

Tsagdis does not focus solely on the *teras*, but considers also the *thêrion*, which in Plato's thought resides half-way between the animal and the monstrous. Beyond a purely metaphorical reading, Plato responds to the problem, at once political, physical, and psychological, of the multifarious beast; he develops what Tsagdis calls, with a Platonic neologism, a *theriopolitics*.

Tsagdis's reconstruction offers a thoughtful basis for a group of articles devoted to some of the most important philosophers of the seventeenth century. Andrea Bardin frames Hobbes's philosophy between Galileo and Descartes, insisting on the intertwining of the natural and political dimensions of the problem of monstrosity. Bardin's enquiry reveals the ideological dimensions of Descartes's and Hobbes's scientific enterprise. Beyond the too easy opposition between dualism and monism, the two philosophers reinterpret materialism as a threat to their project of characterising modernity, both on psychological grounds (i.e., the invention of the modern subject) and political ones (i.e., the invention of modern sovereignty).

Hobbes is also at the centre of Arnaud Milanese's article, which analyses the dual dimensions of monstrosity in Hobbes' writings, namely the Civil War in *Behemoth* and the absolute sovereignty in *Leviathan*. Nothing, however, seems to support a clear and unambiguous opposition between the two models. Nothing, in other words, supports the idea that an extreme violence is confined to a natural sphere preceding political civilisation, as many contemporary readings suggest. Through the study of monstrosity and its relationship to animality, Milanese invites us to reconsider influential readings, such as Freud's and Derrida's, and to restore to Hobbes's thought the full magnitude of its complexity and productive ambivalence.

Oliver Feltham and Susan Ruddick explore another major author of the seventeenth century, namely Baruch Spinoza, whose philosophy itself has been described as monstrous from its inception; a characterization that continues across the modern period.<sup>4</sup> While Feltham focuses on the monstrous nature of the multitude, developed in different ways by both Hobbes and Spinoza, Ruddick scrutinises the potentialities of Spinoza's monstrous philosophy to decenter and de-ontologise the human subject, and invites us to reflect upon the limits of the human/nature boundary itself. Fruitfully employing Spinozism in order to build an original theory of judgement (Feltham) and an original critique of anthropocentrism and capitalist technocracy (Ruddick), both articles offer a deep analysis of the intimate connection between history and theory. In this way, they also open up a number of dialogues between monstrosity and contemporary discussions around 'new materialism' and the shape of the posthuman.

The passage from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century brought a new role and status for the concept of monstrosity. This largely happened within the development of the post-Cartesian *critique de système* by many eighteenth-century

philosophers, a development that allows some to elaborate new ideas regarding the origins of life as well as the new place of man in both civil society and, more broadly, in nature. This is manifest most clearly in the neo-Spinozist Denis Diderot and the crypto-Spinozist Giacomo Leopardi, two of the most important intellectual figures of the eighteenth century.

In her article, Annie Ibrahim takes up the interconnections between physiology and politics in Diderot's work, looking particularly at the concepts of normality, hybridity, and monstrosity. As with Ruddick's reflections on the need to compose human and non-human hybrids with Spinoza, Ibrahim also explores the posthuman monstrous forms emerging in Diderot's *Philosophical Thoughts*. Holding a revolutionary position against the idea of fixed and rigid boundaries, Diderot has much to say about the archaeology of biotechnology and biopolitics. Through the critique of a rigid taxonomy dividing the species, Ibrahim claims, Diderot's thought functions as an antidote to any possible taxonomy *within* the human species itself. Rather, his quest is to invent a physiology of the living monstrous, and Ibrahim reflects upon the political stakes of such a position.

The relative nature of the concept of monstrosity can also be seen in Fabio Frosini's analysis of Leopardi's thought. Leopardi develops his powerful meditation on monstrosity in nature within the dialectic between its reality and its imagination. Monstrosity, Frosini claims, is thus linked with the inception of the peculiarly human perception of the exceptionality of man or, in other words, of humanity as something distinguished from nature. Deviation from nature and otherness thus distinguish man from nature, making monstrosity, in Frosini's words, "the identification mark of humanity."

The last section of our issue continues the analysis on more contemporary ground, exploring the ramifications of ancient and early modern conceptions of monstrosity in recent philosophy and politics. Vittorio Morfino traces the presence of monstrosity in two major twentieth-century French philosophers, Henri Bergson and George Canguilhem, back to the Latin poet Lucretius. The connection with Spinozism is thus made clear once again, as the ancient atomists are one of the few classical sources explicitly praised by the author of the *Ethics*.<sup>5</sup> The interest in revisiting Bergson and Canguilhem is not only exegetical, but instead philosophico-political since what is at stake is nothing less than the status of chance, contingency, necessity, and the ontological determination of nature and the world. Through these divergent interpretations of Lucretius, Morfino explores the problem of man's role and the possibilities to shape both the world and nature, despite the tyranny of forms. Morfino's article points to the figure of *monstrum* as an inevitable materialist process of grappling with the aleatory, the uncertain and the unknown.

Echoing authors such as Foucault, Butler, and Mbembe, Selin Islekel and Andrea Torrano each tackle the issue of monstrosity in light of one of the most