LEO STRAUSS ON MODERNITY

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SCOPE AND CONTENTS: This thesis is mainly an exposition of Leo Strauss' distinctive account of modernity which challenges conventional (Hegel's and Weber's) understanding of modernity as secularized Christianity, and opposes to it the portrayal of modernity as a radical modification of the classical tradition of political philosophy and a rejection of the biblical faith tradition, coming into being through the conscious rejection by political thinkers of both traditions' demanding moral precepts of moderation and restraint.

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INTRODUCTION

Professor Leo Strauss' homeland was Germany. He is a refugee from his native home. He found refuge briefly in England, and since 1938, in the United States.

In German universities, he studied philosophy, mathematics and natural science. In American universities, he has taught political science exclusively and continuously.[1]

Professor Strauss wants to say, qua Professor of Political Science, that tyranny is bad, and that regimes based on liberal democratic theory are qualitatively better than National Socialism or Communism, than tyrannies past or present. In order to find a basis on which such a claim could rest, Professor Strauss has dedicated himself to a prodigiously difficult goal: the restoration to academic respectability and to a central position in political science, of the quest for the good, for knowledge of the best political order. As we shall see, in his view, this requires the restoration of the classical natural right tradition, or at least, its reconsideration.

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[1] J. Cropsey (ed), Ancients and Moderns, (N.Y: Basic Books, 1964), p.v.

Professor Strauss is haunted by what he sees as the geist of the kind of German thinking which has insidiously infected contemporary thought, not least, his own discipline. He cites Troeltsch, a distinguished disciple of Max Weber, as proudly claiming as the distinction of German thought, its total rejection of the natural right tradition:

> . . . in Germany the very terms 'natural right' and 'humanity' 'have now become almost incomprehensible. . . and have lost altogether their original life and color.' While abandoning the idea of natural right and through abandoning it, he [Troeltsch] continued, German thought has 'created the historical sense'. . . .[2]

Strauss observes:

> Whatever might be true of the thought of the American people, certainly American social science has adopted the very attitude toward natural right which, a generation ago, could still be described, with some plausibility, as characteristic of German thought. . . .Present-day American social science. . . is dedicated to the proposition that all men are endowed by the evolutionary process or by a mysterious fate with many kinds of urges and aspirations, but certainly with no natural right.[3]

Strauss remarks:

> It would not be the first time that a nation, defeated on the battlefield and, as it were, annihilated as a political being, has deprived its conquerors of the most sublime fruit of victory by imposing on them the yoke of its own thought.[4]

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[2] Leo Strauss, Natural Right and History, (Chicago: Phoenix Books, The University of Chicago Press, 1965), p.1. (Hereafter this work will be referred to as NR.)

[3] Ibid., p.2.

[4] Ibid.

All of Strauss' work is in a sense a wrestling with this geist, a mighty striving to break its formidable hold. Professor Strauss' opposition and position is expressed in the following: referring to Heidegger's welcoming "as a dispensation of fate the verdict of the least wise and moderate part of his nation," Strauss asserts, "man cannot abandon the question of the good society, and. . . he cannot free himself from the responsibility for answering it by deferring to History or to any other power different from his own reason."[5]

Strauss diagnoses the contemporary "crisis of the West" in terms of the "question of the good society."

He demarcates modern from pre-modern by the new line of political philosophy, initiated as a conscious, even conscientious, break with the tradition of classical political thought. The crisis of modernity, then, is the crisis of modern political philosophy. It is Strauss' account of the emergence of this crisis and his tracing of it to its historical roots that is the subject of this paper.

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5 Leo Strauss, What Is Political Philosophy?, (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1959), p.27. (Hereafter this work will be referred to as WPP.) Strauss does not mention Heidegger by name. He speaks of "the most radical historicist" and mentions the year, 1933.

The West, until recently, had a clear vision of its aims and a certain conviction of its purpose. This clarity and certainty of purpose was the answer of modern political philosophy to the "question of the good society." This "answer" is expressed in the declarations of statesmen made during the World Wars. Strauss writes:

> These declarations merely restate the purpose stated originally by the most successful form of modern political philosophy -- a kind of that political philosophy which aspired to build on the foundation laid by classical political philosophy, a society superior in truth and justice to the society toward which the classics aspired. According to the modern project, philosophy or science was no longer to be understood as essentially contemplative and proud but as active and charitable; it was to be in the service of the relief of man's estate; it was to be cultivated for the sake of human power; it was to enable man to become the master and owner of nature through the intellectual conquest of nature. Philosophy or science should make possible progress toward ever greater prosperity; it thus should enable everyone to share in all the advantages of society or life and therewith give full effect to everyone's natural right to comfortable self-preservation and all that that right entails or to everyone's natural right to develop all his faculties fully in concert with everyone else's doing the same. The progress toward ever greater prosperity would thus become, or render possible, the progress toward ever greater freedom and justice. This progress would necessarily be the progress toward a society embracing equally all human beings: a universal league of free and equal nations, each nation consisting of free and equal men and women. For it had come to be believed that the prosperous, free, and just society in a single country or in only a few countries is not possible in the long run: to make the world safe for the Western democracies, one must make the whole globe democratic, each country in itself as well as the

> society of nations. Good order in one country presupposes good order in all countries and among all countries. The movement toward the universal society or the universal state was thought to be guaranteed not only by the rationality, the universal validity, of the goal but also because the movement towards the goal seemed to be the movement of the large majority of men on behalf of the large majority of men: only small groups of men who, however, hold in thrall many millions of their fellow human beings and who defend their own antiquated interests, resist that movement.[6]

In this depiction of the modern project, Strauss intimates it was riding for a fall. The reader, as it is intended he should, senses the overarching, if naive and idealistic, ambition of the modern project, its immoderation.[7] Immoderation is, in Strauss' view, the Alpha (Machiavelli) and Omega (Marx and Nietzsche) of modernity.

The political reality which punctured the plausibility of the modern project and brought its immoderation clearly to the fore was the revelation that it had spawned a terrible tyranny, Communism,[8] which threatens world domination and

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6 Leo Strauss, The City and Man, (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1964), pp. 3-4. (Hereafter this work will be referred to as CM.)

7 Nietzsche was ruefully aware of this. He puts it: "Measure is alien to us. . . . Like a rider on a steed that flies forward, we drop the reins before the infinite, we modern men, like semi-barbarians -- and reach our bliss only where we are most -- in danger." Probably intended, this evokes a pointed contrast to the "rider" of the Phaedrus. See F.Nietzsche's Beyond Good and Evil, Section 224.

8 Strauss notes that in the face of Fascism -- "not in spite of it but because of it" -- the modern project and its view of the human situation retained its plausibility. See CM, p.4.

justifies its tyranny and its imperial ambitions precisely in terms of the modern project's vision of a universal society. The West was struck dumb in word and deed. Strauss comments:

> It was impossible for the Western movement to understand Communism as merely a new version of that eternal reactionism against which it had been fighting for centuries. It had to admit that the Western project which had provided in its way against all earlier forms of evil could not provide against the new form in speech or in deed.[9]

Where previously the West could claim for its purpose the political realization of the brotherhood of man, it now could speak, and none too clearly, and hardly with one voice, only of containment of the Communist menace abroad, and even less clearly about improving things at home. Strauss notes: ". . . the same experience which has made it doubtful of the viability of a world-society has made it doubtful of the belief that affluence is the sufficient and even necessary condition of happiness and justice: affluence does not cure the deepest evils."[10] This lack of certainty of purpose makes for malaise. Strauss observes: "Some among us even despair of the future, and this despair explains many forms of contemporary degradation."[11] This "crisis" is aggravated

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[9] CM, p.5.

[10] Ibid., p.6. Strauss writes: "For the foreseeable future there cannot be a universal state, unitary or federative." See his discussion which concludes "one must rest satisfied. . . with a practical particularism." See pp. 5-6.

[11] Ibid., p.3.

by "those two great powers of the modern world,"[12] Science (social science positivism) and History (historicism) which stridently decree that the quest for purpose, the "question of the good society," is invalid. (Note: Weber, like Nietzsche and Heidegger, has a penchant for angst.)[13] Strauss repeatedly chastises his fellow social scientists for their assumed professional "objectivity." He writes:

> The habit of looking at social or human phenomena without making value judgements has a corroding influence on any preferences. The more serious we are as social scientists, the more completely we develop within ourselves a state of indifference to any goal, or of aimlessness and drifting, a state which may be called nihilism. The social scientist is not immune to preferences; his activity is a constant fight against the preferences he has as a human being and a citizen and which threaten to overcome his scientific detachment.[14]

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[12] WPP, p.18.

[13] Strauss has said of Max Weber: ". . . his soul craved a universe in which failure, that bastard of forceful sinning, accompanied by still more forceful faith, instead of felicity and serenity, was to be the mark of human nobility." Ibid., p.23.

[14] Ibid., pp. 18-19.

The social scientist, qua scientist, aspires to nihilism but does not rise above conformism and philistinism.[15]

Strauss writes:

> I have never met any scientific social scientist who apart from being dedicated to truth and integrity was not also wholeheartedly devoted to democracy. When he says that democracy is a value which is not evidently superior to the opposite value, he does not mean that he is impressed by the alternative which he rejects, or that his heart or his mind is torn between alternatives which in themselves are equally attractive. His 'ethical neutrality' is so far from being nihilism or a road to nihilism that it is not more than an alibi for thoughtlessness and vulgarity: by saying that democracy and truth are values, he says in effect that one does not have to think about the reasons why these things are good, and that he may bow as well as anyone else to the values that are adopted and respected by his society. Social science positivism fosters not so much nihilism as conformism and philistinism.[16]

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[15] From this perspective, what was said about American social sciences' German-inspired rejection of natural right, must be qualified. Qua value-free scientist, the American has succumbed to "German thought" and feels obliged to regard those "self-evident" truths of which the Declaration of Independence speaks, as myth. Qua citizen, he does indeed hold those "truths to be self-evident" in the sense of not wanting to have to think about them. Strauss perhaps alternates between the charge of nihilism and philistinism as dictated by his audience and purpose. Or perhaps Strauss wants to say both things. Taken literally, the social scientist's "assertion that integrity and quest for truth are values which one can with equal right choose or reject," is condemned by Strauss as "nihilistic." But Strauss knows this assertion is a "mere movement of his [the social scientist's] lips and his tongue to which nothing corresponds in his heart and mind." (See WPP, p.20.) In light of this, the assertion is seen as "an alibi for thoughtlessness and vulgarity." Or as he puts it alternately and more pointedly: "We [social scientists] are. . .beings who are sane and sober when engaged in trivial business and who gamble like madmen when confronted with serious issues -- retail sanity and wholesale madness." (See NR, p.4.)

[16] Ibid., p.20.

Still, its affected scientific "value-free" vantage[17] aggravates the "crisis"; or as Strauss puts it with pointed sarcasm: "Through this Olympian freedom, it overcomes the crisis of our time. That crisis may destroy the condition of social science: it cannot affect the validity of its findings."[18]

As we shall see, Strauss regards the major challenge to the possibility of political philosophy as issuing not from social science positivism, but from "schools" of History. One school, Hegelianism, offers the Final Solution to the philosophical quest -- and the "Final Tyranny," the universal homogeneous state. The second, appreciated by Strauss as the most formidably profound and the most profoundly pernicious, is what he calls "radical historicism." The first is the "school" of the Final Solution; the second suggests the problem is bogus. Both are philosophies of history; both

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17 A critical examination of the "fact-value distinction" is not within the scope of this paper. For Strauss' arguments against the theoretical tenability of the "fact-value distinction," see WPP, pp. 9-27, NR, Chapter 2, and "An Epilogue" in Liberalism Ancient and Modern. For our purposes, let it be noted that not the least of these arguments is the telling one that positivism "necessarily transforms itself into historicism," that positivism is no less subject to the historicist critique than is the natural right tradition. See WPP, pp. 25-27.

18 CM, p.7.

have faith in history, the first in its rational progression or progress toward rationality, and the second in the mysterious dispensations of fate. Both aspire to "transcend" history. Both are Wille-philosophies. Both are philosophies of freedom. The first is an extreme radicalization of the modern liberal natural right tradition; the second is an extreme reaction against this tradition and against its radicalization. The first is a political philosophy which offers the political evil of tyranny; the second regards political philosophy as delusion, and thus invites the worst political evils.

In the face of the "crisis of the West" and because of it, and in opposition to the powerful Germanische geist of Science and History, Strauss has striven to bring to the fore and to make foremost the "question of the good society," and to combat those who would abandon it. In his ongoing battle with Science and History, he has focused on their presuppositions and found them to be descendants of the radically new in modern thought, products of the rejection of classical political principles. In taking the view that the modern project has failed and addressing himself to the question of why it has failed, he finds what was wrong with it was typically modern, opposed to the classical view. In his debate with Kojeve on the tyranny of the universal and homogeneous state, he makes clear how thoroughly dependent

its justification is on modern thought, and how dependent his opposition is on classical political thought. This has led him to champion a "return" to the thought of classical political philosophy. Strauss is not indulging in romanticized nostalgia as is evident in his exhortation to "return":

> The return to classical political philosophy is both necessary and tentative or experimental. Not in spite but because of its tentative character, it must be carried out seriously, i.e. without squinting at our present predicament. There is no danger that we can ever become oblivious of this predicament since it is the incentive to our whole concern with the classics. We cannot reasonably expect that a fresh understanding of classical political philosophy will supply us with recipes for today's use. For the relative success of modern political philosophy has brought into being a kind of society wholly unknown to the classics, a kind of society to which the classical principles as stated and elaborated by the classics are not immediately applicable. Only we living today can possibly find a solution to the problems of today. But an adequate understanding of the principles as elaborated by the classics may be the indispensable starting point for an adequate analysis, to be achieved by us, of present-day society in its peculiar character, and for the wise application, to be achieved by us, of these principles to our tasks.[19]

This paper is primarily an attempt to expositorily sketch Strauss' understanding of modernity. Though his interpretation of the thinkers discussed may be subject to debate, such debate is not the subject of this paper. It does take prominently into account the opposition to Strauss' "reading" of modernity and the strong objections to the possibility and relevance of "return" which issue especially from the peculiarly modern "waves" of History. Modernity as "secularization" of biblical faith emerges as a major issue in understanding modernity and is treated at length in this paper.

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[19] Ibid., p.11.

CHAPTER I

MODERNITY AS "MACHIAVELLIANIZATION"

Moderation and Technology

Modernity begins when the question, how may people live together well, becomes the question of how to make people live together well, when the question of the good society becomes primarily a concern with how to make society good. Modernity is initiated by a momentous turning in political philosophy, primarily a turning away from the traditional teaching of moral virtue with its emphasis on moderation and restraint. The pre-modern traditions, classical political philosophy,[1] classical hedonism, and biblical faith appear to concur in stressing restraint and in teaching moderation.[2]

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[1] Strauss views all of what is generally called the "natural law" tradition up to modern times as basically consonant with the political philosophy of Socrates/Plato and Aristotle. Sometimes by "classical political philosophy" he intends the entire tradition and sometimes it is clear he is referring just to the Greek thinkers or one of them. This should not prove confusing.

[2] The Socratic tradition and the Biblical tradition concur in viewing man as essentially dependent and limited, in the Greek view by nature, and in the theological view, by virtue of his creatureliness. According to both, man is subject to a higher eternal order or Being which or Who is beneficent and lovable. Though Epicureanism stoutly maintains that nothing lovable is eternal and the eternal is not lovable, it does teach moderation because it seeks the purest, not the maximum of pleasures. Strauss does note a kinship between Epicureanism and the modern scientific view of nature. He refers to "Kant's presentation of Epicureanism as identical with the spirit of modern natural science prior to the subjection of that science to the critique of pure reason." Leo Strauss, Liberalism, Ancient and Modern, (New York: Basic Books, 1968), p.viii. (Hereafter this work will be referred to as LAM.)

This is not to suggest that modern political philosophers disapprove of virtue. On the contrary, they esteem virtue as "sublime and lofty." Strauss describes the attitude toward virtue in modern times:

> . . . it was inferred in modern times that since virtue [as classically conceived] cannot be brought about by coercion, the promotion of virtue cannot be the purpose of the state; not because virtue is unimportant but because it is lofty and sublime, the state must be indifferent to virtue and vice as such, as distinguished from transgressions of the state's laws which have no other function than the protection of the life, liberty, and property of each citizen. We note in passing that this reasoning does not pay sufficient attention to the importance of habituation or education for the acquisition of virtue. This reasoning leads to the consequence that virtue, and religion, must become private, or else that society, as distinguished from the state, is the sphere less of the private than of the voluntary. Society embraces then not only the sub-political but the supra-political (morality, art, science) as well.[3]

Moderns, therefore, reject virtue as <u>the</u> political objective, as the determining ground of all principles of legitimation on the "realistic" grounds that people are not virtuous and are not susceptible of being <u>made</u> virtuous. The classics fully agree with the modern "realistic" diagnosis: a virtuous man is indeed rare; the best regime, the good society, depends on an improbable chance of the freakish occurrence of the coincidence of philosophy and political power; man is a plaything of the gods; man's nature is enslaved in many ways.

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[3] <u>CM</u>, p.42.

"What is peculiar to modern thought is. . . the resolve to liberate man from that enslavement by his own sustained effort."[4] This resolve strains against restraints of moderation. To achieve this liberation, traditional moral and religious restraints must be loosened. Political virtue comes to be understood as the socially useful, as that which conduces to glory, power, wealth or recognition, as that powerful passion or selfish interest which can be counted on to make man "behave."

We spoke of the immoderate goal of the modern project. It is immoderate because in its concern for making, and in its eagerness to make sure the realization of its aim, it discounted moderation (or relegated it to the private supra-political sector) and switched its faith from an eternal order or Being to "invisible" societal mechanisms or historical processes, or both. A sketch of the modern project focusing on the means rather than the goal will suggest, in a gross way, what is meant and also serve to introduce many of the features of modernity taken up in subsequent discussions: Modern political philosophy discounts moral virtue and counts on the emancipation of socially useful passions, notably acquisitiveness. It puts its faith in the "invisible hand."

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[4] Ibid. This is a central assertion of Strauss'. Much of what follows is an elaboration of this assertion.

It has great faith in the malleability of man and corollary faith in institutions to mold him into the "rationally" desirable idea of man. There is the faith in the compulsion of nature which compels man to become civilized. This leads to faith in history as the progress of man's becoming ever more civilized or rational, or, ironically, free. There is faith in the "cunning of reason." Modern political thought can, therefore, with conviction, set itself a goal of universal grandeur, secure in the faith that it is only a matter of molding technique, Science, and the molding process, History. (It may perhaps be said that in the confrontation with Communism the West faced the immoderation of its own project in radicalized form.)

The immoderation of the modern project is sensed by us today as evidenced by the widespread concern over the dehumanizing impact of technology. The attitude toward technology, Strauss asserts repeatedly, decisively distinguishes classical political thought from the modern. Other differences commonly pointed to, are derivative from this basic difference. Strauss discusses the commonly alleged difference in respect to democracy and concludes:

> On the whole the view has prevailed that democracy must become rule by the educated, and this goal will be achieved by universal education. But universal education presupposes that the economy of scarcity has given way to

> an economy of plenty. And the economy of plenty presupposes the emancipation of technology from moral and political control. The essential difference between our view and the classical view consists then, not in a difference regarding moral principle, not in a different understanding of justice: we, too, even our communist coexistents, think that it is just to give equal things to equal people and unequal things to people of unequal merit. The difference between the classics and us with regard to democracy consists exclusively in a different estimate of the virtues of technology. But we are not entitled to say that the classical view has been refuted. Their implicit prophecy that the emancipation of technology, of the arts, from moral and political control would lead to disaster or to the dehumanization of man has not yet been refuted.[5]

(This introduces a central precept of modern political thought: universal enlightenment.) This suggests why Strauss feels a "return" would be salutary: modern thought cannot teach us moderation; the progressive loosening of restraints has eventuated in the unbridling of technology and vice versa.

Machiavelli

Fundamental and prominent in Strauss' portrait of modernity is its Faustian striving -- restless, incessant striving to overcome chance and to conquer nature. The credo of this technological bent of modernity is expressed with style by Machiavelli: "Fortuna is a woman, and if one wishes to keep her down, it is necessary to beat her and to pound her."[6] Compare this with the updated version: liberation is to be wrought by the domination of nature through technology.

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[5] WPP, p.37.

[6] Quoted and discussed by Strauss in his Thoughts on Machiavelli. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969), p.216.

Strauss deems Machiavelli to be the "Columbus" of that new continent of political "realism" on which modern political philosophy takes root. This new "realism" rejects classical political philosophy on the ground that it is not down to earth, culminating as it does in kingdoms of heaven -- utopias. This new political philosophy is "realistic" in that its goals are so devised as to minimize chance and maximize the probability of their realization. From what has been said it is clear that this requires either rejection or revision of traditional moral teaching.[7] Here is Strauss' paraphrase of Machiavelli's critique of morality:

> Morality is possible only within a context which cannot be created by morality, for morality cannot create itself. The context within which morality is

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[7] See Chapter 15 of The Prince where Machiavelli writes: ". . . my intention being to write something of use to those who understand, it appears to me more proper to go to the real truth of the matter than to its imagination; and many have imagined republics and principalities which have never been seen or known to exist in reality; for how we live is so far removed from how we ought to live, that he who abandons what is done for what ought to be done, will rather learn to bring about his own ruin than his preservation. A man who wishes to make a profession of goodness in everything must necessarily come to grief among so many who are not good. Therefore it is necessary for a prince, who wishes to maintain himself, to learn how not to be good, and to use this knowledge and not use it, according to the necessity of the case."

> possible is created by immorality. Morality rests on immorality [e.g., the founder of Rome was a fratricide], justice rests on injustice, just as all legitimacy ultimately rests on revolutionary foundations. . . . one cannot define the good of society, the common good, in terms of virtue, but one must define virtue in terms of the common good. . . .By the common good we must understand the objectives actually pursued by all societies. These objectives are: freedom from foreign domination, stability or rule of law, prosperity, glory or empire. Virtue in the effectual sense of the word is the sum of habits which are required for or conducive to this end. It is this end, and this end alone, which makes our actions virtuous. Everything done effectively for the sake of this end is good. This end justifies every means. Virtue is nothing but civic virtue, patriotism or devotion to collective selfishness.[8]

But man is not naturally patriotic. What can make him patriotic and in this sense good is the desire for glory of the founders and rulers of states. As Strauss puts it: "The desire for glory is the link between badness and goodness."[9] The founder or statesman, in his selfish ambition for glory, has a selfish incentive for serving his state well; he has a selfish interest in seeing to it that the citizenry "get along" and "behave." Machiavelli succeeds, Strauss says, "in building on this basis a political teaching which does full justice to all possible requirements of any policy of blood and iron, and which is at the same time most favorable to political liberty and the rule of law."[10] But Strauss also points out that Machiavelli

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[8] WPP, p.42.

[9] Ibid., p.43.

[10] Ibid.

quite intentionally "abolishes the essential difference between civil societies and bands of robbers."[11] "The great public tasks which he [the Machiavellian statesman] undertakes are for him only opportunities for coloring his design. He is distinguished from great criminals merely by the fact that the criminals lack a defensible opportunity; the moral conviction is the same."[12]

This is not to say Machiavelli underestimates the delicacy and demanding difficulties of the princely or founders' art. It is certainly much easier to be a robber (but then where's the glory in that?). Aristotle, generally regarded as more of a "realist" than Plato, requires for the actualization of the best regime the proper "matter," a morally decent citizenry well-placed geographically; and this depends on chance. Machiavelli does not discount chance completely; certainly it is an important factor, but not primary. He appreciates how very difficult it is to whip a corrupt people into shape, but with "know-how" one can overcome chance. "Fortuna is a woman" and can be conquered by judicious application of the appropriate technique of "beating and pounding." What for Aristotle is impossible, beyond the

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[12] WPP, p.43.

ken of the princely art, is for Machiavelli a very difficult challenge demanding very clever application of the princely art. This difference points up the "shift from formation of character [impossible to Aristotle's way of thinking when a people is corrupt] to the trust in institutions"[13] ["with teeth in them"] characteristic of modern political thinking.[14] This in turn, Strauss notes, is "the characteristic corollary of the belief in the almost infinite malleability of man."[15]

The notion of the malleability of man in later political thought will give rise to a profoundly troubling antinomy: man is almost infinitely free because he is almost infinitely malleable; man is almost totally subject to manipulation because he is almost infinitely malleable. The ultimate in freedom philosophy promises the Final Tyranny. Both the faith

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[13] Kant, notwithstanding his pietistic regard of the flesh and its passions as devilish, and because of his faith in malleability, is quite optimistic. Opposing the Machiavellian position to Aristotle's, he states: "'Hard as it may sound, the problem of establishing the state (i.e., the just social order) is soluble even for a nation of devils, provided they have sense,' i.e., provided that they are guided by enlightened selfishness." (NR, p.193) Devise devilish means of dealing with devils and the City of God emerges.

[14] WPP, p.43.

[15] Ibid.

of the modern project and the cause of its loss of that faith are based on this "axiom." Rousseau brought his sensitive and profound awareness of this antinomy to the fore of modern political thought. German Idealism laid claim to its solution. So did the West and so does Communism. (Mention might also be made of those who, inspired by Rousseau, embrace their version of a Rousseauesque "out," some kind of return to naturalness.)

Machiavelli's approach to the actualization of political good through the emancipation of the passions or enlightened selfishness, is fundamental to modern political thought. Emancipation of the passions is, of course, the aim of Machiavelli's critique of morality. The passion in particular that he counts on is desire for glory. This is precisely the passion against which Hobbes' and Locke's teaching is directed. One may say the morality of their teaching consists largely in their refusal to emancipate the desire for glory or in restricting it to the marketplace within the sphere of economic competition, a perhaps pedestrian but safe sphere. They imply that if one lifts the restraints on glory, the consequence is that "anything goes" and life will be nasty, short and brutish. One might read confirmation of their view in the consequences of Hegel's attempt to "bring back" glory (as recognition) as the prime political mover, as that passion which can be counted on to bring political salvation. As we

shall see, Kojeve, in Hegel's name, justifies anyone aspiring to tyranny who feels he could do a good job as tyrant and "encourages all statesmen to try to extend their authority over all men in order to achieve universal recognition."[16]

These references to later developments in political philosophy are meant to point up the decisiveness of the turning effected by Machiavelli. (They serve, too, to indicate themes and issues to be discussed below.) We attempted to indicate that especially those notions which conduce to the conviction that chance can be overcome and nature conquered, loom large in later thought.

Three Revolutions

Almost contemporaneous with each other, there occurred three revolutions, two on the plane of rational thought, that of the new political philosophy and the new science,[17] and

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16 Leo Strauss, On Tyranny, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1968) pp. 204-205. (Hereafter this work will be referred to as OT.) It is remarkable how Machiavellian Kojeve's position is. Making allowance for Machiavelli's lack of universal vision, compare Kojeve's position with Strauss' characterization of the purpose of Machiavelli's books: ". . . their broad purpose is to show the need for reckoning with the selfish desires of the rulers and the ruled as the only natural basis of politics, and therefore for trusting, not in men's good will, nor in mercenaries, fortresses, money, or chance but in one's own virtue. . . as the ability to acquire for oneself the highest glory and hence to acquire for one's state whatever makes it strong, prosperous, and respected. The wise rulers who act with a view to their own benefit will enlist the cooperation of the ruled, who likewise act with a view to their own benefit, in such activities as cannot but be detrimental to others. Since the many can never acquire the eternal glory which the great individuals can achieve, they must be induced to bring the greatest sacrifices by the judiciously fostered belief in eternity of another kind." (TOM, p.282.)

17 Arendt tells us: "The term scienza nuova seems to occur for the first time in the work of the sixteenth-century Italian

the other on the plane of theology, the Protestant Reformation. In point of chronology, Machiavelli predates Galileo.[18] As a Mediterranean man, Machiavelli's priority to the Reformation is substantial, notwithstanding chronological contemporaneity. This is symbolically indicative of Strauss' position that the Revolution which decisively initiates modernity is that wrought by the new political philosophy. The new natural science is itself seen by Strauss as a phenomenon of the new political dispensation. The new political philosophy implicitly points out the direction and prophesies the destiny of the new science.[19]

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mathematician Niccolo Tartaglia, who designed the new science of ballistics which he claimed to have discovered because he was the first to apply geometrical reasoning to the motion of projectiles. . . . Galileo. . . insists on the 'absolute novelty' of his discoveries, but this certainly is a far cry from Hobbes' claim that political philosophy was 'no older than my own book De Cive'. . . or Descartes' conviction that no philosopher before him had succeeded in philosophy. . . . From the seventeenth century on, the insistence on absolute novelty and the rejection of the whole tradition became commonplace." Hannah Arendt, The Human Condition, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1959) p. 363, n.1)

[18] Machiavelli lived from 1469-1527, Galileo from 1564-1642. This is not to suggest that chronological priority demonstrates logical priority. Rather it indicates that Strauss' discernment of Machiavelli as the father of modernity is suggestive of his view that the revolution in political thought was primary. Likewise the fact that both Galileo and Machiavelli are Mediterranean men and, therefore, untouched by the Reformation, is indicative of his view of the independence and priority of the "revolution" on the plane of philosophic and scientific thought.

[19] The case for this assertion is sketched below in the following pages.

The new science is, of course, an essential ingredient of modernity. It complements the new political philosophy, firming and confirming the resolve to overcome chance, taking to the task of the conquest of nature with undauntable enthusiasm and prodigious industry. The new science encourages and enables the new political philosophy to consummate its break with the theological heritage and classical tradition and never look back; it stamps that break with its approval and affixes its seal to it which reads -- "SCIENTIFIC." It serves up the utmost in refined technique; it supplies exquisitely sophisticated whips and points out with microscopic accuracy where to "beat and pound" for greatest effect. And above all, it works. Modernity is enchanted by the charm of competence and enraptured by the allure of power.

The new science complemented and reinforced the rejection both of the substance and mode or methodology of classical philosophy. Machiavelli denied teleological natural science but it was the new science which successfully (and scientifically) vitiated this classical position. In political thought we have noted two consequences of this denial of natural ends: the notion of malleability and the new methodology of taking bearings primarily from the lower, from beginnings, rather than from the higher, or from ends. This is the approach of Machiavelli's political teaching: dispensing with ends we must look at the beginnings of society; we must

understand the rational animal primarily in his animality, the rational in terms of the sub-rational, the human in terms of the sub-human. As applied to non-human nature, the notion of malleability is indeed a conviction of the infinite malleability of nature: nature is a dumb, worthless chaos, over against which stands man the master, man the creator, man the lawgiver; nature is made something of by man, by his activity and by his labor. As to why the natural sciences adapted the methodology of understanding the higher in terms of the lower, and looking back to beginnings, we submit not the least of the reasons was the Machiavellian one: it is in the interest of control, of overcoming chance: The emphasis on making and efficiency -- the constructionist bent of modernity -- requires a reductionist view.[20] Related to his methodological stance is Machiavelli's penchant for gloatingly adducing examples of moral outrage, of torture and cruelty. (Neither the Bible nor the classics were unaware of such occurrences.) Strauss writes:

> There is a hidden kinship between Machiavelli's political science and the new natural science. The classics had taken their bearings by the normal case as distinguished from the exception; Machiavelli effects his radical change in the understanding of political things by taking his bearings by the exception, by the extreme case. As appears from Bacon, there is a close connection between Machiavelli's orientation and of torturing nature, i.e., of the controlled experiment.[21]

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[20] This will be seen more clearly in our discussion of Hobbes below.

[21] WPP, p.47.

Philosophy is, as it were, knocked off its exalted pedestal of proud contemplation, knocked down to earth and put to useful work. Strauss says of Machiavelli:

> He achieves the decisive turn toward that notion of philosophy according to which its purpose is to relieve man's estate or to increase man's power or to guide man toward the rational society, the bond and the end of which is enlightened self-interest or the comfortable self-preservation of each of its members.[22]

This new kind of "politicized" philosophy implicitly promises the ascendancy of science. It permits and, indeed, demands technologized science. Knowledge is no longer conceived of as receptive of the "shining forth" of the eternal cosmic order. Man makes knowledge. Man "puts nature to the question"; man constructs and prescribes laws for dumb nature. Truth and meaning originate in man, in man's active constructive understanding. Order is what man bestows. Truth and order are not independent of man's cognitive activity. As an artist, man creates rather than imitates; the artist communicates his truth.

The end of knowledge is power, but in the end it comes to be seen that power knows no end. The new technologized science develops a "Machiavellian" momentum seeking to ever increase its power limitlessly. It is pious in its faith in infinite progress.

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[22] TOM, p.296.

Both the new philosophers and the new scientists manifest a sense of mission in their dedication to assure propagation of their respective sciences. They are clearly conscious of their importance to posterity and consciously adopt judicious strategies to avoid crucifixion by the as-yet unenlightened.

This reflects their divergence from both the theological tradition and the Socratic tradition. Neither Jesus nor Socrates strove to avoid "crosses." Jesus is believed to be the Incarnation of Divine Love. Nietzsche writes of Socrates:

> When finally death. . . was pronounced against him, it seems to have been Socrates himself who, with complete lucidity of mind and in the absence of every natural fear of death, insisted on it. He went to his death with the same calm Plato describes when he has him leave the symposium inthe early dawn, the last reveler, to begin a new day; while behind him on the benches and on the floor, his sleepy companions go on dreaming of Socrates, the true lover.[23]

The pre-modern traditions accepted "crosses" because of their respective convictions of a lovable Eternal Who or order which was beneficent; or, to put it alternately, they believed there was a "higher" love than love of one's own -- love of the Good, or of God. With the modern denial of these traditions

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23 (My underlining) See F.Nietzsche's The Birth of Tragedy, Section XIII.

of trust and faith in a lovable Eternal, avoidance of crosses and anxiety over avoidance of crosses became the dominating aim of life and thought: thus the anxious striving for power, the determination to make sure, thus the taking of bearings for political good from a negative telos, thus the "good" as avoidance of crosses, and finally the determination to push Providence, and indeed to take over, man incarnating himself as a god who avoids crosses, and brings down the Heavenly City of God to earth, by fabricating it with his own hands, with his own power and supreme technology. The strategy then is not incidental to the new teachings. It is a case of the "new prophets" practicing[24] what they preach and what they preach above all, is avoidance of crosses.

The new "gospel" demands "enlightenment"; the new "prophets" optimistically foresee their impact on posterity and are confident of success in bringing about the new order. Strauss writes:

> The new philosophy lives from the outset in the hope which approaches or equals certainty, of future conquest or of conquest of the future -- in the anticipation of an epoch in which the truth will reign, if not in the minds of all men, at any rate in the institutions which mold them. Propaganda is to guarantee the coincidence of philosophy and political power. Philosophy is to fulfill the function of both philosophy and religion.[25]

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[24] Machiavelli did not permit his important political works to be published during his lifetime. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it was commonplace for political philosophers to take "holidays" abroad for expediency's sake.

[25] TOM, p.297.

Hannah Arendt makes clear that this consciousness of significant future influence was common to the new scientists as well:

> The human mind changed in a matter of years or decades as radically as the human world in a matter of centuries; and while this change naturally remained restricted to the few who belonged to that strangest of all modern societies, the society of scientists and the republic of letters. . . this society anticipated in many respects, by sheer force of trained and controlled imagination, the radical change of mind of all modern men. . . .[26]

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26 Arendt, op.cit., p.247. In a note on this passage Arendt writes: "The foundation and early history of the Royal Society is quite suggestive. When it was founded, members had to agree to take no part in matters outside the terms of reference given it by the king, especially to take no part in political or religious strife. One is tempted to conclude that the modern scientific ideal of 'objectivity' was born here, which would suggest that its origin is political and not scientific. [See Nietzsche's third essay in The Genealogy of Morals where he does suggest precisely this in considering modern science and the modern ascetic ideal.] Furthermore, it seems noteworthy that the scientists found it necessary from the beginning to organize themselves into a society, and the fact that the work done inside the Royal Society turned out to be vastly more important than work done outside it demonstrated how right they were. An organization, whether of scientists who have abjured politics or of politicians, is always a political institution; where men organize they intend to act and to acquire power. No scientific teamwork is pure science, whether its aim is to act upon society and secure its members a certain position within it or -- as was and still is to a large extent the case of organized research in the natural sciences -- to act together and in concern in order to conquer nature. It is indeed, as Whitehead once remarked, 'no accident that an age of science has developed into an age of organization. Organized thought is the basis of organized action', not, one is tempted to add, because thought is the basis of action but rather because modern science as 'the organization of thought' introduced an element of action into thinking." Ibid.,pp.367-368,n.26

Strauss asserts this caring passionately about the impact of one's work on posterity is new[27] with Machiavelli:

> . . . Machiavelli is the first philosopher who attempted to force chance to control the future by embarking on a campaign, a campaign of propaganda[28]. . . . He was the first of a long series of modern thinkers who hoped to bring about the establishment of new modes and orders by means of enlightenment. The enlightenment. . . begins with Machiavelli.[29]

Machiavelli saw himself as a latter-day "unarmed prophet" promising future rewards if his "new testament" is faithfully accepted, and predicting a whole new order when his new moral code is disseminated. Machiavelli realized he was up against the powerful sway of tradition which held the minds of men in hide-bound tutelage. In his "unarmed" war against the old order, Machiavelli sought to recruit those who had become disaffected with tradition, those who

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[27] Strauss says: "The earlier philosophers of all persuasions were resigned to the fact that their teaching, the true teaching, would never supersede what they regarded as false teachings, but would coexist with them. They offered their teachings to their contemporaries and above all to posterity without even dreaming of controlling the future fate of human thought in general. . . . they did not for one moment believe that the true political teaching is, or is likely to be, the political teaching of the future." WPP, p.46.

[28] Strauss notes: "This propaganda is at the opposite pole of what is now called propaganda, high pressure salesmanship and hold-up of captivated audiences. Machiavelli desires to convince, not merely to persuade or to bully." Ibid.

[29] Ibid.

preferred their earthly fatherland to any heavenly fatherlands. He assumed Christianity to be waning, and he addressed himself primarily to those who had already begun to throw off the yoke of religious restraints. Modern political philosophers[30] generally appear to assume the waning of faith and insinuate that the new order they propose demands its subjugation or its replacement by a "civic religion."

Though modern thinkers, as we noted, in this regard return to the classical assertion of moral or political principles as independent of theology, they are distinguished by an "anti-theological ire"; their teaching demands the overcoming of traditional piety. This "anti-theological ire" at least partially explains the modern rejection of kingdoms of heavens and the determination to make sure of a new political

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[30] Strauss "credits" Hobbes in particular: ". . . the whole scheme suggested by Hobbes requires for its operation the weakening or, rather, the elimination of the fear of invisible powers. It requires such a radical change of orientation as can be brought about only by the disenchantment of the world, by the diffusion of scientific knowledge or by popular enlightenment. Hobbes' is the first doctrine that necessarily and unmistakably points to a thoroughly 'enlightened,' i.e., a religious or atheistic society as the solution of the social or political problem." See NR, p.198. Camus says: "Rousseau is, in fact, the first man in modern times to institute the profession of civil faith." See A.Camus' The Rebel (New York: Vintage Books, 1956), p.116.

order. Machiavelli and other modern thinkers attributed many of the evils of their day to the ardent concern with the Kingdom of Heaven. As they saw it, these evils resulted from man's being encouraged by traditions to aim too high. They said in effect: Stop trying to save men's souls and the enormities of religious persecution will be eliminated and the incidence of war less frequent. Lower the aim of man. Stop shooting for Heaven. Devise a realistic goal which will assure men's getting along and afford the individual liberty. Devise a goal which man can live with instead of one that they have to be killed for. Accept men as they are; start from where they are and establish a political order on this basis. (But we are still left with unanswered questions such as these: Why did this "anti-theological ire" express itself in this way at this particular time? What made certain thinkers in particular resolve to mitigate evils by a new political order of their making when these had been "accepted" for centuries?)

We readily appreciate the negative role of the theological tradition in modernity as that which was opposed and denied. What is its positive role? This question is itself a theme of modern political thought especially in nineteenth century thought. Strauss would have us be wary of confusing elements of traditional faith with their translations into modern terms or their accommodation to modern times, which

presuppose denial of the faith tradition; in which case the translations or accommodations are essentially expressions not of the influential presence of faith elements but of their rejection. Ignoring this caveat makes it possible to regard the negation of a tradition as its fulfillment. One of the loftier achievements of History is that it "transcends" the law of non-contradiction. As Strauss cracks: "Syntheses effect miracles. . . Hegel's synthesis of classical and Biblical morality effects the miracle of producing an amazingly lax morality out of two moralities, both of which made very strict demands on self-restraint."[31] (We will devote an entire chapter to Hegel's "miracle.") Max Weber, in spite of and <u>because</u> of his insistence on scientific validity and rigorous positivism, identifies as the essence of Calvinism that which he acknowledges was abominated by John Calvin's theology.[32] (Strauss says that Weber "stressed the fact that the effect [the capitalist spirit] was in no way intended by Calvin, that Calvin would have been shocked by it, and-- what is more important -- that the crucial link in the

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31 <u>OT</u>, p.205.

32 Put simply, Strauss' objection to positions like Hegel's and Weber's is that the modern resolve to force and forge the destiny of Providence to make certain <u>certitudo salutis</u> is not inspired or informed by Christian tradition but by its rejection.

chain of causation (a peculiar interpretation of the dogma of predestination) was rejected by Calvin. . . ." Strauss comments: " By avoiding an indispensable value judgment, [i.e., that Calvin's own teaching rejected the later corruption of it by epigones] he [Weber] was forced into giving a factually incorrect picture of what had happened [i.e., linking Calvin's teaching to modern capitalism]. For his fear of value-judgments prompted him to identify the essence of Calvinism with its historically most influential aspect. He instinctively avoided identifying the essence of Calvinism with what Calvin himself considered essential. . . .") Accordingly, may we not conclude that Machiavelli's "anti-theological ire" and the resolve issuing from it are rooted in traditional theology and even claim them to be its fulfillment? To assert this is to deny the tradition's explicit understanding of itself which indeed abominates Machiavelli's teaching. It is to suggest that traditional Christianity demands its own overthrow, that its theology calls for "anti-theological ire" and implicitly recommends its own negation. History makes such conclusions not only palatable but eminently respectable.[33]

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[33] As we shall see, the crucial issue is progressivism. Once it is asserted that later thought understands older traditions in their "true light," that is, better than they understood themselves, one is no longer constrained by the older position's explicit definition of itself; one can "explain away" its explicit self-understanding; one canregard what eventuates later as more truly definitive, even it be the corruption or denial of what the tradition explicitly says it stood for. The nineteenth century especially exudes the confident conviction of final revelation of the truth of history, of true understanding of all epochs and all cultures.

Max Weber, in his famous work The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, claims that the asceticism pervasively characteristic of modernity derives from the Protestant Reformation (Calvinism in particular). Strauss contends: ". . . Weber overestimated the importance of the revolution that had taken place on the plane of theology, and he underestimated the importance of the revolution that had taken place on the plane of rational thought."[34] Certainly "the revolution on the plane of rational thought" as it comes to sight with Machiavelli and Galileo, is totally independent of "the revolution on the plane of theology." If they represent the innovative spirits and formative influences of modernity, as Strauss asserts, then the major features of modernity such as asceticism must derive necessarily from the new directions which they blazed. As we hinted, Strauss views the asceticism of modernity as expressive of its anxiety to "avoid crosses" (as I put it), which is due not to elements of a religious tradition but to a rejection, especially of the faith in the beneficence of nature or God. Fuller discussion must be reserved until we consider the teachings of Hobbes and Locke; but we may now state the question at issue: granted

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[34] NR, pp. 60-61, n.22.

that Weber "underestimated the importance of the revolution that had taken place on the plane of rational thought" what is its relation to Puritanism; in particular, what is the relation between the teachings of Hobbes and Locke and Puritanism.

Above we spoke of modern man fashioning himself as a god-man, incarnating himself, as it were, constructing and ordaining order and proclaiming himself lord of Providence, resolute in his determination to bring about the eschaton. This is the language of "secularization." In order to better understand Strauss' position (and this prepares the ground of his objections to Hegel and Weber) we present his understanding of "secularization."

> 'Secularization' is the 'temporalization' of the spiritual or of the eternal. It is the attempt to integrate the eternal into a temporal context. It therefore presupposes that the eternal is no longer understood as eternal. 'Secularization,' in other words, presupposes a radical change of thought, a transition of thought from one plane to an entirely different plane. This radical change appears in its undisguised form in the emergence of modern philosophy or science; it is not primarily a change within theology. What presents itself as the 'secularization' of theological concepts will have to be understood, in the last analysis, as an adaptation of traditional theology to the intellectual climate produced by modern philosophy or science both natural and political. The 'secularization' of the understanding of Providence culminates in the view that the ways of God are scrutable to sufficiently enlightened men. The theological tradition recognized the mysterious character of Providence especially by the fact that God uses or

> permits evil for his good ends. It asserted, therefore, that man cannot take his bearings by God's providence but only by God's law, which simply forbids man to do evil. In proportion as the providential order came to be regarded as intelligible to man, and therefore evil came to be regarded as evidently necessary or useful, the prohibition against doting evil lost its evidence. Hence various ways of action which were previously condemned as evil could now be regarded as good. The goals of human action were lowered. But it is precisely a lowering of these goals which modern political philosophy consciously intended from its very beginning.[35]

Or as Strauss has put it alternately, the waning of faith is a necessary condition of modernity, but not the sufficient condition. He asserts:

> The sufficient condition is the attempt at a new understanding of social reality -- an understanding which is 'realistic' in the sense that it conceives of the social order as based not on piety and virtue but on socially useful passions or vices.[36]

In this chapter we have attempted to indicate why Strauss conceives of this "new understanding" as "the Machiavellianization of Western thought."[37]

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[35] Ibid., p.317.

[36] Leo Strauss, "Comment", Church History, XXX:1 (March, 1961), p.102.

[37] Strauss' largest work exclusively devoted to a single philosopher is his book on Machiavelli.

CHAPTER II

THE THREE WAVES OF MODERNITY: HOBBES, ROUSSEAU AND NIETZSCHE

Hobbes

As traditional thought comes to be questioned more and more, the old order begins to appear at worst as a grand hoax and at best as built on very shaky foundations. The new philosophers are resolute in their determination that the new world of their making will be built on the surest of foundations. How can they make them sure? How can they assure their new world will not be subject to a similar fate? Methodology. Method will make certain the reliability, durability and universal applicability of the new thinking. (Method is the analogue of technique in the new political philosophy.)[1] Skepticism -- methodical skepticism -- will lead to certain bedrock foundations. (Skepticism is the analogue of enlightenment in the new political philosophy.)[2] The spirit of the

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[1] Method, in the new epistemology, guarantees the achievement of wisdom as technique guarantees actualization of the just order.

[2] Skepticism is meant to inspire distrust; distrust leads to knowledge; likewise enlightenment is meant to induce a distrust of traditional beliefs in the "beyond" which give one a sense of false security; distrust reveals to man the wretchedness of his life and this leads him to make the just society. Both the new political philosophy and the new epistemology employ skepticism to drive one back on one's self on what is within one's power to make or to construct.

new sciences, political and natural, is manifest in Hobbes' "philosophy of power."[3] This new spirit and vantage Strauss characterizes as follows:

> Science is for the sake of power, i.e. for putting at our disposal the means for achieving our natural ends. Those ends can no longer include knowledge for its own sake; they are reduced to comfortable self-preservation. Man as the potential conqueror of nature stands outside of nature. This presupposes that there is no natural harmony between the human mind and the whole. The belief in such harmony appears now as a wishful or good-natured assumption. We must reckon with the possibility that the world is the work of an evil demon bent on deceiving us about himself, the world, and ourselves by means of the faculties with which he has supplied us or, which amounts to the same thing, that the world is the work of a blind necessity which is utterly indifferent as to whether it and its product ever becomes known. Surely we have no right to trust in our natural faculties; extreme skepticism is required. I can trust only in what is entirely within my control: the concepts which I consciously make and of which I do not claim more than that they are my constructs, and the naked data as they impress themselves upon me and of which I do not claim more than that I am conscious of them without having made them. The knowledge which we need for the conquest of nature must indeed be dogmatic, but its dogmatism must be based on extreme skepticism; the synthesis of dogmatism and skepticism eventually takes the form of an infinitely progressive science as a system or agglomeration of confirmed hypotheses which remain exposed to revision _in infinitum_.[4]

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[3] NR, p.194. Generally our presentation of the three waves of modernity follows Strauss' treatment of the philosophers and schools in NR.

[4] CM, pp. 42-43.

Hobbes, in contrast to Machiavelli, appreciates and even admires Greek classical thought. Whereas Machiavelli would reject it entire, Hobbes would make it work in conformity with Machiavelli's demand for "realism." He would guarantee the success of the classical aspirations for wisdom and justice. He would transplant the classical project on Machiavelli's new continent. This results in the radical modification and scaling down of those aspirations, necessary to assure their realization and applicability. It means putting them to the torture test of skepticism. The apparent vulnerability of the classical tradition, its fading into twilight is due to its not having submitted itself to rigorous skepticism. To be sure is to make sure and one can only make what is in one's power to make. Skepticism drives one back on oneself. Certainty is commensurate with one's power to make, to generate, to cause, to construct. What is in one's power (potentia) is authoritative (potestas).[5] What one can

[5]See NR, p.194, n.36, where Strauss adduces evidence that Hobbes uses "power" as synonymous with "generation" and "potentia" as synonymous with causa and also potestas; Hobbes uses the ambiguity of the term "power" to indicate the need for the coincidence of potentia, physical power, and potestas, legal authority. See note 6.

do one may do.[6] This is attested to by mathematics; and mathematics is "the mother of all natural science."[7] (Hobbes applauds Plato for this insight.) Mathematics is supremely authoritative. Of all traditional disciplines, it survived

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[6] Strauss writes: "There are two kinds of exactness: mathematical and legal. From the point of view of mathematical exactness, the study of the actus and therewith of the ends is replaced by the study of potentia. . . .From the point of view of legal exactness, the study of the ends is replaced by the study of potestas." Leviathan "is both the greatest human force and the highest human authority." Strauss notes: "The necessary coincidence of the greatest human force and the highest human authority corresponds strictly to the necessary coincidence of the most powerful passion (fear of violent death) and the most sacred right (the right of self-preservation)." Hobbes' is an exact and universally applicable political science precisely because it ignores the actus, the purposes of potentia. The rights of the sovereign and the rights of the citizen are his theme. As regards duties (prescribed actions), in civil society the rule is the rule of power; the sovereign may do what "he" can do and the citizen may do what he can do. The view which is accepted by modern political philosophy generally is that man will "get away with" what he can "get away with." That must be the assumption of a political science which would guarantee actualization. Strauss puts it: "Power, as distinguished from the end for which power is used or ought to be used, becomes the central theme of political reflections by virtue of that limitation of horizon which is needed if there is to be a guaranty of the actualization of the right social order." This may be seen as an inversion of Aristotle's approach. Strauss writes: "In the language of Aristotle, one could say that the relation of virtue to human nature is comparable to that of act and potency, and the act cannot be determined by starting from the potency, but, on the contrary, the potency becomes known by looking back to it from the act." NR, p.144. (See pp. 194-195.)

[7] NR, p.170.

best. To make it completely invulnerable from "the cavils of the skeptics," Hobbes "demythologizes" it and brings it down to earth. He says: "I thought it necessary in my definitions to express those notions by which lines superficies, solids, and figures were drawn and described."[8] Mathematics survived better than other classical disciplines because: "It consists in comparing figures and motions only";[9] it is the least teleological and if understood properly, it will be seen to be pure making independent of matter. By following the model of mathematics, wisdom can be made certain. Strauss paraphrases Hobbes' view:

> Generally stated, we have absolutely certain or scientific knowledge only of those subjects of which we are the causes, or whose construction is in our own power or depends on our arbitrary will. The construction would not be fully in our power if there were a single step of the construction that is not fully exposed to our supervision. The construction must be conscious construction; it is impossible to know a scientific truth without knowing at the same time that we have made it. The construction would not be fully in our power if it made use of any matter, i.e., of anything that is not itself our construct. The world of our constructs is wholly unenigmatic because we are its sole cause and hence we have perfect knowledge of its cause. The cause of the world of our constructs does not have a further

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[8] Ibid., p.173.

[9] Ibid., p.171.

> cause, a cause that is not, or not fully, within our power; the world of our constructs has an absolute beginning or is a creation in the strict sense.[10]

To wax metaphoric: mathematics is as close as man approximates to creatio-ex-nihilo. Traditionally, Creation and Providence are inter-related. Analogically, once man is established as "creator" he can with the "Logos" of mathematics providentially care for himself, conquer nature and exploit it for his own benefit, and bring about deliverance

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[10] Ibid., p.173. In a long note Strauss appends to this passage, there is reflected the basic difficulty in understanding Hobbes, his "dualism." We can only here briefly register it but cannot cope with it. Hobbes, on the one hand, views man as "maker", as a rational and willing agent who stands over against nature, while on the other hand he insists that he is "matter," a product of nature. Strauss writes: "The antithesis of nature and human will is hidden by the monist (materialist-deterministic) metaphysic, which Hobbes teaches, which he found himself forced to adopt simply because he saw no other possibility of escaping the 'substantialist' conception of mind, and therefore 'the kingdom of darkness'. This dilemma, which was not swept aside until Kant and his successors, is the decisive reason for Hobbes' materialist-deterministic theory, which is not only not needed for his political philosophy, but actually imperils the very root of that philosophy." Strauss concludes his book on Hobbes with the following: "If, then, only inconsistent naturalism is compatible with Hobbes' political philosophy, the consistent naturalism which Hobbes displays in his scientific writings cannot be the foundation of his political philosophy. The foundation must be another conception of nature. The elaboration of this conception of nature, which is related to naturalism but by no means identical with it, is the most urgent task for an exact analysis of Hobbes' political philosophy." (See PPH, pp. 168-170.) Let it then be noted that Strauss thus qualifies his understanding of Hobbes. (See also NR, p.272 and p.281.)

by making a just society. In the beginning of the new phenomenal world, the spirit of geometry hovered over the chaos of nature. And it was said let there be enlightenment to separate away the darkness of the tutelage of tradition that a new day may dawn.

This is a "critique of reason" which restricts what we know to what we can construct. It dictates that we not claim knowledge of natural ends but may construct ideals, artificial[11] "ends" necessary for our constructive understanding. We must acknowledge there is no basis for the faith that this constructive understanding is in harmony with the real nature of things. It suffices that our constructions work, that they are reliable, that we can apply laws to nature which enable us to utilize it for our benefit.

Strauss writes:

> . . . his notion of philosophy or science has its root in the conviction that a teleological cosmology is impossible and in the feeling that a mechanistic cosmology fails to satisfy the requirement of intelligibility. His solution is that the end or the ends without which no

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[11] Hobbes was a nominalist but "parts company with pre-modern nominalism." Strauss draws the contrast: "Premodern nominalism had faith in the natural working of the human mind. It showed this faith especially by teaching that natura occulte operatur in universalibus, or that the 'anticipations' by virtue of which we take our bearings in ordinary life and in science are products of nature. For Hobbes, the natural origin of the universals or of the anticipations was a compelling reason for abandoning them in favor of artificial 'intellectual tools.' There is no natural harmony between the human mind and the universe." NR, p.174.

> phenomenon can be understood need not be inherent in the phenomena; the end inherent in the concern with knowledge suffices. Knowledge as the end supplies the indispensable teleological principle. Not the new mechanistic cosmology but what later on came to be called 'epistemology' becomes the substitute for teleological cosmology. But knowledge cannot remain the end if the whole is simply unintelligible: Scientia propter potentiam. All intelligibility or all meaning has its ultimate root in human needs. The end, or the most compelling end posited by human desire, is the highest principle, the organizing principle. But if the human good becomes the highest principle, political science or social science becomes the most important kind of knowledge, as Aristotle had predicted. . . . One cannot leave it, then, at saying that Hobbes agrees with the idealistic tradition in regard to the function and scope of political philosophy. His expectation from political philosophy is incomparably greater than the expectation of the classics.[12]

Compared to the philosophers of history (or freedom) Kant, Hegel and Marx, Hobbes' "expectation" is moderate. He is more adamant in his "critique of reason," in insisting that cosmological intelligibility is impossible. Kant qua philosopher of history, seems to suggest that for the sake of universal human good the positivism of the Critique of Pure Reason must be overcome; that moral political considerations suggest the conviction or postulation of a harmonization of nature and rationality; they incline one to believe that

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[12] Ibid., pp. 176-177.

nature progresses irrationally toward actualization of rationality, or that the real is pushing toward the ideal. Hegel goes all the way and claims the final ideal is realized, that the real is the rational. There is then a progression in ambition for political philosophy.

This progression is related to the ascendancy of will and decline of natural transcendance in political thought, eventuating in the final ideal of a society in which each individual will is satisfied and conducing to rationality itself being understood as what everyone freely wills. This development is related to Hobbes' philosophy of power. We get a hint of this relationship in Strauss' paraphrase of Hobbes' view that mathematics conceived as construction is paradigmatic for certain knowledge. We may infer these implications. The more secondary and less obvious one is the suggestion that one respects or values, assents and consents to the product of one's own making. Wisdom, in conformity with the mathematical model, is guaranteed because we generated it, but we also guarantee respect for that knowledge and compel assent because we generated it. This is perhaps one reason why Hobbes is more optimistic than Plato[13] that philosophers and scientists can mold public opinion. Hobbes has

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[13] Strauss writes: "Plato had said that evils will not cease from the cities if the philosophers do not become kings or if philosophy and political power do not coincide. He had expected such salvation for mortal nature as can reasonably be expected, from a coincidence over which philosophy has no control but for which one can only wish or pray. Hobbes, on the other hand, was certain that philosophy itself can bring about the coincidence of philosophy and political power by becoming popularized philosophy and thus public opinion. (NR, pp.199-200.)

only to demonstrate that philosophy and science are made by man for man's sake. Scientists today are looked up to and are often looked to for political leadership; this does seem related to respect for their makings. The sentiment is expressed, "Look what man can achieve," and some great feat of scientific technology or engineering ingenuity is pointed to. The more basic implication to be inferred from taking mathematics as paradigmatic indicates the relation between knowledge and consent or rationality and will or desire. Mathematics is manifestly rational and an ideal model for certain knowledge because we readily will[14] or consent to every step of mathematical construction. This in turn suggests that will is more basic, more potent, more authoritative than reason. In mathematics we have nothing at stake (selfish, passionate interests) and therefore we cooperate with reason or permit ourselves to be rational. Man is pure maker; man qua matter does not interfere. This may be seen as pointing to Kant's moral ideal -- man as pure maker or self-legislator. For Kant, however, even mathematics is not

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[14] Strauss notes that according to Hobbes "the most important peculiarities of man -- speech, reason, sociality -- are. . . but the work of his will." Leo Strauss, The Political Philosophy of Hobbes, (Chicago: Phoenix Books -- The University of Chicago Press, 1963), p.168. (Hereafter this work is referred to as PPH.)

pure enough; his pure maker's "making" is limited to pure intention. Both Kant and Hobbes seem to agree that man can be only as rational as his passions permit, and for Kant this does not suffice. This does not meet the demands of his notion of morality. Though according to Hobbes, there is no will or intention not rooted in desire, Hobbes' moral teaching parallels Kant's. Kant's pure will or intention is powerless precisely because it is not rooted in desire. For Hobbes, while not powerless (because it is so rooted) moral intention may well have insufficient power to "make" or execute moral actions. This is the norm in the state of nature. For Hobbes too, moral intention is the primary consideration of morality;[15] it is unconditional; its power to "make" or act is conditional. In the state of nature where the individual suffers under the threat of death from others, moral intention tends to be restrained to "pure" intention only. Only by joining together

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[15] Strauss notes: "In believing that the moral attitude, conscience, intention is of more importance than the action, Hobbes is at one with Kant as with the Christian tradition. . . . The unequivocal distinction between just and unjust intentions holds even for the state of nature and is, therefore, absolute." PPH, pp. 23-24. Let it be noted that Strauss speaks little of Kant. Generally, the remarks on Kant, unless in a quote, are not to be held against Strauss.

the moral wills of enough individuals and by adding together the individually insufficient power of each, can the "making" of the right conditions be accomplished. Perhaps it can be said that Kant looks upon the entire phenomenal world as a "state of nature," or at the human passions as a microcosmic state of nature -- nasty and brutish. What we may note is a progression in the demand for more freedom, for freeing the will from natural conditions. If this is to be more than an ideal, if it is to become a reality, this requires more power, and Hobbes indicates the road to power sufficient to overcome the state of nature lies in collective wills. The greater the expectation from political philosophy, the more universal the ambition for actualization of political good, the greater the demand for human freedom and power. This ambition is expressed in philosophy of history, the faith that nature pushes man to free himself of nature; this progress, it is believed, will eventually achieve human freedom on a universal scale and the more free men become the less friction between them; they become homogenized. Therefore, in the universal homogeneous society, either there is ideally no need for power or there is automatic consent to rationality as in mathematics. It is the vision of Kant's moral ideal as a political reality -- the phenomenal world is overcome or made transcendent. It is the ultimate overcoming of Hobbes' state of nature; it is the

society of "pure makers." (Strauss relates this development to the Ego cogitans. He writes:

> The rights of man are the moral equivalent of the Ego cogitans. The Ego cogitans has emancipated itself entirely from 'the tutelage of nature' and eventually refuses to obey any law which it has not originated in its entirety or to dedicate itself to any 'value' of which it does not know that it is its own creation.)[16]

If political science is to emulate mathematical exactitude and reliability, it must come to grips with its "matter" which is clearly what makes political science so much more difficult than mathematics. This handicap can be turned to advantage because unlike the natural sciences, the "matter" of political science is significantly intelligible.[17] We know that nature "dissociates" men. The Greek thinkers are wrong. Man is rational but not social and his unsocial nature tends to overshadow his rationality. Man strives to lord it over his fellows. He is vain and vanity is what most militates against rationality because it is consciousness of superior power or wisdom. The person who thinks himself superior will not be rational. He must be made to see that

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[16] CM, p.45.

[17] Strauss puts it: "Whereas the philosophy or science of nature remains fundamentally hypothetical, political philosophy rests on a non-hypothetical knowledge of the nature of man." Because he says "in the case of human beings we understand not merely what we make but also what makes our making and our makings." (NR, p.201.)

whether or not in natural fact he is superior, it is politically insignificant; any other man can kill him. All men must be regarded as equals because each is equally a threat. What then can be counted on to permit and indeed encourage man to be rational is the most powerful of all passions, the fear of death (and the fear of the fear of death). Therefore, if the natural law tradition is to be made to work, it must accord with man's most powerful passion; "death insofar as it can be avoided or avenged, supplies the ultimate guidance."[18] It is not in man's power to make laws which do not enlist the support of the most powerful passion, especially as these laws or duties must combat the false doctrines so firmly entrenched and reinforced by vanity. From which it follows (in Strauss' words):

> There are, then, no absolute or unconditional duties; duties are binding only to the extent to which their performance does not endanger our self-preservation. Only the right of self-preservation is unconditional or absolute. By nature, there exists only a perfect right and no perfect duty. The law of nature, which formulates man's natural duties, is not a law, properly speaking. Since the fundamental and absolute moral fact is a right

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[18] NR, p.181.

> and not a duty, the function as well as the limits of civil society must be defined in terms of man's natural right and not in terms of his natural duty.[19]

The sovereign's function is not, in Hobbes' words "to make the citizens good and doers of noble things" but to "study, as much as by laws can be effected, to furnish the citizens abundantly with all good things. . . which are conducive to delectation."[20] Political science, if it is to work, to be applicable universally, to actualize its ideal, must limit itself to what it can make and given the nature of man it is able only to bring about Leviathan and not the "City of God." Leviathan is not the rule of a philosopher-king. It does not pretend to the rule of reason (as classically conceived) because reason does not rule most men most of the time. It is hoped that enough men will be reasonable enough long enough to consent mutually and create a sovereign power. Once established, this power can mold the "matter." As Strauss comments:

> Man as the maker of civil society can solve once and for all the problem inherent in man as the matter

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[19] Ibid., p.181. See note 15. Strauss, in his discussion of Hobbes generally in NR, "forgets" there is unconditional duty in foro interno. But Hobbes likewise "forgets", writing in Chapter XIV of Leviathan that in the state of nature, "nothing can be unjust." Strauss and Hobbes are both to be understood as referring to actions, as opposed to intentions.

[20] Ibid., p.189. My underlining, to point up again that Hobbes sees the political art as the art making what is in man's power to secure. Strauss says: ". . . we must say that the founder of liberalism was Hobbes." Ibid. Strauss also labels Hobbes "the classic and the founder of the specifically modern law doctrine." I would also credit him with the most thorough-going political egalitarianism.

> of civil society. Man can guarantee the actualization of the right social order because he is able to conquer human nature by understanding and manipulating the mechanism of the passions.[21]

The sovereign rules by force, by will, by authority.[22] Hobbes' argument is that it is reasonable that he have that authority: one ought to consent to the fiction of the coincidence of the individual will with the sovereign's will because one ought not to prefer civil war or anarchy; one ought to realize that the sovereign authority or will is what makes possible the satisfaction of individual wills. (And of course the sovereign must realize that unless he provides sufficient protection as the ground for the possibility of individuals' gratification, he will jeopardize his own power.)

The modern natural right tradition, though limited in its aspirations to the conditions of happiness -- life, liberty and commodious living -- may well claim that classical

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[21] NR, p.194. This is a comment on Hobbes' statement: ". . . when (commonwealths) come to be dissolved, not by external violence, but intestine disorder, the fault is not in men, as they are the matter, but as they are the makers, and orderers of them." (Cited in NR, p.194.)

[22] Strauss notes: "Hobbes' doctrine of sovereignty ascribes to the sovereign prince or to the sovereign people an unqualified right to disregard all legal and constitutional limitations according to their pleasure, and it imposes even on sensible men a natural law prohibition against censuring the sovereign and his actions." Ibid., p.193.

political philosophy, because it aimed higher, at happiness itself, at the summum bonum, fails to achieve even these basic conditions. As Strauss acknowledges: "In spite of its [the Socratic tradition's] highness or nobility, it could appear as Sisyphean or ugly, when we contrast its achievement with its goal."[23] Of the modern natural right philosophy founded by Hobbes, we may say: in spite of its lowness and bourgeois character, it could appear as Herculean, when one considers how successfully it achieved its goal. Practically every political philosopher after Hobbes criticizes him in the name of nobility, but after Hobbes nobility is understood in terms of freedom from natural limitation: the will is to be untethered from nature; nobility is to be achieved by ever-greater power, by the unleashing of will until finally we attain to the hideous prospects of a universal Tyrant, on the one side, and the Ubermensch, on the other. In this respect Hobbes is closer to the classics than either Machiavelli or the German thinkers. As Strauss puts it:

> As long as Hobbes' approach prevails, 'the philosophy concerned with the human things' will remain the last refuge of nature. For at some point nature succeeds in getting a hearing.[24]

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23 WPP, p.40.

24 NR, p.201.

To Hobbes, "Satan" appears as vanity. While not underestimating its satanic wiles, he is optimistic about the prospects of vanquishing it through powerful political institutions and the popularization of his moral philosophy. Enlightenment is primarily negatively conceived; its goal is largely the task of removing the veils of darkness which do not permit the most fundamental selfish interests to shine forth. (Enlightenment's function is to disabuse man of false consciousness of superiority, which Hobbes sees as the root cause of most political abuses.) The lesson enlightenment would teach requires little education. As Burke says: "The little catechism of the rights of man is soon learned."[25] But only if vanity is defeated. Man must be made to feel resistance and pain; his complacency must be punctured. Agitate man, make him anxious, make him feel his misery and thereby induce him to consent to Leviathan.

Perhaps the greatest threat and impediment to enlightenment is traditional piety which opposes the will of God to the will of man. Modern political philosophy cannot countenance

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[25] Cited in NR, p.183. Strauss notes: "We may understand the frequently observed fact that during the modern period natural law became much more of a revolutionary force than it had been in the past."

such opposition; the will of God must be subject to the will of man.[26] The modern political thinkers, discussed in this paper, whatever their faith convictions, appear unanimous in the emphatic certainty of the political conviction that God, as it were, must not be Catholic. Traditional biblical faith is opposed because it could well jeopardize the efficacy of the technique -- the mechanisms and institutions -- that modern political philosophy counts on.[27]

Hobbes employs his notion of the state of nature, not only as an articulation of his philosophical position but as a potent propaganda device. The notion is borrowed from tradition to combat tradition. Strauss notes its theological background and comments:

> . . . the term 'state of nature' was at home in Christian theology rather than in political philosophy. The state of nature was distinguished especially from the state of grace, and it was subdivided into the state of pure nature and the state of fallen nature. Hobbes dropped the subdivision and replaced the state of grace

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[26] Strauss, commenting on Hobbes, writes: ". . . the fear of invisible powers is stronger than the fear of violent death as long as people believe in invisible powers, i.e., as long as they are under the spell of delusions about the true character of reality; the fear of violent death comes fully into its own as soon as people have become enlightened." NR, p.198.

[27] Hobbes' derisive attack on Catholic doctrines "built on the vain philosophy of Aristotle" illustrates this clearly. He attacks these on the ground that they "serve to lessen dependence of subjects on the sovereign power of their country." See Chapter 46 of Leviathan.

> by the state of civil society. He thus denied, if not the fact, at any rate the importance of the Fall and accordingly asserted that what is needed for remedying the deficiencies or the 'inconveniences' of the state of nature is, not divine grace, but the right kind of human government. This antitheological implication of 'the state of nature' can only with difficulty be separated from its intra-philosophic meaning, which is to make intelligible the primacy of rights as distinguished from duties: the state of nature is originally characterized by the fact that in it there are perfect rights but no perfect duties.[28]

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[28] NR, p.184. See his n.23. That Hobbes denies the significance of the Fall and the need for grace is clearly implied in the Preface to De Cive, pp. 12-13 of S.P.Lamprecht's edition, (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1949).

Strauss writes: "Rousseau was fully aware of the antibiblical implication of the concept of the state of nature. . . the teaching of the Second Discourse is not that of a Christian." NR, p.267, see all of n.32.

Locke, because he is more "judicious," is trickier. On the one hand he writes: ". . . we may give some kind of guess what kind of notions they were, and whence they derived, which filled their minds who were the first beginners of languages." (Strauss' italics.) But elsewhere, in patent contradiction to the implication of the above, he insists Adam "was created a perfect man, his body and mind in full possession of their strength and reason, and so was capable from the first instant of his being. . . to govern his actions according to the dictates of the law of reason which God had implanted in him." (p.217,n.74.) Strauss also notes: "When speaking of everyone's natural right to be the executioner of the law of nature, Locke refers to 'that great law of nature, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed"' (Gen.9:6). But he omits the biblical reason, 'for in the image of God made he man.' The Lockean reason for the right to inflict capital punishment on murderers is that man may 'destroy things noxious' to men (Strauss' italics). . . the murderer 'may be destroyed as a lion or a tiger, one of those wild savage beasts with whom men can have no society nor security.' NR,p.223, n.84. (Also see Strauss' discussion beginning p.216.)

Hobbes' doctrine of the state of nature is opposed to both the theological tradition and the classical philosphical tradition in these implications: 1) "man is thinkable as a being that lacks awareness of sacred restraints",[29] 2) Grace is denied; this denial is an implicit foundation of modern political philosophy. It is man's making that brings "redemption"; it is man's making that is deserving of respect, trust, and faith, precisely because it is not a matter of grace; 3) To suggest that human goodness is forced upon man by natural scarcity and war is to deny the significance of the belief that God cares for man or to suggest that He created man or governs the cosmos with "malice aforethought."[30]

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[29] OT, p. 205. Strauss says this both in regard to Hegel and Hobbes. It seems even more true of Hegel than of Hobbes, if we remember that for Hobbes moral intention to seek peace is unconditional. See notes 15 and 19 above.

[30] Strauss writes in explication of Plato: "One would not reasonably expect much virtue or much justice of men who live habitually in a condition of extreme scarcity so that they have to fight with one another constantly for the sake of mere survival. If there is to be justice among men, care must be taken that they are not compelled to think constantly of mere self-preservation and to act toward their fellows in the way in which men mostly act under such conditions. But such care cannot be human providence. The cause of justice is infinitely strengthened if the condition of man as man, and hence especially the condition of man in the beginning (when he could not yet have bee corrupted by false opinions), was on of nonscarcity. There is then a profound kinship between the notion of natural law and the notion of a perfect beginning: the golden age or the Garden of Eden." (NR, p. 150, n.24) (See also in CM, Strauss' discussion of traditional justifications of natural inequality.)

What emerges from Hobbes' doctrine of the state of nature is that the "natural" in "natural" law is largely equivalent to the individual. The individual is the court of first and final appeal; there is a "below" but not an "above." Not for the sake of the good life -- compliance with an "above" -- but for the sake of life -- to preserve his own -- does man become social or enter into horizontal relationships as equal with others and empower legal authority. But even then in civil society he still remains the court of final appeal for the law or the sovereign authority has power only by virtue of his consent. Even in civil society he stands supreme, for if it fails in his judgment to guarantee his own preservation, he may well throw off the yoke of civil authority and fight with all his physical might and every means at his disposal against it. Avoidance of crosses is the supreme precept, both in and out of civil society.

Like Machiavelli, both Hobbes and Locke "practice what they preach." Strauss bases this conclusion not on biographical evidence (e.g., expedient "holidays" abroad), but on the internal evidence of their respective political teachings which in his view belie their explicit professions of Christian faith. Strauss is critical of scholars who simply take these professions of faith as conclusive evidence of faith convictions. He suggests these scholars "do not seem to have a sufficient notion of the degree of circumspection or of accommodation to the accepted views that was required in former ages of 'deviationists' who desired

to survive or to die in peace."[31] Strauss repeatedly makes the point that modern liberalism emerges from a rejection of Christian faith. However compellingly it may be demonstrated that Hobbes and Locke oppose the theological tradition and however incontrovertible the "fact" of their atheism, this demonstration does not rule out the influence of religious tradition on their political thought, nor does it tell us much about the interaction between Puritanism and the modern political tradition. We shall examine this question at length below.

Locke

In moving on to Locke (or more accurately, quickly over him), we are not leaving Hobbes. Nor are we leaving the state of nature, which is perhaps one of the most seminal notions in the history of political philosophy. Locke, as Strauss sees him, is a devout disciple of Hobbes, who conceals as much as he can his debt to Hobbes. Strauss speaks of "the judicious Locke who judiciously refrained as much as he could from mentioning Hobbes' 'justly decried name'".[32] Locke, in Strauss' view, consummates Hobbes' teaching and renders it

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[31] NR, pp. 198-199, n. 43. (Strauss cites Pierre Bayle as corroborating his view of these professions of faith.) Strauss also suggests that these scholars subscribe to the "dogma that the mind of the individual is incapable of liberating itself from the opinions which rule his society". This kind of "dogma" and Strauss' attitude toward it is discussed below.

[32] Ibid., p. 166.

palatable by changing it "only in one point": "He [Locke] realized that what man primarily needs for his self-preservation... is property....The right to self-preservation becomes the right to unlimited acquisition."[33] Strauss says Locke's is "the classic doctrine of the spirit of capitalism."[34] Strauss observes:

> "With a view to the resounding success of Locke as contrasted with the apparent failure of Hobbes, especially in the Anglo-Saxon world, we can say that Machiavelli's discovery or invention of the need for an immoral or amoral substitute for morality, became victorious through Locke's discovery or invention that that substitute is acquisitiveness".[35]

(This is an overstatement. Strauss himself indicates this by citing Montesquieu's preference for the spirit of capitalism to "stern, republican, Roman virtue" because it "is productive of gentle manners, of humanité.")[36] Strauss sums up Locke's teaching as follows:

> According to Locke, man and not nature, the work of man and not the gift of nature, is the origin of almost everything valuable: man owes almost everything valuable to his own efforts. Not resigned gratitude and consciously obeying or imitating nature but hopeful self-reliance and creativity become henceforth the marks of human nobility. Man is effectively emancipated from the bonds of nature, and therewith the individual is emancipated from those social bonds which antedate all consent or compact, by the emancipation of his productive acquisitiveness, which is necessarily, if accidentally, beneficent and hence susceptible of becoming the strongest social bond:

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[33] Ibid., p. 246.

[34] WPP., p. 49.

[35] Ibid., p. 49.

[36] Ibid., p. 50.

> restraint of the appetites is replaced by a mechanism whose effect is humane. And that emancipation is achieved through the intercession of the prototype of conventional things, i.e., money. The world in which human creativity seems to reign supreme is, in fact, the world which has replaced the rule of nature by the rule of convention. From now on, nature furnishes only the worthless materials as in themselves; the forms are supplied by man, by man's free creation. For there are no natural forms, no intelligible 'essences': 'the abstract ideas' are 'the inventions and creatures of the understanding, made by it for its own use.' Understanding and science stand in the same relation to 'the given' in which human labor, called forth to its supreme effort by money, stands to the raw materials. There are, therefore, no natural principles of understanding: all knowledge is acquired; all knowledge depends on labor and is labor.[37]

We may now turn to a fuller consideration of Strauss' view of the Weber thesis. Strauss, it will be recalled, contends that Weber failed to discern (or even consider) that the spirit of capitalism was fostered by the new political philosophy and new economics, by Hobbes and especially Locke. Strauss maintains:

> . . . there is a straight line[38] which leads from Machiavelli to Bacon, Hobbes and other Englishmen who in various ways came to exert a powerful influence on 'Puritanism.' Generally speaking the Puritans were more open to the new philosophy of science both natural and moral than, e.g., Lutherans because Calvinism had broken with 'pagan' philosophy (Aristotle) most radically; which it had not originated in any way. By looking for the origin of the capitalist spirit in the way of thinking originated by Machiavelli one will also avoid an obvious pitfall of Weber's inquiry. Weber's study of the origin of the capitalist spirit is wholly unconcerned with the origin of the science of economics, for the science of economics is the authentic interpretation of 'the capitalist spirit.'[39]

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[37] NR, pp. 248-249.

[38] Strauss says: "Modern investigators usually underestimate Bacon's influence on Hobbes, simply because they overestimate the significance of Galileo's method for Hobbes' political philosophy." PPH, p.135, n.3. Bacon approvingly cites Chapter 15 of The Prince. See PPH, p.88 and n. 5 there.

[39] Church History, op. cit., pp. 101-102. Strauss writes:

that the line of thinking in both Strauss' and Weber's respective positions is similar: this kind of ascetic restraint which is not self-serving must be vertically ordained; its source must be transcendent. Strauss is convinced the capitalist spirit is self-serving, not in the sense that it satisfies avarice, but in overcoming the anxiety generated by the impact of the political doctrines of Hobbes and Locke.[40] Locke engenders a

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"What he [Weber] failed to consider was that in the course of the sixteenth century there was a conscious break with the whole philosophic tradition, a break that took place of the plane of purely philosophic or rational or secular thought. This break was originated by Machiavelli, and it led to the moral teachings of Bacon and Hobbes: thinkers whose writings preceded by decades those writings of their Puritan countrymen on whom Weber's thesis is based. One can hardly say more than that Puritanism, having broken more radically with the 'pagan' philosophic tradition (i.e., chiefly with Aristotelianism) than Roman Catholicism and Lutheranism had done, was more open to the new philosophy than were the latter. Puritanism thus could become a very important, and perhaps the most important 'carrier' of the new philosophy both natural and moral--of a philosophy which had been created by men of an entirely non-Puritan stamp." NR, pp. 60-61., n. 22. The question of their "stamp" will be examined below.

[40]Strauss writes: "Tawney rightly pointed out that the capitalist Puritanism studied by Weber was late Puritanism or that it was the Puritanism that had already made its peace with 'the world'. This means that the Puritanism in question had made its peace with the capitalist world already in existence: the Puritanism in question then was not the cause of the capitalist world or of the capitalist spirit." (NR, pp. 60-61, n. 22)

"quest for joy" which is "joyless." Hobbes promotes the never-ending "race".[41] They seek to avoid crosses by laboring under a cross. (Strauss, as we noted, objects to the assertion that from biblical faith can be drawn the political position which stresses not that man become better, but, on the contrary, recommends political institutions and mechanisms which take for granted that he will not, and which are geared to manipulate his base passions, or to play one against the other). Strauss portrays this "joyless quest for joy" inspired by the new political hedonism of Hobbes and Locke and the new science of economics:

> Not the natural sweetness of living but the terrors of death make us cling to life. What nature firmly establishes is that from which desire moves away, the point of departure of desire; the goal toward which desire moves is secondary. The primary fact is want. But this want, this lack, is no longer understood as pointing to something complete, perfect, whole. The necessities of life are no longer understood as necessary for the complete life or the good life, but as mere inescapabilities. The satisfaction of wants is therefore no longer limited by the demands of the good life but becomes aimless. The goal of desire is defined by nature only negatively--the denial of pain. It is not pleasure more or less dimly anticipated which elicits human efforts: 'the chief, if not only, spur to human industry and action is uneasiness.' So powerful is the natural primacy of pain that the active denial of pain is itself painful. The pain which removes pain is labor. It is this pain, and hence a defect, which gives man originally the most important of all rights: sufferings and defects, rather than merits or virtues, originate rights. Hobbes identified the rational life with the life dominated by the fear of fear, by the fear which relieves us from fear.

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[41]His famous passage in The Elements of Law (end of Chapter 9) concludes:
"Continually to out-go the next before, is felicity. And to forsake the course, is to die."

> Moved by the same spirit, Locke identifies the rational life with the life dominated by the pain which relieves pain. Labor takes the place of the art which imitates nature; for labor is, in the words of Hegel, a negative attitude toward nature. The starting point of human efforts is misery: the state of nature is a state of wretchedness. The way toward happiness is a movement away from the state of nature, a movement away from nature: the negation of nature is the way toward happiness. And if the movement toward happiness is the actuality of freedom, freedom is negativity. Just like the primary pain itself, the pain which relieves pain 'ceaseth only in death.' Since there are therefore no pure pleasures, there is no necessary tension between civil society as the mighty leviathan or coercive society, on the one hand, and the good life, on the other: hedonism becomes utilitarianism or political hedonism. The painful relief of pain culminates not so much in the greatest pleasures as 'in the having those things which produce the greatest pleasures.' Life is the joyless quest for joy.[42]

Before leaving Hobbes and Locke (at this juncture) and preliminary to our discussion of Rousseau, we take note of the connection between variations in their respective view of the state of nature and the differences in their political teachings.

For Hobbes the state of nature is terrible, nasty and brutish. After Hobbes its "image" improves, a little in Locke's treatment of it and radically in Rousseau's. This progressive bettering of the image of the state of nature means a progressive diminishing of the absolute right of self-preservation. The fiction of the coincidence of individual will and sovereign will becomes less fictional. Hobbes is a "purist" in his liberalism[43] and not inclined to democracy; Locke and certainly Rousseau are less "pure" liberals; both champion democracy.

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[42] NR, pp. 250-251.

[43] Strauss understands by liberalism "that political doctrine which regards as the fundamental political fact the rights, as distinguished from the duties, of man and which identifies the function of the state with the protection or safeguarding of those rights" (NR, pp. 181-182).

For Hobbes there is no doubt that the state of nature is worse than any kind of political order. He, therefore, upholds the rights of the sovereign to the point of totalitarianism. But he is no less rigorous a liberal. His liberalism is theoretically consistent and "pure" in upholding the absolute right of the individual, to the point of undercutting the moral basis of a citizen army and police force, and capital punishment (and one may say patriotism). What he opposes absolutely is disorder, anarchy and long drawn-out revolutionary struggles.[44] What he prizes is stability; this is purchased at the price of individual liberty, but the cost must not outweigh its benefits to the individual: protection for obedience (but who needs harmful protection).

Locke says that the state of nature is "an age of negligence and unforeseeing innocence." The conspicuous lack he emphasizes most is the equipment which makes for (Whig-style) happiness: it is inconvenient, full of "strife and troubles," "full of fears and dangers" and not least, it is a state of penury.[45] He calls the state of nature an "ill condition." He differs significantly from Hobbes in this one fundamental respect: for Locke, the state of nature is not

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[44] It would seem Hobbes does not oppose revolutions, per se. Perhaps he would not disapprove of a South American style coup d'etat. What he objects to most, is long periods of disorder. In effect it would be extremely difficult to launch a successful revolution in a Leviathan-type state.

[45] Ibid., pp. 224-225 where Strauss discusses Locke's treatment of the state of nature.

marked by the absence of political order; it lacks *good* political order, a constitution, and developed legal code.[46] Therefore, Locke demands more than *Leviathan*; he demands the *Wealth of Nations* and democracy as well.[47] The better the state of nature, the more must civil society offer.

Locke's democracy impinges more on the individual's natural rights than did Hobbes' *Leviathan*. Strauss remarks: "It is only fair to say that Hobbes stresses more strongly than does Locke the individual's right to resist society or the government whenever his preservation is endangered."[48] Locke also makes plain the right of revolution provided it is a

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[46] Strauss comments: "The reason for Locke's deviation from Hobbes is that, according to Hobbes, the state of nature is worse than any kind of government, whereas according to Locke, the state of nature is preferable to arbitrary and lawless government. Hence Locke teaches that the state of nature is more viable from the point of view of sensible men than 'absolute monarchy.'" *Ibid.*, p.230, n.96.

[47] It should be noted that for both Rousseau and Locke democracy emphatically does not mean the rule of the *demos*. They both insist that "have-nots" *not* have a political voice. Locke assigns to government the task of protecting the "haves" from infringement by the "have-nots." Rousseau contemptuously dismisses *la canaille* of the cities as politically irresponsible. *Ibid.*, p.286. The Levellers, though they invoke God repeatedly and make claim to God-given rights "engraven on the table of the heart by the finger of God," feel no compunction about denying these rights to wage earners and alms-takers. (See C.B. MacPherson's *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*, Chapter III.) Universal suffrage, even in "advanced" democracies, is a relatively recent ideal not yet perfectly realized. The thinking seems to have been: political responsibility should not be entrusted to those who have nothing to lose. It is precisely to these that Marx appeals.

[48] *NR*, p.232. Strauss notes: "In accordance with this, Locke asserts more emphatically than did Hobbes the individual's duty of military service." *Ibid.*, n.101.

democratic revolution, the will of the majority. We note that for Locke the coincidence of everyone's will with the sovereign will becomes less of a fiction. Therefore, the individual is more obliged to bow to the sovereign will. Thus we may observe: the better the state of nature the more does sovereign power rest squarely with the citizenry. The greater the sovereignty of the people the more diminished become the rights of the individual. This points to the tragic irony of modern political philosophy: it arises to champion the rights of the individual and instead leads to a new kind of despotism, one that asserts its sovereign claim in the name of freedom.

Hobbes is most emphatic that the tension between the absolute rights of the individual and the rights of the sovereign -- the problem of freedom in an ordered civil society -- cannot be resolved perfectly. Leviathan and not the City of God is actualizable. The individual's freedom must be constrained and canalized. Hobbes would remind us that peace and civil order are the ground of the possibility of any degree of freedom, of life itself. But Rousseau counters: what good is life if not its freedom? Civil society must maximize the freedom of the individual.

Rousseau

Rousseau's is the typical, if not archetypal, modern protest against modernity. Drawing its inspiration from the classics' notion of nobility, it rejects the natural ground and measure of the classical conception of nobility, and so brings about an advance in modernity and its more radical alienation from the classics. Strauss writes of Rousseau:

> While appealing from Hobbes, Locke, or the Encyclopedists to Plato, Aristotle, or Plutarch, he jettisoned important elements of classical thought which his modern predecessors had still preserved. In Hobbes, reason, using her authority, had emancipated passion; passion acquired the status of a freed woman; reason continued to rule, if only by remote control. In Rousseau, passion itself took the initiative and rebelled; usurping the place of reason and indignantly denying her libertine past, passion began to pass judgment, in the severe accents of Catonic virtue, on reason's turpitudes.[49]

It is against this bourgeois[50] life of "joyless quest for joy" that Rousseau protests. Rousseau is the great grandiloquent protester. He protests in the name of freedom and in the name of stern republican virtue, on behalf of the citoyen against the bourgeois and on behalf of the natural man against the "chains" of civilization.

Hobbes and Locke taught that the state of nature must be overcome by the establishment of civil society. Rousseau asks: Why? Is not being held down by the institutional chains

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[49] Ibid., p.252.

[50] Rousseau is the first to use this label. WPP, p.50.

of "'the mighty leviathan' whose 'blood is money,'"[51] less noble and more dehumanizing than the freedom enjoyed by man in his original natural state?

Rousseau is the first[52] philosopher of freedom. From the vantage of the radical supremacy of freedom, life in the state of nature appears in a new light as naturally good, and life in society appears vicious and corrupt, the more civilized the more corrupt.

Rousseau's vantage is discernible in his definition of man; ". . . it is not so much the understanding which institutes the specific difference of man among the animals as his quality as a free agent."[53] (To avoid the cavils of the skeptics he substitutes "perfectibility" for the theologically and metaphysically loaded term "freedom";[54] "no one can deny the fact that man is distinguished from the brutes by perfectibility."[55]) If man's specific difference is "not so much his understanding" then his perfectibility must be essentially related tothe passions or sentiments. Rousseau represents man in a new "image" as primarily a being of sentiment. His impassioned rhetoric is apposite to this new image.

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[51] NR, p.282.

[52] Not merely chronologically but also in that he is its most passionate champion.

[53] Ibid., p.265.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid.

We will examine Rousseau's critique of Hobbes' portrayal of the state of nature, focusing on the contrast in how each relates the state of nature to civil society and how this in turn colors their respective views of the tension between the freedom or rights of the individual and civil authority.

The attack on Hobbes generally takes aim at Hobbes' analysis of "beginnings" -- his portrayal of the state of nature, but it does not question that his is the proper and indeed only approach. Rousseau claims an unbiased consideration of potentia reveals only pure potentia. Hobbes studies potentia with a view to construction or making. Hobbes assumes man is rational, which, as he interprets it, means that man has rational plans or dictates that he would execute or make. The question he considers is this: Why is man's willing of his rational project not sufficient as it is in the paradigm of mathematics. He looks at potentia as potentia for rational making. This is to start with the assumption of an end: the conditions under which the individual will has sufficient power to actualize its rational project. That end is peace. Strauss writes:

> He [Hobbes] claims that he deduced the end from the beginning. In fact, however, he takes the end for granted; for he discovers the beginning by analyzing human nature and human affairs with that end (peace) in view.[56]

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[56] Ibid., p.180, n.16.

Hobbes starts from the fact or the experience of "intestine disorder." Order is made by "makers and orderers." For Hobbes the state of nature is a reflection on political order, on man as "maker," as rational. Rousseau starts from the "chains" forged by the "makers" of political order. For Rousseau the state of nature is a reflection which focuses on what is wrong with order and it views man primarily as "matter," as an innocent being of passion and sentiment. All that is found in the analysis of the beginnings is freedom, the freedom to be passionate, to feel. Rousseau criticizes Hobbes on Hobbesian grounds; his success uproots the natural ground of Hobbes' position, or, we may put it, he endorses Hobbes' break with the classical natural law tradition but severs Hobbes' connections with it, insisting that the break, if consistently thought through, compels pulling out the classical roots. Hobbes concurs with the tradition that man is a rational animal, but insists that he is naturally unsociable and indeed anti-social. Rousseau objects that the denial of man's social nature implies the denial of man's rational nature because "reason is coterminous with language and language presupposes society: being presocial natural man is prerational."[57]

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57 Ibid., p.270.

Therefore, Hobbes' tradition-colored view of the laws of nature as dictates of reason must be rejected. Rousseau insists (says Strauss): "By nature, the law of nature 'must speak immediately with the voice of nature'; it must be prerational, dictated by 'natural sentiment' or by passion."[58] According to Strauss, Rousseau objects: "Hobbes is grossly inconsistent because, on the one hand, he denies that man is by nature social and, on the other hand, he tries to establish the character of natural man by referring to his experience of man which is the experience of social man."[59] Man's unsociableness cannot be ascribed to vanity since vanity presupposes society. The vices Hobbes ascribes to man in the state of nature are not natural to man but are picked up in society. Thus we must conclude that by nature man is neither rational nor vainly vicious. If man is not naturally vicious he may be said to be naturally good. Rousseau appears to consider vanity and compassion as opposites; and he appears to have inferred from his own experience in society that the "more refined" people are, the more they tend to be vain, and the more vain they are, the more conspicuous their lack of compassion.

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[58] Ibid., p.269.

[59] Ibid., p.268.

Rousseau does not demonstrate it cogently but asserts man is by nature compassionate: he will harm others only if threatened and then he will automatically, as it were, not exceed what is required to preserve himself; man's natural passion is love, self-love, and when this is satisfied, compassion.[60] Compassion is the natural source of social virtue. Strauss remarks: "He [Rousseau] seems to assume that the instinctive desire for the preservation of the species bifurcates into the desire for procreation and compassion."[61]

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[60] One wonders what inspires Rousseau's conviction. It seems to go against the grain of both the classical tradition and the theological tradition. Eve did not eat the forbidden fruit because she was threatened nor did Cain kill Abel to secure his own preservation. The biblical view suggests that love of neighbor is rooted in love of God. Nietzsche waxes eloquent on this: "To love man for God's sake -- that has so far been the noblest and most remote feeling attained among men. That the love of man is just one more stupidity and brutishness if there is no ulterior intent to sanctify it; that the inclination to such love of man must receive its measure, its subtlety, its grain of salt and dash of ambergris from some higher inclination -- whoever the human being may have been who first felt and 'experienced' this, however much his tongue may have stumbled as it tried to express such delicatesse, let him remain holy and venerable for us for all time as the human being who has flown highest yet and gone astray most beautifully!" F.Nietzsche's Beyond Good and Evil, Section 60. Similarly in the Socratic view, it is love of the Good which enables man to transcend love of one's own. Both suggest there is no satisfying sheer unrestrained selfishness. As Hobbes puts it: ". . . in the first place, I put for a generall inclination of all mankind, a perpetuall and restlesse desire of power after power, that ceaseth only in Death." (Quoted in PPH, p.10.) Did Rousseau infer his view from the "law of the jungle" according to which sated animals do not molest others? In any case Rousseau apparently inspired the questionable Hegelian-Marxist, apocalyptic vision of the day when man's selfishness will be sated.

[61] NR, p.270.

According to Rousseau reason emerges as a necessary aid to satisfaction of bodily needs which becomes more difficult as a result of population increase and adverse natural conditions. Man becomes rational perforce. Need (due especially to scarcity) is not only the "mother of invention" but the "inventor" of reason. As natural conditions vary, so does the degree and kind of development, resulting in distinctive Volksgeist and natural peoples. Reason not only helps satisfy want, it stimulates new wants and so stimulates its own further development. The spectacular phenomena of nature act as a catalyst spurring on and accelerating this development. Strauss sketches it:

> The progress of the mind is then a necessary process. It is necessary because men are forced to invent by changes (formation of islands, eruption of volcanoes, and the like) which, although not directed toward an end and hence accidental, are yet the necessary effects of natural causes. Accident forces understanding and its development upon man. This being the character especially of the transition from the state of nature to civilized life, it is perhaps not surprising that the process of civilization should have been destructive of the sub-human bliss of the state of nature or that men should have committed grave errors in organizing societies. Yet all this misery and all these blunders were necessary; they were the necessary outcome of early man's lack of experience and lack of philosophy. Still, in and through society, however imperfect, reason develops. Eventually, the original lack of experience and of philosophy is overcome, and man succeeds in establishing public right on solid grounds. At that moment, which is Rousseau's moment, man will no longer be molded by fortuitous circumstances but rather by his reason. Man, the product of blind fate, eventually becomes the seeing master of his fate. Reason's creativity or mastership over the blind forces of nature is a product of those blind forces.[62]

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[62] Ibid., p.273.

Though society emerges from the need for self-preservation or selfish bodily satisfaction, it is not utilitarian calculation which forms and informs the order and cohesiveness of the best political society. Though men enter society to preserve life, they do so because life is sensed as good and its goodness is its freedom. Therefore, not merely preservation of life must be the root and bond of society, but preservation and promotion of the goodness of life. The difference between Hobbes and Rousseau centers around the "self" that is to be preserved. According to Hobbes this is primarily the rational self -- man the maker. According to Rousseau the "self" is free, innocent, good-natured, passionate man, not essentially man the maker. Strauss notes: ". . . the primacy of the individual in relation to society is preserved [by Rousseau] if the place which Hobbes had assigned to calculation or self-interest is assigned to passion or sentiment."[63] The vision of man in the state of nature, for Rousseau, is therefore not a negative telos but a positive standard to be aspired to. Strauss says that according to Rousseau "the good life consists in the closest approximation of the state of nature which is possible on the level of humanity."[64]

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63 Ibid., pp. 277-278.

64 Ibid., p.282.

Rousseau employs the state of nature to champion freedom, Hobbes, to limit it. Hobbes subordinates freedom to self-preservation, to preservation of life; for Rousseau freedom is that for the sake of which life should be preserved. Hobbes chains and canalizes the passions and sentiments for the sake of rationality, of construction, whereas Rousseau indentures rationality to serve man's freedom, man's naturally good sentiment and passion: science and artifact must serve in their cause and for their sake, to make man free to be his own good-natured "feeling" self. For Rousseau, the goal is not power to make but, ultimately, making possible liberation from concern with power to make, and freedom to "just" be.

Rousseau's central objection to all past views of the "beginnings" of man is that neither God nor nature (nor Kantian Reason) presents to man a filled-in Idea of man which he must emulate at the cost of the freedom of his natural passionate self. The only Idea one can elicit, after reason has developed fully at a very late stage (Rousseau's moment), is the Idea that man's humanity is his freedom, or perfectibility or malleability, as a being of passion and sentiment. He is endowed with neither a vicious nature nor a moral or rational nature; he has no natural inclinations to the one or the other.

The most one may say is that he is by nature inclined to his freedom; if free, he is good, if free he is compassionate, naturally and passionately, and not because he executes dictates of reason. Reason is to be utilized to mitigate and legitimate the "chains" of civilization. Reason does not make him good; it allows him to be naturally good. Virtue is victory in the struggle against the "chains." Virtue requires effort, struggle, even self-denial and asceticism, but what is denied or abstained from, are social vices, the corruption and degeneration of the passions due to rational political makings, but not the passions in their natural goodness. For Kant and Hobbes, virtue is the victory of the "chains" against the passions. Certainly for Kant, no passion is good; goodness is defined precisely as the "transcendence" of passion, and good will as passion-free transcendent will. Notwithstanding his taking his lead from Rousseau and defining rationality by its form of generality or universality, and concurring in the denial of the rational nature of man, his rationally projected Idea of man is basically closer to Hobbes' given "rational nature" of man: man the (rational) "maker" whose "matter" tends to interfere with his "making" but can be overcome by the right kind of powerful making or construction. Kant also inclines more toward Hobbes rather than Rousseau in his view of man's unsociability; he does not appear to subscribe to the view that man is compassionate.

He shares with Hobbes, in opposition to Rousseau, the faith that universal enlightenment will free man and empower him to be rational.

In a free society, the best society, the filled-in Idea of man is immanent; it is the general will. The general will is the source of positive law which is the positive expression of the general will. There is no appeal from the positive to the natural law because the need for such appeal is obviated. There is no transcendent natural law or Ideal standard; the expression of freedom, the filled-in Idea peculiar to a particular society is immanent in the corporate identity and general will of that society. Rousseau asserts: "By the very fact that he is, the sovereign is always what he ought to be."[65] Does this imply the endorsement of cannibalism, or condone license as long as it meets the test of generality or mutuality? Strauss suggests that it does.[66] We do not believe he is

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[65] Ibid., p.286.

[66] WPP, p.51. Strauss writes: "If the ultimate criterion of justice becomes the general will, i.e., the will of a free society, cannibalism is as just as its opposite. Every institution hallowed by a folk-mind has to be regarded as sacred." And he writes: "On the basis of Rousseau, the limitation of license is effected horizontally by the license of other men. I am just if I grant to every other man the same rights which I claim for myself, regardless of what these rights may be. The horizontal limitation is preferred to the vertical limitation because it seems to be more realistic: the horizontal limitation, the limitation of my claim by the claims of others is self enforcing." Ibid.

suggesting that Rousseau teaches this, but that he opens the door to extreme legal positivism and the justification of enormities in the name of historical necessity. For Rousseau, there appears to be a rough standard by which to judge societies, the components of which are liberty, democracy, compassion and patriotism. As Strauss himself insists:

> One cannot emphasize too strongly that Rousseau would have abhorred the totalitarianism of our day. He favored, indeed, the totalitarianism of a free society, but he rejected in the clearest possible language any possible totalitarianism of government.[67]

(We may also say that he would have disapproved of most modern democracies insofar as they are based on economism; the root and social bond of these societies are utilitarian rather than expressive of compassion; they lack the stern republican brand of patriotism; ironically, it is likely Rousseau would find distasteful their "excessive" egalitarianism.) Strauss would have us see that this standard is less clear, and less filled-in, than the natural law tradition, classic or modern, that the

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[67] Ibid. Compare Barker's remarks: "You can find your own dogmas in Rousseau, whether you belong to the Left (and especially to the left of the Left) or whether you belong to the Right (and especially to the right of the Right). . . . There is no comfort for the Center in all the shot fabric of Rousseau's book." Sir Ernest Barker, ed., Social Contract, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), p.xxxix.

distinction between the ought and the is, is blurred and blunted. It is this major turning effected by the second "wave" of modernity that Strauss underscores:

> 'Material' ethics gives way to 'formal' ethics with the result that it becomes impossible ever to establish clear substantive principles and that one is compelled to borrow substantive principles from the 'general will' or from what came to be called History.[68]

Because Rousseau, in contradistinction to Hobbes and Kant and to the Enlightenment generally, is not dedicated primarily to a political state of affairs which empowers rational achievement for its own sake, he does not share the Enlightenment attitude toward reason and truth as liberating. He opposes the Enlightenment article of faith which prescribes the diffusion of science and popularization of philosophy. In form, his attitude toward technology resembles the classics, but only in form. Science is to be subject to political control but the criteria of control are not "heavenly" -- vertically ordained criteria. They are positive or immanent criteria, not dictates of reason but dictates of will, of the will of the people, determinations of their positive or patriotic good. This is to radically politicize science. Hobbes and the Enlightenment generally saw science as productive of power; they believed that if man gains sufficient power he will become his rational self. Rousseau, however, denying the rational nature of man,

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[68] WPP, p.52.

had to have positive prescriptions for the use of power and therefore politically circumscribe rational making. He felt that construction, even civilising construction, could corrupt, or that there may well be conflict and tension between rationality and freedom. His formal similarity to the classics bespeaks a more radical departure than was effected by Hobbes. Rousseau follows the classics in opposing to the Enlightenment the assertion of intellectual inequality. However this too is colored by positive political considerations. It is less a question of whether men are equally apt and more a question of their respective degrees of virtue, positively and patriotically considered, of the kind of influence they will have on society. Strauss notes:

> . . . whereas science is essentially cosmopolitan, society must be animated by a spirit of patriotism, by a spirit which is by no means irreconcilable with national hatreds.[69]

And further on:

> . . . the true philosophers fulfil the absolutely necessary function of being the guardians of virtue or of free society. . . . They, and they alone, can enlighten the peoples as to their duties and as to the precise character of the good society. . . . Theoretical science, which is not intrinsically in the service of virtue and is therefore bad, must be put into the service of virtue in order to become good. It can become good, however, only if its study remains the preserve of the few who are by nature destined to guide the people; only an esoteric theoretic science can become good. This is not to deny that, in times of corruption, the restriction on the popularization of science can and must be relaxed.[70]

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[69] NR, p.257.

[70] Ibid., p.263.

Rousseau is a modern champion of "the noble lie," of salutary myth and religion, of folk-ways and custom, of all that conduces to a strong corporate identity. Strauss writes:

> Civil society will approximate the state of nature on the level of humanity to a higher degree, or it will be more healthy, if it rests on the almost natural basis of nationality or if it has a national individuality. National custom or national cohesion is a deeper root of civil society than are calculation or self-interest and hence than the social contract. National custom and national 'philosophy' are the matrix of the general will. . . . Hence the past, and especially the early past, of one's own nation tends to become of higher dignity than any cosmopolitan aspirations. If man's humanity is acquired by accidental causation, that humanity will be radically different from nation to nation and from age to age.[71]

Rousseau's vision of the best society, of the free society, envisages a modern polis with a naturally homogeneous ethnic citizenry informed by a natural Volksgeist. It is the vision

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[71] Ibid., pp. 289-290. This may seem to lay the groundwork for notions of racial supremacy or for theories of racial superiority; but it also tends to make Rousseau less ambitious to "save the world" through his political science. Strauss notes: "Rousseau agrees with the classics by explicitly agreeing with the 'principle established by Montesquieu' that 'liberty not being a fruit of all climates is not within the reach of all peoples'. Acceptance of this principles explains the moderate character of most of Rousseau's proposals which were meant for immediate application. [My underlining.] Deviating from Montesquieu and the classics, Rousseau teaches, however, that 'every legitimate government is republican' and hence that almost all existing regimes are illegitimate: 'very few nations have laws'. This amounts to saying that in many cases despotic regimes are inevitable, without becoming, by this fact, legitimate: the strangling of a sultan is as lawful as all governmental actions of the sultan." Ibid., p. 277, n.44.

of a civil society which approximates as much as possible to the solution of the antinomy of the natural freedom of the individual and the "chains" of political order. As Rousseau put it: "Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains."[72] But he does not pretend to show us how to remove those chains, as his question -- "What can make it legitimate?" -- indicates. He would at best "legitimate" those "chains," but they are nonetheless "chains." In the best society, those chains are legitimate because man molds them and forges them himself, the laws and institutions are expressions of what each citizen wills in freedom, the general will. The technique of molding, of political construction, is aimed at fostering natural equality and the natural goodness of the citizen, and against the corruption of man's natural goodness as he became more civilized. The sovereign power may be Leviathan-like, but it is not seen as set over against the citizenry to impinge upon its freedom, but rather to promote it, to encourage the citizens to realize their own true, good, sensibilities; the free citizen is naturally compassionate, enthusiastically patriotic, and his private interests intend the common good. This vision is a protest against the technological artificial and forced homogenization of man, but it hardly comes to terms with it. Even within the

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[72] The duly celebrated opening of his Contrat Social.

vision the "chains" remain. Rousseau's greatness derives less from his practical resolution of the conflict between the individual and society and rather more from his powerfully moving evocation of that conflict. Primarily and ultimately, his is not the perspective of the statesman or citizen, but that of the natural man; he views the political from a supra-political vantage.[73] Virtue and duty mean struggle, effort and constraint -- "chains" -- though they be of one's own making; "chains" clang and clash with the ideal of the complete naturalness, of the idyllic beginnings. Strauss remarks:

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[73] Barker writes: "Rousseau was not a philosopher -- at any rate in the sense in which Hobbes, Locke and Hume were philosophers. He was rather a littérateur of genius and an acute sensibility, who drew ideas from the surrounding air by the magnet of his intuition, and proceeded to make himself their incomparable exponent. Nor had he acquired. . . any practical experience of political affairs, except what he drew from his observation of the affairs of Geneva. He was an a priori theorist; and belonging to the age of the encyclopedie he could theorize readily in many fields. He adorned and illuminated, (or dazzled) the field of political theory with a large number of writings." Barker, op.cit.,p.xxvii.

> Rousseau taught, indeed, that virtue is superior to goodness. Yet the ambiguity of his notion of freedom, or, in other words, his longing for the happiness of prepolitical life, makes that teaching questionable from his own point of view.[74]

To put it in our terms, rational making is not the height for man. Strauss writes:

> Here at last civilized man or those civilized men who have returned from civil society to solitude reach a degree of happiness of which the stupid animal must

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[74] NR, p.290. Strauss does indicate that Rousseau indeed sounds the note which, as taken up in German thought, becomes a keynote of later modern political philosophy. He writes: "He [Rousseau] tended to conceive of the fundamental freedom, or of the fundamental right, as such a creative act as issues in the establishment of unconditional duties and in nothing else: freedom is essentially self-legislation. The ultimate outcome of this attempt was the substitution of freedom for virtue or the view that it is not virtue which makes man free but freedom which makes man virtuous." Ibid., p.281. But Strauss explicitly takes issue with Kant and those who hold that the "mature" Rousseau "found a solution which he thought satisfied equally the legitimate claims of the individual and those of society, the solution consisting in a certain type of society." Strauss objects strongly: "Rousseau believed to the end that even the right kind of society is a form of bondage." Ibid., pp. 254-255. Strauss feels that the later "clarification" of Rousseau's views was purchased at the cost of limiting his vision. He says (with great flair): "The fiery rocks with which the Rousseauan eruption had covered the Western world were used, after they had cooled and after they had been hewn, for the imposing structures which the great thinkers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries erected. His disciples clarified his views indeed, but one may wonder whether they preserved the breadth of his vision." Ibid., p.252.

> have been utterly incapable. In the last analysis it is only this superiority of civilized man, or of the best among civilized men, which permits Rousseau to contend without hesitation that, while the emergence of civil society was bad for the human species or for the common good, it was good for the individual. The ultimate justification of civil society is, then, the fact that it allows a certain type of individual to enjoy the supreme felicity by withdrawing from civil society, i.e., by living at its fringes. . . . The type of man foreshadowed by Rousseau, which justifies civil society by transcending it, is no longer the philosopher but what later came to be called the 'artist.' His claim to privileged treatment is based on his sensitivity rather than on his wisdom, on his goodness or compassion rather than on his virtue.[75]

Strauss concludes his discussion of Rousseau with a final word on Rousseau's notion of freedom:

> . . . the very indefiniteness of the state of nature as a goal of human aspiration made that state the ideal vehicle of freedom. To have a reservation against society in the name of the state of nature means to have a reservation against society without being either compelled or able to indicate the way of life or the cause or the pursuit for the sake of which that reservation is made. The notion of a return to the state of nature on the level of humanity was the ideal basis for claiming a freedom from society which is not a freedom for something. It was the ideal basis for an appeal from society to something indefinite and undefinable, to an ultimate sanctity of the individual as individual, unredeemed and unjustified. This was precisely what freedom came to mean for a considerable number of men. Every freedom which is freedom for something, every freedom which is justified by reference to something higher than the individual or than man as mere man, necessarily restricts freedom or, which is the same thing, establishes a tenable distinction between freedom and license. It makes freedom conditional on the purpose for which it is claimed. Rousseau is distinguished from many of his followers by the fact that he still saw clearly the disproportion between this undefined and undefinable freedom and the requirements of civil society.[76]

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[75] Ibid., pp. 292-293.

[76] Ibid., p.294.

History

The Historical School and Historicism

The appeal to history by historicism and philosophy of history echoes Rousseau's dissatisfaction with the first wave of modernity, and adopts (and adapts) Rousseau's assertion that man's humanity is historical as a cardinal precept. Also like Rousseau the respective proponents of history combat the Hobbes-Locke tradition, often with cudgets fashioned from timber supplied by Hobbes and Locke.

Rousseau is the foremost philosopher popularly associated with the French Revolution. In Germany the historical school[77] was founded by "eminent conservatives" in response to the French Revolution. These "eminent conservatives," in order to secure "throne and altar" from the subversive modern natural right tradition and the French philosophers, developed a political

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77 According to C.J.Friedrich, the founder of this school was Gustav Hugo (1764-1861) and its leading exponent was Friedrich Carl von Savigny (1779-1861). Friedrich writes that for them "the romantic notion of the spirit of a people is vigorously alive. . . . According to Savigny, there exists 'an organic connection between law and the nature and character of a people.'" Friedrich notes the "strange fissure" in Savigny's position: "For Savigny was by no means ready to treat all national legal forms as equivalent." C.J.Friedrich, The Philosophy of Law In Historical Perspective, (Chicago: Phoenix Books, University of Chicago Press, 1963), pp. 138-139.

philosophy which radicalizes notions of Rousseau's and freely adapts those of the modern natural right teaching. Like Rousseau, they are protesting against modernity in the name of tradition and for the sake of patriotism, but on grounds which mark a new advance of modernity tending toward a more revolutionary break with tradition than any intended by the Revolution.[78]

The historical school follows Rousseau's lead in attempting to resolve the conflict between individual and society in a way which makes for patriotism and hallows "the establishment" by historically particularizing the individual and concretizing the state. The historical school opposed the claim that there are political principles which transcend the actual, which are universal, and on the basis of which any and all actual practice may be judged. Strauss indicates its view:

> Local and temporal variety seemed to supply a safe and solid middle ground between anti-social individualism and unnatural universality. . . radicalizing the tendency of men like Rousseau, the historical school asserted that the local and temporal have a higher value than the universal. As a consequence what claimed to be universal appeared eventually as derivative from something locally and

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[78] Strauss writes: "By denying the significance, if not the existence, of universal norms, the historical school destroyed the only solid basis of all efforts to transcend the actual. Historicism can therefore be described as a much more extreme form of modern this-worldliness than the French radicalism of the eighteenth century had been. It certainly acted as if it intended to make men absolutely at home in 'this world.'" NR, p.15.

> temporally confined, as the local and temporal in statu evanescendi. The natural law teaching of the Stoics, for example, was likely to appear as a mere reflex of a particular temporal state of a particular local society -- of the dissolution of the Greek city.[79]

Strauss points out[80] two elements of particular importance in the "discovery of History." The first derives from the first wave of modernity: the economic doctrine of "the invisible hand." The second is Rousseau's assertion that man is an historical being. The first implies that good political order or the rational is a product of natural selfishness and natural accident -- of irrational forces -- and the expression of a national Folk-mind. The second implies there is an absolute moment in history when man attains to full rationality, which makes for final "knowledge of good and evil."[81] The historical school sought to elicit the revelation of particular standards from history.[82] It opposed "metaphysical jurisprudence" and

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[79] Ibid., pp. 14-15.

[80] Ibid., p.315.

[81] Rousseau thought this moment was in his day; Kant appears to have regarded the French Revolution as indicative of it; the nineteenth century in particular seems to have bred a host of thinkers confident that they had been graced with the final revelation of history.

[82] Strauss writes: "It [the historical school] believed that, by understanding their past, their heritage, their historical situation, men could arrive at principles that would be as objective as those of the older, prehistoricist political philosophy had claimed to be and, in addition, would not be abstract or universal and hence harmful to wise action or to a truly human life, but concrete or particular -- principles fitting the particular age or particular nation, principles relative to the particular or particular nation." NR, p.16.

championed "historical jurisprudence," but failed to adduce standards for the latter from history, and so invited Hegelianism[83] or legal positivism.[84]

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[83] Without the second element in the "discovery of History," the revelation of the absolute moment, the only clear lesson the conservative historical school can cogently adduce is that "nothing succeeds like success" or "Die Weltgeschicte ist die Weltgericht." Burke, though not of the historical school apparently shares their conservative sentiments. His attitude is indicative. What if the Revolution becomes a "mighty current in human affairs"? Strauss writes: "Burke comes close to suggesting that to oppose a thoroughly evil current in human affairs is perverse if that current is sufficiently powerful; he is oblivious of the nobility of last-ditch resistance. He does not consider that, in a way which no man can foresee, resistance in a forlorn position to the enemies of mankind, 'going down with guns blazing and flag flying,' may contribute greatly toward keeping awake the recollection of the immense loss sustained by mankind, may inspire and strengthen the desire and the hope for its recovery, and may become a beacon for those who humbly carry on the works of humanity in a seemingly endless valley of darkness and destruction. He does not consider this because he is too certain that man can know whether a cause lost now is lost forever or that man can understand sufficiently the meaning of a providential dispensation as distinguished from the moral law. It is only a short step from this thought of Burke to the supersession of the distinction between good and bad by the distinction between the progressive and the retrograde, or between what is and what is not in harmony with the historical process." NR, p.318. For all their traditionalism and eloquent calls to nobility, modern conservatives, the defenders of "throne and altar", appear no less eager to avoid crosses. The following comment applies both to Burke and the historical school: "What could appear as a return to the primeval equation of the good with the ancestral is, in fact, a preparation for Hegel." NR, p.319.

[84] Strauss cites a late nineteenth century legal positivist, Karl Bergbohm: "Bergbohm's strict argument against the possibility of natural right (as distinguished from the argument that is meant merely to show the disastrous consequences of natural right for the positive legal order) is based on 'the undeniable truth that nothing eternal and absolute exists except the One Whom man cannot comprehend, but only divine in a spirit of faith', that is, on the assumption that 'the standards with reference to which we pass judgment on the historical, positive law. . . are themselves absolutely the progeny of their time and are always historical and relative.' NR, p.10, n.3.

The reliance by the protesters against the first "wave" of modernity on the first "wave's" principles suggests its theory was found less objectionable than the practice it produced; that it was judged primarily on the basis of this practice rather than on its merits as astute political reflections. Of course, "the philosophy of power" insists on being so adjudged; Hobbes explicitly discourages confusing his Leviathan with the Republic. The protesters appropriate principles from Hobbes and Locke and historicize them. Hobbes and Locke emphasize that the human condition is such by fiat of its unchangeable nature, that man's passions ever tend to impede man's rationality. The protesters remove the stigma of the state of nature and thereby the natural limitations stressed in the Hobbes-Locke teaching by historicizing the state of nature by pushing it back into the past and viewing man as having now outgrown his original limitations; rationality has emerged and man need no longer be limited by his passions; but this progress is understood precisely in terms of man's passionate selfishness reacting to natural conditions. The conservatives ascribe this rationality to which nature had progressed to the natural individual par excellence -- the nation; the individual citizen's individuality derives from and is determined by it. (This parallels Locke's view that being uncharitable is in the best interests of the needy because the more added to the

common good by man's selfish acquisitiveness, the better it is for every individual; similarly to limit rights of citizens for the sake of their patriotic common good redounds to the benefit of the citizen.) Though the protesters' sense of nobility[85] is offended by the bourgeois economism of "English ethics," their view of man in the state of nature is not less ignoble[86] than Hobbes'. This may help satisfy their sense of nobility, for the more ignoble man is at the start, the nobler loom his achievements through history. For Hobbes, man is stuck with his nature; he cannot overcome it; at best he can harness it. The more Enlightenment progresses, the

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[85] The modern sense of nobility prides itself on the asceticism it demands. Modern thinkers appear to be striving to outdo one another in the "hardness" demanded by their respective political doctrines; there is a tendency to scorn as "soft" the doctrine of an opponent, and invariably a tendency to underestimate the asceticism engendered by the opponent's teaching. Rousseau and Kant appear to underestimate the asceticism demanded by "English ethics"; (it is noteworthy that Weber focuses particularly on the English in underscoring the asceticism of modernity). Conservatives, like Burke, appear to underestimate the "hardness" of civic virtue, as taught by Rousseau. No one appears to criticize an opponent's view as "excessive" in its ascetic demands. Another manifestation of this typically modern association of the worthwhile with the ascetic is the centrality of pain in modern thought. (See Chapter IV below.) Anything good depends on pain, whether it be sound reasoning and proper method, or even pleasure itself. Rousseau singularly seeks to escape this, but he can do so only by taking leave of modern society and leaving modern science behind.

[86] I suppose it is debatable whether Rousseau's view of man is ignoble, but I so regard it.

the harder he will work at harnessing it, the more power he will have, the more optimal will be the conditions for rational achievement. But if those conditions become too good (in the material sense) man will wax fat through self-indulgence of his passions and relapse. What man needs always is the spectre of the state of nature hanging like Damocles' sword over his head.[87] He requires it to marshal his passions on the side of reason. Because man cannot overcome his natural limitations, he can only guarantee Leviathan, not the City of God. Historicizing the state of nature liberates man and makes him free even of his own nature; through Enlightenment and the technological conquest of nature, he can indeed build the City of God and even guarantee its actualization.

Yet, as Strauss notes, "Hobbes is. . . the originator of the ideal of civilization." He lays the foundations from which the dream of the total and final annihilation of the state of nature and the vision of the City of God take wing. Strauss writes:

> Hobbes differs from full grown liberalism only by what he regards as the obstacle against which the liberal ideal of civilization is to be established in a determined fight: the obstacle is not corrupt institutions or the ill will of a ruling stratum, but man's natural malice. Hobbes establishes liberalism in an illiberal

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[87] See below, Chapter IV.

> world against the. . . illiberal nature of man, whereas his successors, ignoring their presuppositions and goals, trust in the original goodness of human nature, guaranteed by God's creation and providence, or, basing themselves on scientific neutrality, hope for an improvement of human nature to which man's experience of himself does not entitle him. Hobbes attempts to overcome the state of nature to the extent to which it can be overcome, while he faces the state of nature, whereas his successors, dreaming of a state of nature or allegedly possessing a deeper insight into man's history and therewith into his essence, forget the state of nature. But -- this justice must be accorded to his successors -- that dream and that oblivion are in the last instance only the consequence of the negation of the state of nature, or of the affirmation of civilization, that was begun by Hobbes.[88]

Strauss suggests that "the discovery of History was originally rather the recovery of the distinction between [modern] theory and practice."[89] He writes:

> That distinction [between theory and practice] had been blurred by the doctrinairism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries or, what is fundamentally the same thing, by the understanding of all theory as essentially in the service of practice (scientia propter potentiam). The recovery of the distinction between theory and practice was from the outset modified by skepticism in regard to theoretical metaphysics, a skepticism which culminated in the depreciation of theory in favor of practice. In accordance with these antecedents, the highest form of practice -- the foundation or formation of a political society -- was viewed as a quasi-natural process not controlled by reflection; thus it could become a purely theoretical theme. Political theory became understanding of what practice has produced or of the actual and ceased

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[88] Leo Strauss, "Comments on Der Begriff Des Politischen By Carl Schmitt," published in the author's Spinoza's Critique of Religion, (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), p.338. (Hereafter this work will be referred to as SCR.)

[89] NR, p.319.

> to be the quest for what ought to be; political theory ceased to be 'theoretically practical' (i.e., deliberative at a second remove) and became purely theoretical in the way in which metaphysics (and physics) were traditionally understood to be purely theoretical. There came into being a new type of theory, of metaphysics, having as its highest theme human action and its product rather than the whole, which is in no way the object of human action. Within the whole and the metaphysic that is oriented upon it, human action occupies a high but subordinate place. When metaphysics came, as it now did, to regard human action and its product as the end toward which all other beings or processes are directed, metaphysics became philosophy of history. Philosophy of history was primarily theory, i.e., contemplation, of human practice and therewith necessarily of completed human practice; it presupposed that significant human action, History, was completed. By becoming the highest theme of philosophy, practice ceased to be practice proper, i.e., concern with agenda.[90]

The skepticism of Hobbes resulted in the denial of a harmony between the human mind and the natural universe, and so established man as sovereign creator. As Strauss puts it:

> Man can be sovereign only because there is no cosmic support for his humanity. . . . Since the universe is unintelligible and since control of nature does not require understanding of nature, there are no knowable limits to his conquest of nature.[91]

Man can guarantee wisdom because it is his construction: he is its cause. Hobbes saw man in regard to wisdom as the "uncaused cause" or "the first cause"; his island of constructs safe from "the cavils of skeptics" is anchored in human nature. Rousseau questions the givenness of man's nature. Rousseau applied to human nature the skepticism Hobbes applied to the nature of the universe.

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[90] Ibid., pp. 319-320.

[91] Ibid., p.175.

The anchorage is loosed; the natural is not normative but somehow good; the highest freedom is beyond norm, beyond concern with construction. It is being natural. Kant, after Rousseau, no longer finds Hobbes' "island" safe enough. Awoken by Hume and inspired by Rousseau, he unroots this anchorage completely and rebuilds on an invulnerable Archimedean base from which, unlike Rousseau, he takes up the Hobbesian project of construction safe from "the cavils of skeptics."[92]

Strauss says: "Rousseau's thought marks a decisive step in the secular movement which tries to guarantee the actualization of the ideal, or to prove the necessary coincidence of the rational and the real, or to get rid of that which essentially transcends every possible human reality.[93] This is to say that "the political philosophy belonging to the second wave of modernity is inseparable from philosophy of history.[94] But Rousseau himself was more than, or if you prefer, less than, a political philosopher. Strauss emphasizes that though Rousseau blazed the trail he did not choose to follow it. Strauss writes:

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[92]Strauss writes: "After some time (after Hobbes) it appeared that the conquest of nature requires the conquest of human nature and hence in the first place the questioning of the unchangeability of human nature: an unchangeable human nature might set absolute limits to progress. Accordingly, the natural needs of men could no longer direct the conquest of nature; the direction had to come from reason as distinguished from nature, from the rational Ought as distinguished from the neutral Is. Thus philosophy (logic, ethics, esthetics) as the study of the Ought or the norms became separated from science as the study of the Is.. OM, p. 71.

[93]WPP, p. 51

[94]Ibid, p. 53

> . . . (Rousseau) had shown that what is characteristically human is not the gift of nature but is the outcome of what man did, or was forced to do, in order to overcome or to change nature: man's humanity is the product of the historical process. For a moment--the moment lasted longer than a century--it seemed possible to seek the standard of human action in the historical process. This solution presupposed that the historical process or its results are unambiguously preferable to the state of nature or that that process is 'meaningful'. Rousseau could not accept that presupposition.[95]

Kant does.

Man is to subjugate nature altogether. Kant frees man from his "chains" not because by nature "man is born free" --on the contrary, by nature man is born an abject slave--but because from his Archimedean redoubt man can be free of the "chains" of nature. Kant agrees with Rousseau that reason is not the subjugation of nature. Nature then directs man to become free from the tutelage of nature; this is the Idea of man projected by reason once nature has pushed him to the stage of rationality. Freedom from enslavement to nature, from the passions and passionate interest, becomes the hallmark of rationality. Virtue is freedom, not self-realization but self-transcendence, not vertically toward an "above" but horizontally toward universality. Kant shares the modern faith that the conquest of nature is liberating and pushes it to the extreme toward the vision of the universal homogeneous society.[96]

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[95] NP, p. 274

[96] Strauss observes: "The delusions of communism are already the delusions of Hegel and even of Kant". (my underlining). WPP, p. 54

Unlike Rousseau, he has no qualms about artificial or technological homogenization of man because his vision is universal in its ambitious breadth. Kant radicalizes Rousseau's notion of particular "general wills" by universalizing it. The form of universality is the standard or form of virtue: Intentions are moral and good and virtuous if they are susceptible of being universalized or becoming principles of universal legislation: that will is good which wills the universal or is universalizable. Virtue or goodness of will is formal: its form is rational form because the form of rationality is universality; the rational is good precisely because humanity--rationality--having reached its majority, is independent of nature. The great advantage of horizontal or universal transcendence is that man can make it and realize it fully, whereas vertical transcendence implies limitation of the human and its dependence. The ought is liberated from the is and from its limitations. The good is good will; it is (ostensibly) completely independent both of the this-worldly and other-worldly. Yet, it engenders, or perhaps better, constructs, consistent with its independence, faith in immortality and directs our political aspirations to the universal realization of the moral ideal when nature will have been subjugated completely and universally, and all men will be made men of good will. This "projected" goal of history gives meaning to history, and accordingly we may

gauge history's progress and celebrate felicitous signs of that progress such as the French Revolution. Kant is an avid champion of universal enlightenment. He assaults tradition "with a dangerous weapon" -- The Critique of Pure Reason; he is the great enlightener who "liberates" man from the tutelage of nature and God. Reason usurps the heavenly Throne of God and proclaiming itself sovereign creator-ex-nihilo; ex nihilo, in a free act of grace, it creates the Ideas of God and nature.

Hegel consummates man's "divinity" by making him absolute Lord of History. Man achieves full "divinity" over God's "dead body." (In addition to "killing God" millions of humans must be killed; and all is justified.) Hegel's imagery is strictly New Testament to the exclusion of the Hebrew Scriptures. The God that needs killing is the "cruel God of Abraham." The New Testament portrayal of Incarnation provides the image of the reconciliation of universal and unique particular.[97]

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[97] Michael Foster is emphatic about this: here are selected passages from his The Political Philosophies of Plato and Hegel, (Oxford: University Press, 1968):

"His (Hegel's)philosophy shows no trace of the metaphysics of will implicit in the Judaic doctrines of the Creation and the Law, which entails the recognition that contingency is essential to nature, positivity to law, and will to the perfection of man; but he is steeped in the Christian teachings of the Trinity, the Incarnation and Redemption." (p.138.)

"His doctrine (of Revelation) has closer affinities to the teaching of the New Testament than to that of the Old; it involves a conception of the Word of God nearer to that of the fourth Gospel than to that of the Hebrew prophets." (p.139, n.1)

"Hegel habitually confuses the generation of the Son with the Creation of the world. . . ." (p.140, n.1) See also p.140 and p.204.)

The allegation that the God of Abraham is "cruel" expresses Hegel's conviction that He is excessively transcendent -- "wholly other." He is not amenable to Hegel's grand system of comprehensive intelligibility. He is a cruel Master because He does not "play" the dialectical role Hegel assigns to Masters in the master-slave dialectic; He perversely insists on being strictly Master. Hyppolite[98] makes clear that the master-slave dialectic applies to the relationship between man and God. Hegel calls God, the Master; he also calls fear of death, the Master. God's Mastership derives from man's fear of death: because man the slave is in fear of his life, he gives himself a new Master -- God. The God of Abraham is "cruel" because according to Hegel, He does not mitigate this fear. Christianity does offer mitigation of this fear; the Incarnation promises "life everlasting"; "Christ. . . reconciles in Himself the universal and the unique."[99] But to achieve its promise in this world, Christianity must be dialectically

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[98] Cited by Camus in The Rebel, p.141. Here is Camus' poetic evocation of Hegel's vision of the end of history: "At this moment, 'when the eyes of the spirit coincide with the eyes of the body,' each individual consciousness will be nothing more than a mirror reflecting another mirror, itself reflected to infinity in infinitely recurring images. The City of God will coincide with the city of humanity; and universal history, sitting in judgment on the world, will pass its sentence by which good and evil will be justified. The State will play the part of Destiny and will proclaim its approval of every aspect of reality on 'the sacred day of the Presence.'" (p.142.)

[99] Ibid., p.141.

negated or secularized; the Universal Church must be translated or sublated into the Universal State, where "the spirit of the world will be finally reflected inthe mutual recognition of each by all and in the universal reconciliation of everything that has ever existed under the sun." [100]

Strauss reminds us that even if one deems Hegel's vision as indeed the City of God, a higher and better order than the best envisaged by the classics, it can only be established "in the Machiavellian way not in the Platonic way: it was thought to be established in a manner which contradicts the right order itself."[101] This is a comment on the German visionaries of History generally. Though they looked down their uplifted noses at "English ethics" contemptuous of its ignobility, they at least equal and tend to far outstrip the English in the advocacy of ignoble means to achieve their more "noble" political order. Indeed, compared to many of them, the English are paragons of moderation.

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[100] Ibid., p.141.

[101] WPP, p.54.

Nietzsche and Radical Historicism

Hegel represents one extreme pole of History, history fulfilled, or the vision of horizontal transcendence actualized. Nietzsche represents the antagonistic extreme pole of History, history transcended, or the vision of immanent vertical transcendence as a possibility. Hegel offers the final philosophy -- Wisdom -- and the Final and Best society. Nietzsche offers the ultimate "critique of reason"; he offers but does not guarantee a literally new breed of man -- the Ubermensch. Both poles are extremities which grow out of historicism. Hegel's is the attempt to overcome or attenuate its positivistic "critique of reason"; Nietzsche antagonistically pushes the "critique of reason" to its most radical extreme -- to the "abyss." Historicism is their common denominator and the issue of their difference. It is the key issue of controversy between Strauss and Hegelianism and between Strauss and Nietzsche. Strauss is an advocate of the natural right tradition. Historicism sets out to combat natural right doctrine; as fully developed by Hegel and Nietzsche respectively, it represents the most extreme protest, a most profound challenge, opposing this tradition.

Strauss calls the historical school "the infancy of historicism."[102] Though the "eminent conservatives" failed theoretically to raise practice above subversive theory, they did succeed in generating a "historical consciousness" which tended toward the subversion of all theory; and its possessors evinced particular delight and pride in attacking natural right doctrine.

Historicism is the radical offspring of the modern skeptical epistemological tradition of English and Kantian[103] thought. It pushes the limits of knowledge demanded by this

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[102] NR, p.16.

[103] There is a "Kantian" flavor to historicism despite its vehement assaults on Kant. Not only does it radicalize Kant's "critique of reason" and champion it in steadfast opposition to Hegel's attenuation of it, it also adapts the Kantian view of historical development as nature pushing man beyond his nature. According to Kant, humanity is fostered by history pushing brute man beyond history toward absolute freedom from history. For Kant, the special moment is the stage of reason or man's attainment to rationality. According to Nietzsche, humanity is the story of history pushing the Untermensch toward the possibility of the Übermensch, toward self-transcendence toward a new and higher species. Nobility is not purchased through rationality but by the acceptance of one's fate -- amor fati. This is possible for modern man at the moment when history reveals to man his historicity. Both Kant and Nietzsche (and perhaps Heidegger) derive from their respective historical understanding (respective) formal inner-worldly, (heroically ascetic) will ethics.

skeptical tradition to the point of the impossibility of knowledge: as all knowledge is of man's making or his construction, it cannot be universal or eternal; there is no basis for the claim of certain knowledge. The only certain knowledge is a dispensation of fate or a revelation of history. Strauss points to two strata of the historicist "critique of reason." The first is essentially the Kantian positivistic "critique of reason" "that allegedly proves the impossibility of theoretical metaphysics and of philosophic ethics or natural right." The second is the uprooting of positivism itself on the grounds "that the positive sciences rest on metaphysical foundations."[104]

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[104] Ibid., pp. 19-20. Historicism could not rest at the positivistic stage (though Weber's positivism may be seen as an attempt at this). Positivism limited knowledge to the empirical which it defined in terms of the procedures of the natural sciences. The historicist could not accept this limitation; he claimed his studies were empirical, indeed more significantly empirical and more purely empirical because he studied empirical humanity; he could not limit himself to the procedures of the natural sciences, and condemned them as productive of trivia, as incapable of saying anything significant about man or human concerns. He indicted positivism as impure, as a bastard of the metaphysical tradition. He claimed that only he, the historicist, is totally free of the impurities of metaphysical bias, that historicism is the only (radically) pure empiricism.

Historicism, in its most radical form, goes beyond positivism in these ways: "(1) It abandons the distinction between facts and values, because every understanding, however theoretical, implies specific evaluations. (2) It denies the authoritative character of modern science, which appears as only one form among many of man's thinking orientation in the world. (3) It refuses to regard the historical process as fundamentally progressive, or, more generally stated, as reasonable. (4) It denies the relevance of the evolutionist thesis by contending that the evolution of man out of non-man cannot make intelligible man's humanity." WPP, p.26.

What is left after this critique? The "experience of history." Here is Strauss' paraphrase of the articulation of this experience:

> No competent man of our age would regard as simply true the complete teaching of any thinker of the past. In every case experience has shown that the originator of the teaching took things for granted which must not be taken for granted or that he did not know certain facts or possibilities which were discovered in a later age. Up to now, all thought has proved to be in need of radical revisions or to be incomplete or limited in decisive respects. Furthermore, looking back at the past, we seem to observe that every progress of thought in one direction was bought at the price of a retrogression of thought in another respect: when a given limitation was overcome by a progress of thought, earlier important insights were invariably forgotten as a consequence of that progress. On the whole, there was then no progress, but merely a change from one type of limitation to another type. Finally, we seem to observe that the most important limitations of earlier thought were of such a nature that they could not possibly have been overcome by any effort of the earlier thinkers; to say nothing of other considerations, any effort of thought which led to the overcoming of specific limitations led to blindness in other respects. It is reasonable to assume that what has invariably happened up to now will happen again and again in the future. Human thought is essentially limited in such a way that its limitations differ from historical situation to historical situation and the limitation characteristic of the thought of a given epoch cannot be overcome by any human effort. There always have been and there always will be surprising, wholly unexpected, changes of outlook which radically modify the meaning of all previously acquired knowledge. No view of the whole, and in particular no view of the whole of human life, can claim to be final or universally valid. Every doctrine, however seemingly final, will be superseded sooner or later by another doctrine. There is no reason to doubt that earlier thinkers had insights which are wholly inaccessible to us and which cannot become accessible to us, however carefully we might study their works, because our limitations prevent us from even suspecting the possibility of the insights in question. Since the limitations of human thought are essentially unknowable, it makes no sense to conceive of them in terms of social, economic, and other conditions, that is, in terms of knowable or analyzable phenomena: the limitations of human thought are set by fate.[105]

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[105] Ibid., pp. 20-21.

Central to Strauss' position is the denial of what is asserted here. Strauss must argue that the experience of history indicates (or at least is compatible with) "an unchanging framework which persists in all changes of human knowledge of both facts and principles."[106] Strauss does not underestimate his task. He proceeds negatively by denying that this possibility has been ruled out decisively and by arguing the political salutariness of the traditional view.

Strauss readily acknowledges the allure of the experience of history. It is a typically modern allure. As we noted, modernity is characterized by an avid determination not to be duped by dogmatism. Conspicuous skepticism is a de rigeur guise for even the most dogmatic positions in modern philosophic thought. Historicism is particularly alluring because it appears conscientiously skeptical; it appears as a noble unyielding stance against dogmatism. (The allure of contemporary positivism is due to this same patina, according to Strauss.)[107] But obviously "the experience of history" position implicitly indicts itself as dogmatic though it may claim exemption since it asserts that any and every philosophic position is dogmatic, then even the critique of all positions is dogmatic. As Strauss puts it:

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[106] Ibid., pp. 23-24.

[107] See LAM, p.26.

> We cannot see the historical character of 'all' thought -- that is, of all thought with the exception of the historicist insight and its implications -- without transcending history, without grasping something trans-historical.[108]

Strauss reminds us that "dogmatism -- or the inclination 'to identify the goal of our thinking with the point at which we have become tired of thinking' -- is so natural to man that it is not likely to be a preserve of the past."[109] He characterizes "the experience of history" as"a birds-eye view of the history of thought, as that history come to be seen under the combined influence of the belief in necessary progress (or in the impossibility of returning to that thought of the past) and of the belief in the supreme value of diversity or uniqueness (or of the equal right of all epochs and civilizations)."[110]

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[108] NR, p.25.

[109] Ibid., p.22.

[110] Ibid., p.22. The "supreme value of diversity" is a "value" associated with a kind of liberalism. The historicist has no right to a liberal bias and the liberal cannot "tolerate" historicism or relativism. Strauss writes: "At the bottom of the passionate rejection of all 'absolutes," we discern the recognition of a natural right or, more precisely, of that particular interpretation of natural right according to which the one thing needful is respect for diversity or individuality. But there is a tension between the respect for diversity or individuality and the recognition of natural right. When liberals became impatient of the absolute limits to diversity or individuality that are imposed even by the most liberal version of natural right, they had to make a choice between natural right and the uninhibited cultivation of individuality. They [I don't know who] chose the latter.

Like radical skepticism, historicist relativism is not "lived." Sophocles and Shakespeare continue to be admired and "speak" to people over many epochs; Christianity is deemed superior to cannibalism, even by the social scientist who strives to make us "understand" cannibalism. Strauss especially combats the historicist assertion that "the acquisition of new important insights necessarily leads to the forgetting of earlier important insights and that the earlier thinkers could not possibly have thought of fundamental possibilities which come to the center of attention in later ages.[111] This assertion

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Once this step was taken, tolerance appeared as one value or ideal among many, and not intrinsically superior to its opposite. In other words, intolerance appeared as a value equal in dignity to tolerance. But it is practically impossible to leave it at the equality of all preferences or choices. If the unequal rank of choices cannot be traced to the unequal rank of their objectives, it must be traced to the unequal rank of the acts of choosing; and this means eventually that genuine choice, as distinguished from spurious or despicable choice, is nothing but resolute or deadly serious decision. Such a decision, however, is akin to intolerance rather than to tolerance. Liberal relativism has its roots in the natural right tradition of tolerance or in the notion that everyone has a natural right to the pursuit of happiness as he understands happiness; but in itself it is a seminary of intolerance. (NR, pp. 5-6.)

[111] Ibid., p.23.

denies transcendence; it denies the possibility of an eternal order accessible to man; it implies that the philosophic tradition is a tradition of epochal delusions and it states emphatically that the tradition can shed no light on modern man's predicament. A great part of our critical discussion below centers on how and how well Strauss contends with this assertion. Suffice it here to remind ourselves that Strauss expounds modernity as essentially rejection of the classic tradition; therefore classical philosophy entails the rejection of this rejection by modernity; Strauss even says it consciously considers and rejects the presuppositions of modernity, e.g., that science be utilized for the "conquest of nature." Strauss also argues, as noted above, that the experience of history contrary to the historicist's claim may be seen as pointing to the similarity of fundamental themes and philosophic problems. Strauss says this is "obviously compatible with the fact that clarity about these problems, the approach to them, and the suggested solutions to them differ more or less from thinker to thinker or from age to age."[112] Even granting the "historicity" of thought, and the impossibility of trans-historical solutions, the perseverance of the same fundamental problems indicate man's most profound concern is trans-historical. But the classical natural right tradition lays claim to knowledge.

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[112] Ibid., p.24.

It is a modest claim; it does not claim to have achieved wisdom and it accentuates man's ignorance, but it does insist on the possibility of "genuine, universally valid final knowledge within a limited sphere or genuine knowledge of specific subjects" (i.e., it must know the principles of justice). Strauss asserts:

> Historicism cannot deny this possibility. For its own contention implies the admission of this possibility. By asserting that all human thought, or at least all relevant human thought, is historical, historicism admits that human thought is capable of acquiring a most important insight that is universally valid and that will in no way be affected by any future surprises. . . . This view has the same trans-historical character or pretension as any natural right doctrine.[113]

As Strauss himself seems to indicate, this hardly constitutes a decisive "victory" for his position. Hegelians, Marxists, Nietzsche and Heidegger all can and deny this possibility. These are the formidable opponents -- Hegelianism and radical historicism -- Strauss must contend with. Strauss esteems Nietzsche as the most formidable, because Strauss sees Nietzsche as "defeating" all the others, and indeed when Strauss contends with Hegelianism, he borrows Nietzsche's cudgels. Hegelianism is the attempt to overcome the critique of reason--to go beyond the binding strictures of positivism; it can do this only by claiming Wisdom, in principle, the resolution of the fundamental problems; it achieves this by immanentizing

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[113] Ibid.

the whole and is thus able to claim intimate and certain knowledge of it; it is the vision of secular incarnation and resurrection, when man knows the all, when man is master of history, when man overcomes the fear of death and is liberated, when freedom reigns with despotic sovereignty. Nietzsche denies[114] the possibility of Wisdom. Modern thought in "killing God," in denying the possibility of transcendence, cuts the ground out from under itself; the will to truth eventuates in the impossibility of any truth that is not self-willed.

Historicism in all its forms and Hegelianism in all its forms assume an absolute moment in history or a moment of absolute insight. This is the heritage of Rousseau, of the assertion that man is a historical being, of the denial of human nature as a given. This historical view of man asserts that there is a moment in history when man knows himself to be

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[114]Nietzsche claims it is in fact denied by modern science precisely by virtue of its ascetic virtue, of its rigorous will-to-truth. He writes: "The Christian ethics with its key notion, ever more strictly applied, of truthfulness; the casuistic finesse of the Christian conscience, translated and sublimated into the scholarly conscience, into intellectual integrity to be maintained at all costs; the interpretation of nature as a proof of God's beneficent care; the interpretation of history to the glory of divine providence, as perpetual testimony of a moral order and moral ends; the interpretation of individual experience as preordained, purposely arranged for the salvation of the soul -- all these are now things of the past: they revolt our consciences as being indecent, dishonest, cowardly, effeminate. It is this rigor, if anything, that makes us good Europeans and the heirs of Europe's longest, most courageous self-conquest." (My underlining.) The Genealogy of Morals, Section XXVII.

a product of history. This insight is absolute; it cannot be affected by anything that may happen after this moment; it may be forgotten or dogmatically rejected, but this does not impugn the truth of this insight. This is implicit in Rousseau and "surreptitiously"[115] implicit in historicism (and in "process" philosophy as well); it is centrally explicit in Hegel and Marx. "According to Hegel, the absolute moment is the one in which philosophy, or quest for wisdom, has been transformed into wisdom, that is, the moment in which the fundamental riddles have been fully solved."[116] In this way, Hegel is able to reconcile the historicity of thought with absolute truth, the historical with the transhistorical. This is his secularization of Incarnation though it is not clear beyond controversy whether "Logos" becomes "Flesh"; or "Flesh" becomes "Logos"; i.e., is the absolute insight coincident with its actualization? does it succeed its actualization? or does it necessitate actualization at some future time? The latter is the Marxist view: the insight guarantees future actualization of the final ideal.

Nietzsche denies the possibility of guarantees, because he denies that the final insight yields final ideals. On the contrary, the final insight reveals that all ideals

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[115] Strauss' word. NR, p.29.

[116] Ibid., p.29.

of the past have been fictions; all ideals depend on transcendence of some kind, God, nature, or reason, but the modern development of thought has demonstrated the fact that "God is dead," there is no transcendence of any sort at all. Man stares into the abyss and the abyss stares back. This is the significance of Strauss' calling Nietzsche and his epigones (preeminently Heidegger) radical historicists. Nietzsche is "radical" in a way parallel to the way Rousseau was "radical." Rousseau said, in effect, "if you want to really look at natural man, then take a radical look"; Nietzsche similarly says to those who pride themselves on "historical consciousness," in effect, if you want to look at man as an historical being, then take a radical look and have the courage to stare into the abyss. Nietzsche writes:

> All philosophers have the common defect that they start from present day man and believe that they can reach their goal by an analysis of present day man. Lack of historical sense is the inherited defect of all philosophers.[117]

Strauss writes:

> He [Nietzsche] denies. . . the possibility of a theoretical or objective analysis, which as such would be trans-historical, of the various comprehensive views or 'historical worlds' or 'cultures'. . . . According to Nietzsche, the theoretical analysis of human life that realizes the relativity of all comprehensive views and thus depreciates them would make human life itself impossible, for it would destroy the protecting atmosphere within which life or culture or action is alone possible.[118]

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[117] F. Nietzsche, Human, All Too Human, Section 2.

[118] NR, p.26.

Strauss suggests that radical historicism was developed by Nietzsche's successors, leaving it open whether this is indeed Nietzsche's own position.[119] He recognizes that radical historicism is not as vulnerable to the charge of self-contradiction (see above, p.111) as he indicates in this presentation of its historicist view:

> One does not have to transcend history in order to see the historical character of all thought: there is a privileged moment, an absolute moment in the historical process, a moment in which the essential character of all thought becomes transparent. In exempting itself from its own verdict, historicism claims merely to mirror the character of historical reality or to be true to the facts; the self-contradictory character of the historicist thesis should be changed not to historicism but to reality.[120]

From this vantage, which is "the unforseeable gift of unfathomable fate,"[121] the possibility of philosophy is denied. Strauss acknowledges this as a formidable challenge to his position, but does not counter it. (Strauss retreats from metaphysical combat.) Here is Strauss' presentation of that challenge in full.

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[119] NR, p.26.

[120] Ibid., p.28.

[121] Ibid., Strauss' characterization.

> The most influential attempts to establish the dogmatic and hence arbitrary or historically relative character of philosophy proper proceed along the following lines. Philosophy or the attempt to replace opinions about the whole by knowledge of the whole, presupposes that the whole is knowable, that is, intelligible. This presupposition leads to the consequence that the whole as it is in itself is identified with the whole in so far as it is intelligible or in so far as it can become an object; it leads to the identification of 'being' with 'intelligible' or 'object'; it leads to the dogmatic disregard of everything that cannot be mastered by the subject. Furthermore, to say that the whole is knowable or intelligible is tantamount to saying that the whole has a permanent structure or that the whole as such is unchangeable or always the same. If this is the case, it is, in principle, possible to predict how the whole will be at any future time: the future of the whole can be anticipated by thought. The presupposition mentioned is said to have its root in the dogmatic identification of 'to be' in the highest sense with 'to be always,' or in the fact that philosophy understands 'to be' in such a sense that 'to be' in the highest sense must mean 'to be always.' The dogmatic character of the basic premise of philosophy is said to have been revealed by the discovery of history or of the 'historicity' of human life. The meaning of that discovery can be expressed in theses like these: what is called the whole is actually always incomplete and therefore not truly a whole; the whole is essentially changing in such a manner that its future cannot be predicted; the whole as it is in itself can never be grasped, or it is not intelligible; human thought essentially depends on something that cannot be anticipated or that can never be mastered by the subject; 'to be' in the highest sense cannot mean -- or, at any rate, it does not necessarily mean -- 'to be always.'[122]

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[122] This is extremely difficult and obviously crucial, yet Strauss does not even direct the reader to the source or indicate the author of this critique. My guess is Heidegger. Ibid., pp. 30-31.

Strauss responds with this gallant acknowledgement:

> Radical historicism compels us to realize the bearing of the fact that the very idea of natural right presupposes the possibility of philosophy in the full and original meaning of the term. It compels us at the same time to realize the need for unbiased reconsideration of the most elementary premises whose validity is presupposed by philosophy. . . .[123]

He concludes: "Prior to such reconsideration, however, the issues of natural right can only remain an open question."[124] Nietzsche (and Heidegger) then are Strauss' foremost metaphysical opponents and, to the extent that they can be implicated in National Socialism, his real life foes and his theoretical adversaries are the same. More significant than this, the Nazi regime is for Strauss the actualization of the crisis in liberalism, in that the well-intentioned Weimar Republic effetely lapsed into the Hitler regime, and in a sense, perhaps invited it.[125]

Rousseau, as we noted, is less strictly a political philosopher than Hobbes and Locke; his concern transcends the citizen. He is saying that political philosophy and indeed philosophy in general can point the way to the height for man, only in so far as it points beyond itself. Philosophy, the quest for wisdom, is not choiceworthy for its own sake; political philosophy's central question of how men shall best

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[123] Ibid., p.31.

[124] Ibid. This is a major admission which we will discuss below.

[125] See his Preface to SCR.

live together is a self-indictment; it offers at best only correctives; it cannot restore the idyllic. It is very difficult to articulate the teaching or doctrine of a thinker whose doctrine is based on a critique of philosophy but is itself "positive" -- more than merely critique (as is, say, unqualified historicism). Rousseau's teaching of union and communion with nature, by its very nature and as Rousseau would want it, can be understood fully or perhaps felt only by the chosen few who have experienced it. This is to indicate the modern movement of rationalism consciously "knocking" rationalism for the sake of something better; since this "something better" is beyond the rational, it is very difficult to express or perhaps is inexpressible; it usually claims esoteric status. Hegel, in a sense, sets out to overcome this: he is the champion of intelligibility, but note that Hegel can do this only by returning to the tradition of political philosophy whose central concern and perspective is that of the citizen. Rousseau introduces a new kind of rhetoric into modern philosophy -- impassioned, expressionistic rhetoric -- rich in poetic metaphor and imagery. The Romantics followed Rousseau's lead and we may say that Thus Spoke Zarathustra is the radical extreme of this development. It also is the radical extreme in degree of esotericity.

Strauss sees Nietzsche as a major "wave" in modern thought; to ascertain where Nietzsche intended that "wave" to go, is exceedingly difficult. Rousseau and the Romantics, for all their anti-rationalism never raised in anyone's mind the question of the possibility of theory or of theoretical truth. Nietzsche did. The question is then when to interpret Nietzsche's teaching as "interpretation" and when as esoteric doctrine.[126] Nietzsche, like Rousseau, preferred "the ancient city" to the modern. Like Rousseau, he extols the heroic virtues; his "noble" man is clearly a descendant of the traditional magnanimous man.[127] Like Rousseau, though he admires traditional political virtue, he is a radical "individualist." If it may be said that Rousseau is concerned with a kind of self-realization of the individual or in a kind of ultimate therapeutic, this could also be said of Nietzsche. But this should not blur the profound antagonistic differences between them. One may say that Rousseau is seen by Nietzsche as a prime target; specifically Nietzsche never tires of attacking

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[126] Strauss believes Nietzsche does not deny *theoria* but insists on its esotericity; he would restore the Platonic notion of the noble delusion. Strauss recognizes solid grounds for understanding Nietzsche as denying *theoria* altogether -- conceiving of thought "as essentially subservient to, or dependent on, life or fate." (See NR, p.26.) This latter view of Nietzsche, I believe, is Heidegger's.

[127] In the Vintage edition of *Beyond Good and Evil*, Walter Kaufmann, the translator, points out some remarkable resemblances between Aristotle's conception of *megalopsychia* and Nietzsche's conception of nobility. See his n.35, p.138.

Rousseau's naive notion of man's natural innocence and his misguided exaltation of compassion and the resulting rose-coloured sentiment of existence. Nietzsche's central principle is: "Wherever I found life, I found will to power."[128] Life is strife, a painful unceasing struggle to overpower the other. This is the truth of all possible principles of thought and action; they are expressions of this will to power. Philosophy and religion are the highest expressions of will to power; they are created in order for the "priests" to have sway over others. Once fate grants man this insight, he is free to transvalue all values to express a will to power greater than that which expressed itself in the old values, to be the bridge to the Ubermensch. If this does not come about and Nietzsche not only does not guarantee it, he does not even encourage optimism. Though he disagrees that the absolute insight necessitates the actualization of the final ideal, he does agree with Marx that it marks the overcoming of chance, and that man is now complete master of his fate.[129] He also defers to Marx, in a left-handed

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[128] F.Nietzsche, Human, All Too Human, Section 2.

[129] Nietzsche writes: "To teach man the future of man as his will, as dependent on a human will, and to prepare great ventures and over-all attempts of discipline and cultivation by way of putting an end to that gruesome dominion of nonsense and accident that has so far been called 'history' -- the nonsense of the 'greatest number' is merely its ultimate form: at some time new types of philosophers and commanders

fashion, in envisioning precisely what Marx predicts. It is the alternative devoutly to be avoided. For Nietzsche it represents a new low for man; the Marxist utopia is satirized as the state of the "last man." Nietzsche throughout his writings insists on Rangordnung on a hierarchial political structure, but what the ground of this hierarchy should be or could be is unclear.[130]

If we view Nietzsche as a "therapist," we may say that his therapeutic goal is to convince his "patients" that it matters what they do, that it matters how men live together.[131]

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will be necessary for that, and whatever has existed on earth of concealed, terrible, and benevolent spirits, will look pale and dwarfed by comparison. . . . on the other hand, the necessity of such leaders, the frightening danger that they might fail to appear or that they might turn out badly or degenerate -- these are our real worries and gloom." See Beyond Good and Evil, Section 203.

[130] Strauss writes of Nietzsche: "He used much of his unsurpassable and inexhaustible power of passionate and fascinating speech for making his readers loathe, not only socialism and communism, but conservatism, nationalism and democracy as well. . . he could not show his readers a way toward political responsibility. He left them no choice except that between irresponsible indifference to politics and irresponsible political options." WPP, p.55.

[131] NR, p.320. Strauss writes: "The revolts against Hegelianism on the part of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. . . appear as attempts to recover the possibility of practice, i.e., of a human life which has a significant and undetermined future."

From this perspective, his aim is at one with traditional political philosophy. (It is perhaps noteworthy that Aristotle was a physician's son and that numerous analogies to medicine abound in all classical political teaching.) Nietzsche diagnoses a fatal illness and his treatment is extreme. (Hippocrates taught: "For extreme diseases, extreme remedies.")[132] It is shock treatment. He would induce by shock the recognition of the nihilism implicit in modern thought. He would shock people to rebel against Hegelianism which teaches inevitability; he would shock them into an awareness that their actions are significant. But the shock which brings recognition of nihilism is stunning; one is left dumb-founded as to why it matters, on what possible grounds it can matter what one does. As Strauss puts it, in classical terms: "Prudence and 'this lower world' cannot be seen properly without some knowledge of 'the higher world' -- without genuine theoria."[133] As regards theoria, Nietzsche's impact is destructive. His earthly surrogate for the "higher world" is extremely esoteric, the doctrine of Eternal Recurrence and the teaching of the Ubermensch. And one wonders whether,

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[132] Cited by M.Crichton in "The High Cost of Cure," The Atlantic Monthly (March, 1970), p.50.

[133] NR, p.321.

Strauss would have us see contemporary political regimes in relation to the "waves" he has delineated. The crisis of liberal democracy Strauss would have us realize is the crisis of the natural right tradition, which in turn is the crisis of philosophy (in the original sense). As the quote above indicates, it will not do simply to congratulate ourselves on the evident practical superiority of liberal democracy to Hitlerism or Stalinism. It is not enough that our scientists still believe in "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" -- though they cannot justify this belief theoretically. Strauss exhorts us not to underestimate the power of political theory. He puts it dramatically. The most profound critique of liberal theory issues from Nietzsche and his followers both in philosophy (e.g. Heidegger) and in the social sciences (e.g. Weber). Their influence pervaded German thought, and indeed German scholarship is proud of it.[136]

Liberal democratic theory must strive to re-establish its theoretical foundation and confront the formidable threat posed by the Nietzschean challenge. To do this is to rethink natural right theory, and ultimately to rethink the possibility of philosophy. This necessarily leads to the pre-modern roots of liberal democratic theory. Communism and Fascism are

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[136] See Introduction above.

consummately modern phenomena; they have radically severed connections with pre-modern traditions. The "waves" analysis of modernity illustrates this. Communism is inspired by and derives from the second "wave"; Fascism appears as inspired by the third "wave." Or if we view it in terms History vs. nature and/or inscrutable Providence, it is apparent that Communism and Fascism are political articulations of the ultimate implications of History. To view it in terms of transcendence, we see Communism and Fascism in effect denying transcendence by making it immanent and subject to human control. To put it in terms of is and ought, they assert that if the is can be said to reveal anything, it is that the is is a product of man's willing. They both assert that man's essence is his freedom. Liberal democratic theory, the modern natural right tradition, retains transcendence in the form of a transcendent human nature, a given, independent of human willing, and the normative basis of human willing. It subscribes to the ought prescribed by this is. While it upholds individuality, it insists on limitation and canalization in accord with man's nature; man's essence is not his freedom; he is bound by his nature. In contrast to Fascism, it still has faith in rationalism; in opposition to Communism, it emphasizes man's limitations. Though modern natural right breaks with its heritage and rejects it, its filial ties, however tenuous, remain. Its distinctiveness and its superiority on the practical level issues from its heritage.

If it is to assert itself theoretically and meet the challenges, and they are formidable, it must reexamine and rethink its theory and return to its classical foundations non-historistically. As a first step, it must strive for a genuine understanding of the thought of the past, for an understanding free from modern ideological slant and historicist bias. This possibility is emphatically denied by historicism, Hegelianism, and radical historicism. Indeed the "historicist" view of history has virtually become the natural standpoint of present day thinking.

Strauss' exhortation to genuine historical understanding implies not only that we are capable of such understanding but that such understanding is pertinent to contemporary issues. It is the assertion of the classical assertion of an eternal order, of eternal philosophic truth. It is a denial of the "experience of history" of the alleged self-evidence of the inaccessibility of earlier thought. It is a denial of progressivism and a denial of the "liberal" belief "in the supreme value of diversity or uniqueness (or of the equal right of all epochs and civilizations)." Strauss certainly acknowledges and appreciates the great impact of biblical religion on the Western world, but denies that modernity is its direct result. Hegel, the consummate secularizer, on the contrary finds in Christianity the root cause of what Strauss calls modernity.

Strauss agrees that modernity may be understood as "secularization" but maintains "secularization" is not prior to modernity, but is dependent on the rejection of the classical philosophical tradition and the rejection of the traditional theological principles, particularly Providence. "Secularization" as he sees it, is essentially rejection and denial of traditional faith; it is the guise with which one tries to "get away with" throwing off the yoke of sacred restraints. According to Hegel (and Marx and Weber), "secularization" is the traditional teaching become rational, intelligible and worldly, through denial of its theistic and other-worldly, orientation. "Secularization" is a worldly Incarnation, i.e., demythologization of the Christian spirit.

Hegel sees the consummation of this "Incarnation" in the universal homogeneous state. This true religion has become "the public" religion of his day, liberalism; the post-revolutionary state is founded self-consciously on equality and the rights of man. The universal homogeneous state, if not actual in fact, is actual in the prevalent Zeitgeist.

CHAPTER III

THE STRAUSS-KOJEVE CONTROVERSY

Has the Classical Orientation Not Been Made Obsolete By the Triumph of the Biblical Orientation?

Strauss' understanding of modernity and his advocacy of classical political science depends on his successful opposition, especially to the second "wave" of modernity, the "wave" of History. Its ultimate expression is Hegelianism which asserts progressivism, in effect denies the classical assertion of an eternal order, and asserts that classical thought has been transcended by Christianity and that both the faith tradition and the classical tradition are transcended by modernity which is essentially secularized Christianity. It will be instructive to see how and how well Strauss opposes, and holds his own, against such formidable opposition. We will be particularly interested in the question of the role of the "biblical orientation" in the rise of modernity, since Strauss himself indicates that his advocacy of "return" to classical political thought and his assertion of its relevance for modern political phenomena is challenged by this objection: ". . . is the attempt to restore

classical social science not utopian since it implies that the classical orientation has not been made obsolete by the triumph of the biblical orientation?"[1]

Strauss' study of Xenophon's Hiero, On Tyranny, is meant to be an example of how to understand a classical thinker non-historistically. He says in his introduction:

> Many present-day scholars start from the historicist assumption, namely, that all human thought is 'historical' or that the foundations of human thought are laid by specific experiences which are not, as a matter of principle, coeval with human thought as such. Yet there is a fatal disproportion between historicism and true historical understanding. The goal of the historian of thought is to understand the thought of the past 'as it really has been,' i.e., to understand it as exactly as possible as it was actually understood by its authors. But the historicist approaches the thought of the past on the basis of the historicist assumption which was wholly alien to the thought of the past. He is therefore compelled to attempt to understand the thought of the past better than it understood itself before he has understood it exactly as it understood itself. In one way or the other, his presentation will be a questionable mixture of interpretation and critique. It is the beginning of historical understanding, its necessary and, one is tempted to add, its sufficient condition that one realizes the problematic character of historicism. For one cannot realize it without becoming seriously interested in an impartial confrontation of the historicist approach that prevails today with the nonhistoricist approach of the past. And such a confrontation in its turn requires that the nonhistoricist thought of the past be understood on its own terms, and not in the way in which it presents itself within the horizon of historicism. . . . I have tried to understand Xenophon's thought as exactly as I could. I have not tried to relate his thought to his 'historical situation' because this is not the natural way of reading the work of a wise man; and, in addition,

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[1] OT, pp. 189-190.

> Xenophon never indicated that he wanted to be understood that way. I assumed that Xenophon, being an able writer, gave us to the best of his powers the information required for understanding his work. I have relied therefore as much as possible on what he himself says, directly or indirectly, and as little as possible on extraneous information, to say nothing of modern hypotheses. . . . I never believed that my mind was moving in a larger 'circle of ideas' than Xenophon's mind.[2]

Strauss writes that the objection stated above "seems to be the chief objection to which my study of Xenophon's Hiero is exposed."[3] The chief objector, highly esteemed by Strauss, is M.Alexandre Kojève, an eminent French Hegelian.[4] The questions, Strauss raises in effect, against the Hegelian position are questions such as these: Does the "biblical orientation" teach that the universal homogeneous state is the highest goal of mankind? Is not classical thought more

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[2] Ibid.,pp. 24-25.

[3] Ibid., p.190.

[4] G.P.Grant, in his article "Tyranny and Wisdom" discusses the Strauss-Kojeve controversy. He "introduces" Kojeve in this way: ". . . it is necessary to state here that Kojeve's Hegel is not the gentlemanly idealist of the nineteenth century who became the butt of the British 'realists' in this century. To Kojeve the essential work of Hegel is The Phenomenology of Spirit. His Hegel is atheist and his thought contains all the truth implicit in existentialism and Marxism. Since his lectures of the 1930's Kojeve has exerted a profound influence on the contemporary existentialists in France. . . . I am not certain whether Kojeve's interpretation of Hegel is correct; but I am quite certain that Kojeve's Hegel is incomparably nearer to the original than such English interpretations as those of Caird, Bosanquet and Russell." G.P.Grant, Technology and Empire, (Toronto: House of Anansi, 1969), p.84, n.10.

profoundly right in describing this state as undesirable and tyrannical? Is not the eschatological vision of such a state less inspired by the "biblical orientation" than by a rejection of that orientation and of the "classical orientation"?

Kojève has an apparent advantage. He says clearly what the positive role of Christianity has been. Strauss does not tell us how he views the impact of the "biblical orientation"; indeed he does not make clear precisely what he thinks this "orientation" is, or how he views its relation to the "classical orientation." This reticence is consonant with Strauss' "conservative" position. From his point of view the onus is on Kojève to demonstrate radical novelty, a wholly new kind of thinking; Strauss, to maintain the classical position, has only to bring into question Kojève's assertion of such; it is not necessary to his position that he give a positive account of the "biblical orientation," much as his readers would like it. His readers demand it for the very good reason that whether they are followers of Biblical tradition or atheists, they take as axiomatic the significant difference between the Biblical orientation and the Greek orientation. By not spelling out this difference and concomitantly denying the difference asserted by Hegelianism and much modern theology which

follows in its wake, Strauss is asking the reader to think this difference in non-Hegelian, if you will, in non-19th century terms. This appears to be the positive side of his reticence on the relation between Athens and Jerusalem in this context.

Kojève at the outset of his remarks appears to deny[5] the possibility of a non-historicist understanding of Xenophon, but he does agree that the problem evoked by Hiero is fundamental: the relation of the philosopher and the ruler. Kojève presents an Hegelian interpretation of the Hiero -- not even attempting what Strauss calls genuine understanding, as in the following: "In presenting his own situation, Hiero describes the tragedy of the Master analysed by Hegel in the Phenomenology of Mind (Ch. IV, Section A)."[6] More striking

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[5] He writes: ". . . in spite of what its author thinks about it, this book of Strauss' is truly important not because it might reveal to us the authentic and uncomprehended thought of a contemporary and compatriot of Plato, but rather because of the problem it raises and discusses." OT, p.143. See also p. 147 where Kojève makes prominent the limitation of Xenophon's historical horizon.

[6] Ibid., p.150.

is his "reading in" aspects of Soviet Communism (under Stalin). To wit:

> What is said in those three chapters is this. To begin with, the tyrant ought to distribute 'prizes' of all sorts, especially honorific, in order to establish in his State a stakhanovistic emulation in the fields of agriculture, industry and commerce (Ch.IX). Next, instead of maintaining a mercenary bodyguard, the tyrant should organize a state police. . . and a permanent armed force which would serve as the nucleus of an army mobilized in case of war (Ch. X).[7]

One need not be a "Straussian" to find questionable the suggestion that Hiero is best understood in terms of a chapter in Hegel or that what Simonides recommends to Hiero is what Stalin has done. Modern social scientists, though they disclaim ideological bias, like Kojeve's, are often guilty of this kind of gross "reading in." Modern social science tends to squeeze historical phenomena into a Procrustean bed of an anachronistic value-laden conceptual schema.[8] (We have already adduced the example of Weber's "reading" of Calvinism.)

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[7] Ibid., pp. 146-147.

[8] Strauss charges: "The value judgments which are forbidden to enter through the front door. . . enter. . . through the back door." (See his discussion in WPP, p.21. Also see his discussion of Weber in Natural Right and History and his article "Epilogue" in LAM.) One example pertinent to our discussion is the one Strauss calls the "most important example of the dogmatism" of social science. He writes: "The new science uses sociological or psychological theories regarding religion which exclude, without considering it, the possibility that religion rests ultimately on God's revealing Himself to man; hence those theories are mere hypotheses which can never be confirmed. Those theories are in fact the hidden basis of the new science. The new science rests on a dogmatic atheism which presents itself as merely methodological or hypothetical." (LAM, p.218.)

In Strauss' view Kojève is more estimable than the social scientists, in that his position is based on principle, on philosophic presuppositions he has thought through and understands fully. His ideological "reading in" is the reading out of Truth and Wisdom revealed by the Hegelian "Bible," the final philosophy. Strauss says of Kojève;

> At least on one occasion he goes so far as to call 'unpopular' certain measures which the very tyrant Hiero had declared to be criminal. He does not hesitate to proclaim that present-day dictators are tyrants without regarding this in the least as an objection to their rule. As for reverence for legitimacy, he has none.[9]

But:

> . . . Kojève belongs to the very few who know how to think and who love to think. He does not belong to the many who today are unabashed atheists and more than Byzantine flatterers of tyrants for the same reason for which they would have been addicted to the grossest superstitions, both religious and legal, had they lived in an earlier age. In a word, Kojève is a philosopher and not an intellectual.[10]

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[9] OT, p.198.

[10] Ibid., p.198.

Of himself and Kojève, in contrast to philosophers of Being, (like Heidegger), he writes:

> Mais nous y avons toujours été attentif, car nous nous détournons tous deux, en apparence, de l'Etre pour nous tourner vers la tyrannie, parce que nous avons vu que ceux qui manquent de courage pour braver les conséquences de la tyrannie, qui, par conséquent 'et humiliter serviebant et superbe dominabantur,' étaient forcés de s'évader tout autant des conséquences de l'Etre, precisement parce qu'ils ne faisaient rien d'autre que parler de l'Etre.[11]

Kojève concurs in Strauss' indictment of modern social science but in contrast to Strauss, regards it not as issuing from modern philosophy but from the refusal of decadent thinkers to accept the teaching of the greatest modern philosopher, Hegel. Kojève concurs, according to Strauss, in the view that classical thought comprehends the fundamental political problems more profoundly and more adequately than do the social sciences.[12] But he maintains classical thought

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[11] Grant, op.cit.,p.102. See his note 29. Here is a translation: "But we have been attentive to it [to the conflict between their hypotheses about Being] at all times, for we both, apparently, turn from Being in order to turn toward tyranny, because we have seen that those who lack courage to face the consequences of tyranny, who consequently et humilieter serviebant et superbe dominabantur, were forced to evade just as much the consequences of Being, precisely because they did nothing else but talk of Being." (I am indebted to Professor D.Hitchcock for this translation.)

[12] OT, p.199.

is not itself adequate because it is "dated" and therefore outdated; the horizon of its thought extends to the conception of a universal state, but stops short of the conception of a homogeneous state. This conception is derived from the modern secularization of the Christian vision of a universal and homogeneous Church. Classical thinkers can think the political only out of an "aristocratic existential attitude"; they teach the morality of the Master; Christianity teaches the morality of the Slave. The former encourages questing for glory. Opposed to this, Christianity gives man a "bad conscience" about experiencing the pleasure of glory; it deprecates the "joy which comes from honor" and emphasizes the "joy which comes from [successful] labor" regardless of praise or honor.[13] This is to say classical thought does not and could not comprehend the modern bourgeois world. Moreover, Kojève alleges that the classical conception of philosophy is "fundamentally erroneous"; Kojève suggests this "erroneous" conception is the self-justification of the "egoistic" philosopher who selfishly prefers to live in "splendid isolation."[14] (It is the intellectual or spiritualized expression of the aristocratic existential attitude.)

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[13] Ibid., p.148.

[14] Ibid., p.160.

Kojève writes:

> . . . in order to justify the absolute isolation of the philosopher, it is necessary to maintain that Being is essentially immutable in itself, eternally identical with itself, and completely revealed for all eternity in and by an intelligence perfect from the outset -- this sufficient revelation of the nontemporal totality of Being is the Truth. Man (the philosopher) can at any moment participate in this Truth: whether consequent to an action coming from the Truth itself (divine revelation), or by his own individual effort of comprehension (Platonic 'intellectual intuition'), an effort conditioned by nothing but the innate 'talent' of the man who undertakes it and which depends neither on the localization of this man in space (in the state) nor on his position in time (in history). If this is the case, the philosopher can and must isolate himself from the changing and tumultuous world (which is only pure appearance), and live in a tranquil 'garden,' or in case of real necessity, within a 'Republic of Letters' where the intellectual disputes still are less 'disturbing' than the political struggles outside. It is in the quietude of this isolation, in this total lack of interest in his fellows and in the whole of 'society,' that the absolutely egoistic philosopher has the greatest chance of attaining the truth, to the quest for which he has decided to dedicate his whole life.[15]

One may see this opposition in conceptions of philosophy (and indeed Kojève would encourage viewing it so) as contemplation vs. Charity (theory for the sake of the relief of man's estate), or "aristocratic philosophy" vs. "bourgeois philosophy." Again, at issue is the relation of Athens and Jerusalem. Kojève insists this relation is fundamentally antithetical; Christianity introduces not only new thought but paves the way for a whole new way of thinking with brand new conceptions

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[15] Ibid., p.161.

of philosophy, Truth and Wisdom. We note again that Strauss need only bring into question Kojève's assertion; he need not engage in a metaphysical debate; and he does not as Grant points out: "At no point in his writings has he. . . argued at length with Hegel's claim to have included history within metaphysics, and with the resulting relation between concepts and time."[16] Strauss' metaphysical reticence makes understanding his position difficult. What is the relation of the changeless to change, of eternity to history? Does his reticence suggest it is a problem whose ultimate solution is beyond human understanding? This will be discussed in the conclusion below.

Kojève instructs us in the Hegelian method of historical verification:

> For Hegel, the outcome of the classical 'dialectic' of the 'dialogue,' that is, the victory gained in a purely verbal 'discussion,' is not a sufficient criterion of the truth. In other words, discursive 'dialectic' as such cannot, according to him, lead to any definitive solution of a problem (any solution, that is, which remains invariable for all time to come). This is for the simple reason that if one is content to talk one will never be able definitively to 'eliminate' either the contradictor or, consequently, the contradiction itself, for to refute someone is not necessarily to convince him. 'Contradiction' or 'controversy' (between Man and Nature on the one hand, between men, or rather between a man and his social and historical milieu, on the other) can be 'dialectically done away with' (that is, done away with insofar as they are

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[16] Grant, op.cit., p.92, n.17.

> 'false,' but preserved insofar as they are 'true,' and raised to a higher level of 'discussion') only to the extent that they are played out on the historical terrain of active social life where one argues by acts of Labor (against Nature) and Struggle (against men). To be sure, Truth emerges from this active 'dialogue,' this historical dialectic, only at the moment when the latter is completed, that is to say, at the moment when history comes to its final conclusion in and by the universal and homogeneous state which, implying the 'satisfaction' of the citizens, excludes all possibility of any negating action and hence of all negation in general and, consequently, of any new 'discussion' of what has already been established.[17]

For Kojève, the Christian new departure leads to the inescapable conclusion that the universal homogeneous state is the best social order and only just political order. This is made clear in the following historical sketch:

> But the political goal that humanity is at present pursuing (or combating) is not only that of the politically universal state; it is just as much the socially homogeneous state or 'classless society.'
>
> Here again the remote origins of the political idea are found in the religious universalist conception which is already found in Ikhnaton and culminates in St.Paul. It is the idea of the fundamental equality of all those who believe in a single God. This transcendental conception of social equality differs radically from the Socratic-Platonic conception of the identity of beings having the same immanent 'essence.' For Alexander, a disciple of the Greek philosophers, the Hellene and the barbarian have the same title to political citizenship in the Empire, to the extent that they HAVE the same human (moreover, rational, logical, discursive) 'nature' (= essence, idea, form, etc.) or are 'essentially' identified with each other as the result of a direct (= 'immediate') 'mixture' of their innate qualities (realized by means of biological union). For St. Paul there is no 'essential' (irreducible) difference between

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[17] OT, p.178.

the Greek and the Jew because they both can BECOME Christians, and this not by 'mixing' their Greek and Jewish 'qualities' but by negating them both and 'synthesizing' them in and by this very negation into a homogeneous unity not innate or given, but (freely) created by 'conversion.' Because of the negating character of the Christian 'synthesis,' there are no longer any incompatible 'qualities' or 'contradictory' (= mutually exclusive) 'qualities.' For Alexander, a Greek philosopher, there was no possible 'mixture' of Masters and Slaves, for they were 'opposites.' Thus his universal state, which did away with race, could not be homogeneous in the sense that it would equally do away with 'class.' For St.Paul, on the contrary, the negation (active to the extent that 'faith' is an act, being 'dead' without 'acts') of the opposition between pagan mastery and servitude could engender an 'essentially' new Christian unity (which is, moreover, active or acting, or 'emotional,' and not purely rational or discursive, that is, 'logical') which could serve as the basis not only for political universality but also for the social homogeneity of the state.

But in fact, universality and homogeneity on a transcendental, theistic, religious foundation did not and could not engender a State, properly speaking. They served as the foundation only for the 'mystical body' of the universal and homogeneous Church, and they are supposed to be fully actualized only in the beyond (in the 'Kingdom of Heaven,' provided one abstracts from the permanent existence of hell). Guided solely by the double influence of ancient pagan philosophy and Christian religion, politics has in fact pursued only the goal of the universal State, without, moreover, ever having attained it up to now.

But in our time the universal and homogeneous state has also become a political goal. Now here again politics is a tributary of philosophy. To be sure, this philosophy (being the negation of religious Christianity) is in turn a tributary of St.Paul (who, since 'negated,' must have been presupposed). But it is only from the moment when modern philosophy could secularize (= rationalize, transform into coherent discourse) the religious Christian idea of human homogeneity that this idea could have a real political bearing. . . . . .

. . . . . .

This new philosophy will preserve only that part of the old which has survived the test of the creative political negation of the historical reality which corresponded to it;

> and it will transform or 'sublimate' the part preserved, synthesizing it (in and by a coherent discourse) with its own revelation of the new historical reality. It is only by proceeding in this way that philosophy will make its way toward absolute knowledge or Wisdom: which it will be able to attain only when it has accomplished all possible active (political) negations.[18]

Strauss objects: "Kojeve's sketch of the history of Western world. . . would seem to presuppose the truth of the thesis which it is meant to prove."[19] (Strauss' questioning of the truth of the assumption that the universal homogeneous state is the simply best social order is discussed below.)

Strauss makes clear that the onus probandi is on the critics of the classical position and that before that can even begin to demonstrate their critical conclusions they must understand the classics, non-historicistically. Although this appears to beg the question at issue, it is perfectly consonant with Strauss' position. He writes:

> After the experience of our generation, the burden of proof would seem to rest on those who assert rather than on those who deny that we have progressed beyond the classics. And even if it were true that we could understand the classics better than they understood themselves, we would become certain of our superiority only after understanding them exactly as they understood themselves. Otherwise we might mistake our superiority to our notion of the classics for superiority to the classics.[20]

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[18] Ibid., pp. 183-186.

[19] Ibid., p.220.

[20] Ibid., p.195.

Accordingly he goes on to show that Hiero is not in anticipation of Chapter IV of Phenomenology of Mind, that Xenophon and the Socratic tradition "did not accept the morality of Masters" or take glory to be the summum bonum.[21] The classical ideal of virtuous activity does not negate aristocratic morality and does include bourgeois morality. The classics neither induce a "bad conscience" about experiencing glory, nor encourage glory-seeking for its own sake; they do recommend activities for their own sake -- virtuous activities. Which is to imply the Hegelian antitheses are inadequate, and Hegelian "dialectic," at best, is too simplistic. Strauss writes:

> The classical interpretation would seem to be truer to the facts. Kojève refers to the pleasure which a solitary child or a solitary painter may derive from executing his projects well. But one can easily imagine a solitary safecracker deriving pleasure from executing his project well, and without a thought of the external rewards (wealth or admiration of his competence) which he reaps. There are artists in all walks of life. It does make a difference what kind of a 'job' is the source of disinterested pleasure: whether the job is criminal or innocent, whether it is mere play or serious, and so on. By thinking through this observation one arrives at the view that the highest kind of job, or the only job that is truly human, is noble or virtuous activity, or noble or virtuous work. If one is fond of this manner of looking at things, one may say that noble work is the synthesis effected by the classics between the morality of workless nobility and the morality of ignoble work.[22]

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[21] No one asserts this more forcefully than Nietzsche. I find Nietzsche and Strauss convincing. How do Hegelians understand the Gorgias?

[22] Ibid., p.204.

The "'aristocratic' existential attitude" Kojeve discerns is not the ground of the classical conception of philosophy. Strauss asserts the contrary; the conception of philosophy is the ground of the political teaching that the best regime is an aristocracy. This classical conception of philosophy militates against the technological conquest of nature, against technologizing science and against its popular diffusion, and it denies that universal satisfaction of the desire for recognition is desirable or possible. In the classical view, wisdom and moderation go together. For Hegel, as Kojève makes clear, wisdom is achieved by tyranny, by unabashed, unbridled glory-seeking, by the universal emancipation of passions tyrannically canalized, by the negation of all sacred restraints, by the promulgation universally of the Wisdom of the Final Tyrant, by war rather than peace, by labour rather than leisure, by revolution rather than by law abidingness, by assassination of political leaders rather than by respecting their authority, by what was once called — "evil." This evokes Strauss' pointed observation:

> Syntheses effect miracles. Kojève's or Hegel's synthesis of classical and Biblical morality effects the miracle of producing an amazingly lax morality out of the two moralities, both of which made very strict demands on self-restraint. Neither Biblical nor classical morality encourages us to try, solely for the sake of our preferment or our glory, to oust from their positions men who do the required work as well as we could. Neither Biblical nor classical morality encourages all statesmen to try to extend their authority over all men in order to achieve universal recognition.[23]

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[23] Ibid., p.205.

Both traditions allegedly synthesized tend to be on the "conservative" side. Both suggest that human excellence depends on moderation, on self-restraint. It is difficult to see how technology can guarantee human excellence especially in that the technological satisfaction of desires seems to mean negating restraints. It is also difficult to see how unrestrained appetites can be sated.

Hegel and Marx seem to assume a point of satisfaction of appetites as though they were determinate. Hobbes is certain this is not so: ". . . I put for a generall inclination of all mankind, a perpetuall and restlesse desire of power after power, that ceaseth only in Death."[24] Contemporary North American experience seems to bear him out; the "affluent society"[25] reveals appetites becoming ever hungrier with every "satisfaction."

If one follows the tradition of Hobbes, it is sufficient that everyone is capable of knowing where his self-interest lies, and therefore everyone can be made "virtuous." It follows then that universal enlightenment, the widespread diffusion of knowledge and the promulgation of public dogmas are all instrumental in pointing out to the

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[24] Leviathan, Chapter 11.

[25] See Introduction above.

populace where its interest lies, its destructive function is particularly important; it must free man from the tutelage of tradition and from the bonds of sacred restraints. The universal homogeneous state can only work if it is constituted by homogeneous minds. To this end, technology is very helpful. Not only can mass media condition the masses, but technology makes "underground" dissent easily detectable and more easily squashable in its incipiency. It also enables the ruler to eliminate large segments ofthe population quickly, quietly and efficiently without fuss, muss, or bother. Strauss agrees that tyranny of this modern type was not envisioned by classical thinkers. But they did consider and reject both the notion of unlimited technology and universal enlightenment; they did consider and reject the presuppositions of the ideal of a universal homogeneous state. Strauss writes:

> Both possibilities -- the possibility of a science that issues in the conquest of nature and the possibility of the popularization of philosophy as science -- were known to the classics. . . . But the classics rejected them as 'unnatural,' i.e., as destructive of humanity. They did not dream of present-day tyranny because they regarded its basic presuppositions as so preposterous that they turned their imagination in entirely different directions.[26]

Kojève and Strauss both agree that this attitude is rooted in the classical conception of philosophy, but for Kojève this conception is "fundamentally erroneous." The

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[26] OT, p.190.

"error" is accounted for in terms of the classical thinkers' desire for recognition and admiration. Kojève suggests that philosophy is an exercise in selfish pleasure-seeking; the goal of History is to afford everyone equally the pleasure sought -- recognition; this final philosophy or rather ultimate Wisdom is actualized when society becomes a universal mutual admiration society. Truth is reached when everyone agrees and everyone will agree when the self-interest of everyone is served. To support his contention Kojève invokes the argument from solipsism. His view is that if "lunacy is universal, it is necessarily the truth and necessarily good; universality at the end of history is the only possible way to overcome, to finally overcome solipsism; if everyone believes, the problem of the deus deceptor is vitiated. Nietzsche satirizes this "ultimate" state of affairs:

> Behold! I shall show you the Ultimate Man.[27]
> "What is love? What is creation? What is longing? What is a star?' thus asks the Ultimate Man and blinks.
> The earth has become small, and upon it hops the Ultimate Man, who makes everything small. His race is as inexterminable as the flea; the Ultimate Man lives longest.
> 'We have discovered happiness,' say the Ultimate Men and blink.
> They have left the places where living was hard: for one needs warmth. One still loves one's neighbour and rubs oneself against him: for one needs warmth.

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[27] More commonly rendered "Last Man."

> Sickness and mistrust count as sins with them: one should go about warily. He is a fool who still stumbles over stones or over men!
>
> A little poison now and then: that produces pleasant dreams. And a lot of poison at last, for a pleasant death.
>
> They still work, for work is entertainment. But they take care the entertainment does not exhaust them.
>
> Nobody grows rich or poor any more: both are too much of a burden. Who still wants to rule? Who obey? Both are too much of a burden.
>
> No herdsman and one herd. Everyone wants the same thing, everyone is the same: whoever thinks otherwise goes voluntarily into the madhouse.
>
> 'Formerly all the world was mad,' say the most acute of them and blink.
>
> They are clever and know everything that has ever happened: so there is no end to their mockery. They still quarrel, but they soon make up -- otherwise indigestion would result.
>
> They have their little pleasure for the day and their little pleasure for the night: but they respect health.
>
> 'We have discovered happiness,' say the Ultimate Men and blink. [28]

Strauss readily accepts the caveat issuing from Kojève's argument from solipsism against sectarian "lunacy." He writes:

> The whole history of philosophy testifies that the danger eloquently described by Kojève is inevitable. He is equally right in saying that that danger cannot be avoided by abandoning the sect in favor of what he regards as its modern substitute, the Republic of Letters. The Republic of Letters indeed lacks the narrowness of the sect: it embraces men of all philosophic persuasions. But precisely for this reason, the first article of the constitution of the Republic of Letters stipulates that no philosophic persuasion

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[28] F. Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra, Prologue, Section 5.

> must be taken too seriously or that every philosophic persuasion must be treated with as much respect as any other. The Republic of Letters is relativistic. Or if it tries to avoid this pitfall, it becomes eclectic. A certain vague middle line, which is perhaps barely tolerable for the most easy-going members of the different persuasions if they are in their drowsiest mood, is set up as The Truth or as Common Sense; the substantive and irrepressible conflicts are dismissed as merely 'semantic.' Whereas the sect is narrow because it is passionately concerned with the true issues, the Republic of Letters is comprehensive because it is indifferent to the true issues: it prefers agreement to truth or to the quest for truth. If we have to choose between the sect and the Republic of Letters, we must choose the sect.[29]

The "danger" cannot be overcome by sheer mass even if it is a universal mass; universal consensus does not equal truth or absolutely preclude lunacy. (This is to assume what Kojève denies: truth is transcendent and eternal, prior to human willing; <u>becoming</u> is not becoming to truth. Truth is not what you <u>make</u> or <u>will</u> it.) Kojève, in the tradition of modern skepticism, uses his argument not to assert that we cannot know but to demonstrate that only Hegel's is the teaching of true knowledge. Strauss writes:

> The 'subjective certainty' of the members of the sect, and especially of the weaker brethren, may be increased if the tenets of the sect are repeated by millions of parrots instead of by a few dozens of human beings, but this obviously has no effect on the claim of the tenets in question to 'objective truth.'

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[29] <u>OT</u>, pp. 208-209.

> Much as we loathe the snobbish silence or whispering of the sect, we loathe even more the savage noise of the loudspeakers of the mass party. The problem stated by Kojève is not then solved by dropping the distinction between those who are able and willing to think and those who are not.[30]

Strauss articulates the classical position and its implicit opposition to Hegelianism:

> But must we choose the sect? The decisive premise of Kojève's argument is that philosophy 'implies necessarily "subjective certainties" which are not "objective truths" or, in other words, which are prejudices.' But philosophy in the original meaning of the term is nothing but knowledge of one's ignorance. The 'subjective certainty' that one does not know coincides with the 'objective truth' of that certainty. But one cannot know that one does not know without knowing what one does not know. What Pascal said with antiphilosophic intent about the impotence of both dogmatism and skepticism, is the only possible justification of philosophy which as such is neither dogmatic nor skeptic, and still less 'decisionist,' but zetetic (or skeptic in the original sense of the term). Philosophy as such is nothing but genuine awareness of the problems, i.e., of the fundamental and comprehensive problems. It is impossible to think about these problems without becoming inclined toward a solution, toward one or the other of the very few typical solutions. Yet as long as there is no wisdom but only quest for wisdom, the evidence of all solutions is necessarily smaller than the evidence of the problems. Therefore the philosopher ceases to be a philosopher at the moment at which the 'subjective certainty' of a solution becomes stronger than his awareness of the problematic character of that solution. At that moment the sectarian is born. The danger of succumbing to the attraction of solutions is essential to philosophy which, without incurring this danger, would degenerate into playing with the problems.

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[30] Ibid., p.209.

> But the philosopher does not necessarily succumb to this danger, as is shown by Socrates, who never belonged to a sect and never founded one. And even if the philosophic friends are compelled to be members of a sect or to found one, they are not necessarily members of one and the same sect: Amicus Plato.[31]

Following from this conception of philosophy is the differentiation of motivation and goal of the philosopher from that of the political leader, which Kojève denies, asserting that they both strive for recognition and neither is motivated by eros. Strauss writes:

> All men desire 'satisfaction.' But satisfaction cannot be identified with recognition and even universal recognition. The classics identified satisfaction with happiness. The difference between the philosopher and the political man will then be a difference with respect to happiness. The philosopher's dominating passion is the desire for truth, i.e., for knowledge of the eternal order, or the eternal cause or causes of the whole. . . . he is as unconcerned as possible with individual and perishable human beings and hence also with his own 'individuality,' or his body, as well as with the sum total of all individual human beings and their 'historical' procession.[32]

The political man personifies extended "love of one's own" whereas the philosopher loves "what can never become private or exclusive property." The philosopher is a member of a family and a citizen and therefore he cannot in justice neglect "his own," but it is not comparable to the erotic involvement of the political man. We may say it is the

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31 Ibid., pp. 209-210.

32 Ibid., p.211.

philosopher's erotic attachment to the transcendent that enables him to act more justly than other men in human affairs. Strauss writes:

> While trying to transcend humanity (for wisdom is divine) or while trying to make it his sole business to die and to be dead to all human things, the philosopher cannot help living as a human being who as such cannot be dead to human concerns, although his soul will not be in these concerns. The philosopher cannot devote his life to his own work if other people do not take care of the needs of his body. Philosophy is possible only in a society in which there is 'division of labor.' The philosopher needs the services of other human beings and has to pay for them with services of his own if he does not want to be reproved as a thief or fraud. But man's need for other men's services is founded on the fact that man is by nature a social animal or that the human individual is not self-sufficient. There is therefore a natural attachment of man to man which is prior to any calculation of mutual benefit. This natural attachment to human beings is weakened in the case of the philosopher by his attachment to the eternal beings. On the other hand, the philosopher is immune to the most common and the most powerful dissolvent of man's natural attachment to man, the desire to have more than one has already and in particular to have more than others have; for he has the greatest self-sufficiency which is humanly possible. Hence the philosopher will not hurt anyone. While he cannot help being more attached to his family and his city than to strangers, he is free from the delusions bred by collective egoisms; his benevolence or humanity extends to all human beings with whom he comes into contact. Since he fully realizes the limits set to all human action and all human planning (for what has come into being must perish again), he does not expect salvation or satisfaction from the establishment of the simply best social order. He will therefore not engage in revolutionary or subversive activity. But he will try to help his fellow man by mitigating, as far as in him lies, the evils which are inseparable from the human condition. In particular, he will give advice to

> his city or to other rulers. Since all advice of this kind presupposes comprehensive reflections which as such are the business of the philosopher, he must first have become a political philosopher. After this preparation he will act as Simonides did when he talked to Hiero, or as Socrates did when he talked to Alcibiades, Critias, Charmides, Critobulus, the younger Pericles and others.[33]

The philosopher, not qua family member or citizen, but qua philosopher is attached to "friends." This "philosophic" friendship is portrayed by Plato[34] as stronger than even familial relationships. The philosopher needs friends to overcome the deficiency of "subjective certainty" but this does not explain why he is so deeply attached to them. Here again, this is to be understood in terms of the philosopher's essential erotic desire for the divine which well-ordered souls -- the souls of philosophers or potential philosophers -- reflect. Strauss asks if the deficiency of "subjective certainty" is sufficient to explain "without being forced to use ad hoc hypotheses the immediate pleasure which the philosopher experiences when he sees a well-ordered soul or the immediate pleasure which we experience when we observe signs of human nobility."[35] As Strauss admits, "observations of this kind do not prove the assumption that the well-ordered soul is more akin to the eternal order. . . than is the chaotic soul."[36] Furthermore, "one does not have

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[33] Ibid., pp. 213-214.

[34] Notably in the Phaedo.

[35] OT, p.216.

[36] Ibid.

to make that assumption in order to be a philosopher, as is shown by Democritus and other pre-Socratics, to say nothing of moderns."[37] But a classical philosopher did assume that only an elite few are fit (whatever the criteria of fitness) to philosophize. Moderns resist this discrimination, yet find it compelling. Is this resistance the product of Christianity? Obviously Kojève would say it was. Strauss would attribute it to the modern demotion of virtue to social utility, to the divorcing of virtue from knowledge. According to Hobbes, the basis of the politics of the classics is natural inequality, and this is their basic mistake.[38] Not because they are wrong about the facts, but because everyone asserts himself as the best judge of his self-interest -- and political reality demands this assertion of every man be accepted, for the sake of internal peace and stability.

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[37] Ibid.

[38] DeCive, III:13, p.50. "The question whether of two men be the more worthy, belongs not to the natural, but civil state. . . . Aristotle, in his first book of Politics, affirms as a foundation of the whole political science, that some men by nature are made worthy to command, others only to serve; . . . . Which foundation is not only against reason. . . but also against experience. For neither almost is any man so dull of understanding as not to judge it better to be ruled by himself, than to yield himself to the government of another; neither if the wiser and stronger do contest, have these ever or after the upper hand of those. Whether therefore men be equal by nature, the equality is to be acknowledged, or whether unequal, because they are like to contest for dominion, it is necessary for the obtaining of peace, that they be esteemed as equal. . . ." (My underlining.)

(Is there a connection between Hobbes' teaching on equality and the biblical orientation? We examine this question again below.) Hobbes and the modern natural right tradition do not deny the fact of natural aristocracy; this fact is as constant as human nature. Kojève and the champions of the universal and homogeneous state, however, believe that human nature is evolving toward factual or natural homogeneity. This is a difficult if not discomfiting position. When Kojève speaks of the "pleasure" of self-admiration of the philosopher deriving from his feeling of superiority to others, he sounds very much as if he endorses natural aristocracy. He writes: ". . . whatever the Christians say, one cannot be wise and virtuous (that is, in fact wiser and more virtuous than others. . .) without deriving therefrom a certain 'satisfaction' and sort of 'pleasure.'"[39] Strauss not

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[39] OT, p.170. Kojève appends this note: "Moreover, the Christians only succeeded in 'spoiling this pleasure' by playing on the disagreeable sentiment which appears in the form of 'jealousy' or 'envy,' among others: one is discontent with himself (at times he even despises himself) when he is 'worse than another.' Now the Christian always has at his disposal Another Who is better than he, this Other being God Himself, Who, to facilitate the comparison, made Himself man. To the extent that this man to whom he compares himself and whom he tries in vain to imitate is for him a God, the Christian feels neither 'envy' nor 'jealousy' toward him, but limits himself to the pure and simple 'inferiority complex' which is nonetheless sufficient to prevent him from recognizing his own wisdom or virtue and rejoicing in it." (n.5.)

only notes this[40] but also cites Kojève as implicitly admitting that even in the universal homogeneous state, natural inequality in the appreciation of Wisdom is not overcome. Strauss writes:

> . . . if the final state is to satisfy the deepest longing of the human soul, every human being must be capable of becoming wise. The most relevant difference among human beings must have practically disappeared. We understand now why Kojève is so anxious to refute the classical view according to which only a minority of men are capable of the quest for wisdom. If the classics are right, only a few men will be truly happy in the universal and homogeneous state and hence only a few men will find their satisfaction in and through it. Kojève himself observes that the ordinary citizens of the final state are only 'potentially satisfied.' The actual satisfaction of all human beings, which allegedly is the goal of History, is impossible. It is for this reason, I suppose, that the final social order, as Kojève conceives of it, is a State and not a stateless society: the State, or coercive government, cannot wither away because it is impossible that all human beings should ever become actually satisfied.[41]

This indicates the key differentiation between the political man's attachment to others and the philosopher's to his friends. We said they are both lovers distinguished by their realms of love-objects; the philosopher's attachment is to the transcendent, and the ruler's to the human. From this follows a derivative distinction within the human realm: the philosopher is a connoisseur who selects the beautiful people; the political man woos the multitude. The philosopher and political man are thus distinguishable also by whom they love.

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[40] Ibid., p.217.

[41] Ibid., p.225.

It also follows then that the philosopher is the connoisseur who desires the highest and the best and therefore elects to associate primarily with the beautiful people; "the ruler is not motivated by true Socratic eros because he does not know what a well- ordered soul is";[42] he woos the multitude. The philosopher and politician are also distinguishable by who loves them. It requires discriminating judgment to interest oneself in a philosopher -- and certainly more discriminating judgment to appreciate him, much more than is required for the appreciation of a ruler. From which follows the denial of "Kojève's contention that the educative tendency of the ruler has the same character or scope as that of the philosopher."[43] The ruler necessarily aims at universal education; the philosopher aims at educating the few to an appreciation of the "universal"; not only the "teachers" but the "student bodies" are different, not to mention the "curriculum." Strauss writes:

> . . . If the ruler is concerned with universal recognition, he must be concerned with enlarging universally the class of competent judges of his merits. But Kojève does not seem to believe that all men are capable of becoming competent judges in political matters. He limits himself to contending

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[42] Ibid., p.216.

[43] Ibid., p.217.

> that the number of men of philosophic competence is not smaller than the number of men of political competence. Yet contrary to what he seems to say in the text of his essay as distinguished from his note number five, many more men are capable of judging competently of the greatness of a ruler than of the greatness of a philosopher. This is the case not merely because a much greater intellectual effort is required for competent judgment of a philosophic achievement than for competent judgment of a political achievement. Rather is it true because philosophy requires liberation from the most potent natural charm whose undiminished power in no way obstructs political competence as the ruler understands political competence: from that charm that consists in unqualified attachment to human things as such. If the philosopher addresses himself, therefore, to a small minority, he is not acting on the basis of an a priori judgment. He is following the constant experience of all times and countries and, no doubt, the experience of Kojève himself. For try as one may to expel nature with a hayfork, it will always come back. The philosopher will certainly not be compelled, either by the need to remedy the deficiency of 'subjective certainty' or by ambition, to strive for universal recognition. His friends alone suffice to remedy that deficiency, and no shortcomings in his friends can be remedied by having recourse to utterly incompetent people. And as for ambition, as a philosopher, he is free from it.[44]

The philosopher then, qua philosopher, according to Strauss does not seek recognition for glory's sake; and for truth's sake recognition is unimportant. Strauss writes:

> If the philosopher, trying to remedy the deficiency of 'subjective certainty' engages in conversation with others and observes again and again that his interlocutors, as they themselves are forced to admit, involve themselves in self-contradictions or are unable to

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[44] Ibid., pp. 217-218.

> give any account of their questionable contentions, he will be reasonably confirmed in his estimate of himself without necessarily finding a single soul who admires him. . . . The self-admiration of the philosopher is in this respect akin to 'the good conscience' which as such does not require confirmation by others.[45]

Strauss suggests that the hedonistic understanding of philosophy does not and cannot consider the intrinsic worth or rank of that activity. It cannot answer the question: Is questing for wisdom good? It can say only that it is pleasurable and this is not relevant to the question of goodness or intrinsic worth. Strauss writes:

> Neither the quantity nor the purity of the pleasures determines in the last resort the rank of human activities. The pleasures are essentially secondary; they cannot be understood but with reference to the activities. The question as to whether the activities or the pleasures are in themselves primary has nothing to do with the question as to whether someone who engages in an activity is prompted to do so primarily by the intrinsic value of the activity or by the pleasure which he expects to enjoy as a consequence of the activity. Kojève may be perfectly right in saying that the latter question does not permit a responsible answer and is unimportant from the point of view of philosophy. But the consideration is irrelevant to Xenophon's argument, which is concerned exclusively with the former question.[46]

Strauss here again counters Kojève by simply stating the classical position in opposition to Kojève, for whom no activity is intrinsically or absolutely unworthy; intrinsic worth is determined by external relations.

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[45] Ibid., p.218.

[46] Ibid., p.219.

As we noted, Strauss' "strategy" is primarily defensive. He does aggressively attack the assertion that the universal and homogeneous state is "the simply best social order."[47] This is consonant with his defensive classical line; his aggressiveness is perhaps commensurate with the dangerous evil he discerns in this ideal. He claims Kojève's sketch of the history of the Western world and the conclusion drawn from it presupposes the truth of the thesis which it is meant to prove. He questions whether universal satisfaction is possible and whether Kojève himself does implicitly question its possibility. Strauss writes:

> Does Kojève not underestimate the power of the passions? Does he not have an unfounded belief in the eventually rational effect of the movements instigated by the passions? In addition, men will have very good reasons for being dissatisfied with the universal and homogeneous state. To show this, I must have recourse to Kojève's more extensive exposition in his Introduction a la lecture de Hegel. There are degrees of satisfaction. The satisfaction of the humble citizen, whose human dignity is universally recognized and who enjoys all opportunities that correspond to his humble capacities and achievements, is not comparable to the satisfaction of the Chief of State. Only the Chief of State is 'really satisfied.' He alone is 'truly free'. Did Hegel not say something to the effect that the state in which one man is free is the Oriental despotic state? Is the universal and homogeneous state then merely a planetary Oriental despotism? However this may be, there is no guarantee that the incumbent Chief of State deserves his position to a higher degree than others. Those

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[47] Ibid., p.222.

> others then have very good reason for dissatisfaction: a state which treats equal men unequally is not just. A change from the universal-homogeneous monarchy into a universal-homogeneous aristocracy would seem to be reasonable. But we cannot stop here. The universal and homogeneous state, being the synthesis of the Masters and the Slaves, is the state of the working warrior or of the war-waging worker. In fact, all its members are warrior workers. But if the state is universal and homogeneous, 'wars and revolutions are henceforth impossible.' Besides, work in the strict sense, namely the conquest or domestication of nature, is completed, for otherwise the universal and homogeneous state could not be the basis for wisdom. . . . 'There is no longer fight nor work. History has come to its end. There is nothing more to do'. This end of History would be most exhilarating but for the fact that, according to Kojève, it is the participation in bloody political struggles as well as in real work or, generally expressed, the negating action, which raises man above the brutes. The state through which man is said to become reasonably satisfied is, then, the state in which the basis of man's humanity withers away, or in which man loses his humanity. It is the state of Nietzsche's 'last man.' Kojève in fact confirms the classical view that unlimited technological progress and its accompaniment, which are the indispensable conditions of the universal and homogeneous state, are destructive of humanity.[48]

He asks rhetorically: "Is this not a hideous prospect: a state in which the last refuge of man's humanity is political assassination in the particularly sordid form of the palace revolutions?"[49] He concludes by drawing the consequences for philosophy under the Universal and Final Tyrant:

> To retain his power, he will be forced to suppress every activity which might lead people into doubt of the essential soundness of the universal and homogeneous state: he must suppress philosophy as an attempt to corrupt the young. In particular he must in the interest

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[48] Ibid., p.223.

[49] Ibid., p.224.

> of the homogeneity of his universal state forbid every teaching, every suggestion, that there are politically relevant natural differences among men which cannot be abolished or neutralized by progressing scientific technology. He must command his biologists to prove that every human being has, or will acquire, the capacity of becoming a philosopher or a tyrant. The philosophers in their turn will be forced to defend themselves or the cause of philosophy. They will be obliged, therefore, to try to act on the Tyrant. Everything seems to be a re-enactment of the age-old drama. But this time, the cause of philosophy is lost from the start. For the Final Tyrant presents himself as a philosopher, as the highest philosophic authority, as the supreme exegete of the only true philosophy, as the executor and hangman authorized by the only true philosophy. He claims therefore that he persecutes not philosophy but false philosophies. The experience is not altogether new for philosophers. If philosophers were confronted with claims of this kind in former ages, philosophy went underground. It accommodated itself in its explicit or exoteric teaching to the unfounded commands of rulers who believed they knew things which they did not know. Yet its very exoteric teaching undermined the commands or dogmas of the rulers in such a way as to guide the potential philosophers toward the eternal and unsolved problems. And since there was no universal state in existence, the philosophers could escape to other countries if life became unbearable in the tyrant's dominions. From the Universal Tyrant, however, there is no escape. Thanks to the conquest of nature and to the completely unabashed substitution of suspicion and terror for law, the Universal and Final Tyrant has at his disposal practically unlimited means for ferreting out, and for extinguishing, the most modest efforts in the direction of thought. Kojève would seem to be right although for the wrong reason: the coming of the universal and homogeneous state will be the end of philosophy on earth.[50]

We note that Strauss' attack on the vision of the universal and homogeneous state is peculiarly Nietzschean. We remember that Nietzsche accepts historicism but deems it

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[50] Ibid., p.226.

unsalutary to "life," preferring "noble delusion." This is to say again that Strauss does not attack or attempt to refute Kojève's Hegelian metaphysics; rather, like Nietzsche he demonstrates the political unsalutariness of Kojève's position, but unlike Nietzsche[51] he clearly and emphatically rejects the metaphysical basis of that position. But alas he does not attempt to refute it or even contend with it in a direct frontal metaphysical attack. His argument appears to be: since classical political thought is clearly so much more salutary than the modern, this warrants the attempt to understand the classics non-modernly -- not taking for granted modern presuppositions but striving to understand them as they understood themselves. The dilemma here is that it is the modern conviction that this is impossible, that it is impossible to suspend, bracket, or set aside the presuppositions of modernity. Hegelianism not only asserts this, but also claims that Christianity is the major turning away from Greeks and therefore the classics have little to say to us, since they did not and could not envisage modern secularized Christianity. This brings us back to Strauss' question: ". . . is the attempt to restore classical social science not utopian since it implies that the classical orientation has not been made obsolete by the triumph of the biblical orientation?"[52] Strauss replies in effect: Kojeve (Hegelianism)

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[51] Strauss notes: "Nietzsche accepted what we may consider the fundamental premise of the historical school." (See NR, p.26, n.9.)

[52] OT, p.190.

has not demonstrated the role of "the triumph of the biblical orientation" in modernity and has not demonstrated the obsolescence of the classical orientation; indeed, modernity is best understood in terms of that orientation, as a rejection of it; which means it is most relevant. (Strauss does not tell us, as we noted, precisely, or even roughly, what he means by "biblical orientation" or how he views its impact; whatever it may be, he is clearly convinced it does not render obsolete the classical orientation.) Kojève and Strauss do agree that Hegel's is an (attempted) "synthesis of Socratic and Machiavellian or Hobbian politics."[53] Strauss maintains such a synthesis is impossible: Hobbes and Socrates are incompatible. But precisely for this reason Hobbes is well understood in terms of the Socratic tradition as rejecting it. (E.G: $A \cdot \sim A$ cannot be synthesized and $\sim A$ is understood in terms of A.) Kojève on the other hand maintains Hobbes' teaching is secularized Christianity and therefore it can be synthesized with the Socratic tradition and the product (Hegel's teaching) is superior to the component parts. (E.G: A and B, where B is neither A or $\sim A$, may be synthesized into C and according to Hegelian logic, $C > A \cdot B$.) Strauss writes:

> Hegel continued, and in a certain respect radicalized, the modern tradition that emancipated the passions and hence 'competition.' That tradition was originated by

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[53] Ibid., p.205.

> Machiavelli and perfected by such men as Hobbes and Adam Smith. It came into being through a conscious break with the strict moral demands made by both the Bible and classical philosophy; those demands were explicitly rejected as too strict. Hegel's moral or political teaching is indeed a synthesis: it is a synthesis of Socratic and Machiavellian or Hobbian politics. Kojève knows as well as anyone living that Hegel's fundamental teaching regarding master and slave is based on Hobbes' doctrine of the state of nature. If Hobbes' doctrine of the state of nature is abandoned en pleine connaissance de cause (as indeed it should be abandoned), Hegel's fundamental teaching will lose the evidence which it apparently still possesses for Kojève. Hegel's teaching is much more sophisticated than Hobbes', but it is as much a construction as the latter. Both doctrines construct human society by starting from the untrue assumption that man as man is thinkable as a being that lacks awareness of sacred restraints or as a being that is guided by nothing but a desire for recognition.[54]

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[54] Ibid.,p.205. But recall the qualification that, for Hobbes, in foro interno the moral imperative obtains unconditionally. This is not a mere technicality but a crucial distinction. Strauss writes: "Thanks to the moral basis of his political philosophy and thanks to it alone, Hobbes kept the possibility of acknowledging justice as such and distinguishing between might and right." (PPH, p.28). Strauss emphatically insists on the distinction between Hobbes' natural right teaching and Spinoza's -- on Hobbes' opposition to Spinoza's naturalistic equivalence of might and right. (See Strauss' discussion in his SCR, p.229.) There appears to be a parallel distinction between Hobbes' position and the philosophy of history which views might in the process of making right by force, such that at the end of history might is right. Camus is passionately emphatic on this point. Discussing Hegel, he writes: "Values are thus only to be found at the end of history. Until then there is no suitable criterion on which to base a judgment of value. One must act and live in terms of the future. All morality becomes provisional. . . . One of Hegel's commentators, Alexandre Kojève, of left-wing tendencies it is true, but orthodox in his opinion on this particular point, notes Hegel's hostility to the moralists and remarks that his only axiom is

Granting that Socrates and Hobbes are incompatible, we may still ask whether Hobbes was not influenced by the Biblical orientation. (E.G: What is the relation of ~A and B?)

Grant comments:

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to live according to the manners and customs of one's nation. A maxim of social conformity of which Hegel, in fact, gave the most cynical proofs Kojève adds, however, that this conformity is legitimate only to the extent that the customs of the nation correspond to the spirit of the times -- in other words, to the extent that they are solidly established and can resist revolutionary criticism and attacks. But who will determine their solidity and who will judge their validity?. . . . should those who were faithful to the Weimar Republic have abandoned it and pledged themselves to Hitler in 1933 because the former collapsed when attacked by the latter?. . . . The political movements or ideologies, inspired by Hegel are all united in the ostensible abandonment of virtue. . . . Without reason, there is nothing but naked force, the master and slave waiting for reason one day to prevail. . . . The only escape is to create order with the use of weapons. 'Kill or enslave!'. . . . The accents of a strange new prophecy ring out: 'Individuality has replaced faith, reason the Bible, politics religion and the Church, the earth heaven, work prayer, poverty hell, and man Christ.' Thus there is only one hell and it is on earth: and it is against this that the struggle must be waged. Politics is religion, and transcendent Christianity -- that of the hereafter -- establishes the masters of the earth by means of the slave's renunciation and creates one master more beneath the heavens. That is why atheism and the revolutionary spirit are only two aspects of the same movement of liberation.... Because to conquer God, to make Him a slave, amounts to abolishing the transcendence that kept the former masters in power and to preparing with the ascendancy of the new tyrants, the advent of the man-king. When poverty is abolished, when the contradictions of history are resolved, 'the real God, the human God, will be the state.' Them <u>homo homini lupus</u> becomes <u>homo homini deus</u>. This concept is atthe root of the contemporary world. . . . Cynicism, the deification of history and of matter, individual terror and State crime, these are the inordinate consequences that will now spring, armed to the teeth, from the equivocal conception of a world that entrusts to history alone the task of producing both values and truth. If nothing can be clearly understood before truth

> . . . the rejection of the Hegelian account of the relation between modern philosophy and Biblical religion still leaves one with the question of what that relation has been. This question cannot be avoided by a thinker such as Strauss, who is attempting to restore classical social science. The impossibility of that avoidance can be seen in one platitudinous generalisation: one difference between all European philosophy up to the

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has been brought to light, at the end of time, then every action is arbitrary, and force will finally rule supreme. 'If reality is inconceivable,' Hegel exclaims, 'then we must contrive inconceivable concepts.' A concept that cannot be conceived must, perforce, like error, be contrived. But to be accepted it cannot rely on the persuasion innate in order and truth, but must finally be imposed. Hegel's attitude consists of saying: 'This is truth, which appears to us, however, to be error, but which is true precisely because it happens to be error. As for proof, it is not I, but history, at its conclusion, that will furnish it.' Such pretensions can only entail two attitudes: either the suspension of all affirmation until the production of proof, or the affirmation of everything, in history, which seems dedicated to success -- force in particular. . . . Moreover, it is impossible to understand twentieth-century revolutionary thought if we overlook the fact that unfortunately it derived a large part of its inspiration from a philosophy of conformity and opportunism. . . . When cholera carries off the philosopher of the Battle of Jena at the height of his glory, everything is, in fact, in order for what is to follow. The sky is empty, the earth delivered into the hands of power without principles. Those who have chosen to kill and those who have chosen to enslave will successively occupy the front of the stage in the name of a form of rebellion which has been diverted from the path of truth." The Rebel, pp. 142-148. Camus, with inimitable rhetoric, thus underlines the Hegelian equivalence of might and right. Another reason for quoting at such length is to indicate Camus' apparent concurrence with Strauss' view.

twentieth century and classical philosophy is that the former was written by men who lived in a society permeated with Biblical religion. An historian has recently written, 'By the middle of the thirteenth century, a considerable group of active minds. . . were coming to think of the cosmos as a vast reservoir of the energies to be tapped and used according to human intentions.' If this statement is true, and if (as I have already quoted from Strauss) 'Modern man as little as pre-modern man can escape imitating nature as he understands nature,' then clearly the question arises as to the connection between the religion of western Europe and the dynamic civilisation which first arose there, the spread of which has been so rapid in our century. This is the civilisation which in the opinion of both Strauss and Kojève tends towards the universal and homogeneous state.[55]

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[55] Grant, op. cit., p.106.

CHAPTER IV

HOBBES AND BIBLICAL FAITH

We have seen that the most eminent representatives both of Science (Weber) and History (Hegel) view modernity as secularized Christianity.[1] Today this is become the "natural standpoint." Strauss, going against the grain of much of modern scholarship, questions this standpoint. He suggests it is the result of assimilating "Hobbian politics" to one's view of biblical faith. "Hobbian politics," he asserts, is "a conscious break with the strict moral demands made by both the Bible and classical philosophy."[2] His contention is that modernity is more incompatible with the Socratic tradition than is biblical faith. Therefore, one cannot adequately or accurately account for modernity in terms of secularized faith elements. An adequate accounting of modernity must focus on its rejection of both traditions and in particular on its rejection of the classical political tradition. In this chapter we will focus on this issue, turning to Strauss' book[3] on Hobbes to consider more fully

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[1] Nietzsche too concurs in this view.

[2] OT, p.205.

[3] The Political Philosophy of Hobbes. Strauss' basic contention is: "The foundation of Hobbes' political philosophy, that is the moral attitude to which it owes its existence and its unity, are objectively as well as biographically 'prior' to the mathematical scientific founding and presentation of that philosophy." (p.170) (The incorrect grammar is in the text.)

the relation of "Hobbian politics" to the "biblical orientation" and to Puritanism in particular. Strauss' reticence significantly handicaps such considerations. Strauss does not tell us what the "biblical orientation" is in his view. He does seem to suggest it is not basically (and at least formally) incompatible with classical political principles.[4] This means, in effect, that what may be alleged to indicate secularization of faith elements cannot readily be distinguished from evidence of rejection of both traditions. We will attempt to indicate why Strauss stresses Hobbes' conscious break with the biblical faith tradition rather than its secularization. It is realized that what may be adduced will hardly appear cogent to an Hegelian. Indeed, according

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[4] Strauss (as far as I know) nowhere explicitly asserts that they are compatible. He does indicate these (at least formal) concurrences between the biblical and classical orientation. My statement intends no more than the sum total of these: both stress moderation and restraint; both discourage the resolve to "overcome chance" (Strauss emphasizes the central faith doctrines of inscrutable Providence and Grace); both deny that man is "thinkable as a being that lacks awareness of sacred restraints" (OT, p.205); both assert the beginnings of man were good; both subscribe to a "theistic" notion of truth; both stress eternity and the Transcendent, the more than and higher than human good (i.e., love of one's own); he denies that classical morality contrasts as a master morality antithetical to Christian morality. Grant lists several questions about Christianity on which Strauss does not speak (Grant, op.cit., p.107). This indicates one cannot say that Strauss regards the two traditions as compatible (without qualification).

to Strauss' assertion that Hegel's view of Christianity is colored by "Hobbian politics", it would seem in principle impossible for the Hegelian not to regard Hobbes' teaching as secularized Christianity.

We will indicate the congruence of Puritanism and Hobbes' teaching. The question as to which was the primary influence on modernity is prodigiously difficult precisely because they came to be fused. One readily agrees (even Weber) that Calvin can hardly be regarded as a modern. On the other hand, one readily perceives (including Strauss) the formative influence of Puritanism, albeit in tandem with the new political teaching and new economics. We attempt to relate the affinities of Hobbes' thought and the new theology to the mutual rejection of Aristotelianism and somewhat to a new appropriation of Plato.

At the very outset of his book, Strauss stresses the importance of Hobbes' political teaching for modernity: ". . . the ideal of civilization in its modern form, the ideal . . . of the bourgeois capitalist development. . . was founded and expounded by Hobbes with a depth, clarity, and sincerity never rivalled before or since."[5] The central thesis of Strauss' book, put simply, is that the "essential basis" of Hobbes' teaching is "the moral and humanist antithesis of fundamentally unjust vanity and fundamentally just fear of violent death."[6]

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[5] PPH, p.1.

[6] Ibid., p.27.

Strauss accommodatingly puts these questions:

> . . . what is the antithesis between vanity and fear of violent death, if not the 'secularized form of the traditional antithesis between spiritual pride and fear of God (or humility), a secularized form which results from the Almighty God having been replaced by the over-mighty enemies and then by the over-mighty State, 'the Mortall God'?[7]

Does this indicate "that Hobbes had not yet completely freed himself from the influence of the Christian Biblical tradition"?[8] Strauss is here not primarily concerned to rebut the view of those who view Hobbes' thought as secularization. He replies that even granting the alleged affiliation of this antithesis is correct, it is not a residue of a rejected tradition or evidence of subconscious influences molding Hobbes' thought. This moral antithesis and the denial of hierarchy (discussed below) are basic essential planks of Hobbes' political thought; that is, Hobbes deliberately builds on these bases his political doctrine, not because they have Christian affinities, not because he is attempting a synthesis of Socratic and Christian traditions, but because in his view they are the central truths of political experience. (We note that Hobbes' self-understanding of his central political principles does not

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[7] Ibid., p.28.

[8] Ibid.

constitute cogent evidence to an Hegelian. Nor would the latter be likely to accept the suggestion that perhaps the affinity does not indicate relational significance.)

This antithesis that is alleged to be a secularization of faith elements is used by Hobbes as an important basis central to his rejection of the faith tradition.[9] By the use of it, he renders his "anti-theological ire" scientific and the more potent. His new science calls for the positivistic frontal attack on traditional biblical faith. He appears more ardently intent on the devastation of this tradition than he is in opposing the Socratic tradition. Hobbes apparently appreciates the root philosophic experience and its aspiration for wisdom. He depreciates the root faith experience; the faith experience he alleges is hallucinatory. Its root is the root of all evils -- vainglory. Strauss cites Tonnies who says of Hobbes: ". . . quite after the mode of Plato he thinks of the infinite delight which lies within the

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[9]This is analogous to Hobbes' use of the notion of the state of nature (assuming the alleged affiliation is correct here). Hobbes finds a notion in the tradition and then turns it against the tradition.

commerce which the soul may have with the high beauty of the cosmos."[10] By marked contrast Hobbes asserts that gloriatio is the basis of prophecy, of the claim to revelation. Plato is guilty of gloriatio because he wants to bask in the light of the "Sun"; he inclines to the glorification of theory instead of confining himself to the Cave, to "anthropology," "which compels exclusive focusing of attention on what impels and activates the majority of men."[11] But Plato's is a minor sin, and one Hobbes is very sympathetically disposed to, compared to the overweening gloriatio of prophets who claim to be inspired by "spirit," which "spirit" "is nothing other than their gloriatio."[12] Strauss says Hobbes rejects religion "as a creation of vanity, desire for status and reputation, overestimation of one's powers, the tendency to over-tender self-assessment."[13]

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[10] SCR, p.98. See also PPH, p.34. There Strauss writes: ". . . Hobbes, even after natural science had become his favorite subject of investigation, acknowledged the precedence of practice over theory and of political philosophy over natural science. He certainly knew and valued the joys of knowledge no less than any other philosopher; but these joys are for him not the justification of philosophy; he finds its justification only in benefit to man, ... It is not a matter of chance thatthe (traditional) praise of the contemplative life is to be found mainly in dedications and forwards."

[11] SCR, p.98.

[12] Ibid., p.97.

[13] Ibid., p.95.

Hobbes discerns the "natural seed of religion" in anxiety and dreams. It takes on "culture" within paganism. By "culture" Hobbes means its aim becomes a civilizing one, "the education of mankind to obedience, peace, love and ordered society."[14] It was "civilizing" literally in that it conduced to civil obedience, which is why in Rome all pagan religions were tolerated. Judaism was not tolerated because it reversed the "natural" relationship between politics and religion, thus fostering rebelliousness. Hobbes insists on restoring this "natural" relationship: "religion can never and must never contradict politics."[15] The distinction of the temporal and spiritual introduced by the Jews is based on belief in spirits. It is primitive natural religion rooted in anxiety and dreams. It is uncivilized because it is not civilizing but, on the contrary, a threat to civilization. It must be eradicated by enlightenment. Hobbes may be said to be opposing religion as unreason. Religion lacks method. Method is a great equalizer enabling all men to attain to reasonable conclusions. Prophecy is based on the assertion of special status, of inequality. Reason is modesty, revelation gloriatio.[16] The fundamental

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[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid., p.96.

[16] Ibid., p.97.

antithesis of vanity and fear or gloriatio-modestia, is the basis of Hobbes' objections to biblical faith on the grounds both of science and of political philosophy.[17]

Strauss asserts that the Hobbesian moral attitude at the center of his political teaching may be said to be "the deepest stratum of the modern mind."[18] Hannah Arendt, who differs from Strauss in her understanding of modernity, agrees with him in this. She writes:

> . . . modern rationalism as it is currently known, with the assumed antagonism of reason and passion as its stock-in-trade, has never found a clearer and more uncompromising representative [than Hobbes].[19]

What must be overcome in both society and science, are vain imaginings -- vanity. The antidote is painstaking, and the taking of pains is encouraged by pain. One takes an unpleasant antidote when he experiences pain and fear. The basic inspiration of the quest for true knowledge -- for rationality -- is the fear of death. Science is impeded by "false opinion of our own Knowledge", by unwarranted assent to phantasmata of sight and sound;[20] vanity militates against both justice

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17 Hobbes, though he pioneered "Higher Criticism" was not interested in establishing it as a "science." He anticipates the later "Higher Criticism" contention that the Hebrew scriptures are of post-exilic authorship. (See Strauss' discussion.) SCR, pp. 101-104)

18 Ibid., p.5.

19 Arendt, op.cit., p.273.

20 PPH, p.26.

and knowledge. Because of it,

> no man can conceive there is any greater degree of (Understanding), than that which he already attained unto. And from hence it comes to passe, that men have no other means to acknowledge their own Darknesse, but onely by reasoning from the unforeseen mischances, that befall them in their ways.[21]

Mischance, mortal danger, is fortunate for science. In the face of danger one is cautious; science must proceed cautiously: "from most low and humble principles, evident even to the meanest capacity; going on slowly, and with most scrupulous ratiocination."[22] Science can be acquired only one way, the hard way, by the "sweat of the brow." Science "suddenly" gained is suspect. Science is not revelation; it is not an account of the "shining forth" of nature. Science is "in" man; it is a record of his consciousness, of his indubitable inner experience. What is most "inner" and most "indubitable" is the experience of pain and of resistance because it is most involuntary, and what is involuntary cannot be due to vanity. The new political hedonistic thought and the new "inner" epistemology -- intent on "making certain" find inspiration in the experience of pain. Arendt quotes Hume:

> If you. . . inquire, why (somebody) desires health, he will readily reply, because sickness is painful. If you push your inquiries further and desire a reason why he hates pain, it is impossible he can ever give any. This is an ultimate end, and is never referred to by any other object.

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[21] Ibid., p.27.

[22] Ibid.

Arendt comments:

> The reason for this impossibility is that only pain is completely independent of any object, that only one who is in pain really senses nothing but himself; pleasure does not enjoy itself but something besides itself. Pain is the only inner sense found by introspection which can rival in independence from experienced objects the self-evident certainty of logical and arithmetical reasoning.[23]

Of the five senses the one most closely approximating the certainty of pain is the sense of touch. One knows the world best through experiencing the resistance it offers. Though the sense of touch is perhaps the least discriminating, the experience of the resistance produced is the most marked in innerlichkeit, the least voluntary, the least intentional (as phenomenologists would say). Hobbes accounts for all sense perception as a product of resistance; it follows that the sense of touch is exalted and deemed most reliable; indeed it is a measure of the reliability of the other senses and so scientific verification becomes primarily concerned with measuring resistance. The place of honour newly bestowed on the sense of touch[24] by the new science accords with the salient "revolutionary" features of the new science; the demand for applicability and tangibility, the new image of man as creator, maker, manipulator and conqueror; the emphasis

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[23] Arendt, op.cit., p.283.

[24] Strauss notes that among the Hobbes papers at Chatsworth there is one which "treats in express controversy with Aristotle, of the pre-eminence of the human sense of touch over that of animals." (PPH, p.166, n.3)

on labour as the ground and measure of value, the understanding of mathematics as construction and of consciousness as "reckoning" or calculating (think of sifting pebbles in one's hand) and not least with the identification of being with res extensa. Mistrust and doubt (along with experiencing resistance) are ennobled and become scientific virtues. The new school of thought is a "school of suspicion."(Nietzsche) Especially suspect are seeing and hearing, imagination and memory, precisely what was exalted by tradition, indeed the very root experiences of traditional faith are made suspect. Hobbes' moral theory, Strauss suggests, "corresponds better to Descartes' deepest intention than does the morality of Les Passions de l'âme."[25] (Descartes liked De Cive. Some even thought he was the author.)[26] Strauss' contention is based on this line of reasoning:

> Radical doubt, whose moral correlate is distrust and fear, comes earlier than the self-confidence of the ego grown conscious of its independence and freedom, whose moral correlate is générosité. Descartes begins the groundwork of philosophy with distrust of his own prejudices, with distrust above all of the potential deus deceptor, just as Hobbes begins interpreting the State and therewith all morality by starting from men's natural distrust. It is, however, not Descartes' morals, but Hobbes's, which explains the concrete meaning and the concrete implications of fundamental distrust. For Hobbes. . . sees the origin of virtue not in magnanimity, but in fear. . . . He considers fear of violent death as the only adequate self-consciousness.[27]

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[25] PPH, p.56.

[26] Ibid., n.3.

[27] Ibid., p.57.

Bolder is Strauss' suggestion that Hobbes' moral attitude is the more profound basis of modern philosophy, of the philosophy of self-consciousness. He cites Hegel for corroboration. Strauss writes:

> Hegel tacitly recognizes the superiority of Hobbes's philosophic basis to that of Descartes when he characterizes the experience from which self-consciousness originally arises as the life-and-death struggle which is born of interest in recognition from others. . . . . .
>
> From this struggle arises together with the master-servant relationship the original form of self-consciousness. The consciousness of the servant is essentially determined according to both Hegel and Hobbes by fear of death; and in principle to Hegel just as much as to Hobbes the consciousness of the [illegible] represents a higher stage than the consciousness of the master.[28]

Hegel's recognition of the profound influence of Hobbes paired with his assertion that modernity is secularized Christianity clearly indicates his conviction that Hobbes' teaching was informed by Christianity. Hegel sees Hobbes as the great modern teacher of slave morality or bourgeois morality which Hegel asserts characterizes Christian morality. Strauss' contention is that Hegel is reading Hobbes and modern thought, which is essentially a complete break with Christian tradition, back into that tradition. He does not

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[28] Ibid., Strauss quotes Hegel: ". . . bondage. . . is a self-consciousness. . .this self-consciousness was not in peril and fear for this element or that, nor for this or that moment of time, it was afraid for its entire being; it felt the fear of death, it was in mortal terror of its sovereign master. . ." (n.2.)

indicate whether he believes Christianity is accurately characterized as slave morality. He confines himself to the denial of the Hegelian assertion that Greek morality is an antithetical master morality. Does Strauss concur with Nietzsche that "Christianity is Platonism for 'the people'"?[29] He does not say.

Is not the Hobbesian emphasis on the fear of death and the general modern concern with preservation of the individual not a secularization of the faith tradition's teaching of the [illegible] of life"? Strauss notes that Aristotle [illegible] as a higher good than life, whereas Hobbes seems to have "forgotten" happiness in his digest of the Rhetoric, and places life first and foremost. Hannah Arendt (who is not reticent) insists this contrast between the modern and classical views results from the influence of Christianity. She writes:

> The reason why life asserted itself as the ultimate point of reference in the modern age and has remained the highest good of modern society is that the modern reversal operated within the fabric of a Christian society whose fundamental belief in the sacredness of life has survived, and has even remained completely unshaken by, secularization and the general decline of the Christian faith. In other words, the modern reversal followed and left unchallenged the most important reversal with which Christianity had broken into the ancient world, a

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[29] Beyond Good and Evil, Preface.

reversal that was politically even more far-reaching and, historically at any rate, more enduring than any specific dogmatic content or belief. For the Christian 'glad tidings' of the immortality of individual human life had reversed the ancient relationship between man and world and promoted the most mortal thing, human life, to the position of immortality, which up to then the cosmos had held. . . . . .

. . . . . .

It is precisely individual life which now came to occupy the position once held by the 'life' of the body politic, and Paul's statement that 'death is the wages of sin,' since life is meant to last forever, echoes Cicero's statement that death is the reward of sins committed by political communities which were built to last for eternity. It is as though the early Christians -- at least Paul, who after all was a Roman citizen -- consciously shaped their concept of immortality after the Roman model, substituting individual life for the political life of the body politic. Just as the body politic possesses only a potential immortality which can be forfeited by political transgressions, individual life had once forfeited its guaranteed immortality in Adam's fall and now, through Christ, had regained a new, potentially everlasting life which, could again be lost in a second death through individual sin. . . . . .

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The point is that Christianity -- except for heretical and gnostic speculations -- always insisted that life, though it had no longer a final end, still has a definite beginning. Life on earth may be only the first and the most miserable stage of eternal life; it still is life, and without this life that will be terminated in death, there cannot be eternal life. This may be the reason for the undisputable fact that only when the immortality of individual life became the central creed of Western mankind, that is, only with the rise of Christianity, did life on earth also become the highest good of man. . . . .

. . . . . .

the modern age continued to operate under the assumption that life, and not the world, is the highest good of man; in its boldest and most radical revisions and criticisms of traditional beliefs and concepts, it never even thought of challenging this fundamental reversal which Christianity had brought into the dying ancient world. No matter how

> articulate and how conscious the thinkers of modernity were in their attacks on tradition, the priority of life over everything else had acquired for them the status of a 'self-evident truth,' and as such it has survived even in our present world, which has begun already to leave the whole modern age behind and to substitute for a laboring society the society of jobholders. . . . . The only thing we can be sure of is that the coincidence of the reversal of doing and contemplating with the earlier reversal of life and world became the point of departure for the whole modern development. Only when the vita activa had lost its point of reference in the vita contemplativa could it become active life in the full sense of the word; and only because this active life remained bound to life as its only point of reference could life as such, the laboring metabolism of man with nature, become active and unfold its entire fertility.[30]

At first sight, her reading of history (based as it seems on her peculiar blend of Heidegger and Marx) is in the Hegelian tradition -- but in the last paragraph quoted she emphasizes that modernity emerges only with the loss of activity's point of reference in the vita contemplativa. The vita contemplativa implies the conviction of what Kojève calls the "theistic" notion of Being and truth. She seems to corroborate Strauss' view of modernity as essentially the rejection of this classical tradition. Arendt ascribes the "reversal of life and world" to Christianity but not the "reversal of doing and contemplating." The latter is the more essential of the two because the consummation of the

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[30] Arendt., op.cit., pp. 286-292.

"reversal of life and world" depends upon it. Medieval Christianity may have emphasized "life" more than "world" relative to the Greeks, but relative to moderns it did not cut loose from the world. Contemplation is grounded in the world and grounds the world. It is the modern rejection of it with its great emphasis on "doing" that results in world alienation. The "reversal of doing and contemplating" is the more essential characteristic of modernity. As she herself observes:

> One of the most persistent trends in modern philosophy since Descartes and perhaps its most original contribution to philosophy has been an exclusive concern with the self, as distinguished from the soul or person or man in general, an attempt to reduce all experiences, with the world aswell as with other human beings, to experiences between man and himself. . . . World alienation, and not self-alienation as Marx thought, has been the hallmark of the modern age.[31]

Arendt does not ascribe the "reversal of doing and contemplating" to Christianity because she finds no evidence of a positive labor philosophy in Christianity, and she does find the vita contemplativa deeply entrenched. She writes:

> . . . there are no indications of the modern glorification of laboring in the New Testament or in other premodern Christian writers. Paul, who has been called 'the apostle of labor,' was nothing of the sort, and the few passages on which this claim is based either are addressed to those who out of laziness 'ate other men's bread' or they recommend labor as a good means to keep out of trouble, that is, they reinforce the general

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[31] Ibid., pp. 230-231.

prescription of a strictly private life and warn of political activities. It is even more relevant that in later Christian philosophy, and particularly in Thomas Aquinas, labor had become a duty for those who had no other means to keep alive, the duty consisting in keeping one's self alive and not in laboring; if one could provide for himself through beggary, so much the better. Whoever reads the sources without modern prolabor prejudices will be surprised at how little the church fathers availed themselves even of the obvious opportunity to justify labor as punishment for original sin. Thus Thomas does not hesitate to follow Aristotle rather than the Bible in this question and to assert that 'only the necessity to keep alive compels to do manual labor.' Labor to him is nature's way of keeping the human species alive, and from this he concludes that it is by no means necessary that all men earn their bread by the sweat of their brows, but that this is rather a kind of last and desperate resort to solve the problem or fulfil the duty. Not even the use of labor as a means with which to ward off the dangers of otiosity is a new Christian discovery, but was already a commonplace of Roman morality. In complete agreement with ancient convictions about the character of the laboring activity, finally, is the frequent Christian use for the mortification of the flesh, where labor, especially in the monasteries, sometimes played the same role as other painful exercises and forms of self-torture.

The reason why Christianity, its insistence on the sacredness of life and on the duty to stay alive notwithstanding, never developed a positive labor philosophy lies in the unquestioned priority given to the vita contemplativa over all kinds of human activities. Vita contemplativa simpliciter melior est quam vita activa ('the life of contemplation is simply better than the life of action'). . . . This conviction, it is true, can hardly be found in the preachings of Jesus of Nazareth, and it is certainly due to the influence of Greek philosophy; yet even if medieval philosophy had kept closer to the spirit of the Gospels, it could hardly have found there any reason for a glorification of laboring.[32]

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[32] Ibid., pp. 289-290.

This would seem to question Kojève's position that the Christian view of the laboring activity is antithetical to the classical view. It certainly points up the sharp contrast between the exaltation of laboring in modern political philosophy and the traditional Christian view.

Even her ascription to Christianity of the modern conviction that life is the highest good she qualifies (in a "Straussian" direction) with these remarks:

> . . . it by no means follows that we still live in a Christian world. For what matters today is not the immortality of life, but that life is the highest good. And while this assumption certainly is Christian in origin, it constitutes no more than an important attending circumstance for the Christian faith. Moreover, even if we disregard the details of Christian dogma and consider only the general mood of Christianity, which resides in the importance of faith, it is obvious that nothing could be more detrimental to this spirit than the spirit of distrust and suspicion of the modern age. Surely, Cartesian doubt has proved its efficiency nowhere more disastrously and irretrievably than in the realm of religious belief. . . .[33]

The Congruence of the "Revolutions"

There is a striking congruence between the revolutions in theology (Protestantism, especially Calvinism) and philosophy (Hobbes). Strauss acknowledges this explicitly in the following note (but leaves the question of its significance "open"):

> 'Pride' in the traditional sense means rebellion against the gradation of beings; it presupposes, therefore, the existence and obligatory character of that gradation.

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[33] Ibid., p.291.

> Hobbes' conception of 'pride', on the other hand, presupposes the denial of natural gradation; this conception is, indeed, nothing other than a means of 'explaining', i.e. of denying that gradation; the allegedly natural gradation concerning the faculties of the mind proceeds from 'a vain conceipt of one's own wisdom, which almost all men think they have in a greater degree than the Vulgar!.. . The revolutionary character of this conception of pride -- it is this conception which underlies modern criticism of 'illusions' and 'ideologies' -- is obvious. How far the Puritans, who, in their criticism of ecclesiastical and secular hierarchy, also understood that hierarchy as proceeding from pride, anticipated this conception, must here remain an open question.[34]

This is an example of the congruence of positions in the new theology and new sciences which apparently were reached quite independently of each other. Is there any warrant for suggesting that the denial of natural hierarchy in the new sciences influenced the new theology's opposition to hierarchy or vice versa? We may ascribe the affinity of positions to the common rejection of Aristotelianism, and perhaps even suggest that the political implications of the new theology tends to militate against aristocratic morality(though we can hardly infer an inclination toward modern bourgeois capitalist or socialist developments). The combined impact of the "revolutions" and the impact of the combination of Puritanism with the new political doctrines in particular annihilated aristocratic morality. (Rousseau laments its loss; Hegel claims to include it in his "synthesis"; Nietzsche insists on the need for a new planetary aristocracy; and the Germans attempt to impose their version of it on the world.)

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[34] PPH, pp. 167-168, n.2.

A contemporary of Hobbes', Lord Clarendon, eloquently lays this accusation against Hobbes:

> Hobbes 'must not take it ill, that I observe his extreme malignity to the Nobility, by whose bread he hath bin alwaies sustain'd, who must not expect any part, at least any precedence in his Institution; that in this his deep meditation upon the ten Commandments, and in a conjuncture when the Levellers were at highest, and the reduction of all degrees to one and the same was resolv'd upon, and begun, and exercis'd towards the whole Nobility with all the instances of contemt and scorn, he chose to publish his judgments; as if the safety of the People requir'd an equality of Persons and that "the honor of great Persons is to be valued for their beneficence, and the aids they give to men of inferior rank, or not at all; and the consequence of partiality towards the great, raised hatred, and an endeavor in the people to pull down all oppressing and contumelious greatness"; language lent to, or borrowed from the Agitators of that time. "Good counsel", he saies, "comes not by lot or inheritance, and therefore there is no more reason to expect good advice from the rich, or the noble, in the matter of State, then in delineating the dimensions of a Fortress"; and is very solicitous, like a faithful Leveller, that no man may have priviledges of that kind by his birth or descent, or have farther honor then adhereth naturally to his abilities. . ."[35]

(Though Lord Clarendon suggests that Hobbes uses the language of "the Agitators" he does not indicate that he thinks Hobbes' political judgments derive from the Levellers. Rather he seems to express his dismay that Hobbes' political reflections should issue in a position which supports the Leveller cause.)

For both Hobbes and the new theology, Aristotle's distinction between prudence and wisdom loses all reference to the distinction between practice and theory. For Hobbes, wisdom

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[35] Ibid., p.121, quoted by Strauss in n.2.

is the knowledge "of what is right and wrong and what is good and hurtful to the being and well-being of mankind. . . . For generally, not he that hath skill in geometry, or any other science speculative, but only he that understandeth what conduceth to the good and government of the people, is called a wise man." [36] Strauss comments:

> The contrast with Aristotle has its ultimate reason in Hobbes's conception of the place of man in the universe, which is diametrically opposed to Aristotle's conception. Aristotle justified his placing of the theoretical sciences above moral and political philosophy by the argument that man is not the highest being of the universe. This ultimate assumption of the primacy of theory is rejected by Hobbes; in his contention man is 'the most excellent work of nature'.[37]

The new theology concurs with Aristotle that man is not the highest being, but in marked contrast to Aristotle, asserts that the highest Being is radically wholly other. Theoria is not the routeto God; natural theology is virtually a contradiction in terms. This issues in a position paralleling Hobbes': the new theology emphasizes knowledge of right and wrong, the practical wisdom of piety, of ordering one's life methodically and systematically in obedience to God. (What perhaps may be said to have replaced theoria was biblical exegesis.)[38]

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[36] Ibid., pp. 34-35.

[37] Ibid., p.35.

[38] According to Calvin, man "needs the Word of God, as the witness borne by God about Himself." But of course man is enlightened by Holy Writ, only if the "same Spirit that spoke through the prophet vouches by being effective in us, for the truth of Scripture." (SCR, p.193)

Strauss writes of Calvin:

> He waives investigation of quid sit Deus. He does this not because knowledge of the essentia Dei far transcends the capacity of the human understanding, as Maimonides and Thomas Aquinas, but because such 'chill speculations' are not salutary for man. There are matters more important. There is but one thing needful. Knowledge of God is not the knowledge by which we comprehend that there is a God, but the knowledge which serves to honor God. Where there is no piety there is no knowledge of God. That a knowledge of God which is content with mere insights, which does not consist of life being radically determined by God avails nothing. . . . pietas in Calvin's sense, indeed Calvin's theology itself, dispenses with all theoretical basis, and deliberately so. Calvin is not minded to say anything about God that does not serve the purpose of man's learning to depend utterly on God, to fear God, to trust and obey God. . . . What is decisive with respect to what is to be thought and said and taught about God is the function of those thoughts, words, doctrines for piety, their utilitas. . . . As is man's whole life, so theory also is subjected from the outset to God's judgment and to that question [Does it obey God?] Theory, allegedly stripped of presuppositions and prejudices, theory which seeks first of all to examine cautiously and suspiciously, is thus viewed as an actual fact full of presuppositions: in the place of the fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom, itputs disobedience. . . . It is headstrong curiosity, disobedience, ingratitude, defiance, blindness, in any case sin, if man disregards revelation, if man presumptuously takes it upon himself to judge the witness borne by God to Himself.[39]

(Does Calvin appear to be the inspiration for the "spirit of capitalism"? As compared to Hobbes and Locke?)

Here is another example of the congruence of the new sciences and the new theology. They zealously promulgate

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[39] Ibid., pp. 194-195.

honesty as a cardinal virtue.[40] Arendt observes: "It seems as though prior to puritan morality nobody ever considered lies to be serious offenses."[41] Arendt explains this new emphasis on truthfulness as follows:

> What was lost in the modern age, of course, was not the capacity for truth or reality or faith nor the concomitant inevitable acceptance of the testimony of the senses and of reason, but the certainty that formerly went with it. In religion it was not belief in salvation or a hereafter that was immediately lost, but the certitudo salutis. . . . Just as the immediate consequence of this loss of certainty was a new zeal for making good in this life as though it were only an overlong period of probation, so the loss of certainty of truth ended in a new, entirely unprecedented zeal for truthfulness -- as though man could afford to be a liar only so long as he was certain of the unchallengeable existence of truth and objective reality, which surely would survive and defeat all his lies.[42]

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[40] Strauss relates the stress on honesty to the modern disparagement of shame. He writes (with Hobbes in mind): "The disparagement of shame, the replacement of shame by fear is the necessary consequence of preferring the shameless 'honest' admission of fear, which renounces all claim to honour, to 'vain' hiding of fear, which is solicitous of honour." PPH, p.133.

[41] Arendt, op.cit., p.369, n.35.

[42] Ibid., p.252. Arendt credits the new scientists in particular for successfully establishing this new virtue. She writes: "The radical change in moral standards occurring in the first century of the modern age was inspired by the needs and ideals of its most important group of men, the new scientists; and the modern cardinal virtues -- success, industry, and truthfulness -- are at the same time the greatest virtues of modern science." Ibid., p.253.

We would also indicate the new very sober "mood" of both the new political philosophy and new theology. For Aristotle, what is typical of the pleasant, Strauss tells us,

> is the ease which constitutes or accompanies the achievement of or return to a natural and, therefore, customary state. . . ; thus everything which one can do without compulsion and exertion, with ease and convenience, counts as pleasant. . . freedom for care, idleness, sleep, play, jesting, laughter.[43]

Strauss notes: "Such things are not even mentioned in Hobbes' list."[44] (Laughter is associated with vanity.) Strauss explains the contrast:

> According to Hobbes, the pleasant is not so much what is naturally pleasant, as the 'pleasant' movement from one pleasant thing to another pleasant thing, to a pleasanter thing, the consciousness which accompanies this movement, . . . self-consciousness. Self-consciousness is, however, constituted only by a comparison of the individual with other individuals; man does not merely strive after ever-farther goals, but after goals more remote than other man has yet attained to. If the pleasant. . . exists only. . . in matching oneself against others, it is not surprising that. . . Hobbes, differing from Aristotle, mentions neither friends nor the doing or receiving good, but immediately after progress itself, as it were interpreting progress, malum videre alienum.[45]

In the quest for certitudo salutis, the sign of it would be sought in the measure of one's worldly success or standing over against one's fellows. Tawney and Strauss claim this would be

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[43] PPH, p.134.

[44] Such as that in The Elements of Law, Part 1, Chapter 7.

[45] PPH, p.135.

true only of Puritanism which had made its peace with "the world," which had already accommodated itself to the new social understanding and new economics.[46]

Unlike the classics[47] which understood pleasure as unalloyed with pain, the modern view taught by Hobbes is that pain is an essential ingredient of pleasure, and dissatisfaction, of enjoyment. Nietzsche quotes Kant: "I subscribe entirely to these sentences of Count Verri: 'The only moving principle of man is pain. Pain precedes every pleasure. Pleasure is not a positive state.'"[48] Whereas the classics identify pleasure with gentle movement, according to Hobbes the "more vehement" the better.[49] Compare this statement of Nietzsche's:

> It is not the satisfaction of the will that causes pleasure. . . but rather the will's forward thrust and again and again becoming master over that which stands in its way. The feeling of pleasure lies precisely in the dissatisfaction of the will, in the fact that the will is never satisfied unless it has opponents and resistance.[50]

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[46] Refer again to NR, pp. 60-61, n.22.

[47] Strauss asserts: ". . . Aristotle and Plato and Epicurus. . . say that the greatest pleasure is pleasure free from any alloy of pain, the purest pleasure." PPH, p.134.

[48] F.Nietzsche, The Will to Power, Section 698 (translated from the Italian).

[49] PPH, p.134.

[50] F.Nietzsche, op.cit., Section 697.

(The theological inspiration for "If it hurts, it is good for your soul" is uncertain, but it is commonly or, perhaps one should say, vulgarly, ascribed to Calvinism.)

Aristotle, the "pagan" said: "Men that prosper have this ill; to be more proud and inconsiderate than others. And this good, that they worship God, trusting in him, for that they find themselves to receive more good than proceeds from their industry."[51] Hobbes emphasizes only the first part -- the "ill" consequences of pride and presumption: "much prosperity. . . maketh men in love with themselves."[52] Strauss comments:

> That good fortune calls forth gratitude, he (Hobbes) either does not or will not recognize. Only ill fortune, especially unforeseen ill fortune, teaches men. For man must be brought to recognize his position by the violent resistance of the real world, and against his natural inclination, which is to deceive himself as to the horror of his natural situation by weaving a cocoon of vain dreams about himself. For the man who has once come into contact with this world, joy and laughter are over. Man must be serious and that exclusively. It is the fearfulness of death rather than the sweetness of life which makes man cling to existence. Since man is at the mercy of a fate utterly unconcerned as to his weal or woe, a fate which one may call God's irresistible power, because man experiences only force, and not kindness from the overwhelming power of the universe, he has no choice but to help himself. He has to live, not in gratitude, but in the serious and oppressive conscicusness of his freedom, of himself

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[51] PPH, p.124.

[52] Ibid.

> as a free being, of his capacity to free himself. Constantly aware of the desperate seriousness of his situation, it will not occur to him to be proud of his freedom, and, therefore, he will, above all, be on his guard against taking that freedom as the object of his speculations, against contemplating himself in his freedom and taking pleasure in it. It is better and more becoming to the situation of man to deny that freedom theoretically by mechanistic physical science, and to assert it practically by the conquest of nature, and particularly of human nature, with the help of that science. Not grateful contemplation of nature, and still less vain contemplation of man, is fitting to man's situation, but the utilization and cultivation of nature. For man can assert himself only by increasing and improving nature's deceptive and niggardly gifts by his labour and exertions; and the more he makes himself independent of nature by his labour, the further he draws away from nature, and makes the gifts of nature disappear behind his own free activity, the more highly is his labour to be valued; trade and industry are more to be prized than agriculture and fishing. . . . Thus he is on the side of those who are prepared to owe their good fortune exclusively to their own achievement and their own serious labour.[53]

This indicates why Strauss claims the ascetic "spirit of capitalism" is enunciated in modern political thought; and this is why he charges Weber with being insufficiently heedful to the "revolution on the plane of rational thought."

The convergence of Hobbes' political thought and Puritanism derives not only from a mutual opposition and even antipathy to Aristotelianism, but from a return to or a new appropriation of Plato. (For Protestant theology, Augustine, more than any other thinker, is preeminent.) Hobbes and the new theology find Aristotle sensually self-indulgent. It is

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[53] Ibid., pp. 124-126.

not from Aristotle that one gets the impression that this earthly life is a prison or a disease. The new political thought and the new theology finds the Platonic portrayal not only more true-to-life, but emphatically more edifying. Plato is seen as the great critic of sensuality and therefore is found appealing. Strauss draws this parallel between Plato and Hobbes. According to Strauss, Plato questions the virtue of courage and so demotes it. This is significant not only for the parallel to Hobbes, who in his opposition to aristocratic morality attacks courage in particular, but also to Strauss' contention that Plato's is not a master morality. He writes:

> One gains the clearest conception of the antithesis between true and pseudo-virtue, if one compares the life and fate of a truly just man, who has no appearance of justice, whose justice is hidden, with the life and fate of a truly unjust man, who enjoys a reputation for justice and whose injustice is hidden. It is not a mere matter of chance that Plato thus compares the just and the unjust, and not the courageous man and his opposite. Courage, the virtue of the warrior, is inseparable from military glory. No virtue seems more brilliant, more worthy even of reverence than courage; for courage is the standard ideal of the Lacedaemonian and Cretan laws. And yet it is the lowest virtue. Its problematic nature shows itself in full clearness only when one considers it not in its archaic form, in which its sense is, as it were, narrowed and limited by obedience to law, and in which, for that very reason, it is hidden wisdom, but when one considers it apart from this limitation, in itself. This consideration of courage in isolation is all the more fitting, since courage seems more sharply delimited from other virtues than are the other virtues one from another. Courage, as it is usually understood,

> is the virtue of the man, his capacity, without fear or effeminacy, to help himself, to protect himself from injustice or injury, to assert and save himself. According to this ideal, the perfect man is the tyrant, who disposes of the greatest possible power to do what he will. The tyrant as an ideal is the perfect expression, the most seductive and therefore the most revealing form of the popular ideal of courage, and thus challenges to searching criticism of that ideal. In limitless self-love, in frenzied arrogance, the tyrant seeks to rule not merely over men but even over gods. From this a light falls on the more 'innocent' ideal of courage. This ideal is nothing more noble, and nothing else, than a disguise of man's natural self-love, of man's natural hedonism. If the unequivocal coordination of virtue with manliness is thus called into question, the equality of the sexes in the ideal State becomes inevitable in principle. It is not courage which is the highest virtue -- self-mastery stands higher, and higher still than self-mastery stand wisdom and justice. In itself wisdom stands supreme, but justice stands supreme from an exoteric point of view.[54]

Hobbes demolishes courage as a virtue, whereas Plato demotes it to the bottom of the list of virtues. As we noted above, Hobbes goes so far as to undercut the moral ground for national defense. The parallel antithesis in Hobbes' teaching is described by Strauss as follows:

> In his [Hobbes'] moral philosophy also, the antithesis between pseudo-virtue, which aims at reputation and honour, and the true virtue is a constituent part. He also teaches that true virtue on the one hand, and pseudo-virtue and vice on the other, differ only in their reason. . . . He also recognizes only political virtues. For him also the antithesis between the fitting and the great is of supreme importance, and as a result he also distrusts rhetoric, in a way which recalls Plato.[55]

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[54] Ibid., pp. 146-147. The last sentence suggests another reason for Hobbes preferring Plato over Aristotle. Aristotle champions supra-political virtue, whereas for Plato the philosopher must concern himself with the political well-being of others. According to Hobbes, this is the main function of the philosopher. See pp. 147-148.

[55] Ibid., p.148.

Strauss also discerns this affinity of views:

> History. . . finally has for Hobbes the same significance as sophistry had for Plato. According to Plato's view also, there was a connexion between sophistry and what modern usage would call 'historical interest'.[56]

This "connexion" is that sophistry and history are primarily concerned with the great rather than the true and the fitting, the prime concern of philosophy. This accounts too for the similarity in literary taste. Socrates prefers Euripides. Nietzsche tells us, this is because Euripides reduced the stature of the hero from demigod to the "bourgeois mediocrity" of the common man and always concluded with the deux-ex-machina triumph of justice. Though incomparably inferior to Aeschylus and Sophocles, Euripides was preferred because he was less concerned with greatness and evinced a rational concern for the fitting, for the triumph of justice.[57] The combined impact of the new political thought and new theology also results in the common man as hero and the duly celebrated triumph of justice. This is especially true in the popular new art form of the novel.

Of course, the difference between Plato and Hobbes overshadows all affinity. Strauss states this key difference:

> Hobbes' political philosophy is. . . different from Plato's, that in the latter exactness means the undistorted reliability of the standards, while in the former, exactness means unconditional applicability, applicability under all circumstances, applicability in the extreme case.[58]

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[56] Ibid., p.149, n.5.

[57] See section XI of Nietzsche's The Birth of Tragedy.

[58] PPH, p.151. See Strauss' discussion of other

Hobbes' orientation is negative: he does not reflect on Platonic questions, like "What is the good and the fitting?" One of the salient features of Reformation theology is a similar negative orientation. One knows what sin is, what not to do, what to avoid in order not to be damned, but there is nothing one can do to assure salvation since works do not save. In both the new theology and in the new political philosophy, the aim is to mitigate man's corrupt nature or the natural inclination to corruption.

The parallel also extends to a similar "dilemma" in both the new theology and new philosophy. Both are exhortative; both assert emphatically that what one does matters; both insist that intentions matter. Yet the theology is predestinarian, and Hobbes' metaphysics deterministic. Hobbes, opposed to the "substantialist" conception of mind and emphatic in his denial of natural hierarchy, develops a monistic materialist-deterministic metaphysic.[59] It is presupposed by his political teaching in its denials of teleology, hierarchy and soul, but in what it asserts, it destroys the central and basic antithesis of his moral teaching and political philosophy.[60]

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[59] PPH, p.168.

[60] Ibid.

Basil Willey observes:

> It had perhaps been 'held', but it had hardly before been so deeply felt, that 'Nature could move only along one road to a pre-destined end', and that 'in brief, the act of creation had created not only the universe but its whole future history. . . . The final establishment of this law as the primary guiding principle in Nature was the triumph of the seventeenth century. . . .' It is not surprising, if this was so, that the seventeenth century should have witnessed an attempt to subdue the stubborn human will to the same great law. There was also a clear analogy between this scientific determinism and the current predestinarian theology; God's 'fore-knowledge absolute' included, and his 'immutable decrees' controlled, both the course of each atom and the destiny of each soul. . . .Hobbes' Leviathan is an admirable illustration of this point; for in that work the determinist philosopher uses all his powers to urge that man can and must so affect the course of events. That he can do so is shown in the Social Contract, which converted the life of man at one blow from a welter of mutual rapine into an ordered commonwealth. That he must at all costs continue to do so, by supporting in every way the authority of the Leviathan, is the purport of the whole argument, and is illustrated by many a despairing reference to the contemporary chaos. But the Contract, the authority of the Leviathan and the Civil War are all alike products of determinism? True, but the point is that Hobbes writes throughout as if these issues were for men to decide. In strict determinism there should, I suppose, be no passion for values which may be lost or preserved by taking thought, for nothing is contingent upon human volitions. But Hobbes' book, as we have seen, is nothing if not suasive; he cares supremely for strong government, and blames his opponents quite as lavishly as if they were completely answerable for their own actions. Hobbes sees the need for determinism as a scientific hypothesis, and also finds it most useful as a solvent for views he dislikes, but where his own interests are deeply engaged he leaves it out of account. It is noteworthy that throughout the Leviathan, although it is of course implicit, he hardly makes more than one direct reference to it.[61]

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[61] B.Willey, The Seventeenth Century Background, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1953) pp. 114-115.

Finally, we register this biographical connection between Hobbes, and Locke, and Puritanism. (It is left to last because its significance is dubious.) Hobbes was educated "in the Puritan spirit" at Puritan Magdalen Hall.[62] Barker tells us Locke "had been bred in Puritanism" and during his sojourn in Holland his "circle" was composed mainly of Dutch Calvinists and Huguenots.[63]

We have attempted by focusing on Hobbes and biblical faith to illustrate the difficulty of drawing decisive conclusions. on the issue of contention between Hegelianism and Strauss as to whether modernity is to be understood as secularized Christianity or as essentially a rejection of the biblical faith tradition and a most radical modification of classical political philosophy.

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[62] PPH, p.31.

[63] Barker, op.cit., p.xviii.Barker writes: ". . . he [Locke] had in him the great Puritan sense of the supreme importance of the individual soul; the Puritan feeling for the soul's right to determine its own relations to God, and to enjoy, at the least, toleration from the State and from all authority in so doing; the Puritan instinct for setting bounds to the State -- 'thus far, and no farther'; the Puritan echo of the plea of Antigone when she cites the higher law, which is the law of Nature and God, against the edicts of Creon. True, these nobler elements were mixed in Locke, as they were mixed in the nonconformity of the English middle class, with ignobler things. The sacred right of property was somehow included among the sanctities; and an individualism based on religion was made to trail clouds of ingloriousness. That is the penalty of making the solitary individual the pivot of all your thought."

We have indicated the congruence of the "revolutions" and adduced affinities in the respective doctrines of the new theology and the new political thought. We have pointed to the impact their combination made on modernity. We have attempted to indicate why Strauss questions the Weber thesis which asserts that the new theology is the primary inspiration of modernity. Here is a good statement of that thesis (though perhaps somewhat modified) by Troeltsch:

> Calvinism, with its abolition of the absolute goodness and rationality of the Divine activity into mere separate will-acts, connected by no inner necessity and no metaphysical unity of substance, essentially tends to the emphasizing of the individual and empirical, the renunciation of the conceptions of absolute causality and unity, the practically free and utilitarian individual judgement of all things. The influence of this spirit is quite unmistakably the most important cause of the empirical and positivist tendencies of the Anglo-Saxon spirit, which today find themselves in it as compatible with strong religious feelings, ethical discipline and keen intellectuality as they formerly did in Calvinism itself.[64]

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[64] Quoted by Grant, op.cit., p.21. Compare this diametrically opposed view of A.C.McGiffert, a historian of Christian theology (and a distinguished student of A. Harnack's): "The Protestant Reformation was medieval, not modern, in its spirit and interest. . . . Bondage to an external law of faith and practice was for a long time as complete in Protestantism as in Catholicism, and the one was as conservative in the field of religious thought as the other. The immediate effect of the modern spirit, when it began to make its influence felt in Christianity, was as destructive of the new Protestantism as

We have indicated again in this chapter as well as in many other places throughout the paper (notably Chapter II) why Strauss challenges the assertion that Calvinism "tends" toward that spirit which is "quite unmistakably the most important cause of the empirical and positivist tendencies of the Anglo-Saxon spirit." We may note that Strauss' charge that the Weberian underestimates the new social understanding fostered by the new political philosophy may not appear very cogent to one who understands modernity as essentially secularized Christianity.[65] The issues remain and will no doubt long be debated.

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of the old Catholicism. . . . Against modern views of every kind, Protestantism set itself as uncompromisingly as Catholicism. That rationalism ultimately made its home in Protestantism rather than in the older communion, was not because the former was in principle more tolerant of divergent views, but because the divisions within the Protestant rank made greater tolerance a necessity. The break with the old ecclesiastical institution and the rise of new churches independent of it and of each other facilitated the gradual growth of a freedom in religious thought which could not have come had all Christendom remained under a single ecclesiastical control; but the break itself, and not any particular principles leading to it, made the new liberty possible. (My underlining) A.C.McGiffert, Protestant Thought Before Kant, (New York: Harper Torch Books, 1962), pp. 186-187.

[65] One wonders: Were the Weberian to carefully study the writings of Hobbes and Locke, would he not be likely to assert that he discerns therein much evidence of secularized Calvinism?

At the oral defense of this Thesis, Professor G.P.Grant suggested that the identification of Troeltsch as a Weberian is misleading in that Strauss appears to esteem Troeltsch as distinguished from Weberians.

Basil Willey sums up the issue of "Hobbes and Biblical Faith" with proverbial English common sense. He says forthrightly: "It can hardly fail to strike a modern reader that there is a radical incompatibility between the principles of Hobbes's philosophy and those of any sort of Christianity, if not of any sort of religion."[66] But he is evidently wrong: it does fail to strike many modern readers that way.

Can it be said that Hobbes' egalitarianism derives from the biblical faith tradition? Hardly, in Hobbes' own view (which we noted at the outset is not taken as decisive). The suggestion that egalitarianism derives from prophetic utterances is paradoxical, for Hobbes, on the contrary, says that the claim to revelation and prophecy is an assertion of superiority (gloriatio); religion breeds inequality. Implicitly opposing Hegel's view he suggests Jews and Christians assert a "master morality"; (vainly) convinced of their superiority they bred political rebelliousness. The "mastership" asserted by adherents of biblical faith was more reprehensible than the master morality of the pagans which reflected (in a cultured way) the social structure and political hierarchy of the established order. He also implicitly challenges Hegel's assertion that Christianity was the major milestone in the political progress of world history; Hobbes sees it as having had an uncivilizing effect.

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[66] Willey, op.cit., p. 115.

Is Hobbes' emphasis on shunning death and the modern concern with the preservation of the individual rooted in Christianity? We quoted Arendt's view which asserts that itis. This does not seem in harmony with Hobbes' own view. He appears to regard Christianity, and especially traditional Christianity, as excessively other-worldly, as mitigating the proper concern with shunning death and as diverting man's attention away from it to fancied entities and realms. Hobbes' is perhaps the more pious view: he sees traditional Christianity as the religion of martyrs.

As we have been emphasizing, none too subtly, throughout the paper, by the repetitive use of the awkward phrase "avoidance of crosses," it is at least paradoxical that the avoidance of crosses should be said to be inspired by the religion of the Cross.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION: COMMENTS, CRITICISMS AND CONTEMPORARY CONCERNS

Classical political philosophy deliberately rejected technologizing science, opposed the conquest of nature and overcoming of chance, and frowned on universal enlightenment because in its view such projects were unnatural and dehumanizing. What is central is not the fact that Greek science, while precocious in "pure heavenly science," was conspicuously arrested in the development of technology; the moot question is why. We have seen that Strauss denies any progressivist view which might suggest that Greek science was so arrested because it was the infancy stage of later technological science -- the view "that earlier thinkers could not possibly have thought of fundamental possibilities which came to the center of attention in later ages."[1] Marxists agree with Strauss that the Greeks turned their backs on technology, and Strauss agrees with Marxists that oligarchs certainly had selfish political economic interests in preserving slavery and in opposing technology. But Strauss, as we

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[1] NR, p.23.

have seen, denies this reveals the why of the classic philosophic attitude toward technology.[2]

S. Sambursky, an historian of classical science, in large measure, corroborates Strauss' position. He writes:

> . . . the Ancient Greeks throughout a period of eight hundred years made no attempt at systematic experimentation. . . . It [Greek science] does not aim at the conquest and control of nature, but is motivated by purely intellectual curiosity. For this reason technology finds no place in it. . . .[3]

He differentiates modern from classical science along Strauss' line of demarcation. In the middle ages he finds no novelty excepting "isolated sparks scattered through the darkness of centuries." The "real revolution" he attributes to the Renaissance "awakening of man's desire for conquest, the

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[2] Grant discusses the respective views of Marxists and Strauss. Of Strauss' position he writes: "Strauss' position asserts an eternal and unchangeable order in which history takes its place and which is in no manner affected by the events of history. The realm of freedom is no more than a dependency of the realm of necessity. For Strauss the attempt to dominate the realm of necessity, far from being the condition of universal human satisfaction, implies the impossibility of true human excellence. He argues as follows: philosophy is the excellence of the soul. There cannot be philosophy in this sense unless there is an eternal and unchangeable order. But the belief that one can dominate the realm of necessity is to deny any eternal order which transcends history and in which history takes its place. Therefore the desire to dominate necessity leads to the denial of the possibility of human excellence. Grant, op.cit., p.98.

[3] S. Sambursky, The Physical World of the Greeks, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), pp. 2-3.

conquest and control of nature through science;" "striving for power through knowledge" "turned science into the handmaid of technical progress."[4] He shows again and again that the Greeks had the know-how for technology, but did not apply it. For example, "Even though all the necessary preconditions existed, steam-power was never exploited on a technical scale nor were the elements put to any economic use such as construction of windmills. . . ." Whatever "machines" were developed were regarded as "toys," "rather than means of harnessing the forces of nature for technical exploitation." As he says: "The ancient Greek believed fundamentally that the world should be understood, but that there was no need to change it."[5]

He opposes the Marxist view with the example of Egypt where great technological progress went hand-in-hand with slavery. He claims the Egyptian overshadowed not only the Greeks but even late Roman civilization in building technology, and indeed engineers today still gaze agape at Egyptian technology. He argues slavery encourages technology: "how best to use great masses of men in large technical undertakings raised further technical and organizational problems. ..."[6]

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[4] Ibid., pp. 230-231.

[5] Ibid., p.230.

[6] Ibid., p.226.

Like Strauss, he believes the Greek attitude is due to their conviction that the mechanical is dehumanizing. He cites Plato (Republic 590C), who speaks of that "'base mechanic' handicraft," and Aristotle (Metaphysics 980a), who reasons that inventors of things useful to life's necessities are less estimable than inventors whose "branches of knowledge did not aim at utility."[7] Aristotle (in contrast to us moderns) admires not the ingenious Egyptian engineers but their priests who devoted themselves to theoretical mathematics. Sambursky comments:

> Most instructive is the comparison that Aristotle draws between the various kinds of science and a man's social status: 'But as the man is free, we say, who exists for his own sake and not for another's, so we pursue this (science of first principles) as the only free science, for it alone exists for its own sake.' (Metaphysics 98ab)[8]

Sambursky (again, in corroboration of Strauss) sees this attitude connected with the moral emphasis on moderation. He points out (as does Strauss) that this is not peculiar to the Socratic tradition. Democritus, among others, also

> stressed the necessity of restricting man's inclination to devote too much of his limited strength to improving his material conditions. 'One should realize that human life is weak and brief and mixed with many cares and difficulties, in order that one may care only for moderate possessions, and that hardship may be measured by the standard of one's needs.'[9]

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[7] Ibid., pp. 226-227.

[8] Ibid., p.227.

[9] Ibid., pp. 228-229.

Sambursky suggests that modern science by contrast to Greek science appears artificial and unnatural. He writes: "The essential thing in an experiment is the isolation of a certain phenomenon in its pure form. . . ." Mechanics, for example, which had a "decisive influence on the basic methods and notions of physics," was based on "the notion that friction or the resistance of environment are to be considered as incidental interferences with the study of the phenomenon that illustrates a natural law or principle in its pure form."[10] For Aristotle, "the environment was actually an integral part of the phenomenon itself, and he regarded the very idea of isolation as untenable."[11] Another "unnatural" kind of "dissection of nature," which is "the theoretical counterpart of the experiment," is the modern mathematization of science. Sambursky writes: "Movement and rest are natural phenomena; but velocity, as mathematically defined is the relation between two such essentially different quantities as distance and time."[12]

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[10] Ibid., pp. 233-234.

[11] Ibid., p.233.

[12] Ibid., p.241.

This unnatural "dissection of nature," Sambursky tells us, "was. . . the result of man's changed attitude to the cosmos" (and, we may add, to the soul). He writes:

> The Greek had a profound awareness of the unity of man and the cosmos, an awareness which was characterized by his biological approach to the world of matter. The teleological principle is essentially biological and anthropomorphic, so that the first basis for the conception of order in the cosmos was found in the system of the world of living things. Whereas we are reducing biology to physics and chemistry, the Greek applied the concepts and thought processes of biology to physical phenomena.[13]

This independent corroboration of Strauss' position lends strong credence to Strauss' assertion that the Greeks' attitude to technology is deliberate, deriving from their political philosophy and philosophic conception of science,

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[13] Ibid., pp. 241-242. In his Preface, Sambursky writes: ". . . while we attempt to transform the world into an abstract mathematic entity which transgresses the boundaries of the inorganic universe and infiltrates into biology and the realm of man, the Greeks saw the cosmos as a living organism. . . . Thus the Greeks. . . were prevented for a period of a thousand years, from making the rapid progress that came about in a few decades of the seventeenth century. From this time on, a picture of the cosmos evolved that must be set against the background of a civilization based on an interplay of science and technology, while the cosmos of the Greeks emerged from a world whose scientific curiosity remained untouched by any desire to conquer nature."

which leads them to condemn technology as unnatural and dehumanizing. It also implicitly echoes Strauss' call to strive for a genuine understanding of this attitude. If one is going to explain it away or reduce it to more basic "geschictliche" factors, material or geistliche, let it be first understood what is being so reduced or explained. As Strauss puts it:

> Even if it were true that we could understand the classics better than they understood themselves, we would become certain of our superiority only after understanding them exactly as they understood themselves. Otherwise we might mistake our superiority to our notion of the classics for superiority to the classics.[14]

Strauss' call for "return" presupposes what Kojève calls the "theistic" notion of truth. At first glance it appears destined to fall on deaf ears. Why should the progressivist bother to understand the classics as they understood themselves? One does not attempt to restrict his mentality to infant bounds, even if it were possible, in order to better understand infancy. If one believes with Nietzsche that all thought is "interpretation," then one is primarily interested in why and how a particular "interpretation" is expressive of will to power. Or alternately put, a therapist need only know enough about a patient's delusions to see how and why he is using them. Strauss' exhortation then appears

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[14] OT, p.195.

to the progressivist and the radical historicist as an invitation to retrogression, delusion, or, at best, entertaining half-truths. Strauss is aware of this. He appeals precisely to the moderns' concern to avoid delusions and half-truths by asking that the presuppositions of modernity become the theme of contemporary philosophic scrutiny. This entails a non-modern, (i.e. non-historicist, non-progressivist) attempt to understand the classics, against whom the fathers of modernity raised the banner of their new philosophy and science. It is evidently Strauss' conviction that if one makes these presuppositions the theme of philosophic inquiry, he will of his own philosophic momentum be drawn into the attempt of a genuine understanding of the classics, because he will come to see that modern presuppositions are modifications of classical thought. We may say there are two steps "back": first, transcending the limitations of modern thought so as to make it the object of investigation and/second -- a thoroughgoing attempt at understanding classical political philosophy. The first step, however, apparently requires the preliminary tentative acceptance of the classical point of view as a crutch or pole-vault to help one free oneself from modern biases. What is accepted at first tentatively, Strauss promises, will come to engage the investigator fully. The result will be greater clarity in viewing modernity and in understanding the contemporary predicament resulting from it;

hopefully, the insights inspired by the study of the classics will prove helpful in formulating the political recipes for coming to grips with today's problems. Strauss feels that the fate of our times makes this an urgent task because the modern project and its optimism appear to have soured into nihilism and despair. The same fate makes this kind of study more feasible now than it was earlier. Strauss says why:

> The genuine understanding of the political philosophies which is then necessary may be said to have been rendered possible by the shaking of all traditions; the crisis of our time may have the accidental advantage of enabling us to understand in untraditional or fresh manner what was hitherto understood only in a traditional or derivative manner. This may apply especially to classical political philosophy which has been seen for a considerable time only through the lenses of modern political philosophy and its various successors.[15]

Of all modern lenses through which the classics are seen, the most radically modern are Nietzsche's and that of radical historicism (Heidegger). And yet Strauss would agree theirs is the most profound understanding of the classics and of the fundamental questions with which they are concerned. How would Strauss account for this paradox? Furthermore, if, as Strauss admits, radical historicism results in the questioning of the most elementary premises presupposed by philosophy, it would then appear to transcend

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[15] CM, p.9.

the classical-modern opposition or justify its modern presuppositions as conducive to raising the most profound questions. What does Strauss say? As we noted, Strauss does not underestimate radical historicism nor is he lacking in appreciation of Nietzsche. The formidable strength of his opponent is precisely its radicalism; Nietzsche and radical historicism have "seen through" modernity because they have rejected most of the lenses of modernity and attempted to transcend it. It is precisely their success in proclaiming God and all traditions of transcendence "dead" that Strauss vigorously combats. Strauss writes:

> Modern political philosophy presupposes Nature as understood by modern natural science and History as understood by the modern historical awareness. Eventually these presuppositions prove to be incompatible with modern political philosophy. Thus one seems to be confronted with the choice between abandoning political philosophy altogether and returning to classical political philosophy.[16]

Radical historicism transcends or opposes the modern lenses of Science and History in these ways:

> (1) It abandons the distinction between facts and values, because every understanding, however theoretical, implies specific evaluations. (2) It denies the authoritative character of modern science, which appears as only one form among many of man's thinking orientation in the world. (3) It refuses to regard the historical process as fundamentally progressive, or, more generally stated, as reasonable. (4) It denies the relevance of the evolutionist thesis by contending that the evolution of man out of non-man cannot make intelligible man's humanity.[17]

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16 Ibid., p.1.

17 WPP, p.26.

Nietzsche, unlike Heidegger, is concerned with the "permanent characteristics of humanity such as the distinction between the noble and base";[18] to this extent he even "transcends" his own historicism.

Though Nietzsche and his epigones are the "enemy" there are striking resemblances in the respective positions of Strauss and Nietzsche. Both experience deeply the revelation of fate. For both this revelation points to the crisis of modernity -- its nihilism -- which both feel bound to overcome. This turns both back to the classics, Nietzsche with a vengeance and Strauss with reverence. Both take their bearings from the "permanent characteristics" -- nobility and baseness. Both are disposed negatively toward egalitarianism. Both oppose vehemently the universal homogeneous state and both acknowledge with apprehensiveness that it may well be on its way. Both see constitutional democracy as a "rock dam" against such inundation.[19] Both recommend political control or mastership of technology. Both concur in the diagnosis that modernity has attempted to "kill God" -- to vitiate transcendence. Nietzsche believes the attempt was

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[18] Ibid.

[19] "Rock dam" is Nietzsche's term. Nietzsche does not appear equivocal in viewing democracy as a "rock dam" against despotic "socialism," though Jaspers discerns in his writings at least three very different estimates of democracy. See Karl Jaspers' Nietzsche, (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1965), pp. 262-264. This is not to say Nietzsche thinks the "dam" will or can hold. Is Strauss certain it can hold?

successful and is irreversible (his historicist conviction). Strauss believes the attempt was successful only in laying "God" low. Strauss urges resuscitation and rediscovery through "return." Strauss says that Nietzsche restores the Platonic notion of the noble delusion, while holding to a strictly esoteric theoretical analysis of life[20] (metaphysics). Does Strauss in effect do this? Strauss says that the third "wave" of modernity -- Nietzsche's -- is the one "that bears us today."[21] How does he propose to effectively oppose Nietzsche and his epigones Heidegger and Weber? How can he? He writes that Nietzsche's teaching and its inherent difficulties "led to the explicit renunciation of the very notion of eternity." He goes on:

> Modern thought reaches its culmination, its highest self-consciousness, in the most radical historicism, i.e., in explicitly condemning to oblivion the notion of eternity. For oblivion of eternity, or, in other words, estrangement from man's deepest desire and therewith from the primary issues, is the price which modern man had to pay, from the very beginning for attempting to be absolutely sovereign, to become the master and owner of nature, to conquer chance.[22]

Strauss asserts that political philosophy is "the rightful queen of social sciences, the sciences of man and of human affairs";[23] but he acknowledges when confronted with the

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[20] NR, p.26. For Strauss' discussion of Nietzsche and radical historicism, see there pp. 25-33.

[21] WPP, p.54.

[22] Ibid., p.55.

[23] CM, p.1.

critique of radical historicism "the need for unbiased reconsideration of the most elementary premises whose validity is presupposed by philosophy."[24] Strauss does not engage in such metaphysical "reconsideration." Why then should the modern "return"? Should Strauss not offer some assurance that "return" will not be an exercise in futility? Should he not offer metaphysical assurance of at least the possibility of philosophy? Is not "reconsideration" prior to "return"? Is Strauss, like Nietzsche, relegating *theoria* to the esoteric and promoting "noble delusions"? This is suggested by the implication that though the modern project was a grandiose delusion the West was the better for it. But against this he writes: "Even by proving that a certain view is indispensable for living well, one proves merely that the view in question is a salutary myth: one does not prove it to be true."[25] And against Nietzsche he writes: "Prudence and 'this lower world' cannot be seen properly without some knowledge of 'the higher world' -- without genuine *theoria*."[26] And in praise of Kojève he says:

> His understanding does not permit him to rest satisfied with the vulgar separation of theory from practice. He knows too well that there never was and

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[24] *NR*, p.31.

[25] *Ibid.*, p.6.

[26] *Ibid.*, p.321.

> there never will be reasonable security for sound practice except after theory has overcome the powerful obstacles to sound practice which originate in theoretical misconceptions of a certain kind.[27]

Perhaps a quick little "return" will be helpful in understanding his position. Against the objection that classical political philosophy is dated because it is tied to an out-dated cosmology, Strauss says:

> . . . Socrates was so far from being committed to a specific cosmology that his knowledge was knowledge of ignorance. Knowledge of ignorance is not ignorance. It is knowledge of the elusive character of the truth, of the whole. Socrates, then, viewed man in the light of the mysterious character of the whole. He held therefore that we are more familiar with the situation of man as man than with the ultimate causes of that situation. We may also say he viewed man in the light of the unchangeable ideas, i.e., of the fundamental and permanent problems. For to articulate the situation of man means to articulate man's openness to the whole. This understanding of the situation of man which includes, then, the quest for cosmology rather than a solution to the cosmological problem, was the foundation of classical political philosophy.

He goes on:

> Philosophy strives for knowledge of the whole. The whole is the totality of the parts. The whole eludes us but we know parts: we possess partial knowledge of parts. The knowledge which we possess is characterized by a fundamental dualism which has never been overcome. At one pole we find knowledge of homogeneity: above all in arithmetic, but also in the other branches of mathematics, and derivatively in all productive arts or crafts. At the opposite pole we find knowledge of heterogeneity, and in particular of heterogeneous ends; the highest form of this kind of knowledge is the art of the statesman and of the educator. The latter kind of knowledge is superior to the former for this reason. As knowledge of the ends of human life, it is knowledge of what makes human life complete or whole; it is therefore knowledge of a whole. Knowledge of the ends

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[27] CT p.199.

> of man implies knowledge of the human soul; and the human soul is the only part of the whole which is open to the whole and therefore more akin to the whole than anything else is. But this knowledge -- the political art in the highest sense -- is not knowledge of the whole. It seems that knowledge of the whole would have to combine somehow political knowledge in the highest sense with knowledge of homogeneity. And this combination is not at our disposal. Men are therefore constantly tempted to force the issue by imposing unity on the phenomena, by absolutizing either knowledge of homogeneity or knowledge of ends. Men are constantly attracted and deluded by two opposite charms: the charm of competence which is engendered by mathematics and everything akin to mathematics, and the charm of humble awe, which is engendered by meditation on the human soul and its experiences. Philosophy is characterized by the gentle, if firm, refusal to succumb to either charm.[28]

Strauss here appears to intimate that his metaphysical position is that: metaphysics is problematic. Recall his saying: ". . . the philosopher ceases to be a philosopher at the moment at which the 'subjective certainty' of a solution becomes stronger than his awareness of the problematic character of that solution."[29] Knowledge of the whole is beyond us. This may partially explain why he does not counter Hegel or Heidegger with an opposed metaphysics. He does assume the classical conception of philosophy is true and that philosophy so conceived is possible. On the basis of his assumptions he lays claim to knowledge of the human whole and asserts the truth of classical political principles.

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[28] WPP, pp. 38-40.

[29] OT, p.210.

His assumptions, he admits, require "reconsideration." Indeed he is quite emphatic: "nothing ought to be said or done which would create the impression that unbiased reconsideration of the most elementary premises of philosophy is a merely academic or historical affair."[30] (One wonders whether this emphasis is essentially moral; that is, such "reconsideration" is good for the soul because it directs men to look up toward the "Sun"; it prescribes intellectual engagement on the highest and most profound level; it means questing for the eternal, aspiring to the vision of the Good. The Socratic position -- Strauss' position -- hardly indicates that "reconsideration" can in principle lead to the theoretical demonstration of the whole or eternity.) Strauss attempts to show that classical political philosophy, and the modern political philosophy which retains some ties with it, is superior to those modern developments which radically dismiss and violate classical principles. He attempts to show that classical political philosophy is the "knowledge of what makes human life whole," knowledge of what man is by nature inclined toward and what his limitations are; he claims it is the supreme and primary articulation of the nature of political things. Strauss would emulate Socrates' example. Socrates does not engage in metaphysical combat. Socrates attempts to indicate the vulnerability of the opponent's position, its inadequacy and unsalutariness; and if he can, to

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[30] NR, p. 31.

unfold it dialectically to a point of self-contradiction. Strauss we may say, attempts this in a historical vein (perhaps seeing the history of philosophy as a dialogue). He shows that Science and History, though they claim pure metaphysical status, or pure non-metaphysical status, grow out of a new departure in political philosophy or theoretical science. He indicates that the lineage of these descendants is a chain of at least questionable presuppositions. He tellingly points to links in that chain which are contradicted by the descendants. For example, he shows that Marxism is a descendant of "the historical school" which was the reactionary anti-revolutionary reaction of "fat" capitalist conservatives. He shows that radical historicism derives from an articulation of "the experience of history" which evinces both liberal and progressivist biases; both liberals and progressivists are anathema to radical historicism. He has, in the tradition of Socrates, attempted to "unpack" through a kind of historical dialectic the presuppositions of Science and History, revealing their vulnerability or their dogmatism; he has attempted to indicate inadequacies and inconsistencies, especially of Science (in his discussions of social science positivism which we have only alluded to); and he has eloquently underscored the glaring unsalutariness of History (Hegel and Heidegger). If he appears to devote himself more to damning the political unsalutariness of his opponents' position than to offering meta-physical opposition, this is because consistent with his knowledge

of the human whole, he is duty-bound to mitigate, as far as he is able, the harm which threatens his fellow citizens. Considerations of salutariness have a priority based on urgency, especially when an enemy threatens. Strauss advises his fellow citizens to be on guard in practice, i.e., in formulating foreign policy and in maintaining a keen edge of preparedness and on guard, in "theory" lest they underestimate the unscrupulousness of the enemy. But he realizes this is insufficient if the citizen does not have a clear sense of his state's own purpose, if the theory supporting its practice is under attack and vulnerable. In the age of universal enlightenment, noble myths are unlikely to be effective in the long run. In any case myth is only to be used in support of philosophy, to bolster the rule of reason. Therefore, Strauss urges "return". "Return" is necessary for re-establishing on secure rational grounds the theoretical support of sound practice and for overcoming "the powerful obstacles which originate in theoretical misconceptions of a certain kind."[31]

If knowledge of the human whole is "superior" and the whole is elusive, how does this position differ from Hobbes'? (The contrast will serve to illumine Strauss' position.) Strauss says with reference to Hobbes:

> . . . if the human good becomes the highest principle, political science or social science becomes the most important kind of knowledge, as Aristotle had predicted. . . One cannot leave it, then, at saying that Hobbes agrees with the idealistic tradition in regard to the function

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31 OT, p.199.

> and scope of political philosophy. His expectation from political philosophy is incomparably greater than the expectation of the classics. No Scipionic dream illumined by a true vision of the whole reminds his readers of the ultimate futility of all that men can do.[32]

(Is the "true vision of the whole" the vision of its inscrutability and elusiveness?)[33] The difference then between the two positions is that Hobbes and moderns generally, in effect, deny the whole; all there is as far as we need be concerned is the human good. Socrates, however, suggests that openness to the whole, intimations of it, though not knowledge of it, is necessary to human wholeness. The mysterious more than and higher than human good illumines the human whole and especially its limits. Openness to the whole, to the eternal -- the concern with completeness and permanency -- is the ultimate source of virtue and is what differentiates the classics from the modern. It is questing for the vision of the Good which enables us to see more clearly and to realize more fully the human good. This indicates why modern political philosophy, in attenuating or denying this more than and higher than, becomes immoderate; it loses that which indicates limits and conduces to moderation.[34]

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[32] NR, p.177.

[33] It hardly seems so. Yet according to his articulation of the Socratic position quoted above, in the vision of the whole one glimpses its elusive and mysterious character.

[34] See Strauss' "On Plato's Republic": There he writes: "The doctrine of ideas which Socrates expounds to his interlocutors is very hard to understand; to begin with, it is utterly incredible, not to say that it appears to be fantastic. . . No one has ever succeeded in giving a satisfactory or clear account of this doctrine of ideas." (CM, p.119) He concludes: "The situation at the end of the Republic corresponds

These intimations of Strauss' position, though seen through a glass darkly, do make clear that Strauss' opposition

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precisely to the situation at the end of the first book, where Socrates makes clear that he has proved that justice is salutary without knowing the What or nature of justice. . . . The teaching of the Republic regarding justice can be true although it is not complete, insofar as the nature of justice depends decisively on the nature of the city -- for even the trans-political cannot be understood as such except if the city is understood -- and the city is completely intelligible because its limits can be made perfectly manifest: to see these limits, one need not have answered the question regarding the whole; it is sufficient for the purpose to have raised the question regarding the whole. As Cicero has observed, the Republic does not bring to light the best possible regime but rather the nature of political things -- the nature of the city. Socrates makes clear in the Republic of what character the city would have to be in order to satisfy the highest need of man. By letting us see that the city constructed in accordance with this requirement is not possible, he lets us see the essential limits, the nature, of the city." (my underlining) CM, p.138. There is evidently a distinction between Strauss' understanding of the Socratic position and Aristotle's position. According to Aristotle, knowledge of the human whole is not "superior"; Aristotle claims less "ignorance" or, he finds the whole more intelligible. Strauss intimates that for Aristotle the whole is "lower" than it is for Plato: "Plato and Aristotle agree that in the highest, the perfect knower and the perfect known must be united; but whereas according to Aristotle the highest is knowledge or thought thinking itself, according to Plato the highest is beyond the difference between knower and known or is not a thinking being. It also becomes questionable whether the highest as Plato understands it is still properly called an idea; Socrates uses 'the idea of the good' and 'the good' synonymously (505a2-b3)." (CM, p.119.) The validity and cogency of the objection to classical political science on the grounds of its integral connection to outdated cosmology is acknowledged by Strauss (in one place) in reference to Aristotle. He writes: "From the point of view of Aristotle -- and who could dare to claim to be a better judge in this matter than Aristotle? -- the issue between the mechanical and the teleological conception of the universe is decided by the manner in which the problem of the heavens, the heavenly bodies, and their

to Nietzsche overshadows the resemblances. Strauss is the passionate partisan of the rule of reason; the political philosophy he champions is rooted in the conception of man as essentially rational, for whom "God" is very much "alive," if mysterious, for whom the transcendent eternal order is accessible at least insofar as it reflects tellingly on human excellence and human limitation and reveals the human whole. Strauss probably cannot reach and does not address

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motion is solved. Now in this respect, which from Aristotle's own point of view was a decisive one, the issue seems to have been decided in favor of the nonteleological conception of the universe. . . . This means that people were forced to accept a fundamental, typically modern, dualism of a non-teleological natural science and a teleological science of man. This is the position which the modern followers of Thomas Aquinas, among others, are forced to take, a position which presupposes a break with the comprehensive view of Aristotle as well as that of Thomas Aquinas himself. The fundamental dilemma, in whose grip we are, is caused by the victory of modern natural science. An adequate solution to the problem of natural right cannot be found before this basic problem has been solved." NR, p.8. But contrast: "Let us then turn to the modern criticism of Aristotle's principle. It does not suffice to say that the new, anti-Aristotelian science of the seventeenth-century rejected final causes, for the classical materialists had done the same and yet not denied, as the modern anti-Aristotelians did, that the good life is the life according to nature and that 'Nature has made the necessary things easy to supply.'" CM, p.42. He appears to be saying here that the validity of the objection is not the basic ground of the moderns' rejection of Aristotle; rather it is "the resolve to liberate man. . . by his own sustained effort, or in other words the modern denial of eternity and of the mysterious whole." CM, p.42.

himself to the epigones of Nietzsche; they are, to use Heidegger's term, "verfallen." Men like Weber who assume "reality is an infinite and meaningless. . . chaos,"[35] and men like Heidegger who condemn "to oblivion the notion of eternity,"[36] Strauss does not speak to but against, in order to mitigate their influence, that their tribe may not increase. He speaks to moderns who care about the political things and to moderns who are committed to rational truth; he speaks especially to North American social scientists who combine in themselves both a commitment to truth and the caring about political things, in particular about the liberal democratic heritage. Unfortunately many of them do not seem to consciously combine these in their rational thinking; on the contrary, they conscientiously deny the rational warrant of the values they cherish and live by. It is primarily to them that Strauss recommends "return" -- making the suppositions of their science the theme of their rational considerations. He urges them to awake to the realization that "history of political philosophy and not logic, proves to be the pursuit concerned with the presuppositions of social science."[37] Strauss argues that classical political

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[35] Ibid., p.77.

[36] WPP, p.55.

[37] CM, p.10.

science is the "natural" starting point of contemporary political science both because it is the "primary form of political science because the common sense understanding of political things is primary"[38] and because the "genealogy of (their) morals" reaches back to classical foundations.

But let us return from "return" to the difficulties. Strauss has written studies of medieval thought but has said little about medieval political life, against which modernity arose. (This may be due to his general disinclination to discuss Christianity.)[39] Here is a little

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[38] Ibid., p.12. Strauss writes: "The scientific understanding implies. . . a break with the pre-scientific understanding, yet at the same time it remains dependent on the pre-scientific understanding. Regardless of whether the superiority of the scientific understanding to the pre-scientific understanding can be demonstrated or not, the scientific understanding is secondary or derivative. Hence, social science cannot reach clarity about its doings if it does not possess a coherent and comprehensive understanding of what is frequently called the common sense view of political things, i.e., if it does not primarily understand the political things as they are experienced by the citizen or statesman; only if it possesses such a coherent and comprehensive understanding of its basis or matrix can it possibly show the legitimacy, and make intelligible the character, of that peculiar modification of the primary understanding of political things which is their scientific understanding."(pp.11-12

[39] Grant, op.cit., p.109. Grant conjecturally accounts for Strauss' reticence on the role of biblical faith in the modern world. Grant writes: "It is . . . the case that in the western world what remnants of sacred restraints still linger in the minds of men are most often connected with the practice of the two religions, Judaism and Christianity, which alone . are indigenous to the western world. Therefore, even if

that he does say:

> By Machiavelli's time the classical tradition had undergone profound changes. . . . Moral virtue had been transfigured into Christian charity. Through this man's responsibility to his fellow men and for his fellow men, his fellow creatures, had been infinitely increased. Concern with the salvation of men's immortal souls seemed to permit, nay, to require courses of action which would have appeared to the classics, and which did appear to Machiavelli, to be inhuman and cruel. . . .[40]

Did the sense of Christian mission incline toward the resolve to "liberate" man by forceful human efforts? (This question is not rhetorical.) The more basic question is perhaps this one: If the Church engaged in courses of action, in good conscience, which would have appeared to the classics as "inhuman and cruel," does this not indicate a significant modification of classical political teaching by the Church? Evidently Strauss is convinced this modification was not "radical," that it was far less significant than the modifications of the classical tradition wrought by modern political thought. We acknowledge the absence

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Strauss should in fact think that the Biblical categories have been in part responsible for a false and therefore dangerous conception of nature among modern philosophers, he would not necessarily think it wise to speak openly or forcibly about the matter.

[40] WPP, p.44.

of an examination of the modifications wrought by the medieval Church in classical political philosophy and confess it may constitute a lack in our discussion of modernity.

There is an apparent inconsistency in Strauss' demand for non-historicist historical understanding. Is his discussion of modernity and his consideration of modern thinkers not blatantly historicist?[41] That is, his method of inquiry asks the question, What are they after? rather than, Is their teaching true? Strauss would justify this because modern political thinkers themselves, according to Strauss, fuse the two. Strauss asserts that modern thought is essentially politicized philosophy and therefore an historicist understanding of it is apposite, whereas classical thought represents a pure aspiration for truth. Strauss writes with reference to classical thought:

> . . . the discovery of nature is identical with the actualization of a human possibility which, at least according to its own interpretation, is trans-historical, trans-social, trans-moral, and trans-religious.[42]

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[41] "Historicist" here does not mean one who subscribes to "the dogma that the mind of the individual is incapable of liberating itself from the opinions which rule his society."

[42] NR, p.89.

He quotes Whitehead:

> After Aristotle, ethical and religious interests began to influence metaphysical conclusions. . . . It may be doubted whether any properly general metaphysics can ever, without the illicit introduction of other considerations, get much further than Aristotle.[43]

From this point of view, which sees the classics as the only "pure" quest for truth, modern thinkers appear as sophists. Strauss writes:

> Originally, philosophy had been the humanizing quest for the eternal order, and hence it had been a pure source of humane inspiration and aspiration. Since the seventeenth century, philosophy has become a weapon, and hence an instrument. . . . the politicization of philosophy consists precisely in this, that the difference between intellectuals and philosophers -- a difference formerly known as the difference between gentleman and philosophers, on the one hand, and the difference between sophists or rhetoricians and philosophers, on the other -- becomes blurred and finally disappears.[44]

For the understanding of sophists, historicism is most appropriate; at least as primary to a genuine understanding of moderns is the question -- What are they after? a question which in Strauss' view is illegitimate in reference to the classics who are not "after" anything but truth. Does this help to explain at all why Strauss does not sufficiently register righteous indignation at the spectacle of rapine run rampant during the reign of the natural law tradition? Hardly. Strauss does not highlight the bestialities of this period. He devotes himself to underscoring the urgency

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[43] Ibid., n.9.

[44] Ibid., p.34.

of the modern political situation. He indicates that the massive atrocities of National Socialism and Stalinism are the products of the critical failure or insufficiency of the tradition of liberal democracy. This is made clear with respect to National Socialism in these comments:

> It has been said, not without reason, that Hegel's rule [Philosophy of Right brand of liberalism] over Germany came to an end only on the day that Hitler came to power. . . . All German dissatisfactions with modernity pointed toward a Third Reich.[45]

This sentence, "The action most characteristic of the Middle Ages is the Crusades; it may be said to have culminated not accidentally in the murder of whole Jewish communities," is quickly followed by this pointed reminder:

> The German Jews owed their emancipation to the French Revolution or its effects. They were given full political rights for the first time by the Weimar Republic. The Weimar Republic was succeeded by the only German regime that ever was anywhere --- which had no other clear principle except murderous hatred of the Jews, for 'Aryan' had no clear meaning other than 'non-Jewish.'[46]

Strauss, it seems, does not want the reader to linger over the inference that the natural law tradition does not

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[45] SCR, p.2.

[46] Ibid., p.3.

preclude wholesale massacres.[47] This may also be due in part to the sense of urgency he feels about the predicament of the West today. He writes:

> The crisis of liberal democracy has become concealed by a ritual which calls itself methodology or logic. This almost willful blindness to the crisis of liberal democracy is part of that crisis. No wonder then that the new political science has nothing to say against those who unhesitatingly prefer surrender, that is, the abandonment of liberal democracy, to war.
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> Only a great fool would call the new political science diabolic: it has no attributes peculiar to fallen angels. It is not even Machiavellian for Machiavelli's teaching was graceful, subtle and colourful. Nor is it Neronian. Nevertheless one may say of it that it fiddles while Rome burns. It is excused by two facts: it does not know that it fiddles, and it does not know thatRome burns.[48]

Strauss then, if we take his analogy seriously, is crying "Fire!" In a fire, expedience and salutariness have unusual importance. Strauss is saying that the urgency of the crisis demands the highest priority for political philosophy, even if its metaphysical foundations may require "reconsideration." The crisis demands a salutary "resolution"

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[47] Strauss certainly does not want to speak ill of Catholic Christianity which in the middle ages, he says, "was the bond of society." (SCR, p.3) He clearly does not want to do this because he admires Catholic adherence to the natural law tradition. (See NR, pp. 7-8)

[48] LAM, p.223.

even if its metaphysical defense cannot be secured theoretically, quickly or easily. (This is illustrated biographically: Strauss and many other refugees who studied philosophy in Europe, upon arrival in North America, became social scientists out of the sense of urgency which convinced them that the political questions must be given priority over the Heideggerean type of ontological investigation, however important and perhaps central that may be ultimately.)

Strauss tells us not to expect "that a fresh understanding of classical political philosophy will supply us with recipes for today's use."[49] What then may we expect to glean? He does stress the classical demand for political control of technology. Grant expresses the difficulty in transforming this into a "recipe":

> My difficulty in comprehending Strauss' position lies not then in giving some meaning to the idea that the dominant leaders of our society are committed to unlimited technological progress, but rather in understanding what it meant to the classical political philosophers not to be so committed, and even more in understanding what it would mean not to be so committed in the contemporary world.[50]

Grant asks by what criteria determinations of political control are to be made. He concludes: "Strauss' position would be easier to understand if he would explicate the classical teaching on this matter."[51] (Should the telephone

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[49] CM, p.11.

[50] Grant, op.cit., p.101.

[51] Ibid.

have been banned or aviation discouraged? Grant is right; it is extremely difficult to think this.) Grant also suggests Strauss might have more fully discussed what limiting of technology would mean to "the poor, the diseased, the hungry and the tired." He quotes Feuerbach's dictum, "compassion is before thought" and insists Strauss "must come to terms with the implications of this phase in full explicitness."[52]

Another difficulty is Machiavelli's cogent criticism that the limitation of technology is impossible even for a utopian Republic when confronted with an enemy; and Strauss has to agree. He writes:

> They (the classics) had to admit that the moral-political supervision of inventions by the good and wise city is necessarily limited by the need of adaptation to the practices of morally inferior cities which scorn such supervision. . . . They had to admit in other words that in an important respect the good city has to take its bearings by the practice of bad cities or that the bad impose their law on the good.[53]

Strauss recommends to the West against Communism the posture of the Republic's guardians toward strangers, that of watchful savage dogs.[54] This means in effect no limitations

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[52] Ibid., p.103. Grant notes: "Strauss is clearly aware of this fact. One could wish, however, that he had drawn out the implications of it in the present controversy."

[53] TOM, p.298.

[54] CM, p.5.

on technology. This looking to classical political science from the context of today and the foreseeable future would not only not discourage, but would encourage, rapid technological advances.[55] Strauss would suggest that at least such technological advances would be purposive, rather than technology for technology's sake.[56] But this would be naive: it matters little how purposive was the origin of the technological endeavour once it gains momentum. Strauss seems to recognize this in calling attention to the classical "opinion that there occur periodic cataclysms. . . (which) took care of any apprehension regarding an excessive

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[55] Strauss does say: ". . . that it is not inventions as such but the use of science for such inventions which renders impossible the good city in the classical sense. From the point of view of the classics, such use of science is excluded by the nature of science as a theoretical pursuit." (TOM, p.299) Sambursky confirms this by noting that the techniques developed for use in war, "the child of urgent necessity, could have become the nucleus of considerable and many-sided technological developments. . . . but in fact there is no sign of a development of this kind which might well have changed ancient society." (The Physical World of the Greeks, pp. 229-230.) It is exceedingly difficult to conceive of how we would "un-technologize" science even were it possible in principle. It would certainly not be possible in practice especially when an enemy threatens.

[56] Grant, op.cit., p.101. Grant writes: "It would appear to me that technological progress is now being pursued not first and foremost to free all men from work and disease, but for the investigation and conquest of the infinite spaces around us. The vastness of such a task suggests that modern society is committed to unlimited technological progress for its own sake."

development of technology or regarding the danger that man's inventions might become his masters and his destroyers."[57] This opinion Strauss notes "has been rendered incredible by the experience of the last centuries." The classics not only cannot instruct us as how to limit technology; it appears they scorn the biblically inspired hope for universal peace and encourage particularist waspishness. (On the other hand the classical emphasis on striving for moral excellence is indeed in tune with the biblical vision of the conditions of universal peace.) It seems even Hobbes encourages a more pacific attitude than the classics. Strauss indicates Hobbes' view:

> Peace. . . requires, in addition to the peaceable attitude, the coercive power of the state which insures security. But the peaceable attitude, the attitude of trust and faith of itself tends by itself toward a situation in which it can become fully active.[58]

Is this "peaceable attitude" recommended by the classics? Strauss writes of the confrontation today between East and West: "The only restraint in which the West can put some confidence is the tyrant's fear of the West's immense military power."[59] Perhaps this needs more emphasis than the pacific inclination, but even Hobbes, for all his Machiavellian realism, nevertheless underscores the

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[57] TOM, p.299.

[58] SCR, p.235.

[59] CM, p.5.

importance of the pacific attitude along with power. As Strauss puts it: "The pacific attitude and the power of the state support each other in turn."[60] Hobbes recommends this attitude even toward "robbers."[61] This perhaps suggests it might be well to question whether the principles of classical social science are an unmixed blessing.

It should be noted that Strauss is not prescribing a radical "new cure." Neither is Strauss venting anti-social ire. Grant notes that Strauss implies "that the philosopher who recognizes that society is committed to. . . an unwise pursuit must not fall into the temptation of escaping into anti-social dreams."[62] Strauss appears to find Western democracy more "rundown" than basically sick. It suffers a malaise of spirit, a kind of theoretical neurasthenia, rendering it listless and depressed in the absence of a sense of purpose and conducing to various forms of degradation. A crisis of the spirit endangers the whole organism; loss of purpose makes one susceptible to pathological purpose. As Nietzsche says: "man would sooner have the void for his purpose than be void of purpose."[63]

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[60] (Strauss' paraphrase of Hobbes) SCR, p.235.

[61] Ibid., pp. 234-236. Hobbes advises that one keep one's promises even to criminals, even when one can break them with impunity.

[62] Grant, op.cit., p.102.

[63] The Genealogy of Morals, Section XXVIII.

Strauss would strive to lend reasonable security to the sound practice of constitutional democracy by restoring its spiritual political heritage, the base of its soundness and the source of its strength. Strauss does not pretend to "transcend" or to innovate. He lays no claim to originality. He is not presenting his own "brand" of philosophy (in contrast to, say, Heidegger or Whitehead). He seeks to reinforce an already well-entrenched modern tradition of natural right. He would do this not by adding something but by returning to its roots for reinvigoration.

The "lesson" it seems Strauss would have us relearn from classical political thought is moderation, moderation of our political ambitions and moderation of our selfishness: the two-fold moderation of love of one's own. In Strauss' view modern political thought is excessively ambitious and grossly immoderate. The collapse of the modern project, we noted, was due to such excessive universal political ambitions; this resulted in traumatic disenchantment. (See the Introduction above.) The modern tendency to understand happiness in terms of affluence also has come under question as a result of the failure of the modern project.[64]

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64 (It will be recalled) Strauss writes: ". . . for the foreseeable future, political society remains what it has always been; a partial or particular society whose most urgent and primary task is its self-preservation and whose highest task is its self-improvement. As for the meaning of self-improvement, we may observe that the same experience which has made the West doubtful of the viability of a world society has made it doubtful of the belief that affluence is the sufficient and even necessary condition of happiness and justice: affluence does not cure the deepest evils."(CM,p.6)

Affluence does not satisfy. Comfortable self-preservation is found wanting. Strauss appears to suggest that the well-entrenched rights of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" be supplemented by duties, that we learn to moderate our claim to the unrestrained pursuit of affluence in a manner which would not seriously impinge on our basic rights. As a result of a "return" to classical thought the direction of our "self-improvement" may become clearer and the meaning of "happiness" more "filled-in."

For a crowning example of the growing conviction of the need to moderate political expectations, we offer these excerpts from a recent article by the liberal pundit Richard Rovere. (We are not here concerned with the pros and cons of the policies discussed; the point being made is that there is a growing realization that excessive political expectations often lead not to panaceas but in the direction of Pandora's box.) Rovere writes of the late Senator Robert Taft:

> . . . his conservatism in domestic matters seemed to rest on the conviction that the United States could hardly police the United States, rather than on any devotion to laissez-faire or rugged individualism. Today, his rightist view of federal power is heard not only on the right but on the left -- especially the New Left -- and frequently in the center. He wanted to restrain federal power not because he thought it evil in principle but because of what he regarded as its limitations -- its inability to be effective in a country as large and diverse as the United States. . . . All he objected to was the assumption that the federal bureaucracy, operating out of a highly provincial city on the Atlantic coast, was competent to establish and carry out sound policy for a continental nation approaching a population of two hundred million souls.

Of his isolationism, Rovere says:

> . . . his views on foreign policy were not dissimilar to those of many of today's radicals and liberals. He simply did not believe, he said, that the United States could police the world or had any business trying to do so.

Rovere comments:

> If Taft's conservatism could be described as intellectually sterile and socially callous a quarter century ago, some of its fundamental assumptions have in the years since his death gained wide acceptance. . . . The central government can pass laws and amass funds for good works of many kinds -- education, the abatement of poverty, urban renewal -- but it seldom any longer comes close to achieving the goals it seeks, and as often as not deepens the problems it hopes to solve. . . . . there is today not only a lack of confidence in the central government but a feeling that it menaces the world and increases human suffering within the American society itself. . . . Something like the highway program is oppressive in its consequences, and it had richly rewarded a number of vested interests, but the intent of its initiators was benign, being a response to what was held to be a social need. Much the same can be said of most of the other programs that are working against the ends of their designers.[65]

As Rovere indicates, benign intentions which are translated into technological solutions to major human problems invariably go awry. This may be said to reflect Strauss' understanding of modernity that we have attempted to essay here: the road to hell is paved with good intentions.

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[65] R.Rovere, "Letter from Washington," The New Yorker (July 18, 1970), pp. 72-79.

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