea or Iran, in that second-strike capability makes destruction mutually assured. The problem, however, is that acquiring the technology is an illegal project, one that would certainly provoke some kind of response, including preemptive military attack. However, for a nation such as North Korea, the calculation has

been made that becoming capable of launching a nuclear-armed weapon is worth the potential cost of decimation militarily and worth withstanding the already-induced economic pains of sanctions.

Therefore, in terms of this escalating feud in which the subject and object have not been agreed upon but the participants have been, in this case, the U.S. and North Korea, I want to highlight a point at which this relationship has not reached the level Iraq did. It is worth pinpointing, in that, as Nietzsche said of Socrates, which applies here, I believe, Socrates was a buffoon who got himself taken seriously. That is, I am not suggesting the leader of North Korea to be a buffoon, but his acts of provocation, as deemed by the U.S. and much of the international community, to have been mirth-like but are now increasingly being viewed as more and more threatening, which will, in terms of provocation, require a different, more serious response, potentially.

Since the mid-2000s, North Korea has defied the orders of the international community, and has tested missiles by launching them into the adjacent bodies of water. Upon their notification, these tests have been repeatedly described as "provocations." Although they have become more successful in the launches, they often failed—the missiles misfiring and plopping into the Sea of Japan. The world—not necessarily governments but commentators and expert analysts—scoffed at North Korea's failings, ridiculing them, shrugging them off as a first-order or top-rate country. That view has changed and is changing. North Korea is becoming more successful and increasingly defiant, so the world has and will continue to react to such "provocations" differently, as they feel more

threatened. On such matters, Aristotle writes about the use of provocation, as it goes from words to acts:

> [T]he very indications of such things are terrible, making us feel that the terrible thing itself is close at hand; the approach of what is terrible is just what we mean by 'danger.' Such indications are the enmity and anger of people who have power to do something to us... Also outraged virtue in possession of power; for it is plain that, when outraged, it also has the will to retaliate, and now it has the power to do so. Also fear felt by those who have the power to do something to us, since such persons are sure to be ready to do it. And since most men tend to be bad—slaves to greed, and cowards in danger-—it is, as a rule, a terrible thing to be at another man's mercy. (*Rh* 1388)

And as with North Korea, the situation with Iran is fluid. As it changes, so too will the nature of the characterization of each other's words and behaviors evolve, replacing a more dismissive tone—one which Athens spoke in about Socrates in the beginning—with a more serious one that requires physical coercion. However, from a contemporary American point of view, not all relationships based on provocation happen between countries, they can be internal, as well. I now turn to identifying some contemporaneous examples in which America has internally encountered and responded to American citizens as provocateurs.

Cases of Provocation in Contemporary America: Edward Snowden

In May 2013, 29-year-old American contract employee for the U.S. National Security Agency, Edward Snowden, downloaded classified documents, and leaked the secret files to, most notably, American journalist, Glenn Greenwald of the British newspaper, *The Guardian*, who, in turn, published and made public a covert program that collects information about Americans' phone use, known as meta-data. The meta-data—or, data of data—is supposed to collect the data and feed it into a sophisticated algorithm in order to identify and then

thwart terrorist-planning activities. It also, however, tracks calls' numbers and durations ,although it does not record the conversations.

Immediately after leaking the contents of the NSA program among an unknown number of additional secret programs, Snowden fled the country, afraid—and rightfully so—of being accused of espionage, which many politicians (including both chambers' Intelligence Committees' chairs, Democratic Senator Diane Feinstein and Republican Representative Mike Rogers) have, in fact, have called him a traitor. Others politicians (probably most notably, 2016 likely presidential hopeful and libertarian-leaning Republic Senator Rand Paul), meanwhile, herald him as a civil liberties champion and American patriot. To further complicate matters, after fleeing, Snowden ended up in Moscow, where Russian President Vladimir Putin has granted him temporary asylum. From Russia, he continues to speak, even delivering a controversial Christmas day message on British television, the same segment that, for instance, former Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who previously called for Israel's elimination from the map, delivered a message on another matter. After his appearance there, even those commentators initially sympathetic to Snowden began referring to him as a narcissist and a provocateur—with that negative connotation. It is reminiscent of the type of reaction Jean-Jacques Rousseau often received; that is, his narcissism began overshadowing the substantive message that brought him to public attention.

The vast majority agree that Snowden's, who came in second to the newly-elected Pope, Francis, as *Time*'s 2013 Person of the Year, rise to notary is owed to his provocative

act of releasing his government's secret surveillance program, which included spying not only on targeted, would-be terrorists but also on world leaders (e.g., German Chancellor Angela Merkel) and average Americans, as well. In terms of provocation, the question is what kind of provocateur is he: Is he a traitor who put at risk the safety of his fellow American citizens by tipping off terrorist planners or a true patriot who in revealing government overreach protects our constitutionally protected civil liberties? The answer depends, in part, on what one accepts as the original act of provocation that now defines the contentious relationship between the U.S. Government and Edward Snowden—and, by extension, all Americans and even the international community. In addition, where one plots that original provocation provides a clear signal as to which deeply cherished American value one holds dearer, both of which, however, are grounded in securing the protection of its citizens—that is, being protected from terrorists or from governmental tyranny, the latter of which is in large measure the reason for the existence of America in the first place.

Therefore, if one were to argue that Snowden—who justifiably circumvented "whistle-blower" laws—revealed (whose uses are associated with a positive form of provocation's function) "unAmerican" intrusions into the constitutionally protected privacy of American citizens by the government, which, in turn, warrants his act as one, ironically, being imposed on him by the government, Snowden becomes identified as the object, thus making the government the subject, or aggressor. For those who fall into this category— who prioritize the Constitutionally protected right to privacy—the original act of provocation is the program itself. Also, the point at which the relationship, defined as one of

provocation, started between the Government and Snowden (as representative of the whole population)—although unbeknownst to everyone until May 2013—is the effective date the program came online. However, for those who prefer national security over privacy concerns, as that is the necessary cost for fighting the war on terror—the theft of the secret program with the intent to protect Americans represents the act of a traitor, subject to prosecution for endangering America, which is among the top, if it is not the highest, duties of the Executive Branch.

The task of answering the following question cannot be completed here, but it is worth asking, as Socrates and the others posed it long before Snowden. From his refuge in Russia—no haven for the protection of free speech—Snowden appeals to a different standard than do his detractors. Those in the Snowden camp continue to defend the leaks as certainly a provocative act but a positive one made by a loyal American patriot who values his "duty" to fight for the protection of constitutionally guaranteed civil liberties which trump any "inferior" laws made to undermine the core freedoms that make America, *America*, as defined on his terms. Those whose duty it is to protect the country from physical harm see the terms of duty differently from Snowden, as Athens did with Socrates, who at his trial made the case for having conducted himself dutifully: "From that time on I interviewed one person after another. I realized with distress and alarm that I was making myself unpopular, but I felt compelled to put my religious duty first...[as] I was trying to find out the meaning of the oracle" (*A* 8). Before, however, Socrates prefaced with the following statement, attempting to set the most favorable terms for proceeding, and foreshadows this

continued struggle over who ought to have rightful proprietorship over what terms and concepts and thus the meaning and associated behaviors that are grounded in their appeal.

Socrates asks the jury to look beyond his speech:

> One thing, however, I do most earnestly beg and entreat of you. If you hear me defending myself in the same language which it has been my habit to use, both in the open spaces of this city—where many of you have heard me—and elsewhere, do not be surprised...so I am a complete stranger to the language of this place. Now if I were really from another country, you would naturally excuse me if I spoke in the manner and dialect in which I had been brought up, and so in the present case I make this request of you, which I think is only reasonable, to disregard the manner of my speech...and to consider and concentrate your attention upon this one question, whether my claims are fair or not. That is the first duty of the juryman, just as it is the pleader's duty to speak the truth. (*A* 4)

In a real and functioning democracy, I maintain—a regime fairer than any other—what counts as fair requires the consultation and maintenance of an informed and engaged citizenry in defining its language and then implementing its meaning through sound public policies, ones in which the specific contexts are endorsements of a shared vernacular that made it impossible for Socrates and democratic Athens to find a common language from which to have an honest and good-faith debate about already-agreed upon terms like fairness and duty. For the distribution of justice that is fair and legitimate to be sustained— and to always be striving for improvement—the political culture must continually foster a rightly provokable citizen-disposition that cannot be lulled into a state of politically misanthropic disinterest or be riled into a fury of predatory majoritarian anxiousness. Intellectually speaking, I argue, democratic pluralism has won the position of privilege when postulating theoretical assumptions about just political formulations. Plato, Rousseau and Nietzsche continue to stay relevant because reading them still forces us to grapple with how

to be rightly provokable when confronting and being confronted by injustices—for otherwise, we become Aristotle's negative-example: "those who are not angry at the things they should be angry at are thought to be fools, and so are those who are not angry in the right way, at the right time, or with the right persons" (*NE* 97). Let us develop our capacity for recognizing the rhetoric of provocation and (re)act appropriately, and work toward eliminating all instances of humiliation and cruelty.

REFERENCES

Abizadeh, Arash. 2001. "Banishing the Particular: Rousseau on Rhetoric, Patrie and the

    Passions." *Political Theory*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (August): 556-582.

Aristotle. 1984. *Aristotle's Politics*. Carnes Lord, trans. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Aristotle. 1980. *The Nicomachean Ethics*. Ross, William D., ed. Oxford: Oxford University

    Press.

Benardete, Seth. 1991. *The Rhetoric of Morality and Philosophy*. Chicago: University of

    Chicago Press.

Bloom, Allan. 1978. "The Education of Democratic Man: Emile." *Daedalus*, Vol. 107, No. 3

    (Summer): 135-153.

Blyth, Douglas.2000. "Socrates' Trial and Conviction and the Jurors in Plato's Apology."

    Philosophy & Rhetoric 33(1): 1-22.

Boghossian, Peter. 2012. "Socratic Pedagogy: Perplexity, Humiliation, Shame and a broken

    Egg." *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, Vol. 44, Issue 7: 710-720.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1990. *In Other Words: Essays towards a Reflexive Sociology*. Cambridge:

    Polity Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre.1991. *Language and Symbolic Power*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University

    Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre.1993. *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*. New

    York: Columbia University Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1994. *The Science of Science and Reflexivity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre.1998. *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action*. Cambridge, MA: Polity

    Press.

Boyd, Richard. 2004. "Pity's Pathologies Portrayed: Rousseau and the Limits of Democratic

    Compassion." *Political Theory*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (August): 519-546.

Cohen, Joshua. 2010. R*ousseau: A Free Community of Equals*. Oxford: Oxford University

    Press.

Conway, Daniel W. 1994. "Parastrategesis, Or: Rhetoric for Decadents." *Philosophy and

    Rhetoric* 27(3): 179-201.

Cook, Albert. 1992. "Particles, Qualification, Ordering, Style, Irony and Meaning in Plato's

    Dialogues." *Quaderni Urninati di Cultura Classica* 40(1): 111-126.

Cox, Christoph. 1999. *Nietzsche: Naturalism and Interpretation*. Berkeley: University of

    California Press.

Cranston, Maurice W. *The Noble Savage: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 1754-1762*. Chicago:

    The University of Chicago Press, 1991.

Cranston, Maurice W. *The Solitary Self: Jean-Jacques Rousseau in Exile and Adversity*.

    Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997.

Cranston, Maurice W. (1983). *Jean-Jacques: The early life and work of Jean-Jacques

    Rousseau, 1712–1754*. London: Allen Lane.

Dannhauser, Werner. 1974. *Nietzsche's View of Socrates*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Deming, Richard. 2004. "Strategies of Overcoming: Nietzsche and the Will to Metaphor."

    Philosophy and Literature 28(April): 60-73.

Dent, N. J. H. 1989. *Rousseau: An Introduction to his Psychological, Social and Political Theory*. New York: Basil Blackwell.

Dobbs, Darrell. 1994. "Choosing Justice: Socrates' Model City and the Practice of Dialectic." *The American Political Science Review* 88(2): 263-277.

Eisenstadt, Oona. 2001. "Shame in the Apology," in *Politics, Philosophy, Writing: Plato's Art of Caring for Souls*, Zdravko Planinc, ed. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press.

Emerson, Ralph Waldo. 2000. *The Essential Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Brooks Atkinson, ed. New York: The Modern Library.

Friedlander, Eli. 2004. *J.J. Rousseau: An Afterlife of Words*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Gellrich, Michelle. 1994. "Socratic Enchantment, Irony, and Persuasion in Plato's Dialogues." *The Classical World* 87(4): 275-307.

Grant, Ruth W. 1994. "Integrity and Politics: An Alternative Reading of Rousseau." *Political Theory*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (August): 414-443.

Griswold, Charles. 1980. "Style and Philosophy: The Case of Plato's Dialogues." *The Monist* 63(4): 530-546.

Guay, Robert. 2011. "Genealogy and Irony." *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 41(1): 26-49.

Guthrie, William K. C., 1975. *A History of Greek Philosophy Volume IV: Plato—the Man and his Dialogues: Earlier Period*. London: Cambridge University Press.

Guthrie, William K. C. 1978. *A History of Greek Philosophy Volume V: The Later Plato and the Academy*. London: Cambridge University Press.

Guthrie, William K. C. 1981. *A History of Greek Philosophy Volume VI: Aristotle: An Encounter*. London: Cambridge University Press.

Heidegger, Martin. 1977. *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*. William Lovitt, trans. New York: Garland Publishing Inc..

Hicks, Steven V. and Alan Rosenberg. 2008. *Reading Nietzsche at the Margins*. West Lafayette: Perdue University Press.

Johnstone, Christopher Lyle. 1980. "An Aristotelian Trilogy: Ethics, Rhetoric, Politics, and the Search for Moral Truth." *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 13(1): 1-24.

Kahn, Charles H. 1981. "Did Plato Write Socratic Dialogues?" *The Classical Quarterly* 31(2): 305-320.

Kahn, Charles H. 1996. *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue: The Philosophical Use of a Literary Form*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kaufer, David. 1977. "Irony and Rhetorical Strategy." *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 10(2): 90-110.

Kaufmann, Walter. 1968. *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Kraut, Richard, ed. 1997. *Plato's Republic: Critical Essays*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Kraut, Richard. 1997. "The Defense of Justice in Plato's Republic," in *Plato's Republic: Critical Essays*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Kuhn, Helmut. 1941. "The True Tragedy: On the Relationship between Greek Tragedy and Plato, I" *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 52: 1-40.

Levin, Michael. 1967. "Uses of the Social Contract Method: Vaughan's Interpretation of

    Rousseau." *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (October-December):

    521-536.

Levine, Andrew. 1978. "Robespierre: Critic of Rousseau." *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*,

    Vol. 8, No. 3 (September): 543-557.

Maistre, Joseph comte de. [1870] 1996. *Against Rousseau: "On the State of Nature" and*

    "On the Sovereignty of the People." Richard A. LeBrun, trans. London: McGill-

    Queen's University Press.

Marshall, Terence E. 1982. "Rousseau Translations: A Review Essay." *Political Theory*, Vol.

    10, No. 1 (February): 103-123.

Masters, Roger D. 1968. *The Political Philosophy of Rousseau*. Princeton: Princeton

    University Press.

McDonald, Christie V. 1979. "Jacques Derrida's Reading of Rousseau." *The Eighteen*

    Century, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Winter): 82-95.

McKeon, Richard. 1941. *The Basic Works of Aristotle*. New York: Random House.

Melzer, Arthur M. 1980. "Rousseau and the Problem of Bourgeois Society." *The American*

    Political Science Review, Vol. 74, No. 2 (December): 1018-1033.

Melzer, Arthur M. 1983a. "Rousseau's 'Mission' and the Intentions of His Writings." *American*

    Journal of Political Science, Vol. 27, No. 2 (May): 294-320.

Melzer, Arthur M. 1983b. "Rousseau's Moral Realism: Replacing Natural Law with the

General Will." *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 77, No. 3 (September):

633-651.

Melzer, Arthur M. 1996. "The Origin of the Counter-Enlightenment: Rousseau and the New

Religion of Sincerity." *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 90, No. 2 (June):

344-360.

Melzer, Arthur M. 2007. "On the Pedagogical Motive for Esoteric Writing." *The Journal of

Politics*, Vol. 69, No. 4 (November): 1015-1031.

Meyer, Michael. 1980. "Dialectic and Questioning: Socrates and Plato." *American

Philosophical Quarterly* 17(4): 281-289.

Morgenstern, Mira. 1996. *Rousseau and the Politics of Ambiguity: Self, Culture and Society*.

University Park, PA: Penn State University Press.

Müller-Lauter, Wolfgang. 1999. *Nietzsche: His Philosophy of Contradictions and the

Contradictions of his Philosophy*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Murphy, Tim. 2001. *Nietzsche, Metaphor, Religion*. Albany: State University of New York

Press.

Murray, James Stewart. 1994. "Interpreting Plato on Sophistic Claims and the Provenance of

the 'Socratic method.'" *Phoenix* (48)2: 115-134.

Nehamas, Alexander. 1992. "What Did Socrates Teach and to Whom Did He Teach It?" *The

Review of Metaphysics* 46(2): 279-306.

Furley, David J. and Alexander Nehamas. 1994. "Pity and Fear in the Rhetoric and the Politics," in *Philosophical Essays*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Neuhouser, Federick. 2012. "The Critical Function of Genealogy in the Thought of J-J Rousseau." *The Review of Politics*: 371-387.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. [1873] 1962. *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greek*. Marianne Cowen, trans. Washington: Regnery.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. [1882] 1974. *The Gay Science*. Walter Kaufmann, trans. New York, NY: Vintage Books.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. [1883] 1933. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Walter Kaufmann, trans. London and New York: Dent and Dutton.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. [1886] 1966. *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*. Walter Kaufmann, trans. New York: Vintage Books.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. [1887, 1888] 1969. *On the Genealogy of Morals—Ecce Homo*. Walter Kaufmann, trans. New York: Vintage Books.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. [1888] 1977. *Twilight of the Idols; and the Anti-Christ*. Walter Kaufmann, trans. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Nussbaum, Martha. 1997. "Is Nietzsche a Political Thinker." *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 5: 1-13.

Plato. 1961. *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*. Hamilton, Edith, and Huntington Cairns, eds. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Plato. 1991. *The Republic of Plato*. Allen Bloom, trans. New York: Basic Books.

Plato. 1997. *Plato: Complete Works*. John M. Cooper, ed. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing

Co.

Plato. 1998. *Plato's Gorgias*. James H. Nichols, Jr., trans. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University

Publishing.

Podoksik, Efraim. 2008. "Anti-Totalitarian Ambiguities: Jacob Talmon and Michael

Oakeshott." *History of European Ideas*, 34: 206-219.

Reeve, C. D. C. 1989. *Socrates in the "Apology": An Essay on Plato's Apology of Socrates*.

Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Co.

Rorty, Richard. 1989. *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University

Press.

Rosenow, Eliyahu. 1980. "Rousseau's 'Emile', an Anti-Utopia." *British Journal of Educational

Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (October): 212-224.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. [1763] 1990. "Essay on the Origin of Languages," in *Collected

Writings of Rousseau Vol. 7*, John T. Scott, trans. Hanover, NH: University Press of

New England.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. [1762] 1979. *Emile, or On Education*. Allan Bloom, trans. New

York: Basic Books.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. [1782a] 1953. *The Confessions of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*. J.M.

Cowen, trans. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. [1782b] 1979. *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker*. Charles E.

Butterworth, trans. New York: New York University Press.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. 1987. *The Basic Political Writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*. Donald A. Cress, trans. and Peter Gay, intro. Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company.

Salkever, Steven G. 1977-1978. "Interpreting Rousseau's Paradoxes." *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (Winter): 204-226.

Sanderman, Daniel. 2004. Why Socrates Mocks His Interlocutors. *Skepsis* Vol. 15,2-3: 432-438

Saxonhouse, Arlene W. 2009. "The Socratic Narrative: A Democratic Reading of Plato's Dialogues." *Political Theory* 37(6): 728-753.

Schacht, Richard. 1984. "Nietzsche on Philosophy, Interpretation and Truth." *NOUS* 18(1): 75-85.

Schacht, Richard. 2012. "Translating Nietzsche: The Case of Kaufmann." *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 43(1): 68-86.

Schrift, Alan D. 1990. *Nietzsche and the Question of Interpretation: Between Hermeneutics and Deconstruction*. New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Self, Lois S. 1978. "Rhetoric and Phronesis: The Aristotelian Ideal." *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 12(2): 130-145.

Shklar, Judith. 1969. *Men and Citizens: A Study of Rousseau's Social Theory*. Cambridge: University Press.

Shklar, Judith. 1978. "Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Equality." Daedalus Vol. 107, No. 3 (Summer): 13-25.

Sleinis, Edgar. 1994. *Nietzsche's Revaluation of Values: A Study in Strategies*. Urbana:

   University of Illinois Press.

Solomon, Robert C., and Kathleen M. Higgins. 2000. *What Nietzsche Really Said*. New York:

   Random House.

Stack, George J. 1982. "Nietzsche's Influence on Pragmatic Humanism." *Journal of the

   History of Philosophy* 20(4): 369-406.

Stern, Tom. 2011. "Back to the Future: Eternal Recurrence and the Death of Socrates." The

   Journal of Nietzsche Studies 41(Spring): 73-82.

Stevens, Edward B. 1948. "Envy and Pity in Greek Philosophy." *The American journal of

   Philology* 69(2): 171-189.

Stone, I. F. 1989. *The Trial of Socrates*. New York: Anchor Books.

Strathern, Paul. 1997. Socrates in 90 Minutes. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee.

Strauss, Leo. 1941. "Persecution and the Art of Writing." *Social Research* 8(4): 488-504.

Strauss, Leo. 1947. "On the Intention of Rousseau." *Social Research*, Vol. 14, No. 4

   (December): 455-487.

Strong, Tracy B. 1975. *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration*. Berkeley:

   University of California Press.

Strong, Tracy B. 1994. *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: The Politics of the Ordinary*. London: Sage.

Talmon, Jacob Leib. 1960. *Origins of Totalitarian Democracy*. New York: Frederick A.

   Praeger.

Tarrant, Dorothy. 1948. "Style and Thought in Plato's Dialogues." *The Classical Quarterly*

    42(1/2): 28-34.

Thomas, Douglas. 1999. *Reading Nietzsche Rhetorically*. New York: Guilford Press.

Ure, Michael. 2006. "The Irony of Pity: Nietzsche contra Schopenhauer and Rousseau." *The*

    Journal of Nietzsche Studies 32(Autumn): 68-91.

Vlastos, Gregory. 1978. "Socratic Irony." *The Classical Quarterly* 37(1): 79-96.

Vlastos, Gregory. 1994. *Socratic Studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Vlastos, Gregory. 1997. "A Metaphysical Paradox," in *Plato's Republic: Critical Essays*.

    Richard Kraut, ed. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Waite, Geoff. 1996. *Nietzsche's Corps/e: Aesthetics, Politics, Prophecy, or, the Spectacular*

    Technoculture of Everyday Life. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Weeks, Mark. (2004) "Beyond a Joke: Nietzsche and the Birth of 'Super-Laughter.'" *The*

    Journal of Nietzsche Studies 27(Spring): 1-17.

West, Cornel. 1989. *The American Evasion of Philosophy: A Genealogy of Pragmatism*.

    Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.

Whitehead, Alfred North. 1978. *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*. New York: Free

    Press.

Wilcox, John T. 1974. *Truth and Value in Nietzsche: A Study of His Metaethics and*

    Epistemology. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Wingrove, Elizabeth. 1998. "Republic Romance." *Representations*, No. 63 (Summer): 13-38.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1969 3c. G. E. M. Anscombe, trans. *Philosophical Investigations, The English Text of the Third Edition.* New York: MacMillan [Publishing Co., Inc].

Wolfsdorf, David. 2007. "The irony of Socrates." The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 65(2): 175-187.

ABSTRACT

PROVOCATION IN THE POLITICAL THEORIES OF PLATO, ROUSSEAU AND NIETZSCHE

by

AARON MARTIN

August 2014

Advisor: Dr. Ronald E. Brown

Major: Political Science

Degree: Doctor of Philosophy

I devise a theoretical model that provides an interpretive framework to define and describe the concept of provocation as well as to analyze and explain the theoretical provocations in Plato, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Friedrich Nietzsche's works. I assess their works as well as a wide-ranging body of scholarship both on the concept and the theorists, to show that—despite Plato, Rousseau and Nietzsche's many peculiarities both in terms of their lives and works—the three separate theoretical projects similarly use the conceptual language of provocation as an integral part of an overall rhetorical strategy to articulate their philosophical systems as ones of provocation themselves in order to theorize a new—and superior—conception of personhood and politics. In addition, I argue that interpreting political provocation through such a methodological framework has relevant applicability extending beyond theory to real-life provocateurs and events whose developments and outcomes are politically consequential, particularly with respect to helping equip citizens with their democratic responsibilities.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

Aaron Martin studies political theory at Wayne State University, whose research focuses on political provocation. He defends his dissertation in June 2014. Martin earned his BA in political science from Oakland University and his MA in political theory from Wayne State University. While a graduate teaching assistant at Wayne State University, Martin became interested in the politics of food, and founded the nonprofit corp., TLC Charitable City Garden. He has testified as an expert panelist before the Health and Human Services Committee of the Macomb County government in the effort to identify opportunities to increase food accessibility. He has presented the Garden's model at numerous conferences, including Michigan State University's C.S. Mott Group for Sustainable Food Systems's. Martin is a former federally registered lobbyist for the Detroit autos, conducting legislative research and policy analysis on various key issues, including securing appropriation of the $25 billion in direct loans (Section 136) authorized in the Energy Independence and Security Act. He has taught numerous sections of the American Politics course at Wayne State University, and plans to again after defending his dissertation.