HISTORICAL CAUSATION IN THE WRITINGS OF THUCYDIDES SAINT AUGUSTINE AND VOLTAIRE

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To Diana

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

> History knows no scruples and no hesitation. Inert and unerring, she flows towards her goal. At every bend in her course she leaves the mud which she carries and the corpses of the drowned. History knows her way. She makes no mistakes. He who has not absolute faith in History does not belong. . . .[1]

Is history an inexorable force that follows its course despite all manner of attempts to alter it? Or does reason promise to enable man to control history?

> The time will therefore come when the sun will shine only on free men who know no other master but their reason; when tyrants and slaves, priests and their stupid or hypocritical instruments, will exist only to pity history and on the stage; and when we shall think of them only to pity their victims and their dupes; to maintain ourselves in a state of vigilance by thinking on their excesses; and to learn how to recognize and so to destroy, by force of reason, the first seeds of tyranny and superstition, should they ever dare to reappear amongst us.[2]

Or is history too complex for human guidance, yet not beyond being altered sporadically by man?

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[1]Arthur Koestler, Darkness at Noon, trans. Daphne Hardy (New York: Macmillan, 1941), p. 34.

[2]Condorcet, "The Progress of the Human Mind," Readings in Western Civilization: 1500 to the Present, ed. George H. Knoles and Rixford K. Snyder (New York: Lippincott, 1968), p. 162.

> For beyond the contingent operation of mechanistic causalities the spontaneous acts of men may now intervene to interrupt, divert, intensify, or weaken the morphology of events and so impart to history that complexity and singularity which makes a mockery of all attempts to explain it by invariable laws.[3]

Which of the preceding quotes by Koestler, Condrocet, and Meinecke is valid? Yet these are only three of a multitude of ways in which historical causation has been described.

The problem of historical causation forces itself upon all historians; each must decide what he believes to be the purpose, course, and methods of history. The majority of historians make these decisions on a very limited scale pertaining to specific historical events. Their primary purpose is the event, not its implications; thus, most of the time they make no definite commitment as to ultimate causality, but rather, acknowledging limitations, they hedge on their opinions and apply them sparingly. A few historians, however, have chosen to write much more universal histories and to emphasize the implications of history rather than the details of its fragmented episodes. This type of historian is primarily concerned not with the events themselves, but with the questions of causation, purpose, and the course of history. He tends to write in ultimates and absolutes.

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[3]Friedrich Meinecke, "Values and Causalities in History," The Varieties of History, ed. Fritz Stern (Cleveland: World Publishing, 1956), p. 269.

Ignoring, glossing over, or perhaps simply not recognizing the apparent contradictions of history, he finds absolute purpose, ultimate goals, and universal causation where other less bold historians find only the limited, the relative, and the subjective.

As science has its absolutists and relativists, so too does the historical profession have its Newtons as well as its Einsteins. History seems to provide an irresistible attraction for those who would discover the answers to the questions of morality, ethics, and the purpose of human existence. The Hebrews, Marx, Hegel, and a host of other groups and individuals have come forward with a bewildering variety of revealed and empirical truths and patterns of history. These writings have as their goal the discovery or explanation of some kind of universal order. The past seemed to these writers to hold the key to understanding this pattern. Thus they sought, examined, and explained the lessons of history; these lessons then seemed to provide at least hints as to the future if not actually a clear picture of the future.

These historians have encountered one primary difficulty; their ideas of the universal have never been accepted universally. Historians are constantly at variance over the purpose, theme, methodology, causality, and significance of history; thus, the essence of history may differ radically

from one historian to another. Despite their disputes in these areas, there is one element in history that is essential to all historians. History always revolves around human actions and reactions. Man is the single reference point through which all history must pass; therefore, no historian can avoid the necessity of dealing in some manner with man.

If it is granted that man is essential to history, his place in it is not likewise established. Is man a mere pawn living his life as directed by an omnipotent God? Is man in complete control of his own actions, and can he direct these actions toward a specific purpose? Is he an irrational creature who creates his own problems by failing to understand his own actions, motives, and purposes, and, therefore, has only an accidental effect on history? Or is man caught in the grip of forces he can neither control nor understand. In other words, what control, if any, does man exercise over history?

Just as many historians make little effort to define ultimate causality and purpose in history, many historians also make no real attempt to cope with the problem of defining man's role in history. Some historians have argued that the uniqueness of history prevents an assertion of generalities about history and man; others have argued that for history to have meaning the historian must make

generalizations.[4] Whatever the merits of these viewpoints, it is true that some historians have concerned themselves with final causality and man's most basic contribution to the historical process. It is with three of these kind of historians that this paper is concerned.

It is the purpose of this study to examine, contrast, compare, and evaluate the histories of Thucydides, Saint Augustine, and Voltaire in regard to their ideas pertaining to ultimate historical causation and man's relationship to historical causation.

Certain key elements, or constants, are used in this study as guides in the isolation and evaluation of each of the three historian's theory of causation and theory of man's relationship to the historical process. One of the constants used is the historian's purpose in writing his histories. This is important because the purpose of each of the histories is directly linked to the concept of the controlling element in history. For example, a historian who writes in order to instruct mankind in the great lessons of history must feel that he has a great degree of knowledge as to the ultimate causes of history. The subject matter of the historian also tends to reveal whether or not he has a desire to reveal ultimate causes or only wants to deal with

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[4]Carey B. Joynt and Nicholas Rescher, "The Problem of Uniqueness in History," History and Theory, I, No. 2 (1962), pp. 154-159.

secondary ones. Is he writing a monograph or a universal history? Does he convey the idea that his subject matter is eternal? The subject of the histories also gives a clue as to the individual historian's answer to the question of what mediums or tools are used to make history what it is. This, of course, shows whether or not man is essential to the historical process. A third important constant is the patterns outlined in the historical writings of the authors. That is, what do they consider to be the goal of history, and what path has history taken to achieve that goal. This study also takes into account the overt and clearly identifiable influences that helped to sway the various historians in their efforts. Consideration is given to the general temper of the intellectual and political climates of the ages in which the historians wrote, as well as to the specific individual contacts and frictions that directly affected the histories of Thucydides, Saint Augustine, and Voltaire. One of the most important keys in determining the role of man in the historical process is the historian's view of human nature; does he believe that human nature is constant or subject to change. Lastly, to what degree do the various historians think man exercised freedom of will, and to what degree is man's role in the historical process determined by factors beyond his control?

Certain terms used throughout this study are of such importance to the study that a definition of them is necessary.

(1) Free Will: Man has the power of independent choice and is capable of genuine initiative. This initiative does not extend beyond physical limitations; for example, man cannot successfully will himself to stop breathing and digesting. But it does extend beyond psychological necessity; in this respect, a kind of Freudian determinism of innate natural drives is not recognized in this paper as limiting free will.

(2) Determinism: Man is not capable of effective independent action and initiative. Most or all of his actions are determined by forces beyond his control.

(3) Chance: The historical process and man's actions and reactions do not occur because of logical necessity but by mere accident. Chance has largely a negative quality and connotation and is difficult to express positively. According to the idea implied by chance, things happen for no logical, rational, or irrational reason. They simply happen.

(4) Human Nature: Human nature refers to the innate propensity of people, either as individuals or as members of a group to act or react in partially predictable ways. In this way, many of the actions of the individual or group are traceable to man's innate nature which may or may not, in

regard to time and place, remain relatively constant within each individual and each particular group.

There is, of course, no pretense made in this study that the writings of Thucydides, Saint Augustine, and Voltaire have not been previously examined. Therefore, any uniqueness of the study is founded in the point of view of the author and in the fact that the ideas of these historians in regard to the controlling element in history have never been directly contrasted and compared.

This study is not to be considered a thorough examination of the histories of the three authors. The paper is not directly concerned with the form, style and methodology of the three historians. However, just as the whole is the sum of its parts, in order to achieve a better understanding of the historian's viewpoints, brief mention will occasionally be made of these three factors.

Another more serious yet unavoidable limitation of this thesis involves the consistency of the historians' conclusions. At various times Thucydides, Saint Augustine, and Voltaire all modified their views on causation and man's role in the historical process. This is most readily true with regard to Voltaire, whose inconsistency sometimes reaches the point where he espouses irreconcilably contradictory truths. The cataloging of each and everyone of these inconsistencies is beyond the scope of this study, for,

despite the inconsistencies and contradictions of the various authors, a general pattern does, in each case, emerge.

The main body of the thesis is organized along the following lines: (1) Chapters Two, Three, and Four are devoted to a delineation of the theories of causation and the theories of man's role in the historical process espoused by Thucydides, Saint Augustine, and Voltaire respectively. (2) Chapter Five contains a comparison and contrast of the theories advocated by the three historians.

CHAPTER II

THUCYDIDES

Not much is known about the life of Thucydides. He describes very little of his life in his history, and other sources are both sparse and inconsistent. There are, however, several facts about his life which must be considered prior to an examination of his theory of causation. They are: (1) His social and political position. (2) His war experience. (3) The intellectual currents in Athens that influenced him.

Although there is no definite proof of the exact date of Thucydides' birth or death, it is probable that he was born around 470 B.C. and died around 399 B.C.[1] He was born in Athens into a wealthy family which tended to be politically conservative; however, the concept of empire at that time was making conservatism less and less popular.[2] There are a great many indications--his admiration for Pericles is one of the most significant--that despite his conservative family, the times and his own political interests tended to make him a moderate democrat. At least he approves of the

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[1]Charles A. Robinson, Jr., ed., Selections from Greek and Roman Historians (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1957), p. xiv.

[2]John H. Finley, Jr., Thucydides (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1942), p. 17.

"First Citizen" type of imperial democracy existing during the period of Pericles' rule. While Thucydides consistently tended to hold this view, as time passed Athenian democracy became more and more egalitarian, and therefore his relative political position became more conservative.[3]

Thucydides took an active interest in the state, and in the year 424 B.C. he was elected to the post of general. He served as a commander of an Athenian fleet, but in that same year he was exiled from Athens for twenty years because of his failure to come to the rescue of besieged Amphipolis quickly enough.[4] Thus Thucydides was ousted from Athenian society and cut off from active participation in his city-state at a time when it underwent a period of violent stress. He sustained his interest in the affairs of Athens, but after his exile this interest was made manifest in his more passive role as historian.

The early Greeks had long been concerned with the discovery of eternal verities, the unchanging, the universal.[5] Since they considered history to be transitory in the sense that events came into existence and then passed away, early

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[3]G. B. Grundy, Thucydides and the History of His Age, Vol. II (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1948), p. 43; Finley, Thucydides, p. 29.

[4]Finley, Thucydides, p. 17.

[5]R. G. Collingwood, The Idea of History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 20.

Greek intellectual life may be called anti-historical.[6] The world of nature also seemed to be outside the realm of eternal truth to these early Greeks because nature seemed to be the epitome of catastrophic change.[7] According to some historians this concept underwent a change during the life of Thucydides. In this view sixth century Athens received from Asia Minor by way of Sicily new ideas about nature centering around the theory that nature obeyed natural law. While these ideas originated in the field of natural science, they also stimulated new ideas pertaining to human behaviour that were to affect the Greek concept of universals.[8] In addition to the idea that nature followed natural law, Sicily also circulated certain ideas that fall broadly under the term sophistic.[9] In the fifth century the Sicilian states adopted democracy.[10] With democracy came the need to persuade and control masses of men without force. This need helped to foster a group of men who became involved in the teaching of rhetoric. These teachers of rhetoric became the first of the sophists.[11] Sophism did not evolve a tightly

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[6] Ibid. [7] Ibid., p. 3.

[8] Grundy, Thucydides and the History, p. 1.

[9] Finley, Thucydides, p. 39.

[10] Grundy, Thucydides and the History, p. 3.

[11] Ibid., p. 4.

knit philosophical system. Like the philosophes of the Enlightenment, the group of men lumped together under the term sophist were not always of the same mind. Sophist thought also influenced men who did not endorse all of the ramifications of sophist philosophy.[12] It seems that Thucydides was influenced by parts of the sophist philosophy but that he does not accept it all.

Two ideas promoted by the sophists influenced Thucydides. The first of these ideas was a part of the general sophist emphasis on rhetoric. In order to persuade groups of people, speakers had to act upon some common ground. The crowds they spoke to were composed of people with a multitude of differences, but the speaker in order to be effective had to go beneath the superficial differences of his audiences and appeal to their more consistent traits.[13] Towards this end the sophists evolved methods of rhetoric based upon the idea that common elements of human nature existed and permeated all men and groups of men. Therefore the sophists had to be concerned with generic aspects of men as opposed to their individuality.[14]

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[12]Finley, Thucydides, pp. 43-44.

[13]Grundy, Thucydides and the History, p. 3.

[14]Finley, Thucydides, p. 40; Grundy, Thucydides and the History, p. 4.

A second sophist idea that influenced Thucydides was that of humanism. Protagoras, one of the most important of the early sophists, is credited with the statement, "Man is the measure of all things. . . ."[15] This expression has many implications. One of the most important conclusions drawn from this statement by some of the early Greeks was that knowledge was relative. Since men's opinions and subjective rationalizations were the criteria for knowledge, absolute knowledge or truth was impossible to attain. This idea was not adopted by Thucydides,[16] but another idea implicit in the phrase did influence him. This idea was termed humanism. To the Greeks humanism implied that man's will and actions were to a great extent independent of outside forces.[17] Man possessed enough free will to make right or wrong decisions concerning his own well being.[18] Thus some Greeks believed that while man did not have complete control of his affairs he had enough control so that his future was largely dependent not on the whims of the gods but upon his own actions.

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[15]Bruno Snell, The Discovery of the Mind: The Greek Origins of European Thought, trans. T. G. Rosenmeyer (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), p. 248.

[16]Finley, Thucydides, p. 48.

[17]Grundy, Thucydides and the History, p. 23.

[18]Ibid., p. 91.

Thucydides work is not totally sophistic, but he was influenced by some of the sophist ideas. His writings reflect these three sophist ideas. (1) Since nature follows observable natural laws, it is possible and probable that man's relationship to himself and society also follows general patterns. (2) Man's nature is such that individuals and groups can be subjected to mass persuasion. (3) Man is in control of a large part of his life. The interaction of these three ideas influenced Thucydides to see history not as a pursuit of the transitory and, therefore, the unknowable, but rather as a study of lasting human truths.[19]

> Thucydides is the father of psychological history . . . not history at all, but natural science of a special kind. Its chief purpose is to affirm laws, psychological laws. A psychological law is not an event, not yet a complex of events; it is an unchanging rule which governs the relation between events . . . what chiefly interests Thucydides is the laws according to which they [events] happen.[20]

While most historians believe that the major influences on Thucydides were the secular ones previously mentioned, there is one other possible influence that has yet to be mentioned. This concerns the fifth century Greek concept of religion and mythology. The Greece of the fifth century, although in a process of change, did not break all

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[19]Ibid., p. 3.

[20]Collingwood, The Idea of History, pp. 29-30.

of its ties with the gods and goddesses of Mt. Olympus; a state religion still existed in Thucydides' time.[21] Just as there remains an important substance of Puritan morality and religion even in the modern United States, so too was there a persistent element of the religious and the mythological in fifth century Greece.[22] While there is nothing in Thucydides' writings which would indicate that he is a firm believer in the Athenian state religion, neither is there concrete evidence that he is a non-believer.[23] The sophist ideas that Thucydides uses were relatively new to Athenian intellectual life, and while their affect upon Thucydides may have been profound, it is impossible to assume that the older Greek points of view as advanced by such men as Homer and Aeschylus were completely destroyed in but a few years and replaced by a point of view completely devoid of religion and mythology. Even Copernicus, Darwin, Freud, and Marx, while generating tremendous changes in the life patterns of millions of people, were not able to bring about these changes overnight; neither did these changes expunge all traditional modes of thought. Tradition dies slowly; the religious and mythological were still a part of Thucydides'

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[21]Grundy, Thucydides and the History, p. 401.

[22]Francis M. Cornford, Thucydides Mythistoricus (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1907) p. 252.

[23]Grundy, Thucydides and the History, p. 40.

world. Potentially they might have affected his history.

> The mind of any individual . . . is not an insulated compartment, but more like a pool in one continuous medium--the circumambient atmosphere of his place and time.[24]

The exact influence of these mythological currents on Thucydides is impossible to define at this time. However the possible influence of these ideas will be discussed later with reference to Thucydides' ideas about human nature and Fortune. It is necessary at this time to examine Thucydides' purpose in writing history.

> But if anyone desires to examine the clear truth about the events that have taken place, and about those which are likely to take place in the future--in the order of human things, they will resemble what has occurred--and pronounces what I have written to be useful, I shall be content. My history is an everlasting possession, not a prize composition that is heard and forgotten.[25]

In this quote Thucydides clearly purports to write the eternal truths of history. He is not content merely to write the facts of what happened in the past; this he will do, but a much broader design impels him. He wishes to provide knowledge, based on what happened in the past, that will aid men in the future; he is going to teach the perpetual lessons of history. To Thucydides politics are the basis of history; the lessons he teaches are political

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[24]Cornford, Thucydides Mythistoricus, p. viii.

[25]Thuc. I. 22.

lessons of mass action and reaction. In order to teach his lessons and thus provide political foresight, he had to discover social and political truths.[26] Fortified with these truths future statesmen and politicians would be able to recognize some of the mistakes made in the past, and since similar situations would arise in the future, this knowledge might help them to avoid the mistakes of the past or, at least, enable them to put themselves in a more advantageous position in respect to what will occur.[27] With this purpose in mind, Thucydides deliniates many cases of what he considers to be political and social, i.e., historical truths.

On Revolution:

> And revolution brought many calamities on the cities, which occurred and always will occur so long as human nature remains the same, but which are more or less aggravated and differ in character with every new combination of circumstances. In peace and prosperity both states and individuals act on better principles because they are not involved in necessities which allow them no choice; but war, stealing away the means of providing easily for their daily lives, is a teacher of violence and assimilates the passions of most men to their circumstances.[28]

On the Consequences of Revolution:

> Thus, revolutions gave birth to every form of wickedness in Hellas, and the simplicity which

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[26]Finley, Thucydides, p. 187.

[27]Karl Lowith, Meaning in History (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1949), p. 7.

[28]Thuc. III. 82.

is so large an element in a noble nature was laughed to scorn and disappeared.[29]

On the Cause of Evil:

The cause of all these evils was the love of power originating in avarice and ambition.[30]

On Democracy:

But his [Pericles] successors were more on an equality with one another; as each was struggling to be first himself, they came to sacrifice the whole conduct of affairs to the gratification of the people. As was natural in a great and imperial city, this led to many errors.[31]

These brief exerpts are but a very few of the kind of overt and general judgments that Thucydides makes. Despite his desire to write a handbook for future leaders, he is not entirely successful; often his conclusions are interpreted in different ways. Frequently he espouses his views through the speeches of others. Understanding of the ideas and theories that Thucydides holds is made difficult by the fact that he usually pairs his speeches, and within each pair the two speeches advocate different and contradictory points of view. It is, therefore, impossible to credit Thucydides with adhering to all the ideas presented in each speech. So, if one is interested in isolating the ideas of Thucydides, he must choose which of the opposite points of view presented in each pair of speeches reflects Thucydides'

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[29] Ibid., III. 83. [30] Ibid., III. 82.

[31] Ibid., II. 65.

theories or attempt to see through the contradictions. Thus attempting to isolate Thucydides' ideas is an interesting problem. A most famous case in point is the controversy that has arisen over the interpretation of the Melian Dialogue with respect to the morality of power. One historian, G. B. Grundy, has stated that "the whole dialogue is by implication an attack on the doctrine that might is right, that doctrine which Thucydides . . . abominated."[32] P. A. Brunt, on the other hand, says in reference to the Melian Dialogue, "That is the way the world goes; might does not create right, but excludes it."[33] A more accurate view, espoused by Peter Fliess, is that Thucydides is inconsistent in his view of morals; Fliess argues that this inconsistency is explained by the fact that Thucydides thought that necessity sometimes makes the realization of morality impossible, but morality is not negated when circumstances permit it to be observed.[34] While the conclusion of Fliess seems to best explain Thucydides' stand on morality, it is clear that his speeches make Thucydides' lessons less than obvious.

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[32]Grundy, Thucydides and the History, p. 61.

[33]P. A. Brunt, "Introduction," Thucydides: The Peloponnesian Wars (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), p. xxxii.

[34]Peter J. Fliess, Thucydides and the Politics of Bipolarity (Nashville: The Louisiana State University Press, 1966), p. ix.

Despite the ambiguities involved in trying to isolate the lessons of Thucydides, it is very clear that the purpose of his history is to instruct his readers in the lessons he believes history has to offer. It is logical to assume that if Thucydides is writing to instruct, there must be a basis for the validity of his instructions. The validity of his conclusions would be of no value if history did not tend to repeat itself. If future events were not similar to past events, his ideas might apply only to the past. Thucydides excludes this possibility; to him history follows a cyclical pattern. The very essence of his history revolves around this cyclical view of history.

> But if anyone desires to examine the clear truth about events that have taken place, and about those which are likely to take place in the future--in the order of human things. They will resemble what has occurred. . . .[35]

The future will resemble the past because human nature and its passions will remain constant. Human nature being constant will provide future men with the same motives and desires as those active in the past; these common motives will lead men to take actions of the same type as those of the past. No ultimate goal or end is in sight; events in the future will tend to resemble those of the past, a cyclical view of history.

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[35]Thuc. I. 22.

There is one minor exception to Thucydides' consistent reliance on a cyclical view of history. This exception occurs early in his history when he states that "he began to write when they first took up arms, expecting that it [Peloponnesian War] would be great and memorable above any previous war."[36] He goes on to describe in chapters two through twenty the development of Greek political units and naval strength; in these chapters he emphasizes the disparity between the power of Greece prior to the Trojan War compared to his own day. The years from the Trojan War up to the Peloponnesian War are described in terms of material progress.[37] He then begins his description of the origin of the Peloponnesian War with these words:

> The greatest achievements of former times was the Persian War; yet even this was speedily decided in two battles by sea and two by land. But this war was a protracted struggle and attended by calamities such as Hellas had never known. . . .[38]

Thus in the first few chapters Thucydides seems to portray a scene of historical progress; events of his time are different from those of the past, at least as far as magnitude and materialism are concerned. But aside from this brief mention of what can be construed as an incomplete

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[36] Ibid., I. 1. [37] Ibid., I. 4-20.

[38] Ibid., I. 23.

depiction of an idea of progress, Thucydides consistently advocates a cyclical historical pattern.[39]

As Thucydides' description of the pattern of history indicates, human nature is to him the most important element involved in historical causation. Why is the purpose of his history to instruct people in the way to react to events that may take place in the future? Why is his book to be a possession forever? Why is the pattern of history cyclical? The answer to each of these questions is that Thucydides regards human nature as a constant. It is largely human nature that shapes history.[40] Several questions that arise in connection with this view must be considered. (1) What does Thucydides think to be the constitution of human nature; is it a result of innate natural law or imposed on man by the will of outside forces? (2) What is the strength of human nature; can it be consciously surmounted or is it impregnable? (3) Under what limitation does human nature operate; is human nature the only element of historical causation? If not, what other forces are at work and to what extent do they affect historical causation?

The first question to be considered is what did Thucydides think to be the constitution of human nature. St. Paul advocated the idea that human nature was passed

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[39]Finley, Thucydides, p. 110.

[40]Thuc. II. 22, III. 83.

down through original sin, and therefore, the actions and fate of man were predestined because of this original sin. As a Greek, Thucydides does not maintain any such doctrine. The Greeks as a whole always lacked an overwhelming sense of divine control over human affairs.[41] Even in Homer's writings, while the gods constantly intervene in human affairs, the significance of the story lies in the role of man not the gods. The Greeks ". . . had a lively and indeed naive sense of the power of man to control his own destiny."[42] Thus they believed that history was what it was because of man.[43] The sophist ideas also implied that man was free to pursue his goals without worrying about the intercession of the gods.[44] The Sophists seemed to assume that if the gods existed, they did not meddle in human affairs to any great extent; the gods of the Sophists were remote from the world of man. This did not necessarily make them anti-religious, at least in a positive way, "but independent of religion."[45] The conclusion is easily drawn that in Thucydides' concept human nature is innate and that humanity bears the responsibility

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[41]Finley, Thucydides, p. 38.

[42]Collingwood, The Idea of History, p. 24.

[43]Finley, Thucydides, p. 38.

[44]Grundy, Thucydides and the History, p. 23.

[45]Ibid.

for history.[46] There are many passages in his work that can be interpreted to uphold this position.

The Revolution at Corcyra:

> And men changed the conventional meaning of words as they chose. Irrational daring was held to be loyal courage; prudent delay, an excuse for cowardice; sound sense, a disguise for unmanly weakness; and men who considered matters in every aspect were thought to be incapable of doing anything.[47]

> The leaders on either side . . . had no use for scruples; but when they succeeded in effecting some odious purpose, they were more highly spoken of, if they found a plea that sounded well. The citizens who were of neither party were destroyed by both because men grudged them survival.[48]

Thucydides believes that he can explain much of history, including the revolution at Corcyra, because man was responsible for it. However Thucydides does not attempt to explain events he believes to be of non-human origins. For example the plague at Athens:

> Every man, physician or layman, may declare his own judgment about its probable origin and the causes he thinks sufficient to have produced so great a vicissitude.[49]

This last passage indicates that since the plague did not originate from human causes, Thucydides cannot explain it;

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[46] John Bury, The Ancient Greek Historians (New York: Dover Publications, 1958), p. 129.

[47] Thuc. III. 82. [48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid., II. 48.

conversely, the causes he explains elsewhere come from largely human origins.

As is probably natural most historians believe that Thucydides views human nature as an innate and fixed part of man's existence, free from visitations from the gods. There is, however, one historian, F. M. Cornford, who argues that Thucydides does not conceive of human nature as free from powers outside of man's innate being.

Cornford labels the work of Thucydides "mythistoria," ". . . history cast in a mould of conception, whether artistic or philosophic, which, long before the work is even contemplated, was already inwrought into the very structure of the author's mind."[50] Cornford's contention rests on the idea that although Thucydides tries to write an unbiased and methodical history, his work is a product of his age, and as such, it reflects a traditional Greek outlook on life.[51] This point of view is, to Cornford, not a scientific nor a sophistic one, but rather a mode of thought learned from Greek drama,[52] and particularly from the drama of Aeschylus.[53] This preconceived notion of human nature over-rules Thucydides' desire to free himself of prejudice because this

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[50]Cornford, Thucydides Mythistoricus, p. viii.

[51]Ibid. [52]Ibid., p. 147.

[53]Ibid., p. 53.

prejudice is unperceived. According to Cornford, this residue of Greek thought is outlined in a speech made by Diodotus, Book III. 45.[54]

> . . . excited by hope, men risk their lives. . . . It is in men's nature to err in personal and public affairs alike, and no law will prevent them . . . poverty produces daring by the pressure of necessity, and power produces ambition by its insolence and pride; while the other conditions of human life engendering passion, as men are held in the grip of some force varying with circumstances, for which no cure exists, also lead men into dangers. Hope and desire are never wanting; desire leads the way, and hope follows, for men think out an enterprise in desire and hope suggests that fortune will supply the means of its success. . . . And fortune too does play a part and contributes no less encouragement; she often presents herself unexpectedly and leads men on into perils, however inadequate their means . . . In short, it is impossible and simply absurd to suppose that when human nature is under a strong impulse toward some action, it can be restrained either by the force of laws or by any other deterrent.

A passage in Thucydides' narrative reinforces this concept of spiritual possession.

Revolution at Corcyra:

> In this crisis the life of the city was in utter disorder; and human nature which is accustomed to do wrong, even in defiance of the laws, now trampled them under foot and delighted to show that it is ungovernable in passion. . . . For they would not have set revenge above religion and profit above innocence, if envy had not exercised a fatal power.[55]

Cornford interprets these passages to mean that human nature is open to corruption by temptation in the form of "Hope,

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[54] Ibid., p. 135. [55] Thuc. III. 84.

Desire and Fortune", especially when Fortune unexpectedly aids him. Thus blinded, man abandons his foresight, and by so doing he dooms himself.[56] These passions are not innate natural desires, ". . . passion is not conceived as a natural state of mind determined by a previous state--the effect of a normal cause; it is a spirit which haunts, swoops down, and takes possession of the soul, when reason slumbers and keeps no watch."[57] Thus Cornford concludes that Thucydides conceives of human nature as possessing a "supernatural quality."[58]

Finley tries to answer this contention by arguing that in Thucydides work ". . . the gods are chiefly remarkable by their absence . . . he seems to go out of his way to deny their intervention in human affairs."[59] This is in large measure true; Thucydides does in many instances imply the inability or at least the unwillingness of the gods to intervene in human affairs.

Nicias at Syracuse:

> Yet, throughout my life I have been assiduous in worshipping the gods and in just and blameless conduct to men. Therefore, I am still bold in hope for the future; and though I am alarmed at our disasters, I know that they are undeserved,

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[56]Cornford, Thucydides Mythistoricus, p. 124.

[57]Ibid., p. 157. [58]Ibid., p. 243.

[59]Finley, Thucydides, p. 310.

> and perhaps may cease; and if our expedition incurred the jealousy of any of the gods, by this time we have been sufficiently punished.[60]

Nicias was executed.[61] Similar trends of thought are witnessed throughout Thucydides' work.[62] Finley concludes that Thucydides writes of men, not gods.[63]

None of the historians who assume that the gods play no active part in Thucydides' thinking are actually able to successfully refute Cornford's challenge that human nature may be prevaded with spirits.[64] Finley assumes that since Thucydides makes no positive statement that spirits intervene in the affairs of man, that he ignores them, and that hope, desire, avarice, and ambition are innate parts of man's nature. Cornford does not argue that Thucydides does not try to eliminate the gods from his history, but rather that the point of view Thucydides inherited from the drama allows him to think of hope, desire, avarice, et cetera as supernatural entities.[65] Thucydides does not declare himself on the issue. He makes no unequivocal statement that he believes these passions, which are symptomatic of human

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[60]Thuc. VII. 77. [61]Ibid., VII. 86.

[62]Ibid., V. 26; II. 54; VI. 70.

[63]Finley, Thucydides, p. 324.

[64]Cornford, Thucydides Mythistoricus, p. 157.

[65]Ibid.

nature, to be supernatural or innate. Fortunately the purpose of this paper can still be achieved without reaching a definite conclusion to this question for two reasons. First, regardless of its constitution human nature is consistent, and secondly, human nature is not the only causative element in history. Thucydides' doctrine of the strength of human will negates the problem of whether human nature is controlled by spirits; to examine this concept it is essential to examine his theory of necessity and foresight.

Thucydides bases part of the value of his history on the fact that human nature, being constant and predictable, establishes a pattern whereby future events will resemble those of the past.[66] He reinforces this major theme with frequent references to instances where necessity demands certain human responses to certain situations.

The cause of the Pelopennesian War:

> The truest explanation, though it was least avowed, I believe to have been the growth of the Athenian power, which terrified the Lacedaemonians and put them under the necessity of fighting.[67]

The Peace of Nicias:

> For six years and ten months the two powers abstained from invading each other's territories. . . . At last they were under the necessity of breaking the treaty.[68]

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[66] Thuc. II. 22.

[67] Ibid., II. 23.

[68] Ibid., V. 25.

Revolution at Corcyra:

> . . . human nature . . . delighted to show that it is ungovernable in passion, uncontrollable by justice and hostile to all superiors.[69]

> The cause of all these evils was the love of power originating in avarice and ambition. . . .[70]

> And revolution brought many calamities on the cities, which occurred and always will occur so long as human nature remains the same, but which are more or less aggravated and differ in character with every new combination of circumstance. In peace and prosperity both states and individuals act on better principles because they are not involved in necessities which allow them no choice.[71]

As these passages show Thucydides believes that certain historical actions, while originating in human nature, were beyond the control of individual man. Motives such as fear, greed, and the love of power and glory at times dictate human actions which are abhorred by reason, yet stronger than reason. One is therefore justified in saying that there is an element of determinism in Thucydides history; certain situations caused by human nature demand certain responses by human nature.[72]

It would be misleading to leave the question of determinism at this point. There is an element in Thucydides' history and purpose which is just as important

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[69] Ibid., III. 84. [70] Ibid., III. 82.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Finley, Thucydides, pp. 308-309.

as deterministic human nature; this element is human foresight. The last sentence of the above passage on revolution at Corcyra implies that there are times in which necessity is not the overpowering force that it may be at other times. Certain passages in Thucydides' work indicate that by using foresight man can escape the tendencies of human nature.

The Spartan Counteroffensive:

> They tended to believe without proof what they wished, instead of exercising foresight which saves men from mistakes.[73]

Pericles and his successors:

> During the peace while he was at the head of affairs, he showed moderation as a leader; he kept Athens safe, and she reached the height of her greatness in his time. When the war began he showed here too his foresight in estimating Athenian power. He survived two years and six months; and, after his death, his prescience regarding the war was even better appreciated.[74]

> So that at the time Pericles was more than justified in the conviction at which his foresight had arrived, that the Athenians could very easily have the better of the unaided forces of the Peloponnesians.[75]

The passages cited on the last three pages identify two forms of causation. In some instances the necessity of human nature under the stimulation of greed, pride, and love of glory implies an inevitableness of human action.[76] This determinism of human nature is at its strongest when man

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[73]Thuc. IV. 108. [74]Ibid., II. 65.

[75]Ibid. [76]Brunt, "Introduction", p. xxxi.

fails to understand its operation. Yet the determinism of human nature is opposed by rational foresight.[77] The purpose of Thucydides' history is to instruct men on the workings of history, to give them foreknowledge of what is likely to occur. "If you say in one breath that events follow a pattern but, in the next, that the pattern can and should be understood, you imply that such understanding will be the basis of action, which in turn will effect events."[78] Men by recognizing the dangers and inclinations of human nature can use foresight to proceed with constructive rational action; thus, human nature will not be totally deterministic. Thucydides gives credence to a duality of causation. Human nature in times of uncommon stress controls man's actions; it also controls these actions when man has no knowledge of its operation. Reasonable men armed with knowledge of the workings of human nature form Thucydides' second causative element.

The question of whether or not human nature is innate or the result of supernatural intervention becomes less important because of this theory of foresight. The question is still unanswered, but in either case human nature is not irrevocably deterministic. Man's foresight at times can be

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[77]Thuc. IV. 108; II. 65.

[78]Finley, Thucydides, p. 308.

made to control the desires or human nature, and even when man cannot control human nature, foresight enables him to respond positively to its manifestations.

There remains one more aspect of Thucydides' theory of causation to be considered; this is his view of the unknown causative, the reason for historical events that occur for some reason other than human nature or human foresight. As the following references to the battle of Pylos show, Thucydides does recognize the operation of some element beyond the control of man.

> When they [an Athenian fleet of 40 ships] arrived off the coast of Laconia and heard that the Peloponnesian ships were already at Corcyra, Eurymedon and Sophocles wanted to hasten there . . . but it so happened that a storm came on and drove them into Pylos.[79]

An unforeseen storm put the Athenians ashore on Pylos, and in the battle that followed Fortune continued to help the Athenians.

> It was a singular turn of fortune which drove the Athenians to fight on land, and Laconian land, against the Lacedaemonians, who were attacking them by sea. . . . For in those days it was the great glory of the Lacedaemonians to be a land power distinguished for their military prowess, and of the Athenians to be a nation of sailors and the first sea power in Hellas.[80]

A whole series of unexpected and unpredictable events helped the Athenians score a major victory at Pylos.[81]

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[79] Thuc. IV. 3. [80] Ibid., IV. 12.

[81] Ibid., IV. 15.

Thucydides' account of Pylos, the plague at Athens, and other events show that he does give credence to a causative element beyond man. This element is Fortune. Although Fortune is easily identified in Thucydides' work, there is no general agreement as to how he defines it. The majority of historians concerned call this element chance or accident. Finley says, "Chance to him therefore denoted simply the minor, if occasionally critical, happenings which could not be calculated on, though it might also cover unforeseen events, such as the plague, of which the cause was obscure."[82] Grundy echoes these thoughts. ". . . life in this world might be ordered and made happier by the exercise of man's will . . . it was not a question of pure accident, though pure accident remained a factor in it."[83] Brunt and Adcock concur.[84] Bury goes on to add, "Chance . . . simply represents an element which cannot be foretold. He recognizes the operation of the unknown; he does not recognize the presence of 'things occult.'"[85]

The majority are opposed by Cornford; he presents a comprehensive and convincing argument that the causative

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[82]Finley, Thucydides, p. 313.

[83]Grundy, Thucydides and the History, p. 10.

[84]Brunt, "Introduction," p. xxviii; F. E. Adcock, Thucydides and His History (Cambridge University Press, 1963), p. 12.

[85]Bury, The Ancient Greek Historians, p. 129.

element outside the control of man is to Thucydides a supernatural force.[86] The core of Cornford's theory lies in the fact that he does not believe that the Greek mind had any concept of what has come to be called natural law.[87] Cornford contends that without this concept Thucydides relies on the supernatural to explain things outside the sphere of human causation; these occurences include such things as earthquakes, floods, and other upheavels of nature as well as the plague, the Athenian success at Pylos and other events Bury calls chance.[88] According to Cornford, Fortune is prone to appear when man least expects it. It then beguiles the individuals involved in the unexpected success into believing that success is of their own doing, eclipses their foresight and abandons them, and in this way causes their downfall.[89] Cornford contends that Thucydides' Fortune is not Chance or Fate. Neither is it Moira, an impersonal world order which establishes limits beyond which man cannot go.[90] Nor is Thucydides' Fortune to be equated with Providence.[91] Cornford says that when Thucydides writes about Fortune "he is thinking of extraordinary, sudden

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[86]Cornford, Thucydides Mythistoricus, p. 124.

[87]Ibid., pp. 104-105. [88]Ibid., 105.

[89]Ibid., 124-125. [90]Ibid., 106-107.

[91]Ibid., 107.

interventions of non-human agencies, occurring especially at critical moments in warfare, or manifest from time to time in convulsions of Nature."[92] Cornford is unable to give a more precise definition because Thucydides does not define Fortune more specifically.[93] This conception of Fortune is used by Thucydides to contrast "the field of ordinary human foresight with the unknown field, which lies beyond it, of inscrutable, non-human powers."[94] Thus to Cornford the history of Thucydides resolves itself into a dramatic contrast of "Fortune and foresight."[95]

Cornford's ideas have much to recommend them especially in light of Thucydides' non-committal view about things he does not attempt to explain. However, even though Cornford presents a persuasive theory, he cannot prove the ideas he advances.[96] Thucydides does not give a definition of Fortune, and any theory that attempts to define his concept of it lacks positive proof. However it is not necessary to take a stand on the question in this paper because the importance of Fortune to Thucydides does not lie in its internal composition. Regardless of its constitution, the real significance of Fortune is that its outward manifestations

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[92] Ibid., 106.
[93] Ibid., 108.
[94] Ibid., 105.
[95] Ibid., 108.
[96] Ibid., 172.

are disruptive and unpredictable. It cannot be relied upon in any given situation; it cannot be explained or limited; it lays down no rules and follows none. It is unpredictable. The most positive statements Thucydides makes about it are that it comes when least expected and that it should not be relied upon.

Pylos; unexpected Athenian success:

> "Do not suffer the fate of men inexperienced in success; when they obtain some advantage, the unexpectedness of their momentary good fortune makes them continually hope for and grasp at further gains. But men who have most often known the vicissitudes of both kinds of fortune ought to be least reliant on successes, and it would be most natural if experience should have taught this lesson to your city as well as to us."[97]

This is all Thucydides can tell us about chance or Fortune. The very sparseness of information tends to make the reader look elsewhere for tangible causation; this is what Thucydides wants the reader to do. According to Thucydides, man's nature and knowledge that are the primary molders of history. In this way, Thucydides' concept of chance or Fortune "while denoting a realm in which thought, or at least prognostic thought, cannot operate, only emphasizes more clearly the greater and more important realms in which it is successful."[98] Going even further, he seems to conclude that the most successful man is one who can adapt himself

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[97]Thuc. IV.17. [98]Finley, Thucydides, p. 314.

most readily to unexpected occurrences.[99]

Thucydides more than St. Augustine or Voltaire gives validity to the concept of free will. In his work only two things limit man's freedom: uncontrolled, unrecognized human nature and Fortune. Foresight sometimes gives man the ability to control the tendencies of human nature and always enables him to respond positively to the effects of uncontrolled Fortune and human nature. Determinism becomes the major part of Thucydides' world only when man fails to exercise this foresight.

The course of the Peloponnesian War did not please Thucydides. In its passage he saw Athens humiliated by the stupidity of her citizens. The self interest, greed, jealousy, pride, and cruelty of human nature contributed to the debacle. Fortune played its part by giving men false hope, by encouraging them to be too confident, and by spawning self-delusion. Thucydides does not portray the course of the war as inevitable; he leaves the door open for foresight to gain control. If the citizens as a whole will not practice this foresight then political leaders should employ it for the good of the state, as Pericles once did. Had this been done in Athens the results of the war might have been averted. This is not to say that political

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[99]Thuc. I. 143; VI, 34; VII. 42; Finley, Thucydides, p. 314.

foresight could have completely controlled the course of human events; human nature's grip is strong, the masses will always be subject to its larger manifestations, and Fortune will play its unpredictable role. But political foresight can, at least, prevent the grossest miscarriages of the other two causative forces. Foresight was the tool Athenians could have used to, if not to prevent the war, at least to guide it to a reasonable conclusion. But after Pericles, no one effectively used this foresight, and Athenians, by failing to use their most important guide, were responsible for their downfall. Thucydides hopes that in the future man will make use of foreknowledge. Human nature and Fortune have the power to disrupt men's lives. But it is Thucydides' strongest belief that man has the power and authority to discipline human nature and adapt to the effects of human nature and Fortune, if he chooses to do so. Thucydides believes that it is man's responsibility to so choose.

CHAPTER III

ST. AUGUSTINE

On the day he was born, November 13, A.D. 354, in the small town of Tagaste, in Numidia, St. Augustine committed his first willful sin, which he states was his crying for food; he probably continued his sinful way by throwing some sort of tantrum which "shows that, if babies are innocent, it is not for lack of will to do harm, but for lack of strength."[1] In this two-fold state of sin, original and personal, he began his life.

Augustine's family was of the lower middle class and was declining in socio-economic status.[2] His father was not a Christian, but his mother was. Augustine writes that in his early years she did her best to see that he believed in Christ.[3] Augustine began his education in Tagaste, but he received his intermediate education at Madauros and his higher education at Carthage. This early education consisted almost solely of the studying of literary and oratorical

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[1]August. Conf. i. 7.

[2]Henri Marrow, St. Augustine and His Influence Through the Ages, trans. Patrick Hepburne-Scott (New York: Harper, n.d.), p. 12.

[3]August. Conf. i. 11.

arts; Virgil, Cicero, and Sallust were his concerns. At the age of nineteen Augustine began his career as a teacher. For thirteen years he taught successively in Tagaste, Carthage, Rome, and lastly Milan. At Milan in 384 he met St. Ambrose, bishop of Milan. It was the sermons of St. Ambrose that rekindled his somewhat dormant interest in Christianity. For a time Augustine was torn between what he calls aspiration for "eternal bliss" and "love of temporal pleasure."[4] This struggle resolved itself in 386 when he found himself miraculously and totally converted to Christianity.

By the end of 388 and after the death of his mother, Augustine returned to Tagaste where he spent the next three years in monastic retreat. In 391, against his wish, he was drafted as a priest for the parish at Hippo. For four years Augustine proved himself to be valuable to his parish, and in 395 he was appointed coadjutor bishop at Hippo. On the death of his equal he became sole bishop, and since African bishops could not move, his future with the Church was inextricably tied to Hippo until his death in 430.[5]

During his thirty-five years as bishop of Hippo, Augustine wrote the greater part of his lasting works; he

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[4]Ibid., viii. 10-12.

[5]Roy W. Battenhouse, "The Life of St. Augustine," A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine, ed. Roy W. Battenhouse (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 44.

finished his autobiography, the Confessions, and the majority of his anti-Manichean works by 400. After a period mainly concerned with anti-Donatist writings, he began his most famous work, the City of God, in 413. At the same time he took on the task of repudiating a major adversary, the Pelagians.[6] This task was to occupy him until his death.

The intellectual climate in which Augustine spent his youth before conversion was varied and confusing. During the time that he searched for a sound foundation for his restless intellect, the Roman world was also experiencing a period of drift. Politically Rome had gone from republic to autocratic empire and by the end of the fourth century was close to anarchy. The difficult years dominated by Marius, Sulla, Pompey, and Caesar were paralleled by growing elements of uncertainty in the Greco-Roman intellectual world. These elements were to become intensified in the later stages of the Empire.[7] G. L. Keyes states that "basic here was a mood of pessimism and self-doubt," which while not universal was growing and increasingly centered on the idea on evil.[8]

> Confidence in man's ability to understand this world by the exercise of reason continued to decline.

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[6]Donald D. Williams, "The Significance of St. Augustine Today," A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine, p. 2.

[7]G. L. Keyes, Christian Faith and the Interpretation of History: A Study of St. Augustine's Philosophy of History (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), p. 13.

[8]Ibid.

> The imperial age agreed with Carneades that since nothing could be known, men must seek a modus vivendi with the unknown. They must accept, on faith, tentative propositions which might arise from induction but were increasingly likely to be attributed to divine revelation.[9]

This attitude encouraged a mood of introspection and self-control. If the world continually slipped from the realm of rational understanding, and man could not understand it much less control it, then perhaps, he should try to establish inner control over his attitudes and reactions to the outer world. Gnosticism, Mithraism, Stoicism, Epicureanism, and Neo-Platonism chose this route of escape from the world or at least from ultimate responsibility for the world's condition.[10]

Men tend to reject relativity, and if rationality cannot provide a basis for understanding the complexities and ambiguities of existence, something else has to be utilized to provide this understanding. The something else to which a large number of fourth century Romans adhered was supernatural knowledge gained through revelation.[11] In the areas of philosophy and religion, men placed increasing importance upon asceticism as means of receiving revelation. This mutual emphasis on a life of pain and self-denial is one instance of another growing aspect of the intellectual

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[9] Ibid., pp. 14-15. [10] Ibid., p. 15.

[11] Ibid.

period, syncretism. In this intellectual atmosphere St. Augustine came to grips with his doubts.

Before discussing Augustine's theory of causation and man, a brief examination of his theory of knowledge is necessary because it is this theory that enable Augustine to write with the assuredness of one who is convinced that he possesses the unalterable truth.

During the years before his conversion, Augustine searched for the truth, truth that could be proven and demonstrated by reason. "Truth! Truth! How the very marrow of my soul within me yearned for it."[12] He describes his early years of study as spent in love of evil, "the hideous flood of lust,"[13] and "in the pursuit of unholy curiosity."[14] Desire for some type of intellectual mooring led him to close association with the Manichaean religion. The dualism of the Manichaeans seemed to provide answers for many of Augustine's questions about evil, and for about nine years he was a convert; "I deserted you and sank to the bottom-most depths of scepticism and the mockery of devil-worship."[15] However he became increasingly disenchanted with the contradictions and mistakes of Manichaeism; he discovered that the severe morality expressed by the adherents was not

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[12]August. Conf. iii. 6. [13]Ibid., iii. 2.

[14]Ibid., iii. 3. [15]Ibid.

achieved in practice and that they accepted as truth ideas that could be proven false by science.[16] At Rome and Milan he found a philosophy and a man that were to help free him from "the snares of the devil" to which Manichaeism had brought him.[17]

The philosophy was Neo-Platonism, and strangely it was the scepticism of this philosophy that influenced him more than anything else. Neo-Platonic scepticism helped him to solve the question of the certainty of knowledge by convincing him that reason could not find absolutes in the areas where he desired them.

> He lost and never recovered his 'natural' confidence in knowledge derived from sensation and reason, and he came to see the necessity under which all men labor of living by faith in uncertainties.[18]

" . . . we are too weak to discover the truth by reason alone."[19] This decision did not end his search for absolutes; it simply removed reason as the source for the absolute, and, as yet, he did not know what criterion established true knowledge. So he was caught up in an aura of despair lest he never know truth.

> Anxiety about what I could believe as certain gnawed at my heart all the more sharply as I grew

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[16] Ibid., v. 7. [17] Ibid., iii. 6.

[18] Keyes, Augustine's Philosophy of History, p. 31.

[19] August. Conf. vi. 5.

> more and more ashamed that I had been misled and deluded by promises of certainty for so long. . . . I was hanging in suspense . . . I wanted to be just as certain of those things which were hidden from my sight as that seven and three make ten, for I was not so far out of my wits as to suppose that not even this could be known. But I wanted to be equally sure about everything else, both material things for which I could not vouch by my own senses, and spiritual things of which I could form no idea except in bodily form.[20]

At the time Augustine was exploring Neo-Platonic thought and trying to find something to replace relativism, he was also attending the sermons of St. Ambrose. Christianity, which had long held an emotional appeal for Augustine, was given intellectual merit by St. Ambrose. The un-Christian nature of the Old Testament was one of the things that made Christianity distasteful to Augustine, but St. Ambrose taught a less literal, more allegorical interpretation of this part of the Bible.[21] The sincerity and intelligence of Ambrose impressed Augustine, and gradually "Christianity began to seem comparable with Neo-Platonism in its intellectual sublety, and with Manichaeism in ethical austerity."[22]

St. Ambrose also taught one way to remove Augustine's doubts as to where he could find truth, but Augustine was at first unable to accept it in good conscience.

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[20] Ibid., vi. 4.

[21] Battenhouse, "The Life of St. Augustine Today," p. 29.

[22] Keyes, Augustine's Philosophy of History, p. 31.

> . . . my sick soul, which could not be healed except through faith, refused this cure for fear of believing a doctrine that was false.[23]

At last, God entered into this drama of doubt and imposed a solution.

> Then, O Lord, you laid your most gentle, most merciful finger on my heart and set my thoughts in order.[24]

Augustine began to realize that there were many things that he had previously taken on trust alone including his parentage, history, and facts about distant places.

> In this way You made me understand that I ought not find fault with those who believed your Bible. . . . I began to believe that you would never have invested the Bible with such conspicuous authority in every land unless you had intended it to be the means by which we should look for you and believe in you. . . . The authority of Scripture should be respected and accepted with the purest faith.[25]

Then came his conversion and with it the truth for which he had searched.

> From now on I began to prefer the Catholic teaching. The Church demanded that certain things should be believed even though they could not be proved.[26]

God, the Catholic Church, and the Bible--all of Augustine's writings illustrate his faith that these three constitute truth. Faith in these truths is for Augustine, essential to existence because it provides the absolutes

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[23]August. Conf. vi. 4. [24]Ibid., vi. 5.

[25]Ibid. [26]Ibid.

that cannot be found by unaided human reason. He writes that faith in these truths is justified by God who makes his existence and wishes known through divine revelation to a select few; revelation is transmitted through the Bible and the Church to the rest of mankind. The only limits to this faith are those of quantity not quality because God is not vitally concerned that man possess scientific truth or even knowledge about material things. In the Enchiridion Augustine states that "in those things which do not concern our attainment of the Kingdom of God, it does not matter whether they are believed in or not."[27] In this way Augustine is forced to give up his quest for temporal truths because they are immaterial to faith and salvation, thus beyond the realm of true knowledge. But in exchange for this sacrifice, Augustine retains the most awesome and possibly the most terrible tool man can ever possess, unfailing confidence that he is privy to the absolute truth.

On the whole the writings of St. Augustine are concerned with defending and explaining his interpretation of the word of God. While the specific topic of each of his works differs, the basic underlying theme of the all-powerful Christian God does not. Four of these works center on topics of particular interest to this paper; these are the City of God, Confessions, Anti-Pelagion Writings, and the Enchiridion.

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[27]August. Enchiridion 8. 21.

The City of God was written to defend Christianity against critics "who attributed the calamities of the world and especially the recent sack of Rome by the Goths, to the Christian Religion, and its prohibition of the worship of the gods."[28] Thus, the City of God represents Augustine's view of the course of history. The Confessions is Augustine's autobiography and as such it is a kind of miniature of the working out of his concept of God's plan. The Anti-Pelagion Writings deal with free will in that they attempt to prove that man has not been born with the capability of securing salvation by his own effort and merit. The Enchiridion contains a brief description of God's plan and man's relation to it. Together these four give a synthesis of Augustine's thought, and this paper has drawn heavily from them for its description of Augustine's theory of causation.

For Augustine the causative force behind the existence and operation of everything in the universe is God.

> For the Christian, it is enough to believe that the cause of all created things, whether in heaven or earth, whether visible or invisible, is nothing other than the goodness of the Creator, who is the one and the true God.[29]

The universe created by God is nothing less than perfect. "All of nature, therefore, is good, since the Creator of all

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[28]August. De Civ. D. i. preface.

[29]August. Enchiridion 3. 9.

nature is supremely good."[30] Just as God created a perfect universe,[31] so too does he control all effective action within that universe.

> However strong the wills either of angels or of men, whether good or evil, whether they will what God willeth or will something else, the will of the Omnipotent is always undefeated.[32]

> "He hath done all things in heaven and earth, whatsoever he willed," as Truth sings of him, and surely he hath not willed to do anything that he hath not done. There must be no equivocation on this point."[33]

God created everything in a perfect universe. At the moment of creation He knew all that would take place in His universe, and nothing takes place unless he has caused or allowed it to happen. Many questions arise pertinent to this concept of the order of life. First, if this world is perfect, why is there evil? Augustine's answer to this question is central to his concepts and will serve as a reference point for an examination of the relationship of man to the omnipotent causative force of history.

According to St. Augustine, God has not and will not will that any of his creatures be unhappy; if we find ourselves unhappy, it must in some way be our own fault. [34]

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[30] Ibid., 4. 12. [31] August. Conf. vii. 14.

[32] August. Enchiridion 26. 102.

[33] Ibid., 27. 103.

[34] Keyes, Augustine's Philosophy of History, p. 150.

It is within Augustine's theory of evil that the vast majority of human beings find their role and purpose. In Augustine's view, the first step in the origins of evil comes from the fact that while all men are created good, they are not immutably good.[35]

> All of nature is good, since, the Creator of all nature is supremely good. But nature is not supremely and immutably good as is the Creator of it. Thus the good in created things can be diminished and augmented. For good to be diminished is evil.[36]

All things are good, but relatively so. If God has never willed evil, then it follows that evil is a kind of non-being. In one instance Augustine compares evil with disease or wounds; when men or animals are sick, they suffer from an absence of health, but when the disease or wound is cured, health returns as the disease or wound ceases to exist.[37] "Therefore, whatever is, is good; and evil . . . is not a substance, because if it were a substance it would be good."[38] Since man wills evil actions, and God by his very definition could not have caused evil, evil must come from the mutability of man. According to Augustine this mutability is a result of the wrong use of free will.[39]

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[35]August. De Civ. D. xii. 1.

[36]August. Enchiridion 4. 12. [37]Ibid., 3. 11.

[38]August. Conf. vii. 12.

[39]August. De Civ. D. xiii. 14.

> How, I say, can good be the cause of evil? For when the will abandons what is above itself, and turns to what is lower, it becomes evil--not because that is evil to which it turns, but because the turning itself is wicked. Therefore, it is not an inferior thing which has made the will evil, but it is itself which has become so by wickedly and inordinately desiring an inferior thing.[42]

Thus Adam brought evil into the world by his own volition, and his sin is inflicted on all of mankind.

> From this state [righteousness] after he had sinned, man was banished and through his sin he subjected his descendents to the punishment of sin and damnation, for he had radically corrupted them, in himself by his sinning. As a consequence of this, all those descended from him and his wife . . . entered into the inheritance of original sin.[43]

The first man damned all who have come after him. Hereafter evil and sin follow man for the rest of his earthly existence. He is no longer free to pursue effectively the good and the just for the free will of Adam was lost when he turned away from God toward pride. After Adam man continues to possess a measure of free will but its nature is radically different from that Adam possessed before his sin.

> For it was in the evil use of his free will that man destroyed himself and his will at the same time . . . sin which arises from the action of the free will turns out to be victor over the will and the free will is destroyed. . . . He serves freely who freely does the will of his master. Accordingly he who is slave to sin is free to sin. But thereafter

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[42]August. De Civ. D. xii. 6.

[43]August. Enchiridion 8. 26.

> he will not be free to do right unless he is delivered from the bondage of sin and begins to be the servant of righteousness.[44]

After the fall, man is free to will to sin and all mankind inherits not only the damnation of original sin but also the propensity to sin over which he has no real control.

Augustine's system depends on the compatibility of two separate ideas. First, God is perfectly good, omnipotent, and omniscient; everything He does is good, and nothing happens that He does not allow to happen. Secondly, man turns from God, and this turning is sinful. In order to reconcile these two beliefs, Augustine differentiates between freedom of will and freedom of action.[45] Adam possessed both freedom of will and freedom of action prior to the first sin, but when he committed the first sin, he and all his descendents lost freedom of action. His descendents retain part of Adam's freedom of will, the freedom to will evil. This ability to will evil is not translated into action because no action takes place unless it is a part of God's plan, which is good. Man acts according to his evil will only when God allows him to do so.[46]

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[44] Ibid., 9. 30.

[45] Keyes, Augustine's Philosophy of History, pp. 153-154.

[46] August. Enchiridion 3. 9.

> In His supreme will resides the power which acts on the wills of all created spirits . . . all of them are most of all subject to the will of God, to whom all wills are subject, since they have no power except what He had bestowed upon them. . . . For one who is not prescient of all future things is not God. Wherefore our wills also have just so much power as God willed and foreknew that they should have; and therefore whatever power they have, they are to do, they are most assuredly to do, for He whose foreknowledge is infallible foreknew that they would have the power to do it, and would do it.[47]

Man can will anything, but he can do nothing "which does not conform to the Master Plan."[48] Any action that occurs must help fulfill God's purpose. Action and will exist on separate planes, and they must be judged by two separate sets of criteria. All actions willed by unredeemed men are both good and evil. On a lower level, actions are evil because they are willed by man, and man's will is evil. God does not will man to do evil; man is responsible for his evil will even though he can do nothing to change his will because it is inherited from Adam. The actions that man takes are in accordance with his will, thus he is damned because of his evil will and evil actions. In a higher sense the actions of man are good because God's will is so strong that nothing occurs unless He allows it to take place. When the evil will of men is translated into action, these actions become good because the world of events "is completely

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[47]August. De Civ. D. v. 9.

[48]Keyes, Augustine's Philosophy of History, p. 154.

predetermined" by God's perfect plan.[49] God brings forth good out of evil. God's plan remains perfect, and yet man is damned because of his sins. In this way. Augustine justifies his belief in an all-good, all-seeing, all-powerful God and in man who is responsible for his sins and deserves to be punished.

Although all men constantly will contrary to God's will, only Adam was capable of taking actions contrary to God's will. Even Adam's actions did not subvert God's purpose, though they were opposed to that purpose.

> . . . God would have willed to preserve even the first man in that state of salvation in which he was created . . . if he had foreknown that man would have had a steadfast will to continue without sin, as he had been created to do. But since he did foreknow that man would make bad use of his free will--that is, that he would sin--God prearranged his own purpose so that he could do good to man, even in man's doing evil, and so that the good will of the Omnipotent should be nullified by the bad will of men, but should nonetheless be fulfilled.[50]

> For you evil does not exist, and not only for you but for the whole of your creation as well, because there is nothing outside it which could invade it and break down the order which you have imposed on it.[51]

After Adam all men are controlled by two deterministic forces. Their will controls all their desires and plans. This will is evil, so man can will nothing of his own accord

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[49] Ibid. [50] August. Enchiridion 28. 104.

[51] August. Conf. vii. 13.

that is good. Man's actions are controlled by God. No matter what action man wills, he can only do the actions that God allows him to do. Man's only freedom exists in his will; he is free to will any evil action, even though he cannot fulfill his will unless God permits him to do so. Thus man has no freedom of action, and no ability to will the good.

The paradox of Augustine's concept of evil lies in the fact that God knew what course of action Adam would take even before He created man, and yet He did nothing to stop Adam.[52] Adam had the ability to do good or evil. God did not will that Adam sin, but neither did He stop Adam. God did not will evil onto Adam, but He allowed Adam to bring it on himself and his descendents and then He damned them for it. It is as if God led Adam to a dangerous precipice. God, secure in his ability, stood close to the edge. He warned Adam to stand back. Adam knew he should stand back; he had the ability to stand back, but he too wanted to stand close to God. God warned Adam, but God knew that Adam would approach the edge and fall to his death. Since then God has watched as the rest of mankind, who do not have the ability to stand back, fall to their deaths.

It is obvious that Augustine holds the truths of faith

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[52]Keyes, Augustine's Philosophy of History, pp. 192-193.

to be much more valid than the conclusions of unaided, imperfect human reason. Unaided reason without the a priori belief in the truth of faith cannot rationalize why God, all-powerful and all-good should create a perfect universe, yet allow his principal creations to disobey him then damn them for the flaw of free will which He knew would exist before He created them. Faith must prevail where knowledge and logic fail, and to one lacking Augustine's all-embracing faith, it seems that God is playing a monstrous joke on his principal creation.

Augustine's outline does not stop with the fall of Adam; the course of God's plan is directed toward a more noble end than the endless, unregenerate sinning of mankind. God in his mercy provides a happy ending for his creations, at least for a chosen few. Augustine sees hope in the perfect world that makes man so miserable; this hope is bound up in the idea of grace.

> . . . God foresaw also that by His grace a people would be called to adoption, and that they, being justified by the remission of their sins, would be united by the Holy Ghost to the holy angels in eternal peace, the last enemy, death, being destroyed.[53]

Man has hope of salvation, but Augustine's interpretation of the operation of salvation virtually kills this hope for the majority of mankind.

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[53]August. De Civ. D. xii. 22.

In the first place, man can do nothing to achieve his own salvation.

> Forasmuch then as our turning away from God is our own act and deed, and this is our depraved will; since also our turning to God is not in our power, except He rouses and helps us . . . it comes from His grace and from His truth and equity that He wills not to impart them to others.[54]

In the second place, God's mercy and salvation is for the few not the many.[55] The vast majority of men are damned, and they furnish an excellent example for the men fortunate enough to be saved by God's grace. All men are equally powerless; none can effect his salvation on his own merits. All are sinful, and a merely just God would damn the whole of creation, but God is not only just he is also merciful, so he saves a few men. The only purpose for the existence of the damned is to show the utter worthlessness of man's life when man is denied God's grace.[56] To those who ask if this is really a merciful God, Augustine answers:

> Eternal punishment seems hard and unjust to human perceptions, because in the weakness of our mortal condition there is wanting that highest and purest wisdom by which it can be perceived how great a wickedness was committed in that first transgression. . . . If all had been transferred from darkness to light, the severity of retribution would have been manifested in none. But

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[54]August. On the Merits and Forgiveness of Sins, ii. 31.

[55]August. Enchiridion 27, 103.

[56]Ibid., 25. 98-99.

> many more are left under punishment than are delivered from it, in order that it may thus be shown what was due to all. And had it been inflicted on all, no one could justly have found fault with the justice of Him who taketh vengeance; whereas, in the deliverance of so many from that just award, there is cause to render the most cordial thanks to the gratuitous bounty of Him who delivers.[57]

The majority of men are sentenced to eternal punishment in order to provide grotesque examples of God's power.

God's grace operates through three main instruments--Jesus Christ, the Scripture, and the Church. God chose Christ as the sole path to grace and salvation. His coming and death provide the remission of sins necessary to salvation. In addition God uses the Church as the earthly means for man's salvation.[58] In the Church, men receive the sacraments which are necessary for salvation, and there they learn about God. But even this earthly agent gets its orders and effectiveness from God.

> Whence it happens that even with the assistance of holy men, or even if the holy angels themselves take part, no one rightly learns those things which pertain to life with God unless he is made by God docile to God. . . . Medicines for the body which are administered to men by men do not help them unless health is conferred by God. . . .[59]

Moreover, one is very much mistaken if he believes that all

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[57]August. De Civ. D. xxi. 11-12.

[58]August. On Christian Doct. i. 18.

[59]Ibid., iv. 16.

who join the Church are to be saved.[60] Many join who are not truly committed to God, and these people will not be saved even though they receive the sacraments and the ministrations of the earthly Church. Ten chapters of the City of God are devoted to refuting those who see more salvation in God's plan than Augustine. In one chapter he specifically refutes the theory that all orthodox Catholics will be saved.[61]

> And therefore neither ought such persons as lead an abandoned and damnable life to be confident of salvation, though they persevere to the end in the communion of the Church catholic.[62]

Augustine even goes so far as to state that it is likely that even some saints will suffer eternal punishment.[63]

It is clear that much of Augustine's writing resolves itself into a thesis, antithesis proposition. The thesis is God, omnipotent, omniscient, and by his very name all-good. The antithesis is man. Brought low by the sin of pride, man is reduced to a self-seeking, helpless hulk devoid of all ability to give purpose to his existence, make his world pleasant, or effect his salvation. His life is punishment, and his power non-existent.[64] His mind is a slave to his

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[60]Keyes, Augustine's Philosophy of History, p. 172.

[61]August. De Civ. D. xxi. 25. [62]Ibid.

[63]August. One the Merits and Forgiveness of Sins, ii. 32.

[64]August. De Civ. D. xxi. 14.

evil will, and he can act only in accordance with God's plan. He lacks the ability to live; he only exists.[65] St. Augustine is not for the weak in faith, for he destroys man in order that one light and one hope remain standing. Nothing is left to those lacking true and complete faith in God; all other landmarks are destroyed and the unfaithful are cast adrift in a sea of futility and impotency.

The faith man needs to give him direction is not easy to obtain because it is difficult if not impossible to procure it through reason. The principal conflict in the Confessions is between Augustine's reason and faith; Augustine understands the plight of men torn between reason and the necessity of faith; but he can feel no real sympathy because the demands of God must be met. Man must believe what he cannot understand by reason alone.

Augustine's precepts are destructive as far as the writing and methods of history are concerned because he approaches history burdened with a complete and a priori grand design. Events of history have to fit this design; if reason dictates that a specific event or fact does not concur with the preconceived plan then reason is at fault and has to be modified.[66] This is not to say that Augustine completely

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[65]August. Enchiridion 24. 94-95.

[66]Keyes, Augustine's Philosophy of History, pp. 190-194.

negated reason. His writings constitute a good example of a remarkably intelligent and ingenious man trying to refute what he thinks to be bad logic and bad faith. Still historical development suffers under the weight of unyielding faith. The City of God is poor history because Augustine already knows what happened and is simply trying to find or explain specific facts that support or can be made to support his beliefs. To Augustine the history of man is beside the point, as is man himself.

CHAPTER IV

VOLTAIRE

Francois-Marie Arouet de Voltaire constitutes one of the best examples of man's ability to hold contradictory beliefs simultaneously. Many of the ideas Voltaire strongly espouses are incompatible with other of his strongly held positions. By any logic these ideas are impossible to collectively defend; however, "Psychologically there seems to be little difficulty in holding . . . incompatible beliefs. All that is needed is to keep these beliefs in separate compartments and to use them in turn as may be convenient."[1] Voltaire keeps his ideas in separate compartments and when he puts one of his thoughts on paper, he often ignores the ideas in other compartments until they are needed to suit a different mood. As a result any one seeking to understand Voltaire's ideas must explicate them. This helps account for the fact that one historian can call Voltaire a determinist,[2] while another states that determinism is

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[1]Henry Ehlers, Logic by Way of Set Theory (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1968), p. 6.

[2]J. H. Brumfitt, Voltaire: Historian (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 12.

lacking in Voltaire's work;[3] some historians can indicate that Voltaire is a sociologist,[4] and others can deny this appellation and give him the names "historian" and "philosopher".[5] If, as Voltaire indicates, history can be made to seem to support the most erroneous of "overstrained conjectures,"[6] his work can also be used to support divergent opinions. Analysis and explanation of the separate parts are not sufficient to describe the essence of his works because above all Voltaire is an artist, and in spite of the disharmonious theories of causation he adheres to, his history is more than the sum of its discordant parts.

The key words in any description of the Enlightenment of eighteenth century France in which Voltaire lived and worked are natural law, reason, and progress. Progress was to be achieved by using reason to outline the natural order of society. The old conceptions of art, literature, politics, religion, history, and society were to be purged from the

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[3]George P. Gooch, Catherine the Great and Other Studies (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1966), p. 202.

[4]Peter Gay, The Party of Humanity (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964), p. 24; Gooch, Catherine, p. 257.

[5]Will Durant, The Story of Philosophy (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960), p. 220; Brumfitt, Voltaire, p. 98.

[6]Voltaire, Essay on the Manners and Spirit of Nations in The Works of M. de Voltaire, trans. T. Smollett, et al., Vol. I (London, 1762-70), pp. 7-8.

contemporary scene. This purging was a varied and ambitious scheme, never unified as to method or theory, but nevertheless proceeding toward the destruction of what individual philosophes thought to be unreasonable, unnatural and unprogressive thoughts and institutions. Definitions of what constituted natural law, reason, and progress were never universally agreed upon by the philosophes, and so they, Diderot, Condorcet, Montesquieu, and Turgot, to mention a few, went their own ways, sometimes in step with their brothers, often not, influenced by, ignoring, and in turn influencing the others, but generally "determined to sweep away the accumulated rubbish of the past."[7]

The starting points for the work of the philosophes were two closely related assumptions: (1) Nature and man were both subject to natural universal law. (2) The supernatural hand of Providence did not actively control the destiny of man. These ideas did not originate with the Enlightenment; they had been presaged by the Renaissance and especially by the scientific discoveries of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Isaac Newton and John Locke were instrumental in helping prepare the ground for the Enlightenment. Newton provided the world with physical explanations of the laws of motion and gravity. He helped

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[7]Gooch, Catherine, p. 259.

reduce the world of nature to immutable law, thereby diminishing her enigma; his theories were used as a foundation for a broadening of the concept of a world machine, and in this way the "occasional divine intervention" Newton gave credence to was pushed farther and farther into the background.[8] While Newton did not relegate God to the remote regions of heaven, many men accepted his work on that basis.[9] With this secular, scientific foundation it was but a short step from the idea that the material world follows the rule of law to the concept that natural law also applies to man in his relationship to society. Voltaire takes that step.[10]

The Englishman John Locke provided a way to discover the natural laws that were thought to apply to man and the way to follow them once discovered; the light of reason was supposed to provide man with the keys to understanding which would make progress possible.

> ". . . we must consider what State all Men are naturally in, and that is, a State of perfect Freedom to order their actions . . . within the bounds of the Law of Nature. . . ."[11]

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[8]Gay, The Party of Humanity, p. 22.

[9]Roland N. Stromberg, An Intellectual History of Modern Europe (New York: Meredith, 1966), p. 54.

[10]R. G. Collingwood, The Idea of History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), pp. 76-85.

[11]John Locke, "Two Treatise of Government," From Absolutism to Revolution: 1648-1848, ed. Herbert H. Rowen (New York: Macmillan, 1968), p. 56.

Others expanded and modified the theories of Newton and Locke, but the basic premises of natural law and the power of reason were generally accepted as true. Optimistically the men of the Enlightenment thought that through the use of reason man could follow the eternal precepts of natural law, and thereby build a better world.[12] The way to achieve this better world was never agreed upon by the philosophes for if reason was to be the principal guide to man and law, then as Locke said, "Every Man is Judge for himself."[13] Reasoning men often came to contradictory conclusions. Partially because of the conflicting ideas of reasonable men construction of a society built on natural law was not an accomplishment of the men of the Enlightenment. However, many did agree that before they could build a new society they had to tear down parts of the old one. Their principal role became one of destruction, and their enemy was any idea or institution that seemed to thwart man and his potentialities. The Christian religion in combination with the idea of Divine Providence was one institution that seemed to limit man, therefore it became a primary target of the philosophes.

> So long as the notion of an all-controlling Providence remained without challenge, the idea of progress as a human achievement shaped by a

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[12]Gooch, Catherine, p. 258.

[13]Locke, "Two Treatise of Government," p. 63.

> combination of material factors and spiritual energies was impossible, Christianity had supplied history with meaning by teaching that it led up to a goal, but the process was regarded as the ultimate responsibility of God, not of man.[14]

Voltaire is an integral part of the Enlightenment; in some respects, particularly anti-Catholicism, he is the very epitome of the Enlightenment, but like the rest of the philosophes he is also unique, and the conclusions he comes to are his own. Sometimes they tend to support the general movement; sometimes they do not, but they are always advocated with a passion and force which few historians have ever equaled. On the subject of causation inconsistency is Voltaire's most consistent trait. He never reaches a final conclusion as to ultimate historical causation, but when he mentions causation he usually uses terms that indicate that the particular causative force he is referring to is both absolute and universal. The result is that Voltaire's works identify many different forms of causation some of which are in conflict with each other.

In his first major historical work the History of Charles XII, Voltaire concerns himself more with narration than explanation, however, ". . . in so far as he does attempt to explain causes, Voltaire relies, on the whole, on

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[14]Gooch, Catherine, p. 255.

the 'great men' view of history."[15] The Age of Louis XIV is supposed to be more in accordance with Voltaire's professed theories of writing history,[16] but it presents an unsatisfactory explanation of causation.[17]

> His [Louis XIV] example shewed [sic], that an absolute prince, who has good intentions, can compass the greatest things without difficulty. He had only to command; and the successes in the administration were no less rapid than his conquests had been.[18]

William III of England also possessed this needed greatness.

> Fortune had apparently very little share in any part of this revolution, from the beginning to the end. The Characters of William and James did every thing.[19]

The "great man" theory in the Age of Louis XIV is limited by Voltaire's concept of chance. According to the first idea Louis XIV and others of his ilk are in control of the events that surround them. According to the second, men are the playthings of chance.[20] At Denain, for example, Louis XIV, the greatest of Voltaire's heroes, is saved by a chance occurence.[21]

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[15]Brumfitt, Voltaire, p. 105.

[16]See below, pp. (80 and 81 in this draft).

[17]Brumfitt, Voltaire, p. 106.

[18]Voltaire, Age of Louis XIV in Works, Vol. VII, p. 10.

[19]Ibid., p. 111. [20]Brumfitt, Voltaire, p. 107.

[21]Voltaire, Age of Louis XIV in Works, Vol. VII, p. 270-273.

> It is said, that his [Eugene's] lines were too much extended; that his magazines at Marchiennes were at too great a distance. . . . I have been assured, that a beautiful Italian lady . . . lives in Marchiennes; and that it was on her account that this was made a place for magazines. . . . To this action, in fact, France owed her safety more than to the peace she made with England . . . this will better serve to prove, by what secret and weak springs the greatest affairs of this world are often directed.[22]

It seems that "great men" sometimes control their affairs, while at other times they cannot exercise complete control.[23]

The "great men" theory and the idea of chance are further limited by Voltaire's delineation of other forms of historical causation. Of these other ideas of causation, Voltaire most frequently advances the theory that natural law is the force behind man's actions. Voltaire's theory of natural law contains his diverse ideas about God, morality, and human nature. Voltaire is not consistent in his description of natural law. He often indicates that natural law is universal, innate in man, and eternal.[24] He describes natural law as all-good.

> B: What is natural law? A: The instinct which makes us feel justice. B: What do you call just and unjust? A: What appears so to the entire universe. . . . It does not consist either in doing harm to others or in rejoicing thereat.[25]

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[22] Ibid., p. 271. [23] Ibid., p. 112.

[24] Voltaire, The Philosophy of History (New York: Philosophical Library, 1965), pp. 29-30, 245.

[25] Voltaire, Philosophical Dictionary as quoted in The Portable Voltaire (New York: Viking Press, 1963), pp. 166-167.

Natural law comes from omnipotent God.

> His favors consist in His laws themselves; he has foreseen all and arranged all, with a view to them. All invariably obey the force which He had impressed forever on nature.[26]

Natural law is immutable; not even God can change it.

> If the Eternal Being, who has foreseen all things, arranged all things, who governs all things by immutable laws, acts contrary to his own design by subverting those laws, this can be only supposed to take place for the benefit of all nature. But it appears contradictory to suppose a single case, wherein the creator and master of all things, could change the order of the world for the benefit of the world; for he either foresaw the supposed necessity there would be before the change, or else he did not see it. If he did foresee, the necessary regulations were made in the beginning; if he did not foresee, he is no longer God.[27]

Thus when Voltaire wants to he unequivocally defines natural law as just, immutable, and "engraven in every heart."[28] However at other times he contradicts these definitions. Sometimes he defines natural law as all-good and not consisting "either in doing harm to others or in rejoicing thereat,"[29] at other times he refutes that goodness.[30]

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[26]Voltaire, Philosophical Dictionary as quoted in French Philosophers from Descartes to Sartre, ed. Leonard M. Marsak (Cleveland: World Publishing, 1961), p. 160.

[27]Voltaire, Philosophy of History, pp. 146-147.

[28]Ibid., p. 245.

[29]Voltaire, Philosophical Dictionary, Viking edition, p. 176.

[30]Voltaire, Age of Louis XIV in Works, Vol. IX, p. 152.

> As nature has placed in the heart of man, interest, pride, and all the passions, it is no wonder, that, during a period of about six centuries, we meet with almost a continual succession of crimes and disasters.[31]

Not only justice, but also injustice is a part of natural law. Sometimes Voltaire describes God as omnipotent, but because He had to create injustice He is also called not omnipotent.[32]

> If the great Being had been infinitely powerful, there is no reason why He should not have made sentient animals infinitely happy. He has not done so; therefore He was unable to do so.
>
> All the philosophical sects have stranded on the reef of moral and physical ill. We can only conclude and avow that God, having acted for the best, has not been able to act better.
>
> This necessity settles all the difficulties and finishes all the disputes. We are not impudent enough to say: "All is good." We say: "All is as little bad as possible."[33]

Despite the contradictory definitions that Voltaire sanctions as to the structure of natural law, the idea itself is deterministic because Voltaire sees natural law as immutable, and as such it limits man to a pattern of action inherent in it.

> Nature being every where the same, men must necessarily have adopted the same truths, and fallen into the same errors.[34]

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[31] Ibid.

[32] Voltaire, Philosophical Dictionary, Viking edition, p. 176.

[33] Ibid., p. 177.

[34] Voltaire, Philosophy of History, p. 21.

According to this idea, natural law is deterministic. However this determinism must be limited because if it were unlimited, there could be no such thing as differences between civilizations or men. Voltaire believes that natural law determines human nature, is immutable, and is always in operation.[35] Voltaire deals with the problem of historical differences and similarities in the Age of Louis XIV.[36] After discussing a few of the differences between East and West, he summarizes:

> In short, we differ in every respect, in religion, policy, government, manners, food, cloathing [sic] and thinking. That in which we the most resemble them is, that propensity to war, slaughter, and destruction, which has always depopulated the face of the earth.[37]

Voltaire says custom is the reason for these differences, and natural law is the reason for the similarities.

> From all that we have observed in this sketch of universal history, it follows, that whatever concerns human nature, is the same from one end of the universe to the other, and that what is dependent on custom differs, or if there is any resemblance, it is the effect of chance. The dominion of custom is much more extensive than that of nature, and influences all manners and all usages. Nature establishes unity, and every where settles a few invariable principles.[38]

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[35] Ibid., p. 245. [36] Brumfitt, Voltaire, p. 125.

[37] Voltaire, Age of Louis XIV, in Works, Vol. IX, p. 149.

[38] Ibid., p. 152.

In this way Voltaire limits the control of natural law over man's actions. Custom joins with chance, natural law, and "great men" to form the causative elements of history. Just as he has difficulty defining natural law, so too does he have trouble describing the composition of custom. At times Voltaire designates climate and environment as possible sources for the differences between customs in different areas.[39] Elsewhere he denies that climate or environment ever have the power to effect any of the institutions and history of man.[40] His inability to find a reason for differences of customs leads him to so thoroughly contradict himself that occasionally he even attributes differences of custom to natural law, which is a concept exactly opposed to his usual view.[41] Not only is Voltaire unable to find a reason for custom, but he also fails to draw a firm line between the sphere of custom and the sphere of natural law. For example, he usually holds that there is a universal morality.[42] But when a different kind of morality is advocated by others, he cannot bring himself to accept it as natural law. Instead he terms it "abominable

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[39]Voltaire, Spirit of Nations in Works, Vol. XXX, p. 15.

[40]Ibid., Vol. XXXI, pp. 95-96.

[41]Voltaire, Age of Louis XIV in Works, Vol. IX, p. 51.

[42]Ibid., p. 40.

custom."[43] One can never be sure where deterministic natural law is in operation and where non-deterministic custom operates.

In addition to the theories of causation previously mentioned, Voltaire also advocates a pessimistic determinism of fate. According to him fate is different from chance because of the way in which man can react to chance. It was chance that led to Eugene's defeat at Denain, but Louis XIV had to take advantage of the chance fact that Eugene's magazines were too far from the front. The fact that Eugene had placed them there did not automatically insure Louis' success. However fate or fortune differs from chance because it leaves no room for independent human action. When advocating deterministic fate, Voltaire denies that man has free will[44] and says that the world exists "under the empire of fortune, which is nothing but necessity, insurmountable fatality. She makes us blindly play her terrible game, and we never see beneath the cards."[45]

It is readily seen that Voltaire's theories of causation are the "antithesis of a unified theory."[46]

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[43]Voltaire, Spirit of Nations in Works, Vol. XXX, p. 14.

[44]Voltaire, Philosophical Dictionary, Viking edition, p. 124.

[45]Ibid., 228. [46]Brumfitt, Voltaire, p. 124.

Multiple causation does not necessarily make for contradiction, but in Voltaire's writings it does. Three things make Voltaire's ideas contradictory. In the first place, he is unable to define exactly what his causative elements are. His definitions of such things as natural law and custom contradict one another. He says that natural law is all-good,[47] and he states that it is not all-good.[48] He says that natural law controls everything on earth,[49] and he states that it is not able to do so.[50] He says that natural law governs all morality,[51] and he states that custom determines morality.[52] His terms are too fluid; like fog they envelope everything yet describe nothing.

Another reason why Voltaire's ideas are contradictory is that some of his theories of causation are deterministic, while others are not. Voltaire's conception of fortune leaves no room for freedom of action on man's part. According to this theory everything proceeds according to predetermined

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[47]Voltaire, Philosophical Dictionary, Viking edition, p. 166-167.

[48]Voltaire, Age of Louis XIV in Works, Vol. IX, p. 152.

[49]Voltaire, Philosophical Dictionary, Marsak edition, p. 160.

[50]Voltaire, Age of Louis XIV in Works, Vol. VII, p. 112.

[51]Ibid., Vol. IX, p. 40.

[52]Voltaire, Spirit of Nations in Works, Vol. XXX, p.14.

fatality.[53] His theory of natural law is also deterministic. On the other hand, Voltaire does not indicate that customs are imposed upon man by an outside force. He says that customs are made by men exercising free will.[54] At times he does indicate that man may not have complete control over his customs because climate forces him to adopt certain customs,[55] but elsewhere he scoffs at the idea that geography ever has the power to determine any of civilizations customs.[56] The idea of "great men" is not deterministic.[57] Louis XIV was responsible for his actions and success; he may have been helped by chance, but he had to be "great" enough to take advantage of his good luck or overcome bad luck. Thus Voltaire does not consistently advocate absolute determinism. He does deny free will and freedom of action;[58] he does advocate unavoidable fatality and immutable natural law.[59] But he also believes in free will and freedom of action.[60] It is possible to defend at the same time some

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[53]Voltaire, Philosophical Dictionary, Viking edition, p. 228.

[54]Voltaire, Philosophy of History, p. 101.

[55]Voltaire, Spirit of Nations in Works, Vol. XXX, p. 15.

[56]Ibid., Vol. XXXI, pp. 95-96.

[57]Voltaire, Age of Louis XIV in Works, Vol. VII, p. 10.

[58]Voltaire, Philosophical Dictionary, Viking edition, p. 127.

[59]See above pp. 75-77. [60]Brumfitt, Voltaire, p. 121.

free will and some determinism, but it is not possible to defend without contradiction complete determinism and some freedom of will and action. The contradictions that arise among Voltaire's various theories of causation cannot be explained away on the grounds that he changes his views over a period of years. Voltaire holds his divergent ideas concurrently.[61]

A third reason why Voltaire's theories of causation lack unity is that his purpose in writing history is often in conflict with his deterministic theories. Voltaire writes history to instruct his readers in the lessons of the past in order that they may use this knowledge for the betterment of mankind.[62] He dislikes the history of earlier historians for many reasons, and he is determined to avoid their mistakes. Voltaire thinks that the trouble with historians and their histories is that they are too credulous,[63] too concerned with the unimportant subjects at the expense of the important ones,[64] and too concerned with telling a good story to give the reader the most important value history has to offer, moral instruction.[65] He relegates the majority of written history to the status of mere fable and goes even

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[61] Ibid., pp. 127, 166. [62] Ibid., p. 137.

[63] Voltaire, "Observations on History," in Works, Vol. X, p. 1.

[64] Ibid., p. 4. [65] Brumfitt, Voltaire, p. 97.

further in "New Reflections on History" when he states that even after reading the better histories,

> I do not find myself one jot wiser than when I began; because from them I learn nothing but events. . . . This serves very well to gratify my curiosity, but contributes little to my instruction.[66]

The credulity of historians is largely shown by the fact that they often do not believe as Voltaire does about human nature, natural law, and morality; "Let us refuse our belief to every historian, ancient and modern, who relates things contrary to nature."[67] In the final analysis nature is to Voltaire what he thinks it to be at the time, and things contrary to nature are what he hopes are unnatural. This is perhaps not too strange in the affairs of men, but in Voltaire this attitude has a very limiting effect above and beyond the positive effect of giving his thoughts structure. He carries it to the extreme whereby he believes himself justified in condemning absolutely those who see the potentialities of humanity differently than he does. Those he disagrees with are labeled fools, liars, or both.[68] He advises scepticism as a good rule of thumb to apply to history, at least to the history others wrote.

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[66]Voltaire, "New Reflections on History," in Works, Vol. X, pp. 10-11.

[67]Voltaire, "The Skepticism of History," in Works, Vol. X, pp. 54-55.

[68]Brumfitt, Voltaire, p. 101.

Since history is made by people, and people have almost unlimited potential for all kinds of actions, the lessons historians may purport to teach are myriad and contradictory. If Voltaire's work is to be understood, some knowledge of the lessons he chooses to illustrate is necessary. To Voltaire history is chiefly composed of crimes against humanity, and therefore most valuable not because of its positive aspects, but rather because he uses it to teach what should not be done.

> The great mistakes of the past are useful in all areas. We cannot describe too often the crimes and misfortunes caused by absurd quarrels. It is certain that by refreshing our memory of these quarrels, we prevent a repetition of them.[69]

In his Essay on the Manners and Spirit of Nations, Voltaire again and again emphasizes the irrational mistakes of history.

> It must therefore once again be acknowledged that history in general is a collection of crimes, follies, and misfortunes, among which we have now and then meet with a few virtues, and some happy times; as we sometimes see a few scattered huts in a barren desert.[70]

The achievements of the vast folly and everlasting bloodbath that constitute the greater part of history are "nothing great or considerable. . . . All history then in short, is little less than a long succession of useless cruelties."[71]

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[69]Voltaire, "History," The Encyclopedia, trans. by Stephen J. Gendzier (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 134.

[70]Voltaire, Spirit of Nations in Works, Vol. IX, p. 145.

[71]Ibid., p. 144.

Just as St. Augustine renders man helpless and evil in order to illustrate the glory of God, so too does Voltaire portray most of history as black in order to provide the greatest contrast with the periods of light and reason he sees in history. He says, in effect, man's existence is bad when he functions irrationally, but let him use his reason and the world can be made better.[72]

> God has implanted in us a principle of reason that is universal, as he has given feathers to birds and skins to bears; and this principle is so immutable, that it subsists in despite of all the passions which oppose it, in despite of those tyrants who would drown it in blood, in despite of those impostors who would annihilate it by superstition.[73]

Voltaire's greatest hope is for men to be reasonable.[74] He terms reason eternal, impossible to eradicate, and when it is stronger than superstition and dogma, the potential for human happiness is at its greatest.[75] He has great admiration for the Greeks; he describes their civilization as one of the best that ever existed.[76] The English also receive Voltaire's blessing because he thinks that they have used reason to free

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[72]Voltaire, "Letters on the English" in French and English Philosophers (New York: Collier Press, 1910), pp. 86-89.

[73]Voltaire, Philosophy of History, p. 32.

[74]Gay, The Party of Humanity, p. 23.

[75]Voltaire, Philosophy of History, p. 116.

[76]Ibid.

themselves from the cruelties of history.[77] In the Age of Louis XIV Voltaire identifies four examples of those happy ages which "by serving as the era of the greatness of the human mind, are examples for posterity."[78] The Greece of Pericles and Alexander, the Roman Empire, and the Italian Renaissance are the first three of these good eras.[79] The fourth is the age of Louis XIV which perhaps "approaches the nearest to perfection of all the four because, although it was not better in all respects, human reason in general was more superior," and "In this age we first became acquainted with sound philosophy."[80]

So Voltaire's purpose is to make his history useful by illustrating that progress and happiness can only be attained by the triumph of reason over superstition and ignorance.[81] He will not be guilty of writing fables or superficial history; he will show how, why, and where mankind has gone wrong.[82] Should his history anger anyone, he is sorry but it has to be.

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[77]Voltaire, "Letter to Nicolas Claude Thieriot," Select Letters of Voltaire, trans. and ed. by Theodore Besterman (London: Thomas Nelson, 1963), pp. 25-26.

[78]Voltaire, Age of Louis XIV in Works, Vol. VI, p. 159.

[79]Ibid., pp. 159-164. [80]Ibid., p. 164.

[81]Gooch, Catherine, p. 272.

[82]Voltaire, "The Skepticism of History," in Works, Vol. X, pp. 56, 60.

> The business of an historian is to record, not to flatter; and the only way to oblige mankind to speak well of us, is to contribute all that lies in our power to their happiness and welfare.[83]

But, for Voltaire, the recording of history results in ambiguity.

Voltaire's histories are sometimes ambigious because history is much more complicated than he assumes it to be. The "lessons" of history are not always consistent with his hopes, beliefs, and purposes. He believes in morality and reason; he likes to assume that reason and morality are a part of natural law, but history does not entirely support this view or even the existence of universal social law. Since history does not furnish him with a sound basis for his beliefs, he is forced to try to reconcile "the facts of human experience with truths already, in some fashion, revealed."[84] This conflict is manifest throughout his history. His hopes and the diversity of history subvert his attempts at building a cohesive theory of causation, and the facts and diversity of history make him doubt his hopes and beliefs. In the end his belief in reason is stronger than history.

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[83]Voltaire, History of Charles XII in Works, Vol. X, p. 64.

[84]Carl L. Becker, The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophers (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), p. 102.

Despite his discordant, deterministic theories of causation, despite his frequent expressions of pessimism, and despite the many depictions of crime in his history, the spirit of his work does not convey despair, but rather "a sense of progress and achievement."[85] The mere existence of his works and the fact that he can condemn the mistakes and atrocities of the past imply that something better may be within the grasp of mankind.[86] He illustrates this point in his essay on conscience in the Philosophical Dictionary.

> We have no other conscience that what is created in us by the spirit of the age, by example, and by our dispositions and reflections. . . .
>
> A young savage who, when hungry, has received from his father a piece of another savage to eat, will, on the morrow, ask for the like meal, without thinking about any obligation not to treat a neighbor otherwise than he would be treated himself. He acts, mechanically and irresistibly, directly contrary to the eternal principle.
>
> Nature has made a provision against such horrors. She has given to man a disposition to pity, and the power of comprehending truth. These two gifts of God constitute the foundation of civil society. This is the reason there have ever been but few cannibals; and which renders life, among civilized nations, a little tolerable. Fathers and mothers bestow on their children an education which soon renders them social, and this education confers on them a conscience.[87]

Reason in this definition is a part of natural law, but it can be subverted unless people make an effort to develop

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[85]Brumfitt, Voltaire, p. 127. [86]Ibid.

[87]Voltaire, Philosophical Dictionary, Marsak edition, pp. 152-153.

through education. This is certainly not a complete or coherent argument for reason or natural law because on the one hand it is implied that reason is a natural law common to all, and on the other that this natural law cannot be fulfilled without the prior existence of reason. This is as close as Voltaire comes to reconciling natural law and his belief in reason; it is typical of his superficiality,[88] and it clearly shows the conflict of his positions. He, unlike Condorcet, is never dogmatic enough to reason away the facts of the past in accordance with his faith in morality and reason.[89] Thus his faith in reason and his knowledge of empirical history remain in conflict.

Although this conflict helps prevent Voltaire from developing a systematic conception of the operation of history, it does not destroy his unity of purpose. His purpose makes history the responsibility of man. Illogically and haphazardly Voltaire above all else implies the reality of progress if men will try to be reasonable. He is beset by enough doubts that it is impossible for him to dogmatically insist on the truth of his faith, but his uncertainty never forces him to abandon his faith in reason. He gives the best description of his dilemma when he writes,

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[88]Brumfitt, Voltaire, p. 127.

[89]Gooch, Catherine, p. 272.

All certainty which does not consist in mathematical demonstration is nothing more than the highest probability; there is no other historical certainty.[90]

Let each of us boldly and honestly say: How little it is that I really know.[91]

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[90]Voltaire, Philosophical Dictionary, Viking edition, p. 223.

[91]Ibid., p. 225.

CHAPTER V

A COMPARISON

Over two thousand years elapsed between the Peloponnesian War and the Age of the Enlightenment. During this time the society of western man underwent many changes. The works of Thucydides, Augustine, and Voltaire are concerned with different events and problems, and the conclusions they draw are not the same. Nevertheless, in one respect the works of the three are almost identical; they share a common purpose. Each of the historians in question endeavors to capture the "lessons" of history. They do not think in terms of history for its own sake; to them nothing could seem more futile or useless. They are concerned men, determined to help their fellow human beings achieve a meaningful existence. It is their self-imposed task to use history to this end; to do so they try to wrest "lessons" from history.

Each man brings his own ideas to the historical arena. For Augustine revelation is the best way by which God's plan and purpose for man can be known, but revelation is denied most men. While some men can be privy to this revelation by studying the Bible and adhering to the dogmas of the Church, the way to reach the minds of men unwilling to accept these

paths is to illustrate the truth of revelation as it unfoldes in the history of mankind.[1] In the cases of Thucydides and Voltaire, history is the primary medium through which they validate their ideas and make them known to their fellow men. Voltaire also expresses his ideas in plays and stories, but he believes fiction lacks the authority to form the solid foundation that he wants as a basis for the "lessons" he has in mind. Voltaire believes that historical facts can conclusively prove the points he wants to make.[2]

The truth Thucydides, Augustine, and Voltaire desire to find in history does exist. There is absolute historical truth. Any event that occurs must be the result of a certain finite set of causes. The Crusades, for example, might have been inspired by religious fervor, desire for profit, desire for less bloodshed in Europe, or a number of other factors, but no matter what the causative factors were they, and only they, equaled the Crusades. In fact, a great number of factors may produce conflict that leads to war, but only one finite set caused the particular conflict called the Crusades. It is part of the historian's job to try to bring

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[1]August. De Civ. D. 1, preface.

[2]Voltaire, "Skepticism of History," in The Works of M. de Voltaire, trans. T. Smollett, et al., Vol. I (London: 1762-70), pp. 7-8.

these causes to light. However, the historian attempts an almost impossible task in trying to write the truth about the past. The events with which he is concerned are gone forever; they cannot be reconstructed. When the event passes some of its component parts go with it, consumed by the passage of time. The historian must work with the residue history leaves behind. It is often the case that an event leaves very little evidence behind, and the historian must stretch that evidence into a comprehensive whole. In other instances, too much evidence clutters the area of investigation; in these cases the historian must ignore evidence he does not consider pertinent to his purpose. In either case, whether he works with too little evidence or is forced to abandon some, his evidence is less than total even before he begins.

The historian has at his disposal certain largely objective aids which may help him determine what happened. Chronology, geography, internal and external criticism, and other auxiliary sciences may help him to isolate facts and eliminate untruths. But facts have no meaning in and of themselves; they must be given meaning by man,[3] and in giving his facts meaning the historian may move another step away from truth. Human existence demands that man have a point of

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[3]Abraham Kaplan, The Conduct of Inquiry (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing, 1964), pp. 85-87.

view, an idea of causal relationships. If these ideas were not formulated, there would be no meaning, only chaos.[4] In the area of natural phenomena these relationships are highly predictable. Lightning is generally followed by thunder. Too much rain in a given area usually causes flooding. The historian must identify these kinds of relationships, but not with reference to natural phenomena. He must deal with people. He is concerned with man's relationship to himself, man's relationship to man, and man's relationship to historical events. These relationships are not as well defined or predictable as those among natural phenomena.

Every individual is unique and capable of being unpredictable. No two individuals always react in the same way to identical situations, and a person may react differently at various times to identical stimuli. The historian must depict the relationships, motives, and actions of people on the basis of less than complete evidence. He cannot resurrect dead historical personages in order to subject them to detailed psychoanalysis; he can only work with the living and the recorded parts of his history. At this time his point of view becomes the determining factor in the conclusions of his history. He must see historical relationships in light of what he considers most likely to

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[4] W. H. Walsh, Philosophy of History (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), p. 83.

be possible, and every historian possesses a unique point of view. Disagreement among historians writing on the same subject is common. Undoubtedly in any given case the facts that historians have available to them may differ, but the major reason why historian's disagree is that their points of view, their way of looking at causal relationships, are different.[5]

The causes for an historical event remain the same, but the difficulties inherent in writing history make it unlikely that in any given instance historical truth will be recorded.[6] But suppose that a hypothetical historian examining a given event were fortunate enough to have all the information pertinent to the course and cause of that event. Suppose further that he possessed precisely the right point of view necessary to describe the event in terms of cause and effect exactly as it happened. In short, he accomplished the great rarity, the recording of historical truth. Is that history useful in the sense that it would teach "lessons," the kind of lessons Thucydides, Augustine, and Voltaire have in mind? No, because it would be unique. It would describe a historical event, an event shaped by men and circumstances that appeared once and then disappeared

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[5]Walsh, Philosophy of History, p. 93.

[6]Ibid., pp. 116-118.

forever. Even if the same circumstances confronted people at a later date, the individuals involved would not be the same, thus, their responses to that situation might be different. Even the same individuals confronting an identical situation might act differently than they once did. Recording historical truth is most often unattainable, but it is a valid goal. On the other hand, trying to teach universal lessons based on history is the height of folly. In order to make history useful in the way Thucydides, Augustine, and Voltaire have in mind, the historian must predict the actions of unique men in response to as yet unknown situations on the basis of the supposed actions of other unique men in response to largely unknown situations. This kind of procedure is not conducive to the production of valid lessons.

The problems inherent in the writing of history are such that recorded history is at best an unsure proposition. While one point of view may suffice for a historical monograph, the scope of universal history is too large to be encompassed by any single point of view. The historian faces a difficult task in trying to write what happened and an even more difficult one in determining why it happened. Even if he produces truth, he cannot conclusively prove its validity.[7] The best attitude toward the validity of

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[7]Ibid., p. 93.

recorded history is summed up with the word, "perhaps." The conclusions a historian adheres to ought to be seen as "fallible propositions, tentatively held, and subject to change."[8] This is especially true of universal history.

To Thucydides, Augustine, and Voltaire tentative propositions are not enough. Each of them sets out to prove the lessons of history, and their individual points of view are too important to them to allow them to hold their ideas as tentative. To varying degrees they already know what they will find in history, thus the ideas and conclusions they make manifest are not so much culled from history as brought to history and imposed upon it. They want to write universal truths, so they establish a pattern of history and to different extents force their histories to conform to the pattern.

In order to accomplish this delineation of historical pattern the three historians reduce the freedom of action of their historical characters. No one in their histories is allowed to act on a basis other than that which conforms to Thucydides', Augustine's, or Voltaire's concept of the potentialities of human behavior. Thus, Thucydides recognizes only human nature and reason as a basis for man's

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[8]G. L. Keyes, Christian Faith and the Interpretation of History: A Study of St. Augustine's Philosophy of History (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), p. 194.

actions; Augustine gives credence only to actions which conform to God's plan; and Voltaire wants to recognize only those actions that take place in accordance with his concept of natural law. They try to make history suit their intentions. This is why, for example, Voltaire could not accept the Crusades as partially a manifestation of real religious fervor. To him true religious thought would not permit the waging of a Holy War. So he dismisses religious belief as a possible cause of the Crusades, and turns to other motives, such as a desire for personal profit, which are from his point of view capable of bringing on war.[9]

All historians must be selective. They are engaged in a problem of probabilities, and they must have some idea of what are the most likely motives and causes of human activities. But to write as accurately as he can, the historian must see his point of view as a means of understanding, not as an unyielding truth. His point of view must be rigid enough to give order to his evidence yet flexible enough to be modified in light of that evidence. If his a priori beliefs are too rigid, it is likely that the conclusions he reaches are not the result of investigation but rather of preconceived ideas.

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[9]J. H. Brumfitt, Voltaire: Historian (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1907), p. 59-61.

To varying degrees Thucydides, Augustine, and Voltaire distort their histories in their search for universals. For the most part they ignore the tenuous reciprocal arrangement whereby evidence influences point of view and point of view in turn influences evidence. Their desire to use history as authoritative proof led them to share similar problems. One problem that they share is what to do about the diversity of human nature. They solve this problem by instituting deterministic forces that have the potential to limit human actions. All three of the men in question place this same kind of restriction on men. They all consider human nature as an unchanging constant and as capable of controlling man. This restriction makes their conclusions appear to be valid at all times and all places because if human nature is constant, then different men will react in the same way to any given situation. A second problem they face was what to do about the actions that do not seem to fall under the sway of their universal deterministic causative force. They answer this problem with different methods and with varying degrees of success.

Thucydides recognizes three causative elements in his history. The first element is human nature. Like the other two, Thucydides limits human actions by advocating the idea of unchanging human nature; human nature exists as a deterministic force capable of controlling man. For

Thucydides the most important parts of human nature are ambition and avarice.[10] However, to Thucydides human nature represents only a limited determinism because it can be thwarted by reason and Fortune.[11] Foreknowledge and reason represent Thucydides' answer to the problem of the exceptions to the rule of human nature. The decrees of human nature do not explain the actions of men like Pericles, but foreknowledge and reason do. Pericles knew about human nature and how man acts; thus, he was armed with foreknowledge; he used this foreknowledge in combination with reason to assume control of his own nature.[12] Having control over himself Pericles was free to attempt to influence the actions of others. When he was successful Athens prospered.[13]

Thucydides' system contains only one other element. That element is chance. The concept of chance supplies Thucydides with an explanation for events that can not be attributed to either human nature or human reason. Events like the plague, the victory at Pylos, and others are explained qualitatively if not quantitatively by chance.

With human nature, reason and foresight, and chance Thucydides' pattern of history is complete. In summary, most events are determined by unchanging human nature; events

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[10]Thuc., 3, 82.

[11]Ibid., 4. 108.

[12]Ibid., 2. 65.

[13]Ibid.

that do not fit into Thucydides' concept of the drives of human nature are explained by man's exercise of reason. Events that do not stem from accountable human actions are attributed to unpredictable chance. Reason is capable of guiding human nature and of reacting positively to the whims of chance.[14] Thus Thucydides' universe is ordered and capable of being largely understood. The main weakness of Thucydides' theory is the rigidness of human nature. His historical figures are too stereotyped, and when an individual acts out of character, Thucydides does not abandon or modify his narrow view of human nature, rather he glosses over or ignores the discrepancy.[15]

Saint Augustine, like Thucydides, assumes that human nature is constant. However, while Thucydides defends reason, Augustine is defending God. In Thucydides human nature is powerful enough to cause actions to come into being. In Augustine, human nature is powerful enough to corrupt man's will, but not powerful enough to cause actions in and of itself. In his desire to justify and explain his concept of God, Augustine describes a much more deterministic world than either Thucydides or Voltaire.

Augustine defines God in three ways: He is all-good,

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[14] Ibid., 4. 17.

[15] Francis M. Cornford, Thucydides Mythistoricus (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1907), p. 59-61.

all-knowing, and all-powerful.[16] Since this is the case, history has always been perfect and exactly what God has wanted it to be.[17] Augustine admits only one exception to this all embracing system, an exception that is necessary to explain evil. This exception occurred in Paradise. In Paradise Adam had both freedom of will and freedom of action; he used these freedoms to disobey God. After this original sin man lost forever his freedom of action, but not all of his freedom of will. Man still retained the ability to will, but unlike Adam he cannot will either good or evil, but only evil.[18] After Adam, whatever action man wills to do is evil. Since God does not will man to sin, man is responsible for his sins. In a lower sense, when man acts his actions are evil and they damn him because he does not act against his evil will.[19] However, in a higher sense man's actions are good because God allows man to do them, and the action is therefore a part of God's plan which is perfect. Freedom of action and freedom of will are entirely separate. An action conceived in the human will is evil. When that action is carried out man is responsible for its evilness, but when

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[16]August. Enchiridion, 4. 12; 26. 102; De Civ. D. 5.9.

[17]August. Enchiridion, 27. 103. [18]Ibid., 9. 30.

[19]August. "A Treatise on the Spirit and the Letter," 53.

that action is seen in the context of God's plan for the universe it is automatically good. God brings forth good out of evil: His purpose is fulfilled, but the sin of man is not nullified.[20]

Augustine and Thucydides begin from approximately the same position. Man's will or nature is unchanging. It is responsible for all of the evil in the world according to Augustine and many of the misfortunes of the world in Thucydides view. In both Thucydides' and Augustine's work human nature is deterministic. The great difference between their ideas is the extent to which human nature is responsible for man's actions. In Augustine's view, human nature cannot alter the course of history, but as far as man's will is concerned human nature is totally deterministic. Without the intervention of God, man is powerless to alter or inhibit in any way his evil will or take any action not allowed by God. Man is a complete pawn. Two kinds of deterministic force control him. His will is entirely controlled by human nature, and his actions are totally governed by God. Augustine's determinism is all encompassing and unconditional. On the other hand, Thucydides' determinism is both situational and conditional. For him, human nature is not all bad. Pride is not intrinsically bad; in some cases a certain amount of

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[20]August. Enchiridion, 8. 27.

pride is a positive good.[21] However in other instances pride may result in irresponsible and disruptive action.[22] The same might be said about many of the other elements Thucydides recognizes in human nature. The merit of human nature was thus situational. Human nature itself is conditional because its manifestations can, at times, be overruled by reason. Augustine sees the human will as responsible for all the evil in the world, but Thucydides leaves a place for chance, and even allows that chance might be good or bad.[23] Augustine leaves nothing to chance, just as he leaves nothing positive to man.[24]

Voltaire also attempts to limit the freedom of action of the characters in his history by advocating that human nature is unchanging.[25] However, he is not as successful as Thucydides or Augustine in upholding this view. Part of the reason why Voltaire is less successful than the other two stems from his subject matter and point of view. Thucydides dealt with Greeks who had much in common. The fact that the Eleusinian Mysteries, the Delphic oracle, and the Olympic games were Panhellenic rather than the manifestation of any

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[21]Thuc., 2. 52. [22]Ibid., 3. 45.

[23]Ibid., 4. 14-15.

[24]August. De Civ. D., 5. 9.

[25]Voltaire, The Philosophy of History (New York: Philosophical Library, 1965), pp. 29-30.

single Greek city-state helps illustrate that, despite their disputes, the Greeks shared a common heritage. This heritage allowed Thucydides' view of human nature to be potentially more accurate than that of Voltaire because Voltaire writes about widely divergent groups who shared very little common heritage. Thucydides is astute enough to fulfill this potential. Augustine has a very simple and reliable method of limiting human nature; he simply calls it bad and lets it go at that. If a good action is contemplated by a man, it is the result of God implanting that idea. All other ideas are condemned out of hand as evil, and Augustine does not have to classify or limit human nature any further. Whenever Voltaire tries to limit human nature too closely, he is confronted with contradictions. He does not confine his investigations to any single place or period, and he is forced to recognize the fact that the Chinese and the Indians do not think or act in the same ways that Jews or Frenchmen do. Voltaire does not condemn all human nature as strongly as Augustine does, for many reasons. The most important motive is that he wants reason to be a part of human nature, and of course, he thinks reason is good.[26] At times he tries to resolve the conflicts of diverse human activity by

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[26]Carl Becker, The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophers (New York: Yale University Press, 1932), p. 111.

differentiating between custom and natural law,[27] but he is never able to draw a clear line between the things he considers to be custom and those that are natural law. Although he is never able to clearly define the limits of human nature, he never gives up his belief that it is constant.[28]

This inability to define the key to human nature explains why Voltaire's works reflect less determinism than those of Augustine or Thucydides. Both Thucydides and Voltaire operate on two levels. At the highest level is human reason; reasoning men are capable of being their own masters at least part of the time. Thucydides assumes that men who do not reason are incapable of this control. For him unchanging human nature immediately takes control of men when they cease or fail to reason; Voltaire, however, cannot go that far. He too assumes that unreasoning men are unable to control their affairs, but he is never able to clearly define what force takes over in the absence of reason. At times he indicates that fate takes control,[29] at other times environment,[30] at still others custom.[31] Sometimes he goes

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[27]Voltaire, Age of Louis XIV, in Works, Vol. IX, p. 152.

[28]Brumfitt, Voltaire, p. 103.

[29]Voltaire, Age of Louis XIV in Works, Vol. 7, p. 112.

[30]Voltaire, Essay on the Manners and Spirit of Nations in Works, vol. 30, p. 15.

[31]Voltaire, Age of Louis XIV in Works, vol 9, p. 149.

to the extreme of indicating that destiny governs even rational men.[32] Every time he tries to define determinism, he is forced in the next paragraph or page or book to make exceptions or contradict himself. The result of this ambiguity is that the determinism in his history is lessoned.

The attempts by Thucydides, Augustine, and Voltaire to make history prove their contentions make for distortion in their histories. These distortions were less in Thucydides than in the other two. One reason for this is that his point of view is influenced more by his material than the points of view of the others. The Greek world was his whole world; thus he could proceed more inductively.[33] The truths that he puts forward may not hold in the light of universal history, but they serve him fairly well in his limited testing ground. Augustine's beliefs go much further in limiting the evidence he will accept. He already knows through faith what the truth is, and since it is impossible to disprove faith, Augustine has to make no concessions to historical evidence.[34]

> His philosophy of history is fatal to historical studies as pursued by men of open mind. It leads to

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[32]Voltaire, Philosophical Dictionary, as quoted in The Portable Voltaire (New York: Viking Press, 1963), pp. 105-107.

[33]F. E. Adcock, Thucydides and His History (London: Cambridge University Press, 1963), p. 109.

[34]Keyes, Christian Faith, pp. 193-194.

> a flouting of the ordinary canons of probability. It leads, de facto though not de jure, to carelessness with detail.[35]

Voltaire also writes history with faith; he hopes that history will prove his faith in reason and morality.[36] He is not successful in proving his contention because he never completely justifies his faith with empirical evidence. His "history is falsified by the search for unchanging principles of reason and behavior,"[37] but he does not go the whole route by ignoring all evidence that does not fit his beliefs. He is able to admit to facts which he cannot explain.[38] Thus his history, while bearing some distortion because of his a priori beliefs, is not distorted to the extent that it is completely subordinate to those beliefs.

Thucydides', St. Augustine's, and Voltaire's beliefs and purposes are reflected in the historical role each of them assigns to man. Augustine describes life as a burden to be endured.[39] The only true joy he recognizes in life stems from submission to God. Earthly pleasure is transitory.[40] The only worthwhile goals are bound up in God's plan, thus the only positive action man can take is to submit his life

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[35]Ibid., p. 194. [36]Becker, Heavenly City, p. 102.

[37]Brumfitt, Voltaire, p. 103. [38]Ibid., 125.

[39]August. De Civ. D., 21. 14.

[40]August. Conf., 6. 6.

entirely to God. Even this submission is impossible unless God allows one to submit.[41] In Augustine's history man has no place to go.

Of the three, Thucydides allows man the most positive role. He describes man as often capable of controlling his actions. This control is not automatic or complete; man has to be equipped with foreknowledge and the ability to reason to overcome the dictates of his own nature.[42] Even if he achieves this, he still has no control over chance. However, if he has no way to control chance, neither does chance control man. Man is always free to respond rationally, even to chance. All in all, Thucydides sees great potential in man.[43]

Voltaire's history is less deterministic than either Thucydides' or Augustine's, but Voltaire is not as positive in his assessment of man's role in history as is Thucydides or as confident of possible future happiness as is Augustine. Voltaire never successfully isolates his enemy. He finds many enemies including superstition, custom, environment, and even destiny, but he can never define them clearly.

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[41]August. "A Treatise on the Merits and Forgiveness of Sins, and the Baptism of Infants," 2. 27.

[42]John H. Finley, Jr., Thucydides (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1942), p. 308.

[43]Ibid., p. 324.

Unsure of his ground, Voltaire is skeptical of human ability.[44] He cuts man's closest ties with Divine Providence in order to give man a more positive place in the world, but without Providence man can be even more destructive than constructive. Voltaire cuts himself loose from dogma, but history does not provide him with an adequate foundation for his beliefs. Man's rational efforts are what makes the world better, but reasonable men are not assured of success.[45] Candide represents Voltaire's idea of the role of man as well as does his history,[46] and the last line sums up his attitude: ". . . we must cultivate our gardens."[47] Men must try even though they may not succeed.

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[44]George P. Gooch, Catherine the Great and Other Studies (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1966), p. 244.

[45]Voltaire, Philosophical Dictionary, pp. 185-187; Gooch, Catherine, p. 271.

[46]Gooch, Catherine, p. 269

[47]Voltaire, Candide, in The Portable Voltaire, p. 328.

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