MAKING EXCEPTIONS
Some Remarks on the Concept of Coup d'état and Its History

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WHAT MAKES THE CONCEPT of *coup d'état* intriguing yet so difficult to disentangle is the fact that the logic of its usage forces us to reconsider a more general problem in political philosophy, one that concerns the relationship between the regular and the exceptional in political theory and practice. A coup d'état does not only by definition constitute an exceptional event, but must also invariably be justified with reference to exceptional circumstances to be successful. At a minimum, therefore, the practice of coup d'état is the technique of *making* exceptions from old rules and creating new rules out of these exceptions. This essay purports to deal first with the varying historical conditions of this technique and, second, how this technique has conditioned our modern political identity as a *democratic* one.

Thus, as a first and indispensable step, our analysis necessitates a reopening of the relationship between the regular and the exceptional in political philosophy. Arguably, this relationship has been closed to investigation by modern political science, which places its bet on the continuing subordination of the exceptional to the persistence of the regular. As Arendt once remarked, regularity "is the no longer secret political ideal of a society which, entirely submerged in the routine of everyday living, is at peace with the scientific outlook inherent in its very existence."[1] Thus, since modern political science has long been devoted to the analysis of the regularities that characterize a stable sociopolitical order, the exceptional is only comprehensible as an anomalous deviation from those regularities.[2] This could be no more visible

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than in a modern definition of a coup d'état. To modern political science, a coup d'état is

> a stroke of state; a seizure of power by a group using the permanent employees of the state . . . to capture and paralyze the nerve ends of continuing government. The coup d'état is distinguished from a revolution in that it does not aim to alter the social and political structure, but merely to substitute one ruling group for another. The coup operates essentially by detaching the employees of the state from their loyalty to legitimate government.[3]

What is defined here is a class of events, and it is evident that this definition presupposes a particular concept of the state. It presupposes that the object of the coup—the state—is present to thought and action, and, like any other object, possible to *seize* in a quite literal sense without simultaneously destroying its identity. Supposedly, the state remains essentially the same even after the coup has been successfully accomplished. Thus, the modern concept of coup d'état presupposes a doubly abstract state, capable of continuous and sovereign existence independent of rulers as well as the ruled. It is an institution with a life of its own. Furthermore, the threat against the existing order which the modern coup d'état embodies comes from without, from a particular point outside what is considered legitimate authority. Thus, by definition, a coup d'état is a manifestation of a particular interest as opposed to a general one, and, as such, it carries the stigma of illegitimacy.

Turning now to a political manual from the early seventeenth century like Naudé's *Considérations Politiques sur les Coups d'Estat (1639),* these logical relations are turned inside out. The coup d'état then was

> those bold and extraordinary acts that princes are forced to undertake in difficult and hopeless matters, contrary to common law and regardless of any justice, putting the particular interest at stake for the benefit of the general one.[4]

What is defined here is a practice rather than a class of events, in which the acting subject is the prince who acts against the backdrop of perceived emergency and necessity, and whose acts are directed outward, toward the social body and hopefully for the benefit of the common good. The classical definition presupposes that the prince remains identical with himself, but has nothing to say about the object of his activity or the conditions of its identity. Rather, the coup d'état looks more like a means to constitute this object—the state—as identical with itself, since this activity seems necessary to secure the primacy of the general interest over particular ones.

It seems like we have stumbled upon an abysmal discontinuity in political discourse, marked by the final triumph of popular sovereignty over absolut-

ism. As modern democracy is based on an imagined identity between rulers and the ruled, and a harmony of interest between state and society—between the subject and object of the classical coup—the classical coup becomes superfluous if not impossible.

One decisive moment in this development was Locke's discussion of rebellion and usurpation. Rebellion, writes Locke in his *Second Treatise* (1690), is when "any one by force takes away the established Legislative of any Society," something that "they who are in Power being likeliest to do."[5] Similarly, usurpation is "a change only of Persons, but not of the Forms and Rules of the Government."[6] Through these definitions, Locke in fact did make the classical coup conceptually redundant while paving the way for the modern definition, since the former definition did assimilate the practices of the classical coup d'état to a category which had been reserved for subversive acts undertaken from without, while the latter assumed that the identity of political institutions can be conceived of independently of those controlling them, something which had not been possible according to earlier definitions of the term.

Consequently, in modern terms, a coup can only be carried out from the outside, never staged from inside the locus of legitimate authority. Furthermore, it cannot profoundly affect the identity of political institutions. Thus, from a modern point of view, it is tempting to regard the classical coup as something forever left behind and to which we owe nothing. Nevertheless, since both the formation of the modern state and the coming of modern democracy took place through successive disruptions of traditional patterns of authority and legitimacy, it is reasonable to suspect that there are stronger genealogical ties between the classical coup and our own political self-description than we are led to believe by the above definitions and more complacent accounts of this transition. Clearly, something strange happens to the concept of coup d'état between the celebrations of absolutism and the modern pleas for popular sovereignty. The main objective of this article is to provide a description—however necessarily brief and fragmentary—of how this transition was carried out in political discourse, and how the concept of coup d'état came to mean so different things to different ages.

As I shall try to show below, the historical record of the concept of coup d'état reflects a set of more profound reconceptualizations of politics, power, and legitimacy that have inspired political thought and action since the early-modern period. Thus, through a critical historical analysis of the concept of coup d'état, these major changes in our political self-description can be understood from a new and slightly different perspective. Above all, it can help us to understand how the concept of politics came to be an absolute and boundless category.[7] Furthermore, such a perspective helps us to proble-

maticize our present democratic identity, since by signifying the exceptional, the concept of coup d'état provides a new key to our understanding of the regular and the normal.

This can be made plain if we interpret the concept of coup d'état in decisionist terms, thereby splitting the difference between classical and modern definitions. Below the level of disagreement between the two above definitions, they both associate the concept of coup d'état with the concepts of sovereignty and exception. At a minimum, a coup is a way to conquer the locus of sovereignty or to extend its scope with reference to exceptional circumstances. As such, a coup constitutes an empirical instance of the decisionist definition of sovereignty that equates it with the power to decide when an exception is beforehand, and thus with the authority to suspend valid law.[8]

According to absolutist doctrine, this competence is embodied in the prince.[9] In a democracy, this competence lies dormant in the constitutional arrangements but is ready to be awakened in the event of crisis or war.[10] From a decisionist perspective, the ultimate condition of sovereignty is visible neither in everyday political practice nor in the normative order of the constitution, but only in the exception. According to Carl Schmitt

> The exception is more interesting than the rule. The rule proves nothing; the exception proves everything: It confirms not only the rule but also its existence, which derives only from the exception. In the exception the power of real life breaks through the crust of a mechanism that has become torpid by repetition.[11]

Now this boils down to the observation that power resides in the exception, whereas legitimacy inheres in the rule. Thus the exception can never be understood as an instance of the rule, rather, the converse holds true. In the present context, there is no reason to discuss the validity of the decisionist thesis as such, whether interpreted as a statement of actual fact or as a normative thesis. For present purposes it is quite sufficient to use it as a heuristic device that helps us to open the relationship between the rule and the exception to historical investigation without committing ourselves to any particular idea of how they *ought* to be related.

Thus, if agents are going to be able to *make* an exception by justifying a transgression or violation of an existing order, it is necessary that agents be able to discern when an exception is beforehand or create one whenever it is not. This ability presupposes not only that the regular and the exceptional are conceptually distinct within a given political discourse but also that there is a certain distribution of privilege or order of priority between them. In other words, the practice of coup d'état is discursively constituted to the extent that it presupposes cognitive access to a preconstituted yet flexible divide between

the regular and the exceptional, a divide that the coup itself is designed to subvert, redraw, or abolish.

Therefore, to analyze the concept of coup d'état and its place in political discourse is not primarily a matter of studying how exceptional acts have been justified throughout the ages, safely convinced that the regular occupies a firm and privileged position from which these justifications can be undertaken and later studied. Rather, to analyze the concept of coup d'état is a matter of studying the recurrent and swift repositioning of the exceptional and the regular within political discourse, guided by the less than safe suspicion that that which appears as regular is the result of a prior exception, and conversely. In the first section below, I shall describe the conditions of possibility of the concept of coup d'état. In the second section, I shall analyze the concept and its role within early-modern political discourse, especially in the works of Gabriel Naudé. In the last section, I shall discuss some implications of this analysis for our present political identity.

FROM POLITICS TO REASON OF STATE

One way to describe how the concept of coup d'état once emerged and has been transformed is to relate it to long-term discursive transformations and investigate how these changes condition the place of the concept in a wider system of other concepts. Having determined the proper place of the concept among these, it is then possible to detect the conditions that enable and circumscribe the translation of a given conceptual world into particular structures of political action.[12]

Doing this, we are bound to discover that the coup d'état has not always been an open possibility, neither in theory nor in practice. For example, it is difficult to envisage a coup in classical Greece or the late-medieval city-states of Italy, since the then dominant conception of politics seems to rule out such a possibility.

As Meier has argued, in classical Greece, the concept of the political was directly related to the activity of free and equal men within the civil community—the *polis*—and regulated by a constitution. Within this conception, to act politically was to act in the general interest of that community and in accordance with its constitution.[13] Aristotle was very explicit on this point, reserving the term constitutional rule for the kind of rule where the ruler has to act in accordance with a constitution laid down by the citizenry, and the citizenry has to obey the ruler only insofar as he acts in accordance with the constitution.[14]

During the high Middle Ages, the concept of politics was absent as an autonomous category of thought and action; what we in retrospect feel tempted to label "politics" was in fact a blend of law and theology.[15] When the ancient concept of politics was recovered from Greek sources during the late medieval period, this had profound and corrosive consequences for the Christian idea of a divine and universal community. As Rubinstein has shown, the translation of Aristotle's *Politica* contained itself a strong ideological commitment, since the very term political now was reserved for those forms of rule in which the citizens govern themselves according to precepts laid down by themselves. From Aquinas on, political rule therefore became directly opposed to those forms of rule where the ruler stands above the law and the will of the community.[16]

This terminological twist became crucial to the emergence of a distinctively *policentric* discourse during the fourteenth century. Whereas the early and high Middle Ages had justified existing patterns of authority by pointing to a transcendent order over and above the social body, policentric discourse focuses on patterns of authority within concrete communities and discusses the conditions of their legitimacy against the backdrop of a naturalized order. Where the former discourse bases its judgment on theology, the latter does so by reference to a teleology of the common good.[17]

As Viroli has argued, in the republican city-state, political activity was above all justified as a means to safeguard the liberty of the citizens from both external dominance and domestic tyranny. The ultimate guarantee of the free political life is the virtue of the citizens and the ability of the political institutions to promote and reproduce these virtues, both at the individual and the institutional level. Thus liberty necessitates a basic distributive and retributive equality among citizens, so that no particular citizen or group of citizens can seize the political institutions and use them for their own purposes to enrich themselves or inflict punishment on their enemies.[18]

Within this context, the classical coup is not possible, simply because the elected governors of a republic could not transgress the constitution laid down by the citizenry without thereby becoming tyrants, all while the political institutions become private property in the hands of the usurpers. Thus the classical concept of coup d'état simply does not chime very well with policentric understanding, since the definition of the classical coup demands that those who undertake it remain identical with themselves after its accomplishment, a condition that cannot be met with such a narrow definition of the concept of politics as the policentric one. Those who usurp republican institutions simply step out of politics, since republican institutions cease to be political ones the moment they are usurped.

Nor seems the modern coup to be an open possibility here, even if it better approximates the policentric view of usurpation and tyranny. The crucial element lacking is the modern and doubly abstract concept of the state, well separated from rulers as well as ruled, and therefore accessible as an object that can be seized without violating its basic identity.[19]

So if no coup ever posed a threat to the *quatrocento* Italian republics, it was not because of their inherent stability or out of any shortage of evil and power-hungry men, but because the definition of politics still excluded this possibility. The major threat against the civil community was instead represented by the act of usurpation and the tyrannical government established through it. However, the relative success of an act of usurpation was dependent on exactly that which is ruled out by the classical as well as modern definitions of the coup d'état, namely, the extent to which a profound transformation of the identity of the political institutions could be carried out. The act of usurpation therefore represented a threat not only against a specific institutional arrangement but also against the very essence of politics.

The specific kind of problems that such a transformation represented could not be formulated, let alone be solved, within the conceptual world of policentric discourse. To policentric discourse, the characteristic problem had been the reverse, that is, how to arrange political life to maximize liberty while minimizing the likelihood of an illegitimate concentration of power. Within this perspective, the act of usurpation and its stratagems were not only impossible to justify in moral terms, but were also phenomena which were difficult to comprehend and describe without violating the coherence of policentric discourse.[20] The act of usurpation was in an important sense extra-political, inscribed within the same field of forces as the relationship *between* city-republics, devoid of legal significance and governed by a blend of contingency and necessity.[21] Hence the act of usurpation can be understood as a momentous inversion of the relationship between the republic and its outside, since those forces which held sway on its outside suddenly were released on its inside.

So what was threatening to the political institutions of the day was also unfamiliar to the form of political knowledge upon which these rested. The theory and practice of usurpation became the province of a new, emergent discourse. As we shall see, the ascendancy of this discourse brought with it a profound reconceptualization of politics.

In order to avoid some of the interpretive confusion that flows from the use of more well-established terms, I shall use the term state-centric discourse to connote what a century later was commonly defined as the *mezzi atti à fundare, conservare, e ampliare un Dominio*,[22] that is, Reason of State. Within

this discourse, the policentric core problem is turned inside out, since what now matters is how and under what circumstances it is possible to concentrate and preserve power by a strategical manipulation of existing institutions and their legitimacy.[23]

In the conventional accounts of this transformation, this shift of perspective is normally associated with Machiavelli, and subsequently portrayed as a battle between morals and politics or between incommensurable standards of political judgment. In the present context, however, it is not necessary to dwell upon let alone take sides in this enormous scholarly debate.[24]

For present purposes, it is quite sufficient to point to the fact that it is possible and indeed reasonable to read *Il Principe* (1532) as a manual of usurpation, not only since it was dedicated to a usurper but also, and more important, because the problematic singled out for investigation in this book is how to create legitimacy ex nihilo. What Machiavelli discusses is exactly the kind of problems that arise in the creation of new principalities and in the violent acquisition of old ones; those problems that pertain to hereditary ones are of limited interest to the author.[25] As Viroli has pointed out, *Il Principe* contains no discussion of politics in the contemporary sense of the term,[26] but rather it contains a discussion of the special case presented by a situation in which legitimacy must be created anew and in conflict with inherited laws, customs, and traditions:

> Those who . . . become rulers through their own abilities, experience difficulty in attaining power, but once that is achieved, they keep it easily. The difficulties encountered in attaining power arise partly from the new institutions and laws they are forced to introduce in order to establish their power and make it secure. And it should be realised that taking the initiative in introducing a new form of government is very difficult and dangerous, and unlikely to succeed. The reason is that all those who profit from the old order will be opposed to the innovator, whereas all those who might benefit from the new order are, at best, tepid supporters of him.[27]

This passage can be read as a comment upon the difficulty of making exceptions, since the founder and usurper of a state face similar problems—problems that arise with innovation. While the founder of a political community has to create rules out of nothing, the usurper has to create new rules out of old ones. But through their activities, the founder as well as the usurper release forces which they cannot fully control but nonetheless have to cope with in order to be successful. Through the act of founding, anarchy and contingency are to be replaced by regularity and predictability, but through the act of usurpation, the regular and predictable are replaced by the forces of contingency.[28] Hence the effort at renewal does not only disrupt the customary and the familiar, but it destabilizes the very divide that previously

separated the inside of republican politics from its more anarchic outside, since what formerly was relegated to the outside now moves into the very centre of political action and understanding.

But the state-centric discourse of Machiavelli represents not only a change of perspective but also a new way of textualizing political reality by mirroring its structure in the structure and play of the text itself. Through this inherent rhetorical capacity, the textual focus on innovation represents as well as creates a space for innovation, and opens up new vistas in the structure of political action and understanding.[29] Thus, what commonly has been portrayed as a change of values is in fact also a profound change of identities. When the prince steps into political discourse at its very centre as a knowing and acting subject, political institutions are turned into objects of agency instead of being *loci* of participation.[30] Simultaneously, the concept of politics is extended to signify—and therefore also silently legitimize—those practices which formerly constituted its negation. The exceptional can now be interpreted independently of any prior rule and be understood as prior in relation to the rule: in the beginning was the act of usurpation.

Hence, by reinterpreting the act of usurpation as an act of founding or innovation, the first step is taken toward an understanding of the classical coup as a discontinuous expansion of princely power, in order to render previous enlargements or conquests secure, either against rival claims to power or against the forces of contingency released by the initial act of usurpation. Simply put, from Machiavelli on, the making of exceptions becomes the ultimate rule of politics.

But whenever we try to arrive at a more exact understanding of this change, a series of historiographical problems have to be faced. First, there is a widespread tendency to overestimate impact of the state-centric discourse and the swiftness of its dissemination, coupled with a corresponding tendency to underestimate the persistence and vigour of the policentric discourse.[31] Certainly the work of Viroli has done much to improve on such simplistic interpretations, but it still remains to account for the dissemination of the state-centric perspective after 1600.

Second, and more important, it is inherently difficult to describe the transition between prima facie incommensurable perspectives without privileging the one over the other in the description. This problem becomes all the more real when the historian tries to account for the spread of the state-centric discourse retrospectively, since the explanation is likely to contain conceptual elements from the discourse whose emergence and final triumph are to be accounted for.[32] Again Viroli has described this transition down to detail in the Italian context, but has done so from a contextualist viewpoint, in which conceptual and political change are accounted for in terms congruent with

the perspective to be accounted for. A contextualist historiography depicts conceptual change as the outcome of a battle of opinions, constituted and regulated by a will to power similar to that which animates the discourse of reason of state.

From such a viewpoint, the spread of the state-centric perspective looks like a self-fulfilling prophecy, but with the absurd proviso that even the very act of prophesying must have been part of the prophecy. This would certainly help us to account for *why* the state-centric perspective seemed impossible to resist *after* it had gained foothold: when a critical rhetorical mass had been reached, those who set out to combat the state-centric perspective had to do so on its own ground, by relying on the very same set of practices and stratagems that had been rendered accessible by the very same discourse they were fighting, but whose further dissemination they nevertheless instead unwittingly contributed to.[33]

REASON OF STATE AND THE CLASSICAL COUP D'ÉTAT

Unfortunately, this logic does not explain the reverse and often neglected phenomenon, namely, the fact that the advocates of *raison d'état* for a long time felt obliged to justify their peculiar perspective as well as their acts with reference to the older system of political values, embodied in the policentric discourse on the virtues, something which unwittingly yet inevitably contributed to the survival of these values. If such an explanation is attempted, it would invariably reduce this habit to a manifestation of the new discourse and the dissimulation it fosters.

As I shall argue in this section, the crucial turning point in the rhetorical battle between the policentric and the state-centric perspectives lies in the interpretation of the exceptional. In the same way a coup has to be justified with reference to the exceptional in order to be successful, the rhetorical success of the state-centric discourse depended on its capacity to define the criteria of application of the concept of exception and to reserve the interpretation of and decision upon the exception to a particular mode of political subjectivity and agency. As I shall attempt to make clear, the classical coup is not merely an expression of an already manifest transformation of political discourse, but rather the very instrument with which this transformation is carried out and the victory of the state-centric view of politics completed. By conquering the right to define the exception, state-centric discourse not only

secured its own triumph but also that of its own object: the doubly abstract state.

Important clues to how this change took place are to be found among the neostoics and their particular way of handling the balance between policentric and state-centric values.[34] Simply put, to Montaigne, Lipsius, and Charron, it was no longer a matter *if* one should depart from the honorably and morally praiseworthy, but rather a question of under *what circumstances* and to what extent this was permissible or even recommendable.[35] At first glance, the burden of proof seems to be distributed in favor of those virtues that were about to be worn down by the same practices upon which these authors so cavalierly sought to impose restrictions, since the imperatives of circumstance forced the would-be transgressor to argue that an exception indeed had been present before he embarked upon an otherwise blameworthy line of action.

However, even before the advent of neostoicism, the policentric system of virtues had lost much of the coherence necessary to sustain political action. One of the main problems in late-medieval political discourse had been to account for the relationship between various virtues, and how they could be brought to support each other within a community created to realize the common good. In theory, these virtues were subordinated by the same overarching teleological principle; as a consequence, value conflicts in the modern sense were not possible. In practice, however, political action was enabled and constrained by these virtues, which not only supplied the concepts necessary to justify a particular line of action but also furnished the premises of the deliberation that conditioned the very possibility of acting. Deliberation and justification were assumed to be two sides of the same coin and sequentially inseparable.

Therefore, to the neostoics, the preordained harmony among the virtues was already broken. So when the demands of political prudence eventually became more sharply contrasted with policentric values, it was contrasted with a system of values already beset by decay due to the tensions between a variety of possible interpretations—Aristotelian, Christian, and Stoic—of the virtues and their possible relationship to political action. Political action still had to be justified with reference to the virtues, but the latter no longer constituted the condition of possibility of the former by informing the chain of reasoning conducive to particular acts. Rather, justification and deliberation were now separate and stood no longer in a predetermined relationship to each other. As a consequence, the dictates of reason of state could easily be substituted for the policentric virtues in actual lines of practical reasoning, but without necessarily undermining the possibility of *justifying* the ensuing

line of action with reference to the virtues.[36] The prudent and the honorable *could* but needed not to coincide.

When Justus Lipsius in *Politicorum sive civilis doctrinae libris sex* (1589) introduces the concept *prudentia mixta*, he does so in order to handle this lacuna between reason and agency and simultaneously dovetail the art of the state with Christian morality.[37] *Prudentia mixta* is a blend of these elements and is subdivided into three categories. The first and slight form of prudence consists in mistrust and dissimulation; the second and moderate forms consist in bribery; the third and serious form in outright deceit and treachery. Whereas slight prudence is recommendable and moderate prudence permissible, the third form is extremely condemnable. Lipsius then goes on to discuss the exceptional circumstances under which these stratagems should be applied, but confesses that he is unable to solve the underlying dilemma.[38]

Now it was this emergent tension between morals and politics that came to constitute the core problem in Gabriel Naudé's manual in the theory and practice of coup d'état. Politically adventurous librarian to Mazarin, student both of magic and politics—which were not that far apart at the time—Naudé could well qualify as a character in a novel by Eco. His main contribution, however, was his effort to provide reason of state with a rationalist justification, firmly centered on the concept of coup d'état.[39]

Whereas this concept was well known to his contemporaries, the underlying tensions between deliberation and justification had remained largely unresolved. Criticizing Lipsius, Naudé notices that his trichotomy gives no access to the exceptional. Ordinary prudence (*prudence ordinaire*) is quite sufficient given the normal course of political affairs, while the extraordinary form of prudence (*prudence extraordinaire*) includes those deeds that conflict with established morality and therefore only should be used under extraordinary circumstances.[40] In order to grasp the full essence of the art of government, Naudé subsequently introduces a third category, the exceptional political act as exemplified by the coup d'état.

According to Naudé, the coup and its techniques cannot be understood in the same terms as politics in general, since the latter activity presupposes the existence of general rules and maxims, based on justice and sovereignty. Any attempt to reduce the coup to general rules is bound to fail, and would contradict the very nature of the coup.[41] Nevertheless, its logic can be known by deciphering princely practices, and then reinscribed into the very centre of political knowledge as the condition of the general and regular. Hence, the concept of coup d'état refers both to a particular type of action and a general structure of action all at once, since the doctrine of coup d'état seeks to specify those circumstances under which it is necessary and advisable to violate established precepts in order to create new ones, while securing princely

power and the common good simultaneously; that these goals could conflict was not altogether obvious to Naudé and his contemporaries.[42] To Naudé, the coup is a variety of ancient *arcana imperi*, that political wisdom that ceases to be effective if and when reduced to maxims or made public. The coup must be carefully veiled by secrecy; if not, it ceases to be a coup.[43]

Another important difference between the kind of political action that can be subsumed under and therefore justified with reference to general rules and the kind of political action exemplified by the coup is that whereas the former has to be justified in advance to have any prospect of success, the success of the latter demands that action precedes justification and that the reasons figuring in the deliberation that precedes the act remain hidden until the desired result has been achieved.[44]

Thus the very logic of the coup presents the agent with a pragmatic paradox. Whenever taken seriously, the demand that an action ought to be justified in advance threatens to undermine its execution, while its execution undermines the future possibility of justifying it. In this case, the legitimacy of a given line of action becomes exclusively dependent on its relative success, since its justification now either is part of or a consequence of that very line of action, rather than an independent sequence of practical reasoning preceding and therefore also causing it. The practical syllogism has here been replaced by instrumental rationality.

Naudé goes on to specify the precautions that must be taken if a coup is likely to succeed. Most important, the resort to coups must be confined to exceptional circumstances, otherwise the capacity of the coup to transgress the regular is undermined.[45] The making of exceptions thus has an objective correlate in the rarity of exceptional events; the capacity to make coups is both enabled and constrained by the scarcity of these events, and the effectiveness of coups is exposed to the attrition that comes with frequent use:

> Experience teaches us that everything that is enchanting and extraordinary does not appear all the time: comets do appear only once in ages: monsters, deluges, Vesuvius's conflagrations and earthquakes arrive even more rarely, and this rarity lends a lustre and zest to many things, which they lose upon frequent use.[46]

Even here the agent confronts a pragmatic paradox, since the contingency released by the coup undermines the prospects of its success. As a generalized practice, the coup is successful only to the extent that the relationship to its negation remains stable, yet every singular coup destabilizes and subverts this relationship cumulatively. In the final analysis, therefore, the logic of the coup d'état seems self-defeating. If the regular is transgressed frequently, the acts of transgression form a statistically regular series. If this is allowed to

happen, the exceptional not only by definition ceases to be exceptional, but the regular becomes also impossible to transgress without the act of transgression being an instance of yet another regularity, that of transgression itself. When the original opposition between rule and exception is dissolved, every regularity appears as the outcome of past exceptions, and every possible future exception an instance of a past regularity. Therefore, if the exceptional is to be justified, it must be historicized. Throughout history, exceptions constitute the rule.

Naudés next step is to discuss those historical circumstances which enable and indeed necessitate coups. Much like in *Il Principe*, the paradigm case is the founding of new political communities. The important difference is that Naudé attempts to demythologize those founding gestures whose historical reality Machiavelli and his ancient predecessors never questioned when tirelessly citing them as *exempla* of successful lawgiving. But Naudé himself does not doubt the historical reality of characters like Theseus, Romulus, Moses, and Cyrus, nor that they founded political communities out of nothing. To doubt this presupposes access to a form of metahistorical critique which it took Enlightenment historiographers considerable labour to elaborate and bestow with a mythological splendour of its own.[47]

What Naudé bravely doubts, unaided by Descartes but well under the spell of Pyrrhonian skepticism, is the magical content of these founding gestures. Rather than being expressions of supernatural intervention in human affairs, these gestures were performances, testifying to the skillful employment of ruse and dissimulation in political affairs and therefore edifying examples of successful coups in the past.[48] Thus, in the absence of anything supernatural, it is the prerogative of politics to create simulacra by manipulating a blend of natural and artificial signs; all those magicians and prophets of the past were in reality successful coupmakers, since politics ultimately depends on the capacity to conjure up the supernatural and divine.[49]

Pushed to extremes, this critique of political myth not only deprives the state of its supernatural resplendence but also makes it very difficult to furnish the state and the law with *any* kind of transcendent legitimacy. Therefore, to Naudé, the state and the laws do not find their origin or ultimate point of justification in the *ius naturalist* idea of reasonable sociability or in a social contract grounded in consent, but in the ability of the coup to create and disseminate those myths that are necessary to legitimize the state and its laws.[50]

Contrary to modern belief, however, the consequence of Naudé's rhetoric is not that power as such is demythologized by being submerged in the natural and profane. Rather, by demonstrating that the miraculous and supernatural derive from the mastery of the exceptional, the mastery of the exceptional is

elevated above the humanly and to the level of the semidivine, the latter whose existence had not yet been exposed to doubt. Phrased differently, the demythologization of the legendary acts of lawgiving makes it possible to describe the practices of contemporary absolutism in perfectly analogous terms and to justify them with reference to the timeless essence of politics constituted by the perennial practice of coup d'état. Therefore, Richelieu is not merely a pale imitation of a Moses now established as his precursor; it is Moses that is a distant founder of a practice now being brought to perfection by his successor Richelieu.

Given this mutual dependence between reconstructability and justifiability, all present rules appear as the outcome of past exceptions. Those rules can and ought to be transgressed if this is necessary to create or consolidate a state, or if this state is threatened by inner or outer rivals of power.[51] Interpreted as a general structure of action, the practice of coup d'état constitutes a discontinuous extension of state power in time and space, and therefore also a means of securing the continuous presence of that power in time and space by gradually disconnecting it from its relationship to the personalized sovereignty of the prince. In this respect, it is the practice of state making par excellence, since at the very moment the prince ceases to be identical with his state, the state becomes identical with itself by virtue of its continuous existence in time and space. By conquering the exception, the identity of the modern state could hopefully be rendered secure from future intrusions.

The pragmatic paradoxes inherent in the structure of action that is constituted by the discourse on coup d'état can now be dissolved. If the practice of coup d'état appears to be beset by counterfinality, it is because it has the peculiar capacity of making itself redundant insofar as it succeeds. As Naudé points out, the coup is conditioned by a particular cosmology and presupposes a perishable and transitory world. At the level of political and religious affairs, transitoriness manifests itself in an utter lack of constancy and stability; in the absence of any natural or divinely preordained regularity, everything in this world is exposed to corruption and decay.[52]

This sense of transitoriness is a recurrent theme in all seventeenth century political thought and figures as a pretext for the restless quest for epistemic certainty and political security in an age when the forces of contingency unleashed by state-centric political practices had manifested themselves in religious and civil war.[53] The solution of the Neostoics and the *ius naturalists* to this problem had been to appeal to a common ground of reason, elevated above religious passions.

But secular reason was as much poison as it was antidote. To Naudé and the political technologicians of the seventeenth century, there was no such

foundation except the form of successful execution of power exemplified by and embodied in secular and rationalist reason of state, an execution of power whose outcome was left to the new mythologicians of power to justify by appeals to a social contract. Ultimately, therefore, the classical coup is a way of handling and tempering the very same transitoriness that had been conjured up by the new political discourse, and this through an endless repetition in the new time of those historical events and deeds which had made possible the old world that triumphant reason now so valiantly demythologized and nullified. After all, we have to remember that in the seventeenth century, political speculation had no room for progress, only for recurrence and repetition.

FROM REASON OF STATE TO DEMOCRACY

To us moderns, it is easy to imagine that the advent of modernity marks the end of the classical coup. Since the French Revolution and the coming of popular sovereignty, the coup has become utterly superfluous. Why should a sovereign people ever undertake a coup against themselves?

However, this idea is not without consequence. Insofar as we feel obliged to accept the idea that rules are the outcome of exceptions rather than the converse, we are led to accept the idea that the only way out of this predicament would be to reconquer that which has been suspended and buried by earlier exceptions, or, more importantly, by creating a horizon of future possibilities not yet subsumed under the regular, against which we can project our dreams and desires. Thus, to modern political thought, nostalgia and pleas for change become the dominant modes of legitimizing political agency.

In this respect the classical concept of coup prefigures the modern concept of revolution, since the logic of the classical coup called for as well as effected an enlargement of the domain of the political as such.[54] The more institutions and practices that can be understood and described as political ones, the more comprehensive the change required to affect the political as such. The longer the shadow of the future, the more hopes and expectations for such a change; the more such hopes and expectations projected onto it, the more comprehensive the ensuing change can be.[55]

So when the modern concept of coup d'état emerges in the semantic turmoil of postrevolutionary discourse, it is defined as the very antithesis of political progress. The concept is now used to describe not only the political practices of absolutism, but any set of events that threatens to cancel or reverse modern achievements, or worse, their very possibilities and ends. That this usage extended not only to the proponents of revolution but also to

its critics is evident from the following brief remark by Tocqueville upon the eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, which was to become the paradigm case of a modern coup:

> Force overturning law, trampling on the liberty of the press and of the person, deriding the popular will, in whose name the Government pretends to act—France torn from the alliance of free nations to be yoked to the despotic monarchies of the Continent—such is the result of this coup d'état.[56]

An emergent terminological consensus made it possible to agree about what to disagree about in modern ideologues such as Tocqueville, Marx, Proudhon, and Bagehot. Granted that the event in question could be characterized as a coup—something which even Burke would have found difficult to deny had he been alive—this event could be subjected to a wide variety of interpretations, each dependent on the particular kind of expectations that happened to regulate their understanding of the present.

If we cling to the belief that modern forms of legitimacy not only have rendered the classic coup superfluous but also represent a complete break with the dark past of absolutism, we are not only complacent but also naive.

True, in a modern democracy based on an imagined identity between rulers and the ruled and a harmony of interest between state and society, there is certainly no room for the classical coup. Nor is there supposed to be any need for mythological founders or miraculous gestures of legislation. When it comes to legitimacy, democracy is supposedly self-sufficient. However, this presents modern democracy with a paradox, since it becomes difficult to explain how this legitimacy was founded in and through an original contract without invoking some extra-contractual ground of this state of things. Rousseau was well aware of this problem:

> For a young people to be able to relish sound principles of political theory and follow the fundamental rules of statecraft, the effect would have to become the cause; the social spirit, which should be created by those institutions, would have to preside over their very foundation; and men would have to be before the law what they should become by means of law. The legislator therefore, being unable to appeal to either force or reason, must have recourse to an authority of a different order, capable of constraining without violence and persuading without convincing.[57]

According to Rousseau, it is this paradox that has compelled legislators in all times to direct their attention to the supernatural and divine, hopefully there finding the first principles of law and society. By incessantly demasking lawgiving gestures and profaning society, modern democracy has deprived itself of this possibility.[58]

Now what lurks behind the unmasked and profane is nothing but the pure exception, which makes modern democracy a continuation of reason of state by other means. Here the affinity between Machiavelli and Rousseau perhaps is greater than historians of ideas have been willing to admit, since at the theoretical level, the foundation of democracy appears as the result of an ultimate coup d'état that once and for all has reconciled power and legitimacy in a positive and mutually reinforcing identity.

This done, the discourse and practice of reason of state could safely be relegated to the place from which it came, to the primitive outside of politics. Within this view, there is no coincidence that reason of state has become reserved for interstate relations within an international system, while presumably being absent in the relationship between rulers and ruled within those states. The amoral past of modern states has simply been pushed out in the international system and embodied in its violent practices.

Hence, and according to the decisionist thesis that constituted the provisional point of departure of this essay, modern democracy leaves the back door open to the exception in case of foreign threats or inner crisis. By the same token, the modern coup represents a sudden *foreignization* of domestic politics, since those parts of modern political practice reserved for interstate intercourse penetrate the sphere from which they have been aborted, and therefore also hurl it back to its predemocratic past.

At this point, it is tempting to read into the genealogy of the concept of coup d'état a certain circularity and a certain recurrence, by regarding the modern coup as a counterpart to the policentric concept of usurpation, and, by implication, in modern democracy see the possible rebirth of the ancient *polis*. In fact, Rousseau leads us into this temptation by taking tyranny to be equivalent to the illegitimate execution of power and then spelling out the message of Aristotle's definition to the moderns, namely, that since the dawn of history, there have been no kings, only usurpers.[59]

But perhaps we should resist this temptation, not only because of the anachronism it invites but also because of the nostalgia it inspires. The modern state is indissolubly intertwined with state-centric discourse, and the ways modern democracy formulates political problems presupposes the kind of abstract and depersonalized state that this discourse has left us with. As soon as we conceive of modern politics as a matter of authoritative allocation of values, or, when we understand justice in distributive terms, we tacitly presuppose the existence of an acting subject essentially separate from the object of its action, and this regardless of the imagined identity of rulers and ruled that constitutes the core of democratic ideology.

The fact that the prince has been replaced by the people in this equation does not change the basic state-centric perspective underlying it. At the same

time, nostalgia cannot redress this situation either, since any attempt to resurrect those forms of political legitimacy that preceded the triumph of the state-centric perspective are likely to become yet another manifestation of it by being realized from inside and perhaps even by the state. Every communitarian vision—no matter how benevolent—has potentially totalitarian implications, since it in any case will have to be implemented from the same position over and above the community that it promises to eliminate: here nostalgia and utopia converge.

Therefore, what distinguishes modern democracy from its antecedents is its peculiar arrangement of power and legitimacy and the modern concept of politics which this arrangement presupposes. Within policentric discourse, the divide between legitimate and illegitimate power coincided with the divide between politics and its other, since politics was the legitimate execution of power within the community of free and equal men. This presupposes that there indeed exists a sphere of activity that is genuinely apolitical or prepolitical, against which political activity can be measured and judged. Within policentric discourse, this was commonly done by making politics the condition of the perfection of the apolitical.

Within state-centric discourse, the problem of legitimacy is reduced to the capacity of creating legitimacy out of power, most notably by a gradual extension of power toward a preexisting social order and its traditional legitimacy. Thus, even in this case, politics demands that there should be something not yet political to politicize. The coup constitutes the paradigmatic means of creating legitimacy by a discontinuous expansion of the domain of the political, which consequently is brought to coincide with that of state authority.

In both cases, there is a close and symbiotic relationship between power and legitimacy, but without them being positively identified. In policentric discourse, legitimacy precedes power, since legitimacy—be it conceived of in theological or in teleological terms—conditions the possibility of political action in general and the wielding of power in particular; in the state-centric discourse, power precedes legitimacy, since power—understood either in mythological or in secular terms—is a necessary condition of legitimacy.

To modern democracy as well as to mainstream political science, power and legitimacy are interconnected in another way, since modern democracy seems to demand a positive identity between them. This identification is secured by defining legitimacy in terms of actual or hypothetical consent to a *de facto* distribution of power in the social body, and not in transcendental terms. Modern democracy seems to preclude precisely such a higher point of reference, since it has been married both to legal positivism and rationalism. However, modern democracy is—in fact, this is what makes it modern—

connected to an expectation of its own gradual perfection in time and projects the ultimate realization of democratic hopes into the future. The legitimacy of modern democracy does not reside in what it already is, but what it promises to become.

In a democracy, legitimate is that and only that power that is subject—in the very literal sense of being subject—to the explicit or tacit consent among them who are in turn subjected to that power. The basic problem is that this equation is unstable: it is always possible to object that it is power itself that enforces consent. Power does not exist because people have consented and voluntarily subjected themselves to it; rather, the fact that people consent to power is but a manifestation of their prior subjection to power. This paradox is not possible to solve without introducing some premise that stabilizes the relationship between power and legitimacy by pointing outside this circle, once more in the direction of the transcendental.

As long as this equation remains unstabilized, the divide between the political and the apolitical can only be drawn from within the political, yet at the same time the perfection of modern democracy in time seems to demand that the domain of the political continuously is expanded. If we by democracy mean a form of government in which the decision upon what is to be subjected to democratic decisions itself has to be democratic in character, then the question of what is political and what is not political itself becomes a political decision. In a perfect democracy, there can be no practice or institution that is a priori apolitical and, therefore, consequently nothing against which politics can be measured and judged. Politics becomes by definition boundless and absolute.

But if everything is politics, then politics suddenly becomes nothing. The challenge of modern democracy therefore lies in the ever-increasing surplus of politics that threatens to make the political itself superfluous. Until someone makes an exception, that is.

NOTES

1. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 43.

2. Cf. Terence Ball, "The Ontological Presuppositions and Political Consequences of a Social Science," in *Changing Social Science: Critical Theory and Other Critical Perspectives*, ed. D. R. Sabia and J. Wallulis (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), 31-51.

3. *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Political Institutions* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 158. However, in *The Oxford English Dictionary*—whose prime task is not to reflect an existing

consensus within the social sciences—we learn that a coup is "a sudden and great change of government, carried out violently or illegally by the ruling power."

4. Gabriel Naudé, *Considérations Politiques sur les Coups d'éstat* (Political reflections on Coups d'état) (Paris, 1667), 103: "des actions hardies & extraordinaires que les Princes sont contraints d'executer aux affaires difficiles & comme desesperées, contre le droit commun, sans garder même aucun ordre ny forme de justice, hazardant l'interest du particulier, pour le bien du public."

5. Locke, *Second Treatise*, § 226-7, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. P. Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 434.

6. Locke, *Second Treatise*, § 197, 415.

7. Cf. Alessandro Pizzorno, "Politics Unbound," in *Changing Boundaries of the Political*, ed. Charles S. Maier (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 27-62.

8. Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. G. Schwab (Boston: MIT Press, 1985), 5.

9. See, for example, Jean Bodin, *Six Books of a Commonweale* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), bk. 1, chap. 10.

10. Hans Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 6th ed. (New York: Knopf, 1985), 344.

11. Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 15.

12. James Farr, "Understanding Conceptual Change Politically," in *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change*, ed. T. Ball, J. Farr, and R. L. Hanson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 24-49.

13. Cf. Christian Meier, *The Greek Discovery of Politics*, trans. D. McLintock (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 13-19.

14. Aristotle, *The Politics*, $1255^{b}20$, $1277^{b}7$.

15. See, for example, Walter Ullmann, *A History of Political Thought: The Middle Ages* (Hammondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1965), 15 f.

16. See Nicolai Rubinstein, "A History of the Word '*Politicus*' in Early-Modern Europe," in *The Languages of Political Theory in Early-Modern Europe*, ed. A. Pagden (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 42-3; C. J. Nederman, "Aristotelianism and the Origin of 'Political Science' in the Twelfth Century," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 52, no. 2 (1991): 179-94.

17. See Gaines Post, *Studies in Medieval Political Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964), 301.

18. Maurizio Viroli, *From Politics to Reason of State: The Acquisition and Transformation of the Language of Politics 1250-1600* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), chap. 2.

19. See, for example, Quentin Skinner, "The State," in *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change*, ed. Terence Ball, Russell L. Hanson, and James Farr (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 90-131.

20. An interesting example is the commentary of contemporary chroniclers on the usurpation of the Florentine republic in 1434 by Cosimo de Medici. See Vespasiano da Bisticci, *The Vespasiano Memoirs*, trans. W. George and E. Waters (New York: Dial Press, 1926); for a background to the event, see D. Kent, *The Rise of the Medici: Faction in Florence 1426-1434* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978).

21. Cf. J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Tradition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), 237; Garrett Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy* (London: Cape, 1955), chap. 3; Justin Rosenberg, "Secret Origins of the State: The Structural Basis of Raison d'état," *Review of International Studies* 18 (1992), passim.

22. G. Giovanni Botero, *Della Ragion di Stato. Con tre libri delle cause della grandezza delle Città* (The reason of state) (1586. Reprint, Turin, Italy: UTET, 1948), preface.

23. Cf. Maurizio Viroli, "The Revolution in the Concept of Politics," *Political Theory* 20, no. 3 (1992): 480.

24. For an overview, see E. W. Cochrane, "Machiavelli 1940-1960," *Journal of Modern History* 33, no. 2 (1961): 113-36; J. H. Geerken, "Machiavelli Studies Since 1969," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 37 (1976): 351-68. For influential interpretations, see Isaiah Berlin, "The Originality of Machiavelli," in *Studies on Machiavelli*, ed. M. Gilmore (Firenze: Sansoni, 1972); Quentin Skinner, *Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 132-8; Viroli, *From Politics to Reason of State*, chap. 3.

25. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. R. Price (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), chaps. I-III.

26. Cf. Viroli, "The Revolution in the Concept of Politics," 486-9.

27. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, chap. VI, pp. 21-2.

28. Cf. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, 160-80.

29. Cf. M. McCanles, *The Discourse of Il Principe* (Malibu: Undena, 1983), 12 ff; J. D. Lyons, *Exemplum: The Rhetoric of Example in Early Modern France and Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989).

30. As Hexter has argued, Machiavelli uses the term *stato* quite consistently to denote an object of agency, and rarely with its medieval connotations of status or estate left intact. See J. H. Hexter, *The Vision of Politics on the Eve of the Reformation: More, Machiavelli, and Seyssel* (London: Allen Lane, 1973), 150-60.

31. The classical example in this respect is of course Friedrich Meinecke, *Machiavellism: The Doctrine of Raison d'Etat and Its Place in Modern History*, trans. D. Scott (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1984). Against this reading of Machiavelli as the precursor of modern *Realpolitik* stands an alternative tradition that emphasizes his defence of republican and policentric values in *The Discourses* (1521). See, among others, Hans Baron, "Machiavelli: The Republican Citizen and the Author of The Prince," *English Historical Review* 76 (1961): 217-53; Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, passim; G. Bock, Q. Skinner, and M. Viroli, eds., *Machiavelli and Republicanism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

32. Meinecke, *Machiavellism*, 50-3.

33. For different accounts, see ibid., 50; Felix Raab, *The English Face of Machiavelli: A Changing Interpretation 1500-1700* (London: Routledge, 1964); Peter S. Donaldson, *Machiavelli and Mystery of State* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1988), chaps. 1 and 2; V. Kahn, "Reading Machiavelli: Innocent Gentillet's Discourse on Method," *Political Theory* 22, no. 2 (1994): 539-60.

34. For a penetrating analysis of the relationship between neostoicism and *raison d'état*, see Richard Tuck, *Philosophy and Government 1572-1651* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 31-64.

35. Montaigne, "L'Utile et l'Honorable" (The useful and the honourable) in *Essais*, vol. III, essay I (Paris: Felix Alcan, 1922); Lipsius, *Six Bookes of Politicks or Civil Doctrine* (London, 1594), bk. IV, chap. XIV; Charron, *De la Sagesse* (On wisdom) (Paris, 1820), bk. III, chap. II.

36. Cf. G. Oestreich, *Neostoicism and the Early Modern State* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 28-38, 48 f.

37. Cf. Wiliam F. Church, *Richelieu and Reason of State* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973), 58-62.

38. Lipsius, *Six Bookes of Politicks*, bk. IV, chap. XIV; Cf. Oestreich, *Neostoicism and the Early Modern State*, 49, 107 f.

39. For a background to Naudé's life and work, see J. V. Rice, *Gabriel Naudé 1600-1653* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1939), chap. 4; J. A. Clarke, *Gabriel Naudé 1600-1653* (Hamden, CN: Archon Books, 1970), chap. 3; A. E. Bakos, " '*Qui Nescit Dissimulare Nescit Regnare*': Louis XI and Raison d'état during the Reign of Louis XIII," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 52, no. 3 (1991): 399-416.

40. Naudé, *Considérations*, 52 f., 116.

41. Naudé, *Considérations*, 64: "nous pouvons encore dire qu'ils ont pareillement depravé la nature de la chose, veu qu'ils nous proposent des preceptes generaux & des maximes universelles, fondées sur la justice & droit de Souveraineté."

42. Naudé, *Considérations*, 121: "soit pour la necessité ou evidente & importante utilité publique de l'Estat, ou du Prince." Naudé here and in other passages in *Considérations* tries to separate princely interest from general interest, semantically but without being able to do so analytically. That princely interest and general interest coincided appeared almost self-evident to most continental theorists of absolutism, since the general interest commonly was defined in terms of a hypothetical vantage point situated over and above rivaling interests in the social body, a vantage point that coincided perfectly with the perspective of the sovereign, who consequently came to embody this general interest. In the French context, it took d'Argenson some labour to articulate a recognizably modern doctrine of the general interest, later popularized by Rousseau. Cf. Nannerl O. Keohane, *Philosophy and State in France: The Renaissance to the Enlightenment* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 175 f.

43. Naudé, *Considérations*, 64 f. For a study of the concept *arcana imperi* and its theological foundations, see Ernst H. Kantorowicz, "Mysteries of State: An Absolutist Concept and Its Late Medieval Origins," *The Harvard Theological Review* 48 (1955): 65-91. Interestingly, Naudé seems to use the concept without its Christian connotations, and without reserving its use exclusively for the monarch; his application of the concept comes closer to that of the stoics, see Tacitus, *Annals*, bk. II, chap. XXXVI.

44. Naudé, *Considérations*, 104-5: "les causes, raisons, manifestes, declarations, & toutes les formes & façons de legitimer une action, precedent les effets & les operations, où au contraire . . . [les] Coups d'Estat . . . [la] principale regle de ceux-cy est de les tenir caches jusques à la fin."

45. For analyses of the concept of exception in *Considérations*, see Julien Freund, "La situation exceptionelle comme justification de la raison d'état chez Gabriel Naudé" (The exceptional situation as justification of reason of state in Gabriel Naudé), in *Staaträson: Studien zur Geschichte eines Politischen Begriffs* (Reason of state: Studies in the history of a political concept), ed. Roman Schnur (Berlin: Dunker & Humblot, 1975), 141-64; Y. C. Zarka, "Raison d'Etat, maximes d'etat et coups d'Etat chez Gabriel Naudé" (Reason of state, maximes of state, and coups d'état in Gabriel Naudé), in *Raison et déraison d'Etat: Théoriciens et théories de la Raison détat aux XVI^e^ et XVII^e^ siècles* (Reason and folly of state: Theoreticians and theories of reason of state in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries), ed. Y. C. Zarka (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1994), 151-69. Both these authors emphasize the objective criteria of the exception rather than its constructive potentials, however.

46. Naudé, *Considérations*, 123: "L'experience nous apprend, que tout ce qui est émerveillable & extraordinaire, ne se montre pas tous les jours: les cometes n'apparoissent que de siecles en siecles: les monstres, les deluges, les incendies du Vesuve, les tremblemens de terre, n'arrivent que fort rarement, & cette rareté donne un lustre & une coleur à beaucoup des choses, qui le perdent soudain que l'on en use trop frequentement."

47. Cf. Paul Veyne, *Did the Greeks Believe in Their Myths: An Essay on the Constitutive Imagination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 50-2.

48. Naudé, *Considérations*, 133: "Nous trouverons toujours qu'elles ont commencé par quelques-unes de ces inventions & supercheries, en faisant marcher la religion & les miracles en teste d' une longue suite de barbaries & de cruautez."

49. Naudé, *Considérations*, 133. Naudé argues extensively for this point of view in an earlier work, *Apologie pour tous les grands personnages qui ont esté faussement supçonnes de magie* (An apology for great men falsely suspected of magic) (Paris, 1625), esp. chap. 2. See also Rice, *Gabriel Naudé*, 47 ff. This critique of myth differed also from then prevalent ways of dealing with superstition, see V-L Tapié, *France in the Age of Louis XIII and Richelieu* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 290 f.

50. Naudé, *Considérations*, 140: "Il est encore à propos de remarquer, que tout ainsi que cette domination Monarchicque ne s'estoit pû établir sans beaucoup de ruses & tromperies."

51. Naudé, *Considérations*, 140: "lors qu'il s'agit d'affoiblir ou casser certains droits privileges, franchises & exemptions dont joüissent quelques sujets au prejudice & diminuation de l'autorité du Prince." P. 164: "lors qu'il est necessaire de ruiner quelque puissance, laquelle pour estre trop grande, nombreuse, ou étenduë en divers lieux . . . on ne peut pas facilement abatre par les voyes ordinaires."

52. Naudé, *Considérations*, 220: "que ces trois principes internes des Estats venant à veillir & se corrompre, la religion par les heresies ou atheismes; la justice par la venalité des offices, la faveur des grands, l'autorité des Souverains; & les sectes par la liberte qu'un chacun prend d'introduire des nouveaux dogmes, ou de rétablir les anciens."

53. Cf. Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 45 ff.

54. Cf. Reinhart Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis: Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society* (Oxford: Berg, 1988), esp. chaps. 1 and 10, where he argues that this extension of the political realm is imitated by revolutionary practices rather than something that conditions them.

55. Reinhart Koselleck, "Historical Criteria of the Modern Concept of Revolution," in *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, ed. Reinhart Koselleck (Boston: MIT Press, 1985), 46 f.

56. de Tocqueville, *Letter to The Times*, 11 December 1851. Reprinted in J. B. Halstead, *December 2, 1851. Contemporary Writings on the Coup d'état of Louis Napoleon* (New York: Anchor Books, 1972), 45. I am grateful to Jan Sellberg for having drawn my attention to this book.

57. Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, 216, in *The Social Contract and Discourses* (London: Everyman's, 1990).

58. For an analysis, see C. Kelly, " 'To Persuade without Convincing' ": The Language of Rousseau's Legislator," *American Journal of Political Science* 31 (1987): 321-35.

59. Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, 259 note.

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