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PREFACE

The theme of the 1998 volume of *Animus* is "Early Modern Thought", covering the period c.1550 to c.1800. But what gives unity to this period of the intellectual history of mankind? There are obviously very significant developments in the period: the Reformation, the rise of the modern state, the foundations of modern science and technology, the birth of modern philosophy, the discovery and colonization of the New World. There is also as the period draws to a close a denouement of the early enthusiasm or at least a transformation of it into its secular expression.

The period begins with a recognition and assertion of human freedom, for what is the Reformation but the acknowledgement of the interior authority of conscience against the external authority of priests and bishops, and what is the Cartesian philosophy but a new beginning from thought alone, free from anything external or presupposed. The rise of modern democracies, the conquest of the New World and of nature, are themselves manifestations of man coming to his majority, knowing his freedom and determining himself. The period draws to a close in what is called 'Enlightenment', which superficially appears destructive of the earlier enthusiasms, of faith, of the elements of early modern philosophy now thought 'dogmatic'. But 'Enlightenment' is related to the earlier thought as its further development, a self-determination which sees in Protestant piety a servitude it will not tolerate, and in the earlier modern philosophy an incomplete subjective principle not known as its own.

Essential to *Animus* from its beginning has been the principle that in order to appreciate any argument drawn from our tradition whether poetical, theological or philosophical, there is the absolute necessity first to understand it on its own terms. In this our third issue we present nine articles on authors from Shakespeare to Kant written in accord with this principle. For this period our general principle has a peculiarly intense interest arising from the fact that many of our contemporary practical and theoretical judgments are based on misinterpretations of early modern thought. It is commonly assumed among left-wing Americans for example that the United States is a secular state and among certain conservatives that it is directly a Christian state. Peddle's article in this issue shows rather how Puritanism and Enlightenment converge in the Constitution. Again, in literary interpretation a self-subsistent individuality is commonly assumed to animate the dramas of Shakespeare. Epstein's article on his great tragedies shows rather that this individuality is only formed in relation to the state and to the Good, a poetic world therefore on the very eve of the early modern period.

The essays we present here, if they do not take up explicitly the theme of the underlying unity of this period, everywhere presuppose it and are written in relation to it. Thus, Kirby shows how Hooker can assimilate ideas of Aquinas concerning natural law and still remain a thoroughgoing Protestant reformer. Andrews shows the Cartesian philosophy beginning without presupposition from thinking alone, and Scott treats of the tension in Leibniz and the Occasionalists between God's absolute creativity and the self-subsistence of the monads.

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Maxwell argues against the contemporary reduction of Hume to an unqualified skepticism and shows rather his significance as a serious metaphysician of the period. Stafford argues that Kant's confidence in the autonomy of ethical selfhood entails the subordination of Christian categories to the demands of rational subjectivity, and Kierkegaard offers no genuine alternative to this Enlightenment position.

The recovery of an accurate knowledge of the thought of this period is further rendered difficult by two kinds of anachronism. One would assimilate the thought of this period to its Medieval antecedents, evident in Stephen Menn's book on Descartes and Augustine, as Hankey's critical review makes clear; the other finds purely contemporary ideas and concerns in this period, as Robertson has shown that Leo Strauss has done in his interpretation of early modern political philosophy.