intoxication. You have to struggle, however, to see how intellectually radical he is. That is one way of sustaining his claim to attention and perhaps to greatness. Pick up any work by Strauss—except perhaps for, *pace* Pangle, the interminable and uneventful *Socrates and Aristophanes* (1966)—and you find an uncanny ability to get under the skin of the text. Strauss can impersonate any idea or attitude or perspective. He has the beautiful severity of detachment. Pangle is eloquent on this power (p. 45). On any given text, Strauss is able to lose himself in the flow of thought and provide the revelation of unsurpassed insight.

The Heart of Judgment: Practical Wisdom, Neuroscience, and Narrative. By Leslie Paul Thiele. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006. 334p. $80.00.
DOI: 10.1017/S1537592707070958

— Peter J. Steinberger, *Reed College*

Paul Thiele asks the right question: How should we think about political judgment and, more generally, practical wisdom, understood as an intellectual faculty or virtue that is different from, or at least irreducible to, faculties of logical or scientific reasoning but that remains, nonetheless, a decidedly rational mode of thought in its own right? Such a question defines, arguably, the project of the sixth book of the *Nichomachean Ethics.* And Aristotle's failure to provide there a fully satisfying account of the nature of *phronesis*—something different from *sophia* on the one hand, from a merely nonrational knack on the other—establishes the problematic for virtually all subsequent approaches to judgment.

In addressing this problem, hence in attempting to solve the mystery of judgment, Thiele's strategy is to deploy the vast resources of contemporary neuroscience. Roughly: we can understand how the judging mind operates if we can understand how the mind in general operates. In some substantial sense, then, the problem of judgment is to be understood as a scientific problem, rather than a philosophical one.

It is, I think, virtually inevitable that someone would write such a book; at this point, any effort to get clear about one or another manner of thinking is surely apt to consider, and would be at least tempted to exploit, the extraordinary and frequently stunning findings of the new science of cognition. But if such a book pretty much had to be written, it is also the case that Thiele has written it well. This is an interesting and worthy effort that suggests an earnest, hard-fought engagement with the materials of cognitive science and psychobiology—relying primarily (though, it must be said, not especially critically) on some of the less technical, more speculative, hence more controversial works of major figures in the field—and an equally earnest effort to bring those materials to bear on venerable issues of political theory. As such, it is a welcome addition to the literature.

To examine judgment from the perspective of cognitive science is inevitably to embrace a kind of physicalism. Thus, Thiele considers a set of standard themes in the literature on judgment—the importance of experience, the role of unconscious or tacit knowledge, the function of emotion—and in each case the phenomenon in question is reduced to a complex set of physical processes internal to the brain. For example, to learn from experience is really to undergo a kind of "brain mapping" driven by the "electrochemical activity" of synapses and involving "neural relays" that "chart the history of the individual" and that compose, as such, the "neural inventory of the individual's life" (p. 77). When analyzed in this way, the kind of experience that we expect of a good judge seems hardly different from the learned behavior that we find in animals. Thiele is sometimes explicit about this: "Twain observes that a cat is smart enough to learn from the experience of sitting on a hot stove never to do so again" (p. 109); and while he—Thiele—immediately notes that "we expect more of humans" than we do of cats, his account suggests, at best, a difference of degree rather than kind. Similarly, his account of the dependence of judgment on nonreflective, instinctual, unconscious mental process rooted in one or another "distinct brain region" (p. 127)—the hypothalamus, the hippocampus, the amygdala, and so on—again suggests a reductionist approach that would make it difficult to distinguish human behavior from that of nonhuman animals. To be sure, the author seeks to resist any such suggestion, insisting on the importance of "reflection and deliberation" (e.g., p. 119). But this insistence seems to lack conviction; for whereas the role of physical processes is outlined in great detail, the role of conscious reflection is merely asserted, never analyzed; and the assertion itself, though made more than once (cf. pp. 105–6), seems half-hearted at best, as, for example, when he suggests that, from the perspective of practical judgment, "[a]s often as not, the less conscious the activity the better" (p. 141).

Can this—the physical morphology and operation of the brain—really be what we have in mind when we say of an individual that he or she is a person of good judgment? Surely we wouldn't want to say (except perhaps metaphorically) that a dog is judicious, that a mouse possesses the virtue of prudence, that one frog has more common sense than another. Yet time and again, and despite repeated protests to the contrary, Thiele's account seems to conceive of human mental activity as merely a more complex configuration of purely physical processes that allow us to adapt to our environments much as animals adapt to theirs. Is this kind of adaptation really what we are referring to when we talk about moral insight, practical wisdom, and good judgment?

Again, Thiele acknowledges that the physical processes of judgment must be "supplemented" by reflection and deliberation (p. 105). But are not those things—good

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reflection and good deliberation—precisely what practical wisdom or judgment is really all about? And if, as he indicates, reflection and deliberation are supplementary to, hence, different from and irreducible to, the neural relays and brain maps of memory, learning, intuition and affect, then it is hard not to wonder just how helpful neuroscience really can be.

I think I can point to the exact location at which the tensions in Thiele's account become fully evident. Chapter 5 pursues "the riches of narrative"—the importance of stories—from the perspective of neuroscience. Thus, "[n]eural mapping is best understood as a narrative accounting" (p. 205). The narrative of consciousness is "synaptically formed," as a result of which the "self is generated" as a kind of "fabricated character" in a story. Of course, the individual does not write this story. While the story "allows the impression that an I is in control" (p. 206), hence "produces the wonderful sensation that our self is in charge of our destiny" (p. 209), the "impression" and the "sensation" are only that—happy illusions. But then, precisely on page 224, the focus of the chapter suddenly shifts to an account of narrative and the moral life as understood by, inter alia, Alasdair MacIntyre, Richard Rorty, Michel Foucault, Henry James, and any number of other philosophers, social theorists, and literary artists. Despite what Thiele says, it seems unlikely that these people are really talking about the same thing as the neuroscientists. When MacIntyre says "I can only answer the question 'What am I to do?' if I can answer the prior question 'Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?' " (p. 226), it is hard to escape the sense that he is thinking about something utterly different from, indeed largely unrelated to, the kind of "narrative" that describes "the development of [the brain's] neural relays . . . as the organism grapples with its environment" (p. 205).

If these two perspectives on narrative—the neuroscientific and the literary—share anything, it would seem to be a kind of antirationalism. On the one hand, it is in the findings of neuroscience, as invoked by Thiele, that "reason truly displays its slavish relation to passion" (p. 171). On the other hand, he embraces the message of, among others, Nikos Kazantzakis's famous protagonist Zorba, an "earthy man with a lust for life and an appetite for dance [who] does not read much . . . [c]ertainly no philosophy," but whose wisdom is said to surpass by far that of his erudite boss (p. 239). Once again, Thiele wants to resist the inference, to "strike a balance" between art and analysis, between the nonrational and the rational (p. 257ff). But again, the insistence seems unconvincing. For striking a proper balance cannot be an account of prudence or practical wisdom, since the very possibility of finding, recognizing, and embracing such a balance presumably presupposes, is unthinkable without, a kind of practical wisdom that must be, as a result, independent of and prior to the balance itself.

Representative Democracy: Principles and Genealogy.
By Nadia Urbinati. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006. 326p. $45.00.
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— Shannon Stimson, *University of California at Berkeley*

Nadia Urbinati begins her new book, *Representative Democracy: Principles and Genealogy,* with the observation that while we call certain contemporary western governments "democratic," any historical glance at their political institutions will as readily show that they were "designed to contain rather than encourage democracy" (p. 1). She takes as one "main point of reference" (p. 9) for her argument, Bernard Manin's claim in *The Principles of Representative Government* (1997) that the practice of contemporary democracy is still constrained by the fact that "there has been no significant change in the institutions regulating the selection of representatives and the influence of the popular will on their decisions in office" (p. 229, n. 2). For many, this view of unchanged institutions simply reflects either the more defensive observation that modern governments continue to need Schumpeterian neutralizing restrictions on participation or, conversely, the critical claim that modern democracy continues to fall short of an ideal (or perhaps idealized) Athenian standard of direct self-rule. On both of these views, Urbinati notes, representative democracy is seen as an *oxymoron* (p. 4). However, she quite forcefully disagrees, and what is more, she believes both the times and contemporary democratic theorizing are on her side.

Urbinati's very interesting book references a growing body of work of those contemporary democratic theorists such as Jane Mansbridge and the late Iris Marion Young, who have "rediscovered" representation and who offer various versions of the position that "political representation is both necessary and desirable" to democratic participation and that "democracy and representation are complimentary rather than antithetical" (p. 4) (Jane Mansbridge, "Rethinking Representation," *APSR* 97 [2003], 515–28; Iris Marion Young, "Deferring Group Representation," in Ian Shapiro and Will Kymlicka, eds., *Ethnicity and Group Rights,* Nomos 39, 1990). However, Urbinati's thesis is stronger still: "First, that representative democracy is neither an oxymoron nor merely a pragmatic alternative for something we, modern citizens, can no longer have, namely direct democracy; and, second, that it is intrinsically, and necessarily, intertwined with participation and informal expression of 'popular will' " (p. 10). This linkage of political representation to participation and the informal expression of sovereignty, which Urbinati takes to be one of continuous judgment rather than of periodic, decisionist voting, is what consciously distances her argument and conclusions from that of Manin, who sees the uniqueness of representative government deriving precisely from elections rather than from representation per se (p. 9).

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