

# DESTROYERS AND SAVIORS: A STUDY OF CYRUS AND LINCOLN IN THEIR REPUBLICS

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## INTRODUCTION

### Destroyers and Saviors of Republics

*Many great and good men sufficiently qualified for any task they should undertake, may ever be found, whose ambition would aspire to nothing beyond a seat in Congress, a gubernatorial or a presidential chair; but such belongs not to the family of the lion, or the tribe of the eagle. What! think you these places would satisfy an Alexander, a Caesar, or a Napoleon? – Never! Towering genius disdains a beaten path... Distinction will be his paramount object, and although he would willingly, perhaps more so, acquire it by doing good as harm; yet, that opportunity being past, and nothing left to be done in the way of building up, he would set boldly to the task of pulling down.*

– Abraham Lincoln, *Lyceum Address* (1838)

This project is about human beings who change political society, particularly those with republican governments, and the objects which cause or compel them to alter it for better or worse. Students of history will know that remarkable human beings have used their talent and genius to do good or to do evil. Some are destroyers, and some are saviors. In both cases, the efforts of the destroyer and the savior can transform republican governments, societies and, in some

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cases, the known world. The destroyers and saviors of republics are different based on the end they achieve, but the careful observer will notice that they often share the same virtues, passions, talents, and sometimes motivations for altering the course of history in a significant way.

If human beings of “towering genius” are fundamentally similar in their capacity to dispense either destruction or salvation, what causes or compels them to choose one path over the other? What distinguishes a destroyer and a savior? As a young Abraham Lincoln observed in his address before the Young Men’s Lyceum of Springfield, Illinois, men capable of being destroyers and saviors especially seek to gratify their ambition – the desire for fame, glory, and honor – by distinguishing themselves from all others. According to Lincoln, men of great ambition are amoral and guided by whatever opportunity leads to distinction. What an assertion! Can it be true to say that the only difference between Julius Caesar, George Washington, Alexander the Great, Winston Churchill, and others of similar caliber is merely opportunity? Are the great destroyers and saviors of history only different from each other incidentally? Does ambition reign supreme over such men? Perhaps it is so. Or do other objects influence the thoughts and actions of extraordinary human beings? What of justice, truth, and goodness? To help us answer these questions, two human beings were especially fascinating and helpful to the task at hand: Cyrus the Great and Abraham Lincoln.

I will now explain my reasons for making Cyrus and Lincoln the focus of this

project by arguing that both men are among the renowned destroyers and saviors of history; that comparing and contrasting them is relevant to distinguishing destroyers and saviors of republican government; that my thesis regarding Cyrus and Lincoln helps to clarify and identify these distinctions; and that the reader should care to reflect upon the conclusions of this project.

### *The Destroyer: Cyrus*

Readers of the Bible, Herodotus, and Xenophon will perhaps be familiar with Cyrus the Great. While these historical texts differ in their presentation of his character and deeds, they all attest to the grandeur of his conquests and the success of his rule. Cyrus is specifically attributed with establishing the greatest empire the world has ever known. The Hebrew prophets Ezra and Isaiah assert that God gave Cyrus the power to subdue all the nations and kingdoms of the earth.<sup>1</sup> According to Herodotus, Cyrus “dominated all of Asia.”<sup>2</sup> And Xenophon similarly recorded that the Persian Empire was bounded by “the Indian Ocean... to the east; the Black Sea to the north; Cyprus and Egypt to the west; and Ethiopia to the south.”<sup>3</sup>

In the Scriptures, Cyrus is the Lord’s “anointed” and the earthly savior of the Jewish people.<sup>4</sup> He is a “shepherd” lauded for his justice and benevolence by the great prophets of Israel.<sup>5</sup> The Bible’s presentation of Cyrus is contrasted with the Persian king who dominates the first book of Herodotus’ *The History*. He is a warmonger, “insatiate of blood,”<sup>6</sup> and remarkably cruel to his conquered subjects in some instances. The differing presentation of Cyrus’ character in the Bible and Herodotus is not due to historical

inaccuracy, but largely perspective. It is true that Cyrus permitted the Jewish people to leave Babylon to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. It is also true that Cyrus was a great conqueror and a ruthless ruler. The writers of each focused on the characteristics of Cyrus that were most relevant to their knowledge and the particular purpose of their writings. Xenophon masterfully combines these two perspectives of Cyrus the Great in his own work.

While Xenophon’s Cyrus is mostly an imagined character of historical fiction, many readers of the *Cyropaedia*, also called *The Education of Cyrus*, admire and seek to imitate what they believe the character to represent. Political thinkers and scholars throughout history have been divided in their understanding of the Persian king Xenophon presents in the Education. Ancient figures, like Cicero, Alexander the Great, and Julius Caesar, along with modern writers, like Bodil Due and Deborah Levine Gera, held Xenophon’s Cyrus to be the paradigm of human virtue, generalship, and political rule. Others, like Niccolo Machiavelli, Christopher Nardon, and Robert Faulkner, considered Xenophon’s Cyrus to be a tyrant with an extraordinary talent for political deception and manipulation.

Despite these different interpretations of Xenophon’s Cyrus and the overall purpose of the Education, the facts of his story are clear. Cyrus is raised in Persia and Media. As a young man, he is sent on campaign to defend against an Assyrian invasion. The Persians push back the Assyrians and subdue many other nations in the process. After capturing Babylon, the Assyrian capital, Cyrus continues to campaign and establishes a

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<sup>1</sup> Ezra 1:1-2 and Isaiah 45:1

<sup>2</sup> Herodotus, *Herodotus: The History*, translated by David Grene (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 1.130.

<sup>3</sup> Xenophon, *The Education of Cyrus*, translated and annotated by Wayne Ambler (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 8.6.21.

<sup>4</sup> Isaiah 45:1

<sup>5</sup> Isaiah 44:28

<sup>6</sup> Herodotus, *History*, 1.212.

Persian Empire. However, the empire Cyrus builds quickly falls to ruin after his death.

The writer believes that Xenophon's Cyrus is responsible for destroying the republic and empire of Persia. To reach this conclusion, this project will attempt to demonstrate that Persia begins as a republic; that Cyrus dismantles it in the process of establishing his empire; and that Cyrus' political philosophy dictated the subsequent destruction of the Persian Empire as well.

### ***The Savior: Lincoln***

Few will be unfamiliar with the American statesman, politician, and lawyer who served as the 16<sup>th</sup> president of the United States. With the exception of Jesus Christ and Shakespeare, more books have been written about Abraham Lincoln than any other historical figure. In particular, he is known for emancipating African American slaves and preserving the Union through the Civil War. It will perhaps not surprise the reader to learn that it is the writer's wish to demonstrate that Lincoln saves the American republic and further fulfills the principles upon which it was founded. Most Americans will readily accept this assertion, but its truth requires careful consideration and proof. Like its Persian counterpart, this project will attempt to show the republican nature of the American regime and reveal Lincoln as its savior. This is not only necessary for the sake of good argumentation, but the refutation of those who critique and deny this characterization of Lincoln.

The divide amongst scholars and thoughtful citizens over their understanding

of Lincoln today is by no means as large as the one we find concerning Cyrus the Great. Regardless, we ought to take these different perceptions of Lincoln seriously. Moreover, we ought to remember that the United States was greatly divided in its support and understanding of Lincoln as President in the mid-1800s. Some held him to be a savior, and others considered him to be a tyrant. The latter belief was the driving force behind the radical actions of none other than John Wilks Booth. Immediately after shooting Lincoln in the back of the head, Booth jumped to the stage of Ford's theater, brandished a dagger, and cried *Sic semper tyrannus* – Thus always to tyrants.

While they do not seek to justify the actions of Booth, some modern scholars would agree with the assassin's assessment of the 16<sup>th</sup> U.S. President. There are those, like Thomas DiLorenzo,<sup>7</sup> who conclude that Lincoln was a tyrant or, at the least, a deceptive leader with ulterior motives. Such critics largely argue that the centralization of government and the expansion of the Executive power in present-day America are the result of Lincoln's presidency and his lack of respect for constitutionalism. Some even assert that his beliefs in the principles of equality and the moral wrong of slavery were empty and merely a means to consolidating his own power. It may be tempting to dismiss such claims, but we ought to think about them carefully. After all, Lincoln himself argued that men of immense ambition, who thirst and burn for distinction, "will have it, whether at the expense of emancipating slaves, or enslaving freemen."<sup>8</sup> Whether Lincoln was such a man remains to be seen.

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<sup>7</sup> In 2002, Thomas J. DiLorenzo, an American economics professor at Loyola University in Maryland, wrote *The Real Lincoln: A New Look at Abraham Lincoln, His Agenda, and an Unnecessary War* and severely critiqued Lincoln's presidency. He claims that Lincoln, in thought and action, opposed constitutionalism and free market economics. Moreover,

Lincoln's opinions on the evil of slavery were merely a means to the end of "centralized government and the pursuit of empire."

<sup>8</sup> Abraham Lincoln, *Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings*, ed. by Roy P. Basler (Cambridge, MA: De Capo Press, 2001), 83.

However, this project hopes to demonstrate that Lincoln was a savior in reality and not merely in appearance.

### *Cyrus and Lincoln*

Cyrus the Great and Abraham Lincoln are interesting and relevant subjects for furthering our understanding of the distinctions between a destroyer and a savior of republican government because they are similar yet uniquely different. Cyrus and Lincoln both lived in republics, but they each distinctly altered their regimes. Cyrus destroys the Persian republic, and Lincoln saves the American republic. Yet Cyrus and Lincoln share in the desire to be honored, glorified, and praised by their fellow man. This similarity is important, because great ambition is the very passion which often confuses a clear perception of true destroyers and true saviors. If Cyrus and Lincoln only cared about winning distinction due to their ambition, it is possible that the different ends they achieved were merely incidental. Cyrus and Lincoln are perhaps more alike than we would care to admit. It is possible that under different circumstances, Lincoln would be the destroyer of the American republic and Cyrus the savior of the Persian republic.

If, however, this project reveals Cyrus and Lincoln, the former a presumed destroyer and the latter a presumed savior, to be different based on a true distinction which transcends the control that incidental circumstances appear to have on ambitious men, we can seek to understand what accounts for this difference. What subverts an ambitious man's amoral desire for distinction, fame, and honor? Can ambition and reason be reconciled? If not, which is more important to preserve: the pride or equality of man? The thoughts and actions of Cyrus and Lincoln provide us with an opportunity to analyze the conflict between ambition and reason. In pursuit of this endeavor, we will first examine the republics of Persia and America to

understand the social and political circumstances which would have surrounded Cyrus and Lincoln in their time. Then we will attempt to understand Cyrus and Lincoln outside the realm of politics by analyzing their birth, education, and nature. We will then bring the regimes and the men together by looking at Cyrus and Lincoln as political leaders. In light of their thoughts and actions within political society, we will then observe the ultimate impact Cyrus and Lincoln had upon their republics.

### *Thesis Statement*

Beyond demonstrating that Cyrus acts as a destroyer and that Lincoln acts as a savior, it is important to understand the thoughts and motivations behind these actions. My thesis is that Cyrus and Lincoln have truly distinct intentions. Cyrus is moved by the passion of ambition. He becomes a destroyer incidentally and takes advantage of any opportunity for the sake of honor and glory. On the other hand, Lincoln is moved by reasons of truth, justice, and goodness. He becomes a savior because he would not allow himself to become anything other than a good man. Cyrus would readily become either a destroyer or a savior depending upon whichever was incidental to his distinction and fame. Lincoln, however, acts for the sake of the good. He becomes a savior because it is incidental to the good he seeks rather than his ambition. If the opportunity to become a savior of the American republic never presented itself to Lincoln, he would not have sought to be its destroyer. Rather, he would have remained content in the good work he was doing.

Despite this difference of intention, Cyrus and Lincoln share a desire for ambition, as previously mentioned. They each must subvert their ambition for the sake of the distinct ends they seek. As this project will reveal, Cyrus often subverts his ambition, because he foresees the gain of greater honor

and glory in the future. He possesses a kind of self-interested moderation and prudence that cloaks his selfish desires with the appearance of virtue, justice, and goodness. Lincoln, on the contrary, subverts his ambition, because reason reveals the folly of ambition and the wisdom of pursuing the good for its own sake. Consider Cyrus and Lincoln. May their example bear witness to these words.

## CHAPTER ONE Imagined Republics

The statesmen, commanders, and rulers of history may only be properly understood in relation to the time, place, and circumstances which defined them and belonged to their distinct sphere of influence. Winston Churchill once wrote, “In a portrait or impression the human figure is best shown by its true relation to the objects and scenes against which it is thrown and by which it is defined.”<sup>9</sup> To understand Abraham Lincoln and Xenophon’s Cyrus the Great, it is essential first to know the society that raised them and the government in which they operated. With this knowledge, we may establish appropriate means for comparison, namely the republican character of each regime, and perhaps gain insight into the political course of action that each man would undertake. Moreover, it is only through these particulars of the past that the modern student of history may truly know the mind of bygone titans and recognize the truths and passions which transcend the ages to shape the minds and souls of men in his own day.

### *Xenophon’s Persia*

The Persia presented in the Education occupied the same realm of imagination in which Xenophon formed Cyrus the Great. This discovery ought not to be surprising. As a cause is much like the effect it produces so an imagined regime must beget an imagined man. More profound than this logic, however, was the simple fact that Xenophon’s Persia was very different from the Persia of history. It bore an uncanny likeness to another ancient society. The careful observer will discover that Xenophon’s imagined regime displayed many of the political and social characteristics of Sparta, as presented in the accounts of Herodotus’ *The History*, Aristotle’s *Politics*, and Xenophon’s own *Regime of the Lacedaemonians*. Indeed, historians and political thinkers have similarly argued that Xenophon’s presentation of Cyrus’ native land was “rather a consciously modified Sparta than a poor effort at describing historical Persia.”<sup>10</sup> Christopher Nadon, writes, “Xenophon’s Persia bears little or no resemblance to what is known of historical Persia and, as frequently noted, is in fact an improved version of the republican regime he describes in the *Lacedaemonian Constitution*.”<sup>11</sup> We may reasonably assume Xenophon’s deliberate use of Spartan institutions, laws, and customs in the construction of his imagined regime. Identifying the similarities between Xenophon’s Persia and historical Sparta will provide deeper insight into the character of his invented regime.

The presentation of Xenophon’s imagined Persia began with its king. He wrote, “Now the father of Cyrus is said to have been

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<sup>9</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *Marlborough: His Life and Times* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 291.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., Wayne Ambler, “Introduction,” pp. 5. Also see Walter Miller, “Introduction,” in Xenophon, *Cyropaedia*, trans. Miller (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1914), viii-x; Marcel Bizos,

“Notice,” in Xenophon, *Cyropédie* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1971), vi-xvi.

<sup>11</sup> Christopher Nadon, “From Republic to Empire: Political Revolution and the Common Good in Xenophon’s Education of Cyrus.” *American Political Science Review* 90, no. 2 (June 1996): 364.

Cambyzes, king of the Persians; this Cambyzes was of the race of Perseidae, who were so named after Perseus.”<sup>12</sup> According to Xenophon, the Persians were ruled by a single, hereditary king who descended from divine ancestors. In this way, the Persians and Spartans shared two similarities and one significant distinction with regard to kingship. Like the Persians, the Spartan kingship was hereditary and their lineage could be traced back to Heracles, a son of Zeus, and, therefore, the great-grandson and half-brother of Perseus.<sup>13</sup> However, Sparta was ruled by two kings instead of one.<sup>14</sup> Xenophon imposed many Spartan customs and laws upon his imagined Persia, but he intentionally neglected to include their duality of kingship.

Aside from this initial mention of the Persian kingship in Book 1, Chapter 2, Xenophon only spoke once more of the king with regard to his involvement in the public matter of hunting and war. He wrote, “Here is why they take care that hunting be a matter of public concern, and why, just as he is also in war, the king is their leader, and he himself joins the hunt and also takes care that they do: It seems to them that hunting is the truest of exercises that pertain to war.”<sup>15</sup> Xenophon emphasized the Persian king’s leadership in war and in matters pertaining to it, specifically hunting. Similarly one of the two Spartan kings would lead the army whenever it was sent on campaign.<sup>16</sup> However, unlike the Persian king, the Spartan kings appeared to have little or no role to play in the exercise of hunting. Regardless, it was clear that Xenophon made the king of Persia to be like the kings of Sparta in their leadership of the army in times of war. This becomes more apparent

when comparing the powers and responsibilities of the Persian and Spartan kings while on expedition.

Xenophon neglected to expound upon the Persian king’s powers and duties as a military leader in the opening pages of his famous work. However, when Cyrus is made ruler of the expedition to Media and leader of thirty-one thousand Persian troops a few chapters later, we infer a sense of these powers and responsibilities from his generalship. Before crossing the border of Persia, Cyrus’ first act as general was to offer sacrifices and interpret the heavenly signs to determine whether or not good omens would send them forth on campaign. Xenophon recorded, “After returning home and praying to ancestral Hestia, ancestral Zeus, and the other gods, Cyrus set out on the expedition.”<sup>17</sup> On his journey to the border, Cambyzes also commented, “That the gods send you forth propitiously and favorably is clear, son, both in the sacrifices and from the heavenly signs.”<sup>18</sup> Xenophon attributed this practice of offering sacrifices and receiving favorable omens before leaving on expedition to the kings of Sparta. In his writings on the Regime of the Lacedaemonians, Xenophon said, “For first, while at home, [the king of Sparta sent on expedition] sacrifices to Zeus Agētōr and to the gods with him... [At the borders of the country] the king offers sacrifices again, to Zeus and Athena. When he sacrifices to both these gods with good omens, then he crosses over the borders of the country.”<sup>19</sup> The practice of offering sacrifices before leaving on campaign was exclusively the responsibility of both the Spartan and Persian kings. Moreover, the role of interpreting the sacri-

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<sup>12</sup> Xenophon, *Education of Cyrus*, 1.2.1.

<sup>13</sup> Xenophon, *The Shorter Writings* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018), 3.10.8. Also see Herodotus, *History*, 6.52, 1.65-66.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.15.4-5, 3.15.8. Also see Herodotus, *History*, 1.65, 6.56-58.

<sup>15</sup> Xenophon, *Education of Cyrus*, 1.2.10.

<sup>16</sup> See the rights and duties of the Spartan kings in Herodotus, *History*, 6.57.

<sup>17</sup> Xenophon, *Education of Cyrus*, 1.6.1.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.6.2.

<sup>19</sup> McBrayer, *The Shorter Writings*, 3.13.2-3. Also see the rights and duties of the Spartan kings in offering sacrifices and interpreting omens in Herodotus, *History*, 6.57.

fices and heavenly signs was theirs alone as well.

In reference to the sacrifices and prayers Cyrus had offered to the gods before departing from Persia, Cambyses remarked, “You understand [the sacrifices and heavenly signs] yourself, for I purposely taught you this so that you would not learn the counsels of the gods through other interpreters.”<sup>20</sup> The Spartan kings also were responsible for offering and interpreting sacrifices. Xenophon wrote, “When the sacrificial offerings are complete, the king, summoning all, declares what is to be done.”<sup>21</sup> In both Persia and Sparta, no intermediary individual or body existed to interpret the sacrifices and heavenly signs. The king was his own interpreter. The precise similarity of these religious practices between the Spartan and Persian kings sent on expedition indicated Xenophon’s intentional transference of a distinctive Spartan practice to that of his imagined Persian regime.

In ending his discussion on the Spartan king sent on campaign, Xenophon wrote, “...there is no other work for the king on expedition but to be a priest in the affairs that have to do with the gods and a general in the affairs that have to do with human beings.”<sup>22</sup> We may generally apply the same conclusion to the Persian king on expedition given the significant similarity between the responsibilities and powers of both the Spartan and Persian kingships.

In light of all that has been previously established about Sparta and Xenophon’s Persia, one could infer the character of both regimes to be that of an absolute monarchy. However, Xenophon’s discussion on the

Spartan “king in relation to the city,”<sup>23</sup> revealed a more complex relationship between the Spartan and Persian kings and those they were meant to rule.

In chapter fifteen of his *Regime of the Lacedaemonians*, Xenophon summarized the role of the Spartan kings when he wrote, “For [Lycurgus] established that the king should offer all the public sacrifices for the city, on the grounds that he is from the god, and that he lead the army wherever the city should send it.”<sup>24</sup> The last half of this sentence revealed an important limitation on the Spartan kings and, by extension, the imagined Persian kingship as well. While the king possessed an almost absolute power over all affairs when on expedition, he only obtained such a power when *the city* sent him and the army on campaign.<sup>25</sup>

When Xenophon spoke of “the city” he referred to the combined efforts of the *ephorate* – five annually elected overseers “drawn from the people,” according to Aristotle – and the *gerousia* – a council composed of 28 Spartan elders and the two Spartan kings.<sup>26</sup> The ephors or “overseers,” as Aristotle called them, had the authority to judge and punish any they observed to be in disobedience of the established laws, including citizens, elected rulers, and even the Spartan kings.<sup>27</sup> They also could sentence a Spartan to “capital trial” which would be judged by the *gerousia*. On account of the overseers being drawn from the people, Aristotle categorized the ephorate as democratic.<sup>28</sup>

The *gerousia* or Spartan senate, on the other hand, was composed of the oldest, noblest, and wisest men among the Spartans. As previously stated, the *gerousia* was given

<sup>20</sup> Xenophon, *Education of Cyrus*, 1.6.2.

<sup>21</sup> McBrayer, *The Shorter Writings*, 3.13.5.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.13.11.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.15.1.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.15.2.

<sup>25</sup> The city commissioning the Spartan kings and army to military campaigns is affirmed by Herodotus when Cleomenes is sent on an

expedition against Athens (Herodotus, *History*, 5.64). Moreover, it is said that the rights and duties of the Spartan kings have been granted to them by the Spartiates (6.56).

<sup>26</sup> Aristotle, *Politics* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 1265b40.

<sup>27</sup> McBrayer, *The Shorter Writings*, 3.8.3-4.

<sup>28</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 1265b35-45.

the authority to judge “capital trials” – literally translated as “the contest that concerns the soul” – which often determined whether or not the accused individual would be sentenced to death or a life of dishonor.<sup>29</sup> In comparison with the ephors, Aristotle held the *gerousia* to be characteristic of oligarchic rule, especially due to their mode of election.<sup>30</sup>

The ephors and *gerousia* alone held the power to declare war in Sparta and send the king out on expedition. This same moderation of the king’s power was displayed in the *Education* when Cyaxares requested the support of the Persian army against the invading Assyrians and their allies. Xenophon wrote, “[Cyaxares] sent messages to the Persians, both the common council and to Cambyses... He sent also to Cyrus, asking that he try to come as the ruler of the men, if the common council of the Persians should send some soldiers.”<sup>31</sup> In his request for military support from Persia, Cyaxares contacted the common council, Cambyses, and Cyrus. He understood that the power to send out the Persian army rested with the common council and not with Cambyses. Moreover, the “elders in council” chose Cyrus as ruler of the expedition to Media per Cyaxares’ request.<sup>32</sup> The common council, also called “magistrates” by Xenophon, and the elders in council were political bodies tasked with representing the city, moderating the Persian king, and promoting adherence to established law. Although Xenophon neglected to provide intricate details into the structure and function of these Persian institutions, they closely resembled the ephors and *gerousia* of Sparta.

Like the ephors, the Persian magistrates or common council were chosen from the people, specifically the mature men. Selected by the Persian elders and given a

political office, the magistrates were representatives of the city and tasked with enforcing the law and, thereby, securing *koinon*, i.e., the common good or interest.

The Persian elders were reminiscent of the Spartan *gerousia*. While their number and mode of election were unclear, each elder had to be older than fifty and would be considered the noblest and wisest among the Persian men. Moreover, only the elders judged capital cases like the *gerousia*. Xenophon wrote:

Now these elders... remain at home and adjudicate all things common and private. They also judge capital cases as well as choose all magistrates. And if any of either the young or mature men should fall at all short of what is lawful, the several rulers of the tribes, or any other who wishes, show it, and the elders listen and pass judgement. Whoever is convicted spends the rest of his life in dishonor.<sup>33</sup>

Similar to the authority of the Spartan *gerousia*, the Persian elders had the power to sentence citizens to a life of dishonor when adjudicating capital cases.

When compared with the *gerousia*, the ephors possessed a greater political power in Sparta. Aristotle criticized the Spartan regime because he believed the ephors were too powerful and easily corrupted toward tyranny. He argued, “This office has authority by itself over the greatest matters among them, yet it is filled entirely from the people... the office is overly great – like a tyranny, in fact – even the kings were compelled to try to become popular with them.”<sup>34</sup> Perhaps recognizing the same weakness identified by Aristotle, Xenophon appeared to bestow the Persian elders with an authority

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<sup>29</sup> McBrayer, *The Shorter Writings*, 3.10.1-3.

<sup>30</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 1266a1-10.

<sup>31</sup> Xenophon, *Education of Cyrus*, 1.5.4.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.5.5.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.2.14.

<sup>34</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 1270b5-20.



which surpassed the magistrates or common council. The elders were charged with educating the Persian boys, judging capital cases, and electing the magistrates or common council. Unlike the mode of election of the ephors which Aristotle characterized as “overly childish,”<sup>35</sup> the Persian magistrates were not elected by a public assembly but the 64 elders. This difference of election between the ephors and the magistrates particularly attested to the greater power of the elders in Persia and perhaps revealed Xenophon’s attempts to moderate the overreaching office of the ephors when transferring it over to his imagined regime. This slight reversal of power in Persia’s political institutions perhaps suggested Xenophon’s desire to construct a regime which was more oligarchic in appearance and function than that demonstrated by historical Sparta.

The existence of both democratic and oligarchic political institutions in both historical Sparta and Xenophon’s imagined Persia ruled out the possibility of absolute monarchy in each regime. While the democratic and oligarchic bodies in both historical Sparta and Xenophon’s Persia held the power of declaring war and sending out the army on campaign, the extent of each political institution’s power over the kingship remained unclear. As further investigation will reveal, these political institutions not only endowed the king with his powers abroad but significantly controlled the very basis and extent of his authority with regard to domestic affairs. In both societies, the practice of exchanging oaths between the council and the king was perhaps among the most explicit displays of the city seeking to moderate their ruler and prevent his potential rise to tyranny.

Concerning Sparta, Xenophon recorded, “And every month, [the ephors and the king] make oaths to each other: the ephors on behalf of the city; the king on behalf of

himself. The oath for the king is that he will reign in accordance with the established laws of the city; for the city, that if he keeps his oath, it will maintain the kingship undisturbed.”<sup>36</sup> The practice of exchanging oaths each month displayed the fervor of the ephors in their efforts to represent and protect the will of the city from the potential tyranny of kingship. As suggested by the type and substance of oaths exchanged, the ephors asserted their ability to revolt and depose their kings should they fail to uphold the established laws. This revealed the great power the ephors held over the Spartan kings. In fact, Xenophon went so far as to conclude that the Spartan kings were *given* few honors and powers at home which surpassed those of “private individuals.”<sup>37</sup> The domestic honors and powers of the Spartan kingship were relatively weak and bestowed upon them by the city. Their adherence to established law maintained their limited powers. Xenophon explained that these significant limitations on the Spartan kingship were part of Lycurgus’ desire to avoid infusing “the kings with a tyrannical turn of mind or to make the citizens envious of their power.”<sup>38</sup> As understood by Xenophon, this simple republican design sought to achieve the best good for both the ruler and the ruled.

At the end of the Education, Xenophon presented the Spartan practice of exchanging oaths as a compact that Cambyses convinces Cyrus – now in possession of an empire stretching across West Asia – and Persians to make with each other. Calling the Persian elders and magistrates together, Cambyses proclaimed, “[Cyrus and Persians] should make a compact: You, Cyrus, that if anyone marches against Persian land or tries to tear up Persia’s laws, you will give aid with all your strength; and you, Persians, that if someone either undertakes to depose Cyrus from his rule... you will give aid to both

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 1266a25.

<sup>36</sup> McBrayer, *The Shorter Writings*, 3.15.7.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 3.15.8.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

yourselves and to Cyrus, in whatever way he demands.”<sup>39</sup> The wording of the Spartan oaths and the Persian compact differed slightly, but their aims were the same. To justify the creation of a compact between Cyrus and Persians, Cambyses appealed to the same reasons Lysurgus gave when he established the practice of exchanging oaths between the ephors and the Spartan kings. According to Cambyses, the compact would attain “many good things” for both the ruler and ruled by seeking to prevent Cyrus from ruling the Persians with “a view to [his] own advantage” and the citizens of Persia from “envying him for his power” and trying to “depose him from his rule.”<sup>40</sup> The similarity of the Spartan oaths and the Persian compact is astonishing and once again exposes Xenophon’s intentional transference of a unique Spartan practice to his imagined Persian regime. Yet curious differences are present, and we ought to assume Xenophon’s awareness of their existence. Unlike the Spartan practice of exchanging oaths, the Persian compact was not reaffirmed regularly. More importantly, the substance of the Spartan oaths aligned with their intent while the wording of the Persian compact slightly differed from the actual aim Cambyses had established prior. Cambyses originally suggested the creation of a compact to prevent both the ruler and the ruled from becoming tyrannical toward each other. The actual Persian compact that Cambyses proposed, however, failed to express a concern for tyranny rising up from within the regime.

On the contrary, the compact was concerned with preventing external dangers and usurpations. “If anyone marches against Persian land or tries to tear up Persia’s laws,” Cyrus was obligated to help protect the Persians from foreign threats of this sort. On the other hand, “if someone either undertakes

to depose Cyrus,” the Persians were similarly compelled to help preserve his rule as king. Despite Cambyses initial appeal to establish a compact for the sake of domestic tranquility, the actual compact ignored any possibility of internal danger and tyranny. This intentional difference ought to give us pause and will perhaps warrant further investigation later.

The Spartan oaths and the Persian compact revealed a more comprehensive conception of the imagined Persia Xenophon sought to construct. It was not an absolute monarchy. As displayed by the oligarchic and democratic institutions which moderated the Spartan and Persian kingships, both regimes were a mixture of monarchy, oligarchy, and democracy. We may, therefore, rightly characterize historical Sparta and Xenophon’s Persia as a republic, at least as it is initially presented in the *Education*.

Republics in the ancient world imbued with democratic ideas and political institutions may be considered with doubt and suspicion, especially by many American readers. However, both ancient and modern thinkers attested to their existence. In the *Politics*, Aristotle described Sparta as “neither democracy nor oligarchy, but the one midway between them which is called a polity.”<sup>41</sup> In the ancient sense of the word, a polity was a mixed regime featuring both democracy and oligarchy. Today, a polity is more commonly known as a republic. Aristotle’s characterization of ancient Sparta was shared by 18<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>-century thinkers and historians, including the Founding Fathers. In *Federalist No. 6*, Alexander Hamilton concisely proclaimed, “Sparta, Athens, Rome, and Carthage, were all republics.”<sup>42</sup> Given that Xenophon modeled Persia to resemble ancient Sparta, we may be further justified in calling it a republic by extension.

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<sup>39</sup> Xenophon, *Education of Cyrus*, 8.5.25.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.5.24.

<sup>41</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 1265b27-31.

<sup>42</sup> Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison. *The Federalist* (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 2001), 23.

Contemporary scholarship has also rendered the republican character of Xenophon's Persia to be indisputable. While noting a significant distinction between republics of the modern and ancient world, Wayne Ambler wrote, "[Xenophon's Persia] is presented as a republic in which the citizens were responsible for governing themselves by ruling and being ruled..."<sup>43</sup> The republican elements of Xenophon's Persia, however, went beyond each institution of government seeking to moderate the other. As the name of his excellent essay on secondary literature about the Education implied, Nadon held Xenophon's Persia to be a republic as well. He argued, "The Persian republic is... a democratic republic whose most fundamental and publicly declared principle is equality before the law."<sup>44</sup> While the specifics of Persian laws were ambiguous, they aimed at the common good by prohibiting theft, unjust violence, adultery, and other actions which disrupt a functioning society. Much like Sparta, all Persians were held accountable to the law, even the king. Entreating her son to return home after visiting his grandfather in Media, Cyrus' mother, Mandane, described the supremacy of law: "[I]n Persia to have what is equal is believed to be just. And your father is the first both to do what had been ordered by the city and to accept what has been ordered, and not his soul but the law is his measure."<sup>45</sup> Those who violated the laws of Persia were judged by the elders and accordingly punished. Unlike other cities, however, both Sparta and Persia sought to instill lawfulness by putting citizens through an extensive education in virtue and justice.

The fundamental principle of equality revered in Xenophon's Persia extended beyond the law. He wrote, "No one of them is barred by law from honors or political office,

but it is permitted to all Persians to send their own children to the common schools of justice."<sup>46</sup> While all could participate in the Persian system of education and enjoy the honors those with merit obtained, not all would partake in this common education. Only those families who could survive without the assistance of additional labor would send their children to be educated by the public teachers of Persia. Because the Persian education was completed sequentially, citizens who were unable to attend the schools of justice as children were barred from entering the ranks of the youths, mature men, and elders later on in life. Regardless of their merit, uneducated Persians, called "Commoners," would neither become members of the class of "Peers" nor possess the honors or political offices which accompanied such a membership. Wayne Ambler aptly wrote, "It gradually emerges... that like its Spartan model, the Persian republic compels a huge class of commoners to work and deprives them of political rights."<sup>47</sup> While easily overlooked, Xenophon hinted at the division between the Commoners and the Peers in the early paragraphs of Book 1, Chapter 2. He noted the banishment of "vulgar" merchandise sellers from the king's palace and other government buildings, "lest their confusion mingle with the good order of the educated."<sup>48</sup> Given that the educated were neither compelled to work nor permitted to engage in vulgarity, we may reasonably assume that the merchandise sellers were among the Persian underclass. As a consequence, they were banished from the "Free Square" due to their inferior station and economic condition. While republican principles were presented as essential to the whole of Persian society, they were only necessary to the few who enjoyed them as opposed to the many who had to do without them. A brief look at the edu-

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<sup>43</sup> Xenophon, "Introduction" in *Education of Cyrus*, 5.

<sup>44</sup> Nadon, "Republic to Empire," 364.

<sup>45</sup> Xenophon, *Education of Cyrus*, 1.4.18.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.2.15.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, "Introduction" in *Education of Cyrus*, 5.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.2.3.

cation of the Peers will prove helpful to our understanding of Cyrus and the radical changes he made to the Persian regime after securing his newly established empire.

While much could be said of education in Xenophon's Persia, especially when compared with the upbringing of young Spartan warriors, our analysis will be general, concise, and pursued for the purpose of qualifying the *telos* of Xenophon's Persian republic. If they could afford it, Persian citizens would begin their education at an early age among the boys. Until the age of 16 or 17, the boys spent their time "learning justice."<sup>49</sup> The Persian elders devoted a significant portion of each day judging cases of theft, violence, ingratitude, and others which were brought before them by the boys, youths, and mature men. All gained an understanding of justice by their observation of and personal experience with the elders adjudicating cases according to the dictates of Persian law. Moreover, the boys were taught to be moderate, to obey their rulers, and to shoot a bow and throw a spear. In all these things, the elders sought to teach the boys by their words and deeds. After completing their time among the boys, Persian citizens enter the ranks of the youths.

For the next ten years, the youths would be renewed in the teachings they learned as boys and take on the new responsibilities that came with their advancement in the Persian education. When they were not tending to the needs of their rulers and the community, half of the guard and the youths would accompany the king on monthly hunting expeditions. Introduction to the hunt sought to train the youths in the martial virtues. The half of the youths who had remained behind during the hunt would compete in public contests put on by the rulers. The winners would receive rewards for the skill, manliness, and obedience they

displayed. In addition, praise and honor were bestowed upon the rulers and educators who helped raise the most successful competitors. The youths continued in this way until the age of 26 or 27 when they entered among the mature men.

For the next 25 years, the mature men would serve the needs of the community and go on military expeditions, if necessary. However, instead of taking the bow and spear with which they were trained during their youth, the mature men were given weapons for close combat when sent on campaign. It was also at this age that educated Persians could obtain political office and the honors that accompanied it. Upon reaching the age of 50 years old and having accomplished all noble things, the mature men entered among the elders.

No longer going on military expeditions outside of the Persian borders, the elders resided at home and "adjudicate all things common and private."<sup>50</sup> As previously stated, the elders held a position of honor and power in the Persian regime. They were responsible for judging capital cases, choosing the magistrates from the mature men, and educating the boys. This concluded the Persian education.

Reflecting upon the whole Persian republic and its method of education, Xenophon wrote, "By using this regime, they think they may become the best."<sup>51</sup> In this statement, we are given the purpose of Xenophon's imagined Persia. While the end of the Persian regime was explicitly to render citizens best, the kind of excellence they desired and sought to achieve was ambiguous. What were citizens expected to become best at by their participation in the Persian education system? When considering the apparent purpose of Xenophon's Persia, merit was essential to achieving this end. After all, determining those who were "the best" required

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 1.2.6.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 1.2.15.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

perceptible distinctions between men. Virtue provided these distinctions and was only achieved through personal effort. Each man would be constantly challenged to distinguish himself from those of lesser virtue for his merit and hard work to be recognizable. Virtue was, therefore, both the measure of merit and the object of Persian excellence. This was affirmed by the important focus the elders and rulers placed upon virtue in their teachings. Persian education particularly emphasized training in justice, continence, obedience, and courage. The pursuit of virtue was encouraged by punishing “any vile or shameful deed”<sup>52</sup> and establishing public competitions by which distinctions in virtue could be recognized and rewarded. The existence of superiors and inferiors, at least in terms of virtue, would neither undermine the republican and egalitarian principles of the Persian regime nor its pursuit of the common good. On the contrary, each citizen possessed an equal opportunity to pursue a virtuous life. Moreover, virtue was essential to any functioning society, and the acknowledged superiority of the virtuous only furthered the perception and importance of virtue in Persia. By seeking to create “the best” citizens, Persia would also create the best regime; a regime which was just, virtuous, and good.

### ***The Founders’ America***

The construction and purpose of the American regime were rather unambiguous relative to the complex historical and fictitious construction of Xenophon’s Persia. It was born of the *Declaration of Independence*, debated and articulated in *The Federalist* papers, framed by the *Constitution of the United States of America*, and reiterated and upheld by all who desired its unadulterated preservation.

In 1776, the *Declaration of Independence* proclaimed that Governments were instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, to secure the unalienable Rights which all men, being created equal, were endowed with by their Creator. Many Americans believed and argued that the only form of government capable of deriving its just powers from the consent of the governed and securing the unalienable Right of its citizens was a republic. Debating the new constitution which would replace the Articles of Confederation, James Madison wrote:

The first question that offers itself is, whether the general form and aspect of the government be strictly republican? It is evident that no other form would be reconcileable with the genius of the people of America; with the fundamental principles of the revolution; or with that honourable determination which animates every votary of freedom, to rest all our political experiments on the capacity of mankind for self-government. [W]e may define a republic to be... a government which derives all its powers directly or indirectly from the great body of the people.<sup>53</sup>

While the people were the basis for government and all its powers, the character of the American regime was by no means a “pure democracy.”<sup>54</sup> The large mass of American citizens would not assemble and administer their government in person. On the contrary, the consent and will of the people were represented through the frequent direct and indirect elections of political officials who administered the affairs of their government. The principles of consent and representation were the greatest democratic elements of the

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 1.2.3.

<sup>53</sup> Carey, *The Federalist*, 193-194.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 46.

American republic and enabled the will of the people to, directly and indirectly, permeate all aspects of their government in varying degrees.<sup>55</sup>

For instance, the Legislative branch of government was originally a mixture of democracy and oligarchy. The House of Representatives was the most democratic branch of the American republic because all its members were “elected immediately by the great body of the people.”<sup>56</sup> Appointments to the Senate and the Executive branch were less democratic. They were indirectly derived from the choice of the people. Later changed by the Seventeenth Amendment, Senators were originally chosen by State Legislatures. Therefore, the rule of the Senate, while indirectly democratic, possessed a somewhat oligarchic character because its members were selected by a group of individuals more removed from the rest of society.

Similarly, the President was indirectly chosen by the people through an Electoral College formed by popular vote. The Electoral College, therefore, was a somewhat oligarchic political institution much like the State Legislatures when they initially were responsible for appointing Senators. The President was elected through a kind of oligarchic process, and the office itself was tenuously monarchic by virtue of being defined as a “single magistrate”<sup>57</sup> vested with the executive authority.

More so than the selection of Senators and Presidents, the appointment of federal judges was the most indirect choice of the people. The President nominated judges to federal trial courts, appellate courts, and the Supreme Court. Judicial nominations were then confirmed by the Senate. Any other inferior Courts were ordained and established by Congress. The Judiciary was the least democratic branch of the American republic

because the nomination and appointment of judges to both the Supreme Court and inferior Courts was “a remote choice” of the people.<sup>58</sup>

The people were the basis for government and all its powers, but their rule was tempered and by no means democratic. Furthermore, to ensure the power surrendered to the government was used to secure the people’s rights, “ambition must be made to counteract ambition.”<sup>59</sup> This all too familiar idea gave birth to “the compound republic of America”<sup>60</sup> and became manifest in the *Constitution of the United States of America* and the three branches of government it established: the Legislature, the Executive, and the Judiciary. All the power the people surrendered to the government would be divided and subdivided among distinct and separate departments to guard against the oppression of their rulers and society alike.<sup>61</sup> Madison wrote, “A dependence on the people is, no doubt, the primary control on the government; but experience has taught mankind the necessity of auxiliary precautions... The different governments will control each other; at the same time that each will be controlled by itself.”<sup>62</sup> While ultimately subject to the people’s control, each branch of the American republic was designed to moderate the rule of the other branches and even its own rule. For example, all Bills had to pass both the House of Representatives and the Senate to become law. The President faithfully executed the Laws and had the power to veto Bills that passed Congress. Federal judges solely interpreted the Constitution and Laws and maintained their offices during good Behaviour. The Senate possessed the Power of trying Impeachments. Congress alone held power to declare war. In addition to these few examples, other numerous divisions of power existed within this complex republican system of government to

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 195.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 355.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 195.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 268.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 270.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 270.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

adequately secure the rights of the American people and prevent tyranny in any form of rule.

The American founders understood the system of government they established to be republican. In affirmation of this understanding, the frame of the Constitution revealed the republican character of the American regime to have been a reality. By deriving all its powers directly or indirectly from the people, the American government accorded with the Founders' definition of a republic. Furthermore, its compound construction met the ancient understanding of a mixed regime. Finally, the end of the American republics was clearly stated in the Declaration of Independence and the preamble of the Constitution: to secure the natural rights of man and the blessing of liberty.

### ***The Republics of Persia and America***

Though separated by nearly 2500 years of history, Persia and America were republics. Both met the criteria of a mixed regime which divided its political power among monarchic, oligarchic, and democratic institutions that would rule and be ruled in turn. Each regime had a limited executive, a senate, and elected representatives drawn from the people. Informing these mixed political structures were fundamental republican principles, including the equality of individuals, the supremacy of law, and representation. While sharing these principles, the republics of Persia and America were undoubtedly different in the way and degree to which each principle was applied.

While political and social equality existed in Persia and America, each regime had a different basis for human equality. Citizenship established equality among the Persians. Foreigners, therefore, were not held as political and social equals. All citizens were held accountable to the law, and none were barred from a Persian education and the

public honors and political offices associated with it. While equal in theory, not all Persians were equal in reality due to economic limitations. Many citizens could not afford to send their children to the common schools of Persia and, thus, remained politically and socially impotent for generations. Citizens who completed the Persian education joined the ranks of the Peers and enjoyed political and social equality.

In America, "all men were created equal" in their natural rights, including citizens and foreigners alike. Dissimilar to Persia, human equality was an endowment of Nature and God rather than a virtue of citizenship. Because all men were equal in natural rights, citizenship allowed anyone to enjoy political and social equality in the United States. However, this American conception of equality was not enjoyed by all. Since the founding of the American republic, the institution of chattel slavery deprived a portion of the population of natural, political, and social equality. An 1860 census estimated the existence of four million enslaved African-Americans which constituted roughly twelve percent of the total population in the United States.

By comparison, Xenophon reported that the Persians numbered 120,000. Based on the events that occurred throughout the Education, it was clear that the Commoners significantly outnumbered the Peers. In terms of the total population, the Persians underclass was a majority while slaves in America made up a minority. A qualitative distinction also existed between the Persian Commoner and the African-American slave. While the Persian Commoners were deprived of political and social equality with the Peers, they were not forced to be slaves. The inferiority of the Commoners was due to their economic condition. If a Commoner became wealthy enough to send his children to the schools of Persia, they would immediately obtain political and social equality. American slaves, on

the other hand, had little to no hope of improving their condition, especially in terms of political and social equality. In this way, equality was imperfectly achieved in both the Persian and American republic.

Law was supreme in Persia and America. All were equally protected by and accountable to the law, regardless of their political and social status. The law was the measure of the Persian king, the elders, the magistrates, the Peers, and the Commoners. Similarly, the U.S. Constitution and laws limited the Executive, the Legislature, the Judiciary, and the people. Established law was how a mixed regime could rule and be ruled in turn. Therefore, lawfulness was paramount. While equally important to both regimes, respect for the law was enforced and encouraged in different ways. Early American law and respect for its dictates was primarily taught in the home and learned through experience in government. If parents neglected to raise their children with knowledge and respect for the law, they would come to know of it taking part in the legislative process or by punishment. Xenophon wrote, "Most cities allow each to educate his own children however he wants, and they allow the adults themselves to live however they please..."<sup>63</sup> This was identical to the method by which Americans were educated in their own laws. Citizens were given liberty to live life however they pleased and learned law through limited education, political experience, or punishment. The Persians adopted an opposite approach.

Few details were given about the Persian laws in the *Education*. Xenophon neglected to mention how they were established, what specific laws mandated, and who, if any, were involved in the legislative process. We do know that the Peers would receive a lifelong education in their own laws. "But the Persian laws," Xenophon continued, "starting earlier, take care that the citizens will not

in the first place even be such as to desire any vile or shameful deed."<sup>64</sup> Supremacy of law, therefore, was upheld in both regimes but maintained differently. America enforced the law through punishment and encouraged lawfulness by involving the people in the legislative process. The American people were inclined to obey the laws which they had created while maintaining individual liberty. The Persians compromised individual liberty to ensure lawfulness. Assuming only a limited few were involved in the legislative process, the rest of Persian society learned the established law of their homeland through punishment or their radical public education.

Political representation was recognized in both Persia and America. While the whole will of the people was more accurately represented in the American republic, both regimes used representative government as a protection against tyranny. In Persia, magistrates were tasked with representing the city and the law. They were selected by the elders and drawn from the people, specifically the mature men. Although the office of the magistrates was representative, their mode of election only captured a portion of Persian society. Magistrates were only drawn from the Peers and, therefore, anyone in the Persian underclass was barred from being elected as a magistrate. Moreover, neither the Peers nor the Commoners were involved in selecting the magistrates who would represent them because the council of elders was tasked with electing them to office. The Persian conception of political representation was less democratic, especially when compared to a modern liberal regime, but it sought to prevent the ruler and the ruled from acting tyrannically.

By contrast, America sought to more precisely represent the whole will of the people because the just powers of government were derived from the consent of the governed. Through the frequent direct and

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<sup>63</sup> Xenophon, *Education of Cyrus*, 1.2.2.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.2.3.



indirect elections of political officials, Americans could claim their government to be of the people, by the people, and for the people without having to personally administer it. Reflecting upon the republics of history, James Madison wrote, “It is clear, that the principle of representation was neither unknown to the ancients, nor wholly overlooked in their political constitutions. The true distinction between these and the American governments, lies *in the total exclusion of the people, in their collective capacity*, from any share in the *latter*, and not in the *total exclusion of the representatives of the people* from the administration of the *former*.”<sup>65</sup> Surprisingly Madison critiqued ancient republics for being too democratic. The total exclusion of representatives from the administration of ancient republics submitted the government to the daily passions of the people. While more democratic than the ancient republics, political representation in America was not valued for the sake of democracy alone. On the contrary, it sought to exclude the people in their collective capacity from any share in the American government. Like Persia, the Founding Fathers used political representation as a barrier to tyranny. Representation immediately removed government from the tumult of majority passions but gave the people the power to prevent monarchic and oligarchic tyranny. Both American and Persia used political representation to achieve the same end. However, the American conception of representation more reasonably balanced the tension between the various powers of a mixed regime.

The *telos* of Persian and American government was different. The end of the Persian republic was to make men best while the end of the American republic was to secure natural rights. The purpose and repub-

lican principles of both regimes, however, were partially unfulfilled. In Persia and America, a portion of society was not included in the end each regime sought to achieve. In this way, Persia and America were imagined republics waiting to be further realized.

## CHAPTER TWO The Makings of Men

In first observing the political scenes upon which Cyrus and Lincoln would be thrown in their own time and place, it is of equal importance to ascertain the qualities they possessed, if any, when tangentially removed from the affairs of their regime. Can we determine the makings of a destroyer and a savior? Are these qualities innate or learned? Do such men make circumstances or do circumstances make the men? The makings of a man are best perceived when he is not a man at all. The early years of a man’s life reveal the natural and cultivated characteristics of his soul in their purest form. As Tocqueville observed, “[M]an is so to speak a whole in the swaddling clothes of his cradle.”<sup>66</sup> To understand the men that Cyrus and Lincoln would become, we must examine their birth, their education, and their nature.

### *Their Birth*

Xenophon’s Cyrus entered the world as a prince of Persia. Born between 590 and 580 BC, Cyrus was the son of Cambyses, king of the Persians, and Mandane, the daughter of Astyages, king of the Medes. He was the heir of an ancient hereditary kingship and, according to both Herodotus and Xeno-

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<sup>65</sup> Carey, *The Federalist*, 329.

<sup>66</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, translated by Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba

Winthrop (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 27.

phon, a descendant of Perseus. His birth, therefore, was both royal and divine. Because of his noble birth, Cyrus was guaranteed access to a Persian education and the privileges that accompanied a position among the ranks of the Peers. Compared to the vast underclass in Persia, Cyrus would enjoy an uncommon political, social, and economic advantage. Among the educated Persians, however, birth and wealth were inconsequential. In spite of his kingly inheritance, Cyrus was no greater than any of the Peers under the laws of Persia. However, the royal duality of Cyrus' birth had its benefits. As a prince of both Persia and Media, he would experience a foreign way of life by visiting his grandfather, Astyages. This was unheard of among the Persians and, thus, a rare opportunity which may only be attributed to the fortune of his birth.

Compared to the grandeur of Cyrus' origin, the birth of Abraham Lincoln would appear to be of little consequence and wonder. Born in a log cabin in the backwoods of Kentucky on February 12, 1809, Lincoln became the descendant of simple American countrymen. While some of Abraham's ancestors were said to have prospered, his father, Thomas Lincoln, was of a lesser sort. Unaware of his successful elders or his father's living kin, Lincoln was left to the immediate influence of his father, sister, and step-mother. Upon being nominated for the Presidency, numerous reporters requested that Lincoln provide a personal account of his childhood. He often replied, "Why it is great folly to attempt to make anything out of me or my early life. It can all be condensed into a single sentence; and that sentence you will find in Gray's 'Elegy': – 'The short and simple annals of the poor.' That's my life, and that's all you or anyone else can make out

of it."<sup>67</sup> We too shall seek to make out no more than this as well.

### *Their Education*

By virtue of his birth, Cyrus was sent to the "common schools of justice"<sup>68</sup> where he was educated in the laws of Persia. As a boy, he surpassed his agemates in learning justice, living moderately, obeying rulers, and using the bow and spear. Hearing that he was "noble and good,"<sup>69</sup> Astyages desired to see Cyrus and sent for his daughter and grandson. Upon his arrival to Media, Cyrus was around the age of twelve and in the midst of his education among the Persian boys. After staying in the household of Astyages for a short time, Cyrus and his mother prepared to return to Persia. Having grown fond of his grandson, however, Astyages requested that Cyrus remain in Media and be brought up there. While Cyrus desired to stay, his mother was concerned that his education among the Medes would teach him to be tyrannical rather than just. Cyrus replied to his mother, "Your father is more clever at teaching one to have less than to have more. So take heart: Your father will now send any pupil onward, neither me nor anyone else, who will have learned how to be greedy."<sup>70</sup> For the next three to four years of his life, Cyrus was raised according to the customs and laws of Media. His ambition and love of learning were satisfied through friendly competition with his Median agemates and the teachings of his grandfather and elders among the Medes. Dissimilar to the education of the Persians, Cyrus was taught to ride a horse and soon surpassed his Median agemates in this skill.

Like his education among the boys of Persia, Cyrus was encouraged to hunt. Astyages gave his grandson a park filled with

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<sup>67</sup> Godfrey Rathbone Benson Charnwood, *Abraham Lincoln: A Biography* (Maryland: Madison Books, 1996), 10.

<sup>68</sup> Xenophon, *Education of Cyrus*, 1.2.15.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.3.1.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.3.18.

domestic and exotic animals that he and his agemates could hunt with the spear and bow from horseback. When Cyrus had reached the age of 15 or 16, he was given a taste of war and military strategy when the reckless son of the Assyrian king launched a small raid against Median forts near the borderlands.

When word reached Cambyses of all that his son had learned and accomplished while residing in Media, he recalled Cyrus to Persia. Obeying the request of his father, Cyrus returned to Persia and, upon finishing his last year among the boys, entered among the youths in continuation of his Persian education. Over the next ten years, Cyrus was taught “to be superior in caring for what he ought, in being steadfast, in respecting his elders, and in obeying the rulers.”<sup>71</sup> This was the extent of Cyrus’ formal education during the years of his youth.

It was a well-known fact that Lincoln, on the other hand, grew up with little semblance of formal education. By his own calculation, Lincoln had received less than a year of schooling between the ages of eight and fifteen. With the modest knowledge he gleaned from A B C schools in Indiana, Lincoln “taught himself to read, write, and do sums.”<sup>72</sup> Before studying law and mastering Euclid in the independent years of early adulthood, Lincoln “studied”<sup>73</sup> the books immediately available to him, including the Bible, *Aesop’s Fables*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Pilgrim’s Progress*, a *History of the United States*, and Weems’ *Life of Washington*. Lincoln’s desire for knowledge would persist for the rest of his life, and, much like the years of his youth, his want of education was fulfilled by his own diligence and continual study.

Lincoln learned to become a man in the absence of a true father. A dutiful but ill-

tempered man, Thomas Lincoln rented out his son to work on neighboring farms at a young age while procuring all of Abraham’s wages until he was 21 years old. Offering little encouragement in Abraham’s early studies and ambitions, Thomas’ role in shaping the man his son would become only extended to the knowledge Abraham gained by the negation of his example.

Once he was able to live on his own, Abraham’s relationship with his father was respectful yet indifferent. Despite the reserved resentment he held for his ineffective father, Lincoln was willing to help support his parents and siblings financially on occasion. When he received word from his brother in early 1851 that their father was sick and dying, Lincoln replied in a letter, “My business is such that I could hardly leave home now... Say to him that if we could meet now, it is doubtful whether it would not be more painful than pleasant.”<sup>74</sup> While Lincoln held little affection for his father, he cherished his step-mother. Lincoln’s biological mother, Nancy, died when he was only eight years old. Roughly a year later, his father was remarried to Sarah Johnston who had similarly lost a spouse. She was a caring mother and a life-long companion to Lincoln. Unlike his father, Lincoln’s step-mother encouraged him in his early studies in hopes that he would make something better of himself. When Lincoln spoke of his mother as an adult, he was known to succinctly say, “I owe everything that I am to her.”<sup>75</sup> Aside from his personal studies, Lincoln would grow from the experience and relationship he gained as a local lawyer and politician.

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 1.5.1.

<sup>72</sup> Charnwood, *Abraham Lincoln*, 15.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Abraham Lincoln, *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, ed. Roy P. Basler (New

Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953), Vol. 2: 96-97.

<sup>75</sup> Lord Charnwood, *Abraham Lincoln*, 12.

### *Their Nature*

In Chapter 2 of the Education, Xenophon described Cyrus “as having been most beautiful in form and most benevolent in soul, most eager to learn, and most ambitious, with the result that he endured every labor and faced every risk for the sake of being praised. He is remembered, then, as having such a nature in body and soul.”<sup>76</sup> Even as a boy, Cyrus was held to be beautiful. After living in Media for a few years, Cyrus was recalled to Persia by his father so he might finish his education among the Peers. Wishing to return home, Cyrus prepared to depart for Persia. To say farewell, Cyrus’ relatives in Media followed the Persian custom of kissing him on the mouth. A Mede by the name of Artabazus, who “had been struck for quite a long time by Cyrus’ beauty,” observed this exchange taking place and pretended to be one of Cyrus’ relatives so he might receive a kiss from him.<sup>77</sup> Notice of Cyrus’ handsome appearance went beyond the infatuation of one man. As Xenophon noted, the beautiful form of Cyrus was acclaimed “in word and song by the barbarians”<sup>78</sup> he ruled, even long after his death. Throughout the Education, many others held Cyrus to be beautiful. After sparing the life of the Armenian king, for instance, it was said that “one spoke of Cyrus’ wisdom, another of his steadfastness, another of his gentleness, and someone else of his beauty and height.”<sup>79</sup> These stories affirmed Xenophon’s claim that Cyrus was beautiful in form by nature.

It is important to recognize that Xenophon’s characterization of Cyrus implied more than physical beauty. The Greek word used to describe Cyrus in these stories is *kalos*. In English, this word may translate as “beautiful,” “fine,” or “handsome,” but it is

more commonly rendered “noble”<sup>80</sup> according to Wayne Ambler. It is, therefore, more precise to say that Cyrus was noble by nature rather than beautiful in form. *Kalos*, however, meant more than what the English word “noble” typically conveys. As Xenophon and other ancients understood it, the noble implied aesthetic and moral beauty. In this case, moral beauty was virtuous action. Thus, the noble captured those things which were beautiful and acted beautifully. Cyrus’ noble form, therefore, inferred his physical and moral beauty.

Cyrus was also said to have been benevolent by nature. According to Ambler, the superlative used to describe this aspect of Cyrus’ soul was derived from the Greek word *philanthōpos* which translated as “loving human beings.”<sup>81</sup> Cyrus displayed his benevolence or love for human beings in word and deed. The first action of Cyrus described in the Education occurred when he was introduced to his Median grandfather. Upon seeing him for the first time, it was said that Cyrus hugged Astyages as if he had known him for many years. Observing the extravagant Median dress, ornaments, and cosmetics which adorned his grandfather, Cyrus said, “Mother, how handsome my grandfather is!”<sup>82</sup> In his initial words and actions toward his grandfather, Cyrus displayed love, affection, and benevolence. After agreeing to stay in Media rather than return to Persia with his mother, Cyrus’ benevolence toward his grandfather continued, especially on the occasion when Astyages became ill. Unable to care for himself due to his sickness, Cyrus never left his grandfather’s side and waited on him hand and foot. It was said that Cyrus “never ceased weeping, but he made it plain to all that he was extremely afraid that [his grandfather] might die.”<sup>83</sup> The benevolence and love that Cyrus conveyed to his grand-

<sup>76</sup> Xenophon, *Education of Cyrus*, 1.2.1-2.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 1.4.27.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 1.2.1.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 3.2.41.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., “Glossary,” 280.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., “Notes to Book I,” 287n10.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 1.3.2.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 1.4.2.

father were maintained when interacting with other human beings outside his immediate family.

While spending his time among the Medes, Cyrus quickly gained the affection of his agemates and their fathers. He sought to attach others to himself and often accomplished this by being benevolent. If his agemates or their fathers ever required anything of the king, Cyrus would convince his grandfather to fulfill the needs and desires of his friends. Beyond presenting the requests of his friends before Astyages, Cyrus brought his agemates on hunts, praised them in their triumphs, and bestowed gifts upon them frequently. After killing a deer on his first hunt outside the park, Cyrus wished to distribute the meat among his agemates after learning that his grandfather was not in need of it. When Cyrus was called back to Persia, Asytages gave him a multitude of gifts to take home with him. Instead of keeping these gifts for himself, he gratified his agemates with them. In this way, Cyrus returned to Persia having won the favor and loyalty of Media by his benevolence.

Yet his generosity and love of human beings were by no means devoid of self-interest. Xenophon stated that Cyrus' liberality was often meant to attach others to himself, and loyal friends were desirable to an ambitious prince. However, Cyrus was not benevolent for the sake of surrounding himself with sycophants. He valued friends who encouraged hard work and healthy competition. Cyrus' eagerness to learn revealed this to be true.

Before being called to Media by his grandfather, Cyrus spent the initial twelve years of his life among the educated Persian boys. It was said that he distinguished himself from his peers "in quickly learning what was necessary and in doing everything in a noble and manly way."<sup>84</sup> Among the Medes,

however, Cyrus quickly recognized his inferiority, especially regarding horsemanship. The existence of a challenge which could be overcome through diligent practice and learning excited a young Cyrus. Opportunities for learning were, therefore, opportunities for self-improvement and distinction. Reflecting upon his success among his Persian agemates, Cyrus understood that the unexplored heights of learning and human superiority were only available in Media. He concluded that a Persian education, at least among the boys, had nothing left to teach him. There were no other challenges for him to overcome; no new means by which to distinguish himself; no opportunities to satiate his eagerness to learn. When his mother made plans for their return to Persia, Cyrus immediately expressed his desire to stay in Media. He said, "[At] home, mother, among those of my age, I both am and am thought to be the best at throwing spears and shooting the bow, but here I know quite well that I am inferior to those of my age at riding."<sup>85</sup> Unimpressed with his reasoning, Cyrus' mother inquired as to how he would learn justice among the Medes. To put his mother's worries at ease, Cyrus claimed to understand justice already. This was evident, he argued, because his teachers had appointed him to be a judge over others. If his conception of justice was lacking in anyway, Cyrus would gain this additional knowledge and understanding from his grandfather. Regardless of whether he was "accurately versed in justice,"<sup>86</sup> this exchange between Cyrus and Mandane revealed his vexation with educational complacency. While perhaps wrongly confident in his grasp of justice and the other objects of a Persian education, Cyrus was eager to learn of those things he perceived himself to be lacking in comprehension. Beyond being merely desirous of learning, he

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 1.3.1.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 1.3.15.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 1.3.16.

diligently pursued new knowledge and experience in practice.

Cyrus was true to the reasons he gave for wanting to stay and be raised in Media, namely to learn. He easily sought out opportunities to improve his knowledge and abilities because he loved to learn by nature. Unashamedly inquisitive and talkative amongst his Median agemates and elders, he never ceased to ask questions about all things he lacked in understanding. As he grew older, Cyrus only competed against his agemates when he knew he was inferior to them. His reasons for this were perhaps twofold. If Cyrus had only cared to be challenged where he knew he was superior, like his skill in throwing spears and shooting the bow, this would pose no personal challenge to him at all. It would be an effortless display of superiority and a needless source of envy for his Median friends. By focusing on where he was inferior, Cyrus would learn and improve. If his initial inferiority were to become superiority through diligent work and merit, it would be superiority justly won and less likely to cause envy. This was Cyrus' method of study, and he put it into practice while living amongst the Medes. Xenophon wrote, "[Cyrus] did not run from being defeated into the refuge of not doing that in which he had been defeated; rather, he immersed himself in trying to do better the next time. He therefore quickly became the equal of his agemates in horsemanship, [and] quickly surpassed them because he loved the work..."<sup>87</sup> Cyrus honed his weaknesses until they had become strengths, but this method would only get one so far in a stagnant learning environment. What was left to learn in Media having mastered horsemanship? Desirous of a dynamic environment which fostered new learning opportunities and personal betterment, Cyrus encouraged other to engage in this same method of study. Through competition

among equals, Cyrus would thrive. In the process, those around him would become better as well. We witness Cyrus attempting to create this environment of friendly competition during a hunting expedition with his agemates. Because the hunt took place outside the park, Astyages accompanied the boys with the Median cavalry and infantry. When the hunt began, Astyages ordered that Cyrus have the first and choicest of opportunities to chase and kill the prey before anyone else. Cyrus, however, asked that his agemates be his equals in chasing and competing for the prey so "that each may do as well as he is able."<sup>88</sup> By allowing each to do as well as he was able, Cyrus thought that he and, consequently, his friends would become the best.

Finally, Cyrus was most ambitious. When translated from the Greek word *philotimia*, ambition literally means "love of honor."<sup>89</sup> Xenophon explained that Cyrus was ambitious "with the result that he endured every labor and faced very risk for the sake of being praised."<sup>90</sup> In other words, Cyrus would do practically anything to earn the esteem of others. In Persia, honor was especially, if not exclusively, associated with political office. The opportunity to share in honor or political office, however, was only made available to those among the ranks of the mature men. Assuming they could participate in the Persian education, every ambitious boy would have to wait at least 15 to 20 years before actually gaining political office and the honors associated with it. Small honors would be achieved amongst the younger ranks of the Persians by way of hunting and public contests put on by the teachers and elders. Great ambitions, however, would not be satisfied with the honors bestowed by one's equals for small acts of virtue. Moreover, all honor had to be shared with others. If a tribe among the youths displayed virtue

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 1.4.5.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 1.4.14.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., "Glossary," 280.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 1.2.1.

as a collective, honor was given to the ruler of their tribe and those who educated them as boys.<sup>91</sup> Honor was rarely bestowed in recognition of one's own virtue. Other avenues for greater honors, however, would not be found among the Persian boys and youths. Their only option was to wait until they became old enough to be enrolled among the mature men and vie for political office. Even if they gained political office, the honor received would be from their equals or inferiors. Cyrus, however, was not subject to the limitations his Persian agemates would experience. Because Cyrus was royalty in Persia and Media, opportunities for greater honor were made available to him in the midst of his youth.

When he visited his grandfather in Media, it was said that Astyages "honored" Cyrus and bestowed him with a beautiful robe, jewelry, and a horse to ride upon. Xenophon wrote, "Since he was a boy who loved beauty and honor, Cyrus was pleased with the robe and exceedingly delighted at learning how to ride a horse."<sup>92</sup> In Media, Cyrus was able to receive honor from one who was his true superior, and he gained wealth and knowledge which would in turn bring him more honor. Such honor would not be found in Persia. Even though Cyrus' father was a king like Astyages, he was essentially equal to all other Persian citizens, and more than likely it was beyond his power to honor individuals. His grandfather, on the other hand, had no equal in Media. Moreover, wealth and horsemanship were inconsequential sources of honor in Persia. Among the Medes, they commanded honor.

As he was raised in Media, Cyrus wished for nothing more than the esteem and praise of his grandfather. This was made clear in an exchange between Cyrus and his grandfather during their first meal together. When Astyages presented his grandson with

an extravagant feast, Cyrus wished to give away his share of the food so as to avoid being immoderate. Receiving permission to do with the food as he pleased, Cyrus distributed it all among his grandfather's servants. Witnessing this act of benevolence, Astyages said, "But to Sakas, my cupbearer, whom I honor most, do you give nothing?" Cyrus replied, "Why, grandfather, do you honor him so?"<sup>93</sup> Humored by Cyrus' childish behavior, Astyages claimed to honor Sakas most because he performed his duties as a cupbearer nobly. In response, Cyrus imitated Sakas by preparing a glass of wine and presenting it to his grandfather. Pleased and amused by this sight, Astyages laughed and Cyrus rejoiced: "Sakas, you are done for; I will cast you out of honor, for I will both pour the wine more nobly than you..."<sup>94</sup> This scene captured Cyrus' ambition even as a child. He loved honor, but he desired the greatest honors available to him. In Media, the greatest honors were bestowed by Astyages, because no one was his equal. Cyrus naturally sought to win esteem and honor from his grandfather. However, he was frustrated to discover that Sakas was most honored by his grandfather rather than himself. Motivated by his love of honor, Cyrus endured every labor associated with cup bearing for the sake of being praised and most honored. The childlike explicitness of Cyrus' ambition was humorous, but it revealed the incredible affect that honor had on his soul.

In addition to enduring every labor for the sake of praise and honor, Cyrus would undertake many risks to attain the same end. During his first hunt outside the park, Cyrus put his life at risk when he carelessly pursued a deer and then a boar on a later occasion. He faced these dangers so as to earn more praise and honor from his grandfather. In the midst of his uncle's reproach of his thoughtless behavior, Cyrus' only wish was to present his

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 1.2.12.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 1.3.3.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 1.3.8.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 1.3.9.

kills to Astyages. After his uncle allowed his request, “Cyrus, carrying off the wild animals, gave them to his grandfather and said that he himself had hunted them for him. He did not show him the spears, but he put them, still bloody, where he thought his grandfather would see them.”<sup>95</sup> Cyrus’ careful planning for this encounter with his grandfather, specifically his placement of the spears, revealed his intention to gain honor while appearing not to seek it. Astyages perceived Cyrus’ true intentions and requested that his grandson avoid running such risks. Of course, Cyrus’ ambition overruled his grandfather’s entreaties and concerns when he experienced his first battle.

When he was 15 or 16 years old, a small Assyrian army invaded Media and began to plunder the borderlands. In response to this raid, Astyages gathered a cavalry force to repel the Assyrian invaders. However, Astyages refrained from launching an immediate attack because they were outnumbered by the Assyrians. Seeing others rushing to reinforce the Medes at the border, Cyrus also rode out to meet his grandfather on the battlefield though he had not been ordered to do so. Arriving at the border and assessing the situation, Cyrus suggested that some of their cavalry charge against the Assyrians who were occupied by plundering while awaiting additional reinforcements. By the time they had repelled those who were busy plundering, he argued, the Median reinforcements would have arrived and the standing Assyrian cavalry would become afraid and retreat. Astyages approved of the strategy and sent his son, Cyaxares, to lead the attack as opposed to Cyrus. When the Median attack commenced, however, Cyrus rode out in front of the detachment of horses to lead the charge. Much like his behavior during the hunt, Cyrus and his followers recklessly pursued the enemy before them. Their cavalry

force eventually fell into disorder and Astyages charged onto the field of battle to save Cyrus and Cyaxares from harm. Observing the great force of Median cavalry charging upon them, the Assyrians became afraid and retreated. Though the battle was won, “Astyages did not know what to say about [Cyrus], for he knew that he was the cause of the deed but also recognized that he was mad with daring.”<sup>96</sup> Cyrus’ love of honor had put himself and others in harm’s way. His ambition moved him to overtake Cyaxares’ command of the cavalry detachment and lead the charge against the Assyrians. For the greatest honor was reserved for those on the front lines of the battle. If Cyrus had stayed behind with his grandfather, his uncle would have been praised for the victory. He had to execute the military strategy he put forth, if he wished to be honored by his grandfather and the Medes.

While Astyages would remain the object of his ambition, Cyrus sought out the lesser esteem of equals and inferiors. Xenophon wrote, “Cyrus, because of his benevolence and his ambition, was very concerned to accomplish whatever the boys asked of him.”<sup>97</sup> As previously mentioned, Cyrus’ benevolence had not appeared to be devoid of self-interest. Yet it was difficult to ascertain the selfish motivation for his acts of benevolence beyond acquiring favor and loyalty from others. However, Xenophon claimed that Cyrus sought to please his friends because of his benevolent and ambitious nature. Xenophon’s simultaneous use of these two words perhaps revealed Cyrus’ benevolence and ambition to be inseparable. Cyrus’ distress at the prospect of failing to accomplish whatever his friends asked of him affirmed this connection. Doubtful as to whether he would successfully convince his grandfather to allow him and his agemates to go on a hunt outside the park, Cyrus’ friends felt that

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<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.4.10.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.4.24.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.4.1.



someone else would have to act on their behalf. Xenophon wrote, “Cyrus was stung at hearing this, and going away in silence, he ordered himself to take the dare.”<sup>98</sup> Christopher Nadon observed in his book, *Xenophon’s Prince: Republic and Empire in the Cyropaedia*, that Cyrus’ anger at the ingratitude of his friends implied a personal expectation of gratitude in return for his benevolence.<sup>99</sup> Of course, true benevolence is done in the absence of reward and gratitude. Honor, therefore, was perhaps the self-interested motivation for Cyrus’ benevolence. While it was possible for Cyrus to act in the interest of others and himself at the same time, it was impossible for these two loves to occupy an equal share of his true motivation. Given his almost insatiable ambition, it seemed likely that Cyrus’ love of honor would often trump his love of human beings. Regardless of his intentions, Cyrus was successful at satisfying his young ambition, for he left Media having won the esteem and praise of every man, woman, and child.

It may be surprising to some to discover that the natures of Cyrus and Lincoln were spoken of in similar terms. As to his nature, Lincoln was said to have been ungainly yet strong in figure, gentle in spirit, diligent for knowledge, and ambitious. In his teenage years, Lincoln’s figure developed and began to resemble the odd appearance he would assume and retain in adulthood. He was not an attractive man. William Herndon, Lincoln’s law partner and friend, recounted, “At first sight he struck one with his plainness...”<sup>100</sup> This characterization of Lincoln’s dysmorphic figure was often described more crudely by others, including Lincoln himself.

An 1861 *New-York World* publication reported, “Mr. Lincoln’s personal appearance disappointed everyone, but in opposite ways ... To us he seemed very homely.”<sup>101</sup> Lincoln’s face is familiar to the modern eye and renowned throughout the world. While his visage is practically synonymous with America itself today, all were struck by his six-foot-four stature, the disproportion of his long arms and large hands, and “the strange deep-cut lineaments of his face”<sup>102</sup> in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Subject to public scrutiny and insults from political opponents, Lincoln was very aware of his “homely” figure and occasionally engaged in lighthearted yet tactful self-deprecation. In the Great Debates of 1858, Stephen Douglas often accused Lincoln of changing his opinions depending on which part of Illinois they visited. As a result, it was said that Douglas explicitly called Lincoln “two-faced” during one of the debates. In response, Lincoln proclaimed, “I leave it to my audience. If I had two faces, do you think I’d wear this one?” While this story was perhaps more a part of Lincolnian mythology as opposed to historical truth, it accurately captured both Lincoln’s humor and his comfortable sense of self-awareness.

Despite Lincoln’s disproportionate and lean body, he possessed great muscular strength. Though he disliked physical labor, Lincoln was valued as a workman. Charnwood recorded that “startling statistical tales [were] told of the weight [Lincoln] could lift and the force of his blows with a mallet or an axe.”<sup>103</sup> When it came to resolving quarrels on the frontier, men would use fists rather than words. Lincoln sought to avoid brawling, but he was decisively victorious in wrestling

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 1.4.13.

<sup>99</sup> Christopher Nadon, *Xenophon’s Prince: Republic and Empire in the Cyropaedia* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 52.

<sup>100</sup> Lincoln, Abraham et al. *The Words of Abraham Lincoln*, ed. Isaac Thomas (Chicago, IL: Western Publishing House, 1898), 127.

<sup>101</sup> Associated Press, “Mr. Lincoln’s Appearance,” *New-York World*, February, 1861, accessed December 16, 2018, [https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/lincoln/interactives/journey-of-the-president-elect/feb\\_19/article\\_4\\_507g\\_highlight\\_1.html](https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/lincoln/interactives/journey-of-the-president-elect/feb_19/article_4_507g_highlight_1.html).

<sup>102</sup> Charnwood, *Abraham Lincoln*, 14.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

bouts and fist fights when peaceable options were untenable. Though imbued with incredible strength, Lincoln had a gentle spirit.

He never desired to unnecessarily harm a living thing. After shooting a turkey at the age of eight, Lincoln recounted that he never wished to fire a gun again. He possessed such a great sympathy for the suffering of human beings and animals that he was often moved to act in service of their well-being. There were stories of him saving a drunken man from freezing to death in the snow, helping a pig stuck in a bog, and rescuing a dog trapped on an ice floe. According to Charnwood, a lady once explained to Lincoln that “he was not ready with little gracious acts. But rare occasions, such as can arouse a passionate sense of justice, would kindle his slow, kind nature with a sudden fire.”<sup>104</sup> At the age of 22, Lincoln’s gentle spirit and passionate sense of justice were most notably and prophetically displayed during a voyage down the Mississippi to the city of New Orleans. Transporting a flatboat of hogs with the assistance of some close friends, Lincoln and his companions reached their destination and observed a scene which was unfamiliar and shocking to country boys from the free States of Indiana and Illinois. The fifth-largest city in the United States and located in the Deep South, New Orleans was “a slave metropolis.”<sup>105</sup> Observing first-hand the gross treatment of the black man and the auctioning of human beings as slaves, Lincoln and his friends were disturbed. Among Lincoln’s friends who witnessed these events, John Hanks recalled, “Lincoln saw it; his heart bled; said nothing much, was silent. I can say, knowing it, that it was on this trip that he formed his opinion of slavery.”<sup>106</sup> At the time, Lincoln perhaps had not fully understood why slavery was wrong, but he knew it to be true. Such cruelty and subjugation

toward any living thing would not sit well with his gentle spirit and his sense of justice. Whether at this exact moment in New Orleans or upon later reflection, it was clear that Lincoln developed a hatred for the institution of slavery in his youth. For even his earliest political speeches expressed a desire to limit and abolish slavery in America.

In addition to his gentle spirit, Lincoln was diligent for knowledge. On a railway train heading to New York in February, 27, 1860, Lincoln was interviewed by a Rev. J.P. Gulliver regarding his method of study and the character of his education during the years of his youth in Kentucky. The conversation would later be published in the weekly New York City magazine known as *The Independent*. Mr. Gulliver inquired, “I want very much to know how you got this unusual power of ‘putting things.’ It must have been a matter of education. No man has it by nature alone. What has your education been?” Briefly relaying the little schooling he received as a child, Lincoln responded, “I can say this, that among my earliest recollections I can remember how, when a mere child, I used to get irritated when anybody talked to me in a way I could not understand. I don’t think I ever got angry at anything else in my life.”<sup>107</sup> Given his young age and lack of a formal education, Lincoln’s desire to comprehend the conversations he had and heard revealed that he was thoughtful by nature. When interviewed in her old age, Sarah Bush Lincoln recounted observing this same tendency in her step-son’s behavior. When the Lincolns had visitors, Sarah recalled that her son would quietly sit and listen to the adults as they talked. After the guests had left, a young Abraham would ask his mother questions about the conversations he had heard. If he failed to understand even the smallest concept, he would repeat it to himself out loud

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>105</sup> Richard Brookhiser, *Founders’ Son: A Life of Abraham Lincoln* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2014), 38.

<sup>106</sup> Charnwood, *Abraham Lincoln*, 18.

<sup>107</sup> Thomas, *The Words of Abraham Lincoln*, 24.

until he had a sufficient grasp of the issue. This systematic method of repetition and reconstruction to understand a phrase or word would be employed and perfected throughout the rest of Lincoln's life.

In the interview with Mr. Gulliver, Lincoln recalled using the same method of study years later when he was a lawyer's clerk in Springfield. In the course of reading numerous law documents, Lincoln frequently encountered the word *demonstrate* and became unsatisfied with his grasp of the word. Even after consulting Webster's Dictionary and contrasting its definition of *demonstrate* with other words he understood, such as *reason* and *prove*, Lincoln still felt he had no progress in ascertaining the meaning of the word. Frustrated by his ignorance, Lincoln recounted, "At last I said, 'Lincoln, you can never make a lawyer if you do not understand what *demonstrate* means'; and I left my situation in Springfield, went home to my father's house, and stayed there till I could give any proposition in the six books of Euclid at sight. I then found out what 'demonstrate' means, and went back to my law-studies."<sup>108</sup> Lincoln's peculiar obsession with understanding everything not only revealed his thoughtfulness but his ambition as well.

As he noted in his interview with Mr. Gulliver, Lincoln was vexed by his intellectual inability as a child. What was the cause of this frustration? According to Charnwood, Lincoln pondered the books he read "like one who desires the weapon of learning for practical ends..."<sup>109</sup> As a boy, Lincoln valued knowledge and intellectual ability, because it was a means to an end. His sense of frustration was less about the absence of means and more about the inability to attain the desired end. What end had Lincoln hoped to achieve through knowledge and intellectual ability? His thoughtfulness

was perhaps motivated out of an innate desire for honor. Even in the backwoods of Indiana, the most honored men were those who possessed knowledge: preachers, politicians, lawyers, doctors, and the like. As a result, Lincoln disdained the separation and lack of honor he experienced when interacting with those who possessed a superior intellect. Inferiority of any kind would never command great honor. His frustration was directed not at the individual possessing a superior intellect but the personal shortcomings he discovered by comparison. Even as a child, he recognized a kind of inequality between himself and his elders. Though his temporary intellectual inferiority was greatly due to his young age and lack of education, he developed incredible habits of reflection to overcome his sense of deficiency and satisfy his ambition. The systematic method of repetition and reconstruction he employed so as to understand a phrase or a single word revealed a powerful love and desire behind this incredible method of study. This love was for the esteem and praise of others. No other desire was a more powerful mover of men. To gain honor, a man had to possess knowledge, and Lincoln pursued knowledge like no other man.

Apart from his diligence for knowledge, Lincoln's other abilities perhaps attested to his ambition. Like his father, Lincoln was a story teller. Brookhiser wrote, "Abraham Lincoln took to storytelling because he was good at it – he was an excellent mimic, and he developed a great sense of timing – and because he enjoyed the applause he got. It gave him a role in the world, his first and his longest-running."<sup>110</sup> Few forms of entertainment existed for those living in the rough wilderness of Indiana. The ability to tell a story or make a joke was honored among simple country folk, perhaps even more so than those possessing knowledge. Even as a

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 25-26.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>110</sup> Brookhiser, *Founders' Son*, 22.

boy, Lincoln learned to gain the esteem and praise of others with a well-told story or joke. Dennis Hanks, one of Abraham's cousins, recalled that a young Lincoln caught his mother, Nancy, in a riddle when he asked her, "Who was the father of Zebedee's children?"<sup>111</sup> Realizing what Lincoln had done with the turn of a phrase, his mother laughed and playfully told her son to run along. Dennis Hanks recollected, "Abraham saw he had got his mother and ran off laughing."<sup>112</sup> By this simple exchange, a young Lincoln realized that stories and jokes could win the praise and esteem of others. While his penchant for storytelling and making jokes served other purposes, they were another means for gratifying a young ambition.

The existence of Lincoln's early ambition was affirmed by the first political speech he gave to the people of Sangamo County in the spring of 1832. Having become a candidate for the Illinois House of Representatives, Lincoln's political announcement primarily focused on his policies regarding local affairs. His final remarks, however, explicitly revealed the ambition that his relatives and friends observed in the early years of his youth. He concluded his address by saying:

Every man is said to have his peculiar ambition. Whether it be true or not, I can say for one that I have no other so great as that of being truly esteemed of my fellow men, by rendering myself worthy of their esteem. How far I shall succeed in gratifying this ambition, is yet to be developed. I am young and unknown to many of you. I was born and have ever remained in the most humble walks of life. But if the good people in their wisdom shall see fit to keep me in the back ground, I have been too familiar with disap-

pointments to be very much chagrined.<sup>113</sup>

Of all the peculiar ambitions known to man, Lincoln wished to be esteemed of his fellow men. This was, in fact, the highest ambition, and one equally present in the natures of all great men. Ultimately, Lincoln would lose the election and fail to gratify his ambition. Though he claimed such a loss would not be irksome, it undoubtedly was. The desire to gratify his love of honor and esteem would not fade with time. For less than two years later, he would run again and win the office of representative in the Illinois House.

With the birth, education, and nature of Cyrus and Lincoln in mind, we will now bring regime and man together to observe their thoughts and actions as political leaders of republican societies.

### **CHAPTER THREE**

#### **Men in Their Regimes**

In the previous chapters, we considered the regimes of Persia and America and their human counterparts, Cyrus and Lincoln, as separate from each other. Now we must throw Cyrus and Lincoln into their respective regimes and observe the political scenes which they would define and be defined by in turn. Each man's sphere of action was vast and varied. Attempting to comprehensively analyze the public lives of both Cyrus and Lincoln in a meaningful way would be a disservice to the reader due to the limited nature of this project. To get a semblance of these men in their respective regimes, we will look at fundamental points of comparison and contrast in the political philosophies of Cyrus and Lincoln. In particular, we will discuss each man's understanding of virtue, justice, and leadership.

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<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 15. Also see Matthew 27:56.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> Basler, *His Speeches and Writings*, 57.

## *Virtue*

In his first political speech, Cyrus rejected the conception of virtue upheld by the Persian education and regime. The Persian elders appointed Cyrus, now among the mature men, to command a military expedition that would assist the Medes in a defense against an Assyrian invasion. Accepting this appointment, Cyrus was permitted to commission an army of 31,000 Persians. This force was composed of 30,000 Commoners and 1,000 Peers. On the eve of their departure from Persia, Cyrus gathered and addressed the Peers commissioned for the campaign. Cyrus said:

I consider our ancestors to have been no worse than we. At least they too spent all their time practicing the very things that are held to be works of virtue. What good they acquired by being such, however, either for the community of the Persians or for themselves, I cannot see. And yet I do not think that human beings practice any virtue in order that those who become good have no more than do the worthless... But men, let us not suffer these things.<sup>114</sup>

In a few sentences, Cyrus rejected the Persian conception of virtue. His reasons for doing this were simple and clear. According to Cyrus, an act of virtue done for the sake of virtue was an empty pursuit for the individual and the community. Human beings indeed “become good” through the practice of virtue, but the good would be no better than the worthless unless goodness led to good things. Cyrus’ criticism of his ancestors and their understanding of virtue was an outright rejection of the Persian education and regime. Being “the best”<sup>115</sup> was not a satisfying end

for the private individual and the political community. To be the best was also to be deserving of the best things of life. What good would any end serve if the deserving were deprived of their just rewards? Cyrus later metaphorically compared his Persian ancestors to a farmer who failed to reap the fruits of his labor or an athlete who never entered the contest for which he trained.

Cyrus perhaps recognized this supposed failure of the Persian education and regime during his early years abroad. The Peers were good human beings, but they were no better off than the base Medes. In fact, the Peers were worse off than their licentious allies. In Persia, the labors of virtue were unrewarded. Unlike their undeserving neighbors, they had not won great wealth, happiness, or honor, because discipline in virtue was an end in itself. Cyrus wished to put a stop to this empty conception of virtue when he proclaimed, “But men, let us not suffer these things.” Because the Peers were good and well-practiced in virtue, Cyrus believed that he and his men would surpass “the enemy” in every labor, especially those relating to war. Having fought and defeated the Assyrians when he was raised in Media, Cyrus assured the Peers that their enemies were inexperienced in hard work and virtue. If the Peers utilized their superior virtue and martial experience, Cyrus was confident that he and his men would acquire many good things and transform the Persian conception of virtue into something useful. Under this new conception, virtue would no longer be pursued for its own sake. On the contrary, virtue would be a means to an end. It would enable Cyrus and the Peers to acquire the greatest goods of life.

While nowhere near as revolutionary as Cyrus’ address to the Peers, Lincoln questioned the virtue of his ancestors too. Among the most notable speeches of his early

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<sup>114</sup> Xenophon, *Education of Cyrus*, 1.5.8-11.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.2.15.

political career, Lincoln's *Lyceum Address* examined the perpetuation of American political institutions. Lincoln asserted that the deeds of the Revolutionary generation were "not much to be wondered at."<sup>116</sup> The establishment and maintenance of the American government, Lincoln argued, was "*inseparably* linked" with their ambition. He wrote, "Then, all that sought celebrity and fame, and distinction, expected to find them in the success of that experiment."<sup>117</sup> According to Lincoln, many American ancestors fought for self-government and popular rule, not because it was necessarily good in their eyes, but because it was incidental to their celebrity. Lincoln perhaps overstated this characterization of the Revolutionary generation, but even Hamilton held "the love of fame" to be "the ruling passion of the noblest minds."<sup>118</sup> Motivated by this ruling passion under different circumstances, those of "towering genius" among the Revolutionary generation would have destroyed republics rather than found them. While they nobly advanced the noblest cause, the goodness of the American experiment was not the end they sought. Its success was merely a means to another end, namely fame and distinction.

In addition to ambition, the American people during the Revolution were motivated to maintain their political institutions by other passions rather than "judgment" or "reflection and choice." Lincoln argued that "the deep-rooted principles of *hate* and the powerful motive of *revenge*, instead of being turned against each other, were directed exclusively against the British nation."<sup>119</sup> The Revolutionary generation was ruled by "the basest principles of our nature" when they sought to establish and maintain constitutional self-government in America. Subsequent generations of Americans inherited the "fundamental blessings" won by their patri-

otic ancestors, but they also received the base principles which ruled their fathers. The people's disposition toward "furious passions" and "mob law" in 1838 revealed that these ancestral passions had indeed been transmitted to the next generation of Americans. According to Lincoln, this part of their American inheritance had to be abandoned.

Like Cyrus attempting to persuade the Peers to forsake the empty Persian conception of virtue, Lincoln argued that the American people's reliance on the passions of their ancestors was no longer useful and, in fact, harmful to the longevity of good government. Lincoln's critique of passion, especially concerning ambition, implied the absence of virtue in thought and action of the Revolutionary generation and perhaps even the Founding Fathers. As Harry V. Jaffa observed in his essay on the *Lyceum Address*, Lincoln leaves the reader to conclude that our American ancestors did not possess virtue or, at least, virtue not properly understood. They were ruled by passion and the virtue they possessed, if any, was aimed at a lesser end. Concluding his address, Lincoln called his audience to reject the passions of the Revolution and allow reason to reign: "Passion has helped us; but can do so no more. It will in future be our enemy. Reason, cold, calculating, unimpassioned reason, must furnish all the materials for our future support and deference. – Let those materials be molded into *general intelligence, sound morality*, and, in particular, *a reverence for the constitution and laws...*"<sup>120</sup> Through reason, Lincoln believed that human beings would acquire knowledge and, more importantly, form moral and political virtues. Like Socrates, Lincoln conceived virtue to be a disposition conforming to right reasoning and principle.<sup>121</sup> Virtue and reason, therefore, were not distinct. Right reasoning was virtue, and

<sup>116</sup> Basler, *His Speeches and Writings*, 82.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 82-84.

<sup>118</sup> Carey, *The Federalist*, 375.

<sup>119</sup> Basler, *His Speeches and Writings*, 83.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 84-85.

<sup>121</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, translated by Robert C. Bartlett and Susan D. Collins (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 6.13.3.

virtue was right reasoning. Those who lacked virtue simply erred in reasoning.

By taking up reason and virtue, Lincoln rejected the passions of the Revolutionary generation. A year later at the end of his Sub-Treasury speech, Lincoln distinguished himself further from his forefathers by encouraging others to take up the American experiment for its own sake as opposed to some other end. He said, “The *probability* that we may fall in the struggle [to preserve liberty] *ought not* to deter us from the support of a cause we believe to be just; *it shall not* deter me.”<sup>122</sup> Lincoln defended the country’s cause “without contemplating consequences.” He was not “*inseparably* linked” to the success or failure of America like the ambitious and passion driven ancestors of the founding generation. “For such a soul,” Jaffa wrote, “there is a different seat of judgment than that of the highly unstable source of reputations which allots political fame.”<sup>123</sup> In the Sub-Treasury speech, Lincoln built upon the conclusions of his Lyceum Address. The perpetuation of America’s political institutions ought not to be pursued simply because it was useful, but because it was just and good. Lincoln, indeed, held that “sober reason” and, thus, virtue were essential to perpetuating America’s political institutions. More importantly, reason and virtue were desired for their own sake, because they comprehended the just, the good, and the noble.

### *Justice*

Cyrus’ understanding of justice was as revolutionary as his conception of virtue. According to Xenophon, justice was a primary focus of education in Persia. While most children began their education learning their letters, the Persian boys spent their time

learning justice. We gain insight into the particulars of this education in justice during a conversation between Cyrus and his mother. Claiming to be accurately versed in justice, Cyrus recounted a case he was appointed to judge:

A big boy with a little tunic took off the big tunic of a little boy, and he dressed him in his own tunic, while he himself put on that of the other. Now I, in judging it for them, recognized that it was better for both that each have the fitting tunic. Upon this the teacher beat me, saying that whenever I should be appointed judge of the fitting, I must do as I did; but when one must judge to whom the tunic belongs, then one must examine, he said, what is just possession, whether it is to have what is taken away by force or to possess what [one has] made or purchased. Since, he said, the lawful is just, and the unlawful violent, he ordered that the judge always cast his vote in conformity with the law.<sup>124</sup>

Through this lesson, Cyrus was explicitly told that “the lawful was just” as opposed to what was “fitting.” The connection between the just and the legal was essential to preserving the republican principles of the Persian regime and the education of the Peers. As previously noted in Chapter One, the law was the “measure” of each man, including the king. So long as the law was observed, peace and justice were maintained. Those who were unlawful were violent, shameful, and unjust. All were equal before the law, but the laws were not always equally fitting to all. The most obvious instance of the conflict between the “lawful” and the “fitting” was the exclu-

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<sup>122</sup> Basler, *His Speeches and Writings*, 112.

<sup>123</sup> Harry V. Jaffa, *Crisis of the House Divided: An Interpretation of the Issues in the Lincoln-*

*Douglas Debates* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 207.

<sup>124</sup> Xenophon, *Education of Cyrus*, 1.4.17.

sion of the Commoners from the Persian education. While it was lawful for every citizen to pursue a Persian education and the honors of political office, the law was not fitting to all due to the economic disparity which separated the Commoners from the Peers. When justice is determined by the law, as opposed to the fitting, injustice can occur. Cyrus recognized this conflict in his youth when he judged the case with the two boys and their ill-fitting tunics. As a mature man, he would hand down a similar judgement by integrating the army of Commoners into the ranks of the Peers.

Having gone before his fellow Persians to Media, Cyrus prepared for the arrival of the Peers and the army of Commoners. Judging the enemy to outnumber the combined force of the Persians and Medes, he made plans to integrate the Commoners with the Peers to increase the size of their combined infantry. With the help of his uncle, Cyrus was able to make enough close combat weapons to arm the Commoners like the Peers. After the idea gained the approval of the Peers, Cyrus presented the arms before the Commoners and said:

Persian men, you were born and raised in the same land as we, and you have bodies no worse than ours, and it is not fitting for you to have souls that are any worse than ours. Even though you are such as I say, you did not share equally with us in the fatherland, having been excluded not by us but by the necessity upon you to provide sustenance. But it will be my care, with the gods' [help], that you will now have these; and it will be possible for you, if you wish, to take such weapons as we have, to enter upon the same risk as we, and, if anything noble and good should arise

from it, to be held worthy of [rewards] similar to ours.<sup>125</sup>

In conformity with his improper adjudications as a boy in Persia, Cyrus integrated the Commoners with the Peers because it was "fitting." Because the Commoners were no worse than the Peers by nature, it was ill-fitting for them to be excluded from an equal share of the common good. If the Commoners were willing to take up the labors and risks of the Peers, Cyrus would similarly reward them. Fearing they would "live in want for all time,"<sup>126</sup> the Commoners agreed to Cyrus' proposal and took up the arms he had prepared for them.

Cyrus' integration of the Commoners into the ranks of the Peers disregarded the Persian understanding of justice and its inseparable connection with the law. By judging what was "fitting," Cyrus committed the same error for which his teacher beat him in the days of his youth. He redefined justice to be the "fitting" rather than the lawful. As a result, he violated the law by promising to give the Commoners an equal share in the honors which were reserved only to those who completed the Persian education.

The logical consequence of Cyrus' new conception of justice was further realized with the establishment of a meritocracy based on virtue. Before the Persian army was to set out from Media to face their approaching enemies, Cyrus began a discussion among his soldiers by subtly expressing concern for the basis by which every man would obtain his equal share of conquered prizes, contest rewards, and honor. Under his initial proposal to the Commoners and Peers, each man would receive an equal share of the common good, because they were equal by nature. Following his understanding of the "fitting" as just, Cyrus observed that natural equality was an ill-fitting and, therefore, an unjust basis for determin-

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 2.1.15.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 2.1.19.



ing each man's share of the common good. Justice had to account for distinctions of personal virtue. As it was not fitting for a small boy to wear a large cloak and a large boy to wear a small cloak, it also would not be fitting for the good and the bad to receive equal shares. If a reward was to be fitting, shares of the common good had to accord with what each man deserved. Distinctions of worth were essential to determining the fitting and the just. The establishment of a meritocracy based on individual virtue was, therefore, proposed by Cyrus. Members of the Peers and Commoners debated the idea, and "it was decided that each be honored in accord with his worth and that Cyrus be the judge."<sup>127</sup> Cyrus abandoned the teachings of his Persian elders by successfully separating the just from the legal. Instead, he attached the just to the "fitting" and made himself judge of that which was "fitting." In contrast with the rule of his father over the Persians at home, Cyrus' soul was his measure and not the law.

Just as Cyrus liberated the Commoners from economic and political impotence for the sake of military necessity and justice, Lincoln emancipated the slaves for similar reasons. On January 1, 1863, the Emancipation Proclamation was issued and declared "all persons held as slaves within any state, or designated part of a state, the people whereof shall then be in a rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward and forever free..."<sup>128</sup> To justify the issuance of such a proclamation, Lincoln argued that the emancipation of Southern slaves was an "act of justice" and "warranted by the Constitution upon military necessity."<sup>129</sup> Because the United States was in the midst of a civil war, Lincoln argued that the Constitution empowered the Commander-in-chief "with the law of war, in time

of war."<sup>130</sup> For Lincoln and some of his commanders, "the emancipation policy and the use of the colored troops constitute the heaviest blow yet dealt to the Rebellion."<sup>131</sup> Based on sheer numbers, the addition of black soldiers would be essential to further suppressing the rebellion in the South and securing victory for the Union. Deeming emancipation a military necessity, Lincoln believed the proclamation to be warranted by the Constitution as an extension of his war powers.

Aside from asserting the Constitutionality of the emancipation policy, Lincoln held the Proclamation to be an act of justice. As he explained in his *The Dred Scott Decision* speech and on other numerous occasions years prior to his presidency, the emancipation of Southern slaves was a fulfillment of that "standard maxim for free society"<sup>132</sup> expressed in the Declaration of Independence, namely that "all men are created equal." For Lincoln and the Founding Fathers, the just was the equal. Lincoln qualified the American conception of equality when he said:

I think the authors of that notable instrument intended to include *all* men, but they did not intend to declare all men equal *in all respects*. They did not mean to say all were equal in color, size, intellect, moral developments, or social capacity. They defined with tolerable distinctness, in what respects they did consider all men created equal – equal in "certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." This they said, and this meant.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 2.3.16.

<sup>128</sup> Basler, *His Speeches and Writings*, 690.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 691.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 721.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 361.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 360-61.

With this qualification in mind, the just was the naturally equal, specifically the unalienable and self-evident rights of men. Securing these rights was the end of the American government, and anything which subverted this end was unjust.

The institution of slavery in America was undoubtedly in opposition to Lincoln and the Founders' conception of justice. "Slavery is founded in the selfishness of man's nature," Lincoln said, "opposition to it, is his love of justice."<sup>134</sup> Chattel slavery, in particular, deprived human beings of the ability to exercise their unalienable, natural right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It asserted that some human beings were naturally unequal to others. As Lincoln pointed out in his speech on the Dred Scott decision, the freeing of Southern slaves would not immediately produce social and political equality, but all would be equal in their natural right to eat the bread they earned with their own hands. As a result, the Emancipation Proclamation was an act of justice, because it sought to further fulfill the principles and rights proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence.

### *Leadership*

Cambyses and Astyages influenced Cyrus' understanding of political leadership. His father and grandfather were both kings, but each ruled distinctly. Cyrus' father was described as ruling in "the kingly way" while his grandfather was said to be a tyrant that made "himself the master of everything."<sup>135</sup> The former held the equal and the law to be just, and the latter held the unequal and the stronger to be just. The conflict of these divergent conceptions of political leadership caused Cyrus to form his own opinions on the matter.

As he set out on the expedition to Media as a mature man, Cyrus was accompanied to the Persian border by his father. As they traveled together, Cambyses gave his son some last-minute advice to help ensure a Persian victory against the enemy. Among discussions of army provisions, military tactics, the essential qualities of good generalship, Cambyses and Cyrus reflected upon the relationship between the ruler and the ruled. Cyrus introduced the topic of rule into their discussion by "beginning with these friends of ours"<sup>136</sup> (i.e., the Medes) and their conception of political leadership. In Media, Cyrus observed that the ruler distinguished himself from the ruled by having more of everything in the best way possible. Compared to his subjects, Astyages had more food and the best kinds of food all to himself. He had more gold, sleep, free time, and enjoyed many other luxuries of tyranny. Cyrus agreed that the ruler must differ from the ruled, but not in the way which his grandfather had established. He argued, "I think that the ruler ought to differ from the ruled not by his living easily but by taking forethought and by being enthusiastic in his love of labor."<sup>137</sup> Given Cyrus' conception of virtue and justice, it is not surprising that he associates the merit of political leadership with the practice and rewards of virtue. In short, the most virtuous human being ought to rule over everyone else. This idea of political leadership opposed the foundations of the Persian kingship. The rule of Cambyses was a matter of the equal and the legal. Virtue was an essential and desired characteristic of Persian citizenry, even more so among the Peers and the king. However, the legitimacy of Cambyses' kingship was not a question of individual virtue. It was a question of law and hereditary birthright.

Moreover, Cambyses' virtue was not the measure of his power as king. As Cyrus'

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 309.

<sup>135</sup> Xenophon, *Education of Cyrus*, 1.3.18.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 1.6.8.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

mother observed, the equal and the legal were the limits of the Persian king and not his soul.<sup>138</sup> If virtue was the absolute measure of a political leader's legitimacy, any meaningful establishment of equality and law would be done away with or significantly redefined. We have seen this conflict manifest itself with Cyrus' different conceptions of virtue and justice, but we can also imagine the revolutionary consequences of associating the legitimacy of political leadership with excellence in virtue. The ultimate transformation of the Commoners demonstrated the incredible instability of any established political and social hierarchy when it was placed within a contest of virtue. If taken to its logical extreme, the distinctions and hierarchies among friends and enemies would disappear. In a true contest of virtue, there can only be one winner. A man engaged in such a contest see no difference between friends and enemies. He stands alone, and everyone else is a contestant he must get the better of. As a result, constant revolutions of varying degrees would permeate a regime founded and maintained by such a contest of virtue. What was to prevent a Persian Commoner from being worthy of Cambyses kingship under Cyrus' political meritocracy? What distinctions of virtue would decide who was worthy to rule? While political leadership based on the merits of virtue is desirable in theory, Cyrus' conception of political leadership presents a variety of uncertainties and dangers to any society and, in particular, the Persian regime.

Lincoln's conception of political leadership largely stemmed from his understanding of justice and U.S. law. Because all men were created equal in their natural rights, "no man [was] good enough to govern another man, *without that other's consent*."<sup>139</sup> Political positions of governance and leadership were, therefore, appointments of the

people, by the people, and for the people. As a practical expression of this "leading principle – the sheet anchor of American republicanism," government and law were instituted to secure the natural rights and consent of every citizen. The U.S. Constitution and individual state constitutions sought to protect and accurately capture the consent of the people by subjecting political appointments to frequent elections, term limits, the possibility of impeachment, and other protections. While serving in his various appointments, Lincoln upheld this understanding of political leadership and the republican principles it comprehended.

As early as 1832, when he ran for the Illinois House of Representatives, a young Lincoln communicated this American principle of republicanism in his first political announcement to the people of Sangamo County:

Fellow Citizens: Having become a candidate for the honorable office of one of your representatives in the next General Assembly of this state, in accordance with an established custom, and the principles of true republicanism, it becomes my duty to make known to you – the people whom I propose to represent – my sentiments with regard to local affairs... My case is thrown exclusively upon the independent voters of this county, and if elected they will have conferred a favor upon me, for which I shall be unremitting in my labors to compensate.<sup>140</sup>

Lincoln understood his appointment to the Illinois House of Representatives to be a privilege which was only granted to him by the consent of the people. As a result, Lincoln had to submit himself, his sentiments, and his

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 1.3.18.

<sup>139</sup> Basler, *His Speeches and Writings*, 304.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 53 and 57.

abilities to public scrutiny. If deemed worthy and elected by the independent voters of his county, Lincoln would be accountable to his constituents and only maintain his appointment by seeking to achieve their favor and well-being.

When elected President of the United States of America in March of 1861, this same understanding of political leadership guided Lincoln's thought and action. In his *Letter to James C. Conkling* on August 26, 1863, Lincoln wrote, "I freely acknowledge myself the servant of the people, according to the bond of service – the United States Constitution; and that, as such, I am responsible to them."<sup>141</sup> It was clear that in every political capacity, Lincoln maintained the principle of republicanism that the Founders held as necessary for free government, namely that political leaders were established with the consent of the people and acted as servants of the public will.

Like the Founding Fathers, however, Lincoln never believed that the people were allowed to rule absolutely, especially in contradiction to justice. Political leadership involved more than merely appeasing one's constituency. In one of his numerous *Fragment: On Slavery*, Lincoln wrote, "As I would not be a *slave*, so I would not be a *master*. This expresses my idea of democracy. Whatever differs from this, to the extent of the difference, is not democracy."<sup>142</sup> In this fragment, Lincoln qualified his conception of the American principle of popular rule and his understanding of political leadership. For Lincoln and the Founding Fathers, the people ruled in so far as they would not become tyrants and, as a result, destroy free government. American republicanism sought not only to protect against the tyranny of a single monarch or the elite few but all enemies of popular rule, including

the potential tyranny of the people themselves.

Lincoln identified the United States Constitution and laws as the primary objects which would combat tyranny and preserve the political institutions of the American republic. Upholding justice and the law was, therefore, another essential aspect of Lincoln's conception of political leadership. With the opening words of "We the People of the United States" in the preamble, it was clear that the Constitution and laws were made by the people and for the people. By their own reflection and choice, the people ordained and established the Constitution and the subsequent laws that it would create "in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity." The Constitution and laws ruled over all, including the people who ordained and established them. Lincoln understood this truth and encouraged all American citizens and public servants to uphold the Constitution and laws. Moreover, he himself was guided by this truth and sought to preserve it in his policy actions as the President of the United States.

Lincoln's *First Inaugural Address* explicitly and perhaps most comprehensively communicated his understanding of the President's duties and powers. He felt the need to thoroughly present his understanding of the Executive and political leadership because the Southern States were apprehensive of his occupying such an office. They presumed "a Republican Administration" would beget policies which would endanger "their property, and their peace, and personal security."<sup>143</sup> Recognizing these unfounded apprehensions and concerns as capable of producing insurrection and civil war, Lincoln wished to assure his "dissatisfied fellow

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 721.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 427.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 580.

countrymen” that his powers and will as the President of the United States of America was by no means his own.<sup>144</sup> Lincoln proclaimed:

...I shall take care, as the Constitution itself expressly enjoins upon me, that the laws of the Union be faithfully executed in all the States. Doing this I deem to be only a simple duty on my part; and I shall perform it, so far as practicable, unless my rightful masters, the American people, shall withhold the requisite means, or, in some authoritative manner, direct the contrary.<sup>145</sup>

Similar to his first political announcement to the people of Sangamo County, Lincoln maintained that the American people were his “rightful masters” as the Executive of the United States. However, his duty to the American people was to protect the Constitution and laws which they had ordained and established. If the people were to prevent the faithful execution of the Constitution and laws through illegitimate means, such as mob rule and insurrection, they would commit an act of tyranny because it contradicted the republican principles of consent and representation which were fundamental to the American regime. Therefore, the President would seek to prevent such occurrences of tyranny and anarchy from any source which would undermine the Constitution and laws he had sworn to protect and faithfully execute.

When called into the service of his country as the Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States with the start of the Civil War, Lincoln was accused of unconstitutional actions, especially with regard to the suspension of the Writ of Habeas Corpus and the issuance of the

Emancipation Proclamation. Lincoln always believed his actions accorded with the utilization of executive powers which were comprehended by the Constitution. In a *Letter to James C. Conkling*, he wrote, “I think the constitution invests its Commander-in-chief, with the law of war, in time of war.”<sup>146</sup> When his office was imbued with more extensive yet rather ambiguous wartime powers, Lincoln sought to judge his political actions by the Constitution. In a *Letter to Erastus Corning and Others*, Lincoln responded to criticisms from Corning and the Albany Democratic Convention for his suspension of the writ of habeas and the resulting military arrest of Clement L. Vallandigham, a notorious Copperhead and member of Congress from Ohio. Lincoln rebutted:

[T]he meeting, by their resolutions, assert and argue that certain military arrests, and proceedings following them, for which I am ultimately responsible, are unconstitutional. I think they are not... Yet, thoroughly imbued with a reverence for the guaranteed rights of individuals, I was slow to adopt the strong measures which by degrees I have been forced to regard as being within the exceptions of the Constitution, and as indispensable to the public safety.<sup>147</sup>

As the Commander-in-Chief amid the crisis of the Civil War, Lincoln understood that he was still accountable to the American people and strictly guided by the Constitution’s explicit authorizations or its absent limitations on powers which had not been expressly delegated to another branch of government.

In addition to upholding the Constitution and laws, political leaders must also be attuned to justice. In his *Lyceum Address*, Lincoln recognized that unjust laws existed

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 588.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 583.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 721.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 699-700 and 702.

and were possible. When faced with bad laws, they “should be repealed as soon as possible, still while they continue in force, for the sake of example, they should be religiously observed.”<sup>148</sup> According to Lincoln, political leadership and the reform of unjust laws required observance of the law. Lincoln reiterated this conviction in his speech on the Dred Scott decision. He represented the opinions of the Republican Party and proclaimed:

We believe... in obedience to, and respect for, the judicial department of government. We think its decisions on Constitutional questions, when fully settled, should control, not only particular cases decided, but the general policy of the country, subject to be disturbed only by amendments to the Constitution as provided in the instrument itself.<sup>149</sup>

Lincoln greatly revered the judicial department of government and its decisions on Constitutional questions. Even though he and the Republican Party held the Dred Scott decision to be erroneous, they respected the decision. Unless disturbed by a Constitutional amendment or over-ruled by the Supreme Court, the case was decided.

While serving in his various political appointments, Lincoln revealed his conception of political leadership to be rooted in equal respect for the principles of American republicanism, the Constitution and laws, and the dictates of justice. Political leaders were servants of the people and the protectors of liberty and free government. On the other hand, Cyrus understood political leadership to find legitimacy and practical guidance through excellence in virtue. When taken to its logical extreme, political leaders beholden to this conception would merely be competitors in a contest of virtue. Established law and

equality would, at the least, be altered to the point of impotence and, at the worst, entirely destroyed.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Realized Regimes

Cyrus and Lincoln’s conception of virtue, justice, and leadership brought about significant changes to their political societies. The regimes that we analyzed at the beginning of this project will now be transformed for better or worse. Both Persia and America were founded as republics, and this chapter will determine if, how, and why Cyrus and Lincoln sought to realize the regimes their ancestors imagined. History immediately provides an answer to the first question. Cyrus destroyed the Persian republic and built the greatest empire the world has ever known upon its ashes. Lincoln saved the American republic and the Union in the testing of the great Civil War. The how and why, therefore, remain unclear.

### *Cyrus’ Empire*

Because Cyrus redefined his ancestors’ understanding of virtue, justice, and leadership, the Persian republic was undermined and eventually altered beyond recognition by the end of the Education. The longer Cyrus and the Persian army remained abroad, the more unfit they became to return and once again live in the homeland they left to protect. By Chapter 5 in the Education, Cyrus had successfully defended Persia and Media from the Assyrian invasion. In the process, he gained the Hyrcanians as allies, instituted a Persian cavalry, and became the chosen leader of the Medes while Cyaxares served as their quasi-king. Having accomplished the task for which he was commissioned by the Persian elders, Cyrus proposed a conversa-

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 355.

tion about disbanding the army and ending the campaign. Foreign allies begged Cyrus to remain and assist them in conquering the Assyrians once and for all. The Persians were among those who wished to continue campaigning. If they were to go back home, they would be forced to give up the wealth, horses, power, and honor they had won under Cyrus' meritocracy. The Commoners would go back to a life of social and political inferiority, and the Peers would return to a life of useless virtue. Cyrus asked Hystaspas, a fellow Peer, "Do you not desire to go back home?" Hystaspas responded, "No, by Zeus, nor will I be going back."<sup>150</sup> Because no one wished to return to his native land, the campaign against "the enemy" continued.

After making preparations, Cyrus and his army marched deep into enemy territory. They experienced great military successes against the Assyrians, their allies, and Croesus, the chosen general of the assembled enemies. By the time he decided to lay siege to Babylon, Cyrus had won the favor, support, and armies of nearly all the surrounding nations loyal to the Assyrians, including the Phrygians, Lydians, Arabians, Cappadocians, Egyptians, Indians, and others. Upon arriving at Babylon, Cyrus' army was large enough to surround the entire city. Realizing that a siege would be futile, Cyrus and a dispatch of his men secretly entered Babylon by way of large aqueduct that cut through the city. Launching this covert infiltration by night and after a city-wide festival had taken place, Cyrus and his men took Babylon without opposition.

After conquering Babylon, Xenophon recorded that "Cyrus was already desirous of establishing himself in the way he held to be fitting for a king."<sup>151</sup> To avoid envy, he sought to become king with the approval of

his friends. Cyrus refrained from taking a home in Babylon, and endured the hardship of the outdoors. During the day, he would be surrounded by crowds of people seeking to be judged for their merit and rewarded accordingly. Observing these supposed acts of great generosity and humility, Cyrus' friends argued that it would be wrong for him to live outside while they were in houses. Receiving the support of his friends, Cyrus moved into the palace of the king and made preparations for securing his rule.<sup>152</sup>

His first act was to make the eunuchs of Babylon his personal bodyguards. He feared all others human beings, even his closest friends, were untrustworthy and envious. He also recruited ten thousand more Commoners from Persia to guard his palace at all times. Force, however, would not be sufficient when ruling over so many subjects. Cyrus realized that the practice of virtue was even more essential to preserving the good things of life than acquiring them. His empire would not be sustainable under the revolutionary conception of virtue and justice that had helped him attain it. When Cyrus first addressed the Persians, virtue was needed to acquire the good things of life. But once the good things of life were acquired what need was there for virtue? If the Persians abandoned virtue and focused on enjoying the good things they had acquired, Cyrus and his empire would become vulnerable to more virtuous nations. Others would take advantage of this weakness just as Cyrus and the Persians had when they conquered the Assyrians. Virtue could not be forsaken in Cyrus' new empire. Yet the presence of virtue was more immediately concerning than its absence.

If Cyrus maintained that virtue was needed to acquire good things and no good

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<sup>150</sup> Xenophon, *Education of Cyrus*, 6.1.5.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.5.37.

<sup>152</sup> Robert Faulkner wrote an excellent summary of Cyrus' efforts to consolidate power after becoming

the ruler of the Persian Empire. See *The Case for Greatness: Honorable Ambition and Its Critics*. New Haven, CT: Yale University, 2007, 175.

things were left to acquire from enemies, human beings would use their virtue to take the good things their friends had attained. In a true contest of virtue, no distinctions of friends and enemies existed. Cyrus perhaps foresaw this danger. In the absence of enemies possessing the good things of life, one could abandon virtue and become complacent or one could maintain virtue and seek new “enemies” to conquer. Cyrus was now threatened by his own conceptions on virtue and justice. As a ruler, he would naturally become the new enemy; the one that all others would challenge in a contest of virtue.

Unable to abandon virtue altogether or maintain his revolutionary conception of virtue, Cyrus called for a return to the traditional Persian understanding of virtue. To ensure the longevity of his rule and empire, Cyrus encouraged his friends and closest allies to “abide in and care for virtue because they themselves realized this to be best.”<sup>153</sup> In other words, the Persians would have to practice virtue for its own sake! In an attempt to make the continued practice of virtue worthwhile, Cyrus argued that easygoing and pleasure would make them and their goods vulnerable to being taken by other nations who sought to be more virtuous and hardworking. He continued by saying that “one enjoys the good things more to the extent that one goes to them after having labored in advance.”<sup>154</sup> Cyrus thought that the potential threat of losing the good things they had acquired would encourage the Persians to persist in their practice of virtue in the long-term. By having his subjects partaking in artificial exercises of labor, moreover, he hoped they would enjoy their good things more and have their virtue instantly gratified in the short-term. In spite of these attempts to make virtue useful in the Persian Empire, even Cyrus realized that virtue would ultimately have to

be desired for its own sake as it was by their ancestors. He concluded, “Just as in Persia the Peers pass their time at the government buildings, so also I say that all of us who are Peers here must practice the very things we did there...”<sup>155</sup> A reliance on the personal virtue of others, however, would not be enough to maintain Cyrus’ empire.

Given his belief that the most virtuous human being should rule, Cyrus sought to be better than his subjects in all things. Xenophon wrote, “He believed that the same exercise of virtue had to be his as well, for if he were not himself such as he needed to be, he did not think it would be possible to incite others to noble and good works.”<sup>156</sup> For virtue to flourish, leisure was necessary. So Cyrus centralized his administrative affairs and taught his closest friends to do the same. More important than leisure, however, was intelligence. To ensure every man received no more and no less than he deserved, Cyrus became a “seeing law for human beings.”<sup>157</sup> He required his highest-ranking officials to report their work, and those who failed to do so had their property taken from them as punishment. These efforts were furthered with the establishment of the “Eyes of the king” and the “Ears of the king.”<sup>158</sup> Cyrus rewarded those who reported what would benefit him. As a result, subjects were inclined to be more obedient for fear that someone was watching and would report their conduct to Cyrus. Being the best exemplar of virtue, therefore, was not solely capable of inciting others to virtuous action. Through fear and punishment, Cyrus made disobedience and vice a great disadvantage.

On the other hand, he used his benevolence to make obedience and virtue advantageous. Xenophon observed, “It is not to be wondered at, of course, that he, who was wealthiest, exceeded in the greatness of his

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<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.5.71.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.5.80.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.5.85.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.1.12.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.1.22.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.2.10.



gifts.”<sup>159</sup> To attach others to himself and encourage virtue, Cyrus rewarded obedience and cared for his subjects by attending to their good more than they cared for themselves. Croesus, the Assyrian general, warned Cyrus that he would become poor due to his excessive giving. He advised Cyrus to gather his wealth so he would be richest among men. Writing to his friends across the Persian Empire, Cyrus requested that each estimate how much money they could provide. When the response letters were received and the estimates added together, the total exceeded what Croesus could have imagined. Cyrus had done this to make a point. Turning to Croesus, he said, “I too am insatiable for money, just as others are... Yet when I acquire, I minister to the needs of my friends with what I see to be an abundance in excess of what suffices for me. By enriching and benefiting human beings, I acquire goodwill and friendship, and from these I harvest safety and glory.”<sup>160</sup> Cyrus revealed to Croesus that his lack of wealth was merely an appearance. The money he gave to his friends was his to command at a moment’s notice. As Cyrus admitted, his benevolence had not come from a true sense of generosity. In fact, he was greedy. On the contrary, enriching and benefiting others was necessary to avoiding envy and, more importantly, winning the goodwill and friendship of human beings. Cyrus put aside his greed in order to secure the longevity of his empire and the greater prize of glory that awaited him.

Apart from punishing and benefiting human beings, Cyrus believed that a ruler must “bewitch”<sup>161</sup> his subjects to avoid their contempt. He accomplished this by dressing as his grandfather had before him. He and his closest friends would wear Median robes to hide bodily defects, eye shadow to seem nicer, makeup to conceal bad complexions,

and shoes with inserts to appear taller. Because it was not always possible to be better than everyone else, accoutrements were necessary to make up for various natural defects of the body. When one cannot be better than another in reality, one must appear to be so. What contempt could a human being hold for those who were better than himself in reality or appearance? Those who held contempt for his rule, Cyrus made them powerless and ensured that they were unable to act upon their envy.

Securing his kingship in this way, Cyrus was led out of the king’s palace in an extravagant procession. Surrounded by thousands of spearmen and mounted on a chariot in his Median dress, Cyrus presented himself before his subjects. Xenophon recorded, “On seeing him, all prostrated themselves, either because some had been ordered to initiate it or because they were stunned by the display and by Cyrus’ seeming to appear tall and beautiful. Previously, no one of the Persians used to prostrate himself before Cyrus.”<sup>162</sup> The establishment of proskynesis before Cyrus implied his superiority over all other human beings. He, in other words, became a god or “father” to his subjects. Cyrus would reward those who sought to please him and punish those who failed. To seek Cyrus’ advantage, therefore, was to seek one’s own advantage.

Believing Babylon and his empire to be adequately secured, Cyrus traveled back to Persia. After completing the journey to his homeland with his army, he crossed the borders with only his friends and greeted the Persians with the many gifts he had won on campaign. As briefly mentioned in Chapter One, Cambyses suggested that Cyrus and the Persians make a compact which sought to establish and preserve a mutual interest. In particular, that Cyrus would agree to protect Persia and its laws from those who would do

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 8.2.13.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 8.1.20-22.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 8.1.40.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 8.3.14.

them harm and, in turn, the Persians would help to maintain Cyrus' rule. Cambyses' advice was taken, and a compact between Cyrus and the Persians was made.

After this he returned to Babylon and sent satraps to the other nations he had subdued. These satraps were instructed to govern in a manner which imitated Cyrus. To ensure these appointed satraps and subdued nations remained obedient, each year Cyrus would commission a man with an army to patrol his empire. If his satraps needed assistance or became unruly, Cyrus' army would immediately address the issue.

Once Cyrus felt his empire was adequately secured, he continued on campaign and conquered many of the other surrounding nations. Stretching across nearly all of West Asia, Cyrus' empire was bounded by "the Indian Ocean... to the east; the Black Sea to the north; Cyprus and Egypt to the west; and Ethiopia to the south."<sup>163</sup> Cyrus ruled his empire with great success, because all his subjects thought they would be more prosperous by gratifying and obeying him.

When Cyrus was old and lay upon his deathbed, he called his two sons, his closest friends, and the Persian magistrates to himself. To his eldest son, Cambyses, he gave the kingship, and to his other son, Tanaoxares, he gave the satrapy over the Medes, the Armenians, and the Cadusians. Realizing that strife and envy could come between his sons, he implored them to honor each other as brothers, friends, and allies. Instructing his sons in this way, he concluded:

Now if I am teaching you sufficiently how you ought to be toward one another, [fine]; but if I am not, learn also from what has happened in the past, for this teaching is best. Many parents have gone through their lives as friends to their children, and many

brothers as friends with their brothers, but some of these have acted toward each other also in the opposite way. So in whichever of these ways you perceive actions that were advantageous, you would of course deliberate correctly in choosing it. But perhaps there has now been enough of this.<sup>164</sup>

After encouraging his sons to love and support each other in preserving the empire, Cyrus presents them with an alternate course of action. If his teaching was not sufficiently advantageous, Cyrus asserted that acting toward each other in "the opposite way" may be more preferable. In other words, his sons should become enemies, if being friends was not advantageous.

Coming from a father to his sons, this advice is rather odd and perhaps shocking. Why would any father suggest that his sons would be better off as enemies as opposed to friends? Bequeathing the kingship upon his eldest son, Cyrus justified his decision on the basis of tradition. He argued:

I assign to the one born earlier and, as is to be expected, more experienced. I myself was educated like this by my fatherland and yours, to defer to my elders... And as for you, sons, I educated you like this from the beginning, to honor those who are older and to be honored ahead of those who are younger. So accept this, on the grounds that I am saying what is ancient, habitual, and lawful.<sup>165</sup>

This assertion is confusing, because it largely contradicts Cyrus' every word and deed since he was commissioned to lead the Persian army against the Assyrians. In his first public speech to the Peers, Cyrus was eager to claim that the Persian ancestors were "no worse"<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 8.6.21.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 8.7.24-25.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 8.7.9-10.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 1.5.8.

than they. This bold statement does not place the elders on a pedestal of superiority and honor, but that of equality. After Cyrus left the borders of his homeland, it was no secret that he had little regard for what was ancient, habitual, and lawful in Persia. Once he conquered Babylon, few Persian laws, traditions, and beliefs were left intact and preserved under the empire.

It is important to remember, however, that the Persian magistrates were gathered around Cyrus' bedside while he spoke his last words. In an effort to "bewitch" those he ruled till his last breath, Cyrus was perhaps unable to be candid with his sons in front of the magistrates. Given that Cyrus had made a compact with the Persians to uphold the laws of his native country, suggesting that a civil war over the kingship was a viable and perhaps advantageous option for his sons to pursue was by no means in accordance with the law. This perhaps explains why Cyrus appears to contradict himself. He cannot tell his sons to fight over the kingship in front of the Persian magistrates. In light of these circumstances, he appears to encourage his sons in what is lawful while disguising his actual teaching as an afterthought.

If we ignore the contradictory nature of Cyrus' final teachings to his sons, his advice is no less perplexing. By telling his sons that they ought to do whatever is advantageous as opposed to what is lawful, Cyrus implies that he has little interest in securing the order and longevity of his empire after his death. He knowingly advocates for a potential civil war between his sons should they deem it more useful than observing the laws of Persia and maintaining peace. When we recall Cyrus' conception of virtue, justice, and leadership, however, this conclusion is not all that surprising.

Despite his attempts to have his empire take up the practice of virtue for its own sake, Cyrus' meritocracy continued to reign supreme. As we previously mentioned,

Cyrus had to encourage virtue and obedience in his empire through a system of merit-based rewards and punishments. Each man would receive that which he deserved in accordance with his virtue, and the most virtuous man was deserving of political leadership. By giving his eldest son the kingship on the basis of law and the traditions of heredity, Cyrus would forsake the very principles which allowed him to win and maintain his empire. His final advice to his sons is an attempt to make the empire and the kingship a contest of virtue. As Cyrus well understood, there are no true friends and brothers in a contest of virtue. There are only enemies. Friends and brothers are only useful until they no longer are so. If it is just and advantageous that his sons remain friends, so be it. However, law and tradition do not merit and keep a crown. Only virtue is capable and deserving of this. His sons and assumedly any other human being in the empire must prove they are worthy to rule. The best and most deserving man will and ought to win the crown.

Cyrus' teaching is not motivated out of some selfless devotion to his own conceptions of virtue, justice, and leadership. A more sinister intent looms behind the simple desire that his sons and subjects will live by the same meritocracy and principles that guided his thoughts and actions. Cyrus knowingly calls his sons, friends, and subjects to partake in a contest they are not capable of winning. They certainly could not engage in the contest as Cyrus had done. The virtue that Cyrus inculcated in his subjects was wholly reliant upon him. Cyrus was the only force which held virtue in its place. Nothing else in the empire existed to preserve this force. Cyrus was the law; the judge of merit; the enforcer of justice; the exemplar of virtue; the rewarder of obedience; the punisher of ingratitude; the father and shepherd of all. Everyone was attached to their king, and Cyrus intended for it to be so. He concerned himself so much with the good and care of his

subjects that they forgot how to act well on and for their own behalf. Without the influence of Cyrus' encouragement and restraint, how would his sons and subjects successfully compete in a contest of virtue? What would ensure they used the good fortune and prosperity of the empire well? Nothing would hold the empire together and no one would be able replace Cyrus.

The impending collapse of the Persian Empire was not due to Cyrus' lack of foresight or disinterest. On the contrary, it was in his vested interest to perceive and intend the eventual destruction of his empire. His final teaching to his sons indicates this desire. More importantly, his conception of virtue, justice, and leadership necessitated this end. Cyrus dedicated his thought and action to the pursuit of being better than all others. The purpose of the Persian regime was to help men "become the best"<sup>167</sup> and Cyrus took this end to its logical extreme. If the inheritor of the empire were to succeed at perpetuating order, peace, and prosperity, would not the importance of Cyrus' role be diminished? If another man was capable of walking in the footsteps of Cyrus, he would no longer be the best. Cyrus ensured that he, the founder, and the Persian Empire were inseparably linked. The failure of his posterity would enshrine Cyrus as the only man capable of creating and preserving the greatest empire the world has ever seen. In his death, Cyrus would be immortalized as a god among men who held all created things in existence by the power of his hand. Upon willing to remove his hand from that which he created, all that was is no more.

Sabotaging the empire was also the single greatest display of Cyrus' distinction. Up until his death, Cyrus was greatly revered and honored but not in accordance with a true estimation of virtue and merit. The road to distinction from all others is fraught with envy and challenges that cannot be overcome

alone. In a contest of virtue, one must get an advantage over his enemies. As Cambyses once told his son, "Be assured that the one who is going to do this must be a plotter, a dissembler, wily, a cheat, a thief, rapacious, and the sort who takes advantage of his enemies in everything."<sup>168</sup> To achieve distinction and win in a contest of virtue among all other human beings, Cyrus' true intentions and achievements had to be disguised. This is evident throughout the *Education*.

After conquering Babylon, Cyrus was desirous to be king. He hid this longing, however, and manipulated his friends into crowning him as their king. To avoid envy, Cyrus disguised his insatiable want of wealth by dispersing all his money amongst his friends. In his conversation with Croesus, it was revealed that Cyrus controlled all the wealth in the empire and was rich beyond what anyone could have imagined. He was not even able to be genuine on his deathbed. The motivation behind the teachings he offered his sons were not known. These are a few examples of Cyrus bewitching his subjects and disguising his achievements. By disguising the true nature of his thoughts and actions, however, Cyrus could not get the honor he truly deserved. Human beings cannot honor that which is not visible to them. Cyrus' survival and ambition were in a contest with each other. If his true intentions and achievements were made known, Cyrus' rule would be compromised due to the envy and ambition of others. If he remained disguised, however, his ambition would never be satisfied. The failure of the empire was the only act that could reconcile this conflict. His lone success in ruling the Persian Empire would fully display his distinction and bring him honor in accord with his merit: the praise and wonder of the ages.

Regardless of Cyrus' true intentions, the Persian Empire soon collapsed following his death. Xenophon recorded, "When Cyrus

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 1.2.15.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 1.6.27.

died... his sons immediately fell into dissension, cities and nations immediately revolted, and everything took a turn for the worse.”<sup>169</sup> In addition to disorder, it is said that all of Asia, including the Persians, turned toward impiety, injustice, and lawlessness. They no longer took care of their bodies through exercise and overindulged in food and drink. With the passage of time, the Persian education ceased and the youths were neither taught the skills of horsemanship nor raised in accordance with virtue and justice. The Persians adopted the dress of the Medes, as well as their softness. Their military prowess quickly faded, and the Persian homeland was left defenseless, so much so that enemies ranged about their country without opposition. Observing the transformation of the Persian people in this way, Xenophon said, “The present Persians and their associates have been demonstrated to be more impious regarding gods, more irreverent regarding relatives, more unjust regarding others, and more unmanly in what pertains to war than were their predecessors.”<sup>170</sup> This is the conclusion of the Education. Cyrus died, and his empire collapsed upon the ashes of the Persian republic. The once great Persians and their republic had been marred beyond recognition. The memory of such things would be extinguished with the death of those who lived in the better days before Cyrus and his empire.

### *Lincoln’s Republic*

While Cyrus desired an empire distinct from that of the Persian republic, Lincoln and the Founding Fathers shared the same vision for America. As we observed in the previous chapter, Lincoln’s conception of virtue, justice, and political leadership largely aligned with that of his ancestors, and any existing differences only tended toward the

greater realization of the American republic imagined by the Founders. Following the Emancipation Proclamation, three other events helped to the preserve of the republic and its continued progress in our own day: the Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction, the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment, and the Union victory in the Civil War. Because Lincoln was assassinated at the start of his second term and shortly after the Capitol of the Confederacy fell, these events reveal how the American republic was saved and the intended course of action Lincoln would have perhaps maintained had he lived to lead the United States through reconstruction. By briefly looking at each of these events, we will try to perceive Lincoln’s vision for himself as President and the American republic post-Civil War. We will also consider whether or not this vision was achieved in the absence of his influence and leadership.

Lincoln and his cabinet were unsure of when and how the Civil War would end, but they naturally made preparations for reconstruction should the Union succeed in suppressing the Southern rebellion. In December 1863, Lincoln issued a *Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction* using his war time power. It declared that all persons who participated in the Confederacy, with the exception of those who served as government or military agents of the rebellion, would be granted a full pardon and have their confiscated property restored, excluding slaves, if they should swear to faithfully support the Constitution and the Emancipation Proclamation.

While extending amnesty to much of the South as an incentive for peace, this proclamation also included a plan for reconstruction. This plan was particularly relevant to those Confederate states which the Union had regained control of by 1863. If

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 8.8.2.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 8.8.27.

one-tenth of the eligible voters in an ex-Confederate state took an oath of allegiance to the United States, it could re-establish a state government and warrant the recognition of the Federal Government.

Lincoln observed that “whether members sent to Congress from any State shall be admitted to seats, constitutionally rests exclusively with the respective Houses, and not to any extent with the Executive.”<sup>171</sup> Lincoln was constitutionally powerless to ensure representatives from these state governments would have a seat in Congress. His plan for reconstruction would need the favor of Congress in order for ex-Confederate state to be recognized and brought back into a relationship with the Union.

In addition to upholding the Constitution and the Emancipation Proclamation, these renewed state governments in the South were encouraged to enact plans which would support the freedom of slaves and temporarily accommodate this “laboring, landless, and homeless class”<sup>172</sup> until a more permanent solution could be developed to help the free black man.

The Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction affirmed Lincoln’s conception of justice and leadership. As discussed in the previous chapter, Lincoln and the Founders understood justice to be dictated by the laws of God and Nature, in particular the self-evident truth that all men were created equal in their natural rights. Moreover, Lincoln held the American Presidency to be an appointment of the people established for the sake of protecting those natural rights. Serving as the Executive, therefore, was a privilege and governed by the Constitution of the United States.

We see Lincoln maintaining both his understanding of justice and leadership in this proclamation. As a support to the act of

justice which was embodied in the Emancipation Proclamation, Lincoln’s plan for amnesty and reconstruction sought to reunify the nation and further fulfill the principles of the American republic by protecting the natural equality of freed slaves post-Civil War. This proclamation, however, was not issued without due consideration of the U.S. Constitution. To justify his plan of amnesty and reconstruction, Lincoln explained the extent and limitations of his power by citing his ability to “grant reprieves and pardons for offences against the United States”<sup>173</sup> and the duty of the United States to “guarantee to every State in this Union a Republican Form of Government.”<sup>174</sup> As previously mentioned, Lincoln declared his inability to guarantee representatives from these state governments would have a seat in Congress. That power rested with the respective Houses of the Legislative branch.<sup>175</sup> While imbued with war time powers, Lincoln’s constant consideration for the Constitution reveals his desire to uphold its dictates.

Shortly after Lincoln delivered this proclamation, Ohio and Iowa issued bills proposing a constitutional amendment that would permanently and nationally abolish slavery. The proposal and eventual ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment was essential to fulfilling the act of justice embodied in the Emancipation Proclamation. Border slave states that remained loyal to the Union were unaffected by the proclamation, because they were outside the jurisdiction of Lincoln’s constitutional war time powers. A constitutional amendment abolishing slavery would end the institution in those border states, nationally confirm the justice of the Emancipation Proclamation, and further fulfill the principles put forth in the Declaration of Independence. While plans for passing and ratifying the Thirteenth Amendment were

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<sup>171</sup> Basler, *His Speeches and Writings*, 741.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>173</sup> Constitution of the United States America, Article. II., Section. II.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, Article. IV., Section. IV.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, Article. I., Section. V.

underway, the war continued and a Union victory had yet to be secured.

In 1864, Louisiana, Tennessee, and Arkansas would take up Lincoln's offer and elected a new state government. However, a majority of Congress, especially the Radical Republicans, opposed Lincoln's proclamation and plan for reconstruction. They thought the one-tenth plan was too lenient on the rebellious Southern states, and refused to recognize the state governments that had agreed to Lincoln's proclamation. In February, the Radical Republicans, with the support of moderates who constituted the Congressional majority at the time, proposed the Wade-Davis Bill as an alternative plan for reconstruction. The bill was much harsher on Southern states that desired reconciliation and recognition from the Federal Government. Rather than one-tenth of eligible voters swearing allegiance to the Union, the Wade-Davis Bill mandated that a majority of eligible voters in ex-Confederate states had to take the Ironclad Oath.

When the Wade-Davis Bill passed both houses of Congress in July of 1864, Lincoln prevented the bill from becoming law with a pocket veto. He held this plan to be a barrier to binding up the nation's wounds. While Lincoln accepted that he had no power over the Houses in their recognition of representatives from the South, he would not support harsher rules being placed upon state governments that sought reconciliation and renewed devotion to the Union. Some politicians held the strict rules of the Wade-Davis Bill to be an adequate punishment upon the South for causing the war and perpetuating slavery in America. Lincoln, on the contrary, thought that such a plan would punish both the Southerner and the freed slave unnecessarily.

By refusing to recognize these Southern state governments, in particular

Louisiana, animosity would grow rather than cease and former slaves would be denied the freedom their masters were now willing to bestow upon them. While Congress had not passed the proposed amendment, the new state government of Louisiana, for example, gave its approval of the Thirteenth Amendment on February 17, 1864. Allowing the rebellious states to be counted when attempting to ratify the Thirteenth Amendment was essential for Lincoln. The amendment could more easily gain the approval of three-quarters of the states, if only the 25 states that had not seceded were counted. For Lincoln, however, such a ratification process would be contrary to republican principles and cause inevitable Southern resistance to the amendment in the future. Brookhiser wrote:

As long ago as his days in the Illinois legislature, Lincoln had held that slave owners ought to approve abolition themselves. They were free men, albeit engaged in a wrong; they should not be relieved from their wrongdoing by force or external power... requiring all the states, including formerly Confederate ones, to count toward the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment would restore consent and agency to ex-rebels. Freedom would come, but it should come with their participation.<sup>176</sup>

In dealing with former Confederate states seeking new recognition from the Federal Government, Lincoln and Congress could have combined their efforts and ruled the South like tyrants. At the least, they could have made the South suffer for the war it had brought upon America. The Wade-Davis Bill proposed by the Radical Republicans played into this idea. Lincoln, however, would not

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<sup>176</sup> Brookhiser, *Founders' Son*, 290-91.

allow it. To act in such a manner would have been contrary to his conception of virtue, justice, and leadership.

The acceptance or denial of the Thirteenth Amendment and the national abolition of slavery would be an unquestioned decision, if the ex-Confederate states were counted in the ratification process. Lincoln desired for Southerners, especially those in loyal border states, to freely make a decision in accord with right reason. He wanted to give the South an opportunity to act virtuously or, at the least, willingly compromise their selfish desires and give up their tyrannical position as masters over other human beings.

In accordance with his conception of justice and political leadership, Lincoln wanted the South to consent to the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment, because they too were created equal in their natural rights. Indeed the Confederate states were guilty of violating this self-evident truth and starting a civil war. These actions would not go unpunished. High ranking officials and military commanders of the Confederacy would pay for their crimes. Yet the states would have to be renewed in the Union they shared once the war was over. If the Union won the war, peace would not last long when the North ruled over the defeated South like slaves. For the sake of the principles that Lincoln and the Union fought to preserve and further fulfill, the ex-Confederate states had to be treated as equals and consent to the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment.

Lincoln attempting to restrain Congress from trampling on Southern states seeking reconciliation demonstrated his desire to protect the consent of the American people, uphold a ratification process that was unquestionably constitutional, and secure the freedom of the black man. Despite these justifications for Lincoln's reconstruction plan, the debate with Congress continued throughout 1864.

In spite of the disagreements between Lincoln and Congress over plans for reconstruction, the Senate passed the Thirteenth Amendment on April 8, 1864. Later that same year, Lincoln was re-elected president on November 8 carrying all but three states with 55 percent of the popular vote and 212 of the 233 electoral votes. In late January of 1865, Congress followed in the footsteps of the Senate and passed the Thirteenth Amendment. The constitutional amendment was then sent to the states for ratification, but Congress recognizing ex-Confederate state governments in accordance with Lincoln's 1863 proclamation was still a matter of contention.

On February 3, 1865, the end of the war seemed tangible when Lincoln met with Confederate Vice President Alexander Stephens in Virginia to discuss peace. The meeting, however, was a failure. Despite the significant military success of Grant and Sherman in the latter half of 1864, the war would continue.

A month later, Lincoln delivered his Second Inaugural Address and lamented that the end of the war was not in sight after four years bloodshed. He proclaimed, "Fondly do we hope – fervently do we pray – that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away."<sup>177</sup> That hope and that prayer would come to be realized sooner than anyone in the North expected. In early April, Grant's forces advanced upon and capture the Confederate Capitol in Richmond. Accompanied by a small bodyguard, Lincoln went to see the fallen capitol of the Confederacy on April 4, 1865. Brookhiser wrote, "When a party of black workmen recognized [Lincoln], they tried to kiss his feet. 'That is not right,' Lincoln told them. 'You must kneel to God only.' What a temptation. Satan only offered Jesus all the kingdoms of the world; these men offered Lincoln their homage. Turning it aside was one of his noblest moments."<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Basler, *His Speeches and Writings*, 793.

<sup>178</sup> Brookhiser, *Founders' Son*, 290-91.



A few days later, Confederate Army General Robert E. Lee surrendered his army to General Grant in the parlor of his Virginia home. While the official end of the Civil War would come months later, Lee's surrender signaled the Union victory. Upon hearing the news, celebration broke out in Washington, D.C., and, on April 11, Abraham Lincoln delivered his last public address. Taking but a moment to rejoice in the surrender of the principal insurgent army, the goodness of God's providence, and the skill of his generals, Lincoln immediately spoke of the next difficulty that faced the Union. Reconstruction would neither be simple nor easy. Expounding upon his proposed plan for reconstruction, as laid out in the Proclamation of December 1863, Lincoln explained the importance of readily bringing ex-Confederate states back into a proper relation with the Union. Seeking reunification rather than revenge would better the condition of the nation. In Lincoln's opinion, the progress of Louisiana attested to the strength of his plan for reconstruction. Lincoln admitted that the plan was by no means perfect and that certain results were unsatisfactory. At the time, the Louisiana constituency which established the new state government consisted of about twelve thousand people. Greater numbers were desirable, but a small group of twelve thousand people loyal to the Union was a starting point. Moreover, the elective franchise was not conferred upon the freed slaves residing in Louisiana and other ex-Confederate states. Lincoln expressed his wish to see the vote given to black men possessing great intelligence or those who served as Union soldiers. Despite these immediate shortcomings of reconstruction, it would do more harm than good to reject Louisiana and other states like her seeking reconciliation. Speaking directly to Congressmen and concerned citizens who wished to place harsher rules

upon ex-Confederate state governments, Lincoln argued:

Now, if we reject, and spurn them, we do our utmost to disorganize and disperse them. We in effect say to the white men "You are worthless, or worse – we will neither help you, nor be helped by you." To the blacks we say "This cup of liberty which these, your old masters, hold to your lips, we will dash from you, and leave you to the chances of gathering the spilled and scattered contents in some vague and undefined when, where, and how."<sup>179</sup>

Rejecting Louisiana and the other ex-Confederate state governments would only stunt or worsen the condition of whites and blacks striving to advance and move past the terrors of the war. And each Southern state government that remained unrecognized was one less vote for the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment. Would the amendment be stronger without counting the formerly seceded states? Would the vote be more quickly conferred upon the black man by punishing the South? Would peace come sooner by spurning ex-Confederate state governments? Lincoln did not think so, and he hoped others would see the futility of reconstruction plans that sought to punish the South and prolong the nation from healing.

Among those who gathered on the White House lawn to hear Lincoln's public address was John Wilkes Booth. Upon hearing Lincoln's hopes for the political advancement of freed blacks during reconstruction, Booth turned to a friend in the crowd and said, "That means nigger citizenship. That is the last speech he will ever make."<sup>180</sup> Three days later at Ford's Theater, Booth would enter the Lincolns' box during the third act of

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<sup>179</sup> Basler, *His Speeches and Writings*, 800.

<sup>180</sup> Brookhiser, *Founders' Son*, 291.

*Our American Cousin* and shoot the president in the back of the head. Jumping to the stage with a dagger in hand, Booth cried *Sic semper tyrannus* – Thus always to tyrants – and escaped the theater before anyone in the audience knew what had happened. Transported to a house across the street from Ford’s Theater, a gravely wounded Lincoln never regained consciousness and died the following morning.

The death of Lincoln, unlike Cyrus, would not bring about the collapse of American society and government. Despite the success of Booth’s assassination plot, the Civil War had ended, and the American republic was saved. Yet the American republic was no longer what it once was during the time of the Founders and the Revolutionary generation. Lincoln’s republic was a greater fulfillment of that regime which the Founders had imagined. Dissimilar to Cyrus, Lincoln preserved the republic that raised him, and he also sought its realization. The existence of slavery in America soiled its republican robe.<sup>181</sup> The self-evident truth that all men were created equal was trailed in the dust. The principles of the Declaration of Independence had begun to be re-purified and washed clean in the blood of the Civil War. The Emancipation Proclamation, as a war time measure and act of justice, set slavery on the road to permanent and national extinction, but Lincoln would not live to see this come to pass. Nearly eight months after his assassination, the Thirteenth Amendment would be ratified. In spite of this triumph and the other two amendments that followed shortly thereafter, reconstruction was largely a failure under Johnson and Grant. Their best effort for binding up the nation’s wounds was fraught with many challenges. While the natural equality of the blacks was won with the abolition of slavery, their political and social equality was suppressed due to

lingering racial prejudice in the South and the North. Over the next 100 years, the nation would progress toward the good and the just albeit slowly and incrementally.

Whether reconstruction would have enjoyed more success had Lincoln lived to serve his second term is subject to merely speculation. The answer cannot be known. However, we can know that Lincoln, unlike Cyrus, truly desired for the American republic to be preserved, perpetuated, and further fulfilled. While constant challenges would slow this work in the decades that followed Lincoln’s death, that standard maxim of free society – that self-evident truth all men are created equal – would “be familiar to all, and revered by all; constantly looked to, constantly labored for, and even though never perfectly attained, constantly approximate, and thereby constantly spreading and deepening its influence, and augmenting the happiness and value of life to all people of all colors everything.”<sup>182</sup> Contrary to the Persians, who became worse after Cyrus’ kingship, the Americans who came after Lincoln’s presidency knew only better days than that of their ancestors. It continues to be so, but the work of our forefathers remains unfinished. Lincoln would not have expected otherwise: “It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us – that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion – that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain – that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom – and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 315.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, 361.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 734.

## CONCLUSION

### Folly and Wisdom

This project began with the intent of identifying the differences between destroyers and saviors of republics. In pursuit of this end, we studied the thoughts, actions, and accomplishments of Cyrus the Great and Abraham Lincoln. The last chapter explained how and why the former was a destroyer and the latter a savior. And the preceding chapters sought to reveal unique differences that might account for the distinct paths that Cyrus and Lincoln would ultimately tread. Many interesting similarities and dissimilarities, both big and small, existed in their regimes, their natures, their nurtured qualities, their conceptions of virtue, their understandings of justice, their thoughts on leadership, their successes, their failures, their means, and their ends. The most important differences, however, are the sakes for which Cyrus and Lincoln acted and their reasons for doing so.

#### *The Folly of Cyrus' Ambition*

Cyrus acted for the sake of his ambition. From his childhood to the end of his life, he was largely controlled by a passion for honor, distinction, and fame. We ought not to forget that Xenophon practically began the Education by observing that Cyrus “endured every labor and faced every risk for the sake of being praised.”<sup>184</sup> When we recognize ambition as the supreme desire of Cyrus’ soul, his apparent virtues and accomplishments quickly become hollow. As Chapters Three and Four revealed, his acts of benevolence, courage, moderation, justice, and goodness were largely done to win honor and praise. Cyrus was very prudent and patient in this pursuit. He subverted his ambition on countless occasions throughout the Education, be-

cause he foresaw the greater gains he would make in the future. As a result, he became exceptionally good at disguising his real desires and purposes.

As we observed in Chapter Two, the cause of Cyrus’ unrelenting pursuit of honor and praise was partly rooted in his nature. His immense ambition, however, was also a product of the Persian republic itself. In Chapter One, it was determined that the Persian regime sought to make men the best. The Persians wanted men to be virtuous, just, and good. Citizens were to pursue this end for its own sake. However, it is difficult and perhaps impossible for men to do something for its own sake in the absence of reasons and their intellectual assent. The Peers did not seek to become the best, because they recognized the goodness of such an end. As Cyrus admitted before the Peers, “What good [our ancestors] acquired by [practicing the very things that are held to be works of virtue], however, either for the community of the Persians or for themselves, I cannot see.”<sup>185</sup> Cyrus and his fellow Peers were compelled to become the best through force as opposed to reason. Persians that disobeyed the laws or the commands of their elders were punished.

To assist the Peers in their self-forgetting to journey becoming the best, the Persians were deprived of all earthly pleasures and isolated from other pursuits which would inhibit their advancement. In the absence of all these things, honor was the only positive reinforcement a Persian would receive while pursuing virtue, justice, and goodness for their own sakes. Is it, therefore, surprising that a naturally ambitious Cyrus would crave the honor and praise of his fellow man? When Cyrus visited Media, he was exposed to the greater luxuries and honors the world had to offer, especially to those who were virtuous. Is it shocking that Cyrus, in the absence of reasons and intellectual assent, immediately

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<sup>184</sup> Xenophon, *Education of Cyrus*, 1.2.1.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.5.8.

cast aside the purpose of the Persian regime and sought to make it useful? He was not alone in this desire. The willing support of the Peers and Commoners throughout the Education affirms this assertion. Together they used their virtue to gratify the longings the Persian regime fostered and then neglected.

As the Persian campaign against the Assyrians continued, Cyrus' ambition became insatiable. Sharing honor and glory with his allies and companions was a necessary evil. While he surpassed them all in virtue, Cyrus required their assistance to satisfy his growing ambition. He desired all the honor, distinction, and praise for himself. He would not be able to keep it, however, if he refused to gratify his friends as well. Moreover, he had to avoid their envy. As a result, Cyrus accepted less than he deserved or disguised the reality of all he possessed. In this way, he was left longing for rewards of honor and praise that accorded with his virtue.

Once Cyrus consolidated and secured his power, he was able to accept or take rewards he thought he deserved. By the end of the Education, most of the honor Cyrus received was not even willingly given. His friends and subjects were forced to bow down before him during his procession out of Babylon. He openly used fear, force, rewards, and punishments to gain the praise and honor that supposedly accorded with his worth. Even this, however, was not enough. Cyrus had to prove his godlike independence. In Cyrus' mind, the intentional destruction of the Persian Empire was such a proof. It was the only act which would demonstrate his distinction from all other human beings and merit all the honor, praise, and glory associated with the Persian Empire. Yet it was an act which required his death. The collapse of the Persian Empire in the absence of its founder was the singular act which would supposedly satisfy the ambition of Cyrus. He,

of course, would never experience this sense of fulfillment.

In the end, Cyrus pursued the passion of his ambition and was left unfulfilled. He became a destroyer for the sake of distinction, but he would remain empty and unhappy to his last breath. In the process, the Persians and the subjects of the empire were left in a similar condition. Over time, they would become worse than those who once lived under the Persian republic.

Cyrus' ambition was folly, because his pursuit was devoid of reason. In the Education, he neither appeared to question his passion-filled motivations nor the continued failure that praise and honor had in satisfying the longings of his soul. As a result, his actions and accomplishments were misguided and empty. When pursued for its own sake, ambition failed to satisfy. The light of reason would have perhaps corrected his course.

It is telling that Tigranes, the only character in the Education to have enjoyed the company of "a certain wise man,"<sup>186</sup> is the one friend of Cyrus' who refrains from honoring his actions and accomplishments. According to Nadon, "Commentators are nearly unanimous in identifying this sophist with Socrates, and Tigranes with Xenophon himself."<sup>187</sup> As the sole student of philosophy in Xenophon's work, it is significant that Tigranes is the only character who sees through Cyrus' appearances. He prudently aligned himself with Cyrus out of necessity but recognized the error and folly of this Persian king. Nadon observed:

Certain characters in the *Cyropaedia* do genuinely admire Cyrus; they even declare him beautiful and wise. But Tigranes, Xenophon's alter ego in the book, remains silent in the midst of his comrades' general acclamation of their leader. Indicating his judgement of their relative worth, Xenophon

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 3.1.14.

<sup>187</sup> Nadon, *Xenophon's Prince*, 79.

himself certainly never says of Cyrus what he professes to believe of Socrates: “He seemed to me himself blessedly happy and to lead those who listened to him to gentlemanliness.”

Through the character of Tigranes, Xenophon perhaps would affirm the assertion that Cyrus acted in the absence of reason. His careless pursuit of ambition led him and his similarly ignorant friends on a journey which would end in folly and destruction.

### *The Wisdom of Lincoln’s Reason*

Lincoln acted for the sake of truth, justice, and goodness. As opposed to passion, he was guided by reason and the objective truths or universal principles it revealed. As we mentioned in Chapter Two, however, Lincoln was by no means immune to the temptations of ambition. Cyrus and Lincoln shared in their natural desire for honor, distinction, and praise. As William Herndon, once famously said of his law partner, “His ambition was a little engine that knew no rest.” What prevented Lincoln from falling into the same futile trap that Xenophon’s Cyrus experienced? In part, ambition appeared to save Lincoln from the extremes of ambition itself.

As a young boy in the backwoods of Indiana and Illinois, Lincoln pursued his ambition by seeking intellectual distinction. Of course, Lincoln gratified his ambition in other ways. He received the praise of many folks for his immense strength and his ability to tell a joke or tale. However, this would not satisfy him. With the help of his mother’s encouragement, Lincoln sought to make something of himself by improving his mind. In addition to the books he diligently read, the American republic gave Lincoln plenty of ideas to ponder.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the American government was founded to secure natural rights and informed by the self-evident truth that all men were created equal. Unlike the Persian regime, the American republic was established by reflection and choice. It was built upon principles and reasons which citizens were encouraged to freely consider. American citizens were required to respect the laws which embodied the principles of the Founding. Attachment to law and government, however, was held in higher regard than merely punishment and enforcement. Citizens had to reason out the good, truth, and justice of their laws and the principles of the American republic. They often had to come to an understanding of these ideas and principles, because they were makers of the local laws. As a result, the American republic more readily enabled citizens to pursue reason.

As Lincoln grew older, he carefully reflected upon the laws of his state and the principles of the American founding. When he first sought out political office in the local legislature, Lincoln admitted the prevalence of his ambition. He wished to be “truly esteemed by [his] fellow men, by rendering [himself] worthy of their esteem.”<sup>188</sup> Lincoln’s ambition perhaps never disappeared. However, as Chapters Three and Four revealed, reason subverted his desire for distinction, success, honor, and glory. As Lincoln’s knowledge and understanding of the principles of the American republic grew, the passions of ambition faded. The truth, justice, and goodness of the American experiment were noble in and of themselves. Lincoln pursued them for their own sake. In delivering his Sub-Treasury speech, Lincoln declared:

If ever I feel the soul within me elevate and expand to those dimensions

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<sup>188</sup> Basler, *His Speeches and Writings*, 57.

not wholly unworthy of its Almighty Architect, it is when I contemplate the cause of my country, deserted by all the world beside, and I standing boldly alone, and hurling defiance at her victorious oppressors. Here, without contemplating consequences, before High Heaven, and in the face of the world, I swear eternal fidelity to the just cause, as I deem it, of the land of my life, my liberty, and my love... Let none falter, who thinks he is right, and we may succeed. But, if after all, we shall fail, be it so.

The perpetuation of the American experiment was an undertaking that Lincoln contemplated. He understood the justice of it and would defend it regardless of its ultimate success or failure. Lincoln would fight for his country, because its cause was good, just, and true. While it could be said that an enflamed and youthful politician naively spoke the conclusion of the Sub-Treasury speech, the oath he swore that day remained tried and true during the war-torn years of his presidency.

Throughout the Civil War, Lincoln maintained his devotion to the cause of the American republic and Union. Furthermore, he sought its greater fulfillment when just and constitutional actions coincided. Lincoln's presidential duties and moral sentiments collided when the war necessitated the emancipation of slaves in rebellious states. When others sought to honor Lincoln for his presidential and moral actions, he would deny such rewards. He was perhaps overly modest about his involvement in the events of the Civil War. However, Lincoln's words and actions, in public and private, imply a genuine recognition of his insufficient foresight and control.

Almost exactly a year before the Capitol of the Confederacy would fall, Lin-

coln wrote a letter to Albert G. Hodges, editor of the *Commonwealth*, who requested that the President write down a speech he had given during a visit to Kentucky on March 26. Lincoln was good enough to oblige Mr. Hodges and wrote down what he recalled himself to have said that day. The substance of Lincoln's Kentucky speech was on the constitutional justifications and military necessity of emancipation. At the end of the letter, Lincoln wrote:

I add a word which was not in the verbal conversation. In telling this tale I attempt no compliment to my own sagacity. I claim not to have controlled events, but confess plainly that events have controlled me. Now, at the end of three years struggle the nation's condition is not what either party, or any man devised, or expected. God alone can claim it. Whither it is tending seems plain. If God now wills the removal of a great wrong, and wills also that we of the North as well as you of the South, shall pay fairly for our complicity in that wrong, impartial history will find therein new cause to attest and revere the justice and goodness of God.<sup>189</sup>

In lieu of his ambition, Lincoln gave all glory and honor to God. In his Second Inaugural Address and his later wartime speeches, Lincoln would often attribute all power and justice to the Almighty. In the chaos of the Civil War, Lincoln recognized the folly of ambition and the limits of human action. His understanding of this truth was most beautifully displayed when he rejected the honor of black workmen who would have willingly bowed down and worshipped him for emancipating them. What a contrast between Cyrus and Lincoln! Cyrus forced his friends to prostrate themselves before him to satisfy his

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<sup>189</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 7: 282.

ambition, and men who would freely do the same in the presence of Lincoln were told, “That is not right. You must kneel to God only.” Lincoln’s denial of honor has the naturally compelling effect of demanding even more of our praise. He would turn this aside too. It is strange that those who deserve honor most are those who need it least.

There is wisdom in Lincoln’s reason. He avoided the folly of ambition and acted in pursuit of the good, the true, and the just. As a result, he became a savior of the American republic. Of course, Lincoln would never have claimed responsibility for this characterization. He did as the good man does. He acted for the sake of the good. That was all. No more and no less. The rest was in God’s providential hands. Yet Lincoln was also wise enough to realize that man’s “selfless” pursuits are neither perfectly followed nor fully achieved in this lifetime. Concluding his Second Inaugural Address, Lincoln proclaimed, “With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in... to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations.”<sup>190</sup> The work of a good man is never done. Though ambition is folly and the good end never attained, the wise man helps others to gain knowledge of the good so that the virtue of man might be used for the just and timely purposes of the Almighty.

### ***Students, Citizens, and Philosophers***

Reflecting upon these conclusions, the reader will have hopefully gained insight into the difference between destroyers and saviors of republics, recognized the distinct sakes for which Cyrus and Lincoln acted, and assented to the importance of understanding the true intentions of themselves and their

fellow man. In considering these things, there is a truth for us all. Unless we are animals, we all are students, citizens, and philosophers.

As students of history, read the words of those who lived it. While it is hoped that this study of Xenophon’s Cyrus and Abraham Lincoln was interesting and thought-provoking, the written words of these men carry more wisdom than this project could ever aspire to contain. If the attentive mind of the student were to contemplate and act upon any recommendation offered herein, let it be this – spend time with Xenophon and Lincoln.

As guarded citizens of republican government, reflect upon the difference between destroyers and saviors and the sake for which they act. Attempting to understand the true intentions and motivations of those who desire political leadership is important. Men driven by ambition alone will pursue distinction and honor without regard for truth, justice, and goodness. They will win the praising of a watching world by building up republics or tearing them down. They are led by opportunity. Ambitious men in republics are at the mercy of its citizens, and controlling opportunity must be the object of their efforts. They desire honor, fame, and glory, but it is the very thing they cannot give to themselves. Strive to understand and identify those who would lead for the sake of ambition, and act to prevent their appointment. If this cannot be avoided, withhold honor and seek to control opportunities such that they only achieve distinction and fame by doing good for their government and country.

As philosophers, seek truth and love wisdom. Differentiate appearances from reality. There is only so much that can be known about the hearts and minds of others. It is a difficult task, and sometimes impossible. Observers can only plumb the depths of true

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<sup>190</sup> Basler, *His Speeches and Writings*, 793.

intentions on the often ambiguous and complex basis of what human beings say and do. We alone, however, can come to an understanding of ourselves. At the metaphorical heart of this project, the reader will find an inscription once said to adorn the Temple of Apollo at Delphi – Know Thyself. Words and actions can conceal the desires of the heart and the thoughts of the mind to others and perhaps even ourselves. We ought to think carefully about what we do and why we do it. For what sake do we act? Without an answer to this question, who can claim to know what path we will choose when given the opportunity to dispense destruction or salvation? In searching for answers to these questions, be bold and maintain hope. For in much wisdom is much grief.

But because the Preacher was wise,  
he still taught the people knowledge;  
yes, he pondered and sought out and  
set in order many proverbs. The  
Preacher sought to find acceptable  
words; and what was written was  
upright – words of truth. The words  
of the wise are like goads, and the  
words of scholars are like well-  
driven nails, given by one Shepherd.  
And further, my son, be admonished  
by these. Of making many books  
there is no end, and much study is  
wearisome to the flesh. Let us hear  
the conclusion of the whole matter:

Fear God and keep his  
commandments,  
For this is man's all.  
For God will bring every work into  
judgement,  
Including every secret thing,  
Whether good or evil.

— The Words of the Preacher  
(Ecclesiastes), 12:9-14



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