

Shakespeare, Tocqueville, Nietzsche: The Politics of Human Greatness
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My project began with a few questions: in a democratic century where human beings are growing more and more alike, what role does the exceptional human being play in the political community? What is the role of the genius in political life? What political potential for widespread human flourishing and cultural unification flows from the actions of the great human being—in terms of art, in terms of political stability, in terms of regime type itself? And what, finally, is the ultimate nature and implication of human greatness and the exceptional individual?

Taking three motley geniuses—speaking roughly, a poet, a statesman, and a philosopher—as my guiding stars, I began by searching out portraits of human greatness and its political implications in the dramatic work of William Shakespeare.

Seeking answers to such questions first with a poet and not with a political philosopher might strike one as curious, but only if one forgets that from Plato to Rousseau, but also Nietzsche, the political

, *The Gay Science*,

