LEO STRAUSS
ON JERUSALEM AND ATHENS

By

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ABSTRACT

This thesis attempts to enucleate the thought of Leo Strauss on the relation of Jerusalem and Athens. The specific focus and special interest of this thesis in Leo Strauss's investigations of Jerusalem and Athens is the relation of Judaism and philosophy.

The essential assertion of Strauss's position is the fundamental and irreconcilable opposition between Jerusalem and Athens. That fundamental opposition is discerned by Strauss chiefly in the classical conception of philosophy and the "metaphysics" of the Bible, and in the contrast of philosophic morality and the morality of the Bible.

Although evidencing change or "development," Strauss's thought remains centrally concerned with "das theologisch-politische Problem." His early work on Maimonides and his Islamic predecessors, Philosophie und Gesetz, exhibits his concern with the relation of political philosophy and theology, exotericism, the relation of the Law and the natural law, the quarrel between ancients and moderns, the distorting effect of reading pre-modern writers.
through modern lenses and the inadequacy of modern philosophies of Judaism. The extent and character of Strauss's "development," as well as the abiding unity of his vision, is indicated in viewing his earlier understanding in light of his own later "corrections."

The thesis concludes with Strauss's thematic elaboration of the insufficiency generally of Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment accommodations of Jerusalem and of modern Jewish "movements," in particular.

What is all important to this thesis is the central fact of Strauss's life-long attention to Jerusalem and Athens, to "das theologisch-politische Problem," to Judaism and philosophy. Attention is the essence of the "third alternative" to unreasoned belief and unreasoned unbelief.
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I pray I may look forward to giving.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abstract</th>
<th>iii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviations</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. The &quot;Originality&quot; of this Thesis</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The Introduction of Leo Strauss by Leo Strauss:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Jew in the Grip of the Contemporary</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theologico-Political Predicament</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. &quot;The Jewish Problem&quot;</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Liberalism, Conservatism and &quot;the Jewish Problem&quot;</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. On the &quot;Conservatism&quot; of Herzl and Political Zionism</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Liberalism: Less Than a Perfect Solution But the Best Viable -- According to Classical Conservatism, Judaism, and Zionism, Respectively</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. &quot;The Jewish Problem&quot; and the &quot;Preestablished Harmony Between Value-free Science and Liberal Values&quot;</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Strauss the Conservative and the Liberal Jewish &quot;Opinion Leader&quot;</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. The Nearness of the Philistines</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. &quot;In What Sense or To What Extent Is Judaism One of the Roots of Liberalism? Are Jews Compelled by Their Heritage... To Be Liberals?&quot;</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. On &quot;Lives&quot;</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Socrates and Thucydides: Athenians</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Starting From What &quot;Was Hitting Him Directly&quot;</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. &quot;Jerusalemite&quot; or &quot;Athenian&quot;</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
15. An Example of Disinclination To Take Strauss Seriously As a Serious Scholar of Jerusalem: "Der hermeneutische Weg von Leo Strauss". 69
16. Strauss's Rediscovery of Exotericism. 77
17. "Definitions" of "Exoteric" and "Esoteric". 81
18. Strauss's Rediscovery of Exotericism: The Prime Target of His Critics: 84
19. Exotericism and "The Twin Sisters" Positivism and Historicism. 94
20. Reading "Old Books" and Historicism and Positivism. 96
21. The Need for Historical Studies. 108
22. Conclusion: The Question of Strauss's "Nonorthodoxy". 111
23. Plan of the Chapters Following. 129

II. LEO STRAUSS ON THE FUNDAMENTAL OPPOSITION OF JERUSALEM AND ATHENS. 136

Section One
1. Introduction. 137
2. Strauss and Christian Theology. 138
3. Apparent Affinities. 147
4. Some Apparent Resemblances of Jerusalem and Athens and Some Significant Differences. 149
5. Nature -- The Root Issue Between Athens and Jerusalem. 154
6. Genesis As Read By Strauss: The Bible's Rejection of Athens. 170
7. Trust and Hope in God and Tears in Jerusalem, The Quest for Knowledge and Laughter in Athens. 179
8. More Regarding Respective Views of The Beginnings. 186
10. On the Bible On the Arts. 192
11. More than "Apparent" Affinities. 196
12. "Anticipations". 202
Section Two

13. Aspects of the Concern with Justice in Athens and Jerusalem Respectively:
   Some Significant Differences ........................................ 205
15. On Strauss's Early "Leaning" ....................................... 222
16. "The natural law" and the Law .................................... 224
17. "The natural law" Lacks "Categoric Imperatives" ............... 234

Section Three

19. "Am I My Brother's Keeper?" -- The "Answers" Respectively of the Philosopher, the Greek Gentleman, and the Pious Adherent of Biblical Tradition ....................................................... 244
20. The Philosopher -- "a benefactor only accidentally" .......... 247
21. "The Two Ways of Life" and Biblical Piety ......................... 266
22. The Pious of Jerusalem ................................................ 271
23. Biblical Piety Viewed from the "Heights" Ascended by the Philosopher ....................................................... 277
24. Patris and Politeia and Jew ......................................... 296
25. Love of Neighbor -- How Difficult It is .......................... 305
26. Strauss's "Restatement on Xenophon's Hiero": Love and the Philosopher ....................................................... 310
27. The Contrast and Affinity with Biblical Teaching ............... 316
28. The Greek Ruler and the Jewish King ............................... 323
30. Conclusion .................................................................. 329

III. LEO STRAUSS'S PHILOSOPHIE UND GESETZ ON PLATONIC POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY AND MAIMONIDES -- THE "ARISTOTELIZING" CLASSIC RATIONALIST IN JUDAISM .............................................. 332

1. Introduction ............................................................. 333
2. Political Philosophy Its Two Significations and Strauss's Chapter Headings "Die gesetzliche Begründung der Philosophie" and "Die philosophische Begründung des Gesetzes" ........................................... 335
ABBREVIATIONS

Works of Leo Strauss

Abravanel -- "On Abravanel's Philosophical Tendency and Political Teaching" in Isaac Abravanel.

"Accounts" -- "A Giving of Accounts"

C&M -- The City and Man

Cohen's RR -- Introduction to Cohen's Religion of Reason

"Collingwood" -- "On Collingwood's Philosophy of History"

"FP" -- "Farabi's Plato"

Guide -- Introduction to Moses Maimonides' The Guide of the Perplexed

"Hillel Lecture" -- "Why We Remain Jews . . . ?"

HistPP -- History of Political Philosophy

Hobbes -- The Political Philosophy of Hobbes

Husik -- Preface to Philosophical Essays . . . by Isaac Husik

"InGen" -- "Interpretation of Genesis"

interpretation -- "Philosophy as Rigorous Science and Political Philosophy"

"J&A" -- "The Beginning of the Bible and Its Greek Counterparts"

LAM -- Liberalism Ancient and Modern
Macchi -- Thoughts on Machiavelli
NR -- Natural Right and History
OnTyr -- On Tyranny
PAW -- Persecution and the Art of Writing
P&G -- Philosophie und Gesetz
"Qr" -- "Quelques remarques sur la science politique de Maimonide et de Farabi"
S&A -- Socrates and Aristophanes
SCR -- Spinoza's Critique of Religion
"Sparta" -- "The Spirit of Sparta and the Taste of Xenophon"
"Vorwort" -- 1965 German edition of Hobbes
"Wild" -- "On a New Interpretation of Plato's Political Philosophy"
WPP? -- What is Political Philosophy?
X's Oeconomicus -- Xenophon's Socratic Discourse and Interpretation of the Oeconomicus
X's Socrates -- Xenophon's Socrates

Works on Leo Strauss
"LS" -- "Leo Strauss"
"LS's Achievement" -- "The Achievement of Leo Strauss"
"On LS" -- On Leo Strauss
"Hermeneutik" -- "Der hermeneutische Weg von Leo Strauss"
"Strauss Talks" -- S. G. Weber's two days with Strauss
Other Works

PJ -- Julius Guttmann's Philosophies of Judaism
Weiss -- Wisdom and Piety The Ethics of Maimonides
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This thesis attempts to enucleate the thought of Leo Strauss on Jerusalem and Athens and their relation. Leo Strauss was a Jew; this writer is a Jew. The specific focus and special interest of both Leo Strauss and this writer in the investigation of the relation of Jerusalem and Athens is concerned primarily with the relation of Judaism and philosophy. This thesis will examine various writings of Leo Strauss in an attempt to bring out clearly their bearings on this theme. The thesis aspires to a "careful and thorough" and straight thinking discussion of Leo Strauss's writings, writings which exemplify the author's high standards of care, thoroughness and straight thinking. Consonant with its attempt to be true to the thought of Leo Strauss, the thesis is not primarily concerned with the achievement of originality.
1. The "Originality" of This Thesis

Every one of us is probably flattered by the implication that we could be original if we only tried. This implication draws our attention away from our simple and urgent duties, the duties to be careful and thorough and to think straight.¹

The facile delusions which conceal from us our true situation all amount to this: that we are, or can be, wiser than the wisest men of the past. We are thus induced to play the part, not of attentive and docile listeners, but of impresarios or lion-tamers.²

The writings of Leo Strauss do not raise claims to originality; on the contrary, they are self-effacing; they conspicuously present themselves as "commentaries" on the thought of others. The aim of these "commentaries" of Leo Strauss's writings, is to understand "in an untraditional or fresh manner what was hitherto understood only in a traditional or derivative manner."³

¹Leo Strauss, "Comment," Church History, XV, 100.
²Leo Strauss, Liberalism Ancient and Modern (Basic Books, 1968), 8 -- hereafter, LAM.
³Leo Strauss, The City and Man (Rand McNally, 1964), 9 -- hereafter, C&M.
Jacob Klein, Strauss's friend of fifty years standing, writes:

He [Leo Strauss] spent all his life as a man engaged in "political philosophy." He did that mainly by studying and analyzing the masters of political thought and all the authors related to them. Let me name the most important ones: Thucydides, Plato, Xenophon, Aristophanes, Aristotle, Maimonides, Thomas Aquinas, Machiavelli, Spinoza, Hobbes, Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Montesquieu, Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger. Strauss's erudition was immense. He knew the authors I have just cited better than anyone I could possibly name. His interpretative power showed a degree of sagacity, perspicacity, and lucidity hardly equaled today anywhere. He knew how much depends on every one of those authors, on the way each word was used singly, on the way each was combined with others in sequences, in paragraphs, in the entire work, and how much depended on what was not said, on what was only hinted at, and on what was scrupulously omitted. He was deeply aware of the dangers of generalization as well as the necessity to generalize under certain circumstances and to do it circumspectly. It is thus that he achieved an understanding not only of what is written about political life, but also about what it is and can be.

Indeed, the achievement of a "fresh" understanding of past thought may be the most profound "originality." A critic of Strauss's

expresses the suspicion that I [Leo Strauss] might have mistaken the scholar for the philosopher, for he believes that by starting from certain Jewish and Islamic philosophers of the Middle Ages, I studied in fact scholars and commentators rather than philosophers: the writers in question were commentators on Plato and Aristotle rather than original philosophers.²

² Jacob Klein, "Leo Strauss," The College (St. Johns College, Annapolis, 1974), 2 -- hereafter, "LS".

This critic takes seriously Strauss's investigation of medieval thinkers; he thus does him more justice than some of Strauss's admirers, as we shall see below.
Strauss responds:

I doubt whether originality in the sense of discovery or invention of "systems" has anything to do with philosophic depth or true originality. Spinoza was much more original in the present day sense of the term than was Maimonides, but Maimonides was nevertheless a deeper thinker than Spinoza.¹

(If "in the present day sense of the term" Maimonides is not original and a fortiori, Strauss as his commentator is not original, then it would seem that this writer is far removed from even the possibility of originality. Indeed, even the title "commentator" is perhaps beyond the reach of this writer, for the good commentator has plumbed the philosophic depth of the thinker whose work he commentates. If he is a commentator of a commentary on a philosopher, then ideally he will have mastered the thought of that philosopher. This thesis does not remotely imply any such claims. At most, it is hoped that if the commentary on Strauss is ever attempted, that this thesis may be profitably consulted.)²

¹Leo Strauss, What is Political Philosophy? (The Free Press, 1959), 230 -- hereafter, WPP?

²"It is better to finish a little task well than a great one inadequately." See Leo Strauss, "On a New Interpretation of Plato's Political Philosophy" (Review article on John Wild, Plato's Theory of Man), Social Research XIII:3 (September 1946), 332, -- hereafter "Wild." This thesis does not meet the high standards of scholarship Strauss demands and exemplifies. Strauss writes: "We must distinguish between inherited knowledge and independently acquired knowledge. By inherited knowledge we understand the philosophic or scientific knowledge a man takes over from former generations, or, more generally expressed, from others; by independently acquired
Milton Himmelfarb is so impressed by Strauss's scholarly attainments that he finds it difficult to believe that Strauss was a modest man. The "wickedness" of his insinuation that Strauss might have been a "secret Machiavellian" is matched by -- and perhaps induced by -- his assessment of Strauss's preeminence.

He writes:

What did he [Leo Strauss] achieve, how significant was he? History, as they say, will give the answer. . . . One thing is indisputable, that Strauss combined to a preeminent degree the qualities that Talmud scholarship knows as those of the baqi and of the harif -- the first, of copious, wide, deep, and exact knowledge; the second, of sharp and subtle analytical prowess. I have counted more than thirty authors that he treats at some length, from antiquity to the 20th century -- and such authors! (And always read in their own languages -- in Greek,

knowledge we understand the philosophic or scientific knowledge a mature scholar acquires in his unbiased intercourse, as fully enlightened as possible as to its horizon and its presuppositions, with his subject matter. On the basis of the belief in progress, this difference tends to lose its crucial significance. When speaking of a 'body of knowledge' or of 'the results of research,' e.g., we tacitly assign the same cognitive status to inherited knowledge and to independently acquired knowledge. To counteract this tendency a special effort is required to transform inherited knowledge into genuine knowledge by revitalizing its original discovery, and to discriminate between the genuine and the spurious elements of what claims to be inherited knowledge."
Latin, Hebrew, Arabic, Italian, English, French, and his native German. He may have been the most learned man of our time in the great writings that it is worth being learned in, of poets and historians as well as philosophers; and to his learning were joined acuteness, penetration, intuition, zest, and a certain serious playfulness.¹

Clearly, Himmelfarb is not impressed by Strauss's "lack of originality"; on the contrary.

I am persuaded that Strauss regarded himself, and was confident that future generations would regard him, as a refounder: the thinker who expelled (whg undermined the taken-for-granted superiority of) the alien, intrusive teaching that had conquered political thought, and who restored, partly, the authentic classical teaching or teachings. Could Strauss have been a secret Machiavellian? In any event, by the Machiavellian equation² he can regard himself as not inferior to Machiavelli, the founder of the modern teaching. By the same equation he may even regard himself as not altogether inferior to Socrates -- Socrates! -- the founder of the classical teachings.³


²"For Machiavelli, just as the ruler who has founded a city or a dynasty is superior to other rulers, so must the thinker who has founded the doctrine about the founding of cities and dynasties be superior to other thinkers."

³"On LS," 65. It is difficult to argue against a proposition which begins "I am persuaded." It is hard to believe that Himmelfarb intends as an argument for his contention the fact that "Strauss professes to be shocked by Machiavelli's shamelessness, but it is Strauss who reminds us that shamelessness is a moral or practical vice, not an intellectual or theoretical one. He even reminds us that shamelessness like impiety is absent from Aristotle's list of the moral vices." It is certainly hard to take seriously as an argument. Is calling attention
Strauss was so successfully "unoriginal" that he is "accused" of being a Socrates.

Of course, the task of the thesis -- the attempt to expound faithfully Strauss's views on Judaism and philosophy in particular -- may be called "original" in that it is, to my knowledge, the first such attempt. This task in turn demands or produces a number of minor "firsts" or discoveries which, if one is so inclined, one may call "original." For example, in translating Strauss's Introduction to his Philosophie und Gesetz, I discovered the uncanny fact that Strauss, thirty years later in his Preface to the English edition of his Spinoza's Critique of Religion, (apparently) translates verbatim sections of that earlier Introduction. (I found impressively "uncanny" the fact that a man in his early thirties should achieve a clear grasp of important issues that after thirty years more of the most diligent

to the omission of shame in Aristotle's list of virtues itself shameless?
If there is one central "message" that Strauss hammers home again and again it is that pre-modern political thought did not separate wisdom from moderation and that its achievement is to be credited to Machiavelli and his followers. Himmelfarb knows this; he sums up Strauss's "message" as follows: "A line leads from Machiavelli to historicism and its dissolution into nihilism or fanaticism, two sides of the same coin; to the greatest philosopher of our time [Heidegger] supporting Nazism; to our most illustrious jurisprudent [Kelsen] chiding the folly, presumption, and naiveté of those who would refuse legitimacy to despotism." "On LS," 63.
study, he could use the very words in which he expressed his views thirty years before.) On the other hand, in the course of my research, I discerned a shift in Strauss's reading of Maimonides. It was at this point that I went to see Strauss. Strauss readily acknowledged a "development" in his understanding of Maimonides and pinpointed the times and places of his advances in understanding Maimonides.) This "development" in Strauss's understanding of Maimonides (not unrelated apparently to a slight "development" in his apprehension of the Socratic attitude to "natural law") is discussed, if only briefly, for the first time in this thesis. But such "firsts" and "discoveries" are a rather minor sort of "originality." They are simply byproducts of the work of the thesis, of the endeavor "to be careful and thorough and to think straight" in expounding Leo Strauss's thought on Jerusalem and Athens. This thesis does not claim or implicitly presuppose the taming of any lion; least of all does it claim, presuppose or suggest that the leonine erudition of Leo Strauss

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\[1\] I acknowledge my gratitude to Graduate Studies, McMaster University, for a travel grant for this purpose. Dr. Strauss, though ailing, very graciously gave me two days with him (May, 1973). I report our conversations primarily from memory. None are verbatim. They will be referred to as "Strauss Talks."
has been tamed, plumbed or mastered; this thesis puts forward what the writer has learned in striving to "listen attentively" to Leo Strauss. The thesis is an attempt to bring together various writings of Leo Strauss and to bring out what has been discerned about Leo Strauss's thought regarding Jerusalem and Athens. The thesis aspires to being regarded as neither the last word or most "original" word, but it is submitted in the hope that it will be deemed an important and fruitful first word on this subject.

2. The Introduction of Leo Strauss by Leo Strauss: The Jew in the Grip of the Contemporary Theologico-Political Predicament

Strauss tells us that "not indeed the highest principles by themselves, but the manner in which they are approached or come to light, depends decisively on the given situation."1 Accordingly, especially in introductory writings, he begins with "the given situation." A good example of this is his English Preface to Spinoza's Critique of Religion (hereafter -- simply the Preface), which moves from the "given situation" in which he wrote that book thirty-five years earlier to a deeper discussion approaching "the

1LAM, 260.
highest principles." The given situation: "a young Jew born and raised in Germany who found himself in the grip of the theologico-political predicament."¹ "The highest principles" are approached in the exposition of that theologico-political predicament. In his Introduction to Philosophie und Gesetz, Strauss may be said to focus more exclusively on the theological side of that predicament and in the Preface to Liberalism Ancient and Modern he raises questions about Judaism and contemporary liberalism, or about the contemporary theologico-political predicament. Perhaps the simplest is a spoken informal self-introductory statement of Strauss's delivered at St. Johns College (where Strauss was the first Scott Buchanan Distinguished Scholar in Residence). At a meeting there, Jacob Klein and Leo Strauss (referred to as "Mr. Klein" and "Mr. Strauss") were to give "accounts" of the "genesis of their thought." Jacob Klein said of Leo Strauss:

His primary interests were two questions: one, the question of God; and two, the question of politics. These questions were not mine.²

¹Leo Strauss, Spinoza's Critique of Religion (Schocken Books, 1965), 1 -- hereafter, SCR.

²Jacob Klein and Leo Strauss, "A Giving of Accounts," The College (St. Johns College, Annapolis, April, 1970), 1 -- hereafter "Accounts."
(Strauss prefaced his "account" with the question:

Is it proper for people to talk about themselves in public?
The general answer is: no.)

Strauss acknowledges that his thoughts are connected with his life.

I for one will have to say something about my life. But this is of interest even to me only as a starting point of consideration, of studies, which I hope are intelligible to those who do not know my starting point. Why then speak of one's life at all? Because the considerations at which I arrive are not necessarily true or correct; my life may explain my pitfalls.

After more prefatory remarks, Mr. Strauss opens his "account" proper:

I was brought up in a conservative even orthodox Jewish home somewhere in a rural district of Germany. The "ceremonial" laws were rather strictly observed but there was little Jewish knowledge. In the Gymnasium I became exposed to the message of German humanism. I formed the plan, or the wish, to spend my life reading Plato and breeding rabbits by earning my livelihood as a rural postmaster. Without being aware of it, I had moved rather far away from my Jewish home, without any rebellion. When I was seventeen, I was converted to Zionism -- to simple, straightforward political Zionism.

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1 I am not sure what Strauss means by "Jewish knowledge." If he means competence in Jewish thinkers like Maimonides, then indeed few Jews could be said to have "Jewish knowledge." (I have been told second-hand that Strauss's father adhered to a regular schedule of Jewish learning.)

2 Apparently, to Klein, Strauss still appeared orthodox in his twenties. They met at Marburg in 1920. Klein reminisces: "... his [Strauss's] preoccupation with the question of divinity and with the peculiar way of Jewish life and Jewish history tied his thinking and feeling to Jerusalem. He distinguished sharply -- and did so always -- the political programs and actions of the Jews from the religious background. There was a time when Leo Strauss was an orthodox Jew, while yet pursuing his political goals explicitly and determinedly in an unreligious way." "LS," 2.
Notwithstanding his "straying" from his orthodox home, he tells us that he was attracted to Hermann Cohen. 1 "Cohen attracted me because he was a passionate philosopher and a Jew passionately devoted to Judaism." And apparently, it was Strauss's devotion to Judaism which attracted him to Franz Rosenzweig. "Jewish theology was resurrected from a deep slumber by Franz Rosenzweig, a highly gifted man whom I greatly admired to the extent to which I understood him." 2

Cohen and Husserl (under whom he studied, without "great benefit"!), Strauss tells us, "belonged definitely to the pre-war [W. W. I] world." He says: "Most characteristic of the post world war was the resurgence of theology: Karl Barth." 3

1His writings, Strauss's SCR, in the original German which was published in 1930, is dedicated "To the memory of Franz Rosenzweig." One of Strauss's earliest published works is "Cohen's Analyse der Bibelwissenschaft Spinozas," Der Jude, XIII, 1924, 295-314. This article is not listed in the bibliography of Strauss's works at the end of J. Cropsey (ed.) Ancients and Moderns (Basic Books, 1964).


3Ibid. Strauss says: "The preface to the first edition of his commentary on the Epistles to the Romans is of great importance also to non-theologians: it sets forth the principles of interpretation but it is concerned exclusively with the subject matter as distinguished from historical interpretation." Ibid.
And Martin Heidegger.

One of the unknown young men in Husserl's entourage was Heidegger. I attended his lecture course from time to time without understanding a word, but sensed that he dealt with something of the utmost importance to man as man. I understood something on one occasion: when he interpreted the beginning of the Metaphysics, I had never heard nor seen such a thing—such a thorough and intensive interpretation of a philosophic text. On my way home I visited Rosenzweig and said to him that compared to Heidegger, Max Weber, till then regarded by me as the incarnation of the spirit of science and scholarship, was an orphan child.1

But it was less Heidegger's 2 "new thinking" than Rosenzweig's 3 and the "resurgence of theology" generally which animated and gave

1 "Accounts," 3.

2 Apparently, after 1925, when Heidegger was at Marburg, Klein and Strauss spent many hours in discussion together. Strauss recalls: "Klein was more attracted by the Aristotle brought to light and life by Heidegger [in his "Destrucktion"] than by Heidegger's own philosophy. Later Klein turned to the study of Plato in which he got hardly any help from Heidegger. Klein convinced me of two things. First, the one thing needed philosophically is in the first place a return to, a recovery of, classical philosophy; second, the way in which Plato is read, especially by professors of philosophy and by men who do philosophy, is wholly inadequate because it does not take into account the dramatic character of the dialogues, also and especially of those of their parts which look almost like philosophic treatises." But at that time Strauss was deeply involved in his study of Spinoza and Maimonides.

3 Strauss's first position as a professional scholar was with the Academy for Jewish Research in Berlin—a project of Rosenzweig's.
direction to Strauss's studies. In the Preface, Strauss recalls:

Considerations... made one wonder whether an unqualified return to Jewish orthodoxy was not both possible and necessary -- was not at the same time the solution to the problem of the Jew lost in the non-Jewish modern world and the only course compatible with sheer consistency or intellectual probity. Vague difficulties remained like small faraway clouds on a beautiful summer sky. They soon took the shape of Spinoza -- the greatest man of Jewish origin who had openly denied the truth of Judaism and had ceased to belong to the Jewish people without becoming a Christian.

Strauss makes explicit his goal in studying Spinoza:

I wished to understand to what extent it ["the attack of the Enlightenment on the old orthodoxy"] was a failure and to what extent it was not. ... The classic document of the attack on orthodoxy within Judaism, but not only within Judaism, is Spinoza's Theological Political Treatise [sic]. Spinoza's Treatise had been subjected to a fierce criticism by Cohen -- a criticism which was impressive because Cohen was entirely free from the idolatry of Spinoza as the God-intoxicated thinker but it was nevertheless inadequate. In order to form an independent judgment I began, therefore, a fresh study of the Theological Political Treatise [sic]. In this study I was greatly assisted by Lessing, especially his theological writings, some of them with forbidding titles.

1SCR, 15.

Leo Strauss, in 1970, looking back, rather emphatically calls attention to the fact that his starting point was "the Jewish problem" with special emphasis on the theological aspect. (This same emphasis is found in the Introduction to Philosophie und Gesetz, not to mention the Preface.)

3. "The Jewish Problem"

Strauss's first experience of the Jewish problem, at age five or six, made a profound and lasting impression. He recalls:

I saw in my father's house refugees from Russia, after some pogroms which had happened there, women, children, old men, on their way to Australia. At that time it could not happen in Germany. We Jews there lived in profound peace with our non-Jewish neighbours... this story [presumably, of the pogroms in Russia]... made a very deep impression on me which I have not forgotten until the present day. It was an unforgettable moment. I sensed for a moment that it could happen here. That was overlaid soon by other pleasing experiences but still it went to my bones.

As a young man, Strauss lived under a weak, if well-intentioned liberal democratic regime: the Weimar Republic. (He speaks of "its mild, non-radical character: its resolve to keep a balance

1 Leo Strauss, "Why We Remain Jews...?", a Hillel Foundation lecture (Chicago, February 4th, 1962), 3 -- hereafter, "Hillel Lecture." Cf. "On LS" where it is cited to illustrate -- in my opinion, questionably -- Strauss's conservative "instinct." (It should be noted that the transcriptions of Strauss's lectures are "unauthorized"; that is, Strauss himself never looked at them.)
between the dedication to the principles of 1789 and dedication to the highest German tradition." He reflects: "On the whole it presented the sorry spectacle of justice without a sword or of justice unable to use the sword. The old Germany was stronger -- stronger in will -- than the new Germany."\(^1\) The weakness of that liberal democracy, Strauss and other young German Jews realized at the time, made "the situation of indigenous Jews... more precarious in Germany than in any other western country"; Strauss, along with "a small minority of German Jews, but a considerable minority of German-Jewish youth studying at the university... turned to Zionism."\(^2\)

Strauss singles out two elements of the precarious predicament of German Jewry -- in addition to the traditional anti-Jewish sentiments. (Strauss adduces quotations from Goethe, Nietzsche and Heidegger which reflect clearly the anti-Jewish sentiments of Germans.\(^3\)) One is a "peculiarity" of Germany and the other a

\(^1\)SCR, 1.

\(^2\)SCR, 4.

\(^3\)SCR, 3-4. I believe he chooses these three in particular, at least in part, in order to prove his point that "being favorably disposed toward this or that man or woman of Jewish origin does not mean being favorably disposed toward Jews." SCR, 4.
'peculiarity' of German Jews. Strauss writes:

In Germany, and only there, did the end of the Middle Ages coincide with the beginning of the longing for the Middle Ages... All profound German longing -- for those for the Middle Ages were not the only ones or even the most profound -- all these longings for the origins or, negatively expressed, all German dissatisfaction with modernity pointed toward a third Reich...

This is not to suggest that the rise of national socialism was readily foreseeable. But it does suggest that the reaction against the failure of liberal democracy in Germany would likely carry with it a reaction against Jews because of the close identification in the German mind of Jews and liberal democracy. Strauss explains:

Liberal democracy had originally defined itself in theologically-political treatises as the opposite, not of the more or less enlightened despotism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but of "the kingdom of darkness," i.e. of medieval society... In the middle ages religion -- i.e. Catholic Christianity -- was the bond of society. 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. 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 -- the only regime ever anywhere -- which had no other clear principle than murderous hatred of the Jews, for

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1SCR, 2.
2SCR, 1.
"Aryan" had no clear meaning other than "non Jewish." One must keep in mind the fact that Hitler did not come from Prussia, nor even from Bismarck's reich. ¹

The second element, the German-Jewish "peculiarity" is sketched by Strauss in the following statement:

At a time when German Jews were politically in a more precarious situation than Jews in any other Western country, they originated "the science of Judaism," the historical-critical study by Jews of the Jewish heritage. ² The emancipation of Jews in Germany coincided with the greatest epoch of German thought

¹SCR. 3. I am not sure what is intended by the last sentence. Is the point primarily that Hitler's home, Austria, was least modern and most "medieval" and Catholic?

²See Gershom Scholem (whom Strauss greatly admired) on "The Science of Judaism..." in his The Messianic Idea in Judaism (Schocken Books, 1972), 304-314. He writes: "Two tendencies were competing in the construction of the Science of Judaism from the very beginning. The one was set upon the liquidation of Judaism as a living organism. Its goal was 'de-Judaization'. . . . The other was directed toward its transfiguration." But, he adds, "At the same time the positive element quite unintentionally asserts itself. In many... scholars, romantic enthusiasm overcomes their original intention of liquidating, spiritualizing, and de-actualizing Judaism. It drives them on to positive insight far removed from what they originally envisioned." He continues: "This tendency of the Science of Judaism in the nineteenth century... cast a kind of spell over Jewish history itself, a spell which expressed itself in a certain type of idyll, a peculiar etherealization. The ancient Jewish books, forgotten and betrayed by a few generations, had become opaque for this nineteenth century. They were often regarded as possessing only antiquarian interest. They no longer sent their rays outward but, as it were, radiated only into themselves; they had become invisible... A living relationship to the realities of Jewish literature existed only insofar as it lent itself to timely exploitation for the political and apologetic battle of the Jews in Europe, especially in Western Europe. Beyond this there is scarcely a direct, living relationship to these things." 306-307.
and poetry, the epoch in which Germany was the foremost country in thought and poetry. One cannot help comparing the period of German Jewry with the period of Spanish Jewry. The greatest achievements of Jews during the Spanish period were rendered possible partly by the fact that Jews became receptive to the influx of Greek thought, which was understood to be Greek only accidentally. During the German period, however, the Jews opened themselves to the influx of German thought, the thought of the particular nation in the midst of which they lived -- a thought which was understood to be German essentially; political independence was also spiritual dependence. This was the core of the predicament of German Jewry.¹

Concern with "the Jewish problem" and with liberal democracy and its problems and the relation of the two was Strauss's starting point but not merely his starting point. Clearly the Preface is not merely a reminiscence. The Jewish problem is not solved and neither is the crisis of liberal democracy. Strauss makes emphatically clear in the introductory writings which we are discussing that these "problems" have engaged him throughout his life. Concern with "the Jewish problem" and liberal democracy may be said to be the surface of Strauss's deeper studies into "the highest principles" of Jerusalem and Athens respectively, and of his consideration of their relation.

¹ My underlining. SCR, 3.
4. Liberalism, Conservatism and "the Jewish Problem"

Liberalism and conservatism are especially difficult to define in a North American context. (E.g., here in Ontario we have a Progressive Conservative government. According to Strauss:

"Progressivism is indeed a better term than liberalism for the opposite to conservatism. For if conservatism is, as its name indicates, aversion to change or distrust of change, its opposite should be identified with the opposite posture toward change, not with something substantive like liberty or liberality." ) Strauss traces the confusion ultimately back to the quarrel between the ancients and the moderns which his writings "try to lay bare."¹ He writes:

The opposition between conservatism and liberalism had a clear meaning at the time at which and in the places in which it arose in these terms. Then and there the conservatives stood for "throne and altar," and the liberal stood for popular sovereignty and the strictly nonpublic (private) character of religion. Yet conservatism in this sense is no longer politically important. The conservatism of our age is identical with what originally was liberalism, more or less modified by changes in the direction of present-day liberalism. One could go further and say that much of what goes now by the name of conservatism has in the last analysis a common root with present-day liberalism and even with Communism. That this is the case would appear most clearly if one were to go back to the origin of modernity, to the break with the premodern tradition that took place in the seventeenth century, of the quarrel between the ancients and the moderns.²

¹ LAM, vii.
² Ibid.
Now this hardly resolves the difficulty for us but Strauss's remarks may help us be alert and perhaps provide direction for considering in what sense the term liberal or conservative is meant. This obtains, in the context of our discussion, especially for Strauss's use of the terms.

Strauss once wrote a letter to the editor. In it, he emphatically asserts that Herzl was a conservative and that Israel is a conservative country. Consider these excerpts:

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What I am going to say is based exclusively on what I have seen with my own eyes.

The first thing which strikes one in Israel is that the country is a Western country, which educates its many immigrants from the East in the ways of the West; Israel is the only country which as a country is an outpost of the West in the East. Furthermore Israel is a country... in which a single book absolutely predominates in the instruction given in elementary schools and in high schools: the Hebrew Bible. Whatever the failings of individuals may be, the spirit of the country as a whole can justly be described in these terms: heroic austerity supported by the nearness of biblical antiquity. A conservative, I take it, is a man who believes that "everything good is heritage." I know of no country today in which this belief is stronger and less lethargic than in Israel.

I hear the argument that the country is run by labor unions.... But even if it were true, a conservative, I take it, is a man who knows that the same arrangement may have very different meanings in different circumstances.
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Finally I wish to say that the founder of Zionism, Herzl, was fundamentally a conservative man, guided in his Zionism by conservative considerations. The moral spine of the Jews was in danger of being broken by the so-called emancipation which in many cases had alienated them from their heritage, and yet not given them anything more than merely formal equality; it had brought about a condition which has been called "external freedom and inner servitude"; political Zionism was the attempt to restore that inner freedom that simple dignity of which only people who remember their heritage and are loyal to their fate, are capable.

Political Zionism is problematic for obvious reasons. But I can never forget what it achieved as a moral force in an era of complete dissolution. It helped to stem the tide of "progressive" levelling of venerable, ancestral differences: it fulfilled a conservative function.  

Now Strauss in the Preface underscores the liberal aspect of Zionism. Indeed, in that discussion, it appears that what is problematic about political Zionism is precisely its liberal aspect. Strauss writes:

The peculiarity of Zionism as a modern movement comes out most clearly in the strictly political Zionism presented first by Leon Pinsker . . . and then by Theodore Herzl . . . Pinsker and Herzl started from the failure of the liberal solution, but continued to see the problem to be solved as it had begun to be seen by liberalism, i.e. as a merely human problem . . . . It was to be understood in merely human terms, as constituting a

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1Leo Strauss, Letter to the Editor, National Review (January 5th, 1957) -- hereafter, "Strauss Letter." Werner Dannhauser discerns in this Letter "seeds of a possible critique of a kind of conservatism to be found in National Review." Dannhauser brings those seeds to fruition. He counts the ways in which Strauss is not "simply conservative; at the very least, not a simple conservative." W.J. Dannhauser, "The Achievement of Leo Strauss," National Review, December 7th, 1973, 13, 55-57 -- hereafter "LS's Achievement."

Strauss's Letter to the Editor is attached as Appendix A.
purely political problem which as such cannot be solved by appealing to the justice or generosity of other nations, to say nothing of a league of all nations . . . . The true solution of the Jewish problem requires that the Jews become "like all the nations" (I Samuel 8), that the Jewish nation assimilate itself to the nations of the world or that it establish a modern, liberal, secular . . . state. Political Zionism, then, strictly understood was the movement of an elite on behalf of a community constituted by common descent and common degradation, for the restoration of their honor through the acquisition of statehood and therefore of a country . . . . What the change effected by strictly political Zionism means, one sees most clearly when, returning to the origin, one ponders this sentence of Spinoza: "If the foundations of their religion did not effeminate the minds of the Jews, I would absolutely believe that they will at some time, given the occasion (for human things are mutable) establish their state again." ¹

5. On the "Conservatism" of Herzl and Political Zionism

To get unentangled from this confusion, we must straighten out the various strands of meaning of these terms as they are used in various contexts. Herzl, in the context of his time and place, was surely not a conservative -- a "throne and altar" conservative;

¹SCR, 4-5. There is no doubt that Strauss shares the Zionist conviction that Jews could not "regain their honor by assimilating as individuals to the nations among which they lived or by becoming citizens like all other citizens of the liberal states." See his "Hillel Lecture," 16. In that same context, he also makes clear the "unconservative" "liberating" and liberalizing impact of Zionism. Strauss tells this story: "I had a friend who was not a Zionist and his father was an old fashioned liberal Jew. They called themselves in Germany 'German citizens of Jewish faith.' And what he said when he goes to fetch his father from the synagogue and sees him together..."
furthermore, he saw the solution to "the Jewish problem" as a matter of merely human effort (which Strauss suggests marks him a liberal) and that effort was to be directed to the establishment of a liberal secular state. On the other hand, Herzl was critical of the liberal solution of "the Jewish problem." What does this say about his liberalism? It says clearly that he was not a liberal if liberalism be seen "as guided by the ideal of the universal and homogeneous state" or if liberalism be identified with the conviction that we are progressing toward such a state and that that progress is desirable.

with his other assimilationist friends, and then he sees these young generations of Zionist boys . . . [It is clear to him] that this older generation which is so un-Jewish by refusing any [Jewish] national character . . . is much more Jewish than this young generation [of Zionists] . . . . It's undeniable." Ibid.

Strauss writes: "The failure of the liberal solution meant that Jews could not regain their honor by assimilating as individuals to the nations among which they lived or by becoming citizens like all other citizens of the liberal states: the liberal solution bought at best legal equality, but not social equality; as a demand of reason it had no effect on the feelings of non-Jews. To quote Herzl again: 'We are a nation -- the enemy makes us a nation whether we like it or not.'" SCR, 5.

LAM, vi; see v. See, too, Leo Strauss On Tyranny (Cornell U.P., 1968), 225 and 222 ff. -- hereafter OnTyr.
Herzl, then, in light of liberalism so conceived, is a conservative according to the following definition of conservatives:

Conservatives regard the universal homogeneous state as either undesirable, though possible, or as both undesirable and impossible. Conservatives look with greater sympathy than liberals on the particular or particularist and the heterogeneous; at least they are more willing than liberals to respect and perpetuate a more fundamental diversity than the one ordinarily respected and taken for granted by liberals and even by Communists, that is, the diversity regarding language, folksongs, pottery, and the like.

It is in this sense that Strauss may indeed assert, as he does in his letter, that Herzl was a conservative man and that political Zionism "fulfilled a conservative function."

6. Liberalism: Less Than a Perfect Solution, But the Best Viable According to Classical Conservatism, Judaism, and Zionism, Respectively

Strauss tells us that

pre-modern political philosophy, and in particular classical political philosophy, cannot be simply conservative since it is guided by the awareness that all man (sic) seek by nature, not the ancestral or traditional, but the good.

1 LAM, vi.
2 LAM, viii.
On the other hand, classical political philosophy is opposed to liberalism (conceived as aiming at the universal homogeneous state). Strauss writes:

Classical political philosophy opposes to the universal homogeneous state a substantive principle... It asserts that every political society that ever has been and ever will be rests on a particular fundamental opinion which cannot be replaced by knowledge and hence is of necessity a particular or particularist society.¹

Classical conservatism -- especially in its opposition to liberalism on this ground -- then has an affinity with both traditional Judaism and Zionism. And perhaps one may say all of these are combined in Strauss or at very least, Strauss deeply appreciated all of these.² True, he is critical of Zionism but that criticism need hardly be

¹Ibid.

²Himmelfarb observes: "There have been no Left Straussians." (See Dannhauser's "explanation" in "LS's Achievement", 1356.) He also observes: "In the first Straussian generation there is a fairly high proportion of Jews. The reasons for this are unclear." "On LS," 64. That first generation studied with Strauss in the forties and fifties, a time of especially acute awareness of "the Jewish problem." Does our discussion throw any light on these facts?
construed to mean that his Zionist ardor cooled. 1 Judaism and classical political philosophy are in one respect allied over against Zionism: in questioning the promise of perfect human solutions. 2 

(Judaism does promise Divine redemption.) All this is brought out very well in Strauss's critical discussion of Zionism:

Strictly political Zionism became effective only through becoming an ingredient, not to say the backbone, of Zionism at large, i.e. by making its peace with traditional Jewish thought. Through this alliance or fusion it brought about the establishment of the state of Israel and therewith that cleansing

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1 Harry Jaffa, whom Himmelfarb singles out as an exemplar of Straussians who produce first-rate work, seems to imply that Strauss "retired" his Jewish and Zionist ardor. He writes: "Henceforth [after his "Jewish studies led him . . . ultimately to Socrates"] his Jewishness would not take the form of any political commitment as such, but of a quiet pride in a tradition. . ." "LS's Achievement," 1354.

2 Strauss sums up the classical view as follows: "The classics thought that, owing to the weakness or dependence of human nature, universal happiness is impossible, and therefore they did not dream of a fulfillment of History and hence not of a meaning of History. They saw with their mind's eye a society within which that happiness of which human nature is capable would be possible in the highest degree: that society is the best regime. But because they saw how limited man's power is, they held that the actualization of the best regime depends on chance. Modern man, dissatisfied with utopias and scorning them, has tried to find a guarantee for the actualization of the best social order. In order to succeed, or rather in order to be able to believe that he could succeed, he had to lower the goal of man. One form in which this was done was to replace moral virtue by universal recognition, or to replace happiness by the satisfaction deriving from universal recognition. The classical solution is utopian in the sense that its actualization is improbable. The modern solution is utopian in the sense that its actualization is impossible. The classical solution supplies a stable standard by which to judge of any actual order. The modern solution eventually destroys the very idea of a standard that is independent of actual situations." OnTy, 225.
which it had primarily intended; it thus procured a blessing for all Jews everywhere regardless of whether they admit it or not. It did not, however, solve the Jewish problem. It could not solve the Jewish problem because of the narrowness of its original conception, however noble. This narrowness was pointed out most effectively by cultural Zionism: strictly political Zionism, concerned only with the present emergency and resolve, lacks historical perspective: the community of descent, of the blood, must also be a community of the mind, of the national mind; the Jewish state will be an empty shell without a Jewish culture which has its roots in the Jewish heritage. One could not have taken this step unless one had previously interpreted the Jewish heritage itself as a culture, i.e. as a product of the national mind, of the national genius. Yet the foundation, the authoritative layer, of the Jewish heritage presents itself, not as a product of the human mind, but as a divine gift, as divine revelation. Did one not completely distort the meaning of the heritage to which one claimed to be loyal by interpreting it as a culture like any other high culture? Cultural Zionism believed it had found a safe middle ground between politics (power politics) and divine revelation, between the subcultural and the supra-cultural, but it lacked the sternness of these two extremes. When cultural Zionism understands itself, it turns into religious Zionism. But when religious Zionism understands itself, it is in the first place Jewish faith and only secondarily Zionism. It must regard as blasphemous the notion of a human solution to the Jewish problem. It may go so far as to regard the establishment of the state of Israel as the most important event in Jewish history since the completion of the Talmud, but it cannot regard it as the arrival of the Messianic age, of the redemption of Israel and of all men. The establishment of the state of Israel is the most profound modification of the Galut: in the religious sense, and perhaps not only in the religious sense, the state of Israel is a part of the Galut. Finite, relative problems can be solved; infinite, absolute problems cannot be solved. In other words, human beings will never create a society which is free of contradictions. From every point of view it looks as if the Jewish people were the chosen people in the sense, at least, that the Jewish problem is the most manifest symbol of the human problem as a social or political problem.  

1 Lam, 5-6.
The latter sentences remind one -- and I conjecture -- not accidentally of the position of classical political philosophy. Strauss, it may be said, appears to speak both as a Jew and as a friend of Socrates. Both discourage immoderate expectations from political solutions, and immoderate political projects.

Moderation will protect us against the twin dangers of visionary expectations from politics and unmanly contempt for politics.

Strauss suggests that both classical political science and the modern Jew must find the modern liberal democratic state far from perfect: for the Jew, however, "uneasy" its "solution of the Jewish problem" it is far superior to the experienced alternatives (which proclaimed themselves "perfect solutions"), and "it comes closer to what the classics demanded than any alternative that is viable in our age." Both the Platonist and the Jew should be acutely aware that the alternatives which ominously threaten, promise ultimate tyranny or chaos. Precisely this awareness should make both disinclined

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1 LAM, 24.
2 OnTyr, 206.
3 See OnTyr, 226.
4 See OnTyr, 207.
to take complacently liberal democracy for granted. Both in its respective ways should be inclined to help sustain and strengthen liberal democracy. Strauss finds contemporary liberal democracy in a "crisis," \(^1\) urgently in need of reinvigoration, of a persuasive defense of its principles. Such a defense of liberal democracy requires clarity about its roots and in the first place clarity about political things. It therefore requires "return" to the classical articulation of the primary commonsense understanding of political things and to a recollection of the quarrel between ancients and moderns.

7. "The Jewish Problem" and the "Preestablished Harmony Between Value-free Science and Liberal Values"

"The Jewish problem" may be said to give the Jew a special interest and even a special stake in strengthening liberal democracy, but precisely that interest will incline Jews to "spiritual dependence" to a disinclination to adopt a critical posture toward, say, the magisterial sway of positivistic social science. Strauss leaves no

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\(^1\) See his Introduction to C&M.
doubt that we are indeed subject to the magisterial sway of value-free
science and historicism (briefly discussed below). Strauss calls
attention to this difficulty:

Every observer of present-day liberalism must be struck
by the very frequent "personal union" of liberalism and
value-free social science. One is thus led to wonder whether
this union is merely accidental or whether there is not a
necessary connection between value-free social science and
liberalism, although liberalism is not, as goes without saying,
value-free. At any rate, the critical study of present-day
social science is no mean part of the critical study of
liberalism.¹

In immediate juxtaposition to the above, Strauss calls special attention
to the fact that it is especially difficult for Jews to be critical of
contemporary "liberal values." Strauss writes:

Not much familiarity with political life is needed in order
to see that it is particularly difficult for a nonorthodox Jew to
adopt a critical posture toward liberalism. Even Jews who are
politically conservative can be observed to defer to contemporary
Jewish "opinion leaders" who can in no sense be described as
politically conservative. This state of things induces one to
raise questions such as these: In what sense or to what extent
is Judaism one of the roots of liberalism? Are Jews compelled
by their heritage or their self-interest to be liberals? Is
liberalism necessarily friendly to Jews and Judaism? Can the
liberal state claim to have solved the Jewish problem? Can any
state claim to have solved it? To these questions I address
myself in . . . two statements . . . ²

¹LAM, viii.
²LAM, viii-ix.
(The two statements are the Preface and "Perspectives on the Good Society."\(^1\) This statement which is not as simple and direct as we would perhaps like, will serve to focus our attempt to bring out more fully Strauss's concern with "the Jewish problem" and modern liberalism.

Whatever the signification of "nonorthodox" in this statement, clearly there is and can be no significant difference between orthodox and nonorthodox Jews with respect to: a) recognizing the superior if "uneasy" "solution to 'the Jewish problem' offered by the liberal state"; b) Strauss's exhortation ever to bear in mind the truth proclaimed by Zionism regarding the limitations of liberalism and c) the disinclination to be critical -- to put it dramatically -- of Max Weber. Indeed, what Jew would not eagerly embrace Max Weber if the most imposing alternative choices are informed by Heidegger\(^2\)

\(^1\) LAM, 260-272.

\(^2\) Strauss is as unstinting in his acknowledgement of Heidegger's greatness as he is unrelenting in his condemnation of him. Strauss leaves no doubt that Heidegger is the greatest thinker, more, the thinker of our day. It was evident to Strauss very early (in the early 20's) that "Heidegger won out over Husserl" ("Accounts," 3) and over Cassirer and the Marburg school (WPP, 246). Strauss speaks of "present-day philosophy in its highest form, in its Heideggerian form." "Accounts," 3. He writes: "One has to go back to Hegel until one finds another professor of philosophy who affected in a comparable manner the thought of Germany, nay, of Europe. But Hegel had some contemporaries whose power equalled his or at any rate whom one could compare to him
without being manifestly foolish. Heidegger surpasses all his contemporaries by far. This could be seen long before he became known to the general public. As soon as he appeared on the scene, he stood in its center and he began to dominate it. His domination grew almost continuously in extent and in intensity. He gave adequate expression to the prevailing unrest and dissatisfaction because he had clarity and certainty, if not about the whole way, at least about the first and decisive steps. The fermentation or the tempest gradually ceased. Eventually a state has been reached which the outsider is inclined to describe as paralysis of the critical faculties; philosophizing seems to have been transformed into listening with reverence to the incipient mythoi of Heidegger..." WPP? 246. Strauss also leaves no doubt of the essential connection between Heidegger's thought and his espousal of national socialism, and he makes clear that Heidegger remained an unregenerate partisan of national socialism. Strauss refers to the readiness of "the most radical historicist in 1933 to submit to, or rather to welcome, as a dispensation of fate, the verdict of the least wise and least moderate part of his nation while it was in its least wise and least moderate mood, and at the same time to speak of wisdom and moderation." WPP? 27. He states: "Two generations later, in 1953, Heidegger could speak of 'the inner truth of national socialism'." SCR, 4. In addition to this enormity, Strauss notes that Heidegger does not see fit to remove his reference to a "cleansing" of German universities under the Nazi regime. See SCR, 1, n. 6. Strauss states: "It was obvious that Heidegger's new thinking led far away from any charity as well as from any humanity." SCR, 9. And he says: "What I could not stomach was his moral teaching, for despite his disclaimer, he had such a teaching. The key term is resoluteness without any indication as to what are the proper objects of resoluteness. There is a straight line which leads from Heidegger's resoluteness to his siding with the so-called Nazis in 1933. After that I ceased to take any interest in him for about two decades." "Accounts," 3. And he writes: "There is no room for political philosophy in Heidegger's work... This does not mean that Heidegger is wholly alien to politics: he welcomed Hitler's revolution in 1933 and he, who had never praised any other contemporary political effort, still praised national socialism long after Hitler had been muted and Heil Hitler had been transformed into Heil Unheil. We cannot help holding these facts against Heidegger. Moreover, one is bound to misunderstand Heidegger's thought radically if one does not see their intimate connection with the core of his philosophic thought." Leo Strauss, "Philosophy as Rigorous Science and Political Philosophy," interpretation, II:1, (Summer, 1971), 2, -- hereafter, interpretation.
on the one hand and Stalin on the other? Max Weber would not
only win the ugly contest hands down, he might well take the
prize in a beauty contest, because he was a beautifully decent
man. Perhaps no one better exemplifies the "'personal union' of
liberalism and value free social science."¹ (Strauss singles out
Max Weber and Schelling as "famous cases precisely in Germany
who were not only friendly to Jews but showed a very profound
understanding of what one would call the "substance" of Judaism.)²

Of the "uneasy" but "superior" "solution of the Jewish
problem" offered by the liberal state, of the Jewish stake in strong
liberal democracy, and not least, of the need of Jews to be mindful
of "the truth proclaimed by Zionism," Strauss writes:

To realize that the Jewish problem is insoluble means ever to
bear in mind the truth proclaimed by Zionism regarding the
limitations of liberalism. Liberalism stands or falls by the
distinction between state and society, or by the recognition
of a private sphere, protected by the law but impervious to the
law, with the understanding that, above all, religion as
particular religion belongs to the private sphere. Just as

¹ We have already indicated Strauss's great admiration and
virtual disciple-like attraction to Max Weber as a young man. See
Natural Right and History, (Phoenix Books, University of Chicago
Press 1965), 36 -- hereafter, NR. There Strauss acknowledges:
"No one since Weber has devoted a comparable amount of intelli-
gence, assiduity, and almost fanatical devotion to the basic
problems of the social sciences. Whatever may have been his
errors, he is the greatest social scientist of our century."

² "Hillel Lecture," 5.
certainly as the liberal state will not "discriminate" against its Jewish citizens, so is it constitutionally unable and even unwilling to prevent "discrimination" against Jews by individuals or groups. To recognize a private sphere in the sense indicated means to permit private "discrimination," to protect it and thus in fact to foster it. The liberal state cannot provide a solution to the Jewish problem, for such a solution would require a legal prohibition against every kind of "discrimination," i.e. the abolition of the private sphere, the denial of the difference between state and society, the destruction of the liberal state. Such a destruction would not by any means solve the Jewish problem, as is shown in our days by the anti-Jewish policy of the USSR. It is foolish to say that the policy contradicts the principles of Communism, for it contradicts the principles of Communism to separate the principles of Communism from the Communist movement. The USSR owes its survival to Stalin's decision not to wait for the revolution of the Western proletariat, i.e. for what others would do for the USSR, but to build up socialism in a single country where his word was the law, by the use of any means however bestial, and these means could include, as a matter of course, certain means successfully used previously, not to say invented, by Hitler: the large-scale murder of party members and anti-Jewish measures. This is not to say that Communism has become what National Socialism always was, the prisoner of an anti-Jewish ideology, but it makes use of anti-Jewish measures in an unprincipled manner when and where they seem to be expedient. It is merely to confirm our contention that the uneasy "solution of the Jewish problem" offered by the liberal state is superior to the Communist "solution."

1Cf., CM, 4. There Strauss puts it: "Communism revealed itself even to the meanest capacities as Stalinism and post-Stalinism, for Trotskyism, being a flag without an army and even without a general, is condemned or refuted by its own principles."

2SCR, 6-7. It is noteworthy that Himmelfarb fails to discuss Strauss's "Zionist" conviction of the inadequacy of liberalism to solve
Strauss appears to suggest that "discrimination" per se in the private sphere is not too bad or at least much to be preferred to its radical "cure." Imperfect "uneasy" political solutions are to be preferred to "perfect" radical or immoderate ones. Immoderate or visionary expectations of political solutions lead to regimes which

"the Jewish problem." Generally, discussion of "the Jewish problem" and liberalism is omitted. It is pointed to very indirectly in the contrast drawn between Strauss and other German Jews prominent in "the intellectual migration." Himmelfarb writes: "In being as Jewish as he was, and as conservative, Strauss was wholly distinct from those we think of when we think of Weimar culture or the intellectual migration: no chapter is devoted to him in the books about these. Of high degree in the culture and the migration was the Institut für Sozialforschung, the so-called Frankfurt School, which included such luminaries as Franz Neumann, Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer . . . the members of this brilliant and admired school, and especially the inner circle, mostly 'came from Jewish backgrounds.' Even after the war these brilliant men continued to deny the intensity, and almost the existence, of pre-war German anti-Semitism! Anyway, they knew that anti-Semitism was not especially important, a symptom of something about capitalism; or else that it was a capitalistic device. Always they insisted that their Jewish backgrounds had nothing to do with their politics, or their school, or their dialectical imagination. In short, they used their brilliance to blind themselves to the most obvious facts." "On LS," 65.
have recourse to immoderate means of problem solving. But there is a more public kind of discrimination of perhaps "lack of discrimina-
tion" which Strauss finds "a real and present danger" and which "provides the incentive" for the Protestant Jewish Colloquium "reported" by Strauss in "Perspectives . . .""

8. Strauss the Conservative and the Liberal Jewish "Opinion Leader"

It is here in "Perspectives . . ." that Strauss (assuming he intends or includes himself in "even Jews who are politically conserv-
ative") can be observed to defer to a "contemporary Jewish 'opinion leader'" who can in no sense be described as politically conservative.

Mr. Dore Schary (Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith) (I believe). Our previous discussion will prove helpful in clarifying the last part of the description of the liberal Jewish "opinion leader." Strauss leaves no doubt in his description of Schary's position that he is a full-fledged liberal. He "reports" it as follows:

Mr. Dore Schary agreed . . . that contemporary America is fundamentally healthy, . . . and that this fundamental health is connected with its being not purely secularist and its not meaning to be it . . . . According to Mr. Schary, democracy is not primarily the rule of the majority, but recognition of the dignity of the individual, that is, of every individual in his

\[1\text{LAM, ix.}\]
individuality. Only a society in which everyone can be what he is or can develop his unique potentialities is truly free and truly great or excellent. What is true of the individual is true also of the groups of which society consists and in particular of the religious groups; the freedom and excellence of this country require, above all, that its citizenry belong to a variety of faiths. Why this is so appears from a consideration of the ills from which American society suffers. Those ills can be reduced to one head: the tendency toward homogeneity or conformism. . . .

In light of our previous discussion it would not appear to be quite the case, assuming that Mr. Schary exemplifies the Jewish liberal "opinion leader," that he can "in no sense be described as politically conservative." He can be so described because he is opposed to homogeneity; at very least, according to Strauss's "report," he expresses ambivalence about progressive universalism. There is a worm of conservatism in the heart of Schary's liberalism, or a bit of old fashioned liberalism -- Lockean liberalism, which is the same thing more or less. He may be said to be somewhat conservative for the same reason that Herzl could be said to be

\[1\] LAM, 262.
conservative and perhaps even more so. Strauss sums up Schary's position:

Mr. Schary I thought ... was less concerned with the truth common to Judaism and Christianity than with the virtues of diversity. But this very concern made him a defender of the religious point of view since religion rather than science is the bulwark of genuine diversity. As is shown in our age especially by the U.S.S.R., the secularist state is inclined to enforce irreligious conformism, just as in the past the religious state was inclined to enforce a religious conformism. It seems that only a qualified secularist, that is, a qualifiedly religious, state which respects equally religious and nonreligious people can be counted upon to contain within itself the remedy against the ill of conformism. However, this may be, it is the danger caused by radical secularism in its Communist or non-Communist form which provides the incentive for such undertakings as a Protestant-Jewish Colloquium.

Is it then any wonder that Strauss can defer to this view?

Strauss expresses Mr. Schary's concern as follows:

American society is in danger of becoming ever more a mass society which is "informed" in the common and in the metaphysical meaning of the term by mass communication, by the mass communication industry, the most visible and audible part of which is the advertising industry.

But as Strauss makes clear there is the danger of suppression by more "political" means as well, of individuality and diversity. He writes:

One may well find it paradoxical that a society dedicated to the free development of each individual in his individuality

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1 Recall Strauss's story about the young Zionist and the old liberal German Jews. Schary does not appear quite as "liberal" as those German liberals.

2 LAM, 265.

3 LAM, 263.
should be threatened by a particular petty kind of conformism, but the paradox disappears on reflection. It is merely a shallow hope to expect that the uninhibited "growth" of each individual to its greatest height will not lead to serious and bloody conflict. The growth must be kept within certain limits: everyone may grow to any height and in any direction providing his growth does not prevent the growth of anybody else to any height and in any direction. The limits, the right limits, are to be set by the law. But in order to fulfill this function, the lawmakers and ultimately the sovereign must possess both knowledge and good will. The sovereign must be enlightened, free from prejudice; such freedom can be expected to come from exposure to science (both natural and social) and its consequences (technology, facility of traveling, and so on). "People and ideas all over the world are increasingly accessible, and the sense of what is 'alien' grows dimmer"; the "more remarkable differences [among the races of men]" tend to dissipate." Mr. Schary was, to say the least, not quite certain whether this is a pure gain. One must be grateful to science and its concomitants for the liberation from prejudice which it achieves; but, as was indicated, the same power also endangers diversity or fosters homogeneity. [This brings out very well the ambivalence of Mr. Schary's liberalism.] As for good will, democracy was originally said to be the form of government the principle of which is virtue. But it is obviously impossible to restrict the suffrage to virtuous men, men of good will, conscientious men, responsible men, or whichever expression one prefers... In the voting booth the prejudices can assert themselves without any hindrance whatever. Voting is meant to determine the character of the legal majority, but it is not irrelevant to the legal majority how the simple majority feels. There may be a stable or permanent majority; in the United States the stable majority is "white Protestant." As a consequence there is a social hierarchy

1The author's brackets.
at the bottom of which are the Negroes... and barely above them are the Jews. There is then a prejudice which is both constitutional and unconstitutional against Negroes and Jews. If I understood Mr. Schary correctly, the conformism against which he directed his attack has the unavowed intention either to transform all Americans into white Protestants or else to deny those Americans who are not white Protestants full equality of opportunity.¹

Mr. Schary champions religious diversity because he perceives that "difference in religious faith -- in dedication to what simply transcends humanity -- is the obstacle par excellence to conformism."²

Strauss elaborates on the role of biblical religions in the secular state.

The secular state may be said to derive from the view that the basis of the civil order must be reason alone, and not revelation, for if revelation, that is, a particular revelation, were made that basis, one would use compulsion open or disguised in the service of faith to the detriment of the purity of faith... On the other hand... if the secular state were self-sufficient, there would be no secure place within it for transsecular Judaism and Christianity: Judaism and Christianity must have something to say to the secular state which secularism is unable to say, and in order to be effective, the message of Judaism and the message of Christianity must be to some extent identical. It was taken

¹LAM, 263-264.

²LAM, 263.
for granted by all participants in the Colloquium that that message could not be the natural religion or the religion of reason which was in the past sometimes regarded as the basis of the secular state, for the religion of reason (assuming that it is possible) would tempt one to believe in the self-sufficiency of reason or to regard the specifically Jewish or Christian message as an unnecessary and peace-disturbing addition to the one thing needful, and it tends to lead toward the euthanasia of religious belief or toward "ethical culture." The common ground on which Jews and Christians can make a friendly collatio to the secular state cannot be the belief in the God of the philosophers, but only the belief in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob — the God who revealed the Ten Commandments or at any rate such commandments as are valid under all circumstances regardless of the circumstances.

(Adumbrated here is the core of what Strauss means by Jerusalem: biblical religions in which obedience is central and primary. In Chapter II we discuss Strauss's "presumption" in this regard about Christianity. We see below in our discussion of modern "syntheses" of Jerusalem and Athens that Strauss's central objection to such syntheses and indeed to much modern theology is that it does not do justice to the obedience commanded by "the word of God from Jerusalem." There is a Jewish tradition which places Mount Moriah in Jerusalem; for Strauss the paradigm of obedience is Abraham's binding of Isaac.)

1LAM, 265-266.
Strauss elsewhere suggests that Christians and Jews have defaulted playing the crucial role assigned them in "the original conception of modern republicanism":

Our present predicament appears to be caused by the decay of religious education of the people and by the decay of liberal education of the representatives of the people... a very large part of the people no longer receive any religious education.2

(Strauss puts these questions:)

Is our present concern with liberal education of adults, our present expectation from such liberal education, not due to the void created by the decay of religious education? Is such liberal education meant to perform the function formerly performed by religious education? Can liberal education perform that function?3

What is our "present predicament"?

If we look... only at what is peculiar to our age or characteristic of our age, we see hardly more than the interplay of mass taste with high-grade but strictly speaking unprincipled efficiency. The technicians are, if not responsible,

1Strauss writes: "The responsibility of the people, of the electors, does not permit a legal definition and is therefore the most obvious crux of modern republicanism. In the earlier stages the solution was sought in the religious education of the people, in the education, based on the Bible, of everyone to regard himself as responsible for his actions and for his thoughts to a God who would judge him...." LAM, 15-16.

2LAM, 18.

3LAM, 19.
at any rate responsive to the demands of the mass; but a mass as mass cannot be responsible to anyone or to anything for anything.  

9. The Nearness of the Philistines

It is then perhaps not fortuitous that Strauss concludes "Perspectives on the Good Society" and the volume entitled Liberalism Ancient and Modern with:

I believe that Jews and Christians would have to choose anarchism or secession...

This is Strauss's response to Nathan Glazer's projection of "the good big society." Strauss "reports":

He [Glazer] dealt with the most successful revolution of our age, "the organizational revolution, or the scientific revolution," and its implications. Through this revolution the gap between "the intellectuals," "the radical and liberal critics," on the one hand and the organizations "representing the status quo" has been closed or at least very much narrowed. The reason was that the intellectuals proved to possess "new techniques for making organizations more efficient." One might say that in proportion as the scientists drew all

1 LAM, 23.

2 LAM, 272.

3 Strauss notes: "He [Glazer] did not speak from a distinctly Jewish point of view -- though officially, he was a Jewish participant in the Colloquium." LAM, 271.
conclusions from their basic premise, which is the assertion that science is limited to "factual" assertions as distinguished from "value" assertions, they lost the right to be radical critics of institutions and became willing servants of any institutions. Yet, strangely, the co-operation of scientists and men of affairs has affected the "values" of the latter: could there be a pre-established harmony between the allegedly value-free science and the liberal values? Be this as it may, the question which troubled Mr. Glazer was whether the society rendered possible by the co-operation of the scientists and the managers -- the society guaranteeing to everyone "simple justice and simple freedom!" -- can be regarded as the good society. . . . Both the reactionary and the intellectual question the claim of "the whole organization, the machine for doing good" -- to be the good society. Mr. Glazer sees only one way out: "to improve the organizations" by setting up "the great organization" or "the big organization" or "the determining center of allocation" which is enabled to direct all other organizations because it "will have far more information and will make much better diagnoses" than anyone else can. Hence it will be "the good big society." . . . he was not sure whether "the organization will be tolerant enough to let them ["good small societies composed of reactionaries, anarchists and radical intellectuals"] be" nor whether "they will be clever enough to evade it." Faced with the grim prospect of universal philistinism, we are forced to wonder whether, according to Mr. Glazer, Judaism and Christianity belong on the side of the big organization or on that of the anarchists. I believe that Jews and Christians would have to choose anarchism or secession. . . . The reason why I believe this is Exodus 13:17: "And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near." The land of the Philistines is perhaps nearer today than it ever was.  

1LAM, 271-272.
Does this seem hard? Strauss may well appear hard.

Certainly he is uncompromisingly "tough" in asserting without hesitation or reluctance that not bodily death but "spiritual death" is most to be shunned, to be shunned at all costs -- literally. He writes:

Cohen was a faithful warner and comforter to many Jews. . . . [W]hat he said about Jewish martyrdom provided, without his being aware of it, for the experience that the Jews subject to Hitler were soon to undergo. He did not provide what no human being could have provided, a way of dealing with a situation like that of the Jews in Soviet Russia, who are killed spiritually by being cut off from the sources of Judaism.

And he does not hesitate to say:

The reformation abolished bloody persecution. But the unbloody persecution which remained was in some respects worse than the bloody persecution of the Middle Ages because it did not call forth the fighting qualities [heroic martyrdom] which were still so powerfully visible in that glorious time for us of the Crusades [which "culminated not accidentally in the murder of whole Jewish communities"]. . . . Our past, our heritage, our origin is then not misfortune as

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1Hermann Cohen, Religion of Reason Out of the Sources of Judaism (Ungar, 1972), xxxviii. The quotation is from Strauss's "Introductory Essay." Hereafter, this work will be referred to as Cohen's RR.
Heine said, still less baseness. But suffering indeed; heroic suffering; suffering stemming from the heroic act of self-dedication of a whole nation to something which it regarded as infinitely higher than itself, in fact, as the infinitely highest. No Jew can do anything better for himself today than to live in remembering this past. ¹

In "Perspectives . . . " Strauss the "reporter" firmly registers agreement with this sentence (of a Jewish participant with whose other sentences, for the most part, he disagreed):

"What more has Israel to offer the world than eternal patience?" ²

Strauss comments:

This sentence calls indeed for a long commentary. One sentence must here suffice: what is called here "eternal patience" is that fortitude in suffering, now despised as "ghetto mentality" by shallow people who have surrendered wholeheartedly to the modern world or who lack the intelligence to consider that a secession from this world might again become necessary for Jews and even for Christians. ³

¹ "Hillel Lecture," 13.

² LAM, 268.

³ LAM, 268. Is this view a contradiction to Zionism? "Eternal patience" and "fortitude in suffering" need not preclude fighting or political activism. To illustrate this point, Strauss, in his "Hillel Lecture," quotes Y. F. Baer "the greatest living Jewish historian." "The best descriptions left us of the persecutions that took place at the time of the First Crusade are to be
It should not need saying that the toughness of Strauss's position does not in itself impugn its truth. We may do well to consider whether its striking "toughness" does not reflect on our "softness."

found in Hebrew records. These were constructed from shorter reports describing the happenings in individual places and provinces, and encountered similar pamphlets with opposite tendencies that were circulated by the Christians. In this age, religious-national martyrdom reaches its highest expression. These martyrs are no seekers after death like the early Christians, no heroes challenging destiny. Violence and death come unsought. And the whole community suffers -- old and young, women and children, willing or not. At first they fight for the preservation of the community, and they hold off their enemies before the walls of the episcopal palace [Strauss: "One must add here . . . the higher clergy behaved on the whole much better than lower clergy. You know the peasants' sons who became priests were much more fanatical and savage. . . ."] or the fortress just as long as defense is possible. But then, when all hope for safety is gone, they are ready for martyrdom. No scene is more stirring than the Sabbath meal of the pious Jews in Xanten (Rumania, 1096): Hardly had the grace before the meal been recited when the news came of the enemy's approach; immediately they fulfilled the ceremony of the closing grace, recited the formula expressing faith in the oneness of God, and carried out the terrible act of sacrifice that was renewed again and again, generation after generation, from the time of Massada. The martyrlogies have described in frightful clarity the ritual of voluntary mutual slaughter. . . and have glorified it in poetry modeled after the sacrifice of Isaac. . . ." "Hillel Lecture," 12-13. But many such examples were known to Spinoza, in whose day the Inquisition was active in his native country, and many are known to those who today speak deprecatingly of "ghetto mentality." Yes, Strauss in his statement here (above in the text) is questioning their implicit assertion of perfect human solutions: i.e., redemption can be wrought by the right kind of know-how and the right kind of hardware." The traditional Jew fought bravely but put his ultimate trust in God. And precisely this trust in God rather than in hardware'is depreciated as "effeminacy" by Spinoza and as ghetto mentality by some latter-day Zionists. Strauss in his statement here is questioning the perfect faith of moderns in technique and hardware."
10. "In What Sense or To What Extent Is Judaism One of the Roots of Liberalism? Are Jews Compelled by Their Heritage To Be Liberals?"

In seeking Strauss's "answer" to these questions in his "two statements," one learns that "addressing oneself to questions" is to be distinguished from dispensing handy simple answers.¹ (I "experienced" this distinction personally. I asked Dr. Strauss his own question concerning the impact of "the biblical orientation"² on modernity. I wanted to know first simply what he perceived the "biblical orientation" to be. I did not get to the second part. Neither did I get a simple answer. He made the question seem an urgent task to which one might well devote the rest of one's life.)³

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¹The other questions are easier: "Is liberalism necessarily friendly to Jews and Judaism? Can the liberal state claim to have solved the Jewish problem? Can any state claim to have solved it?" LAM, ix. Accordingly, Strauss's answers to these questions are clear and direct.

²"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?" OnTyr, 189-190.

³He reacted to my question, giving me the impression that he found "biblical wisdom" elusive and suggesting that, indeed, it is a most important task to attempt to enunciate it. Strauss (typically) offered examples that were more than examples of central questions about biblical wisdom worth pondering. The Bible absolutely forbids
Strauss "addresses himself" to these questions primarily in his discussion of Hermann Cohen in the Preface and elsewhere. What he says about Cohen's synthesis of "Plato and the prophets" is similar to his well-known expression of opposition to the Hegelian synthesis. The latter statement appears more direct and may serve to help us see more clearly. Strauss writes:

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. . . . There is no need for having recourse to a miracle in order to understand Hegel's moral and political teaching. Hegel continued, and in a certain respect radicalized, the modern incest, whereas Plato countenances it, and it inculcates humility, whereas the classics view humility as a defect -- as debasement. What do these examples or samples reveal about the wisdom peculiar to the Bible? "Strauss Talks." (Strauss discerningly observes that Hermann Cohen takes for granted as a conclusion of autonomous reason the peculiar biblical prohibition against incest: "Cohen's notion of holiness does not seem to have much in common with 'the so-called Holiness code' (Leviticus 17 ff.), but -- and this is of no mean significance -- according to him morality, human, rational morality demands the unqualified abstention from incest." Cohen's RR, xxxix. Cohen however does not take humility to be a conclusion of autonomous ethical reason -- as Strauss unfailingly observes: "In his Religion of Reason Cohen makes no distinction between modesty and humility except to say that he who is humble before God is modest toward men. In his Ethics he had said that modesty keeps unimpaired the feeling of one's own worth whereas humility makes the assumption of one's own worthlessness." Ibid., xxxvii-xxxviii.)
tradition that emancipated the passions and hence "competition." That tradition was originated by 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.  

One is enabled to discern the similar thrust of the Preface. Aside from the deeper consideration of whether Athens and Jerusalem can be synthesized (discussed in Chapter II below), Strauss suggests that on an obvious practical level syntheses appear to remove the backbone from both biblical and classical morality; compared to either in itself the synthesized product appears spineless, soft and hedonistic. Does not propounding modernity as a synthesis obscure those modifications, denials or re-interpretations already wrought in the respective traditions by earlier moderns? Should not these be seen as clearly as possible to begin with? Is then not "return" plainly indicated, not to say urgently needed? In sum, Strauss questions the practical salutariness and the clarity of understanding issuing from such syntheses.

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OnTyr, 205.
These elements of Strauss's criticism of a Hegelian synthesis are discernible in the Preface. He makes evident the blindness of German Jewry (he avoids "rubbing it in" in his critical comments on Cohen). Strauss writes of Cohen:

Cohen had a rare devotion to Judaism, he was hardly less devoted to what he understood by culture (science and secular scholarship, autonomous morality leading to socialist and democratic politics, and art); ... Man's moral autonomy must not in any way be called in question. Cohen's goal was the same as that of the other Western spokesmen for Judaism who came after Mendelssohn: to establish a harmony between Judaism and culture, between Torah and derekh eretz. But Cohen pursued this goal with unrivaled speculative power and intransigence.

In the Preface Strauss suggests that what German Jewry harmonized and what Cohen, in particular, synthesized was modern Judaism and modern culture, both "molded" by Spinoza -- the "hard-headed not to say hard-hearted pupil of Machiavelli." Strauss describes the "molding" influence of Spinoza:

The philosophy of Kant's great successors was consciously a synthesis of Spinoza's and Kant's philosophies. Spinoza's characteristic contribution to this synthesis was a novel conception of God. He thus showed the way toward a new

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1Cohen's RR, xxv.

2SCR, 15.
religion or religiousness which was to inspire a wholly new kind of society, a new kind of Church. He became the sole father of that new Church which was to be universal in fact and not merely in claim, like other Churches, because its foundation was no longer any positive revelation. It was a Church whose rulers were not priests or pastors but philosophers and artists and whose flock were the circles of culture and property. It was of the utmost importance to that Church that its father was not a Christian but a Jew who had informally embraced a Christianity without dogmas and sacraments. The millennial antagonism between Judaism and Christianity was about to disappear. The new Church would transform Jews and Christians into human beings -- into human beings of a certain kind: cultured human beings, human beings who because they possessed Science and Art did not need religion in addition. The new society, constituted by the aspiration common to all its members toward the True, the Good, and the Beautiful, emancipated the Jews in Germany. Spinoza became the symbol of that emancipation which was to be more than emancipation but secular redemption. In Spinoza, a thinker and a saint who was both a Jew and a Christian and hence neither, all cultured families of the earth, it was hoped, will be blessed. In a word, the non-Jewish world, having been molded to a considerable extent by Spinoza, had become receptive to Jews who were willing to assimilate themselves to it.

Notwithstanding the fact that Cohen's indictment of Spinoza was "sobriety itself" and "impressive," "compared with the fantastic flights of the Spinoza enthusiasts in the two camps, of the moralists and the immoralists"² and that indeed it paved the way and encouraged

¹SCR, 17.
²SCR, 18.
Strauss's own re-examination of the *Treatise*, Cohen fails to admit that modern Judaism is a synthesis between rabbinical Judaism and Spinoza. Strauss writes: "Cohen took it for granted that Spinoza had refuted orthodoxy as such." Clearly, then, a synthesis between Judaism -- "modern Judaism" -- and modern culture contains a large measure of Spinoza as an important ingredient.

Strauss questions whether the "stern morality and austerity" of Judaism is truly represented by Cohen. Similarly he questions "whether the orthodox austerity or sternness does not rest on a deeper understanding of the power of evil in man than Rosenzweig's view." Strauss goes so far as to doubt "whether Cohen's political teaching is unqualifiedly superior to Spinoza's from the moral point of view." 

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1 See SCR, 27-28.

2 See SCR, 21-22.

3 SCR, 14.

4 SCR, 22.
Yet Strauss agrees that Cohen brings out "very well the antagonism between Plato and the prophets." Strauss restates Cohen's view of Plato and the prophets "crudely but not misleadingly":

The truth is the synthesis of the teaching of Plato and that of the prophets. What we owe to Plato is the insight that the truth is in the first place the truth of science but that science must be supplemented, overarched by the idea of the good which to Cohen means, not God, but rational, scientific ethics. The ethical truth must not only be compatible with the scientific truth; the ethical truth even needs the scientific truth. The prophets are very much concerned with knowledge: with the knowledge of God, but this knowledge as the prophets understood it, has no connection whatever with scientific knowledge; it is knowledge only in a metaphorical sense. It is perhaps with a view to this fact that Cohen speaks once of the divine Plato but never of the divine prophets. Why then can he not leave matters at Platonic philosophy? What is the fundamental defect of Platonic philosophy that is remedied by the prophets and only by the prophets? According to Plato, the cessation of evils requires the rule of the philosophers, of the men who possess the highest kind of human knowledge, i.e., of science in the broadest sense of the term. But this kind of knowledge, as to some extent all scientific knowledge, is according to Plato the preserve of a small minority: of the men who possess certain gifts that most men lack -- of the few men who possess a certain nature. Plato presupposes that there is an unchangeable human nature. As a consequence, he presupposes that there is such a fundamental structure of the good human society as is unchangeable. This leads him to assert or to assume that there will be wars as long as there will be human beings, that there ought to be a class of warriors and that that class ought to be higher in rank and honor than the class of producers and exchangers. These defects are remedied by the prophets precisely because they lack the idea
of science and hence the idea of nature, and hence they can believe that men's conduct toward one another can undergo a change much more radical than any change ever dreamt of by Plato.¹

But Strauss questioned Cohen's linking of the prophets to modern philosophy of history, to modern progressivism or gradualism.

For now, this statement of Strauss's must suffice:

The true prophets, regardless of whether they predict doom or salvation, predict the unexpected, the humanly unforeseeable — what would not occur to men, left to themselves, to fear or to hope. The true prophets speak and act by the spirit and in the spirit of Ehyeh-aaaher-ehyeh. For the false prophets on the other hand there cannot be the wholly unexpected, whether bad or good.²

Strauss criticizes Cohen's synthesis:

Cohen has brought out very well the antagonism between Plato and the prophets. Nevertheless we cannot leave matters at his view of that antagonism... More disillusioned regarding modern culture than Cohen was, we wonder whether the two ingredients of modern culture, of the modern synthesis, are not more solid than that synthesis. Catastrophes and horrors of a magnitude hitherto unknown, which we have seen and through which we have lived, are better provided for, are made intelligible, by both Plato and the prophets than by the modern belief in progress. Since we are less certain than


²"J&A," 25. (This writing of Strauss's will be discussed more fully in Chapter II below.)
Cohen was that the modern synthesis is superior to the pre-modern ingredients, and since the two ingredients are in fundamental opposition to each other, we are ultimately confronted by a problem rather than by a solution. ¹

This understated indictment of the modern synthesis is amplified in the Preface, although or because not much is said there about "catastrophies and horrors."

Il. On "Lives"

But this ["my life"] is of interest even to me only as a starting point of considerations, of studies, which I hope are intelligible to those who do not know my starting point. Why then speak of one's life at all?

¹ "J&A," 23.

² "Accounts," 2. The immediate answer: "Because the considerations at which I arrived are not necessarily true or correct; my life may explain my pitfalls." This answer reminds one of Strauss's exposition of Spinoza's "hermeneutics." Strauss writes: "Any objections which we could raise against that hermeneutics would be based on the premise that the Bible is substantially intelligible, and Spinoza denies that very premise. . . . It is the essential unintelligibility of the Bible -- the fact that it is a 'hieroglyphic' book -- which is the reason why a special procedure [i.e. an historical one] has to be devised for its interpretation; the purpose of that procedure is to open up an indirect access to a book which is not accessible directly; i.e. by way of its subject matter. . . . To understand a [an intelligible] book . . . , one does not need perfect knowledge, but at most 'a very common and, as it were, boyish knowledge' of the language of the original; in fact, reading of a translation would suffice perfectly. Nor does one have to know the
In our day of "revealing," intimate biography, Strauss's presentation of his life may strike us as remarkably impersonal; even the anecdotes may seem insufficiently intimate.\(^1\) Why he speaks of his life as he does is, I believe, related to his view of the place of "lives," to the proper place of "proper" "lives." Turning to his own suggestions of the place of "lives" in the work of eminent thinkers, we may see more clearly some indication of why he presents his "life" as he does and duly appreciate its place in his work and why it is important not to misplace it.

\(^1\) The informal account of Strauss's "life" in "Accounts" is more biographical than the Preface or the Introduction to \textsc{P&G}. It contains anecdotes and dates, but it is not less centrally an account of contemporary intellectual currents -- of the contemporary "theologico-political predicament" of his times. Consider the "moments" of his "life" presented in "Accounts":

Orthodox Jewish home background in rural Germany
Gymnasium education: German humanism. Plato, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche mentioned (Is this an indication of how Jerusalem and Athens first appeared to him, of what was "first for him," however inadequately apprehended at this stage? And is there not the suggestion that his drifting away from his Jewish home was associated with exposure to Athens, thus hinting at the conflict between them?)
12. Socrates and Thucydides: Athenians

Strauss clearly admired two Athenians: Thucydides and Socrates. The truth each disclosed is independent of being Athenian, but being an Athenian in each case was apparently not simply, negligibly incidental to the quest for and discovery of truth. Strauss writes:

We know from Thucydides himself that he was an Athenian. Through understanding him we see that his wisdom was made possible by "the sun" and by Athens -- by her power and wealth.

Zionism. Hermann Cohen. Karl Barth and Franz Rosenzweig (Again, do his statements about these not indicate his awareness of something wrong with the contemporary reconciliation of Jerusalem and Athens, of Judaism and liberalism, of something wrong with liberalism, both politically and theologically?)

"Return": Spinoza, Hobbes, Maimonides and his predecessors and deeper study of Plato. Rediscovery of "the distinction between exoteric and esoteric speech and its grounds"; Debt to Lessing acknowledged.

The towering giant: Heidegger. Profoundly impressed Strauss by his intensive and thorough interpretation of classic texts and profoundly repelled him by his moral teaching.

If Heidegger -- then Atheism. But Heidegger, the height of present-day philosophy. Therefore, return to political philosophy "the matrix of the historical consciousness presupposed by Heidegger."
by her defective polity, by her spirit of daring innovation, by her active doubt of the divine law. By understanding his work one sees with one's own eyes that Athens was in a sense the home of wisdom. 

If one's place, one's "city" is important, then certainly one's "times" may be of a first importance. "Times" may indicate an era, an epoch or singularly significant events. The best example, perhaps, of the central importance of "times" in the more general sense, is Strauss's repeated suggestion about the peculiarity of the "times" of the rise of classical political philosophy.

Classical political philosophy is non-traditional, because it belongs to the fertile moment when all political traditions were shaken, and there was not yet in existence a tradition of political philosophy. In all later epochs, the philosophers' study of political things were mediated by a tradition of political philosophy which acted like a screen between the philosopher and political things, regardless of whether the individual philosopher cherished or rejected that tradition. From this it follows that the classical philosophers see the political things with a freshness and directness which have never been equalled.

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1 C&M, 231. Cf. what Strauss says about the Athenian Stranger of the Laws. WPP? 30 ff. (Strauss notes: "When Aristotle speaks about Plato's Laws, he takes it for granted that the chief character of the Laws is Socrates." WPP? 33.)

2 Of course, "time" and "place" are not as simply separable as this may suggest.

The best examples of singular "events" of first importance are the Peloponnesian War for Thucydides, and Socrates for Plato.

Strauss writes:

Thucydides surely lets us see the universal in the individual event which he narrates and through it: it is for this reason that his work is meant to be a possession for all times. . . . Thucydides has discovered in the "singulars" of his time (and of "the old things") the "universal." It is not altogether misleading to refer to the Platonic parallel: Plato too can be said to have discovered in a singular event -- in the singular life of Socrates -- the universal and thus to have become able to present the universal through presenting a singular.

From both Thucydides and Plato, Strauss has learned the importance of what is "first for us," which again underscores the significance of the times in the quest for and discovery of truth.

Strauss states:

Philosophy is the ascent from what is first for us to what is first by nature. This ascent requires that what is first for

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1 G&M, 143.

2 Strauss writes: "Thucydides does not rise to the heights of classical political philosophy because he is more concerned than is classical political philosophy with what is 'first for us' as distinguished from what is 'first by nature.'" On the other hand: "classical political philosophy presupposes the articulation of this beginning of political understanding but it does not exhibit it as Thucydides does in an unsurpassable, nay, unrivalled manner." G&M, 239-240.
us be understood as adequately as possible in the manner in which it comes to sight prior to the ascent.\(^1\)

And what is "first for us" in general comprises primarily what Klein stated were Strauss's primary interests and his "two questions: one, the question of God\(^1\) and two, the question of politics."\(^2\) (Strauss puts them together: "Das theologisch-politische Problem ist seitdem [the early twenties] das Thema meiner Untersuchungen geblieben."\(^3\)). Strauss emphasizes:

What is "first for us" is not the philosophic understanding of the city but that understanding which is inherent in the city as such, in the pre-philosophic city, according to which the city sees itself as subject and subservient to the divine in the ordinary understanding of the divine or looks up to it.\(^4\)

\(^1\)C&M, 240.

\(^2\)"Accounts," 1.

\(^3\)"Vorwort" 7.

\(^4\)C&M, 241. See 240.
What is "first for us," Strauss makes clear, is not simply "transcended" or put behind us.

One may say that according to Socrates the things which are "first in themselves" are somehow "first for us"; the things which are "first in themselves" are in a manner, but necessarily, revealed in men's opinions. Those opinions have as opinions a certain order. The highest opinions, the authoritative opinions, are the pronouncements of the law. The law makes manifest the just and noble things and it speaks authoritatively about the highest beings, the gods who dwell in heaven. The law is the law of the city; the city looks up to, holds in reverence, "holds" the gods of the city, . . . Yet the opinions however authoritative contradict one another. Even if it should happen that a given city orders a matter of importance without contradicting itself, one can be certain that the verdict of that city will be contradicted by the verdicts of other cities. It becomes then necessary to transcend the authoritative opinions as such in the direction of what is no longer opinion but knowledge. Even Socrates is compelled to go the way from law to nature, to ascend from law to nature. But he must go that way with a new awareness, caution, and emphasis. He must show the necessity of the ascent by a lucid, comprehensive, and sound argument which starts from the "common sense" embodied in the accepted opinions and transcends them; his "method" is "dialectics." This obviously implies that, however much the considerations referred to may have modified Socrates' position, he still remains chiefly, if not

1 For this reason, classical political philosophers "speak the language of the citizens or statesmen: they hardly use a single term which is not familiar to the marketplace." WPP? 28. Strauss consciously emulates them. He stands out from most contemporary scholars in this respect. His success is remarkable: he comments tellingly on Heidegger's thought without reverting to a host of neologisms in either German or English. A rare feat! (E.g., see interpretation.)
exclusively, concerned with the human things: with what is by nature right and noble or with the nature of justice and nobility. In its original form political philosophy broadly understood is the core of philosophy or rather "the first philosophy." It also remains true that human wisdom is knowledge of ignorance: there is no knowledge of the whole but only knowledge of parts, hence only partial knowledge of parts, hence no unqualified transcending, even by the wisest man as such, of the sphere of opinion. This Socratic or Platonic conclusion differs radically from a typically modern conclusion according to which the unavailability of knowledge of the whole demands that the question regarding the whole be abandoned and replaced by questions characteristic of modern natural and social science. The elusiveness of the whole necessarily affects the knowledge of every part. Because of the elusiveness of the whole, the beginning or the questions retain a greater evidence than the end or the answers; return to the beginning remains a constant necessity. 1

Certainly Strauss is not as "poetic" as either Plato or Thucydides, 2 and it is doubtful -- Himmelfarb's contention notwithstanding -- that Strauss regarded "his life" as Plato did "the singular life of Socrates." And "though it is a general observation," Strauss tells us, "that people write as they read," 3 this rule hardly licenses promiscuous explanations. Still, this much may be said:

1C&M, 19-21.

2See C&M, 142.

3PAW, 144. Strauss there does not mean it quite the way I have appropriated it here.
Strauss presents his "life and times" in a way in which the "singulars" point to the "universals"; he registers the "first for us" of his times and indicates it is informed by Jerusalem and Athens and that the way of "ascent" requires "return" -- recovery of and a "fresh understanding" of biblical wisdom and Greek wisdom; he makes clear that the "first for us" in so far as it came to be seen as problematic, takes the form of "das theologisch-politische Problem" and that this "problem" was his abiding concern; he makes a point of explicitly indicating the universal in his peculiar Jewish concerns. Here are two important examples: One points to the "universal" theologico-political dimension of "the Jewish problem" and the second points more particularly to its "universal" theological dimension.

Human beings will never create a society which is free from contradictions. From every point of view it looks as if the Jewish people were the chosen people in the sense, at least, that the Jewish people is the most manifest symbol of the human problem as a social or a political problem.¹

¹See "J&A," 5.

²SCR, 6. Harry Jaffa, discussing the Preface, suggests that "Strauss never failed to see the weakness of the Weimar regime as a paradigm of the weakness not merely of German liberal democracy, but of modernity." See his full statement in "LS's Achievement," 1354. I venture to suggest that perhaps the German Jews, for whom "political dependence was also spiritual dependence" are a more centrally important symbol: a tragic symbol warning against the dangers of conformism,
The issue of traditional Judaism versus philosophy is identical with the issue of Jerusalem versus Athens.

13. Starting From What "Was Hitting Him Directly"

The foregoing suggests why his "life" as presented by Strauss seems rather impersonal, but it is sufficiently "personal" to indicate that his starting point was not an abstraction but the discomfiting "grip" of a real "predicament." Strauss, to be sure, is a rationalist who appreciates "brains," philosophizing by use of one's head, but he particularly appreciates "passionate" thinking 2 or, if it may be put in contemporary street parlance, against accepting the modern contentions of achievement of the "synthesis" of Jerusalem and Athens, or of having "overcome" or put to rest the conflict between Jerusalem and Athens -- between reason and revelation, or of having got rid of "heavenly kingdoms" and having achieved them here on earth; on Strauss's view the modern project at least implicitly promises or threatens that political dependence will also be spiritual dependence, i.e., it promises spiritual death.  See WPP? 55.

1 PAW, 20. This statement is discussed below at the beginning Chapter II.

2 Strauss tells us that he was attracted to Hermann Cohen "because he was a passionate philosopher and a Jew passionately devoted to Judaism," "Accounts," 2. See WPP? 242. (I met Jacob Katz, author of Tradition and Crisis, and formerly Rector of Hebrew University, in June, 1974. He did not know Strauss personally, though he had heard him speak in Jerusalem and was familiar with his work -- especially on Maimonides. I was struck by Katz' characterizing Strauss as "passionate"; he used the term "passionate" twice (and "controversial" once,)
philosophizing "from the gut" (at least, as respects one's starting point). He says:

When I was still studying these things ['"the Jewish problem"'] with intensity many decades ago I always made a distinction between Pinsker as the clearest case on the one hand, and Nordau on the other. Pinsker really started from the Jewish question as it was hitting him directly, and Nordau had a general theory of nationalism of which the Jewish case was only a special case. And I always went more for the direct people; you know, who started from what everyone could know. ¹

Strauss, in practically every introduction of each of his works -- even in the introductory paragraphs of his articles ² -- points out clearly that the study which follows is not an exercise in antiquarianism, that his starting point is motivated by the present situation, by issues directly "gripping" us all living today. The opening of the City and Man expressly expresses the point made in various ways in the opening statements of nearly all his writings.

It is not self-forgetting and pain-loving antiquarianism nor self-forgetting and intoxicating romanticism which induces us to turn with passionate interest, with unqualified willingness

¹ "Hillel Lecture," 8. Questions and Answers section -- hereafter, Q&A.

² E.g., PAW, 8, 38 and 142.
to learn, toward the political thought of classical antiquity. We are impelled to do so by the crisis of our time, the crisis of the West.

In the presentation of his "life" Strauss is sufficiently "personal" to indicate that he was exercised by issues "hitting him directly" and that the starting point of his concern with thinkers of the past was clearly directed by his concern with and apprehension about the present. Let this suffice for now to "place" Strauss's "life" as presented by him in his introductory statements.

14. "Jerusalemite" or "Athenian"

How would one "misplace it"? Perhaps, by seeing it as merely a reminiscence about the past, about that which is simply past and left behind -- "transcended." Strauss's "life" as it pertains to the interest in Jerusalem in general and to Judaism in particular, is "read" this way. Strauss is accused of being an atheist or of being "not a believing Jew." Yet almost in the same breath, it is said "that Strauss's being a Jew was at the center of his thought and feeling." In one and the same breath (in the same column) it is said that: "This formidable Jew evoked respect for

\[C&M, 1.\]
Jewish tradition and existence." And it is said: "If this Athenian had lived a more Jerusalemite life, he would have set an even stronger Jewish example than he did."

"This formidable Jew" -- "this Athenian"!\(^1\)

The issues may be divided into two questions (which are perhaps not unrelated): one, how "central and significant"\(^2\) are his works on Jewish things, more generally, how deep, serious and abiding was his concern with Jerusalem; two, the precise nature of his professed "nonorthodoxy." We defer the second question to the conclusion below. It is a question to which the definitive answer is not to be expected in this Introduction or in the whole of the thesis.

In dealing with the first question, we are led to a discussion of Strauss's "rediscovery" of exotericism, which in turn leads us to a survey of his works and his critics wherein it will be seen that the critical attacks are directed primarily against his insistence on the exotericism of earlier thinkers and which directs us to the connection

\(^1\) On LS, 64.

\(^2\) See PAW, 147.
between objections to Strauss's position and positivism and historicism. (We try to limit the latter and keep it more or less in the bounds of the frame of the discussion of exotericism, the objections to it and Strauss's counter-objections to the presuppositions of these objections.) We then address the second question.

15. An Example of Disinclination To Take Strauss Seriously As a Serious Scholar of Jerusalem: "Der hermeneutische Weg von Leo Strauss"

Let us look at an example of the disinclination to take at face value or to take seriously Strauss's concern with Jerusalem and his work in that area -- specifically, on Jewish thinkers -- and of the inclination to discount it by explaining it away coupled with, or out of, admiration for Strauss's works relating to Athens. In an article imposingly entitled "Der hermeneutische Weg von Leo Strauss".

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1 We separate things for purposes of discussion which are not strictly separated in fact, e.g., the separation of the theological and the political (in previous discussion and below in Chapter IV). Likewise, as we show (see below in Chapter III), even in discussing the Bible, Strauss is not oblivious of Athens. And we will find especially in Chapter III that precisely Strauss's awareness of the quarrel between ancients and moderns is a key element of the distinctive excellence of his work on Jerusalem.

2 Philosophisches Jahrbuch (1973), 177 ff. -- hereafter, "Hermeneutik." (I do not know why Cato of Canberra published his article in a German journal. Strauss should appear to have a "following"
Hiram Caton (a professor of philosophy at Canberra) puts forth the too-clever suggestion that Strauss artfully and judiciously selected little known non-philosophic writers like Maimonides, Halevi and Spinoza as the vehicles for setting forth "der hermeneutische Weg von Leo Strauss."

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in Germany. Between 1956 and 1965, On Tyranny, The Political Philosophy of Hobbes, and Natural Right and History were published in German editions.) The title may be imposing but it is hardly appropriate. Caton himself acknowledges that Strauss "bedient sich des Hermeneutik-Begriffs überhaupt nicht." Ibid., 174. See the entire paragraph. (Strauss does use the term "hermeneutic" with some frequency in the article on Spinoza in PAW.) Strauss does discuss at length the "how to read" question but he was hardly a methodologist or "hermeneutics specialist." Herbert Storing puts it simply: "Strauss was not a methodologist, but he had a method. He sometimes described it as 'content analysis.' It is the method of careful reading. Assume that your writer may be telling the truth. Assume that he knows what he's doing. Read with the greatest care and alertness that you can muster. If your writer falls into a contradiction that you can see, assume that he could see it, and try to figure out his reason for arguing as he did. Remember (what we all know) that one does not say all one has to say to everyone, that for various reasons one may speak and write at different levels."

"LS's Achievement," 1349. And listen to Laurence Berns reminisce about "Mr. Strauss's impact" on him as a graduate student: "Mr. Strauss, surely, impressed us with the extent of his learning too [as other professors had]. But far more important was the demonstration by example that progress, personal progress, was possible not only in extent of understanding, but also in depth of understanding, depth of insight. System, or better, 'order and orderliness are very good,' he once said, 'but I prefer illumination.'" [I cherish that statement.]

"LS," 4. Is there a "hermeneutics" of "illumination"?

1 How would it hurt Spinoza to be labelled a non-philosopher! And it would be rubbing salt in the wound to lump him together with Halevi and Maimonides. The writer apparently feels justified in including Spinoza in this "non-philosophic" group because it is the Spinoza of Theologico-Political Treatise and not the Spinoza of the Ethics. See "Hermeneutik," 174, n. 6.

Is the writer's statement not based on his conviction that Strauss did not, because he could not, really take seriously these thinkers or be deeply concerned with Jerusalem and with its relation to Athens? Such a conviction would "justify" his inattentiveness to Strauss's extensive work in this area and would perhaps incline him to overlook or discount the obvious -- obvious facts of which he could not have been simply ignorant. He misses or discounts not only obvious facts regarding Strauss on Jerusalem, but, as well, some regarding Strauss on Athens.

Let us return to Strauss's "life and works." Had he read Cropsey's biographical statement on Strauss or even glanced at Strauss's bibliography (not to mention the Preface and other

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1 "Hermeneutik," 174.
2 Cropsey, op. cit.
3 SCR, but not P&G is included in Caton's bibliographical reference to "Die auf deutsch erschiene Werke," "Hermeneutik," 182. Cropsey's Ancients and Moderns is not only listed but specific reference is made to the bibliography of Strauss's works to be found in it.
"biographical" statements of Strauss) he could not have failed to register that Strauss was seriously engaged by Jerusalem and had devoted to it twenty years of study, during which time he had written two books and many articles. If Strauss's bibliography is not sufficiently indicative, then Cropsey's statement on the first page firmly registers the fact that Strauss was for many years deeply involved in studying the thinkers he writes about in *Persecution and the Art of Writing* -- since the early twenties, in fact. ¹ Cropsey writes:

In the years between 1925 and 1932, he held the post of Research Assistant in the Academy of Jewish Research, Berlin, where his work was in the field of seventeenth-century Biblical criticism with special emphasis on the doctrines of Spinoza. He served also as co-editor of the philosophic writings of Moses Mendelssohn [which presupposes some recognition of his scholarly attainments especially as they relate to Spinoza

¹ Indeed, his interest in some of these thinkers must have already been well developed at the time that he wrote his doctoral dissertation on Jacobi -- 1921. See SCR, 16: "The formal reception of Spinoza took place in 1785 when F. H. Jacobi published his book *On The Doctrine of Spinoza . . . ."* (Strauss calls his Ph. D. thesis "a disgraceful performance," Klein states that his "is not worth the paper on which it was written." "Accounts," 1-2.)
and Maimonides among others; the editors alternated writing introductory essays to each of the works in the collection.

Strauss arrived in the U.S.A. a firmly established Jewish scholar.

Himmelfarb writes:

"Jewish scholar" is ambiguous. It can mean a Jew who is a scholar in non-Jewish things or a scholar in Jewish things. Strauss was both, to a unique degree. Only the most eminent Jewish scholars, in the second sense, are fellows of the American Academy for Jewish Research. He was a fellow, because of his work on Judah Halevi, Maimonides, and Spinoza.

Strauss was apparently inducted as a fellow practically on arrival.

Most of the articles in Persecution and the Art of Writing were first published in the Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research in the 1940's. (Cropey omits to say that Strauss's first position in the U.S. was as a research assistant to the renowned Jewish historian Salo Baron of Columbia University. Strauss told me it was at this time, when "all he had to do" was to help prepare the octocentennial Volume of Essays on Maimonides that he achieved a major advance in his understanding of Maimonides.)

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1 Cropey, op. cit., v.
2 "On LS", 60.
3 It was in this volume which issued in 1941 that Strauss's "The Literary Character of The Guide for the Perplexed" first appeared. Might he have been assigned to write this article?
4 "Strauss Talks"
Granting that some of these facts could not be known without some effort, the obvious salient facts could hardly have been missed, had they not been dismissed: e.g., that the "unknown" non-philosophers who Caton suggests were chosen by Strauss for a "rhetorischen Zweck" had been Strauss's primary scholarly concern for some years during which he had published two books and several articles about them. Caton states: "Erst in seinen späten Schriften hat sich Strauss über die Kunst des platonischen Dialogs geäussert. . . ."¹ Strictly speaking, this is inaccurate. Strauss tells us that he and Klein had early become deeply interested in the "Kunst" of the Platonic dialogues; but at the time Strauss was "continuing" his work on Spinoza, Maimonides and his predecessors, and Hobbes.² He did manage later to write at least one article by 1939, which centrally bears on the "Kunst" of "Socratic rhetoric": "The Spirit of Sparta and the Taste of Xenophon."³ This article which precedes those

¹"Hermeneutik," 174, n. 6.
²"Accounts," 3.
collected in *Persecution and the Art of Writing* may be said to introduce what Caton calls "der hermeneutische Weg von Leo Strauss." (Caton does not cite it. 'Did he read it?') Mention may also be made of Strauss's articles "On Classical Political Philosophy"¹ 1945, and "On the New Interpretation of Plato's Political Philosophy,"² 1946. Both of these were written about the same time as some of the articles in *Persecution and the Art of Writing,* both address themselves to the "Kunst" of Plato's *Dialogues.* These facts seem to indicate that Strauss, judiciously or injudiciously, did dare to publish his views about the "Kunst" of the dialogues. Caton's suggestion, in effect, is that Strauss guardedly reverted to lesser known authors to introduce his "hermeneutische Weg" or that he did not dare introduce it with respect to Plato.

What evidence or argument does Caton put forward? Implicitly, it seems to be the following: why would Strauss waste his time on obscure Jewish medieval thinkers when clearly his chief concern is Athens, and why wait so long before thematically

¹ To be found in WPP?

² "Wild" (1946)
elaborating his view on the "Kunst" of the dialogues? To the second implied argument, is it naive to respond that Strauss waited as long as he did to publish his essay "On the Republic" because he was not ready to do so before -- and perhaps could not? Nothing more need be said about the first implied "argument."

Now Caton's article is an appreciation of Strauss as an exponent of Athens. It concludes with fulsome praise of Strauss's achievement:

Dass er ... die politische Philosophie wiederentdeckt hat, dass er unter allen modernen Denkern der tiefste Kenner Sokrates' ist, dass er das Anliegen der modernen Philosophie durchsichtig gemacht und den vergessenen Horizont der klassischen Philosophie wiederentdeckt hat -- dies alles ist nicht nur Versuch, sondern Leistung.

Is there a connection between appreciation of Strauss, this Athenian' and depreciation or discounting of the genuineness of Strauss's devotion to Jerusalem? (Something of this kind but hardly to this degree may be discerned in Jaffa and Himmelfarb.) In our day, is it to compromise such high "achievement" as an exponent of Athens if one seriously entertains "theological" interests? Or, is it that

1"Hermeneutik," 182.
in our era of specialization it is incredible that a scholar of such "achievement" -- "unter allen modernen Denkern der tiefste Kenner Sokrates' ist" -- could really be serious about some old "unknown" medieval Jewish thinkers? Is it for us today a foregone conclusion that such high "achievement" is simply incompatible with taking Judaism seriously? Strauss himself, in any case, does not downplay his concern with Jewish things and indeed, as has been shown, rather calls attention to them.

16. **Strauss's Rediscovery of Exotericism**

Caton rightly suggests that what he calls "der hermeneutische Weg von Leo Strauss" comes to sight in Strauss's "rediscovery" of exotericism.

Die Hermeneutik erscheint zunächst als die positive Feststellung, eine vergessene 'Kunst des Schreibens' wiedergefunden zu haben. Aber seine Auslegungen der esoterischen Lehren überliefelter Texte werden nicht nur seine Methode des Philosophierens schlechthin, sondern auch die Form, in der
er seine 'Erneuerung der Alten' mitteilt. -- die esoterische Lehre der Alten wird von ihrem Ausleger selbst esoterisch mitgeteilt.

Caton is also largely right in stating: "Das Strauß'sche Buch über die esoterische Mitteilungs-Methode heisst Persecution and the Art of Writing. . . ."

1"Hermeneutik," 172, also n. 3. On the last point made in this quotation, Strauss is particularly eloquent in the following passage:"The utmost we can hope to have achieved is to have pointed to the way which the reader must take in studying Machiavelli's work. Books like the Discourses and the Prince do not reveal their full meaning as intended by the author unless one ponders over them "day and night" for a long time. The reader who is properly prepared is bound to come across suggestions which refuse to be stated. Pen or typewriter, to say nothing of hand and tongue, refuse their service. The reader thus comes to understand the truth that what ought not to be said cannot be said. It is fortunate for the historians of ideas, to say nothing of others, that there are not many books of this kind. Still, there are more of them than one would easily believe, for there were more great men who were steppons of their time or out of step with the future than one would easily believe. As Faust put it to Wagner, "the few who understood something of the world and of men's heart and mind, who were foolish enough not to restrain their full heart but to reveal their feeling and their vision to the vulgar, have ever been crucified and burned"; not everyone belonging to those few failed to restrain his full heart. Goethe was the last great man who rediscovered or remembered this, especially after he had returned from the storm and stress of sentiment to the tranquility of fullness of vision. After him, social reason, sentiment and decision and whatever goes with those "dynamic forces" united in order to destroy the last vestiges of the recollection of what philosophy originally meant." Leo Strauss, Thoughts on Machiavelli (University of Washington Press, 1969), 174-175 -- hereafter, Macchi. (Strauss calls attention to Nietzsche's saying that Goethe was "in the history of the Germans an accident without consequences." WPP? 269.)

2"Hermeneutik," 173.
(This is true of the chapters on Maimonides and Spinoza, in particular. Other parts of the book more thematically discuss the disproportion between "philosophy and politics" -- the ground of the need for "die esoterische Mitteilungs-Methode." Caton refuses to accept at face value Strauss's own introduction to the volume:

These essays are here collected into one volume primarily with a view to the fact that they all deal with one problem: the problem of the relation between philosophy and politics... As I state in the Introduction, 1 became familiar with the problem mentioned while studying the Jewish and Islamic philosophy of the Middle Ages.

In the Introduction, Strauss states:

To realize the necessity of a sociology of philosophy ["the fundamental relation of thought as such to society as such"], one must turn to other ages, if not to other climates. The present writer happened to come across phenomena whose understanding calls for a sociology of philosophy, while he was studying the Jewish and Islamic philosophy of the Middle Ages.

Caton dares to offer a "better" explanation -- as we have seen.

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1 Preface to PAW.
2 PAW, 7.
3 PAW, 8.
In addition to these statements, Strauss in his "account" of his "intellectual history," makes clear that it was not the study of Plato which first thrust this problem to the center of his attention, but his struggle to understand Maimonides (though he may have had intimations from his study of Plato, as is suggested by his reference to the Laws). Strauss says:

While Klein was engaged in this work ["Platonic studies"], I continued my study of Spinoza's Treatise from which I had been led to Hobbes, on the one hand, and to Maimonides on the other. Maimonides was, to begin with, wholly unintelligible to me. I got the first glimmer of light when I concentrated on his prophetology and, therefore, the prophetology of the Islamic philosophers who preceded him. One day when reading... Avicenna's treatise, On the Division of the Sciences, I came across this sentence... the standard work on prophecy and revelation is Plato's Laws. Then I began to begin to understand Maimonides' prophetology and eventually, as I believe, the whole Guide of the Perplexed. Maimonides... used a kind of writing which is in the precise sense of the term, exoteric. When Klein had read the manuscript of my essay on the literary character of the Guide of the Perplexed, he said, "We have rediscovered exotericism." To this extent we completely agreed. But there was from the beginning this difference between us: that I attached much greater importance than Klein did and does to the tension between philosophy and the city, even the best city.

1 Precisely when Strauss got this "glimmer of light" is difficult to pinpoint. He submitted his initial work on the prophetology for publication as early as 1931 (see P&G, 87, n. 1). His article on Maimonides did not issue until 1941. In the earlier work he quotes the passage cited here by Avicenna (see P&G, 110).

2 This difference" may be said to be a variation of the difference in 'primary interests." Strauss's questions "of God" and "of politics," Klein says, "were not mine."
I arrived at a conclusion that I can state in the form of a
Syllogism: Philosophy is the attempt to replace opinion by
knowledge; that opinion is the element of the city, hence
philosophy is subversive, hence the philosopher must write in such
a way that he will improve rather than subvert the city. In other
words, the virtue of the philosopher's thought is a certain kind of
mania, while the virtue of the philosopher's public speech is
Sophrosyne. Philosophy is as such trans-political, trans-religious,
and trans-moral, but the city is and ought to be moral and
religious. . . .

This view of philosophy was derived from my study of pre-modern
philosophy.

17. "Definitions" of "Exoteric" and "Esoteric"

Strauss does not so much define the words "exoteric" and
"esoteric" as describe the phenomena. (For what they are worth,
here are one-word "definitions": "... exoteric (or 'disclosed') and
esoteric (or 'enigmatical') . . . .")² Perhaps the following comes
closest to a formal definition:

An exoteric book³ contains . . . two teachings: a popular
教学 of an edifying character, which is in the foreground; and

¹Accounts," 3-4.

² PAW, 183.

³Strauss notes that strictly speaking there cannot be "esoteric"
books. See PAW, lll, n.45. Strauss, discussing Spinoza, comments:
"... one cannot leave it at the impression that while the Treatise is,
of course, exoteric, the Ethics is Spinoza's esoteric work simply,
and that therefore the solution to all the riddles of the Treatise is pre-
sented explicitly and clearly in the Ethics. For Spinoza cannot have
been ignorant of the obvious truth which, in addition, had been pointed
out to him if not by Plato, at any rate by Maimonides, that every book
is accessible to all who can read the language in which it is written;
and that therefore, if there is any need at all for hiding the truth from
the vulgar, no written exposition can be strictly speaking esoteric." PAW, 187.
a philosophic teaching concerning the most important subject, which is indicated only between the lines. . . . Those to whom such books are truly addressed are, however, neither the unphilosophic majority nor the perfect philosopher as such, but the young men who might become philosophers: the potential philosophers are to be led step by step from the popular views which are indispensable for all practical and political purposes to the truth which is merely and purely theoretical, guided by certain obtrusively enigmatic features in the presentation of the popular teaching -- obscurity of the plan, contradictions, pseudonyms, inexact repetitions of earlier statements, strange expressions, etc. Such features do not disturb the slumber of those who cannot see the wood for the trees, but act as awakening stumbling blocks for those who can . . . .

The words of the great writers of the past are very beautiful even from without. And yet their visible beauty is sheer ugliness, compared with the beauty of those hidden treasures which disclose themselves only after very long, never easy, but always pleasant work. This always difficult but always pleasant work is, I believe, what the philosophers had in mind when they recommended education. Education, they felt, is the only answer to the always-pressing question, to the political question par excellence, of how to reconcile order which is not oppression with freedom which is not license.

As will be evident from the following quotation Strauss does not hesitate to put boldly forward his views on exotericism; as early as 1939 he dared apply them to "known" writers. The following may put to final rest Caton's suggestion: Strauss writes in 1939:

In the time of Xenophon, impiety constituted a criminal offence. Thus philosophy, which is essentially incompatible with acceptance of the gods of the city, was as such subject to persecution. Philosophers had therefore to conceal if not the fact that they were philosophers, at least the fact that they were unbelievers. . . . The difficulty implied in the contradiction

\[\text{\textsuperscript{1}}\text{PAW: 36-37.}\]
between the necessarily secret character of the philosophic teaching and the necessarily public character of publications was overcome by a literary technique which made it possible to reveal the truth to a small, if competent, minority, while hiding it from the large majority. That technique was the outcome of a very simple discovery. If a man tells a charming story, most people will enjoy the story, the imitated characters, the imitated actions or events, the imitated landscape, the imitated speeches of the characters, and even the imitation itself—but only a minority of readers will recover from the charm, reflect upon the story and discover the teaching which it silently conveys. Silent or secret teaching is then certainly possible. That it is an actual fact of the past is shown, above all, by the stories and histories of Herodotus, Thucydides and Xenophon, as well as by the Socratic writings of Xenophon and Plato.

It would, however, betray too low a view of the philosophic writers of the past if one assumed that they concealed their thoughts merely for fear of persecution or of violent death. They concealed the truth from the vulgar also because they considered the vulgar to be unfit to digest the truth: the large majority of men, the philosophers of the past thought, would be deprived of the very basis of their morality if they were to lose their beliefs. They considered it then not only a matter of fear and safety, but also a matter of duty to hide the truth from the majority of mankind. By making the discovered truth almost as inaccessible as it was before it had been discovered, they prevented—by calling a vulgar thing by a vulgar name—the cheap sale of the formulations of the truth: nobody should know even the formulations of the truth who had not rediscovered the truth by his own exertions, if aided by subtle suggestions from a superior teacher. It is in this way that the classical authors became the most efficient teachers of independent thinking. It should, however, not be overlooked that this exoteric literature, which provides the highest type of education, is found not only in classical times; it has reappeared in all epochs in which philosophy was understood in its
full and challenging meaning, in all epochs, that is, in which wisdom was not separated from moderation. Its disappearance almost coincides with the victory of higher criticism and of systems of philosophy which claimed to be sincere but which certainly lacked moderation.¹

18. Strauss's Rediscovery of Exotericism: The Prime Target of His Critics

Strauss's insistence -- reiterated in nearly all his works -- on the unduly appreciated exotericism of many earlier thinkers²

provoked attacks and, much less frequently, appreciation by well-known

¹"Sparta," 534-535. It is noteworthy that Strauss credits Lessing with his appreciation of exotericism. He says: "I learned more from him [Lessing] than I knew at that time [the 20's]. As I came to see later [early 30's?] Lessing had said everything I had found out about the distinction between exoteric and esoteric speech and its grounds." "Accounts," 3. See PAW, 20. See the telling example adduced in PAW, 182. (A precise indication of the influence of Lessing on Strauss by a scholar sufficiently knowledgeable about the works of both would perhaps prove an illuminating study.)

²Strauss does distinguish between modern esoteric works and pre-modern ones, suggesting that the latter are the more subtle. (This is not to say that modern writings cannot be exoteric in the pre-modern manner.) To his attackers, Strauss reads altogether too much subtlety into modern writers. Strauss writes: "What attitude people adopt toward freedom of public discussion, depends decisively on what they think about popular education and its limits. Generally speaking, premodern philosophers were more timid in this respect than modern philosophers. After about the middle of the seventeenth century an ever-increasing number of heterodox philosophers who had suffered from persecution published their books not only to communicate their thoughts but also because they desired to contribute to the abolition of persecution as such. They believed that suppression of free inquiry, and of publication of the results of free inquiry, was accidental, an
scholars. These critical comments perhaps drew attention to Strauss and helped make him a "name," if a "controversial" one. (Strauss seems to have been disappointed that so few scholars "reacted."

"Only four or five scholars of my generation did become interested."1) The most renowned of his critics in the field of the history of political thought are George Sabine and Alexandre Kojève. 2 There

outcome of the faulty construction of the body politic, and that the kingdom of general darkness could be replaced by the republic of universal light. They looked forward to a time when, as a result of the progress of popular education, practically complete freedom of speech would be possible, or -- to exaggerate for purposes of clarification -- to a time when no one would suffer any harm from hearing any truth. They concealed their views only far enough to protect themselves as well as possible from persecution; had they been more subtle than that, they would have defeated their purpose, which was to enlighten an ever-increasing number of people who were not potential philosophers. It is therefore comparatively easy to read between the lines of their books." (Strauss notes: "I am thinking of Hobbes in particular, whose significance for the development outlined above can hardly be overestimated." ) PAW, 33-34, and n. 15. Unlike Strauss, his critics make no such distinction: Strauss's assertion of either kind of exotericism draws equal fire from his critics.

1WP 223.

2The Strauss-Kojève controversy is featured in OnTyr. The editor, Allan Bloom, in his Forward; describes it as "a confrontation of positions on the level of the real issue -- argued with an intimate knowledge of the teachings and a clear grasp of the phenomena. The question debated is whether human nature is unchanging and whether philosophy can move from the historic to the permanent." Ibid., vi.
is an all-important difference in their respective attitudes towards
Strauss: Kojeve clearly respects Strauss as a worthy opponent,
where Sabine's attitude is indicated by Strauss's contrasting "the
attitude of Sabine with the open-mindedness characteristic of
M. Yvon Belaval's [a student of Kojeve's] review. . . ."  

Strauss's work may be said to have been received generally
more appreciatively by Jewish scholars. Salo Baron's praise,
like Sabine's, is ambiguous: both employ that ambiguous term of
praise "ingenious." Baron is exasperated by Strauss's suggestion
of planned planlessness as an exoteric veil for the esoteric communica-
tion of an author. Baron observes:

If pursued to its logical conclusion, his [Strauss's] thesis would
leave it entirely to the reader's discretion to decide between the
true parts of contradictions and those intended merely to conceal
the truth.  

Seen in the best light, Baron's criticism reminds of Belaval's
(inspired by Kojeve); accordingly, Strauss's "rebuttal" applies to
Baron's remarks as well as to Belaval's. Strauss writes:

The main objection of Belaval is to the effect that the method
of reading which I suggest can never lead to absolute certainty. . . .

1 WPP? 228.

2 See Salo Baron's A Social and Religious History of the Jews,
VIII (Columbia U. P., 1958), 312-313, n. 25 and 321, n. 43.
I shall limit myself to a counter-objection to Belaval's main objection: Do the alternative methods of reading lead to absolute certainty? Are not the alternative methods of reading based on the demonstratively false premises that in interpreting a book one may disregard completely what its author says about the necessity of secrecy or caution, and that one may disregard completely the unique or rare statements on important subjects in favor of what the author says most frequently or in all cases but one? As Belaval notes, M. Kojève, comparing my method to that of the detective, asserted that there is this difference: that my method cannot lead up to the confession of the criminal. My answer is twofold: I know of cases where the criminal confessed posthumously after having made sure that the detective would not condemn him; and I would be happy if there were suspicion of crime where up to now there has only been implicit faith in perfect innocence. At the very least the observations I have made will force historians sooner or later to abandon the complacency with which they claim to know what the great thinkers thought, to admit that the thought of the past is much more enigmatic than it is generally held to be, and to begin to wonder whether the historical truth is not as difficult of access as the philosophic truth.

Julius Guttmann, the authority on Jewish thinkers in Strauss's day, apparently takes Strauss's works seriously and (unambiguously)

1 WRP? 231-232.

2 Strauss speaks of him as the "hervorragenden Sachkenner" and characterizes his work as an "unentbehrliche Handbuch". The title of the English edition, "Philosophies of Judaism" is mistranslated. The English edition is a translation of the Hebrew rather than the German edition. In the Hebrew title, the word "philosophy" is "hafilosofiah"; it is unmistakably singular -- "the philosophy." R. J. Z. Werblowsky's "Introduction" to the English edition is a gloss on the title "The Philosophy of Judaism"! (J. Guttmann, Philosophies of Judaism (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964) -- hereafter PJ. (The 1973 Schocken paperback edition has different pagination.)
acknowledges his achievement -- even though he is severely taken
to task by Strauss (discussed below in Chapter III).

Leo Strauss, in his book *Philosophie und Gesetz*, was the
first who treated the value of the doctrines of the Islamic
Aristotelians concerning the political function: prophecy,
the dependence of this doctrine upon Plato, and its influence
upon Maimonides. 1

(One infers that Guttman recognized Strauss's understanding of
Maimonides as a significant alternative to his own.) Leon Roth,
the distinguished British scholar, states:

"New ground has been broken . . . in the suggestive essay
of L. Strauss, "Farabi's Plato." 2

Erwin I. J. Rosenthal, known for his works on Muslim political
thinkers, observes that the political thought of the Falasifa "has
attracted the attention of scholars only for the last two decades";
he tells us that Strauss's book was the influential major first step:
"The description and evaluation of al-Farabi's political philosophy
has only begun with L. Strauss's *Philosophie und Gesetz*: . . . " 3

1 *PJ*, 434, n. 125.

2 Leon Roth, *The Guide for the Perplexed - Moses Maimonides*
(Hutchinson's University Library, 1948), 135.

3 E. I. J. Rosenthal, *Political Thought in Medieval Islam*
And last but hardly least, Gershom Scholem refers his readers to Strauss's "significant works in general," and directs his readers to "the subtle investigations of Leo Strauss in Persecution and the Art of Writing, in particular." ¹

The overall impact of Strauss's work on the understanding of Jewish and Islamic thought and of Maimonides, in particular, is indicated by Shlomo Pines, a noted contemporary scholar in the field.

There is undeniably considerable doubt concerning many of the main points of Maimonides' doctrines, the old and not so old certainties of some of the nineteenth and twentieth century exegesis have been exploded, as far as informed opinion is concerned, by the progress of enquiry due in the first place to the methods employed by Leo Strauss. ²

¹ Gershom Scholem, On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism (Schocken Books, 1965), 51, and n.1 there.

² Shlomo Pines, "Spinoza's Tractatus Theologico-Politicus, Maimonides and Kant," Scripta Hierosolymitana, XX (1968), 4. One may want to compare Herbert Storing's summing up of Strauss's impact on the field of political science. See "L S's Achievement," pp. 1347 ff.. He concludes: "The old positivist and historicist foundations that were the object of Strauss's attack return in place -- if not quite so firmly in place -- beneath the turmoil. In 1962 Strauss wrote that scientific political science could be described as fiddling while Rome burned. 'It is excused by two facts: It does not know that it fiddles, and it does not know that Rome burns.' Ten years later it may perhaps be said that political science is beginning to suspect that Rome is burning." 1353. Needless to say, those formidable twins positivism and historicism are not conspicuously absent in Jerusalem. It is no coincidence that the objections to Strauss expressed by renowned scholars of Jerusalem are so similar to those raised by renowned scholars of Athens.
Strauss's study of Maimonides and his "Beitrag" to the understanding of Maimonides' thought, continued literally to the end of his life. (In the last summer of his life, though significantly debilitated physically, he conducted seminars on the Guide.)

In 1963, a new English edition of the Guide was issued, featuring an introductory essay by Leo Strauss: "How to Begin to Study the Guide of the Perplexed." This work marks the consummation of Strauss's understanding of Maimonides. It is perhaps his most profound writing; certainly it is his most enigmatical -- his most esoteric. It is the ripe fruit of a lifetime's study of Maimonides compressed into forty-five pages of distilled "hints." No single work of Strauss's is more important to understanding his view of the relation of Judaism and philosophy than this one and perhaps none is more difficult to comprehend. This writer does not claim to comprehend it adequately. Many years of diligent study of Maimonides's works are a necessary but by no means sufficient prerequisite for understanding.

this writing of Strauss's -- as Marvin Fox (professor of philosophy at Brandeis University) makes clear:

The essay [Strauss's] is brilliant, tantalizing, frustrating, and at times infuriating. . . . He has . . . constructed an obstacle course designed to block the forward movement of all but the most skilled students of Maimonides' Guide. . . . Even the highly skilled reader will receive no clear and explicit analysis of the Guide. If he succeeds in finding his way through this Strauss essay, he will have clues, hints, suggestions, and some confusions -- not a systematic and structured interpretation. Professor Strauss has left to each reader the work of interpreting the Guide for himself.

Fox's understanding of why Strauss writes as he does does not "satisfy" him.

There is no doubt at all that this is exactly the kind of introduction he [Strauss] intended to write. In fact, he says so explicitly at one point when he notes his "desire to give the readers some hints for the better understanding" of a particular section. It is quite clear that any reader who wants more than hints will have to get them on his own. This deliberately obscure manner of introducing Maimonides' Guide is necessitated by the special way in which Strauss understands and reads that great work, for unlike most earlier interpreters he takes very seriously Maimonides' own instructions on how to read the Guide. It is strange that despite Maimonides' great pains to instruct and direct the reader on how to read the Guide, his instructions have been largely ignored. Rarely does one find a work on Maimonides, a commentary or a systematic study

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of his thought in which the author gives evidence that he remembers Maimonides' admonition that the Guide of the Perplexed is a special kind of esoteric book. As a result the book has been consistently misunderstood because it was not studied with the method that Maimonides himself set forth. It is to the credit of Leo Strauss that he has taken Maimonides seriously. In his various writings Strauss reminds us that esoteric books must be read in a special way, and especially that Maimonides' Guide is a supreme example of such a book.

"Above all," he writes, "an esoteric interpretation of the Guide seems to be not only advisable, but even necessary. . . . The interpretation of the Guide cannot be given in ordinary language, but only in parabolic enigmatic speech. That is why, according to Maimonides, the student of those secrets is required not only to be of mature age, to have a sagacious and subtle mind. . . . and to be able to understand the allusive speech of others, but also to be capable of presenting things allusively himself." Professor Strauss has written an introduction which meets this standard, an introduction which is most often cryptic and allusive, explaining basic points only by way of hints and hidden clues.

Fox concludes:

Though it may be justified, this kind of an introduction leaves us unsatisfied. For Strauss exhibits so many brilliant flashes of insight and tantalizes us with so many acute observations that we can only wish that he might be willing to share his secret knowledge with all honest students of Maimonides.

We sympathize. This work of Strauss's on the Guide may be the extreme case or perhaps the most perfect example of Strauss's

\[1\text{Ibid.}, 269.\]
\[2\text{Ibid.}, 273.\]
emulation of premodern education by means of "Socratic rhetoric."

Nobody should know even the formulations of the truth
who had not rediscovered the truth by his own exertions, if
aided by subtle suggestions from a superior teacher.

Though Fox has assiduously studied the Guide and read Strauss's
essay very closely, as he impressively demonstrates in the course
of his review, he remains "frustrated." Perhaps in no other writing
of his does Strauss succeed so well in preventing "the cheap sale
of the formulations of the truth." Generally, Strauss does not sell
them cheaply. Studying Strauss's works invites restudying them
again and again, and each succeeding time the reader experiences
"discovery." He glimpses what entirely escaped his notice on
previous readings. This thesis does not mark the point at which
"discovery" in studying Strauss's works has been completed or at
which the claim is raised that the "subtle suggestions from a superior
teacher" are all now transparent to this reader. Least of all are all
his "hints" on Maimonides transparent to this reader.

1 "Sparta," 535. See PAW, 55-56.
Exotericism and "The Twin Sisters". Positivism and Historicism

Strauss was acutely aware that his project of "return," his attempt to return to the roots of the traditions of Jerusalem and Athens and to apprehend them "in an untraditional or fresh manner" tilted heavily against the entrenched canons of modern scholarship. Accordingly, Strauss again and again discussed "how to read" "old books"; again and again, he discussed "the art of writing" of great thinkers of bygone ages. Certainly, no contemporary professor of political science or Jewish scholar has devoted so much space to "reading" and "writing." Consider these titles of major studies:


(Of course, "the art of writing" and "reading" is discussed -- sometimes extensively -- as well in works with titles which do not explicitly point to such discussion.)

Strauss asserts: "The authorities to which these people [modern scholars] defer are the twin sisters called Science and History."¹

¹ SCR, 156.
And he asserts:

"... for the contemporary West the intellectual powers peculiar

to it are neo-positivism and existentialism [sic], as Strauss

frequently refers to it, radical historicism]. Positivism surpasses

existentialism by far in academic influence and existentialism

surpasses positivism by far in popular influence. Positivism may

be described as the view according to which only scientific know-

ledge is genuine knowledge; since scientific knowledge is

unable to validate or invalidate any value judgments, and political

philosophy most certainly is concerned with the validation of

sound value judgments and the invalidation of unsound ones,

positivism must reject political philosophy as radically unscientific.

Existentialism appears in a great variety of guises but one will

not be far wide of the mark if one defines it in contradistinction

to positivism as the view according to which all principles of

understanding and of action are historical, i.e. have no other

ground than groundless human decision or fateful dispensation:

science, far from being the only kind of genuine knowledge, is

ultimately not more than one form among many of viewing the

world, all these forms having the same dignity. Since according

to existentialism all human thought is historical in the sense

indicated, existentialism must reject political philosophy as

radically unhistorical."

These quotations require extensive commentary. Strauss's

critique of positivism and historicism would require volumes devoted

to it. Strauss himself says:

An adequate discussion of historicism would be identical with

a critical analysis of modern philosophy in general.

1 Interpretation. 1. Strauss adds: "Existentialism is a 'movement'

which like all such movements has a flabby periphery and a hard center.

That center is the thought of Heidegger. To that thought alone existentialism

owes its importance or intellectual respectability. There is no room

for political philosophy in Heidegger's work. ..." Ibid., 2.

2 WPP? 60. My M.A. thesis discusses not adequately, but

more extensively, Strauss's critique of these "isms." S.G. Weber,

"Leo Strauss On Modernity," (Master's thesis, Department of

Philosophy, McMaster University, 1970), hereafter -- my M.A. thesis.
On the other hand, Strauss has proved himself a singularly able champion who has relentlessly wrestled with these powerful spirits of our time since the thirties. It would be most difficult in a thesis on any aspect of Strauss's thought to ignore completely his "fight" with historicism and positivism. In this thesis, the discussion of historicism and positivism will be limited -- more or less -- to the context of Strauss's "rediscovey" of exotericism, to the relation of "The Twin Sisters" to the proper reading of "old books."

20. Reading "Old Books" and Historicism and Positivism

Reading "old books" with due appreciation of "the art of writing" "is today indispensable as an antidote to the ruling dogma that the very notion of a final and true account of the whole is absurd"\(^1\) -- to the powerful sway of those twins,\(^2\) positivism and historicism.

\(^1\) WPP? 228.

\(^2\) The "twin" aspect is perhaps best indicated by this statement of Klein's (who prefers to speak of "twin-brothers"): "Modern history is neither a chronicle of events nor an edifying or moralizing or glorifying report of memorable deeds in the past, but the discovery and the description of man as a specifically historic being, subject to a 'development' which transcends any individual life or even the life of peoples or nations. Modern history is not only -- as ancient history is -- an interpretation of the historic 'movement' as such. It is in this respect, the twin brother of mathematical physics. They are both the dominant powers governing our actual life, setting out..."
For the "antidote" to be effective, it is not necessary that one has read or even heard of Leo Strauss. So Strauss suggests!

The study of earlier thought, if conducted with intelligence and assiduity, leads to a revitalization of earlier ways of thinking. The historian who started out with the conviction that true understanding of human thought is understanding of every teaching in terms of its particular time or as an expression of its particular time, necessarily familiarizes himself with the view, constantly urged upon him by his subject matter, that his initial conviction is unsound. More than that: he is brought to realize that one cannot understand the thought of the past as long as one is guided by that initial conviction. This self-destruction of historicism is not altogether an unforeseen result. ¹

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the horizon of our thinking and determining the scope of our practice. The historicism of recent decades is but an extreme consequence of that general historic trend. We have already characterized historicism as an extension and amplification of psychologism. On the other hand, psychologism, as developed by the English empiricists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, is, in fact, the first attempt to combine the new mathematical and physical sciences (in either their Cartesian or Newtonian aspects) with a 'historical' outlook: Locke and Hume try to set forth the 'natural history' (Hume) of our concepts upon which our science, our morals, and our beliefs are founded. This holds for the empirical schools of the nineteenth century as well, Jacob Klein, "Phenomenology and the History of Science," in Philosophical Essays in Memory of Edmund Husserl, (Harvard U. P., 1940), 149. Cf. WPP? 60.

¹ PAW, 158. Cf. CM, 10.
Of course, reading with "intelligence and assiduity" is most difficult and none too common. Strauss proffers help; he provides "helpful hints" on "how to read," demonstrates how it is done and displays the invariable discovery or recovery in which it results; he thus aids, supports and encourages others. But not everyone agrees that Strauss's "readings" exemplify "the study of earlier thought, conducted with intelligence and assiduity." As we have seen, some suggest his "readings" are "ingenious" -- which is not quite synonymous with "intelligence." (I have never seen it suggested that Strauss was insufficiently assiduous.)

1Sabine expresses indignation at Strauss's implicit allegation that modern commentators on Spinoza are "even less penetrating than the vulgar" of the seventeenth century. Strauss retorts: "This suggestion is not entirely wrong: I regard many present day commentators as less penetrating than the vulgar of the seventeenth century, because the latter had a much greater awareness of the serious character of the theological problem and even of its détails than do men brought up in the belief that enthusiasm for science and progress constitutes a form of religion. When Sabine says that Spinoza knew 'that a frontal attack on Calvinist theology was impossible,' I can only ask him whether Spinoza does not make a frontal attack on the belief in any miracles and whether a doctrine of a certain miracle (the miracle of resurrection) is not the very center of Calvinist theology as Spinoza knew it." WPP? 226.
(Strauss likewise seems to imply that the "vulgar" of today are more "advanced" than present day academics. He writes: "Positivism surpasses existentialism by far in academic influence and existentialism surpasses positivism by far in popular influence." interpretation, 1.)
Let us turn to Strauss's discussion of his critics' objections with the view to discerning the connections between positivism and historicism and the reading of old books with due appreciation of "the art of writing" -- and of "persecution and the art of writing."

Strauss discusses Belaval's discernment of his (Strauss's) "anti-positivist view," "a classical and rationalist conception of truth" that the philosophic truth is untemporal. 1

He raises the question whether there is no contradiction between this view and my apparent concern with making historical inquiries independent of every philosophic postulate. I did not suggest that one can make the study of the history of philosophy independent of every philosophic postulate. History of philosophy necessarily presupposes the persistence of the same fundamental problems. This, and this alone, is the trans-temporal truth which must be admitted, if there is to be history of philosophy. On the other hand, history of philosophy is endangered if the historian starts from the acceptance of any solution of the fundamental problems: if he knows in advance that a given philosophic doctrine which he is studying is false, he lacks the incentive for studying that doctrine with sympathy or care. What I said does imply the rejection of positivism: positivism [sic] is blind to the fundamental problems, and therefore the positivist as positivist cannot be a historian of philosophy; a man who happens to be a positivist can become a historian of philosophy only to the extent to which he develops the capacity for questioning positivism. 2

1WPP? 228.
2WPP? 228-229.
In discussing Sabine's critical comments, the question of the connection between esotericism and historicism is explicitly raised. Strauss writes:

Sabine notes that my "argument about the esoteric interpretation of philosophical writings is combined with, and complicated by, another argument against . . . 'historicism,'" but he does not see a "close logical relation between the two arguments." The strict connection is this. Esotericism necessarily follows from the original meaning of philosophy, provided that it is assumed that opinion is the element of society; but historicism is incompatible with philosophy in the original meaning of the word, and historicism cannot be ignored today. One can illustrate the connection between the two arguments as follows: Historicism may be said to be the view, accepted by Sabine, that "there are presumptions implicit in what Carl Becker called the 'climate of opinion' of an age that no contemporary ever fully grasps, precisely because they are so deeply ingrained in the texture of his thinking." In other words, even the greatest minds cannot liberate themselves from the specific opinions which rule their particular society. This view can be established more easily if all explicit statements of all great thinkers must be taken to express their private thoughts than if this assumption is questioned.

As regards my argument against historicism, Sabine doubts if he follows it. What I meant to say was that if one does not take seriously the intention of the great thinkers, namely, the intention to know the truth about the whole, one cannot understand them; but historicism is based on the premise that this intention is unreasonable because it is simply impossible to know the truth about the whole. I never said, as Sabine believes I did, that reading old books can support the truth of the statement: "that, unless there is a single true account of the whole, no account of anything in particular can be true." I merely said that reading old books is today indispensable as an antidote to the ruling dogma that the very notion of a final
and true account of the whole is absurd. I never said that "a historian must proceed on the supposition that philosophers, even original and important ones, always know the presuppositions and consequences of all the statements they make." I merely said that the historian must proceed on the supposition that the great thinkers understood better what they thought than the historian who is not likely to be a great thinker. Sabine however believes that "there are presumptions implicit in . . . the climate of opinion" of an age that no contemporary ever fully grasps." He seems to imply that the historian may grasp fully the presuppositions implicit in the "climate of opinion," say, of early fourth century Athens which Plato, accepting those presuppositions, did not fully grasp. If Sabine had given an example he would have enabled his readers to consider whether he is right. I do not know of any historian who grasped fully a fundamental presupposition of a great thinker which the great thinker himself did not fully grasp.  

Strauss hardly advocates disregarding "the climate of opinion" or "the life and times" of a thinker; neither does he speak facilely of "transcending" one's times. Indeed, he suggests that historicists are insufficiently inattentive to "the climate of opinion" and the "times." He states:

The historical evidence invoked in favor of historicism has a much more limited bearing than seems to be assumed. In the first place, historicists do not make sufficient allowance for the deliberate adaptation, on the part of the political philosophers of the past, of their views to the prejudices of their contemporaries. Superficial readers are apt to think that a political philosopher was under the spell of the historical situation in which he thought, when he was merely adapting the

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1 WPP? 227-228.
expression of his thought to that situation in order to be listened to at all. . . . They did not limit themselves to expounding what they considered the political truth. They combined with that exposition an exposition of what they considered desirable or feasible in the circumstances, or intelligible on the basis of the generally received opinions; they communicated their views in a manner which was not purely "philosophical," but at the same time "civil." Accordingly, by proving that their political teaching as a whole is "historically conditioned," we do not at all prove that their political philosophy proper is "historically conditioned." ¹

Strauss does vigorously press his questioning of the "gratuitously-assumed" dogma² that the relation between doctrines and their "times" is wholly unambiguous.

The obvious possibility is overlooked that the situation to which one particular doctrine is related, is particularly favorable to the discovery of the truth, whereas all other

¹ WPP? 63-64.

² Strauss repeatedly asserts that positivism and historicism are the ruling dogmas of the day or the contemporary forms of dogmatism. His statements are strong. Consider the following samples: "Positivism may be said to be more dogmatic than any other position of which we have records. Positivism can achieve this triumph because it is able to present itself as very skeptical; it is that manifestation of dogmatism based on skepticism in which the skepticism completely conceals the dogmatism from its adherents." LAM, 26.

"Historical understanding, the revitalization of earlier ways of thinking, was originally meant as a corrective for the specific shortcomings of the modern mind. This impulse was however vitiated from the outset by the belief which accompanied it, that
situations may be more or less unfavorable. More generally expressed, in understanding the genesis of a doctrine we are not necessarily driven to the conclusion that the doctrine in question cannot simply be true. . . . We cannot then stop at ascertaining the relations between a doctrine and its historical origins. We have to interpret these relations; and such interpretation presupposes the philosophic study of the doctrine in itself with a view to its truth or falsehood. At any rate, the modern thought, as distinguished from modern life and modern feeling, was superior to the thought of the past. Thus, what was primarily intended as a corrective for the modern mind, was easily perverted into a confirmation of the dogma of the superiority of modern thought to all earlier thought. Historical understanding lost its liberating force by becoming historicism, which is nothing other than the petrified and self-complacent form of the self-criticism of the modern mind. "PWP, 158.

"Whereas for the genuine philosopher of the past all the answers of which he could possibly think were, prior to his examination of them, open possibilities, the historicist philosopher excludes, prior to his examining them, all the answers suggested in former ages. He is no less dogmatic, he is much more dogmatic, than the average philosopher of the past." WPP? 71.

"We ought . . . to welcome historicism as an ally in our fight against dogmatism. But 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. We are forced to suspect that historicism is the guise in which dogmatism likes to appear in our age. It seems to us that what is called the 'experience of history' is a bird's eye view of the history of thought, as that history came to be seen under the combined influence of the belief in necessary progress (or in the impossibility of returning to the thought of the past) and of the belief in the supreme value of diversity or uniqueness (or of the equal right of all epochs or civilizations)." NR, 22.
fact (if it is a fact) that each doctrine is "related" to a particular historical setting does not prove at all that no doctrine can simply be true.

The old-fashioned, not familiar with the ravages wrought by historicism, may ridicule us for drawing a conclusion which amounts to the truism that we cannot reasonably reject a serious doctrine before we have examined it adequately.

An adequate interpretation is such an interpretation as understands the thought of a philosopher exactly as he understood it himself. All historical evidence adduced in support of historicism presupposes as a matter of course that adequate understanding of the philosophy of the past is possible on the basis of historicism. This presupposition is open to grave doubts. To see this we must consider historicism in the light of the standards of historical exactness which, according to common belief, historicism was the first to perceive, to elaborate, or at least to divine.

The last sentence quoted indicates that Strauss is not simply against "Science" and "History." Indeed, not only is he not opposed to them, he positively commends the "spirit" which originally gave rise to and animated them. ²

¹ WPP? 63-66.

² Note his indignation at Wild speaking of "so called scholars" and of "the favorite fallacy of German nineteenth century scholarship." "We shall have to consider briefly how a man who is obviously a real scholar, who has obviously acquired by signal achievements the moral right to call the great historians and philologists of nineteenth-century German so called scholars . . ." "Wild," 364. Also see 329-330.
Let us take the case of "historicism" which Strauss regards as "the serious antagonist."¹

Historicism discovered these standards while fighting the doctrine which preceded it and paved the way for it. That doctrine was the belief in progress: the conviction of the superiority, say, of the late eighteenth century to all earlier ages, and the expectation of still further progress in the future... It deviates from the philosophic tradition in so far as it is essentially a view concerning "the historical process"; and that that process is, generally speaking, a "progress": a progress of thought and institutions toward an order which fully agrees with certain presupposed universal standards of human excellence.

In consequence, the belief in progress, as distinguished from the views of the philosophic tradition, can be legitimately criticized on purely historical grounds. This was done by early historicism, which showed in a number of cases -- the most famous example is the interpretation of the Middle Ages -- that the "progressivist" view of the past was based on an utterly insufficient understanding of the past...

Against this approach [of progressivist historians who "preferred to ask, what is the contribution of the doctrine to our beliefs? What is the meaning unknown to the originator, of the doctrine from the point of view of the present? What is its meaning in the light of later discoveries and inventions?"], the "historical consciousness" rightly protested in the interest of historical truth, of historical exactness. The task of the historian of thought is to understand the thinkers of the past exactly as they understood themselves, or to revitalize their thought according to their own interpretation. If we abandon this goal, we abandon the only practicable criterion of "objectivity" in the history of thought...

Now, historicism is constitutionally unable to live up to the standards of historical exactness which it might be said

¹WPP? 26.
to have discovered. For historicism is the belief that the historicist approach is superior to the non-historical approach, but practically the whole thought of the past was radically "unhistorical." Historicism is therefore compelled, by its principle, to attempt to understand the philosophy of the past better than it understood itself. The philosophy of the past understood itself in a non-historical manner, but historicism must understand it "historically." The philosophers of the past claimed to have found the truth, and not merely the truth for their times. The historicist, on the other hand, believes that they were mistaken in making that claim, and he cannot help making that belief the basis of his interpretation. Historicism then merely repeats, if sometimes in a more subtle form, the sin for which it upbraided so severely the "progressivist" historiography. . . .

It would be a mistake to think that historicism could be the outcome of an unbiased study of the history of philosophy, and in particular of the history of political philosophy. The historian may have ascertained that all political philosophies are related to specific historical settings, or that only such men as live in a specific historical situation have a natural aptitude for accepting a given political philosophy. He cannot thus rule out the possibility that the historical setting of one particular political philosophy is the ideal condition for the discovery of the political truth. Historicism cannot then be established by historical evidence. . . . The political philosophers of the past attempted to answer the question of the

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1Cf. CM, 9: "Each of them [the great political philosophers] was undoubtedly mistaken in believing that his teaching is the true and final teaching regarding political things; we know through a reliable tradition that this belief forms part of a rationalization; but the process of rationalization is not so thoroughly understood that it would not be worthwhile to study it in the case of the greatest minds; for we all know there may be various kinds of rationalization."
best political order once and for all. Each of them held explicitly or implicitly that all others had failed. It is only after a long period of trial and error that political philosophers started questioning the possibility of answering the fundamental questions once and for all. The ultimate result of that reflection is historicism.

Strauss, it may then be said, suggests that in his critical questioning of the current and prevalent dogmas he is being true to the original "spirit" of positivism and historicism which aspired to the "pure truth" or to "objectivity": precisely in light of that aspiration. Strauss opposes these "isms" indicating that they have become more dogmatic than any of the dogmatisms against which they originally arose. The case of exotericism, it may perhaps be said,

1WPP? 66-69. See Strauss's discussion of Husserl's "Philosophy As Rigorous Science" (interpretation, 6 ff.) for a similar judgment by Husserl on positivism. There appears to be a resemblance between Strauss's critique of positivism and Husserl's, which inclines one to suspect that perhaps Strauss, as a young student of his, did derive some "benefit" notwithstanding Strauss's own disclaimer in "Accounts," 3: "I did not derive great benefit from Husserl; I was probably not mature enough." See especially NR, 78-79. And also see Strauss's presentation of Husserl's point of view in interpretation, 8. It makes a point similar to the one made at the end of the long quotation here.
shows up the constitutional inability of positivism and historicism to achieve objectivity, or indeed even to attempt it: to understand writings of the past as their authors intended them. Accordingly, the case of exotericism indicates why Strauss found it necessary to engage in relentless combat with positivism and historicism.

21. The Need for Historical Studies

Strauss emphasizes that historical studies are today indispensable as the means of digging ourselves out of the deeper unnatural cave in which we are sunk in order to recover the ground of the natural Cave from which ascent to the light—philosophizing—is possible.¹ Why do we moderns, in particular, require historical studies? Strauss lets Hegel answer:

"The manner of study in ancient times is distinct from that of modern times, in that the former consisted in the veritable training and perfecting of the natural consciousness. Trying its powers at each part of its life severally, and philosophizing about everything it came across, the natural consciousness transformed itself into a universality of abstract understanding which was active in every matter and in every respect. In modern times, however, the individual finds the abstract form ready made."²

¹ See PAW, 155 and P&G, 13-14 -- the end of the long footnote.

² WPP? 75.
What, at bottom, accounts for this difference, Strauss suggests, is the idea of progress.

Modern thought is in all its forms, directly or indirectly, determined by the idea of progress. This idea implies that the most elementary questions can be settled once and for all so that future generations can dispense with their further discussion, but can erect on the foundations once laid an ever-growing structure. In this way, the foundations are covered up. The only proof necessary to guarantee their solidity seems to be that the structure stands and grows. Since philosophy demands, however, not merely solidity so understood, but lucidity and truth, a special kind of inquiry becomes necessary whose purpose it is to keep alive the recollection, and the problem, of the foundations hidden by progress. This philosophic inquiry is the history of philosophy or of science.

For Strauss then, historical studies are important for two reasons:

1) to recover "the natural horizon of human thought," "the foundations" and "the problem of the foundations" hidden by progress; 2) "history has the further task of explaining why the proper understanding of the fundamental problems has become lost in such a manner that the loss presents itself at the outset as a progress."³ The ground of

¹WPP? 76.

²"Collingwood," 585-586.
Strauss's interest in history is precisely the opposite of that of the historicists: the doubt of progress, or even stronger, the conviction that ours is "an age of intellectual decline." ¹ Strauss makes clear that it is "the specific character of modern thought" which makes history indispensable to philosophy. It is precisely this recognition which distinguishes his position from the historicist's, as he makes clear in the following statement:

If, as we must, we apply historicism to itself, we must explain historicism in terms of the specific character of modern thought, or, more precisely, of modern philosophy. In doing so, we observe that modern political philosophy or science, as distinguished from pre-modern political philosophy or science, is in need of the history of political philosophy or science as an integral part of its own efforts, since, as modern political philosophy or science itself admits or even emphasizes, it consists to a considerable extent of inherited knowledge whose basis is no longer contemporaneous or immediately accessible. The recognition of this necessity cannot be mistaken for historicism. For historicism asserts that the fusion of philosophic and historical questions marks in itself a progress beyond "naive" non-historical philosophy, whereas we limit ourselves to asserting that that fusion is, within the limits indicated, inevitable on the basis of modern philosophy, as distinguished from pre-modern philosophy or "the philosophy of the future."²

¹ Strauss writes: "History takes on philosophic significance for men living in an age of intellectual decline. Studying the thinkers of the past becomes essential for men living in an age of intellectual decline because it is the only practicable way in which they can recover a proper understanding of the fundamental problems." "Collingwood," 585.

² WPP? 77.
22. Conclusion: The Question of Strauss's "Nonorthodoxy"

We conclude with the question of Strauss's self-professed "nonorthodoxy" -- a question which will not be simply settled here or by the whole of the thesis. We have separated the question of the nature of Strauss's "nonorthodoxy" from the question of his abiding concern with both Jerusalem and Athens for two reasons: one to enable us to treat each by itself for the sake of clarity and two, because even those who underscore his "nonorthodoxy" acknowledge, in the words of Jacob Klein, that "all those who have known him [Strauss] will never forget that he belonged to two worlds"¹ -- Athens and Jerusalem. But, as we have seen, it is suggested that he "belonged" less wholeheartedly to Jerusalem or that he "retired" from it at a certain point or even that he used knowledge of Jerusalem for "rhetorical ends." Suggestions of this kind are made not least by those ambitious for Strauss's posthumous fame,² by those

¹"LS," 2.

²At one point in the "Strauss Talks," the conversation turned to Freud. Strauss expressed his distaste for Freud's attempt to "institutionalize" his teaching. I conjectured that Freud, who apparently "suffered" from being a Jew -- and therefore insisted that C.G. Jung be the front man for psychoanalysis and the first president of its international society -- was apprehensive that his teaching would not receive due attention. Strauss retorted: "Is his teaching true? Then it will be paid attention and last; if not, not."
who fervently wish that "Strauss may in the end be best remembered for his works on Socrates, the preoccupation of his last years." ¹

Jacob Klein's statement carries the weight of a friendship of fifty years' standing:

There is something else that cannot remain unmentioned now as it did not remain unmentioned in the speeches delivered at Strauss's funeral. It is his profound awareness of being a Jew. Just as his thinking on man as a "political animal" had its roots in what the ancient Greeks thought, had its focus in Athens, his preoccupation with the question of divinity and with the peculiar way of Jewish life and Jewish history tied his thinking and feeling to Jerusalem. He distinguished sharply -- and did so always -- the political programs and actions of the Jews from their religious background. There was a time when Leo Strauss was an orthodox Jew, while yet pursuing his political goals explicitly and determinedly in an unreligious way. He later changed his religious orientation radically, tying the question of god and of gods to his political reasoning, without letting his own life be dependent on any divinity or on any religious rites. But his being in a definite sense a Jew was all-important to him. Nothing could change that.

All of those who have known him will never forget that he belonged to two worlds. They bow to the greatness of his soul and its complexity, to his unique sense of the important, to his modesty. They cannot do otherwise. ²

¹"LS's Achievement," 1355.

²"LS," 2. As Strauss indicates, Klein did not share his interest in "the Jewish problem." The friendship, it appears from Strauss's reminiscence, was struck not because of (and perhaps despite) Strauss's interest in Jewish things. "Accounts," 2. This contrast of attitudes is evident in Klein's language: in speaking of "any divinity or ... any religious rites" (not to mention "god and gods") he speaks in accents and terms not at all typical of the more respectful and scrupulous speech Strauss employs in speaking about Jewish things. Compare, for example, Klein's "any religious rites" to Strauss's more sensitively respectful and scrupulous "what the Christians call the ceremonial law." SCR. 9.
Klein's statement supports the contention that whatever may be said about Strauss's "nonorthodoxy," it does not compromise the earnestness of his concern with Jerusalem (as the latter sentences of the statement quoted emphasize).

Himmelfarb attacks Strauss -- unfairly -- by invoking a comparison to Maimonides and using it as a club.

Strauss had stopped going to the synagogue. From his own point of view, should he have? More exactly, should he not have resumed going when he became a master, with disciples? Should he not have offered up a little of that sacrifice -- of the philosopher to the Jew in him -- that he valued so highly in Maimonides?...

Strauss was not a believing Jew. . . . If for him the alternative to philosophy always remained Judaism, . . . for the children and grandchildren of detached Jewish Straussians, the alternative to philosophy would not be Judaism. For them the alternative would necessarily be Christianity -- perhaps by a detour through Eastern religions. . . . If this Athenian had lived a more Jerusalemite life, he would have set an even stronger Jewish example than he did. That would not have been inconsistent, or unprincipled. He began to study Maimonides when young and never stopped, to the day of his death. He held that Maimonides was deeper than Spinoza.

"On LS," 64. The insinuation that Strauss is somehow to blame for the "detachment" of his students from Judaism and for the "detours" as well as the final destination of their children is grossly unfair (and grossly inconsistent, for Himmelfarb contrasts the "detached Jewish Straussians" early deprivation of Jewish sustenance typical of their homes to Strauss's "religious Jewish home".)
It is not only unfair, but rather rare, that a distinguished professor of political science -- and "not a believing" one, at that -- is indicted for not working hard enough at "saving souls"! Despite his bold-faced assertion that "Strauss was not a believing Jew," Himmelfarb is deeply impressed by the "Jewishness" of Strauss: "All agree that Strauss's being a Jew was at the center of his thought and feeling."

Arnaldo Momigliano, the distinguished classicist, also makes the comparison between Strauss and Maimonides, but on a deeper level:

Have we simply to conclude that for Strauss being a believer and being a philosopher are two incompatible things -- or more precisely have we to accept "the old Jewish premise that being a Jew and being a philosopher are two incompatible things"?

The first of many difficulties raised by this conclusion would be that Leo Strauss has never given up either the quality of being a philosopher or the quality of being a Jew. . . . I can only register a personal impression if I say that Strauss's present position still seems to me akin to that of Maimonides who -- in Strauss's words -- "pursued the philosophic approach up to its end. . . . If he had not brought the greatest sacrifice, he could not have defended the Torah against the philosophers so admirably as he did in his Jewish books". . . .

But is Strauss's "nonorthodoxy" simply to be assimilated to Maimonides' heterodoxy as expounded by Strauss? There are at

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1 Arnaldo Momigliano, "Philosophy and Poetry" (A Review of Strauss's Socrates and Aristophanes), Commentary, October, 1967, 103-104.
least two very weighty differences--practical differences. These are adumbrated in Himmelfarb's criticism of Strauss quoted above. First, Maimonides does not pronounce himself to be "nonorthodox" or "heterodox"; on the contrary, as Strauss reminds us repeatedly, Maimonides never calls himself a philosopher:

It is against the opinions of "the philosophers" that he defends the Jewish creed. And what he opposes to the wrong opinions of the philosophers is not a true philosophy, and in particular not a religious philosophy, or a philosophy of religion, but "our opinion, i.e., the opinion of our law," or the opinion of "us, the community of the adherents of the law," or the opinion of the "followers of the law of our teacher Moses." 1

The practical bearing is manifest in the second difference. Strauss writes in his introductory essay to the Guide:

What is the virtue of not being trained in natural science? The reason why natural science is dangerous and is kept secret "with all kinds of artifices" is not that it undermines the Law--only the ignorant believe that (I 33), and Maimonides' whole life as well as the life of his successors refutes this suspicion. Yet it is also true that natural science has this corrupting effect on all men who are not perfect (cf. I 62). For natural science surely affects the understanding of the meaning of the Law, the grounds on which it is to be obeyed and of the weight that is to be attached to its different parts. In a word natural science upsets habits. 2

1 PAW, 43.

2 Guide, xix. On the previous page xviii, Strauss writes: "Orthodox 'views' do not last in a man if he does not confirm them by the corresponding 'actions' (II 31)."
This is the sharp point of Himmelfarb's critical remarks: it appears that it cannot as readily be said that Strauss's "whole life as well as the life of his successors" refutes the suspicion that "science" has led them astray: in the case of Strauss, it is alleged to have led him to unbelief and in the case of his successors -- "detached Jewish Straussians" -- to leave their children without any Jewish sense of direction whatsoever.

Not to repeat ourselves, we will focus now only on the conclusion of Strauss's "biographical" writings. The conclusion is virtually the same in the Preface and in the Introduction to Philosophie und Gesetz. The contemporary Jew, Strauss concludes, is faced with the alternative, orthodoxy or existentialist atheism. And modern reason dictates the latter. If the Jew would be rational according to the canons of modern rationalism, he will discern "the self-destruction of [traditional] rational philosophy," and will in proud probity be an existentialist. Or, he may celebrate "the victory of orthodoxy through the self-destruction of rational philosophy" but then must acknowledge

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there are no reasonable grounds for his orthodoxy, no possibility of any kind of rational articulation of his orthodoxy or of giving "reasons"\(^1\) and that even the most bestial "orthodoxy" is as unobjectionable or as valid as any other.\(^2\) In light of this conclusion, Strauss's profession of "nonorthodoxy" is all the more significant because the only alternative to orthodoxy is atheism. Or is it? This disjunction is not complete. Strauss suggests a third alternative, "return," He writes "biographically":

The victory of orthodoxy through the self-destruction of rational philosophy was not an unmitigated blessing, for it was a victory not of Jewish orthodoxy but of any orthodoxy, and Jewish orthodoxy based its claim to superiority to other religions from the beginning on its superior rationality (Deut. 4:6).\(^3\)

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\(^1\) Giving "reasons" is not to be confused with asserting Judaism to be a "religion of reason." See SCR, 24.

\(^2\) To draw a line between superstition and religion in a universally valid manner is not an easy task, especially after natural theology has ceased to be the generally accepted basis of discussion; nor is it easy to draw a line between genuine religious concern and the hypocritical use of religion . . . to say nothing of the fact that taking enlightenment for granted is tantamount to transforming enlightenment into superstition." CM, 180. See PAW, 130.

\(^3\) Deuteronomy 4:5-6 reads: "Behold, I have taught you statutes and ordinances . . . Observe therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, that, when they hear all these statutes, shall say: 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'"
Apart from this, the hierarchy of moralities and wills to which the final atheism—referred could not but be claimed to be intrinsically true, theoretically true: "the will to power" of the strong or of the weak may be the ground of every other doctrine; it is not the ground of the doctrine of the will to power: the will to power was said to be a fact. Other observations and experiences confirmed the suspicion that it would be unwise to say farewell to reason. I began therefore to wonder whether the self-destruction of reason was not the inevitable outcome of modern rationalism as distinguished from pre-modern rationalism, especially Jewish-medieval rationalism and its classical (Aristotelian and Platonic) foundation.

In the Introduction to Philosophie und Gesetz he puts it more dramatically:

This [the contemporary] situation not only seems to lack a way out; there really is no way out as long as one clings to modern premises. Faced at last in the modern world only with the alternative, orthodoxy or atheism, and yet on the other hand, recognizing that the desideratum of an enlightened Judaism is not to be denied, one finds oneself obliged to ascertain whether enlightenment is necessarily modern Enlightenment. Unless it is known from the start what cannot be known from the start — that only new, unheard of, ultra-modern thoughts can clear away our dilemma, one finds oneself induced to approach the medieval enlightenment, the enlightenment of Maimonides, for help.  

1SCR, 30–31.

2P&G, 28.
(These statements indicate the connection between "the content" of Strauss's "nonorthodoxy" and his ultimate understanding of Maimonides and the importance of apprehending that connection as far as possible.)

We may say here simplistically that Strauss, in his "return," discovered in Maimonides the "rationalist Jew" par excellence. He discovered that on the basis of Platonic political philosophy in particular, the "wisdom and understanding" of the Torah may be discerned and may be shown forth, that the Law could be justified philosophically on that basis, and, perhaps not less important to Maimonides, on that basis, philosophy could be justified before the Law. In other words, he discovered that one could indeed be a "believing" Jew and a rationalist, without sacrificing the substance of Judaism and without circumcising philosophy -- without giving it "a meaning fundamentally different from its Aristotelian (or Platonic) meaning." By contrast, Strauss found that early modern political philosophy -- "Epicurean" in its motive, "Machiavellian" in its means, and charged with "anti-theological passion" -- set out

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1 PAW, 19-20.
3 See LAM, 201 and WPP? 44.
deliberately to create a civilization, the modern world, in which
the biblical God would be an absurdity and in which orthodoxy would
have no place. There were, of course, "movements" which
Strauss questions whether these "movements" are not in bad faith or
untrue to what is fundamental to Judaism; he asserts that they
destroy its substance; "clarity and honesty" demand that such
"accommodations" of Judaism to modernity be rejected. What is
here stated quickly is discussed in Chapters III and IV. (The only
writing of Strauss's in which he elaborates the last point thematically
is his (twenty-page) Introduction to P&G, which is why it is included
in Chapter IV.)

Strauss exhorts to "return" and to "teshuvah" (in Hebrew,
literally, "return" but often rendered), "repentance." The exhorta-
tion to "teshuvah" is addressed to rationalistic Jews who find that
modern rationalism in its various forms forbid them in all probity

1 See P&G, 20, and SCR, 28-30 and 209.
2 See NR, 317.
from "returning" ("teshuvah"). From embracing Jewish tradition.

Strauss's exhortation is understated and perhaps, therefore, all the more effective.

There is a Jewish problem that is humanly soluble, the problem of the Western Jewish individual who or whose parents severed his connection with the Jewish community in the expectation that he would thus become a normal member of a purely liberal or of a universal human society, and who is naturally perplexed when he finds no such society. The solution to his problem is return to the Jewish community, the community established by the Jewish faith and the Jewish way of life -- teshubah (ordinarily rendered by "repentance") in the most comprehensive sense. Some of our contemporaries believe such a return to be altogether impossible because they believe that the Jewish faith has been overthrown once and for all, not by blind rebellion, but by evident refutation. While admitting that their deepest problem would be solved by that return, they assert that intellectual probity forbids them to sacrifice intellect in order to satisfy even the most vital need. Yet they can hardly deny that a vital need legitimately induces a man to probe whether what seems to be an impossibility is not in fact only a very great difficulty.

His exhortation to "return" is addressed to social scientists:

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

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1 SCR, 7. It is rather an overstatement to speak of Strauss "exhorting" to "teshuya," but his statement does have dramatic impact. At least, Strauss directs Jews to find out for themselves whether, in fact, Judaism "has been overthrown once and for all . . . by evident refutation." Strauss "exhorts" then to "teshuvah" -- at least, in the sense of "return" to the study of classic Jewish "source-texts." Cf. 129 below.
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.

One may now not only glimpse the connection between "teshuvah" and "return," one may well conclude that the latter has a logical and perhaps urgent practical priority. \(2\) Strauss asserts that

in our age it is much less urgent to show that political philosophy is the indispensable handmaid of theology than to show that political philosophy is the rightful queen of the social sciences, the sciences of man and of human affairs: even the highest law court in the land is more likely to defer to the contentions of social science than to the Ten Commandments as the words of the living God. \(3\)

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1\textsuperscript{CM}, 11.

\(2\) This is to take seriously Strauss's choice and to assume that indeed he deliberately made this choice. Certainly there seems to be little doubt that a career of teaching Jewish things was open to him. A glance at his bibliography up to 1939, indicates that Strauss had only one title (discounting medieval works on political thought) to his credit that would suggest competence in political science: The Political Philosophy of Hobbes. By contrast, as a Jewish scholar, he had imposing "credentials" and had already made a name for himself.

3\textsuperscript{CM}, 1. (The book ends speaking of "the all-important question which is coeval with philosophy although the philosophers do not frequently pronounce it -- the question quid sit deus.")
And he states:

The recovery of what we are in the habit of calling classical political philosophy and of what Maimonides called simply political science or practical philosophy is, to say the least, an indispensable condition for understanding his thought.

And consider: Is what Strauss tells us about Socrates at all applicable to himself?

...living in Crete, was the alternative to dying in Athens. But Socrates chose to die in Athens. Socrates preferred to sacrifice his life in order to preserve philosophy in Athens rather than to preserve his life in order to introduce philosophy into Crete. If the danger to the future of philosophy in Athens had been less great, he might have chosen to flee to Crete. His choice was a political choice of the highest order.

If it is thought to apply to Strauss at all, it may be well to balance it with this little comment en passant of Strauss's:

In the case of such a man as Halevi... the influence of philosophy on him consists in the conversion to philosophy:

1 WPP? 168-169. Consider too the opening of WPP?: "But while being compelled, or compelling myself, to wander far away from my sacred heritage, or to be silent about it, I shall not for a moment forget what Jerusalem stands for." Does the intent of the last sentence extend beyond the limits of the immediate context there, reflecting something "biographical"? WPP? 9-10.

2 WPP? 33.
for some time, we prefer to think for a very short time, he was a philosopher. After that moment, of spiritual hell, he returned to the Jewish fold.

What then can be said about Strauss's "nonorthodoxy"? We may "define" it negatively --- for the most part. Strauss never rebelled against or dramatically "threw over" orthodoxy. Strauss evinces no "anti-theological ire." He does not mock orthodoxy or poke fun at it; he does not put it down. He does not propose supplanting orthodoxy; he does not oppose to it a "reformed," "liberal," or any other modern accommodation; on the contrary, he denounces these as in bad faith and pronounces them destructive of the substance of Judaism. He appreciates the motive --- "return" --- of Cohen and Rosenzweig, but questions the attempt to render Judaism a religion of reason or to refound it on the basis of the "new thinking"; he suggests that "the movement of return" associated with Cohen and Rosenzweig was insufficiently clear about modernity and was insufficiently attentive to the quarrel between ancients and moderns generally.

1My underlining. PAW, 109.

and to the quarrel between orthodoxy and the Enlightenment in particular.\(^1\) But apparently, Strauss's "nonorthodoxy" does touch on "the understanding of the meaning of the Law, the grounds on which it is to be obeyed and of the weight that is to be attached to its different parts" -- and not least, "habits" and "actions."\(^2\) How precisely, Strauss has not seen fit to make explicit. (He does offer "hints" in his later writings on Maimonides. These doubtless reveal something about Strauss's "nonorthodoxy" but, as we indicated, Strauss's "nonorthodoxy" appears to go beyond Maimonides' "heterodoxy.")) Therefore, it cannot be precisely ascertained and need not be for the purposes of this thesis.

What is all-important to the consideration of this thesis is the central fact of Strauss's lifelong attention\(^3\) to Jerusalem and

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\(^1\) All of this is set out in the Introduction to Philosophie und Gesetz. See Chapter IV below.

\(^2\) Guide, xix and xviii.

\(^3\) See Strauss's differentiation of probity and the old "love of truth" in terms of attention. P&G, 27, n. 1. Cf. "zetetic" questing to attention. Strauss writes in his "Restatement": "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
Athens, to "das theologisch-politische Problem," to Judaism and philosophy. And it is this fact we have sought to establish and to make clear. Attention is the essence of the "third alternative" to unreasoned belief and unreasoned unbelief as Strauss makes clear in his admonishment of social scientists:

The most important example of the dogmatism to which we have alluded is supplied by the treatment of religion in the new political or social science. 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 hidden basis of the new science. The new science rests on a dogmatic atheism which presents itself as merely methodological or hypothetical. . . . Some adherents of the new political science might rejoin with some liveliness that their posture toward religion is imposed on them by intellectual honesty: not 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,' butzetetic (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. 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." OnTyr, 209-210.
being able to believe, they cannot accept belief as the basis of their science. We gladly grant that, other things being equal, a frank atheist is a better man than an alleged theist who conceives of God as a symbol. But we must add that intellectual honesty is not enough. Intellectual honesty is not love of truth. Intellectual honesty, a kind of self-denial, has taken the place of love of truth because truth has come to be believed to be repulsive, and one cannot love the repulsive. Yet just as our opponents refuse respect to unreasoned belief, we on our part, with at least equal right, must refuse respect to unreasoned unbelief; honesty with oneself regarding one's unbelief is in itself not more than unreasoned unbelief, probably accompanied by a vague confidence that the issue of unbelief versus belief has long since been settled once and for all.

This thesis is about the understanding Strauss has gleaned from unflagging attention to Jerusalem and Athens.

It is fitting that Strauss has the last word on his "nonorthodoxy"; that word is a fitting conclusion:

You see, what I tried to show is this. I think clarity or honesty about the most important matters is a most important thing. That was my premise. Therefore I rejected, partly explicitly and partly implicitly because I couldn't develop the whole thing, all attempts to interpret the Jewish past, in terms of a culture. In other words, for me the question is: truly either the Torah as understood by our tradition or, say, unbelief. And I think that is infinitely more important than every cultural interpretation which is based on a tacit unbelief and cannot be a substitute for the belief it has given up . . . . Let me add one point. When I say "the Jewish faith as our ancestors held it," I do not mean that every particular

1 LAM, 218-219.

2 This is made clear, above 81, in his Introduction to P&G. See Chapter IV below.
belief, even if entertained by the majority of Jews or by the large majority of Jews for centuries, must necessarily be binding. I happen to know a bit of the Jewish Medieval thinkers [sic], and I know that quite a few very powerful and important changes were made even by them. I believe, and I say this without any disrespect to any orthodox Jew, that it is hard for people, for most Jews today to believe in verbal inspiration... of the Torah, and in the miracles -- or most of the miracles, and other things... I think that [it] is a perfectly legitimate and sensible goal to restate the essence of Jewish faith in a way which is by no means literally identical, say, with Rambam's "Creator of the world,"... I mean with any traditional statement of principles. That's not the point. But a Judaism which is not belief in the "creator of the world" that has problems running through it.

I have heard that in this very [Hillel] building... someone said, "I believe in God as a symbol." Then I would say that a man who says "I do not believe in God," is, other things being equal, a better man. Now I do not deny that a man can believe in God without believing in creation, and particularly without believing in creation out of nothing... But still Judaism contains the whole notion of man's responsibility and of a final redemption. I mean you can say, "All right, abolish the personal Messiah and have only a Messianic Age," which is done by most liberal Jews as you know, and add many more of these things. But the very notion of the certainty of final redemption is untenable without belief in a God concerned with justice. And this is such a most important issue. And I would say that it seems to me that the proper posture of a man who does not believe in that is to enter into this mystery, into this mysterious belief. And whether he will not come out of it -- even if he will not come out with belief in this -- with some understanding he did not have before.

Gershom Scholem... shows to what amazing lengths some of our mystics went by thinking through these beliefs, and then coming out with views which many of the objections which many of us would have to such traditional beliefs would no longer be tenable. That would be the kind of thing which I would regard as satisfactory. But I believe by simply replacing God by the creative genius of the Jewish people one gives away, one deprives oneself -- even if one does not believe -- of a source of human understanding. [The following underscores the "chutzpah" of Himmelfarb's bold-faced assertion.] Let us also not forget what
does it mean; one does not believe? How much of the unbelief now existing in as much a matter of hearsay, or what someone of your profession would call "social pressure"? Belief and unbelief are not such simple states: here's a camp of the believers, here's a camp of non-believers. Politically it may very well appear this way on many occasions, but for most of the more thoughtful people in both camps things would be different. Now I do not wish to minimize folk dances, Hebrew speaking and many other things, I do not want to minimize them. But I believe that they cannot possibly take the place of what is most profound in our tradition.  

23. Plan of the Chapters Following

Chapter II is divided into three sections. Each section advances the basic theme of the chapter: Strauss's assertion of the fundamental and irreconcilable opposition between Jerusalem and Athens. The statement of this chapter is the core statement of Strauss's view of the fundamental relation between Jerusalem and Athens.

Section 1 shows Strauss's discernment of the "metaphysical" roots -- to speak loosely -- of the opposition between Jerusalem and Athens. It focuses centrally on Strauss's exposition of the discovery of nature, of the classical conception of philosophy, and on his

1'Hillel Lecture, Q&A, 11-12.
exposition of "the metaphysics of the Bible," in particular, his "reading" of Genesis 1-3. It would make clear Strauss's assertion of the Bible's implicit rejection of philosophy and philosophy's intransigent "invincible ignorance" of Revelation. It is stressed that Strauss's assertion of the opposition is deeply rooted in his understanding of Athens.

Section 2 contrasts the "Law of Reason" and the "Natural Law" (Yehuda Halevi's terms) of the philosopher with the "categoric" imperative of biblical morality and of the morality required by the city. It introduces and discusses the fundamental opposition within Athens between the philosopher and the city, between the philosopher and the political man or gentleman. It raises the question of the relation of that opposition to the opposition between Divine Revelation and philosophy.

Section 3 carries out what was introduced in Section 2 and offers extensive comparisons of the relative moralities of the philosopher, the gentleman and the pious adherent of biblical religion.¹

¹In Chapter II, I have recourse to the works of two students of Strauss, Robert Sacks and Raymond Weiss. Sacks was singularly privileged to study Genesis on a regular basis — during the year, 1954-1955, Sacks opens the Preface to his The Lion and the Ass (published privately by the author): "This book began in Jerusalem.
I have above indicated the major tasks of Chapters III and IV. In addition they carry the burden of exhibiting Strauss's "development."

The thesis is concerned to show the significant changes, modifications or advances of Strauss's thought, but it is not less concerned to demonstrate the constancy of concern and basic unity of vision

one Saturday afternoon. . . . [T]he talk soon centered around Genesis. At the end of our discussion Dr. Strauss looked up and said, smiling: 'Mr. Sacks, you don't understand anything about the Book of Genesis. Please come to my house next Shabbat.' And so it was every Shabbat that year."

"This book contains my all-too-poor recollections of those conversations. . . . At this point I could not even try to distinguish those memories from my own thoughts, but I should like the reader to know the great debt this book owes to that kind friend."

Strauss was quite obviously proud of Sacks' work. He insisted that I remove The Lion and the Ass from his bookcase and peruse it there and then. 'Sacks' work, he suggested,' exemplified the much needed endeavor to enucleate biblical wisdom and thus to make clear "the biblical orientation."


It will be seen in the context in which recourse to these works is made that they help fill in or elaborate Strauss's remarks and suggestions or our discussion of them; it will be obvious that these works are not cited as authoritative sources, which unmistakably reveal Strauss's true views.
throughout those changes -- to throw light on his own assertion of that constancy and unity: "Das theologisch-politische Problem ist seitdem [the twenties] das Thema meiner Untersuchungen geblieben." Chapters III and IV are all-important to this task. These chapters focus on Strauss's earliest -- and perhaps it may be said, his most "theological" -- books, Philosophie und Gesetz, and to a lesser extent, Spinoza's Critique of Religion (in Chapter IV). On the one hand they exhibit early positions from which he has moved away; they are then indispensable to showing changes. On the other hand, they also exhibit his early concerns and the themes of his interests, and so they are important to showing that those concerns and themes are abiding ones: precisely by expounding his earlier positions and indicating the direction of later changes, one sees more clearly and appreciates better that indeed "das theologisch-politische Problem" has always been at the center of his attention.

Chapter III expounds the main lines of his early understanding of Maimonides, exhibiting his early concern with these themes of abiding interest: the relation of political philosophy and theology; exotericism, the relation of Law and natural law, the quarrel between ancients and moderns, the distorting effect of reading premodern writers
through modern lenses and the inadequacy of modern philosophies of Judaism. (The second to last point comes out sharply in the discussion of Strauss's criticism of Guttmann.) We expound the main lines of Strauss's position in P&G and then point out later changes. The changes are certainly significant but hardly amount to a simple repudiation: one may say more is left intact than is thrown over. This is brought out dramatically by the translation of the Introduction to Philosophie und Gesetz: after thirty years, not only are the views expressed there unchanged, the very same words still serve in (parts of) the 1962 Preface.

As the title suggests, Philosophie und Gesetz is the book of Strauss's on Judaism and philosophy. It is the only book Strauss ever wrote primarily for a Jewish audience. (Unfortunately few of the intended German-Jewish audience had the leisure, in 1935 and after, to read it.) One may perhaps apply to Philosophie und Gesetz what Strauss says about Nietzsche's The Birth of Tragedy.

"He disowned that work to some extent in later years. Nevertheless, if one reads it in light of his later correction one grasps those features of his youthful statement that he maintained until the end of his career, in spite of some modifications."¹ (The last word is my substitution for "vacillations.")

¹Leo Strauss, Socrates and Aristophanes (Basic Books, 1966), 6 -- hereafter, S&A.
In Chapter II we show, as we put it, that Strauss leaned toward the extreme (in light of his later "correction") in his apprehension of natural right, understanding it somewhat "Thomistically"; his correction is in the direction of the "Averroistic" understanding (but stopping short of it).¹ We suggest in Chapter II that the earlier position is the more biblically pious extreme. This greater piety or orthodoxy is brought out in Philosophie und Gesetz when seen in light of Strauss's later advances in his understanding of Maimonides. (Philosophie und Gesetz is dedicated to the memory of his orthodox father.)

Chapter IV attempts to bring out Strauss's view of Judaism and modern thought, his view of the inadequacy of accommodations of Jerusalem in general and Judaism in particular to modern forms of rationalism. The first part presents Strauss's view of the modern Enlightenment implicitly bringing out the contrasts to the enlightenment of Maimonides discussed Chapter III. The chapter as a whole focuses -- to speak loosely -- on Strauss's "theological" assessment of the Enlightenment and of post-Enlightenment developments. (His more

¹See NR, 157-164.
"purely" political assessment has been treated by me in my M. A. thesis and throughout this thesis I have conscientiously striven not to cover the same ground.) It concludes by bringing us full circle to "the theologico-political predicament," with which the thesis -- and in which Strauss -- began. That "predicament" appeared to offer only the alternative orthodoxy or atheism. And precisely this "only" alternative induced Strauss to "return" to the roots of the Western tradition in Jerusalem and Athens.

All the hopes that we entertain in the midst of the confusion and dangers of the present are founded, positively or negatively, directly or indirectly, on the experiences of the past. Of these experiences, the broadest and deepest -- so far as Western man is concerned -- are indicated by the names of two cities: Jerusalem and Athens. Western man became what he is, and is what he is, through the coming together of biblical faith and Greek thought. In order to understand ourselves and to illuminate our trackless way into the future, we must understand Jerusalem and Athens. It goes without saying that this is a task whose proper performance goes beyond my power . . . But we cannot define our tasks by our powers, for our powers become known to us through the performance of our tasks, and it is better to fail nobly than to succeed basely. \(^1\)

\(^1\) "J&A," 3.
CHAPTER II

LEO STRAUSS ON THE FUNDAMENTAL OPPOSITION
OF JERUSALEM AND ATHENS

On the level of "human wisdom," the disputation between believer
and philosopher is not only possible, but without any question the
most important fact of the whole past.  

One cannot recall too often this remark of Goethe . . . : "Das
eigentliche, einzige und tiefste. Thema der Welt- und
Menschengeschichte, dem alle übrigen untergeordnet sind,
bleibt der Konflikt des Unglaubens und Glaubens."  

The only comprehensive and effective reply to the claim of
contemplation to supremacy is supplied by the Bible.  

The respectable, impressive or specious alternatives to the
acceptance of revelation, to the surrender of God's will, have
always presented themselves and still present themselves based
on what man knows by himself by his reason.  

Jews of the philosophic competence of Halevi and Maimonides
took it for granted that being a Jew and being a philosopher are
mutually exclusive.  

Not every man but every noble man is concerned with justice
or righteousness and therefore with any possible extra-human,
supra-human support, of justice, or with the security of
justice. The insecurity of man and everything human is not an
absolutely terrifying abyss if the highest of which a man knows
is absolutely secure.  

1PAW, 107.  
2PAW, 107, n. 35.  
3LAM, 269.  
4SCR, 9.  
5PAW, 19.  
6SCR, 10-11.  

136
1. **Introduction**

Leo Strauss, again and again, expresses his deeply held conviction that there is a fundamental, irreconcilable opposition between Jerusalem and Athens. This conviction is not merely "felt," nor is it simply an a priori one; rather, it is a matter of conclusions -- conclusions generated by a life-long, careful reading of the major texts of Jerusalem and Athens and of the works of great thinkers who, schooled in both traditions, deeply considered their relation. Strauss finds the Bible implicitly depreciating philosophy, even before the rise of philosophy. He discerns in the classical conception of philosophy an intransigent skepticism regarding revelational claims. His assessment of the attempts by medieval and modern thinkers -- Moslem, Jewish, Christian -- to harmonize revelation and philosophy is summed up in this conclusion:

> In every attempt at harmonization, in every synthesis however impressive, one of the two opposed elements is sacrificed, more or less subtly but in any event surely, to the other: philosophy, which means to be the queen, must be made the handmaid of revelation or vice versa.

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1 NR, 74-75.
We can neither reproduce Strauss's lifetime study of Jerusalem and Athens and his thinking on their relation, nor can we leave it at baldly stating his conviction of their fundamental opposition. This chapter offers something in between. It indicates, if somewhat simply and generally, the grounds of Strauss's convictions; it presents something of Strauss's "reading" of the Bible and the classics respectively, and to a lesser extent of medieval thinkers; it adumbrates the nature of the opposition as perceived by Strauss and highlights the points of opposition stressed by Strauss.

2. Strauss and Christian Theology

Leo Strauss was a Jew. In one of his writings he expresses the opposition between Jerusalem and Athens in terms of the extreme case of opposition between Judaism and philosophy. Strauss quite definitely means "Jerusalem" to comprehend Christianity. This is to say that regarding the issue of opposition between Jerusalem and Athens, the profound differences between Christianity and Judaism are not found by him to be significant. He writes:

The issue of traditional\(^1\) Judaism versus philosophy is identical with the issue of Jerusalem versus Athens. It is

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\(^1\)By "traditional," as the quotations indicate, Strauss means biblical and talmudic "prephilosophic" Judaism. (Strauss disclaimed competence in Talmud. "Strauss Talks." However, Strauss appears to have achieved some proficiency in Talmud, at least sufficient to deal with the talmudic references of Maimonides and others.)
difficult not to see the connection between the depreciation of the primary object of philosophy -- the heavens and the heavenly bodies -- in the first chapter of Genesis, the prohibition against eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil in second chapter, the divine name "I shall be what I shall be," the admonition that the Law is not in heaven nor beyond the sea, the saying of the prophet Micah by what the Lord requires of man, and such talmudic utterances as these:

"For him who reflects about four things, about what is above, what is below, what is before, what is behind -- it would be better not to have come into the world,"1 and "God owns nothing in His World except the four cubits of the Halakhah." (We shall expand on what is compressed here, in the discussion below.)

Does Strauss then simply assimilate all biblical traditions to "the extreme case" of traditional Judaism? Yes, he does, but not "simply" or simple-mindedly, and not out of chauvinism. He is deeply aware of the significant differences between Christian theology and Judaism.

1 P.A.W., 20-21. Of course, Maimonides the rationalist hardly interprets this as anti-philosophic in intent, as he expressly states: "The intention of these texts . . . is not . . . wholly to close the gate of speculation and to deprive the intellect of the apprehension of things that it is possible to apprehend -- as is thought by the ignorant and neglectful, who are pleased to regard their own deficiency and stupidity as perfection and wisdom, and the perfection and the knowledge of others as a defection from Law and who thus regard darkness as light and light as darkness. Their [the rabbis'] purpose in its entirety rather is to make it known that the intellects of human beings have a limit at which they stop." Guide, I 32, p. 70. (Discussed in Chapter III.)
The writings of Leo Strauss testify to his comprehensive acquaintance with Christian thought. His many comments on the subject, and many more notes, range from Tertullian to Barth. Strauss apparently studied the works of Thomas Aquinas with great assiduity. Certainly he refers to him more than to any other Christian theologian. But it really cannot be said that Strauss discusses any Christian theologian very extensively. One finds brief discussions of Aquinas and John Calvin and the heterodox Socinus, and a longer discussion of the unorthodox Marsilius of Padua (primarily of his political thought). Strauss then can hardly be said to have been inattentive to Christian theology though he may have been somewhat reticent. Significantly, where he does discuss Christian theology, often it is in order to point up the contrast between it and Jewish thought. Above all, Strauss has repeatedly underscored the contrast in the respective attitudes toward philosophy. (We will quote and discuss his comments below.) Strauss has not simply assimilated Christianity to Judaism; he has certainly not imposed attitudes of the latter on the former. Yet, he does assert

1A quick survey of the footnotes to SCR will indicate the extent of Strauss's reading in Christian theology.
that Judaism and Christianity are on the same side in what he sees to be fundamentally at issue between Jerusalem and Athens: "a life of obedient love versus a life of free insight." As he puts it in the same passage:

The fundamental question, therefore, is whether men can acquire that knowledge of the good without which they cannot guide their lives individually or collectively by the unaided efforts of their natural powers, or whether they are dependent for that knowledge on Divine Revelation. No alternative is more fundamental than this: human guidance or divine guidance. The first possibility is characteristic of philosophy or science in the original sense of the term, the second is presented in the Bible. The dilemma cannot be evaded by any harmonization or synthesis.

Strauss does, of course, recognize the claim of traditional Christianity to a perfect harmonization. As he put it to me, whereas, one may argue the case for a philosophicus Christi, the case for "Mosaic philosophy" is hardly tenable. It even sounds "funny." Though Strauss appreciates the plausibility of the case for a philosophicus Christi, he clearly does not find the argument for that case compelling. He asserts that "in every synthesis

\[1\text{NR, 74.}\]

\[2\text{See PAW, 19.}\]

\[3\text{"Strauss Talks"}\]
however impressive one of the two opposed elements is sacrificed
more or less subtly but in any event surely, to the other."

Is Strauss presumptuous? We shall attempt to show that
Strauss's position is based chiefly on his understanding of the
classical conception of philosophy -- of what philosophy is -- and
that Strauss proclaims the irreconcilability (without sacrifice) of
Jerusalem and Athens in the name of and for the sake of philosophy.
He is a stout champion of the tradition issuing from Athens and
seeks to defend it against misappropriation, as we see at a glance
in his remarks contra John Wild:

His admission that philosophy has an essentially frag-
mentary character is merely the prelude to his suggestion
that philosophy must be subordinated to theology. . . . It
goes without saying that there is no place in Plato's teaching
for a theology that "lays down certain specifications which
determine the general form of philosophy," and that Wild is
somewhat nearer to Plato when he designates as mythology
what in his own language would be theology. Not without good
reason did Plato replace the Egyptian rule of priests by his
rule of philosophers.

1Wild," 362-363. Strauss' remarks contra Wild "apply only
partly to any attempt to interpret Platonic philosophy in biblical
terms. While all such attempts are extremely questionable, there is
no necessity whatever that they be made in the particular manner
which Wild has chosen, both in his presentation of Plato's philosophy
and in his criticism of modern philosophy. That particular manner
has as little biblical support as it has philosophic support." "Wild," 344.
Cf: "We have access to Plato primarily only through the Platonic
tradition . . . . The Platonic tradition has been for many centuries a
tradition of Christian Platonism. The blessings which we owe to that
tradition must not blind us, however, to the fact that there is a dif-
ference between Christian and primitive Platonism." CM, 61.
It would appear then that if one were to dispute Strauss's assertion of the opposition of Athens and Jerusalem, it would not suffice to dispute his understanding of Jerusalem: one would have to show that his understanding of Athens, of Plato in particular, is mistaken. This is not to deny that Strauss may be found guilty of "presumption" about Christianity: he is "presumptuously" certain that in Christianity "a life of obedient love" is all-important -- more important than "a life of free insight." This "presumption" is not a theme of discussion in any of Strauss's writings as far as I know. But it is reflected in Strauss's commentaries on statements by others. Expounding Spinoza, Strauss writes:

The teaching that is characteristic of Jesus or of the New-Testament in general is not rational morality itself but its combination with such a "history" as permitted its being preached to the common people of all nations. In other words, the substance of the teaching of the two Testaments is identical. They differ only in this: the Old Testament prophets preached that identical teaching by virtue of the Mosaic Covenant, and therefore addressed it only to the Jews, whereas the apostles preached it by virtue of the passion of Jesus, and therefore addressed it to all men. Now the combination of rational morality with a "historical" basis of either kind implies that the rational morality is presented in the form of a divine command, and hence that God is presented as a lawgiver. Thus the New Testament demands obedience to God as does the Old, and therefore both Testaments are equally in conflict with the philosophic teaching according to which God cannot be conceived as a lawgiver. "To know Christ according
to the spirit" means to believe that God is merciful; but philosophy teaches that it does not make sense to ascribe mercy to God. In short, the New Testament is not more rational than the Old.

Does Strauss here in the guise of a commentator expound the view which reflects his own "presumption"? (This points up the difficult task of eliciting the "commentator's" own views.)

Commenting on The Liberal Temper in Greek Politics, Strauss writes:

His [the author's, A. E. Havelock's] historical opinion may be said to find its complete expression in the contention that whereas Plato and Aristotle as well as the Old Testament are responsible for the authoritative strand in Western thought, the New Testament as well as certain Greek sophists, materialists, agnostics, or atheists are responsible for the liberal strand in it (259, 376). One might find it strange that a view according to which moral convictions are negotiable is suggested to be somehow in harmony with the New Testament. But perhaps Havelock thought chiefly of the New Testament prohibition or counsel against resisting evil and the failure of a pupil of Gorgias, as distinguished from the pupil of Socrates, to resort to the punishment of evildoers. Be this as it may, one is tempted to describe Havelock's liberalism as a classical scholar's Christian liberalism of a certain kind. But one must resist this temptation since Havelock deplores the "basic split between the moral or ideal and the expedient or selfish" which developed under "Christian other-worldly influences" (365, 14), unless one assumes that according to him "primitive

PAW, 173-174.
Christianity' (18) was not otherworldly. The issue would seem to be settled by his remark that "religion, however humane, is always intolerant of purely secular thinking" (161). 1

Here again the "presumption" is evident. Finally we adduce this quotation which indicates not only Strauss's presumption but also M. Paul Ricoeur's concurrence in it:

M. Paul Ricoeur (Professor of Philosophy, Sorbonne), presenting "a Christian view" of faith and action, started from the facts that the opposition between the contemplative life and the active life stems from Greek philosophy and is wholly alien to Judaism and that in this respect Christianity is simply the heir to Judaism. One may agree with M. Ricoeur while admitting that there is some evidence supporting the view that Greek philosophy did not as such assert that opposition. It suffices to mention the name of the citizen-philosopher Socrates. But perhaps one will be compelled eventually to say that his being a citizen culminated in his transcending the city, not only the city of Athens but even the best city, in speech, as well as that the only comprehensive and effective reply to the claim of contemplation to supremacy is supplied by the Bible. Be this as it may, M. Ricoeur was chiefly concerned with the question as to whether the doctrines distinguishing Christianity from Judaism do not lead again to the depreciation of action. His answer was in the negative . . . . M. Ricoeur asserted that Christianity sometimes succumbed to "Hellenistic" ways of understanding the relation of faith and action by divorcing faith from action, especially from social action, or by denying that there is any connection between the salvation of the individual and "historical redemption," or by being unconcerned with the

1 LAM, 30.
evil embodied in "impersonal institutions" (the state, property, and culture) as distinguished from sin proper; yet in his view this is simply a "reactionary conception," incompatible with original Christianity. At any rate, there is no serious difference in this respect between Christianity and Judaism.

(Strauss here steps out of his role of "reporter" and speaks in his own voice. But note that he is moved to do so for the sake of Athens.)

In all of these quotations, the "presumption" of the centrality of obedience in Christianity is discernible (and the guise of the "commentator" does not completely hide it.).

This thesis is not concerned with making statements as such about Christianity. It is concerned with Strauss's views. In this chapter, it attempts to lay bare the ground of Leo Strauss's assertion of the fundamental opposition between Athens and Jerusalem. Because Strauss does not exempt Christianity from this opposition, though he recognizes and is familiar with the venerable tradition which claims such exemptions, I have at the outset briefly indicated Strauss's view and specifically called attention to his "presumption" regarding Christianity. As was stated above and as will be shown below, Strauss's position on the opposition between Jerusalem and Athens is rooted

\[\text{LAM, 268-269.}\]
chiefly in his understanding of classical philosophy, certainly not less so than in any particular "presumptions," theologies, or biblical traditions. ¹

3. "Apparent" Affinities

The word "apparent" here is to suggest that the affinities commonly thought to obtain between Jerusalem and Athens are at best questionable. They are best questioned in order to compel

¹ Though perhaps adequate to the level of discussion here, this statement rather too simply and absolutely separates ("theological") "presumptions" and conceptions of philosophy. Strauss discusses their relation on a much deeper level: "History of philosophy presupposes knowledge of what philosophy is. But what philosophy is, is as controversial as any other philosophic subject. History of philosophy will then necessarily be subjective because its very basis is necessarily subjective. To begin with, there is indeed no reason why one should not define philosophy, as the attempt to replace opinions about God, world and man by genuine knowledge of God, world and man. It is controversial, nevertheless, whether there is direct experience of God -- or, more specifically, mystical experience -- which supplies genuine knowledge of God as the first cause of all beings and it is obvious that the manner in which this question is answered determines completely the precise meaning of philosophy." Strauss suggests (something short of a perfect solution): "All arbitrariness could be avoided if the historian would regard as philosophers only those competent thinkers who regarded themselves as philosophers. In fact, this would appear to be the only legitimate historical procedure or the only procedure compatible with the demands of objectivity, if the task of the historian of philosophy be indeed that of understanding the great thinkers of the past as they understood themselves." M. C. Nahn and Leo Strauss (eds.), Philosophical Essays . . . by Isaac Husik (Blackwell, 1952), xxviii -- hereafter, Husik. (Accordingly, Strauss is acutely sensitive to the fact that "Maimonides did not regard himself as a philosopher." ) See also SCR, 11-12.
reflection on them on a deeper level (which is not simply and necessarily to deny them or to deny the denial of them). Strauss is deeply attached to both Jerusalem and Athens. It would be tempting simply to fuse the two loyalties, but to succumb to this temptation would be to betray each. This chapter, as we said, is devoted to indicating that opposition and its ground. This chapter indicates why in Strauss's view one cannot simply fuse Athens and Jerusalem without the sacrifice of either or both. Yet Strauss is a rationalist -- a rationalist Jew. The rationalist Jew whom Strauss admires most is Maimonides. One may say that Strauss admires the "ample use"¹ Maimonides makes of philosophy in defense of Judaism and the way he "uses" it, as well as Maimonides' understanding and appreciation of Athens. More specifically, he admires the way Maimonides brings together the political philosophy of Athens and Torah. He admires Maimonides because Maimonides, according to Strauss, retains the tension between Jerusalem and Athens in his "harmonization," or rather, "juxtaposing" them. (This will be seen somewhat, below in this chapter.) Chapter III treats the relation of political philosophy and Judaism, indicating the way these

¹See Guide, xiv.
are brought together by Maimonides. Chapter IV is devoted primarily to Strauss's view of modern rationalism and traditional Judaism.

4. Some Apparent Resemblances of Jerusalem and Athens and Some Significant Differences

Apparent resemblances between the Bible and Plato have been remarked on by generation after generation of pious adherents of Jerusalem (and by some of rather dubious piety) throughout the ages.\(^1\) That "the philosopher who comes closest to the Bible is Plato," Strauss tells us, "was said not the least during the classical struggle between Jerusalem and Athens."\(^2\) Now "at the time ... of ... its classical struggle in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, philosophy was represented by Aristotle."\(^3\) Why, even at the height of

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\(^1\) In modern times, Nietzsche's is probably the most famous remark (though hardly because of the piety of its intent): "Christianity is-Platonism for 'the people'." Cf. Leibniz's statement: "Je n'entre point ici dans les autres points de la doctrine chrétienne, et je fais seulement voir comment Jésus-Christ acheva de faire passer la religion naturelle en loi, et de lui donner l'autorité d'un dogme public. Il fit lui seul ce que tant de philosophes avaient en vain tâché de faire; et les chrétiens ayant enfin eu le dessus dans l'empire romain, maître de la meilleure partie de la terre connue, la religion des sages devint celle des peuples." Leibniz, *Essais de Théodicée* (Aubier éditions Montaigne), 1962, Preface, 27.


\(^3\) *Ibid.*
Aristotelianism, was it Plato who was said to be "closest to the Bible"? Apparently, even to some "Aristotelizing" adherents of Jerusalem, Aristotle was deemed somewhat less compatible with the Bible than Plato. Strauss suggests why:

The Aristotelian god like the biblical God is a thinking being, but in opposition to the biblical God he is only a thinking being, pure thought; pure thought that thinks itself and only itself. Only by thinking itself and nothing but himself does he rule the world. He surely does not rule by giving orders and laws. Hence he is not a creator-god: the world is as eternal as god. Man is not his image: man is much lower in rank than other parts of the world. For Aristotle it is almost a blasphemy to ascribe justice to his god; he is above justice as well as injustice.

By contrast:

Plato teaches, just as the Bible, that heaven and earth were created and made by an invisible God whom he calls the Father, who is always, who is good and hence whose creation is good. The coming-into-being and the preservation of the world that he has created depends on the will of its maker.

What Plato himself calls the theology consists of two teachings: 1) God is good and hence in no way the cause of evil; 2) God is

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1It is more unpardonable in English than in German to neologize in this way. This "unpardonable" term intends Strauss's German "aristotelisieren." See P&G, 122.

simple and hence unchangeable. On the divine concern with man's justice and injustice, the Platonic teaching is in fundamental agreement with the biblical teaching; it even culminates in the statement that agrees almost literally with biblical statements.¹

But is Plato's "God" the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob? Strauss's answer is an emphatic "No."²


²Strauss's "No" is simple and straightforward, and yet on a deeper level, it is far from "simple." Strauss greatly admires Maimonides, yet Maimonides, Strauss discerns, links "this God" (of the philosophers) with the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob. Strauss writes: "The first four chapters of the Yesodê Ha-Torah [Foundations of the Torah] . . . , in contradistinction to the last six chapters, introduce philosophy into the Holy of Holies by as it were rediscovering it there. Since philosophy requires the greatest possible awareness of what one is doing, Maimonides cannot effect that fundamental change without being aware that it is a fundamental change, i.e. without a conscious, although not necessarily explicit, criticism of the way in which the Torah was commonly understood. The two parts of the Yesodê Ha-Torah are linked to each other by the fact that the God whose knowledge is commanded is 'this God,' the God of Israel. Accordingly, the first section of the Mishneh Torah teaches that only 'this God' is to be acknowledged, loved, and feared and that only His Torah is true." Leo Strauss, "Notes on Maimonides' Book of Knowledge," in E. Urbach et al., Studies in Mysticism and Religion, Presented to Gershom G. Scholem on his 70th Birthday by Pupils, Colleagues and Friends (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1967), 276 hereafter, "Notes." On the one hand, Strauss states: "Every open-minded and discerning reader must be struck by the difference between the hidden God of Maimonides' doctrine of attributes and the hidden God who spoke to the Patriarchs and to Moses or, to employ Maimonides' manner of expression, by the difference between the true understanding of God as it was possessed by the Patriarchs and by Moses and the understanding of God on the part of the uninitiated Jews. The result of his doctrine of divine attributes is that the notion of God that gives
Strauss draws this essential contrast between Plato and the Bible:

In his likely tale of how God created the visible whole, Plato makes a distinction between two kinds of gods, the visible cosmic gods and the traditional gods -- between the gods who revolve manifestly, i.e., who manifest themselves regularly, and the gods who manifest themselves so far as they will. The least one would have to say is that according to Plato the cosmic gods are of much higher rank than the traditional gods, the Greek life and light to the ordinary believers is not only inadequate and misleading but is the notion of something that simply does not exist -- of a merely imaginary being, the theme of deceived and deceiving men (I 60)." Guide, 1-ii. On the other hand, Strauss states: "The doctrine of attributes) in question in spite of its philosophical origin can be regarded as the indeed un biblical but nevertheless appropriate expression of the biblical principle, namely, of the biblical teaching regarding the hidden God who created the world out of nothing, not in order to increase the good -- for since He is the complete good, the good cannot be increased by His actions -- but without any ground, in absolute freedom, and whose essence is therefore indicated by 'Will' rather than by 'Wisdom' (III 13)." Guide, xlii. Yes, Maimonides, too, appears to issue an emphatic "No," insisting emphatically on creatio ex nihilo in express opposition to the philosophers, even though a traditional source reflects the Platonic doctrine, as he explicitly observes: "Marvel at their (the rabbis') saying (in the passage quoted) contemplating, for Plato uses literally the same expression, saying that God looks at the world of the intellects and that in consequence that which exists overflows from Him." Guide, II 6, pp. 262-263. Cf. SCR, 17. Strauss writes: "The law stands or falls by the belief in the creation of the world. . . . In accordance with his judgment on the relation between the Aristotelian doctrine and the doctrine of the Laws, Maimonides proves by an extensive argument that the Aristotelian doctrine is not demonstrated and is in addition not probable. As for the Platonic doctrine, he explicitly refuses to pay any attention to it. . . ." liv-lv. Cf. Ben Zion Bokser, "Reason and Revelation in the Theology of Maimonides," Hebrew Union College Annual, XX, 583. It may seem paradoxical that Strauss admired Maimonides, both for loudly proclaiming the "No" and for attempting to modulate it. What is most important, Strauss appears to suggest, is that one have "the greatest possible awareness of what one is doing" and -- I believe, Strauss is suggesting -- this means fully realizing that the starting point and fundamental "first for us" is the simple straightforward "No." Strauss discerns such awareness in Maimonides.
gods. Inasmuch as the cosmic gods are accessible to man—as man—to his observations and calculations—, whereas the Greek gods are accessible only to the Greeks through Greek traditions, one may ascribe in comic exaggeration the worship of the cosmic gods to the barbarians. This ascription is made in an altogether noncomic manner and intent in the Bible: Israel is forbidden to worship the sun and the moon and the stars which the Lord has allotted to the other peoples everywhere under heaven. This implies that the other peoples', the barbarians', worship of the cosmic gods is not due to a natural or rational cause, to the fact that those gods are accessible to man as man but to an act of God's will. It goes without saying that according to the Bible the God Who manifests Himself as far as He wills, Who is not universally worshipped as such, is the only true god. The Platonic statement taken in conjunction with the biblical [sic] statement brings out the fundamental opposition of Athens at its peak to Jerusalem: the opposition of the God or gods of the philosophers to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the opposition of Reason and Revelation.  

1Strauss refers to Deut. 4:19. (Strauss calls attention to an apparent difference between it and the Decalogue, in commenting on Hermann Cohen's "holy zeal against the false gods": "Cohen . . . says in his own name that 'the service of other gods or of idols must be altogether exterminated.' That holy zeal must overcome all hesitations stemming from the charm exerted by Greek plastics and even from compassion for the worshippers of false gods. At this point more than at any other Cohen reveals how radically he had come to question 'culture' as he and his contemporaries understood it. The worship of the other gods is, according to him, necessarily worship of images. In agreement with the Decalogue, but not with Deuteronomy 4:15-19, he denies that there can be worship of sun, moon and stars as such." Cohen's RR, xxvi.)

We would probe more deeply in an attempt to get at the root of this opposition and would see more comprehensively the significant differences issuing from it.

5. **Nature -- The Root Issue Between Athens and Jerusalem**

When Strauss writes about what we may loosely call the "essentials", of the classical conception of philosophy, he points to the lack of "nature" in the Bible, and when he writes about the biblical God he points out that "nature" is alien to the Bible. We register first Strauss's succinct statement of what the Bible teaches about God. With that in mind we proceed to discuss the significance of "nature" for classical philosophy as Strauss expounds it. Here is Strauss's statement about the God of the Bible:

The God Who created heaven and earth, Who is the only God, Whose only image is man, Who forbade man to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, Who made a Covenant with mankind after the Flood and thereafter a Covenant with Abraham which became His Covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob -- what kind of God is He? Or, to speak more reverently and more adequately, what is His name? This question was addressed to God Himself by Moses when he was sent by Him to the sons of Israel. God replied: "EhyehAsher-Ehyeh." This is mostly translated: "I am That (Who) I am." One has called that reply "the metaphysics of Exodus" in order to indicate its fundamental character. It is indeed
the fundamental biblical statement about the biblical God, but we hesitate to call it metaphysical, since the notion of physis is alien to the Bible. I believe that we ought to render this statement by "I shall be What I shall be," thus preserving the connection between God's name and the fact that He makes covenants with men, i.e., that He reveals himself to men above all by His commandments and by His promises and His fulfillment of the promises. "I shall be What I shall be" is as it were explained in the verse (Ex. 33:19), "I shall be gracious to whom I shall be gracious and I shall show mercy to whom I shall show mercy." God's actions cannot be predicted, unless He Himself predicted them, i.e., promised them. But as is shown precisely by the account of Abraham's binding of Isaac, the way in which He fulfills his promises cannot be known in advance. The biblical God is a mysterious God: He comes in a thick cloud (Ex. 19:4); He cannot be seen; His presence can be sensed but not always and everywhere; what is known of Him is only what He chose to communicate by His word through His chosen servants. The rest of the chosen people knows His word -- apart from the Ten Commandments (Deut. 4:12 and 5:4-5) -- only mediately and does not wish to know it immediately (Ex. 20:19 and 21, 24:1-2, Deut. 18:15-18, Amos 3:17). For almost all purposes the word of God as revealed to His prophets and especially to Moses became the source of knowledge of good and evil, the tree of knowledge which is at the same time the tree of life.

We turn now to nature. Strauss expounds the classical conception of nature -- physis -- in several of his major works.

To begin with, we present a patchwork of excerpts from these
writings to indicate the "nature" of nature as expounded by Strauss.

We approach these excerpts with this question in mind: How does the notion of physis central to classical philosophy generate intransigent opposition to Jerusalem?

Nature, however understood, is not known by nature. Nature had to be discovered.¹

The whole history of philosophy is nothing but the record of the ever repeated attempts to grasp fully what was implied in that crucial discovery which was made by some Greek twenty-six hundred years ago or before.² [This is hardly to deny intimations before its discovery -- as in the case of Homer. The Bible too must have had sufficient intimation, for it is Strauss's thesis that the Bible opposes or rejects it.]³

¹ Leo Strauss and J. Cropsey (eds.), History of Political Philosophy (Rand McNally, 1972), 3 -- hereafter, HistPP.

² NR, 82.

³ Strauss seems to suggest that acquaintance with myth is a sufficient intimation and that the biblical rejection of myth is at the same time an implicit rejection of nature. See the discussion below. Genesis 8:19 employs the term "after its family" in speaking of the varieties of living things. Sacks comments: "In the following chapter we shall see the division of mankind into their families. Verse Nineteen prepares the way for this new type of division by replacing the word kind by the word family . . . ."

"The New Way will depend on family relationships, since it cannot be given to all men at once. If it is to be preserved at all the role of the family as the preserver of tradition must replace the notion of kinds which preserved distinctions according to nature. One must remember that the Hebrew word derech or way denies the distinction between physis and nomos, between nature and custom. However, the replacement of the word kind by the word family seems to indicate that the Biblical author was not completely unaware of the distinction." The Lion and the Ass, 108-109.
What is nature? The first Greek whose work has come down to us, Homer himself, mentions "nature" only a single time; this first mention of "nature" gives us a most important hint as to what the Greek philosophers understood by "nature". Hermes "drew a herb from the earth and showed me (Odysseus) its nature [10th book of the Odyssey]. . . . The gods are thus omnipotent because they are, not indeed omniscient but the knowers of the natures of things -- of natures which they have not made. [Does this suggest that the philosophers' ambition is to rob the gods of their thunder, as it were, or, more pointedly in terms of Greek myth, to castrate their father and supplant him as Kronos did to Ouranus? No wonder that the corollary of the discovery of nature is radical depreciation of the ancestral, as is indicated below.]¹

¹Sacks, commenting on the Genesis account of Cain and Abel, observes that there is no corresponding Greek myth, though there is the well known Roman myth of Romulus and Remus. He suggests: "The political in the most common usage of the word, played a higher role in Rome than it did in Athens. In the Bible, too, fratricide is committed by the founder of the first city. The . . . account is an essentially political account, though the fratricide itself is an essentially pre-political act. The founding of the city requires a leader and yet there is a natural equality among brothers. The awareness of this difficulty seems to lie behind both accounts. Greek myth, on the other hand, deals more with patricide, which ultimately means the attempt to become one's own father by replacing him. Motivations for erasing one's own origins or rather becoming one's own origins lie in the attempt to assert one's own complete independence of being. In that sense, patricide is essentially an apolitical act." The Lion and the Ass, 66.
We could say that the first man we know who spoke of nature was the wily Odysseus who had seen the towns of many men and had thus come to know how much the thoughts of men differ from town to town or from tribe to tribe.

It seems that the Greek word for nature (physis) means primarily "growth" and therefore also that into which a thing grows, the term of the growth, the character a thing has when its growth is completed, when it can do what only the fully grown thing of the kind in question can do or do well. [Not to be confused with the modern notion of "growth" which whatever its kinship to "nature" confounds the classical distinction between nature and convention and leads to "the modern distinction between nature and history according to which history (the realm of freedom and of values) is of higher dignity than nature (which lacks purpose or values), not to say, as has been said, that history comprehends nature which is essentially relative to the essentially historical mind."\(^1\)]

On the other hand, there are things which are "by nature" without

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\(^1\) CM, 15-16. See also LAM, 62, the passage beginning: "For the liberal, 'natural' is not a term of distinction . . . ." Strauss says there: "While the ground of arbitrariness (the natural constitution of man as the rational animal) is natural, or, as was formerly said, while the conventional finds some place within the natural, certainly the product of the arbitrary act which establishes this or that convention is not natural. In other words man fashions a 'state within a state': the man-made 'worlds' have a fundamentally different status from 'the world' and its parts. [This is the pre-modern view.] The liberal view originally emerged through the combination of determinism with the assumption that the laws always correspond to genuine, not merely imagined, needs or that in principle all laws are sensible." Strauss asserts: "Havelock [the classical scholar mentioned above] unintentionally reveals the fundamental difference between the modern liberal and the so-called Greek liberal by this question: 'If law is a compact reached historically by human beings, why is it not natural and organic as are other items in man's progress?' . . . . The term 'historical' as used by Havelock, which is almost a modern equivalent for 'conventional,' serves no other function than to obscure a very obscure event in the development of modern thought." Strauss, in CM, 15, associates this "obscure
having "grown" and even without having come into being in any way. They are said to be "by nature" because they have not been made and because they are the "first things," out of which or through which all other natural things have come into being. The atoms of Democritus [for example]...

Socrates deviated from his predecessors by identifying the science of the whole, or of everything that is, with the understanding of "what each of the beings is." For "to be" means "to be something," and hence to be different from things which are "something else"; "to be" means therefore "to be a part." Hence the whole cannot "be" in the same sense in which everything that is "something" "is"; the whole must be "beyond being." And yet the whole is the totality of the parts. To understand the whole then means to understand all the parts of the whole or the articulation of the whole. If "to be" is "to be something," the being of

the thing, or the nature of the thing, is primarily its What, its "shape" or "form" or "character," as distinguished in particular from that out of which it has come into being. The thing itself, the completed thing, cannot be understood as a product of the process leading up to it, but, on the contrary, the process cannot be understood except in the light of the completed thing or of the end of the process. The What is, as such, the character of a class of things or of a "tribe" of things -- of things which by nature belong together or form a natural group. The whole has a natural articulation. To understand the whole, therefore means no longer primarily to discover the roots out of which the completed whole, the articulated whole, the whole consisting of distinct groups of things, the intelligible whole, the cosmos, has grown, or to discover the cause which has transformed the chaos into a cosmos, or to perceive the unity which is hidden behind the variety of things or appearances, but to understand the unity that is revealed in the manifest articulation of the completed whole. This view supplies the basis for the distinction between the various sciences: the distinction between the various sciences corresponds to the natural

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1 Strauss, discussing the "central difficulty" of the "utterly incredible" "fantastic" doctrine of ideas, explicitly relates "idea" and "nature": "The idea of a thing is that which we seek when we try to find out that 'What' or the 'nature' of a thing or a class of things. The connection between 'idea' and 'nature' appears in the Republic from the fact that 'the idea of justice' is called 'that which is just by nature' (501b2) and the ideas in contradistinction to the things which are not ideas are said to be 'in nature' (597b5-E4). This does not explain however why the ideas are presented as 'separated' from the things which are what they are by participating in an idea or, in other words, why 'dignity' (the class character of dogs) should be 'the true dog.' It seems that two kinds of phenomena [mathematical things and the virtues] lend support to Socrates' assertion . . . . Now while it is obviously reasonable to say that a perfect circle or perfect justice transcends everything which can be seen, it is hard to say that a perfect bed is something on which no man can ever rest or that a perfect howl is completely inaudible." C&M, 119-120.
articulation of the whole. This view makes possible, and it favors in particular the study of the human things as such.

That to which the question "what is?" points is the eidos of a thing, the shape or form or character or "idea" of a thing. It is no accident that the term eidos signifies primarily that which is visible to all without any particular effort or what one might call the "surface" of the thing. Socrates started not from what is first in itself or first by nature but from what is first for us, from what comes to sight first from the phenomena. But the being of things, their What, comes first to sight, not in what we see of them, but in what is said about them or in opinions about them. Accordingly, Socrates started in his understanding of the natures of things from the opinions about their natures. For every opinion is based on some awareness, on some perception with the mind's eye, of something. Socrates implied that disregarding the opinions about the natures of things would amount to abandoning the most important access to reality which we have, or the most important vestiges of the truth which are within our reach. He implied that "the universal doubt" of all opinions would lead us, not into the heart of truth, but into a void. Philosophy consists, therefore, in the ascent that may be said to be guided by opinions ... 2

Opinions about what things are, or what some very important groups of things are, contradict one another. Recognizing the contradiction, one is forced to go beyond opinions towards the consistent

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1 NR, 122-123. See Leo Strauss, Xenophon's Socrates (Cornell U.P., 1972), 116-126 -- hereafter, X's Socrates. Also see Leo Strauss, Xenophon's Socratic Discourse and Interpretation of the Oeconomicus (Cornell U.P., 1970), 146-150 -- hereafter, X's Oeconomicus.

2 This leads Strauss to say: "In its original form political philosophy broadly understood is the core of philosophy or rather 'the first philosophy.'" CM, 20.
view of the nature of the thing concerned. That consistent view makes visible the relative truth of the contradictory opinions; the consistent view proves to be the comprehensive or total view. The opinions are thus seen to be fragments of the truth, soiled fragments of the pure truth. In other words, the opinions prove to be solicited by the self-subsisting truth, and the ascent to the truth proves to be guided by the self-subsistent truth which all men always divine . . .

All knowledge, however limited or "scientific," presupposes a horizon, a comprehensive view within which knowledge is possible. All understanding presupposes a fundamental awareness of the whole: prior to any perception of particular things, the human soul must have had a vision of the ideas, a vision of the articulated whole. However much the comprehensive visions which animate the various societies may differ, they are all visions of the same -- of the whole. Therefore, they do not merely differ from, but contradict, one another. This very fact forces man to realize that each of those visions, taken by itself, is merely an opinion about the whole or an inadequate articulation of the fundamental awareness of the whole and thus points beyond itself toward an adequate articulation. There is no guarantee that the quest for adequate articulation will ever lead beyond an understanding of the fundamental alternatives or that philosophy will ever legitimately go beyond the stage of discussion or disputation and will ever reach the stage of decision. The unfinishable character of the quest for adequate articulation of the whole does not entitle one, however, to limit philosophy to the understanding of a part, however important. For the meaning of a part depends on the meaning of the whole. In particular, such interpretation of a part as is based on fundamental experiences alone, without recourse to hypothetical assumptions about the whole, is ultimately not superior to other interpretations of that part which are frankly based on such hypothetical assumptions.  

1 NR, 122-126,
The Old Testament, whose basic premise may be said to be the implicit rejection of philosophy, does not know "nature": the Hebrew term for nature is unknown to the Hebrew Bible. It goes without saying that "heaven and earth," for example, is not the same thing as "nature."¹

The equivalent in biblical Hebrew of "nature" is something like "way"² or "custom." Prior to the discovery of

¹NR. 81. Strauss goes so far as to say that there is not, strictly speaking, a biblical word for "world." "Olam," he indicates, has primarily a time connotation. He writes: "The word world does not occur in the Bible. The Hebrew Bible says 'heaven and earth' where we would ordinarily say world. The Hebrew word which is mostly translated by world means something different: it means, in the first place, the remote past, once in the sense of then, the early time or since early time. It means secondly, once or then in the future. And it means finally, once and for all, for all times never ceasing, permanent . . . . The Hebrew word for world in other words means, therefore, primarily something connected with time, a character of time rather than something which we see." Leo Strauss, "Interpretation of Genesis" (a lecture in the "Works of the Mind" series given at the University College, University of Chicago, January 25, 1957), p. 9-10 -- hereafter, "InGen". I have taken the liberty of correcting the bad spelling of the transcription.) Isaac Husik says about the term "nature": "It is doubtful whether the very term nature occurs in the Talmud. The Hebrew word 'teva' (Ar.) 'tabia,' is post-Talmudic in the sense of nature and belongs to the Arabic period." Isaac Husik, "The Law of Nature, Hugo Grotius and the Bible," Hebrew Union College Annual, II (1925), 391. According to L. Ginberg too, the term does not emerge until the peak of medieval Jewish thought. See I. Efros, Philosophical Terms in the Moreh Nebukim (Columbia U. P., 1924), 134-135.

²Sacks elaborates the distinction between "way" and "nature": "The Hebrew word for WAY comes from the verb meaning to tread. It is a path which has been worn into the earth by the feet of many generations. Tradition plays a great role in Bible because the WAY for mankind is a WAY that has been trod down in an open field.
nature, men knew that each thing or kind of thing has its "way" or its "custom" -- its form of "regular behavior." There is a way or custom of fire . . . of women . . . of human beings: fire burns . . . women ovulate . . . human beings can speak. Yet, there are also ways or customs of the various human tribes (Egyptians, Persians, Spartans, Moabites, and so on). Through the discovery of nature the

The distinction one finds in Herodotus and Plato between nomos and physis -- custom and nature -- is absent in Biblical thought. For Plato and Herodotus there was a great difference between nature and custom . . . . Some things happened everywhere and always in the same way, while other things depended on stories, tales and beliefs, which differ from country to country. From the Biblical point of view, that distinction either does not exist or is of no great value. Man's openness meant that the only ways open to him were ways trod upon virgin grass.

In the Middle Ages, when a word had to be found in Hebrew to translate the Greek word physis or nature the word teva was chosen. The original word physis came from the root phyo meaning to grow. The nature of a thing was the way into which it grew by itself and from within. The Hebrew word teva came from the word meaning to dip. From that verb came the word for ring, in the sense of a signet ring, as well as the word for a coin. Nature, in this sense, is still something stamped into the world from without, a far cry from phyo.

There is a second word in Hebrew which can also be translated Way, and which will appear in Gen.18:11, where the author will use the phrase The Way Of Women in reference to menstruation. This word for way refers to the path taken by any moving thing. One can speak of the WAY of the sun (Ps. 19:6), and men are told to walk the straight WAY (Prov. 19:6), but its full implication is radically different from the Greek word for nature, physis, as that word was understood by Plato or Aristotle. The verb means to wander. As a noun it means a man who has no home or proper place but wanders from city to city (Judg. 19:17). The Biblical counterpart of nature bears with it no necessity (See Gen.31:35). The Lion and the Ass, 91-92.

1 Strauss writes: "While everything or every class of things has its custom or way, there is a particular custom or way which is of paramount importance: 'our' way, the way of 'us' 'living here,'
radical difference between the two kinds of "ways" or "customs" came to the center of attention. The discovery of nature led to the splitting up of "way" or "custom" into "nature" (physis) on the one hand and "convention" or "law" (nomos) on the other. For instance, that human beings can speak is natural, but that this particular tribe uses this particular language is due to convention. The distinction implies that the natural is prior to the conventional.

Once nature was discovered and understood primarily in contradistinction to law or convention, it became possible and necessary to raise this question: Are the political things natural, and if they are, to what extent? The very question implied that the laws are not natural. But obedience to the laws is generally considered to be justice. Hence one was compelled to wonder whether justice is merely conventional or whether there are things which are by nature just. Are even the laws merely conventional or do they have their roots in nature? Must the laws not be "according to nature," and especially according to the nature of man, if they are to be good? . . .

In the attempts to answer these questions it was presupposed

the way of life of the independent group to which a man belongs. We may call it the 'paramount' custom or way. Not all members of the group remain always in that way, but they mostly return to it if they are properly reminded of it: the paramount way is the right path . . . 'Our' way is the right way because it is both old and 'our own' or because it is both 'home bred and prescriptive.' Just as 'old and one's own' originally was identical with right or good, so 'new and strange' originally, stood for bad. The notion connecting 'old' and 'one's own' is 'ancestral.' Prephilosophic life is characterized by the primeval identification of the good with the ancestral. Therefore, the right way necessarily implies thoughts about the ancestors and hence about the first things simply." NR, 83-85. (Strauss notes: "The right way" would seem to be the link between "way" (or "custom") in general and "the first things," i.e., between the roots of the two most important meanings of "nature": "nature" as essential character of a thing or a group of things and "nature" as "the first things." ) NR, 83, n. 3.)
that there are things which are by nature good for man as
man. The precise question therefore concerns the relation
of what is by nature good for man, on the one hand, to
justice or right on the other. The simple alternative is
this: all right is conventional or there is some natural
right.\footnote{HistPP, 3-4.}

The first things and the right way cannot become ques-
tionable or the object of a quest, or philosophy cannot emerge,
or nature cannot be discovered, if authority as such is not
doubted or as long as at least any general statement of any
being whatsoever is accepted on trust. The emergence of the
idea of natural right presupposes, therefore, the doubt of
authority.\footnote{NR, 84.}

Plato has indicated . . . how indispensable doubt of
authority or freedom from authority is for the discovery of
natural right . . . . If we take Socrates as the representative
of the quest for natural right, we may illustrate the relation of
that quest to authority as follows: in a community governed by
divine laws, it is strictly forbidden to subject these laws to
genuine discussion, i.e., to critical examination, in the presence
of young men; Socrates, however, discusses natural right -- a
subject whose discovery presupposes doubt of the ancestral or
divine code -- not only in the presence of young men but in
conversation with them.\footnote{Ibid., 84-85.}

\footnote{Strauss reminds us: "Let us never forget that there is no biblical word for doubt." The Bible does not address "the fools who say in their hearts 'there is no God'." "J&A," 6. Did then foolishness to attempt to persuade philosophers of the truth claims of the Bible? Both Maimonides and Halevi, whom we discuss below, appear to take this for granted.}
Judgment on, or assent to, the divine or venerable character of any code or account is suspended until the facts upon which the claims are based have been made manifest or demonstrated. They must be made manifest — manifest to all, in broad daylight. Thus man becomes alive to the crucial difference between what his group considers unquestionable and what he himself observes; it is thus that the I is enabled to oppose itself to the We without any sense of guilt. But it is the I as I that acquires that right. Dreams and visions had been of decisive importance for establishing the claim of the divine code or of the sacred account of the first things. By virtue of the universal application of the distinction between hearsay and seeing with one's own eyes, a distinction is now made between the one true and common world perceived in waking and the many untrue and private worlds of dreams and visions. Thus it appears that neither the We of any particular group nor a

Commenting on Genesis 3:8 Sacks writes: "Hearing fundamentally means obeying. If hearing is crucial we must be told things that we could not know for ourselves but if we cannot know a thing by ourselves our knowledge of it cannot be for its own sake but only for the sake of doing. The desire to see is a desire to eliminate any medium between the knower and the known and hence implies desire for knowledge.

In Ex. 33:20 God says, No man can see Me and live. There is a fundamental agreement between the Bible and Greek philosophy on the superiority of seeing to hearing. The only questions are: Is seeing possible? Is hearing trustworthy?" The Lion and the Ass, 50-51. Strauss writes: "The will to mediacy of hearing, not merely the actual mediacy of hearing, is the element of revealed religion." SCR, 295, n. 229. See p. 179.

(The first "test" of mediated knowledge, of traditional knowledge of a divine command, is exhibited in Eve's response to the snake in the Garden. See Genesis 3:2-3, and Strauss's comment, "J&A," II. Also see Sacks' elaboration, The Lion and the Ass, 45.)
unique I, but man as man, is the measure of truth and untruth, of the being or nonbeing of all things. Finally, man thus learns to distinguish between the names of things which he knows through hearsay and which differ from group to group and the things themselves which he, as well as any other human being, can see with his own eyes. He thus can start to replace the arbitrary distinctions of things which differ from group to group by their "natural" distinctions. Nature was discovered when man embarked on the quest for the first things in the light of the fundamental distinctions between hearsay and seeing with one's own eyes, on the one hand, and between things made by man and things not made by man, on the other. The first of these two distinctions motivated the demand that the first things must be brought to light by starting from what all men can see now. But not all visible things are an equally adequate starting point for the discovery of the first things. The man-made things lead to no other first things than man, who certainly is not the first thing simply. The artificial things are seen to be inferior in every respect to, or to be later than, the things that are not made but found or discovered by man. The artificial things are seen to owe

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1 Sacks writes: "The antediluvian period was marked by its pre-legal character. God had made suggestions from time to time, but they were never enforced. Cain was neither punished for killing his brother nor was the suggestion that he become a wanderer ever carried out. The time before the Flood was a time in which there was no external law. God's statement to Cain, If thou dost well . . . (Genesis 4:7), presupposed that there was a faculty within man capable of judging. But when God says My spirit shall not always judge from within man, He recognizes that the ability of man to judge from within is not sufficient for human needs . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

In a way, God seems to have forgotten that man is part animal. The antediluvian experiment neglected that part in man and, for that reason failed. It was a kind of legal fiction in which God pretended that man could live in such a world, in order that by living in it man might see for himself why such a life was bound to fail." The Lion and the Ass. 85-86.
their being to human contrivance or to forethought. If one suspends one's judgment regarding the truth of the sacred accounts of the first things, one does not know whether the things that are not man-made owe their being to forethought of any kind, i.e., whether the first things originate all other things by way of forethought, or otherwise. Thus one realizes the possibility that the first things originate all other things in a manner fundamentally different from all origination by way of forethought. The assertion that all visible things have been produced by thinking beings or that there are any superhuman thinking beings requires henceforth a demonstration: a demonstration that starts from what all can see now.

It can be said that 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.¹

Before proceeding to Strauss's reading of the implicit rejection of philosophy in the Bible, in Genesis in particular, we call attention to Strauss's saying explicitly that he does not deny that "once the idea of natural right has emerged and become a matter of course, it can easily be adjusted to the belief in the existence of divinely revealed law."

We merely contend that the predominance of that belief prevents the emergence of the idea of natural right or makes

¹ NR. 87-89.
the quest for natural right infinitely unimportant: if a man knows by divine revelation what the right path is, he does not have to discover that path by his unassisted efforts.

6. Genesis² As Read By Strauss: The Bible's Rejection of Athens

The Bible like the classics articulates the Lebenswelt:³ they both begin from what Strauss speaks of as

the given whole, the whole which is permanently held together and constituted by the vault of heaven and comprising heaven and earth and everything that is within heaven and earth and between heaven and earth.⁴

He writes:

All human thought, even all thought human or divine, which is meant to be understood by human beings willy-nilly begins with this whole, the permanently given whole which we all know, and which men always know. The Bible begins with an articulation of the permanently given whole. . . . ⁵

¹NR, 85. Cf. the opening of CM: "It is not sufficient for everyone to obey and listen to the Divine passage of the City of Righteousness, the Faithful City. In order to propagate that message among the heathen, nay, in order to understand it as clearly and as fully as is humanly possible, one must also consider to what extent man could discern the outlines of that City if left to himself, to the proper exercise of his own powers." CM, 1.

²Even the name "Genesis" attests to the interpenetration of Jerusalem and Athens. This name is not biblical. Indeed even "Bible" is not biblical. The Bible does not assign titles: it just starts -- "In the beginning. . . ."

³See NR, 79-80. See also P&G, 22. Strauss there identifies "the picture of the world" explicated by Aristotelian science with the Bible's.

⁴"InGen," 3.

⁵"InGen," 3.
After expounding the "cosmology" of the first chapter of Genesis he returns to this point:

These considerations show, it seems to me, how unreasonable it is to speak of the mythical or pre-logical character of biblical thought as such. The account of the world given in the first chapter of the Bible is not fundamentally different from philosophical accounts; that account is based on evident distinctions which are as accessible to us as they were to the biblical author. . . . All the created things mentioned in the Bible are accessible to man as man regardless of difference of climate, origin, religion or anything else.¹

Strauss draws and, one might add, drives home, the contrast between Genesis and philosophy. According to his reading the Genesis accounts spurn philosophy. I quote at length:

We may say that the concern of the author of this chapter [Genesis 1] is a depreciation or a demotion of heaven . . . .² Heaven is depreciated in favor of the

¹"InGen," 9.

²Strauss elaborates this contention: "The Bible presents creatures in an ascending order. Heaven is lower than earth. The heavenly light-givers lack life; they are lower than the lowliest living beast; they serve the living creatures, which are to be found only beneath heaven; they have been created in order to rule over day and night; they have not been made in order to rule over the earth, but alone over man. The most striking characteristic of the biblical account of creation is its demoting or degrading of heaven and the heavenly lights. Sun, moon and stars precede the living things because they are lifeless: they are not gods. What the heavenly lights lose, man gains; man is the peak of creation. The creatures of the first three days cannot change their places; the heavenly bodies change their places but not their courses; the living beings change their courses but not their 'ways'; men alone can change their 'ways.' Man is the only being created in God's image. Only in the case of man's creation does the biblical account of creation repeatedly
earth, life on earth, man. What does this mean? For cosmology, strictly understood, Greek cosmology, heaven is a more important theme than earth, than life on earth. Heaven means for the Greek thinkers the same as the world, the cosmos... And if the more sophisticated Greek cosmologists realized that one cannot leave it at the primacy of heaven they go beyond heaven, as Plato says, to a superheavenly place. The human thing is a word of depreciation in Greek philosophy.

There is then a deep opposition between the Bible and cosmology proper, and since all philosophy is cosmology ultimately between the Bible and philosophy. The Bible proclaims cosmology is a non-thematic implication of the story of creation. It is necessary to articulate the visible universe and understand its character only for the sake of saying that the visible universe, the world, was created by God. The Bible is distinguished from all philosophy because it simply asserts that the world is created by God. There is

speak of God's 'creating' him; in the case of the creation of heaven and the heavenly bodies that account speaks of God's 'making' them... The biblical account of creation teaches silently what the Bible teaches elsewhere explicitly but not therefore more emphatically: there is only one God, the God whose name is written as the Tetragrammaton, the living God Who lives from ever to ever, Who alone has created heaven and earth and all their hosts; He has not created any gods and hence there are no gods beside Him. The many gods whom men worship are either nothings that owe such beings they possess to man's making them, or if they are something (like sun, moon and stars), they surely are not gods." Strauss here too emphasizes: "Not only did the biblical God not create any gods; on the basis of the biblical account of creation one could doubt whether He created any beings one would be compelled to call 'mythical': heaven and earth and all their hosts are always accessible to man as man." "J&A," 8-9.

not a trace of an argument in support of this assertion. How do we know that the world was created? The Bible declared it so. We know it by virtue of declaration, pure and simple, by divine utterance ultimately. Therefore, all knowledge of the createdness of the world has an entirely different character than our knowledge of the structure or articulation of the world.... In other words, the fact that the world has a certain structure is known to man as man. That the world is created is known by the fact that God speaks to Israel on the Horeb; that is the reason why Israel knows that sun and moon and stars do not deserve worship, that heaven must be depreciated in favor of human life on earth, and ultimately that the origin of the world is divine creation. There is no argument in favor of creation except God speaking to Israel. He who has not heard that speech either directly or by tradition will worship the heavenly bodies, will remain, in other words, within the horizon of cosmology.... What's wrong with cosmology? What is wrong with man's effort to find his bearing in the light of what is evident to man as man?.... What is the right life for man? This question is the starting point of the second account of creation [Genesis 2].... In the first account, man is created on the same day as the terrestrial animals, he is seen as part of the whole, -- if as its most exalted part. In this perspective, the absolute difference between man and all other creatures is not adequately seen. It appears from the first account that man is separated to the highest degree, that he can move or change his place, in a very metaphorical sense even, to the highest degree. But this privilege, this liberty, freedom, is

1"InGen," 10-12: Who in Joseph's day but a child of Israel would have dared even dream of the sun, moon and stars bowing down to him? And what's more, he made it come true: by his managerial technique he overcame famine and loosed the dependence of man on the heavens.
also a great danger. Man is the most ambiguous creature; hence man is not called good, just as heaven is not called good. There is a connection between the ambiguity of man, the danger to which man is essentially exposed, and heaven, with what heaven stands for, the attempt to find one's bearing in the light of what is evident to man as man, the attempt to possess knowledge of good and evil like the gods. Now if man is the most ambiguous creature, in the fact the only ambiguous creature, we need . . . an account which focuses on man alone; more precisely, since ambiguity means ambiguity in regard to good and evil, we need an additional account in which man's place is defined, not only as it was in the first account by a command "Be fruitful and multiply" in general, but by a negative command, a prohibition. For a prohibition sets forth explicitly the limitations of man -- up to this point and not beyond! -- the limit separating the good from the evil.

We move quickly to Strauss's summary conclusion as to the major point of the first chapters of Genesis:

Man's transgression is a mystery, but he did transgress and he knew that he did. Man certainly chose to disobey. He chose therewith the principle of disobedience. This principle is called knowledge of good and evil. We may say that disobedience means autonomous knowledge of good and evil, a knowledge which man possesses by himself, the implication being that the true knowledge is not autonomous; and, in the light of later theological developments, one could say the true knowledge of good and evil is supplied only by revelation.

What I am suggesting then is this: the crucial thesis of the first chapter, if we approach it from the point of view of

1 "InGen," 10-13.
Western thought in general is the depreciation of heaven. Heaven is a primary theme of cosmology and of philosophy. The second chapter contains this explicit depreciation of the knowledge of good and evil, that is only another aspect of the thought expressed in the first chapter. For what does forbidden knowledge of good and evil mean? It means ultimately such knowledge of good and evil as is based on the understanding of the nature of things, as philosophers would say; but that means, somewhat more simply expressed, knowledge of good and evil which is based on the contemplation of heaven. . . . The biblical authors, as far as we know, did not know anything of philosophy, strictly so called. But we must not forget that they were probably familiar, and certainly familiar, with certain things in Babylon, for example, which are primitive forms of philosophy, contemplation of heaven and becoming wise in human conduct through the contemplation of heaven. The fundamental idea is the same as that of philosophy in the original sense.

Chapters two and three of Genesis are animated by the same spirit as the first chapter; what the Bible presents is the alternative to the temptation and this temptation we can call, in the light of certain things we happen to know, philosophy. The Bible therefore, confronts us more clearly than any other book with this fundamental alternative: life in obedience to revelation, life in obedience or life in human freedom, the latter being represented by the Greek philosophers. This alternative has never been disposed of although there are many people who believe that there can be a happy synthesis which is superior to the isolated elements: Bible on the one hand and philosophy on the other. This is impossible. The synthesis must always sacrifice the decisive claim of one of the two elements.  

1 "InGen," 14.
There are several more significant points which Strauss discerns in the early chapters of Genesis which suggest opposition to Athens. We will indicate them here and return to them in subsequent discussion below. They are not unrelated to each other or to points of contrast already drawn (though the relation may not be clearly visible at this point).

Strauss writes:

The Bible intends to teach that man was meant to live in simplicity, without knowledge of good and evil. But the narrator seems to be aware of the fact that a being that can be forbidden to strive for knowledge of good and evil, i.e., that can understand to some degree that knowledge of good and evil is evil for it, necessarily possesses such knowledge. Human suffering from evil presupposes human knowledge of good and evil and vice versa. Man wishes to live without evil. The Bible tells us that he was given the opportunity to live without evil and that he cannot blame God for the evils from which he suffers. By giving man that opportunity God convinces him that his deepest wish cannot be fulfilled. The story of the fall is the first part of the story of God's education of man. This story partakes of the unfathomable character of God.

Strauss then points to the perfect beginnings of Genesis, to the primacy of the good and to the responsibility for evil being man's -- certainly not God's. The primacy of the good,

1"J&A," 12.
of the goodness of existence, goodness understood as perfect without evil, is the first word, one might say, of the Bible and its ultimate promise. Strauss sees this as a most significant point of contrast to the view of Athens. This all-important difference is difficult to state. We will attempt to approach it in different ways and different contexts below.

Strauss, in discussing Hesiod, silently calls attention to the marked contrast between Hesiod and Genesis in this issue:

Men must work because the gods keep hidden from them the means of life and they do this in order to punish them for Prometheus' theft, inspired by philanthropy, of fire. But was not Prometheus' action itself prompted by the fact that men were not properly provided for by the gods and in particular by Zeus? Be this as it may, Zeus did not deprive men of the fire that Prometheus had stolen for them; he punished them by sending Pandora to them and her box that was filled with countless evils such as hard toils. The evils with which human life is beset, cannot be traced to human sin. Hesiod conveys the same message by his story of the five races of men . . . The first race, the golden race, was made by the gods while Kronos was still ruling in heaven; these men lived without toil and grief; they had all good things in abundance because the earth by itself gave them abundant food. Yet the men made by father Zeus lacked this bliss; Hesiod does not make clear whether this is due to Zeus's ill-will or to his lack of power; he gives us no reason to think that it is due to man's sin. He creates the impression that human life became ever more miserable as one race of men succeeds the other; there is no divine promise, supported by the fulfillment of earlier divine promises, that permits one to trust and to hope. 1

Now even the age of Kronos is perceived as less good by Plato (according to Strauss) than the Bible's Eden. Strauss writes:

Plato [in the Statesman] makes it clear that we have a knowledge by perception only of the present age; of the age of Kronos we know only from hearsay . . . . As regards the only state of things of which we possess first hand knowledge . . . there is in it no divine providence, no care of God or gods for men . . . . The philosopher who indicates this thought, which is at variance with what other Platonic characters say elsewhere, is of course not Socrates, who merely listens in silence and refrains even at the end of the conversation from expressing his disagreement or agreement with what the strange philosopher had said. The stranger expresses a less disconcerting thought by saying that even if there were divine providence, human happiness would not be assured: the question of whether men led a blessed life under Kronos, when the gods took care of men, is left unanswered on the ground that we do not know whether men then used their freedom from care for philosophizing instead of telling one another myths; only a life dedicated to philosophy can be called happy . . . .

As Strauss reads Genesis, happiness is not philosophy or contemplation: it is life lived in simple obedience and the first commandment is the prohibition against eating from the tree of autonomous knowledge of good and evil -- against philosophy.
7. Trust and Hope in God and Tears in Jerusalem. The Quest for Knowledge and Laughter in Athens

The following discussion may seem to be a digression, but it may be seen and is intended as a preliminary indication of the "existential" import of the issue Strauss discerns in the early chapters of Genesis. How better to begin than with the existentialist -- Martin Heidegger! Strauss "reports" Martin Buber's indignation at this statement of Heidegger's:

The "prophets" of these religions (sc. Judaism and Christianity), says Heidegger according to Buber, "do not begin by foretelling the word of the Holy. They announce immediately the God upon whom the certainty of salvation in a supernatural blessedness reckons."

Strauss dismisses Buber's objection and states:

Surely the Bible teaches that in spite of all appearances to the contrary the world is guided by God or, to use the

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Buber objects: "Incidentally, I have never in our time encountered on a high philosophical plane such a far-reaching misunderstanding of the prophets of Israel. The prophets of Israel have never announced a God upon whom their hearers' striving for security reckoned. They have always aimed to shatter all security and to proclaim in the opened abyss of the final insecurity the unwished for God who demands that His human creatures become real, they become human, and confounds all who imagine that they can take refuge in the certainty that the temple of God is in their midst." Strauss comments: "Heidegger does not speak of the prophets' 'hearers,' but he clearly means that the prophets themselves were concerned with security. This assertion is not refuted by the well-known facts which Buber points out -- by the fact, in a word, that for the prophets there is no refuge and fortress except God; the security afforded by the temple of God is nothing, but the security afforded by God is everything." SCR, 10.
traditional term, that there is particular providence, that man is protected by God if he does not put his trust in flesh and blood but in God alone, that he is not completely exposed or forsaken, that he is not alone, that he has been created by a being which is -- to use Buber's expression -- a Thou.

The insecurity of man and everything human is not an absolutely

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1 Strauss is critical of Buber's expressions. He clearly has Buber in mind in his criticism of modern ways of thinking which claim to be "concrete" but in fact "miss the concrete." Strauss writes: "In later times there has occurred an estrangement from the simple and primary issues. This has given to political philosophy the character of 'abstractness,' and has therefore engendered the view that the philosophic movement must be a movement, not from opinion to knowledge, not from the here and now to what is always or eternal, but from the abstract towards the concrete. It was thought that by virtue of this movement towards the concrete, recent philosophy has overcome the limitations not only of modern political philosophy, but of classical political philosophy as well. The concrete at which one eventually arrived was not at all the truly concrete, but still an abstraction.

One example must suffice here. Today it is held in certain circles that the basic task of political or social science is to understand the most concrete human relation, and that relation is called the I-Thou-We relation. It is obvious that the Thou and the We are supplements to Descartes' Ego; the question is whether the fundamental inadequacy of Descartes' Ego can be disposed of by any supplements, and whether it is not necessary to return to a more fundamental beginning, or to the natural beginning.

The phenomenon which is now called the I-Thou-We relation was known to the classics by the name of friendship. When speaking to a friend I address him in the second person. But philosophic or scientific analysis is not speaking to a friend, i.e., to this individual here and now, but speaking to anyone concerned with such analysis. Such analysis cannot be meant to be a substitute for living together as friends; it can at best only point to such living together or arouse a desire
terrifying abyss if the highest of which a man knows is absolutely secure. Plato's Athenian Stranger does not indeed experience that support, that refuge and fortress as the Biblical prophets experienced it, but he does the second best: he tries to demonstrate its existence.

In light of Plato's view ("reported" by Strauss and quoted just above) of the age of Kronos, it would seem that the philosopher has less desire for and perhaps less need of "that support, that refuge and fortress": the philosopher's "second best" human questing is itself sufficiently fortifying, indeed, only and precisely this questing way of life conduces to true happiness. For "even if there were divine providence, human happiness would

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for it. When speaking about someone with whom I have a close relation I call him my friend. I do not call him my Thou. Adequate 'speaking about' in analytical or objective speech must be grounded in and continue the manner of 'speaking about' which is inherent in human life. [Strauss certainly strives earnestly to speak in this way.] By speaking of 'the Thou' instead of 'the friend,' I am trying to preserve in objective speech what cannot be preserved in objective speech; I am trying to objectify something that is incapable of being objectified. I am trying to preserve in 'speaking about' what can be actual only in 'speaking to.' Hence I do injustice to the phenomena; I am untrue to the phenomena; I miss the concrete." WPP? 28-29.

1 SCR. 10-11.
not be assured." Does the philosopher deem the philosophic quest "second-best"? Would the philosopher prefer to experience "the highest" "as the Biblical prophets experienced it"? Hardly, as Strauss indicates in his eloquent statement of something like the philosopher's "credo" (if that is not a contradiction in terms):

We have no comfort other than that inherent in this activity. Philosophy, as we have learned must be on its guard against the wish to be edifying -- philosophy can only be intrinsically edifying. We cannot exert our understanding without from time to time understanding something of importance; and this act of understanding may be accompanied by the awareness of our understanding, by the understanding of understanding, by noesis noescos and this is so high, so pure, so noble an experience that Aristotle could ascribe it to his god. This experience is entirely independent of whether what we understand primarily is pleasing or displeasing, fair or ugly. It leaves us to realize that all evils are in a sense necessary if there is to be understanding. It enables us to accept all evils which befall us and which may well break our hearts in the spirit of good citizens of the city of God. 3

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1 Or is Strauss deferring to biblical religion?

2 (This sentence is unclear to me.)

3 City is spelled with a small "c." The "city" intended is "the cosmos ruled by God." "Men are citizens of this city, or free men in it, only if they are wise; their obedience to the law which orders the natural city, to the natural law, is the same thing as prudence." NR, 150.
becoming aware of the dignity of the mind, we realize the true ground of the dignity of man and therewith the goodness of the world, whether we understand it as created or as uncreated, which is the home of man because it is the home of the human mind.

This statement may help us somewhat to appreciate the laughter of Athenians: why Socrates "exits" laughing, and why "the Platonic dialogue is slightly more akin to comedy than to tragedy." This laughter of Athenians contrasts dramatically with the tears shed in Jerusalem. (According to Sacks, "Weeping as opposed to laughter is the highest passion of the book [Genesis].")

1 LAM, 8. It should be noted that Strauss here is addressing and identifying with contemporaries whose situation he diagnoses as follows: "We have lost all simply authoritative traditions in which we could trust, the nomos which gave us authoritative guidance, because our immediate teachers and teachers' teachers believed in the possibility of a simply irrational society. Each of us here is compelled to find his bearings by his own powers, however defective they may be." Then follows the statement quoted. This statement is at odds with what Strauss tells us the Bible and its traditions teach. Compare the statement here with the one quoted above beginning "Surely the Bible teaches . . . ." The statement here may well be adduced as evidence of Strauss's unbelief. But is it decisive?

2 The Lion and the Ass, 699. See Sacks' comprehensive discussion of this subject, 285-293, 699-701. He concludes: "The old American adage 'laugh and the world laughs with you,' 'weep and you weep alone' is false from the Biblical point of view. Laughter always implies a distance between the laughter and the world, but weeping is the one passion which can be shared by highest and lowest alike.

The tears which Hagar shed for Ishmael touch us as deeply as the tears which David shed prior to the death of Bath-Sheba's first child. David's tears were not royal nor Hagar's slavish.
Strauss writes:

It is not surprising that perhaps the greatest helper in the effort to see that difference [between "Christian and primitive Platonism"] should be a Christian saint. I have in mind Sir Thomas More. More says: "And for to prove that this life is no laughing time, but that it is a time of weeping, we find that our savior himself wept twice or thrice, but never find we that he laughed so much as once. I will not swear that he never did, but at the least wise he left us no example of it. But, on the other side, he left us an example of weeping." More must have known that exactly the opposite is true of Plato's -- or Xenophon's -- Socrates: Socrates left us no example of weeping, but, on the other side, he left us example of laughing.

But this common levelling of tears, which leaves no room for the distinction between king and slave, is a dangerous and subtle thing. It can both humanize and bestialize. [Sacks (perhaps inspired by Strauss) adds this final enigmatic note:] "But Joseph was replaced by Judah and David succeeded by Josiah, and neither the one nor the other ever wept." [David seems to share two things with Joseph. He weeps and he is beautiful.] Idem., 701. [Moses only wept once -- when he was a baby.] Compare this Socratic complaint against poets: "The poet brings to light the full force of the grief which a man feels at the loss of someone dear to him -- of a feeling to which a respectable man would not give adequate utterance except when he is alone because its adequate utterance in the presence of others is not becoming and lawful: the poets bring to light that in our nature which the law forcibly restrains. The poets as spokesmen of the passions oppose the legislator as spokesman of reason." CM., 136.

1CM., 61.
Strauss calls our attention to the fact that Maimonides has a chapter on "grief" (in the Guide) but none on laughter:

"Why is there a chapter devoted to 'grief' and none to 'laughter'?"  

It would seem that Athens would say, as it were, that Jerusalem engenders excessively high hopes and immoderate expectations. Consider this judgment on the healthy city, a "city without pigs":

The care for men which the description of the healthy city ascribes to nature goes much beyond what nature ever provides. This could be ascribed only to the gods. No wonder that the citizens of the healthy city sing hymns to the gods.

And consider the verdict reached by Athens -- by philosophy:

The just city is then impossible. It is impossible because it is against nature. It is against nature that

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1 Guide, xxiv. See also xxiv and xxvi.

2 Strauss notes that Glaucon (who "cannot distinguish between his desire for dinner and his desire for virtue") "is the one who calls the healthy city the city of pigs .... The healthy city is literally a city without pigs." C&M, 95.

3 C&M, 96. Strauss adds: "All the more remarkable is the silence of Socrates and Adeimantus about the gods' efficacy in a healthy city."
there should ever be "a cessation of evils"; "for it is necessary that there should always be something opposed to the good, and evil necessarily wanders about the mortal nature and the region here."

8. More Regarding Respective Views of The Beginnings

Both Jerusalem and Athens find the question of the origins of human society important. This is not to say that the interest of each is the same: e.g. the distinction between nature and convention is of primary interest to the classical philosophers only. But, it may be said, that both the Bible and classical philosophers have a common interest in the foundations of civil society, of justice and of law, in contrast to the modern position which is characterized by "the depreciation not to say the complete disregard, of the questions concerning the origin of civil society and of the condition of the first men." Strauss says that "what is important according to this modern

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1 C&M, 127.

2 See 187, n.1. It is the later modern position which is here primarily intended. On Hobbes', Locke's and Rousseau's views of the "state of nature," see Strauss's chapters on these thinkers in NR and WPP.
view]... is *the idea of the state* and in no way *the historical origin of the state*. Strauss goes on:

This modern view is a consequence of the rejection of nature as the standard. Nature and Freedom, Reality, and Norm, the Is, and the Ought, appeared to be wholly independent of one another; hence it seemed that we cannot learn anything important about civil society and about right by studying the origins. From the point of view of the ancients however, the question of the origins is of decisive importance because the correct answer to it clarifies the status, the dignity, of civil society and of right. The question of the "essential" origin of civil society and of right or wrong cannot be answered without consideration of what is known about the beginnings. ...

The Bible and philosophy appear to differ in their findings; this difference reflects apparently differing attitudes toward evil --- adumbrated above --- and apparently differing attitudes toward the arts (and hints perhaps at a connection between these differing attitudes). Strauss writes:

As for the question of whether man's actual condition in the beginning was perfect or imperfect, the answer to it decides whether the human race is fully responsible for its actual imperfection or whether that imperfection is "excused" by the original imperfection of the race. In other words, the

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1Strauss refers to Hegel and Kant. See NR, 96, n.23.

2NR, 96.
view that man's beginning was perfect is in accordance with the equation of the good with the ancestral, as well as with theology rather than with philosophy. For man remembered and admitted at all times that the arts were invented by man or that the first age of the world did not know the arts; but philosophy necessarily presupposes the arts; therefore if the philosophic life is indeed the right life or the life according to nature man's beginnings were necessarily imperfect.

Genesis simply exemplifies "the view that man's beginning was perfect." Or does it? The following comments by Strauss do not seriously question that it does, but they do suggest that the Genesis account is hardly simple. To his own question, "what then is the origin of the evil or the bad?" Strauss answers:

The biblical answer seems to be that since everything of divine origin is good, evil is of human origin. Yet if God's creation as a whole is very good, it does not follow that all its parts are good or that creation as a whole contains no evil whatever: God did not find all parts of his creation to be good. Perhaps creation as a whole cannot be "very good" if it does not contain some evils. There cannot be light if there is not darkness; and the darkness is as much created as is light: God creates evil as well as He makes peace. [Strauss refers to Isaiah 45:7.] However this may be, the evils whose origin the Bible lays bare after

\[1\text{NR, 96-97.}\]
has spoken of creation, are a particular kind of evils: the evils that beset man. Those evils are not due to creation or implicit in it, as the Bible shows by setting forth man's original condition.

Does the serpent in the Garden compromise the original perfection? Strauss comments:

The Bible does not tell what induced the serpent to seduce the woman . . . . It is reasonable to assume that the serpent acted as it did because it was cunning, i.e., possessed a low kind of wisdom, a congenital malice; everything that God has created would not be very good if it did not include something congenitally bent on mischief.

Notice that the Perhaps" of the previous quotation does not occur in the second. 4


Before looking at Plato's "findings" about the beginnings, we should appreciate his appreciation of the salutariness of the

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1 "J&A," 9-10.

2 Ibid., II.

3 "Perhaps creation as a whole cannot be 'very good if it does not contain some evil'."

4 "Everything that God has created would not be very good if it did not include something congenitally bent on mischief." Consider too "J&A" 12 -- the sentence beginning "But the narrator. . . ."
belief that man's beginnings were good. Strauss explains:

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 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, hence especially the condition of man in the beginning (when he could not yet have been corrupted by false opinions), was one 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.

Plato speaks with "Socratic rhetoric." He does not separate moderation from wisdom. He does not proclaim the unsalutary truth for all to hear; he communicates it in such a way "that 'the net effect' 'upon the reader's imagination' is the opposite."² Strauss, commenting on the eighth book of the Republic, observes:

The unjust city will be uglier, more condemnable, more deserving indignation in proportion as the just city will be more possible. Anger, indignation ... spiritedness could never come into their own if the just city were not possible. Or inversely, exaltation of spiritedness is the inevitable by-product of the utopia -- of the belief that the

¹ NR, 150, n.24.

² LAM, 40. The quoted words within this quotation are A.E. Havelock's.
cessation of evils is possible -- taken seriously; the belief that all evil is due to human fault . . . makes man infinitely responsible; it leads to the consequence that not only vice but all evil is voluntary. But the possibility of the just city will remain doubtful if the just city was never actual. Accordingly Socrates asserts now that the just city was once actual. More precisely he makes the Muses assert it or rather imply it. The assertion that the just city was once actual, that it was actual in the beginning, is, as one might say, a mythical assertion which agrees with the mythical premise that the best is the oldest. Socrates asserts then through the mouth of the Muses that the good city was actual in the beginning, prior to the emergence of evil, i.e., of the inferior kind of city.

Strauss indicates Plato's true view in the following:

We are compelled to raise the question as to whether philosophy would have been possible at all in the age of Kronos, in which there was no need for the arts and hence the arts did not exist . . . ; we recall that Socrates did not tire of talking, not indeed with the shoemakers and physicians, but of shoemakers and physicians . . . in order to make clear to himself and to others what philosophy is; he thus "demoted (the arts) to the rank of a second best" but this is a high rank . . . Plato admits in the myth of the Statesman the imperfect character of man's beginnings . . . 

[as to Plato's ascribing virtues to the first men in the Laws] Plato uses the comparative and not the positive (679e2-3) and thus denies completeness to the cardinal virtues possessed by early men. Plato altogether denies to early men the highest of the cardinal virtues, wisdom or prudence. In some respects, he suggests, early men were superior to most present-day men, but in the decisive respect -- as regards wisdom or the quest

1CM, 129.
for wisdom they were certainly inferior to the best of later men. To begin with, Plato praises early men highly; he praises them as highly as he praises the members of the city of pigs in the Republic. But Plato goes on to illustrate the political order of early man with that of Homer's Cyclopes. Plato's spokesman in fact describes early men as savages (680d1-4) and even as cannibals (781c5-782c2). ¹

Appreciating then that "the net effect" may incline some readers to opposite conclusions, it is none the less an "untenable assumption that Plato believed in the age of Kronos."²

10. On the Bible On the Arts

What is the biblical attitude toward the arts? This is an immensely big and difficult question. Strauss makes clear what the Bible's "first word" on the arts is (and we dare not attempt to go beyond this):³

Cain... founded a city, and some of his descendants were the ancestors of men practicing various arts: the city

¹ LAM, 38-39. See HistPP, 55, and LAM, 68.
² LAM, 40.
³ Sacks suggests: "The prima facie opposition to the arts on the part of the Bible is fundamentally connected with its opposition to the heroic, and hence to polytheism. The heroic cannot be praised as such if there is no possibility for jumping the gap between the human and the divine. The quest of apotheosis and its ultimate failure is the most fundamental root of Greek tragedy, but without the figure of Heracles looming somewhere in the remote
and the arts, so alien to man's original simplicity, owe their origin to Cain and his race rather than to Seth... and his race. It goes without saying that this is not the last word of the Bible on the city and the arts but it is its first word, just as the prohibition against eating of the tree of knowledge is, as one may say, its first word simply and the revelation of the Torah, i.e., the highest kind of knowledge of good and evil that is vouchsafed to men, is its last word. One is also tempted to think of the difference between the first word of the first book of Samuel on human kingship and its last word. The account of the race of Cain culminates in the song of Lamech who boasted to his wives of his slaying of men, of his being superior to God as an avenger. The (antediluvian) race of Seth cannot boast of a single inventor; its past, a man who had actually achieved the status of a god, the attempt itself could never be viewed as tragic. It would be more than foolish if not sinful, in the deepest sense." The Lion and the Ass, 73. (Elsewhere, Sacks relates opposition to the heroic to the implicit biblical rejection of nature: "Only heroes have fates. Nothing in their lives is accidental and their honor comes from the way in which they meet the inevitable. Men, as we know them from daily experience have fates in the tragic sense of the word. However, our random lives can be made intelligible by seeing them as a reflection of the life of a hero who lives according to the way things are essentially. In this sense the hero is a living, breathing eidolon. But the Bible seems to reject the notion that the most important factor in understanding men is to understand that which is everywhere and always. Man, like the fish, requires a blessing because his character depends more on tradition and individual ways than it does on the unchangeable. By establishing new ways Joseph can mitigate the fate which the dream portends in ways which Oedipus could not. But the biblical author does not believe in a magic lamp. Joseph will invite his brothers to stay in Egypt for five years and those five will stretch out into centuries of servitude. The author is aware of the great difficulties there will be in establishing the state and that it will last no more than those same 400 years. The distinction between our two parents, Jerusalem and Athens, has once more come to the surface only to disappear again in front of our eyes." 650-651)

1 Strauss remarks: "Socrates seems to agree with the Bible insofar as the Bible traces the city as well as the arts to one and the same origin." CM, 96.
only distinguished members were Enoch who walked with God and Noah who was a righteous man and walked with God: civilization and piety are two very different things.

The Bible's "first word" on the arts -- I believe Strauss intends to suggest this -- sufficiently indicates that its "last word" differs from Athens' word on the arts. (The "first word" influences the "last word," as exemplified by the "first" and "last words" on kingship.)

Before proceeding, we would indicate more fully Strauss's view of the foundations of justice and law provided by Genesis.

In the following quotation, Strauss presents the "movement" he discerns in Genesis from the fall to Covenant:

The ambiguity regarding the Fall -- the fact that it was a sin and hence evitable and that it was inevitable -- is reflected in the ambiguity regarding the status of antediluvian mankind [who could have become immortal and did generate men of renown].

The link between antediluvian mankind and the revelation of the Torah is supplied by the first Covenant between God and man, the Covenant following the Flood. The Flood was the proper punishment for the extreme and well-nigh universal wickedness of antediluvian men. Prior to the Flood mankind lived, so to speak, without restraint, without law. While our first parents were still in the garden of Eden, they were not forbidden anything except to eat of the tree of knowledge . . . . After the expulsion from the garden of Eden, God did not

punish men . . . Nor did He establish human judges. God as it were experimented, for the instruction of mankind, with mankind living in freedom from law. This experiment just as the experiment with men remaining like innocent children, ended in failure. Fallen or awake man needs restraint, must live under law. But this law must not be simply imposed. It must form part of a Covenant in which God and man are equally, though not equal, partners. Such a partnership was established only after the Flood; it did not exist in antediluvian times either before or after the Fall. The inequality regarding the Covenant is shown especially by the fact that God's undertaking never again to destroy almost all life on earth as long as the earth lasts is not conditioned on all men or almost all men obeying the laws promulgated by God after the Flood: God's promise is made despite, or because of, His knowing that the devisings of man's heart are evil from his youth. Noah is the ancestor of all later men just as Adam was; the purgation of the earth through the Flood is to some extent a restoration of mankind to its original state; it is the kind of second creation. Within the limits indicated, the condition of postdiluvian men is superior to that of antediluvian men. One point requires special emphasis: in the legislation following the Flood, murder is expressly forbidden and made punishable with death on the ground that man was created in the image of God (9:6). The first Covenant brought an increase in hope and at the same time an increase in punishment . . . .

Noah had accepted the destruction of his generation without any questioning. Abraham, however, who had a deeper trust in God, in God's righteousness, and a deeper awareness of his being only dust and ashes than Noah, presumed in fear and trembling to appeal to God's righteousness lest He, the judge of the whole earth, destroy the righteous along with the wicked. In response to Abraham's insistent pleading, God as it were promised to Abraham that He would not destroy Sodom if ten righteous men were found in the city. He would save the city
for the sake of the ten righteous men within it. Abraham acted as the moral partner in God's righteousness; he acted as if he had some share in the responsibility for God's acting righteously. No wonder that God's Covenant with Abraham was incomparably more incisive than his Covenant immediately following the Flood.

Abraham's trust in God thus appears to be a trust that God in His righteousness will not do anything incompatible with His righteousness and that while or because nothing is too wondrous for the Lord, there are firm boundaries set to Him by His righteousness, by Him.

II. More than "Apparent" Affinities

"Purify Our Hearts to Serve Thee in Truth" ²

Strauss, addressing the question, "What is Political Philosophy?" opens:

In this city [Jerusalem] and in this land [Israel] the theme of political philosophy -- "the city of righteousness, the faithful city" -- has been taken more seriously than anywhere else on earth. Nowhere else has the longing for

1 "J&A," 14-16.

² This prayer (a favorite of Hermann Cohen's) from the Siddur, the Jewish prayerbook, is rendered by Strauss: "Purify our hearts so that we can serve Thee in Truth." WPP, 169. (A competent contemporary translator, Philip Birnbaum, renders the Hebrew word for "in truth," "sincerely." Strauss would strongly object to this rendering. See Strauss's remarks on sincerity in IsAM, 261-262.)
justice and the just city filled the purest hearts and the loftiest souls with such zeal as on this sacred soil.
I know all too well that I am utterly unable to convey to you what in the best possible case, in the case of any man, would be no more than a faint reproduction or a weak imitation of our prophets' vision. I shall even be compelled to lead you into a region where the dimmest recollection of that vision is on the point of vanishing altogether -- where the Kingdom of God is derisively called an imagined principality -- to say here nothing of the region which was never illuminated by it. But while being compelled, or compelling myself, to wander far away from our sacred heritage, or to be silent about it, I shall not for a moment forget what Jerusalem stands for.

In that same "speech" "What is Political Philosophy?" Strauss draws this analogy between the classics and Judaism:

A mother loves her child because he is her own; she loves what is her own. But she also loves the good. All human love is subject to the law that it be both love of one's own and love of the good, and there is necessarily a tension between one's own and the good, a tension which may well lead to a break, be it only the breaking of a heart. The relation between one's own and the good finds its political expression in the relation between the fatherland and the regime. In the language of classical metaphysics, the fatherland or the nation is the matter whereas the regime is the form. The classics held the view that the form is higher in dignity than the matter. One may call this view "idealism." The practical meaning of this idealism is that

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1 Strauss particularly favors Isaiah. See "J&A," 24. See also Strauss's radical suggestion respecting Maimonides' view of the "order of rank between Mosaic theophany and Isaian theophany." Guide, xxxix. Strauss once said: "In the light... of the purity which Isaiah understood when he said of himself 'a man of unclean lips in the midst of a nation of unclean lips' the very Parthenon is impure." "Hillel Lecture," 12.

2 WPP? 9-10.
the good is of higher dignity than one's own, or that the best regime is a higher consideration than the fatherland. The Jewish equivalent of this relation might be said to be the relation between the Torah and Israel.

This "idealism" of both traditions shows in the striking concurrence of both in opposing Epicureanism, both identifying it as the position which equates the good with the pleasant. (As we shall see in Chapter IV, Strauss tags the "motive of the heart" animating the rise of modernity "Epicureanism." And what modernity above all opposes is the "idealism" of these two traditions; as opponents of Epicureanism they would appear to be allies; as that against which modernity arose they would appear\(^2\) to be the common enemy.)

Strauss writes:

When Plato attempts to establish the existence of natural right, he reduces the conventionalist thesis to the premise that the good is identical with the pleasant . . . . When the primeval equation [of the good with the ancestral] is rejected on the basis of the distinction between nature

\(^1\)WPP\(^f\) 35-36. Strauss's saying this to an Israeli audience takes courage. It indicates his opening words quoted above should not be seen as mere rhetoric intended to flatter his audience. We will discuss the analogy more fully below.

\(^2\)Qua philosophers Plato and Epicurus -- it will be shown below -- are closer than "appearances" may indicate.
and convention, the things forbidden by ancestral custom or the divine law present themselves as emphatically natural and hence intrinsically good... Now what induces man to deviate from the narrow path of ancestral custom or divine law appears to be the desire for pleasure and the aversion to pain. The natural good thus appears to be pleasure... The most developed form of classical hedonism is Epicureanism. Epicureanism is certainly that form of conventionalism which has exercised the greatest influence throughout the ages.1

Jewish tradition concurs in this identification and, to be sure,

Jewish tradition generally ascribes deviation from the Law to "the desire for pleasure..." Strauss writes:

The Jewish tradition, in many if not all cases, characterizes the defection from the Law and rebellion against the Law as Epicureanism. Whatever facts, impressions or suspicions may have led the rabbis to this characterization, to this accounting for the defection, it is substantiated by historical investigation of original Epicureanism.2

(We leave open here the question as to whether Jewish tradition would have seen even non-Epicurean philosophers as "Epicurean.")

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2 P&G, 25.
It would seem then that there is an affinity between Jerusalem and Athens which runs deep. Notwithstanding the profound differences between them, biblical wisdom and Socratic wisdom have this very significant formal affinity; both may be said to be theologico-political wisdom. It was this affinity that was discerned by medieval Muslim and Jewish thinkers; and this affinity discerned by these thinkers is given expression by Strauss in his speaking of a hoq alohi, or Göttliche Gesetz, an all-comprehensive, divine law or political ordering which commands the right way of life -- "which regulates not merely actions but thoughts or opinions as well." Strauss speaks "of the all-important question which is coeval with philosophy although the philosophers do not frequently pronounce it -- the question quid sit deus." From this standpoint Strauss can speak, if with irony, of a mutual concern of the Bible and Aristotle. He writes:

In the words of Thomas Aquinas, reason informed by faith, not natural reason simply, to say nothing of corrupted

\[1^\text{P&G, 64.}\]
\[2^\text{PAW, 9-10. And also see 21.}\]
\[3^\text{C&M, 241.}\]
reason, teaches that God is to be loved and worshipped. Natural reason cannot decide which of the various forms of divine worship is the true one, although it is able to show the falsity of those which are plainly immoral; each of the various forms of divine worship appears to natural reason to owe its validity to political establishment and therefore to be subject to the city. Aristotle's view is less opposed to the biblical view than it might seem: he too is concerned above all with the truth of religion.

The end of the theologico-political wisdom of Jerusalem and Athens respectively is a common one: to foster the ultimate perfection or purity of man.

Though I cannot know all that Strauss intends by the following statement, it is, I submit, his definitive statement on the profound affinity between Jerusalem and Athens.

Both Platonic philosophy and biblical piety are animated by the concern with purity and purification: the "pure reason" in Plato's sense is closer to the Bible than the "pure reason" in Kant's sense or for that matter in Anaxagoras' and Aristotle's sense.

1C&M, 34.

2Strauss draws attention to the contrast between Plato and Kant in discussing the Republic: "It [Glaucon's view] cannot but remind us of Kant's view -- of Kant's moving description of the simple man who has no quality other than the good will, the only thing of absolute worth. The opening statement of his Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals makes it clear that morality as he understands it is more akin to justice than to any other virtue. Morality as Kant understands it is as much divorced from art and nature as justice is according to Glaucon: the moral laws are not natural laws nor technical rules." C&M, 89. See the discussion there. -- 87-89.

3On Anaxagoras and Aristotle, see C&M, 28.

This somewhat enigmatic, unarticulated statement of Strauss's suggesting a profound affinity between Jerusalem and Athens is barely visible in its context -- the elaboration of their fundamental opposition. Strauss deems it more important to underscore their opposition. Strauss, as we indicated, disapproves of "syntheses" however "miraculous" that have been forged at the cost of adulterating the high "idealistic" and rigorous respective demands for purity of these great traditions. Strauss would have us recapture or become captivated anew by that "high idealism" and its rigorous demands for purification. The first step, Strauss suggests, is a return to the great and sacred texts respectively of these traditions. For purification presupposes knowledge of what is good for man, knowledge of the hierarchy of human ends. We may say it requires ultimate theologico-political knowledge and concerns itself with Gottliche Gesetz, the right guidance of life -- a commanding knowledge of good and evil.

12. "Anticipations"

Though we are still at a preliminary level, the preliminaries that have gone before now permit "anticipations." We may
anticipate that generally Strauss admires most those thinkers who are mindful of the opposition between Jerusalem and Athens, between biblical wisdom and Greek wisdom, however high they may soar on the wings of philosophy. Those adherents of Jerusalem, medieval or modern, Christian or Jew, who lay claim to a perfect synthesis or harmonization of Athens and Jerusalem or to a "religion of reason" will be viewed by Strauss with skepticism, one may say, challenging skepticism. (This is not to say that he may not appreciate their work.) We may say that he views both biblical and Greek wisdom as theologico-political wisdom. Accordingly, he will appreciate those adherents of Jerusalem who in their articulation of biblical wisdom do not depreciate the term after the hyphen even if it be for the sake of or in the name of the term before the hyphen. We may well suspect that Strauss views the contest through the ages between theology and philosophy as not at all bad for either, or for Western civilization; on the contrary.

Strauss regards Yehuda (or Judah) Halevi and Maimonides as the greatest Jewish thinkers. Both oppose philosophy "for the sake of Jerusalem" but both were enamored of philosophy. Halevi
recoiled from his flirtation with philosophy zealously to oppose it (because of the danger, not because he did not appreciate it). Maimonides, never losing sight of the opposition of philosophy and the Bible, vigorously defended his tradition against the onslaught of the philosophers making "ample use" of philosophy for this purpose and for "enlightening" his own tradition. Both Halevi and Maimonides, it may be said, attempt to show forth the "wisdom and understanding" of Judaism, but it can hardly be said that either proclaims or claims Judaism to be the religion of reason. (Cohen's *Religion of Reason Out of the Sources of Judaism* does, and because it does, Strauss wonders whether Cohen's work is properly called "a Jewish book," he does not hesitate to call the *Guide* a Jewish book.)

chapter, we will draw upon Strauss's writings on these thinkers.
(The next chapter is devoted to Maimonides' Guide. Here we
refer more to his Code, the Mishneh Torah.)

Section Two

13. Aspects of the Concern with Justice in Athens and Jerusalém
Respectively: Some Significant Differences

Let us return to "nature" and the emergence of philosophy.

Strauss writes:

The emergence of philosophy radically affects man's
attitude toward political things in general and toward laws
in particular, because it radically affects his understanding
of these things. Originally the authority par excellence or the
root of all authority was the ancestral. Through the discovery
of nature, the claim of the ancestral is uprooted; philosophy
appeals from the ancestral to the good, to that which is good
intrinsically, to that which is good by nature. . . . By
uprooting the authority of the ancestral, philosophy recognizes
that nature is the authority.

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1On the significance of these titles, see Strauss's comments
in PAW, 84-87.

2NK, 91-92.
Does philosophy reject the "old law" and supplant it with a "new law" commanded by the new authority -- nature? Somehow, this apprehension of the matter seems powerfully tempting, luring both opponents and proponents of the classical natural right tradition. Strauss warns against it. Strauss would have us be ever-mindful that philosophy stands or falls with the distinction between reason and authority: "neither the We of any particular group nor a unique I, but man as man, is the measure of truth and untruth, of the being or non-being of all things." Strauss adds this all-important qualification to his statement that "nature is the authority".

It would be less misleading, however, to say that, by uprooting authority, philosophy recognizes nature as the standard. For the human faculty that, with the help of sense perception, discovers nature is reason or understanding, and the relation of reason or understanding to its objects is fundamentally different from that obedience without reasoning why that corresponds to authority proper. By calling nature the highest authority one would blur the distinction by which philosophy stands or falls, the distinction between reason and authority. By submitting to authority,
philosophy, in particular would degenerate into ideology, i.e., apologetics for a given or emerging social order, or it would undergo a transformation into theology or legal learning.¹

Much follows from this and much is illumined by it.

First, let us recall the initial part of this chapter in which we discussed Strauss's conviction of the intransigence of Athens in opposing the claims of authoritative revelations of biblical tradition. We noted that "Mosaic philosophy" may be a bigger "joke" than "Spartan philosophy," ² but that a case can be made for a philosophicus Christi. The statement just quoted indicates why Strauss would not find that case compelling. This is made more clear by juxtaposing his contrast of Plato to the Thomistic conception of natural law:

Both [Plato and Aristotle] avoided the Scylla of "absolutism" and the Charybdis of "relativism" by holding a view which one may venture to express as follows: There is a universally valid hierarchy of ends, but there are no universally valid rules of action . . . when deciding what ought to be done, i.e., what ought to be done by this individual (or this individual group) here and now, one has to consider not only which of the various

¹ NR, 92.

² Strauss notes: "It is a joke of Socrates' to speak of 'Spartan (and Cretan) philosophy.'" "Sparta," 531, n. 2.
competing objectives is higher in rank but also which is most urgent in the circumstances. What is most urgent is legitimately preferred to what is less urgent, and the most urgent is in many cases lower in rank than the less urgent. But one cannot make a universal rule that urgency is a higher consideration than rank. For it is our duty to make the highest activity, as much as we can, the most urgent or the most needful thing and the maximum of effort which can be expected necessarily varies from individual to individual [which suggests why even the best laws are less preferable than "living intelligence"]'). The only universally valid standard is the hierarchy of ends. This standard is sufficient for passing judgment on the level of nobility of individuals and groups and of actions and institutions. But it is insufficient for judging our actions [hence not simply authoritative].

The Thomistic doctrine . . . of natural law is free from the hesitations and ambiguities which are characteristic of the teachings, not only of Plato and Cicero but of Aristotle as well . . . . No doubt is left, not only regarding the basic harmony between natural right and civil society, but likewise regarding the immutable character of the fundamental propositions of natural law; the principle of the moral law, especially as formulated in the Second Table of the Decalogue, suffer no exception. . . . The doctrine of synderesis or of

1"Closer examination . . . reveals that in taking over Aristotle's concept of the political nature of man and of human living, Aquinas has modified it profoundly under the influence of Christianity and Stoicism and as a consequence of the high degree of clarity and certitude that attaches to the notion of God as a lawgiver in both of these traditions. Human excellence is no longer defined or circumscribed by the conditions of the political life. Through knowledge of the natural law man accedes directly to the common order of reason, over and above the political order to which he belongs as a citizen of a particular society. By sharing in that law he finds himself, along with all other intelligent beings, a member of a universal community
the conscience explains why the natural law can always be duly promulgated to all men and hence be universally obligatory [hence it is simply authoritative -- "the authority"].

Or cosmopolis ruled by divine providence and whose justice is vastly superior to that of any human regime. The dissociation implied in such a view between the best human regime and the perfect social order is further accentuated by the Christian and Thomistic teaching according to which the entire natural order is in turn subject to the order of grace or divine law. Hence the simply best regime is not, as it was for Aristotle, the work of man or of practical reason guided by philosophy. It is synonymous with the kingdom of God and is actual or attainable at all times through God's saving grace. Civil society ceases to be uniquely responsible for the totality of moral virtue and is itself judged by a higher standard to which human actions must conform universally. It becomes part of a broader whole embracing all men and all cities and is by that very fact deprived of its privileged status as the sole horizon limiting the scope of man's moral activity, setting the goals to which he may aspire, and determining the basic order of his priorities." HistPP, 232-233.

1 Father Fortin comments: "The sole use of the words 'conscience (suneidēsis) and 'synderesis,' which do not occur in Aristotle but rather in the later Greek and early Christian traditions through which they were handed down to the authors of the Middle Ages, is already symptomatic of the non-Aristotelian flavor of the Thomistic teaching on this subject. There is more, however. Since they are considered to be laws in the strict and proper sense of the term, the moral principles in question take on a compulsory character that they did not have for Aristotle and the philosophic tradition generally. For the natural law not only recommends or discourages certain action as intrinsically noble or base, it commands or forbids them under pain of retribution if not in this life at least in the next. It thus clearly presupposes both the personal immortality of the human soul and the existence of an all-knowing and all-powerful God who rules the world
It is reasonable to assume that these profound changes were due to the influence of the belief in biblical revelation. The natural law which is knowable to the unassisted human mind and which prescribes chiefly actions in the strict sense is related to, or founded upon, the natural end of man; that end is twofold: moral perfection and intellectual perfection; intellectual perfection is higher in dignity than moral perfection; but intellectual perfection or wisdom, as unassisted human reason knows it, does not require moral virtue. Thomas solves this difficulty by virtually contending that, according to natural reason, the natural end of man is insufficient, or points beyond itself or, more precisely, that the end of man cannot consist in philosophic investigation, to say nothing of political activity. Thus natural reason itself creates a presumption in with wisdom and equity and in whose eyes all individual human actions are either meritorious or deserving of punishment. Any violation of its precepts betrays more than a departure from reason or a simple lack of taste; it bears the mark of an offense against God, the giver and guarantor of the natural law, who, in addition to the loss of those internal goods, such as happiness and virtue, of which the sinner deprives himself, inflicts external sanctions in accordance with the gravity of the misdeed. Within this context man's whole moral life acquires a distinctively new orientation; it ceases to be understood solely in terms of human completeness or fulfillment and becomes in the final instance a matter of willing and grateful compliance with a divinely authorized and unconditionally binding law." HistPP, 239-240.
favor of the divine law, which completes or perfects the
central law. At any rate, the ultimate consequence of the
Thomistic view of natural law is that natural law is
practically inseparable not only from natural theology —
i.e., from a natural theology which is, in fact, based on
belief in biblical revelation — but even from revealed
theology.

1 NR. 162-164. Father Fortin observes: "Even if one were
to accept Aquinas's interpretation and grant that Aristotle's
teaching is not incompatible with Christian dogma, a question
could still be raised as to whether, by inserting Aristotle's
moral and political views into a theological framework or by
complementing them with a teaching based on Revelation, Aquinas
has not profoundly altered their original character. The issue of
the difference between the two authors is not completely disposed of
by Aquinas's occasional suggestion that Aristotle deals primarily
with man's happiness in this life whereas Christianity is preoccupied
above all with man's happiness in the life to come, for the simple
reason that Aristotle treats the happiness of this life as the only
happiness and maintains an unbroken silence on the crucial subject
of the personal immortality of the soul. The changes in outlook
effected by adding an otherworldly dimension to Aristotelian
speculation is not less important for being less conspicuous. To
sense that change one has only to reflect, for example, on what
happens to magnanimity when it is coupled with humility — a virtue
nowhere to be found in Aristotle — or on what happens to courage
when life on earth is considered within the larger perspective of
man's eternal destiny; for, surely, the Christian who looks forward
to a heavenly reward in the event of death on the battlefield is
not animated by sentiments identical to those of the heroic citizen
who has no such assurance and who realizes that, by exposing
his life for a noble cause, he risks the ultimate and irreparable
loss of 'everything that men hold dear.' HistPP, 245.
The differences adumbrated between classical natural right and Thomistic natural law point to the differences between the "righteous" man of the Bible and the truly just man according to Plato. For, as Strauss suggests, the profound changes in the natural right tradition such as exemplified by the Thomistic conception of natural law were due to the influence of the belief in biblical revelation. Strauss is not "faulting" Thomas for being true to the Bible, but for claiming that philosophy is. The Moslem and Jewish thinkers Strauss admires differ from Aquinas in their appreciation of the intrinsigence of philosophy and in

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1 "Righteous" is the common English rendering of tzaddiq, which derives from the Hebrew word for justice, which is also the word for charity. Justice and charity are not differentiated by separate terms for each. "Hesed" is rendered in English as "grace" or "lovingkindness." Maimonides defines "just" as "equibalanced" and "hesed" as excess or extreme; thus the "hasid," the pious man, is one who goes to excess or leans toward the extreme. But in fact the just man too leans toward the extreme in many things. Charity is a matter of justice, tsedāqah; feeding the poor and clothing the naked are included under tsedāqah, not hesed, according to Maimonides. See Weiss, p. 206 ff., 239. Strauss then quite properly does not use—(as I have) the special religious term "righteous." He is on sound ground in speaking of the just man of the Bible. (Strauss states that "religion!" is not "a Jewish word." "Hillel Lecture," 4.)
their perception of philosophy as an all-comprehensive integral way of life of question which essentially resists subordination.

Strauss quotes A.C. Pegis:

Thomas' achievement consisted of "freeing philosophy from the philosophers."

Strauss comments:

This is certainly true in the sense that Thomas, in order "to make the Philosopher a worthy vehicle of reason in Christian thought," had to give to philosophy itself a meaning fundamentally different from its Aristotelian (or Platonic) meaning: in Thomas, as distinguished from the classical philosophers and certainly from their greatest follower in the Islamic world his (Farabi), philosophy is

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1 See PAW, 21. Father Fortin states: "Formulated in broadest terms, the basic problem has to do ... with the contrast between faith and philosophy viewed as the grounds of total and essentially divergent ways of life. One cannot be guided at one and the same time by two different and equally authoritative norms. The acceptance of the supremacy of the life of faith or of devout response to a divinely revealed word necessarily entails the destruction of philosophy in its original sense of, what amounts to the same thing, the replacement of the natural order composed of philosophers and nonphilosophers by a supernatural order based on the more fundamental distinction between true believers and non-believers." HistPP, 245-246.
divorced from the conviction that happiness can be achieved only by, or essentially consists in, philosophy.\(^1\)

In his writing on Halevi, Strauss observes:

The possibility . . . of "adherents of philosophy who belong to the adherents of the religions" is, to begin with, unintelligible, rather than that truism which it is supposed to be today.

Strauss, the commentator, writes:

The philosopher denies the relevance, not only of ceremonial actions, but of all actions; more precisely, he asserts the superiority of contemplation as such to action as such: from the philosopher's point of view,

\(^1\) WPP, 285. Father Fortin concludes: "Contrary to what has often been said, Aquinas did not baptize Aristotle. If anything, he declared invalid the baptism conferred upon him by his early commentators and denied him admission to full citizenship in the City of God. Instead, by casting his philosophy in the role of a handmaid, he made him a slave or servant of that City. In the light of Aquinas's own moral principles, that treatment was not unjust since, in return for his contribution to Christian theology, Aristotle received, if not the gift of grace, at least the grace to live. The proof is that, whereas he was eventually banished from Islam and Judaism, he found a permanent home in the Christian West. The place of honor that he came to occupy in the Christian tradition as the representative par excellence of the most glorious achievements of natural reason bears eloquent witness to the novelty and daring of Aquinas's enterprise." HistPP, 246.

\(^2\) PAW, 105, n. 29.
goodness of character and goodness of action is essentially not more than a means toward, or a by-product of, the life of contemplation.

Here follows Strauss's contrast of the just man of the Bible to Plato's just man. (It may be seen to reflect two of the major points Strauss made in his delineation of the direction of the modifications of classical natural right drawn by adherents of biblical faith, such as Aquinas: one, the certain knowledge and immutable character of the fundamental propositions of natural law, e.g., the Second Table of the Decalogue; two, the much higher regard of moral virtue.)

The perfectly just man, the man who is as just as is humanly possible, is according to Socrates the philosopher and according to the prophets the faithful servant of the Lord. The philosopher is the man who dedicates his life to the quest for knowledge of the good, of the idea of the good; what we would call moral virtue is only the condition or by-product of that quest. According to the prophets, however, there is no need for the quest for knowledge of the good: God "hath shewed thee, o man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and

1PAW, 114. This appears to be the "commentator's" own view as well. In his exchange with Jacob Klein, Strauss says that for the philosopher "what counts is thinking and investigating and not morality." Addressing Klein, he says: "I think that in your scheme of things morality has a higher place than in my scheme." "Accounts," 4-5.
to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." (Micah 6:8)

In accordance with this the prophets as a rule address
the people and sometimes even all of the people whereas
Socrates as a rule addresses only one man. In the language
of Socrates the prophets are orators" while Socrates engages
in conversations with one man, which means he is addressing
questions to him.

(Clearly these are simple portraits -- bare sketches. Nevertheless
the contrast drawn does make the point that biblical traditions
are relatively "free from the hesitations and ambiguities which
are characteristic of the teachings . . . of Plato." The portrait
of the just man of the Bible is perhaps too simple -- too bare a
sketch; it is somewhat less adequate than the depiction, albeit
simple, of Plato's just man; it does not quite represent Strauss's
last word.)

1 In the version of "Jerusalem and Athens" which appeared in
Commentary, the article stops here. Given that it was Strauss's
decision to so edit the article for Commentary, what were the con-
siderations which led him to do so? One can only conjecture.
Ending the article here makes for a conclusive conclusion. And
the Bible has the last word. Or it may be simply that Strauss
felt what followed beyond this point would not be meaningful to the
readers of Commentary.

2 The falsasifat fully appreciate that the prophet is an orator.
Strauss notes: "La condition que le philosophe-roi ait une bonne
élocution, n'est pas mentionnée par Platon. Les falsasifat attachent
une importance plus grande à la rhétorique que ne le faisait Platon;
selon eux, le prophète est en même temps philosophe et orateur. . . ."
Leo Strauss, "Quelques remarques sur la science politique de
Maimonide et de Fârâbin," Revue des Études Juives, C (1936), 37 --
hereafter, "QR."

3 "J&A," 27.

4 That this is not quite Strauss's last word on the subject
is perhaps indicated by Strauss's last words omitted from the

Strauss may have Thomas in mind, but not only him, in the following statement:

Aristotle conceives of nature as superior to law -- for the good law is the law which is according to nature -- and

Commentary version. These point to a parallel between the Bible and a Socratic writing: "There is one striking example of a prophet talking in private to a single man, in a way addressing a question to him. 2Sam. 12:1-7: 'And the Lord sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds: But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had brought up and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveller unto the rich man and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come unto him. [This passage is quoted in the frontispiece of Natural Right and History.] And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die; And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity. And Nathan said to David, 'Thou art the man.' The nearest parallel to this event that occurs in the Socratic writings is Socrates' reproof of his former companion, the tyrant Critias. 'When the thirty were putting to death many citizens and by no means the worst ones, and were encouraging many in crime, Socrates said somewhere, that it seemed strange that a herdsman who lets his cattle decrease and go to the bad should not admit that he is a poor cowherd; but stranger still that a statesman when he causes the citizens to decrease and go to the bad, should feel no shame nor think himself a poor statesman. This remark was reported to Critias. . . .'" (Xenophon, Memorabilia I 2.32-33.) "J&A,"27-28. Does this conclusion intend to question the simple contrast drawn? Does Strauss conclude with a "question" in order to encourage further thought on the contrast between Jerusalem and Athens?
of law as superior to the arts. Aristotle's view must also be distinguished from another extreme view by virtue of which nature and law become fused and oppose themselves to the arts which thus appear to defile a sacred order.

The fusing of nature and law appears to be that modification of the natural right tradition effected by adherents of the biblical tradition who would perfectly harmonize both traditions. Because of this fusing, nature can be regarded simply as "the authority."

1 The first mentioned is the pre-Socratic view which "conceived of nature as superior to art and of art as superior to law."

2 C&M, 25. (My underlining)

3 Father Fortin writes: "Although Aquinas looked upon Aristotelian philosophy as the most perfect expression of natural truth and as the philosophy which was most congruent with the truth of Christianity, he was fully able to coordinate that philosophy with the Christian Faith only by transforming it both in content and in spirit. For present purposes the precise nature of that transformation is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that, whereas Aristotle never speaks of natural law but only of natural right, Aquinas has generally come to be regarded as the classic exponent of the natural law theory in the Western world. HistPP, 228."
The distinction between physis and nomos, between reason and authority -- "by which philosophy stands or falls" -- is overcome.

This fusion contributes to the depreciation of the question of the best regime which animated the classical natural right tradition.

Strauss states:

The classic natural right doctrine in its original form, if fully developed, is identical with the doctrine of the best regime but a question as to what is by nature right or as to what is justice finds its complete answer only through the construction, in speech of the best regime. The essentially political character of the classic natural right doctrine appears most clearly in Plato's Republic. Hardly less revealing is the fact that Aristotle's discussion of natural right is a part of his discussion of political right.

Strauss, discussing the Laws, observes:

The cause of the laws is the regime. Therefore the guiding theme of political philosophy is the regime rather than the laws. Regime becomes the guiding theme of political thought when the derivative or questionable character of laws has been realized. There are a number of biblical terms which can be properly translated by "law"; there is no Biblical equivalent to "regime".

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1See C&M, 45-49. There Strauss states emphatically: "Not to see the city in the light of the variety of regimes means not to look at the city as a political man does, i.e., as a man concerned with a specific public morality does." (48) See too WPP? 34.

2WPP? 34.
The "fusion" of nature and law significantly demotes the concern with politicia. This demotion, not necessarily this fusion, is engendered by the Bible. (Medieval Muslim and Jewish thinkers, and perhaps most modern Protestant theologians, do not effect such a fusion.)

Strauss writes:

On the basis of the biblical faith, the best regime simply is the City of God; therefore, the best regime is coeval with Creation and hence always actual; and the cessation of evil, or Redemption, is brought about by God's supernatural action. The question of the best regime thus loses its crucial significance. The best regime as the classics understood it ceases to be identical with the perfect moral order. The end of civil society is no longer "virtuous life as such" but only a certain segment of the virtuous life. The notion of God as lawgiver takes on a certainty and definiteness which it never possessed in classical philosophy. Therefore natural right or, rather, natural law becomes independent of the best regime and takes precedence over it. The Second Table of the Decalogue and the principles embodied in it are of infinitely higher dignity than the best regime. It is classic natural right in its profoundly modified form that has exercised the most powerful influence on Western thought almost since the beginnings of the Christian era.

1 But note that according to Maimonides, laws, though not simply natural, have a basis in nature. (More will be said below.)

2 This is not the view of the Muslim and Jewish thinkers we shall discuss in the next chapter (excepting perhaps Gersonides).

3 Strauss concludes, perhaps not without irony: "Still even this crucial modification of the classical teaching was in a way anticipated by the classics. According to the classics, political
This eloquent statement by Milton (quoted by Strauss) poetically illustrates the point of the previous quotation.

'Tis not the common law, nor the civil, but piety, and justice, that are our foundresses; they stoop not, neither change colour for Aristocracy, Democracy, or Monarchy, nor yet at all interrupt their just courses, but far above the taking notice of these inferior niceties with perfect sympathy, wherever they meet, kiss each other.

Life as such is essentially inferior in dignity to the philosophic life." _NR_, 144-145. The grounds of the "put down" of the political by the classics on the one hand and by adherents of biblical faith on the other are quite different and the differences are significant -- above all, because the "Herabsetzung" by the classics puts down moral virtue as well, whereas the opposite is true of biblical faith, as Hermann Cohen is quick to point out. See _P&G_, 122. This may be seen in terms of the quotation (on the next page) from Milton: true justice according to Plato has nothing to do with piety, as understood in the city; piety and justice "kiss each other" only on the vulgar level of justice. (More will be said below.) Or we may see the difference in terms of this statement of Strauss's about Aristotle. "In asserting that man transcends the city, Aristotle agrees with the liberalism of the modern age. Yet he differs from that liberalism by limiting this transcendence only to the highest in man. Man transcends the city only by pursuing true happiness [contemplation], not by pursuing happiness however understood." Surely no adherent of any of the biblical traditions countenances "pursuing happiness however understood." But neither is it suggested that "true happiness" may exclude benevolence -- "keeping one's brother" and "loving one's neighbor."

1 _NR_, 144-145, n. 20.
15. On Strauss's Early "Lean ing"

Strauss, in expounding classical political philosophy, has himself striven to avoid "the Scylla of 'absolutism' and the Charybdis of 'relativism'" and to preserve fully "the hesitations and ambiguities" of Plato and Aristotle. And this is no easy task. Strauss himself, in his progress toward the achievement of equibalance, tended initially to lean too far.

We earlier alluded to Strauss's "development." We shall have more to say about it in the next chapter. We here touch upon it, appropriately, because it appears that Strauss's early leaning was toward the "extreme" he has taught us to associate with the biblical tradition. In his writings of the 30's, we find statements like these:

The law of the ideal State compels the philosopher to take thought for other men and to watch over them and not "to turn whither each will." Because the pursuit of philosophy as a human undertaking is under a higher order, justice, with regard to man, stands higher than wisdom.¹

And consider his portraying Plato as an authoritative lawgiver:

Their [Maimonides' and his predecessors'] belief in the authority of Moses or Mohammed was perhaps not greatly different from what would have been the belief of a later Greek Platonist in the authority of Plato, if that Platonist had been the citizen of a commonwealth governed by Plato's Laws.

By contrast, consider this 1972 utterance:

The most obvious difficulty to which Judaism is exposed in modern times is caused by its being Law, an all comprehensive, sacred law. Cohen was assisted in overcoming these difficulties by his failure to take into consideration the extreme questioning of law as such as it was known to him from Plato's Statesman.

Suggestive of "biblical" inclination in the early writings is this contrast inferred by Guttman between early and "later" Strauss.

But at present, it is clear that for him [Strauss], philosophy in its esoteric sense has no connection with revelation, as had been surmised in his earlier essays, but is completely autonomous.  

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2 Cohen's RR, xxxv.

3 PJ, 434, n. 125.
From the 1940's on, Strauss increasingly calls attention to and emphasizes "the extreme questioning of law" both in the classics and in the medieval thinkers, Farabi and, to a lesser extent, Maimonides. This turning point, it may be said, comprises the writings in *Persecution and the Art of Writing*. We may say that Strauss was too little mindful in his earlier writings of the caveat of the paragraph we have been discussing at such length.

By calling nature the highest authority, one would blur the distinction by which philosophy stands or falls, the distinction between reason and authority.

What follows may be seen to continue to be an extended elaboration of this caveat.

16. **"The natural law"**

One seldom finds in Strauss's later writings the terms Gesetz, law, or loi divine applied to classical philosophy as they were with frequency in the earlier works. But this is not to say that he was simply wrongheaded in using them in the earlier writings. "Law" does apply, but Strauss prefers not to use it, one surmises, precisely because its use may encourage the "fusion" and confusion of law -- authority -- and nature that
Strauss is at pains to warn against (in his later work). Strauss, in the chapter after the "warning" paragraph, writes:

The order of the wants of a being points back to the natural constitution, to the What, of the being concerned; it is that constitution which determines the order, the hierarchy, of the various wants or of the various inclinations of a being. To the specific constitution there corresponds a specific operation, a specific work. A being is good, if it is "in order," if it does its proper work well. Hence man will be good if he does well the proper work of man, the work corresponding to the nature of man and required by it. The proper work of man consists in living thoughtfully, in understanding, and in thoughtful action. The good life is the life that is in accordance with the natural order of man's being, the life that flows from a well-ordered or healthy soul. The good life simply, is the life in which the requirements of man's natural inclinations are fulfilled in the proper order to the highest possible degree, the life of a man in whose soul nothing lies waste. The good life is the perfection of man's nature. One may therefore call the rules circumscribing the general character of the good life "the natural law."

17. "The natural law" and the Law

Now to see this "law" more clearly and in relation to the Law, we turn to Strauss's discussion of Yehuda Halevi's Kuzari.

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NR. 126-127. See HistPP, 50-51. There Strauss writes: "The whole is not a whole without man, without man's being whole or complete. But man becomes whole not without his own effort, and this effort presupposes knowledge of a particular kind: knowledge which is not contemplative or theoretical but prescriptive or commanding or practical. The knowledge which the Republic sets forth is prescriptive or commanding."
It is an important writing of Strauss's in many respects. Strauss himself sets as the aim of the discussion "a better understanding of the philosophic teaching concerning Natural Law and the Law of Reason."¹ (These will be defined below.) In it, we find Strauss uttering a rare "I say"² (to be quoted below).

The Kuzari is in the form of a Platonic dialogue in which the true antagonists are the philosopher and the Jewish scholar (who is familiar with philosophy) but the "dialogue" does not feature a direct disputation between them.³ Strauss suggests that the

¹ PAW, 98.

² The other instance will also be quoted below.

³ The Kuzari also features conversations between the king and Christian and Moslem scholars, but, Strauss suggests, "the adversary par excellence of Judaism from Halevi's point of view is, not Christianity and Islam, but philosophy." PAW, 103. See n. 23.

⁴ This is a significant deviation from the major source for the historical event recreated in the Kuzari: the conversion to Judaism of the King of the Khazares. This source, though it does not mention a philosopher, does report that there was a disputation before the King. See PAW, 104, n. 28. The lack of a confrontation between equals is in accord with the Platonic dialogue form. See PAW, 104, n. 27. Also see C&M, 54-55.
omission of such a confrontation is an ad oculos demonstration of the impossibility of such a disputation in that "the philosopher denies as such the premises on which any demonstration of the truth of any revealed religion is based."¹ Strauss says that Halevi "knew too well"² that the genuine philosopher can never become a genuine convert to Judaism or to any other revealed religion, "for, according to him, a genuine philosopher is a man

¹PAW, 105.

²Strauss tells us: "Halevi, in spite of his determined opposition to philosophy as such, underwent the influence of philosophy to no inconsiderable degree. What does influence mean? In the case of a superficial man, it means that he accepts this or that bit of the influencing teaching, that he cedes to the influencing force on the points where it appears to him, on the basis of his previous notions, to be strong, and that he resists it on the points where it appears to him, on the basis of his previous notions, to be weak. A confused or dogmatic mind, in other words, will not be induced by the influencing force to take a critical distance from his previous notions, to look at things, not from his habitual point of view, but from the point of view of the center, clearly grasped, of the influencing teaching, and hence he will be incapable of a serious, a radical and relentless, discussion of that teaching. In the case of a man such as Halevi, however, the influence of philosophy on him consists in a conversion to philosophy: for some time, we prefer to think for a very short time, he was a philosopher. After that moment, a spiritual hell, he returned to the Jewish fold. But after what he had gone through, he could not help interpreting Judaism in a manner in which only a man who had once been a philosopher, could interpret it. For in that moment he had experienced the enormous temptation, the enormous danger of philosophy. The manner in which he defends Judaism against philosophy, testifies to this experience." PAW, 108-109.
such as Socrates who possesses 'human wisdom' and is invincibly ignorant of 'Divine wisdom.' "

Granted that it is impossible to convert a philosopher, why not "stage" a confrontation with a view to pointing up the limitations and failings of philosophy (since in any case Halevi will do this or at least aims to do this in the Kuzari)? Precisely because of the "enormous danger of philosophy," as Strauss tells us:

If he [Halevi] had presented a disputation between a Jewish scholar and a philosopher i.e., a discussion of the crucial issue between truly competent people, he would have been compelled to state the case for philosophy with utmost clarity and vigor, and thus to present an extremely able and ruthless attack on revealed religion by the philosopher. There can be no doubt, to repeat, that the arguments of the philosopher could have been answered by the scholar; but it is hard to tell whether one or the other of the readers would not have been more impressed by the argument of the philosopher than by the rejoinder of the scholar. The Kuzari would thus have been an instrument of seduction, or at least of confusion. Of the kalâm, the defense of religion by means of argument, the scholar who presents such a defense himself, says with so many words that it may become dangerous because it leads to, or implies the raising of, doubts. But what is true of the kalâm, is of course infinitely true of philosophy.

1 PAW, 105.

2 Ibid., 109.
The Kuzari as a whole strongly suggests that revealed religion will not appeal to the philosopher but will appeal to the practical man of affairs, to the political man, for the king is converted to Judaism. Strauss writes:

The philosopher denies the relevance, not only of ceremonial actions, but of all actions; more precisely, he asserts the superiority of contemplation as such to action as such: from the philosopher's point of view, goodness of character and goodness of action is essentially not more than a means toward or a by-product of, the life of contemplation. The king who believes in revelation... believes for the same reason in the superiority of action to contemplation; and the philosopher who denies revelation, believes for the same reason in the superiority of contemplation to action. It is only on the basis of the assumption of the superiority of practical life to contemplative life that the necessity of revelation in general and hence the truth of a given revelation in particular can be demonstrated; and this assumption is taken for granted by the king, who, as king, is the natural representative of the practical or political life.

No, Strauss is not simply suggesting here that revelation is purely or simply political law. For both according to Halevi and Maimonides, the Torah certainly imparts "theoretical" truths, but these have a bearing on "political" guidance. For

1PAW, 114. Cf. C&M, 1: "Political philosophy is the indispensable handmaid of theology..."
example, Creation is a theoretical assertion which is fundamental. It is the ground of the possibility of revelation and miracles -- of Providence. These in turn have a practical impact, e.g., the Covenant between God and man in which man is a partner in righteousness (e.g., Abraham \( \text{1}\) -- "a participant with God in the work of creation."\( \text{2}\)) (This illustrates somewhat what is meant by "theologico-political."\( \text{3}\))

\( \text{1}\)See "J&A," 16.
\( \text{2}\)See LAM, 269.

\( \text{3}\)Sacks offers a specific concrete illustration in his discussion of the contrast between what the Egyptians (admired by Plato and Aristotle) abominated and what the Bible instructs us to abominate: "In the Bible three things are said to be abominable to the Egyptians. In every case they seem to reflect the disagreement with Israel on the proper relation between men and... the animal kingdom in general. [See Exodus 8:22, Genesis 43:22, 43:16 and 46:33.]... In general it would seem to be the case that in the eyes of the Egyptians man's assumption of his simple priority to the animal world as a whole is abominable."

In the book of Leviticus there are two sections which deal with the abominable. In each case the major problem is sodomy which according to Leviticus is the most fundamental distinction between Israel and all other nations [Leviticus 18:22-30 is quoted and reference is made to Leviticus 20:13]....

Verse Twenty Four [Leviticus 18:24 "Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things, for in all of these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you"] is perhaps one of the strongest distinctions between Israel and the other nations presented in the Bible. In modern times we tend to think of the belief in the oneness of God as the most fundamental distinction between Israel and the other nations, but at this point the most fundamental distinction seems to be the
How strictly are we to understand Strauss's suggestion of
the relation between the primacy of intellectual virtue and the denial

rejection of sodomy and homosexuality [Incest is "first" in Leviticus 18.
See verses 6 ff.]. . . . As part of this general point of view it was also
held abominable for a man to dress as a woman or for a woman to dress
as a man (Deut. 22:5).

Idolatry was also called abominable in several places but
presumably the rejection of idolatry is related to the rejection of
sodomy, since idolatry presupposes human, if not superhuman
nobility in the animal kingdom (Deut. 7:25, 26, 13:15 and 27:15).

The same general notion is behind the use of the word abomination
to describe the sacrifice of children since from the pagan point of view
the children are returned thereby to their animal status (Deut. 12:21,
18:9-12, and II Kings 16:3).

There seems to be general agreement between Egypt and Israel
that the most abominable actions are those which disturb the proper
relation between man and the animal world. From the Egyptian point
of view that proper relation is the relation of unity which manifests
itself in the rejection of shepherds in favor of sodomy. This union also
presupposes that the distinction between male and female is not funda-
mental, hence there is no strong prohibition against homosexuality or
transvestitism.

From the biblical point of view cosmic order can be insured
only by human actions which constantly reinforce the distinctions which
were made during the six days of Creation. From the present point of
view paganism, rejoicing in cosmic unity has a certain kinship with
philosophy, since philosophy can afford, upon occasion, to disregard
fundamental distinctions, not because they are irrelevant as paganism
presupposes, but because nature ensures that those boundaries will
not collapse even though man might disregard them momentarily in
order to see another side of the world [not clear to me].

Thus far all attempts to confuse the distinctions implicit in
Creation have been called abominable. The political implications of
the disgust which the biblical reader is to have for the loss of due
proportion can be readily seen . . . . [There follows a quotation from
Deuteronomy 25:14-16 which concludes "And all that do unrighteously
are an abomination unto the Lord thy God."
]

The Biblical rejection of a simple unity between man and the
animal world are discussed in the commentary to Genesis 9:4 in
which we saw that the beauties of this pagan notion are ultimately
injurious to the special feeling of unity which man must have for man
once the necessity for law arises." The Lion and the Ass, 719-723.
of revelation? He intends it strictly, I believe, as it applies to philosophers in the strict sense of that term, and the strict sense of that term excludes adherents of biblical tradition.

Recall his questioning whether Aquinas' understanding of natural law is "purely" philosophical. Strauss also stresses that, according to both Aquinas and Maimonides, revelation is regarded as practical in part and that, according to both, revelation may be said to be a requisite of "practical reason" or "pointed to" by it. And perhaps it may be said that in both there is a "tension" in their respective attempts to exalt intellectual virtue while yet at the same time maintaining the emphases of the respective traditions on action. It is this "tension" which Halevi explodes into irreconcilable opposition. Strauss, though he greatly admires Maimonides' attempt to hold together the primacy of intellectual virtue and Jewish tradition, is appreciative of Halevi's making clear the fundamental opposition. Strauss, as we shall see, agrees basically with Halevi's characterization of the philosophers' "morality" or "Law of Reason" or "the natural law"; he agrees too with Halevi's characterization of the

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1 See NR, 164. Strauss likes to quote Aquinas to the effect that "reason informed by faith, not natural reason simply, to say nothing of corrupted reason, teaches that God is to be loved and worshipped." C&M, 34, and "Accounts," 4.

2 See NR, 164.
philosopher's intransigent "predisposition" to deny revelation.

Strauss identifies with the philosopher in the first respect, but also appears to identify strongly with adherents of Jerusalem -- as a Jew. In both respects, he appears to follow or to resemble Maimonides. But, Strauss reminds us repeatedly, Maimonides never calls himself a philosopher.¹ Still, the primacy of intellectual virtue appears to be upheld by both. How can a Jew maintain this position? This question is perhaps stronger than any answer supplied in this thesis. (The philosophic basis on which one, while maintaining the primacy of intellectual virtue, stoutly defends against and opposes to "the philosophers"² the opinion of the "followers of the law of our teacher Moses" is supplied by Platonic political philosophy -- as will be seen in Chapter III.)

¹ "Accounts," 3. Husik, xxix, and PAW, 42-43. Like Halevi, Maimonides "obviously assumes that the philosophers form a group distinguished from the group of adherents of the law and that both groups are mutually exclusive." PAW, 43.

² PAW, 43. Strauss writes: "It is not an exaggeration to say that for him [Maimonides] philosophy is practically identical with the teaching as well as the message of Aristotle, 'the prince of the philosophers', and of the Aristotelians." (For Halevi too, the philosophers are Aristotelians.) This is not to say that the Muslim and Jewish thinkers of the period were not significantly influenced by Plato (as will be seen in Chapter III). Strauss notes: "I. Heineman goes too far...in stating...that 'Falsafie heisst nicht Philosoph, sondern steht für Aristoteles oder Aristoteliker'." PAW, 42, n.16.
2. Strauss says: "The word "morality" is a "bad word" because it has so many connotations which are wholly alien to the ancients; but I think for provisional purposes we can accept it. He goes on to say: "The high point of modern philosophy was reached in Kant's teaching on the primacy of practical, i.e., moral reason; a teaching prepared to some extent by Rousseau; the one thing needful is a good will and a view that morality or moral virtue is the highest. I am doubtful if it occurs in antiquity at all. "Accounts: "4. This is a direct lesson to the Bible, in terms of our discussion. These major areas of affinity come into view: "practical reason", and "categorical imperative" (it may be noted that morality, the morality of the philosophers, is no morality at all. Strauss may be said to amend his early writings in which he earlier called the Goethe's Gesetz of the philosophers, "the command of the moral character of the good life" may indeed be describing the general character of the idea, but it lacks the authoritative character of the biblical "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not." It is in his writing on Yehuda Halev, that Strauss perhaps first brings to light the character of what he had termed "the natural law," which lacks categorical imperative."
Strauss tells us that Halevi's defense of Judaism against philosophy is a defense of simple piety addressed "to naturally pious people only." It needs defending because the pious are not immune to false beliefs; they need supportive arguments. The pagan king, the Kuzari, is "the immediate and typical addressee of the defense": he "is a naturally pious man in a state of doubt." Why is the defense of Judaism addressed primarily to a Gentile who is a doubter as regards Judaism? Strauss answers with a question:

Is not a doubting Jew an anomaly?

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Strauss, in an early writing, suggests: "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." (See Gershom Scholem's *Messianic Idea...*, 1-17.)

1 PAW, 111. Strauss states: "Halevi refrained from refuting the argument of the philosophers on a natural level out of a sense of responsibility."

2 PAW, 111.

3 Ibid., 112. This is not to deny that "in Halevi's age there unquestionably were doubting Jews." See Strauss's remarks there.
(This is comparable to the question: "Is not an indecent gentleman an anomaly?") Strauss notes:

The limitation of the bearing of Halevi's argument may be compared to the limitation, suggested by Aristotle, of the ethical teaching: the ethical teaching, as distinguished from the theoretical teaching, is addressed not to all intelligent people, but to decent people only, and only the latter can truly accept it.

Strauss, in the guise of the commentator, presents Halevi's polemical defense against philosophy, showing how philosophy, the philosophers' morality, in particular, appears to the decent citizens of any city and particularly to those citizens whose morality has been informed by biblical tradition. The Kuzari, as read by Strauss, forcefully presents the "practical" reasons for the city's being closed to philosophy and open to revealed religion. The crux of the argument is the status of the authoritativness of natural law. Halevi shows that the natural law morality of the philosophers is no morality at all and that "the religion to which speculation leads" -- the religion of the philosophers -- is, practically speaking, a religion of expediency. Morality requires revealed religion and the city requires

1PAW, 106, n. 32.
moral man; therefore the city requires revealed religion. What
Strauss calls "the natural law" is, in the context of his exposition
of Halevi, divided into two parts: "the Law of Reason" and "Natural
Law." (See the definition in the opening sentence of the quotation
that follows.) In that context, it is shown to need supplementing
and its "supplement," called "Natural Law," is discussed. We
quote at length:

The Law of Reason is primarily the sum of rules of conduct
which the philosopher has to observe in order to become capable,
and to be capable, of contemplation. These rules are addressed
to the philosophers as such without any regard to place and time;
hence they cannot but be very general in character: their appli-
cation in given circumstances is left to the discretion of the
individual philosopher; they are, as it were, the framework of
all private codes of all individual philosophers. The way in
which these general rules are applied in the individual case, depends
considerably on the character of the society in which the individual
philosopher happens to live: that society may be favorable or
unfavorable to philosophy and philosophers. In case the given
society is hostile to philosophy, the Law of Reason advises the
philosopher either to leave that society and to search for another
society, or else to try to lead his fellows gradually toward a more
reasonable attitude, i.e., for the time being to adapt his conduct,
as far as necessary, to the requirements of that society: what at
first glance appears to be a repudiation of the Law of Reason in
favor of another rule of life proves on closer investigation to be
one form of observing the very Law of Reason . . . .

1 Earlier in the exposition of the dialogue, Strauss writes:
"The philosopher gives the king the conditional advice -- conditional,
that is, on the king's becoming a philosopher -- to decide the religious
question on grounds of expediency alone: the king may . . . continue
As a matter of principle, contemplation requires withdrawal from society. Therefore, the Law of Reason is primarily the sum of rules of conduct of the philosophizing hermit, the regimen solitarii. Naturally, the solitary character of the philosophic life must be understood. Socrates the model of the philosophic life, loved the company of his pupils, and he had to live together with people who were not, and could not become, his pupils. Hence the Law of Reason must be supplemented with, or, rather, it comprises, rules of social conduct. It is this social, or governmental, part of the Law of Reason which the scholar calls the Law of Reason and which he identifies with the Natural Law: the rational nomoi which he accepts, are purely governmental. He acts as if he were blind to the non-governmental part of the Law of Reason, or to the aim which it is destined to serve; he deliberately disregards that non-governmental part, or its aim, which is assimilation to "the God of Aristotle." For only its governmental part is "visible," i.e., of interest to men who are not philosophers or even

in his ancestral religion, or he may choose one of the other religions already in existence (Christianity or Islam e.g.), or he may invent a new religion, or he may adopt as his religion the rational nomoi of the philosophers. This advice calls for some attention since it contains what may be said to be the only authentic declaration, occurring in the Kuzari, of the intentions of the philosophers; for that declaration is made by the philosopher in person, and not by the Jewish scholar who is an adversary of philosophy, nor by the king, who has only a superficial knowledge of philosophy. The religious indifference of the philosopher knows no limits: he does not oppose to the 'errors' of the positive religions the religion of reason; he does not demand that a philosopher who as such no longer believes in the religion of his fathers, should reveal his religious indifference, proceeding from unbelief, by openly transgressing the laws of that religion; he does not by any means set up the behavior... of Spinoza, as the motto of philosophic behavior; he considers it perfectly legitimate that a philosopher who as such denies Divine revelation, adheres to Islam for example, i.e., complies in deed and speech with the requirements of that religion and therefore, if an emergency arises, defends that faith which he cannot but call the true faith, not only with the sword, but with arguments, viz., dialectical arguments, as well. The philosopher certainly does not say, or imply, that a genuine
adversaries of the philosophers. But by identifying the governmental part of the Law of Reason, or what we may call briefly the philosophers' social morality, with the Natural Law, i.e., natural morality, or the framework of every code, he is enabled to shed some light on the latter.

For what are the distinctive features of the social part of the Law of Reason? While philosophy presupposes social life (division-of-labor), the philosopher has no attachment to society; his soul is elsewhere. Accordingly, the philosophers' rules of social conduct do not go beyond the minimum moral requirements of living together. Besides, from the philosopher's point of view observation of these rules is not an end in itself, but merely a means toward an end, the ultimate end being contemplation. More precisely, these rules are not obligatory; they are valid, not absolutely, but only in the large majority of cases; they can safely be disregarded in extreme cases, in cases of urgent need; they are rules of "prudence" rather than rules of morality proper. The Natural Law then is then a rule of social conduct

philosopher would necessarily openly reject any other religion or law in favor of the rational nomoi composed by the philosophers or of 'the religion of the philosophers' although he does admit that under certain circumstances he might." PAW, 114-115.

1See Strauss's discussion of Aristotle's assertion "that all natural right is changeable." NR, 159 ff. Note his critical assessment of the Thomistic interpretation, his statement of the Averroistic position and his own "suggestion" for understanding Aristotle's assertion. Strauss's own suggestion is clearly closer to the Averroistic view than to the Thomistic. His "suggestion" indicates that he would not go so far as to agree that "the Natural Law . . . is only hypothetically valid," but he certainly does agree with the thrust of Halevi's criticism of the philosopher's morality. Citing approvingly Nietzsche's analogy of a jockey who lives restrainedly only in order to win races, Strauss comments: " . . . why is a philosopher ascetic? . . . He [Nietzsche] says, that it is not different from the asceticism of the jockey, who in order to win a race must live very restrainedly. But that is wholly unimportant to the jockey, what is important is to win the race. If one may compare low to high things, one may say similarly of the philosopher, what counts is thinking and investigating and not morality." And recall his saying to Jacob Klein: "In your scheme of things morality has a higher place than in my scheme." "Accounts," 4.
which is only hypothetically valid and whose addresses are "rugged individualists," men with no inner attachment to society, men who are not -- citizens: it is in contrast to the essentially solitary philosopher that the truly good or pious man is called "the guardian of the city" . . . . It is hardly necessary to add that it is precisely this view of the non-categoric character of the rules of social conduct which permits the philosopher to hold that a man who has become a philosopher, may adhere in his deeds and speeches to a religion to which he does not adhere in his thoughts; it is this view, I say, which is underlying the exotericism of the philosophers.

If the philosophers are right in their appraisal of natural morality, of morality not based on Divine revelation, natural morality is, strictly speaking, no morality at all; it is hardly distinguishable from the morality essential to the preservation of a gang of robbers. Natural morality being what it is, only a law revealed by the omnipotent and omniscient God and sanctioned by the omniscient and omnipotent God can make possible genuine morality, "categoric imperative"; only revelation can transform natural man into "the guardian of his city," or, to use the language of the Bible the guardian of his brother. One has not to be naturally pious, he has merely to have a passionate interest in genuine morality in order to long with all his heart for revelation: moral man as such

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1 My underlining.

2 This again points to a comparison of Aristotle's gentleman and the pious man of biblical religions. It appears that medieval thinkers -- at least some -- did not follow Aristotle's view that the city is for the sake of the gentlemen's virtue -- of the noble life, rather, vice versa: the pious citizen serves the greater glory of God by serving his "city" -- religious community. This seems likely to be related to the biblical emphasis on benediction as all-important to piety. The Bible appears to give less place to the "rugged individualists" -- philosophers or, their "pale reflections," gentlemen. We shall discuss this further, below.
is the potential believer. Halevi could find a sign for the necessity of the connection between morality and revelation in the fact that the same philosophers who denied the Divine law-giver, denied the obligatory character of what we would call the moral law. In defending Judaism, which, according to him is the only true revealed religion, against the philosophers, he was conscious of defending morality itself and therewith the cause, not only of Judaism, but of mankind at large. His basic objection to philosophy was then not particularly Jewish, nor even particularly religious, but moral.

PAW, 136-140. But Yehuda Halevi cannot avoid an "embarrassing" dilemma. Strauss puts it: "Unassisted reason is able to perceive that without religious beliefs and actions no society whatsoever can last, but reason is unable to determine the right kind of such actions and beliefs: specific laws concerning religious actions and beliefs or, as all specific laws are, either supra-rational and hence good, or else irrational and hence bad." PAW, 134-135. Does this not lead to the impossibility of distinguishing superstition from religion or to the equal validity of all orthodoxies not excluding cannibalism or the worship of Moloch? Strauss elaborates this "embarrassment": "To deny that religion is essential to society, is difficult for a man of Halevi's piety, and, we venture to add, for anyone who puts any trust in the accumulated experience of the human race. To assert it, would amount to ascribing some value even to the most abominable idolatrous religion; for the proverbial gang of robbers ... cannot be supposed to adhere to the one true religion or to any of its imitations. From this point of view, it is, I believe, impossible to decide the question as to whether the denial, not accompanied by the assertion of the existence of another deity, of the existence, say, of Moloch is better or worse than a living faith in Moloch." PAW, 130. Granted that "categoric imperatives" are essential, on what grounds can we know which are abominations? To reverse Dostoyevsky: if a deity is believed to command anything, then anything is permitted. The philosopher's cunning "exit line" perhaps points to this. Strauss writes: "The philosopher takes leave of the king, and of the readers with his second speech which consists of one short sentence only. That sentence is to the effect that 'the religion of the philosophers' does not approve of, or command, the killing of the adherents of other religions as such." PAW, 117. (Strauss notes: "The philosopher does not say that the religion of the philosophers objects to the killing of any human beings. The killing of bestial men, of men on the lowest level of humanity was considered legitimate by the philosophers," PAW, 117, n. 67.)
As we have noted, Strauss largely concurs in Halevi's diagnosis of what may well appear to be the deficiencies of the philosophers' Law of Reason or "the natural law" as Strauss calls it. And just as Halevi's defense against the philosophers was not only for the sake of a biblical tradition but for the cause of morality -- of "mankind at large," so too the basis for Strauss's concurrence is not only or even primarily his reading of the Bible (or his Jewishness) but his understanding of and attaching great importance to the tension between philosophy and the city -- even the best city.

Musing aloud about his "development," he says:

I arrived at a conclusion that I can state in the form of a syllogism: philosophy is the attempt to replace opinion by knowledge; but opinion is the element of the city; hence philosophy is subversive, hence the philosopher must write in such a way that he will improve rather than subvert the city. In other words the virtue of the philosopher's thought is a certain kind of mania while the virtue of the philosopher's public speech is sophrosyne. Philosophy is as such trans-political, trans-religious, and trans-moral but the city is and ought to be moral and religious. In the words of Thomas Aquinas only reason informed by faith knows that God must be worshipped, and the intellectual virtues with the exception of prudence do not presuppose moral virtue. To illustrate this point, moral man, merely moral man, the kaloskagathos in the common meaning of the term, is not simply closer to the philosopher than a man of the dubious morality of Alcibiades.

This view of philosophy was derived from my study of pre-modern philosophy.

1 "Accounts," 4. Elsewhere he puts it even more strongly: "If striving for knowledge of the eternal truth is the ultimate end of men, justice and moral virtue in general can be fully legitimated only by
This may suffice to make clear the assertion in the Introduction to this chapter that Strauss's understanding of the opposition between Athens and Jerusalem is rooted deeply in his understanding of philosophy, and especially of political philosophy "the highest theme" of which is the tension between philosophy and the polis. \[1\]

This suggests why, if one would take issue with Strauss's view of the relation of Jerusalem and Athens, it would not suffice to contest his reading of the Bible; one would have to show that his understanding of philosophy is inadequate or mistaken.

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the fact that they are required for the sake of that ultimate end or that they are conditions of the philosophic life [like the jockey's being in condition]. From this point of view the man who is merely just or moral without being a philosopher appears as a mutilated human being. It thus becomes a question whether the moral or just man who is not a philosopher is simply superior to the non-philosophic 'erotic' man. It likewise becomes a question whether justice and morality in general, insofar as they are required for the sake of the philosophic life, are identical, as regards both their meaning and their extension, with justice and morality as they are commonly understood, or whether morality does not have two entirely different roots, or whether what Aristotle calls moral virtue is not, in fact, merely political or vulgar virtue. The latter question can also be expressed by asking whether, by transforming opinion about morality into knowledge of morality, one does not transcend the dimension of morality in the politically relevant sense of the term." \[NR, 151-152.\]

\[1\] Accounts, "4."
Section Three

19. "Am I My Brother's Keeper?" -- The "Answers" Respectively of the Philosopher, the Greek Gentleman, and the Pious Adherent of Biblical Tradition

Following Strauss, we have spoken simply of "Athens." The contexts make clear that Strauss intends by "Athens" primarily Plato and Aristotle and the tradition of classical philosophy, and also classical poets and historians like Thucydides. But precisely in following Strauss, one has thrust to the fore of one's attention the opposition to philosophy in Athens -- the deep cleavage between the philosopher and the political man or gentleman. This opposition, Strauss emphasizes, is fundamental and irreconcilable. We then have two all-important oppositions -- between Jerusalem and Athens and between philosophy and the city, and Strauss stresses that both are fundamental and irreconcilable and by no means "tragic"¹ -- on the contrary. (The two oppositions may be said to comprise the ground of the third opposition prominent in Strauss's work, the quarrel between ancients and moderns. Modernity, in Strauss's view, has too successfully reconciled the opposing "sides" of the oppositions

¹See On Tyr 221.
between Divine Revelation and philosophy and between philosophers and non-philosophers.

We then proceed to complicate our discussion of Strauss's view of the opposition between Jerusalem and Athens with considerations of Strauss's view of the opposition between the philosopher and the political man. The complexity should make for greater clarity. We consider the relation of the pious adherent of biblical tradition, the philosopher and the gentleman in order to bring out more clearly, fully, and dramatically, the opposition between Judaism and philosophy and in order to bring their affinity in some respects into greater relief by contrast to the Greek gentleman, in particular. We attempt to compare the consideration of their respective moralities expounded by Strauss seeking to elicit the "answers" of each to the central and crucial question of morality -- as it appeared, in our discussion of Halevi -- "Am I My Brother's Keeper?" This question -- again, as the foregoing discussion indicated, is intimately related to the question

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1See NR, 74-75.

2See LAM, 19 ff. and NR, 34.

3For the most part, our discussion will center on the pious Jew as defined by Maimonides, but some of the quotations from Strauss make specific reference to Christians; for this reason only is the more general designation of "pious adherent of biblical tradition" used.
of the weighting of understanding of "free insight" and "doing" or "deeds." This question in turn raises another regarding the ground of the respective weightings: what moves a man to devote his life to philosophy? to ruling? to piety? Strauss has addressed these questions directly and extensively. He says least about piety, and we confess, it is the least adequately treated.¹

Strauss did direct a thesis entitled wisdom and piety the ethics of maimonides which indicates at least that he did seriously think about these questions. He expressed some of those thoughts all too briefly in his last published study of maimonides. (For further elaboration of the issue Strauss briefly addresses there, we will have recourse to the thesis² which he directed.) Our discussion then will draw on Strauss's consideration of "the two ways of life," the way of the philosopher and of the gentleman, and the way of piety — primarily within the limited context of maimonides' mishneh torah. In this way we would elicit the respective "answers" to the question, "Am I My Brother's Keeper?"

¹ See "J&A," 5, which perhaps points to the difficulty of subjecting piety to "scientific" inquiry.

² We do not presume that the writer of the thesis perfectly reflects Strauss's views. As noted earlier, Strauss warmly recommended Weis's thesis. He praised particularly the comprehensiveness and care with which Weis combed through the mishneh torah and considered every instance of "wisdom" and "piety."
20. The Philosopher -- "a benefactor only accidentally"

The Bible, in some sense -- in a very significant sense -- may be seen to be an "answer" to the question it poses near the beginning (Genesis 4) "Am I My Brother's Keeper"? What is the "answer" of classical philosophy? Strauss makes clear in his exposition of classical philosophy that its "answer" is antithetical to the Bible's:

The specific function of the wise man is to understand; he is a benefactor only accidentally. The wise man is as self-sufficient as is humanly possible; the admiration which he gains is essentially a tribute to his perfection and not a reward for any services. The desire for praise and admiration ... is the natural foundation for the predominance of the desire for one's own perfection. This is what Xenophon subtly indicates [in Hiero] by presenting Simonides as chiefly interested in the pleasures of eating ... for the enjoyment of food, as distinguished from sexual enjoyment, one does not need other human beings.

Consider this little sentence: "Justice is not beneficence." Strauss elaborates what this comes to mean later in the Republic (i.e., "in the most important part of the book" -- "that part of the Republic which deals with philosophy"): Only the philosopher can be truly just. But the work with which the philosopher is concerned above everything else is intrinsically attractive and in fact the most pleasant work, regardless of what consequences it may entail (583a). Hence

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1 My underlining. OnTyr, 93.
2 Gm, 73.
only in philosophy do justice and happiness coincide. In other words the philosopher is the only individual who is just in the sense in which the city can be just: he is self-sufficient, truly free, or his life is as little devoted to the service of other individuals as the life of the city is devoted to the service of other cities. But the philosopher in the good city is just also in the sense that he serves his fellow men, his fellow citizens, his city, or that he obeys the law. . . . Yet justice in this second sense is not intrinsically attractive or choiceworthy for its own sake but is good only with a view to its consequences; or it is not noble but necessary: the philosopher serves the city, even the good city, not, as he seeks the truth, from natural inclination, from eros, but under compulsion. Compulsion does not cease to be compulsion if it is self-compulsion. [Strauss adds that "there is no reason why the philosopher should not engage in political activity out of that kind of love of one's own which is patriotism."]

Strauss finds in the Republic corroboration of Halevi's depiction of the opposition between philosophy and morality—the morality of "brother-keeping" and "categoric imperatives":

Why are the philosophers unwilling to rule? Being dominated by the desire, the eros, for knowledge as the one thing needful, or knowing that philosophy is the most pleasant

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1 According to Xenophon's Apology . . . . Socrates "at the end of his remarks to the jury . . . speaks of the benefactions which he had bestowed on those who had conversations with him: he does not speak here of his having helped others by his deeds. . . ."

X's Socrates, 135.

2 CM, 127-128.
and blessed possession, the philosophers have no leisure for looking down at human affairs, let alone for taking care of them. They believe that while still alive they are already firmly settled far away from their cities in the "Islands of the Blessed"... Having perceived the truly grand, the philosophers regard the human things as paltry. Their very justice -- their abstaining from wronging their fellow human beings -- flows from contempt for the things which the non-philosophers hotly contest. They know that the life not dedicated to philosophy and therefore even political life at its best is like life in a cave, so much so that the city can be identified with the Cave. The cave-dwellers, i.e. the non-philosophers, see only the shadows of artifacts. Whatever they perceive they understand in the light of opinions sanctified by the fiat of legislators, regarding the just and noble things, i.e. of fabricated or conventional opinions, and they do not know that these their most cherished convictions possess no higher status than that of opinions. For if even the best city stands or falls by a fundamental falsehood, albeit a noble falsehood, it can be expected that the opinions which the imperfect cities rest on which they believe will not be true, to say the least. Precisely the best of the non-philosophers, the good citizens, are passionately attached to these opinions and therefore passionately opposed to philosophy (517a) which is the attempt to go beyond opinion toward knowledge: the multitude is not as persuadable by the philosophers as we sanguinely assumed in an earlier part of the argument. This is the true reason why the coincidence of philosophy and political power is extremely improbable: philosophy and the city tend away from one another in opposite directions.

This suggests why political philosophy is so fundamental.

The philosopher is acutely aware of the tension between philosophy

1 CM, 124-125.
and the city. The philosopher would communicate with and educate potential philosophers. On the other hand, he would in that very same communication, attempt to woo the city -- i.e. to allay its natural enmity and to win its approval or at least acceptance of philosophy, and this requires hiding or covering over precisely that which is to be communicated to the potential philosophers. 1

1 Strauss observes: "While everything said in the Platonic dialogues is said by Plato's characters, Plato himself takes full responsibility for the titles of the dialogues. There are only four dialogues whose titles designate subject matter: the Republic, the Laws, the Sophist, and the Statesman. There is no Platonic Nature or Truth. The subject matter of the dialogues as it is revealed by the titles is preponderantly political... One may say that seven titles indicate the theme of the dialogues concerned... [The four just mentioned and] Hipparchus, Minos, and Apology of Socrates; the theme of the dialogues, insofar as it is revealed by the titles, is preponderantly political.

The fact that the name of Socrates occurs in no title except that of the Apology of Socrates is hardly an accident. Xenophon... too mentions the name of Socrates in no title except that of his Apology of Socrates; his most extensive writing devoted to Socrates is called Recollections and not, as one would expect from its content; Recollections of Socrates; Xenophon, just as Plato, deliberately refrained from mentioning Socrates in the title except when conjoined with Apology'. Plato's Apology of Socrates presents Socrates' official and solemn account of his way of life, the account which he gave to the city of Athens when he was compelled to defend himself against the accusation of having committed a capital crime." CM, 56.
How does the philosopher achieve this? In a word: exotericism.¹

Does the opposition adumbrated between the philosopher and the city also corroborate Halevi's contention that the ruler, political man or gentleman is more likely to be attracted to the teachings of the Bible than to philosophy? If so, from the standpoint of philosophy, this is a dubious tribute to the Bible at best.

We would here register the obvious — the impression that the Greek gentleman would not find biblical piety to his taste. We would?

¹Exotericism is also spoken of as "Socratic rhetoric." These terms in turn are, in Strauss's view, intimately related to "Natural Law" and political philosophy. Strauss writes: "Every student of the history of philosophy assumes, tacitly or expressly, rightly or wrongly, that he knows what philosophy is or what a philosopher is. In attempting to transform the necessarily confused notion with which one starts one's investigations, into a clear notion of philosophy, one is confronted sooner or later with what appears to be the most serious implication of the question 'what a philosopher is,' viz., the relation of philosophy to social or political life. This relation is adumbrated by the term 'Natural Law,' a term which is as indispensable as it is open to grave objections." PAW, 95. Of "Socratic rhetoric," he writes: "Socratic rhetoric is meant to be an indispensable instrument of philosophy. Its purpose is to lead potential philosophers to philosophy both by training them and by liberating them from the charms which obstruct the philosophical effort, as well as to prevent the access to philosophy of those who are not fit for it. Socratic rhetoric is emphatically just: It is animated by the spirit of social responsibility." OnTyr, 26.
further suggest that his distaste for the pious man would in some respects resemble his distaste for the philosopher; both would appear to him to be excessively "unworldly" -- too much in the "clouds," fanatic idealists and, above all, not real men. ¹ (We shall want to go beyond "impressions" and consider the deep and significant differences between the gentleman and the pious man.)

Yet Halevi's contention that there are affinities between the gentleman and pious adherent of biblical tradition cannot be gainsaid, especially if seen in contrast to the philosopher. Consider these excerpts from Strauss's depiction of gentlemanship:

The gentlemen regard virtue as choiceworthy for its own sake, whereas the others [the vulgar] praise virtue as a

¹Strauss reminds us repeatedly that Xenophon does not count manliness among Socrates' virtues, even though Socrates was a soldier and though he faced death nobly. (See X's Oeconomicus, 89 and X's Socrates, 125.) Indeed, Xenophon, Strauss suggests, almost induces one to think of Socrates as a woman: "... we might even think that Ischomachos [the model gentleman] is addressing Socrates 'O woman!" X's Oeconomicus, 136. Strauss suggests that Xenophon omitted manliness from his enumeration of Socrates' virtues "either because he was not the kind of man to take unusual risks for the sake of freedom from tyranny. ... or because he lacked the virtue of the man (aner) which includes surpassing one's enemies in harming them." X's Socrates, 126(and see 177). Also see OnTyr, 203.
means for acquiring wealth and honor. . . . The gentlemen cannot possibly give a sufficient or intelligible account of their way of life to the others. While being responsible to themselves for the well-being of the vulgar, they cannot be responsible to the vulgar. . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

By being what they are, the gentlemen are men to set the tone of society in the most direct, the least ambiguous, and the most unquestionable way . . . .

When comparing politics to philosophy strictly understood ["quest for the truth about the most weighty matters or for the comprehensive truth or for the truth about the whole or for the science of the whole"], one realizes that philosophy is of higher rank than politics. Politics is the pursuit of certain ends; decent politics is the decent pursuit of decent ends. The responsible and clear distinction between ends which are decent and ends which are not is in a way presupposed by politics. It surely transcends politics. . . . The gentleman as gentleman accepts on trust certain most weighty things which for the philosopher are the themes of investigation and of questioning. Hence the gentleman's virtue is not entirely the same as the philosopher's virtue.  

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2. LAM, 13. The full discussion there also indicates somewhat the affinity between the pious adherent and the philosopher, or the ground of the gentleman's "distaste" for both.
The points mentioned which are suggestive of a formal affinity between gentlemanship and piety are these: "Virtue as choice-worthy for its own sake," the difficulty of giving "a sufficient or intelligible account of their way of life to the others," "absolute" principle or grounds of action, accepting "on trust certain most weighty things," and the conviction that action and "everything which comes into being through human action" matters.

Strauss points to but does not articulate an important affinity between the gentleman's devotion to the city and devoutness.

In his "commentary" on Thucydides, he writes:

In the light of the full difference between the universalism of thought and the universalism of the city we understand Thucydides' agreement, not with Sparta, but with that moderation and piety by which Sparta claimed to be guided and which reveals itself less ambiguously in Nicias than in Sparta. It is hard but not altogether misleading to say that for Thucydides the pious understanding or judgment is true if for the wrong reasons; not the gods but nature sets limits to what the city can reasonably attempt. Moderation is conduct in accordance with the nature of human things. The agreement between Thucydides and "Sparta" is reflected in the agreement between the men of noble simplicity and the men of Odyssean versatility who both become the victims of ruthless men with second-rate minds in times of civil discord (III 83). But the agreement between Thucydides and the Spartans, or the Melians, or Nicias, must not blind us to the fact that there is an equally important agreement among all political men, the Athenians
included, by virtue of which they all differ from Thucydides. There is indeed a primary opposition between those (the Spartans, Nicias, the Melians) who merely wish to preserve the present or available things and those (the Athenians) who are haunted by the hope for immanent future things. But on closer inspection the former too prove to depend on such hope. In a language which is not that of Thucydides, there is something reminding of religion in Athenian imperialism.  

(Is Strauss suggesting that biblical religion makes for immoderation?) Strauss suggests that there is a connection between "the hope for immanent future things" and deeds or action -- daring deeds and zealous action:

The longing for sempiternal and universal fame points toward universal rule; the concern with sempiternal and universal fame calls for boundless striving for ever more; it is wholly incompatible with moderation.

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1 Does Strauss have in mind biblical religion? It seems likely since at the beginning of the quotation he speaks of "moderation and piety" -- that is, pagan piety. See CM, 217.

2 CM, 227-228.

3 And this "connection" may be seen in another context in Strauss's "diagnosis" of modernity: Modernity is characterized by "Faustian striving" and it is "animated by the certainty that the future will bring about the realization of possibilities of which no one has ever dreamt, or can ever dream." . . . " WPP, 71.

4 CM, 228.
And just as Straus denies the adequacy of the "synthesis" of "Divine Revelation" and philosophy, so he denies the possibility of the "synthesis" of the political and philosophy or of "the universalism of thought and the universalism of the city." "The 'synthesis' of the two universalisms is indeed impossible." ¹ (Strauss points out the greater "individualism" of the great thinker in contrast to the great political man. He writes:

However ambiguous that daring, that mania, which transcends the limits of moderation, may be on the political plane, it comes into its own, or is in accordance with nature, on the plane of thought, of the thinking individual. The everlasting glory for which Pericles longed is achieved not by Pericles but by Thucydides.

Clearly Pericles was the servant of Athens or subordinated his life to Athens; he was his "brother's keeper" in a way that Thucydides was not. (More will be said in our consideration of "the two ways of life" and in our brief allusion to Moses' subordination of his "individualism." )

¹_CM_ 230.

²_CM_ 229-230.
What emerges as the central core of affinity between the gentleman and the pious adherent of Jerusalem -- especially as it comes to light in contrast to philosophy, -- is that, for both, right actions somehow known unambiguously and unquestionably to be right are of first importance: good deeds matter awfully. It is not as clear, to say the least, that the philosopher perceives himself to be subject to "imperatives" at all; he allows himself far greater prudential leeway;¹ the principles of action appear to him

¹ Strauss makes this point dramatically, illustrating it by the "drama" of Socrates' choice to die in Athens -- refusing the opportunity to escape. Strauss writes: "His refusal was not based on an appeal to a categorical imperative demanding passive obedience, without if's and but's. His refusal was based on a deliberation, on a prudential consideration of what was the right thing to do in the circumstances. One of the circumstances was Socrates' old age: we are forced to wonder how Socrates would have decided if he had been 30 or 40 years old instead of 70. Another circumstance was the unavailability of a proper place of exile. His choice was a political choice of the highest order. It did not consist in the simple subsumption of his case under a simple, universal, and unalterable rule." WPP 33. 'Contrast Amos: "The Lord God hath spoken; who will not prophesy?" quoted by Strauss in a similar context of contrast in "J&A," 24.
not unambiguous and questionable; he is moved to question them and this moves him away from the realm of action toward contemplation. The philosopher deprecates action for its own sake.

Though Strauss mildly protests that "Greek philosophy did not as such assert that opposition~ 1 -- between contemplation and action, in another place he puts forward boldly and baldly precisely that formulation in the name of "Greek philosophy":

Knowledge is intrinsically good, whereas action is not... to know to a greater degree is to know better, whereas to do to a greater degree is not necessarily to do better.

It is difficult for anyone informed by Jerusalem, however impious he may be, not to be aroused by this statement to remonstrate in righteous indignation. Certainly the philosopher's intellectualism 3

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1 It will be recalled that Strauss made his protest in response to M. Paul Ricoeur's "Christian view" of faith and action which "started from the facts that the opposition between the contemplative life and the active life stems from Greek philosophy and is wholly alien to Judaism" and to Christianity. LAM, 268-269. The underlining is mine. The words underlined, "as such," are what saves Strauss from a contradiction. It is an object lesson in the importance of "little words." See PAW, 78.

2 OnTyr, 132, n, 35.

3 Weiss finds this difficulty apparent in Maimonides. He writes (in a section entitled "The Alien Character of an Instrumental Ethic"): "In making the observance of the Law a means to an end [knowledge of God] rather than an end in itself, Maimonides radically departs from Jewish tradition... He quotes from Avot 2:14 to support his view.
appears most difficult to reconcile with the primacy of the biblical
exhortations to acts of lovingkindness beyond measure and to

'Let all your deeds be for the sake of Heaven.' [Maimonides similarly
quotes Proverbs 3:6: "In all thy ways know Him, and He will make
thy path straight," "to show that all deeds need to be ordered towards
the end of knowledge of God (Deot, 3:3)."
] See Weiss 131, and n. 1.
Consider the following rabbinic dicta: "Every man whose deeds are
greater than his wisdom -- his wisdom endures, and everyone whose
wisdom is greater than his deeds -- his wisdom does not endure
(Avot 3:12)." "He who learns in order to teach -- he will be able to
learn and teach. And he who learns in order to act -- he is able to
learn and to teach, to observe and to act (Avot 4:6)." Weiss points
out that on these Maimonides has no comment. He points to his
interpretation of the following dictum suggesting that Maimonides
strains to interpret it in accord with his intellectualist predilection.
"Not study is the main thing but the deed (Avot 1:17)." Cf. PAW, 89.
Maimonides "interprets this to mean a) that a man's deeds should be
consistent with his speech, and b) that a man should teach with brevity."
See Weiss, 132, and n. 1. But Weiss is not easy in his assertion of
Maimonides' "radical departure" and a few pages later retreats from
it somewhat. He writes: "The deviation of Maimonides' ethics from
the tradition does not necessarily invalidate his position even from
the viewpoint of the tradition itself. . . . By interpreting ethics
from the viewpoint of man's rational end, Maimonides gives the Law
a foundation in nature. The use of reason enables him to say of the
Law: 'although it is not natural, it has a basis in what is natural.'"
See Weiss, 134. Weiss' vacillation reminds of Strauss's difficult
formulation of the difficulty: "Maimonides' link with the Torah is,
to begin with, an iron bond: it gradually becomes a fine thread. But
however far what one may call his intellectualization may go, it
always remains the intellectualization of the Torah." Guide, xlv.
Finally, Weiss concludes: "It would be grossly unfair to say that
Maimonides' ethics only considers the needs of intellectual perfection.
Because he saw so clearly the self-centered character of contemplative
ethics, he also saw the need to balance it with lovingkindness. Precisely
this need for lovingkindness by the wise man is stressed in the first
part of the epigraph to The Book of Knowledge. "Draw Thy lovingkindness
unto those who know Thee . . . ." The Mishneh Torah is an example of
"extreme" moral virtue (to use the language of Athens, and thereby indicate the difficulty of "translation," for is not extreme moral virtue a contradiction?).

True, it may appear that philosophy and the Bible are allied over against the gentleman in educating men to look up to what transcends the city and the city's longing for sempiternal and universal fame. But what the Bible looks up to grounds action such that it is all important what man does, whereas what the philosopher looks up to conduces to his looking down on the whole field of human action. Or, in other words, "the highest of which" the philosopher knows or becomes attached to, detaches him from his fellow man, whereas "the highest of which" the man of biblical piety knows or becomes attached to, attaches him to his fellow man profoundly and

Maimonides' lovingkindness to his fellow Jews [Strauss conveyed to me his conviction that Maimonides was aware of his rare superiority and in lovingkindness made a gift of his gift, as it were, to his brethren by devoting himself to writing "Jewish" books. "Strauss Talks." My impression is that Strauss endorses the following: ] . . . . Man's final end, however, is not affected by his lovingkindness. His lovingkindness does not add to his perfection. Intellectual perfection does not exist for the sake of beneficence. This point has been stated in a non-Maimonidéan context as follows: 'The specific function of the wise man is to understand; he is the benefactor only accidentally.'" Weiss, 255-256,
genuinely (and this seems to be the case even for the rationalists among them such as Maimonides). The Covenant between God and man, as Strauss puts it, makes man "the moral partner in God's righteousness... as if he had some share in the responsibility for God's acting righteously."¹ Or as Strauss emphasizes, the doctrine of creation grounds righteousness. "The one thing needful is righteousness or charity; in Judaism these are the same. This notion of the one thing needful is not defensible if the world is not the creation of the just and loving God, the holy God."² Weiss draws the contrast in this way: "The belief in God as the giver of the Law provides a different basis to obedience than if God is an object of contemplation." There follows this quotation from Aristotle's Eudemian Ethics:

For the god is not a ruler in the sense of issuing commands, but is the end as a means to which wisdom gives commands.³

¹ "J&A," 16.
² "Hillel Lecture" -- Q&A, 16.
³ Weiss, 133.
And somehow the "commands" of wisdom are much less categorical and unambiguous. But more than that, from the standpoint of wisdom, what man does, does not seem to matter as much; tradition does not seem to matter as much; institutions appear to matter less.

Sacks suggests that what Moses saw (Exodus 33:22-23) is described in Exodus 34:6-7: "What Moses saw was the great effect which, according to the Bible, tradition may have upon the men who are born into it. Perhaps the most fundamental teaching of the Bible is the radical importance of traditions upon the lives of those who share them, whether those traditions be bad or good. It is the further claim of the Bible that ultimately just and good traditions outlast bad traditions, but that even bad traditions have a strong hold on the souls of mankind." The Lion and the Ass, 491. See his discussion there.

This is not to say that they matter absolutely to adherents of the biblical tradition but the latter are certainly less sanguine about the decay or loss of central institutions than are Greek philosophers, according to whom, in Strauss's words "the distinctly human life is the life devoted to contemplation as distinguished from the life of action or of production." Strauss goes on, criticizing A. E. Havelock: "Just as the coming into being of civilization is succeeded by its perishing, the coming into being of civilization is succeeded by its decay; 'the historical process' is not simply progressive but cyclical. As everyone knows, this does not affect the 'flamboyant optimism' of the liberals, but it may have affected the Greek predecessors; it may have led them to attach less importance to activity contributing to that progress of social institutions which is necessary succeeded by their decay than to the understanding of the permanent grounds or character of the process or to the understanding of the whole within which the process takes place and which limits the progress. ... this limit is not set by man, and it surpasses everything man can being about by his exertions and inventions; it is superhuman or divine." LAM, 31. He is much less activist and much less "tough" than are biblical prophets in talking to kings, as is readily evident from the parallel Strauss draws between Nathan's direct rebuke of King David and Socrates' critical remark which was "reported" to the tyrant Critias. (I believe this explains why Strauss italicized "reported.") "J&A," 27-28. See OnTyr, 124, n. 61.
We have indicated an affinity between biblical morality and the morality of gentlemen with respect to action in contradistinction to philosophy or "contemplative ethics" on the one hand, and between the Bible and philosophy in contradistinction to the horizon of gentlemen on the other, in so far as both philosophy and the Bible conscientiously transcend the political or look up to the trans-political. It remains to distinguish both philosophy and the morality of gentlemen from biblical tradition. A quick indication of a cardinal distinction is the lack of a term in Hebrew for "proper pride."¹ Strauss points

¹See Weiss, 139. (There is perhaps a biblical word which may be said to mean something like "proper pride." The word is **gaah** (see Exodus 15:2 and Psalm 93:1). It is applied only to God. The derivative **gaavah** is applied to man and always means improper pride or arrogance or haughtiness.

See Kojève's note about Christianity "spoiling" the pleasure of self-admiration by inducing in believers an "inferiority complex." OnTyr. 170, n. 5) I would note Weiss' very interesting (but to my mind somewhat questionable) suggestion: "The philosophic sharpening of the differences among men can be conducive to extreme humility. Indifference to insult is engendered by recognition of the condition of most men. . . . An apparently uncharitable judgment of mankind can lead to a charitable treatment of them. Surprisingly enough, the harsh judgment of classical philosophy upon most men can be used to justify the Jewish measure of piety."² Weiss, 157.
to humility as a key point of tension and even contradiction in
Maimonides' "juxtaposition" of "contemplative and religious ethics." Strauss's statement of the contradiction he discerns in Maimonides illuminates many of the points already mentioned in our discussion and thus serves as a helpful summation. It lends support to the approach focusing particularly on the contrast of respective "moralities." Strauss states that "the tension between philosophy and the Torah would here [in De'ot] become thematic to a higher degree than in Yesode Ha-Torah." It confirms the suggestion made

1 Maimonides on humility is a very complex subject which Weiss discusses at very great length.

2 Strauss does not say in the quotation that is to follow "synthesizes," "reconciles," or "harmonizes," but "juxtaposes." Strauss asserts: "The law governing the Mishneh Torah": "To begin with philosophy (although in ex nomen) and to turn almost at once to the Torah may be said to be the law governing the Mishneh Torah as a whole." "Notes," 275. Strauss explicitly rejects Weiss's thesis that Maimonides had or thought he had effected a "synthesis." (More on this point below.)

3 These terms are Weiss's. They are not used and apparently not favored by Strauss.

4 Following Strauss, "De'ot" may be rendered "ethics," and "Yesode Ha-Torah," "foundations of the Torah." See "Notes," 270, 276.

5 Why? Because the tension between Torah and philosophy is more explosive or, at least, more clearly visible on the level of "morality" than on the "secret," sublime, and elusive level of metaphysical speculation?
earlier of tension not only between the "extremes" of biblical piety and philosophical wisdom but even between the philosopher's conception of justice (on whatever level) and the charitable justice demanded by the Bible. It also illustrates what we have paradoxically called extreme moral virtue. Strauss suggests that "contemplative and religious ethics" cannot be harmonized. He writes:

Maimonides makes . . . a distinction between two kinds of human goodness, which he calls wisdom and piety. Wisdom comprises all character traits that are the mean between the corresponding two faulty extremes. Piety, on the other hand, consists in deviating somewhat from the middle toward one or the other extreme, for instance in being not merely humble but very humble. One may say that what Maimonides calls wisdom is moral virtue in Aristotle's sense and that by juxtaposing wisdom and piety he in fact juxtaposes philosophic morality and the morality of the Torah. Accordingly the tension between philosophy and the Torah would here become thematic to a higher degree than in Yesode Ha-Torah. The tension proves on closer inspection to be a contradiction. He says now, first, that in the case of all character traits the middle way is the right way, and then that in the case of some character traits the pious man deviates from the middle way toward one or the other extreme. More precisely, according to Maimonides the right way, the way in which we are commanded to walk, is in every case the middle way that is the way of the Lord (De'ot 1, 3-5; 7; II 2, 7); yet in the case of anger and pride, man is forbidden to walk in the middle way (II, 3). . . . The difficulty is solved somehow in the fifth chapter of the De'ot . . . . In fact the fifth chapter differs from the chapters preceding it in that Maimonides therein moves from the theme of the wise man in the strict or narrow sense as defined above to the 'disciple of the wise', i.e., the Jewish sage who is both wise and pious or in some respects wise and in others pious . . . . His hesitation to identify
unqualifiedly the right way with the middle way may be explained by an ambiguity occurring in his source (Pirqê Abot V, 13-14). There it is said that he who says 'what is mine is thine and what is thine is mine' is pious, but that he who says 'what is mine is mine and what is thine is thine' possesses the middle character or, according to some, the character of Sodom.¹

21. "The Two Ways of Life" and Biblical Piety

"The Two Ways of Life" — the theoretical² life and the practical life — are a chief Socratic concern which is fully and

¹"Notes," 277-278.

²This is Aristotle's language. It is identical to the distinction made by Xenophon between "rule and wisdom" (the Hiero) or between the gentleman's virtue and Socrates' virtue (the Oeconomicus). Strauss writes: "The most massive difference between the two kinds of virtue is that the former presupposes and the latter does not presuppose the possession of considerable wealth. Seen in the light of this difference, the virtue of the economist Ischomachos, of the freeman who is a member of a republic, a commonwealth, and who minds his own business, and the virtue of the king Cyrus, the sole and absolute ruler of an immense empire, whose own business is completely absorbed into his concern for millions of men, are fundamentally the same. Hence, Cyrus or Ischomachos on the one hand and Socrates on the other stand at opposite poles of Xenophon's 'moral universe.' The difference to which Xenophon points is the same as that of which Aristotle speaks as that between the practical, or political, and the theoretical life; the former needs 'external equipment' to a much greater degree than the latter. The difference to which Xenophon points is the same as that which Plato articulates as that between political, or vulgar, and genuine virtue." X's Oeconomicus, 161. See X's Socrates where Strauss suggests that the strict identification of the military and political ruler with the householder is "tantamount to denying the importance, the truth of equality and of freedom in the political sense" and to abstract from the specific dignity, grandeur, and splendor of the political and the military, from what Homer meant when he called Agamemnon 'majestic.'" 63. See there also 76-77. Cf. 167.
prominently reflected in Strauss's writings. The question regarding which of the two ways of life is best "is... a special form of the fundamental Socratic question of how man ought to live, or of what way of life is the most choiceworthy."¹ For Socrates, Strauss tells us, the two ways of life are "the political life and the life devoted to wisdom."² Strauss writes:

Just as the partial human goods cannot be known to be goods except with reference to the highest or the whole human good, the whole human good cannot be known to be good except with reference to the good simply, the idea of the good, which comes to sight only beyond and above all other ideas; the idea of the good, and not the human good or in particular gentlemanship, is the principle of prudence. But since love of wisdom is not wisdom and philosophy as prudence is the never-to-be-completed concern with one's own good, it seems impossible to know that the philosophic life is the best life. Socrates could not know this if he did not know that the only serious alternative to the philosophic life is the political life and that the political life is subordinate to the philosophic life: political life is life in the cave which is partly closed off by a wall from life in the light of the sun...³

¹OnTyr, 80.
²Ibid., 81.
³C&M, 29.
On the basis of On Tyranny, "which draws our attention most forcefully to the problem of that relation [of rule and wisdom],"¹ it may be said quickly and simply that what is common to both ways of life is the desire for self-sufficiency, for honor or recognition -- for megaloprepeia ("magnificence").² The "what is common" to the philosopher and the political man appears to be antithetical to biblical piety and especially to the exhortation of biblical tradition to humility. Consider the Socratic view (represented in the Hiero by Simonides):

We may . . . say that of all desires which are natural, i.e., which "grow" in human beings independently of any education or teaching, he considered the desire for honor

¹ This is said by Strauss of Xenophon's Hiero. It may well be applied to Strauss's "commentary" on Xenophon's Hiero because Strauss is a most faithful commentator. Among Strauss's later works are commentaries on what may be said to be "companion volumes" to the Hiero -- Xenophon's Oeconomicus and Memorabilia. The former in particular is centrally devoted to "gentlemanliness." Strauss compares the two works of Xenophon on this issue: "Whereas in the Oeconomicus the wise man surrenders to the ruler, in the Hiero the ruler surrenders to the wise man. The Hiero and not the Oeconomicus, reveals by its action the true relation of rule and wisdom. In addition, the Hiero is that work of Xenophon which draws our attention most forcefully to the problem of that relation . . . because it does contrast a wise man and a ruler more explicitly than any other Xenophontic writing." (Strauss notes "a profound agreement between Xenophon and Plato": "The precise relation between the philosopher and the political man (i.e., their fundamental difference) is the thematic premise, not of the Republic and the Gorgias, in which Socrates as citizen-philosopher is the leading character, but of the Politicus in which a stranger occupies the central position." ) OnTyr, 89-90.

² OnTyr, 242.
the highest because it is the foundation of the desire for any excellence, be it the excellence of the ruler or that of the wise man.\textsuperscript{1}

Strauss points out:

His [Simonides\textsuperscript{1}] spontaneous praise of honor is concerned exclusively with the benefit of him who is honored or praised and is silent about the benefits to be rendered to others or the duties to others. \ldots Xenophon seems to indicate by the plan of the Memorabilia that Socrates attached a greater importance to the self than to the city. This is in accordance with Xenophon's distinction between the man of excellence and the benefactor of his fellow citizens. [Would such a distinction be countenanced in Jerusalem?]

Can such a view be reconciled with biblical piety?

We may pause for reassurance on two points: One, is the "motivational" root or spring truly "common" to both ways of life? Second, do Simonides' "speeches" truly reflect the Socratic view?

\textsuperscript{1}\textit{On Tyr}, 90 (May we not infer that biblical piety or at least its emphasis on humility seems to negate the very motive which makes for excellence?) See \textit{On Tyr}, 13, n. 41 and also nn. 43 and 45. Strauss's "Restatement" will be discussed below.

\textsuperscript{2}\textit{On Tyr}, 101. See X's \textit{Socrates}, 165.

\textsuperscript{3}(Off the top of my head, I can think of no one presented by Scripture as "excellent" and not a benefactor.)
By and large Strauss reassures us on both points. Regarding the
first, he writes:

It would seem . . . that the characteristic difference between
the ruler and the wise man manifests itself in the objects of their
passionate interest and not in the character of their passion itself. 1

On the agreement between Simonides and Socrates, Strauss writes:

The question of Socrates' attitude toward hedonism is reduced
to the question as to whether wisdom, the highest good, is
intrinsically pleasant. . . . Socrates ultimately leaves no doubt
as to the fundamental difference between the good and the pleasant.
No man can be simply wise; therefore, not wisdom, but progress
toward wisdom is the highest good for man. Wisdom cannot be
separated from self knowledge; therefore, progress toward wisdom
will be accompanied by awareness of that progress. And that
awareness is necessarily pleasant. This whole -- the progress
and the awareness of it -- is both the best and the most pleasant
thing for man. It is in this sense that the highest good is intrinsically
pleasant. Concerning the thesis that the most choiceworthy thing
must be intrinsically pleasant, there is then no difference between
the historical Simonides, Xenophon's Simonides, and Xenophon's
Socrates, and, indeed, Plato's Socrates. Nor is this all. There is
even an important agreement between Xenophon's Simonides and
his Socrates as regards the object of the highest pleasure. For
what else is the pleasant consciousness of one's progress in wisdom
or virtue but one's reasonable and deserved satisfaction with, and
even admiration of, oneself? 2

1 OnTyr, 91. See X's Socrates, 172, where the same point is
made more "mythically."

2 OnTyr, 105. (Cf. X's Socrates, 137, and C&M, 8.) Strauss goes
on: "The difference between Socrates and Simonides seems then to be
that Socrates is not at all concerned with being admired or praised by
others, whereas Simonides is concerned exclusively with it. To reduce
this difference to its proper proportions, it is well to remember that
Simonides' statement on praise or honor is meant to serve a pedagogical
function." OnTyr, 105-106.
22. The Pious of Jerusalem

Strauss does not offer a comparable analysis of the pious of Jerusalem. If the desire for admiration and self-sufficiency are paramount "motivational factors" of the philosopher, what are their counterparts in the highest type of pious man? What, in these terms, makes for the exalted purity of an Isaiah whom Strauss so extols? What moves the pious man beyond love of one's own? ¹ How does one clearly relate (and differentiate) philosophic eros and "love of God"? ² Strauss, as far as I know, has not addressed any of these questions thematically.

Strauss, in describing Abraham, adumbrates the character of the pious or righteous:

Abraham shows his righteousness by at once obeying God's command [to separate himself "from his contemporaries and in particular from his country and kindred"], by trusting in God's promise the fulfillment of which he could not possibly live to see. . . . It was Abraham's trust in God's promise that, above everything else, made him righteous in the eyes of the Lord. . . . Noah had accepted the destruction of his generation without any questioning. Abraham, however, who had a deeper trust in God, in God's righteousness, and a deeper awareness of his being only dust and ashes than Noah, presumed

¹Weiss finds: "The pious man's motivations is not altogether clear in the Mishneh Torah." He also finds: "Piety is never said to be motivated by fear in the Mishneh Torah." He adds: "The following Talmudic passage, applied to pious men, indicates that their motivation should be love of God. 'They act out of love and rejoice in their sufferings.'" Weiss, 214-215.

in fear and trembling to appeal to God's righteousness. . . . Abraham acted as the moral partner in God's righteousness; he acted as if he had some share in the responsibility for God's acting righteously. . . .

Abraham's trust in God. . . . appears to be the trust that God in His righteousness will not do anything incompatible with His righteousness and that while or because nothing is too wondrous for the Lord, there are firm boundaries set to Him by His righteousness, by Him. . . . Abraham did not argue with God for the preservation of Isaac because he loved God, and not himself or his most cherished hope, with all his heart, with all his soul and with all his might. . . . The apparent contradiction between the command to sacrifice Isaac and the Divine promise to the descendants of Isaac is disposed of by the consideration that nothing is too wondrous for the Lord. Abraham's supreme trust in God, his simple, single-minded, child-like faith was rewarded, although or because it presupposed his entire unconcern with any reward, for Abraham was willing to forego, to destroy, to kill the only reward with which he was concerned; God prevented the sacrifice of Isaac. Abraham's intended action needed a reward although he was not concerned with a reward because his intended action cannot be said to have been intrinsically rewarding.

Does Strauss suggest that biblical piety requires "simple, single-minded, child-like faith"? Does he suggest that actions commanded by biblical piety are typically less than intrinsically rewarding -- the kind a philosopher, of himself, would be disinclined to perform? Yes, so it appears from this quotation, from the contrast Strauss draws.
between the just man of the Bible\(^1\) and Plato's, respectively. (quoted above) and from the following:

The biblical God is a mysterious God. He comes in a thick cloud; He cannot be seen; His presence can be sensed but not always and everywhere; what is known of Him is only what He chose to communicate by His word through His chosen servants. The rest of the chosen people knows His word -- apart from the Ten Commandments -- only mediately and does not wish to know it immediately. For almost all purposes the word of God as revealed to His prophets and especially to Moses became the source of knowledge of good and evil, the true tree of knowledge which is at the same time the tree of life.\(^2\)

The last quotation suggests that biblical piety is characterized by complete trust in and submission to religious tradition -- its mediation,\(^3\) its authority and law.

\(^1\) Recall his saying: "According to the prophets [in contradistinction to the philosophers], however, there is no need for the quest for knowledge of the good: God 'hath shewed thee, o man, what is good . . . to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.'"

\(^2\) "J&A," 18.

\(^3\) In his earliest book, Strauss contrasts the will to mediacy which he suggests there is the hallmark of biblical piety, with the will to immediacy characteristic of Enlightenment positivism. Strauss there suggests that it is precisely this will to mediacy that the Enlightenment labels and libels "prejudice." SCR, 179. One has the impression that in his later works the tone and terms of Strauss's "speech" changed. Strauss does not anywhere later (as far as I know) speak of Descartes and Spinoza's will to immediacy in contrast to the pious will to mediacy. SCR, 181-182, and 208. But, significantly, he does later again cite
Strauss, however, is a champion not of "simple" piety but of "enlightened" piety, as he tells us:

"It is not sufficient for everyone to obey and to listen to the Divine message of the City of Righteousness, the Faithful City. In order to propagate that message among the heathen, nay, in order to understand it as clearly and as fully as is humanly possible, one must also consider to what extent man could discern the outlines of that city if left to himself, to the proper exercise of his own powers."

And we know it from the fact of his great admiration for Maimonides. Strauss may well concur with Weiss saying that "the way of 'wisdom' [in the Mishneh Torah] is a marvelous synthesis" of Jewish law and

precisely the same example -- the example of Abraham and the binding of Isaac -- to emphasize unquestioning obedience. He writes there: "If what is required of man in relation to God is fidelity, trust and obedience, then above all what is required is trust when all human assurance fails, obedience when all human insight fails. In this spirit Abraham Ibn Daud, Maimonides' forerunner, justifies the superiority of the revealed commandments, which are beyond human understanding, to the rational commandments. The high example is the obedience of Abraham who made ready to sacrifice his son at the command of God, even though God had promised him that his son would be his heir, even though Abraham, had he wished to pretend to wisdom, could not but find that command absurd." SCR, 180. Cf. Cohen's RR xxvii-xxviii.

1 C&M, 1.

2 But as noted above, Strauss does not employ the term "synthesis," but speaks of "juxtaposition."
the needs of human nature." But he explicitly disagrees with Weiss' conclusion that Maimonides "did not see a cleavage between philosophic and religious ethics." As Strauss says:

The tension proves on closer inspection to be a contradiction.

And Strauss suggests that Maimonides is fully aware of it.

One might say that Strauss is for "enlightened" piety but not for simply dissolving that piety into philosophic "enlightenment." Thus

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1 Weiss writes: "The debt of Maimonides to the prince of philosophers was very great. But Maimonides' adherence to the Law did not allow him to take over Aristotle's ethics as such. Maimonides reinterpreted Jewish tradition in the light of what he learned from Aristotle. In the final analysis, however, he did not see a cleavage between philosophic and religious ethics. In the realm of cosmology, he saw a gulf between philosophy and Judaism: Aristotle's acceptance of the eternity of the universe conflicts with the biblical view of creation." Weiss, 273-274.

2 Weiss, 274. (Strauss made explicit to me his reservations about this thesis of Weiss' Thesis. "Strauss, Talks.")

3 This is in the passage quoted above from "Notes," 277.

4 Strauss could hardly admire Maimonides as much as he does if, indeed, Maimonides was not aware of what he was doing! Strauss writes: "Since philosophy requires the greatest possible awareness of what one is doing, Maimonides cannot effect that fundamental change without being aware that it is a fundamental change..." "Notes, 276.

5 See his statement in Cohen's RR, xxiii.
we may understand his objection to Cohen's "religion of reason."

He writes:

Cohen had no doubt that in teaching the identity of Reason and Revelation he was in full agreement with "all," or "almost all," Jewish philosophers of the Middle Ages. He mentions in this respect with high praise, apart from Maimonides himself, Ibn Daud, who had assigned a very low status to "the prescriptions of obedience" as distinguished from "the rational principles" and had inferred from the weakness of their rank the weakness of their causes. Cohen abstracts from the fact that Ibn Daud says also -- and this he says at the very end of his Edinah Ramah -- that "the prescriptions of obedience" are superior to the rational ones since they call for absolute obedience and submission to the divine will or for faith. The perfect emblem of "the prescriptions of obedience" is God's command to Abraham that he sacrifice his only child Isaac -- a command that flagrantly contradicted His previous promise and therefore transcended reason. One need not be concerned here with whether and how Ibn Daud resolved the contradiction between the thought of which Cohen approves and the thought that Cohen dismisses, but one cannot help being impressed by his attempt to find the highest or deepest ground of "the prescriptions of obedience" in Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac. The religion of reason leaves no place for absolute obedience or for what traditional Judaism considered the core of faith. The reader will have no difficulty in grasping the connection between the disappearance of obedience proper and the idealization or spiritualization of creation and revelation.

Cohen's RR, xxvii–xxviii. Apposite here is what Strauss points out in SCR: 24: "Maimonides. . . denied there any rational commandments. Cohen might have objected to this argument on the ground that if Maimonides' denial of the rationality of any commandments or laws were his last word, he could not well have
23. Biblical Piety Viewed from the "Heights" Ascended by the Philosopher

The philosopher looks down on the "naive" trust of the pious, on the reverence for tradition and the submissiveness to its authority and, above all, on the certainty of the conviction that the way of piety is commanded by God. As Strauss observes:

The notion of God as lawgiver takes on a certainty and definiteness which it never possessed in classical philosophy. [More about this below.]

Halevi, as Strauss discerns, polemically indicates this attitude of the philosopher by contrasting the first words of the Christian and Jewish scholars on the one hand, and those of the philosopher on the other:

Whereas the Christian and the Jew open their expositions with a "credo," the philosopher opens each of his two speeches attempted to show that all or almost all commandments of the Torah have 'reasons.' The reply is obvious: According to Maimonides all or almost all commandments of the Torah serve the purpose of eradicating idolatry, an irrational practice, and are in this sense 'rational'; they are rational in the sense in which, not a healthy body but a medicine is 'healthy.'

1 NR, 144. Strauss is discussing there the impact generally of biblical faith on classic natural right; it is evident that he is specifically speaking of the impact of Christian thought on classic natural right (which again perhaps attests to his "presumption" about Christianity discussed early in this chapter).
with a "non est." The philosopher's first word expresses a denial: philosophy comes first into sight as a denial of something, or . . . as a repudiation of something.¹

In ascending from the cave, the philosopher would transcend all "religious" traditions, all laws and all alleged divine commands and alleged divine lawgivers.² The philosopher in transcending the city, transcends its justice and its piety.³

¹PAW, 112. ²See XI's Oeconomicus, 123, and C&M, 125. ³See SCR, 145. The famous "apology" of Socrates, "viz., that he does not grasp the Divine Wisdom of the people to whom he is talking, is evidently a polite expression of his rejection of that wisdom." Strauss adds that "the attitude of the philosophers is not altered if the people of Socrates' time are replaced by adherents of revealed religion." PAW, 107, n. 33. Cf. "J&A," 25-26. Perhaps Strauss's most emphatic statement on this point is the following: "Philosophy being a kind of knowledge accessible to man as man, the believer who has exerted his natural faculties in the proper way, would know everything the philosopher knows, and he would know more; hence the philosopher who admits his incompetence concerning the specific experiences of the believer, would acknowledge, considering the infinite importance of any genuine revelation, that his position in regard to the intelligent believer is, possibly, not merely unambiguously worse, but infinitely worse than that of a blind man as compared with that of a man who sees. A merely defensive attitude on the part of the philosopher is impossible: his alleged ignorance is actually doubt or distrust. As a matter of fact, the philosophers whom Halevi knew, went so far as to deny the very possibility of the specific experiences of the believers as
Strauss writes:

Socrates did not believe in the gods of the city, nor did his pupil Xenophon. ..

Belief in the gods of the city was apt to be connected with the belief that a god had given the laws of the city. The Spartans, for instance, believed that their Delphian god had given them their laws. Xenophon did not share that belief.

The philosopher's radical "reprobation" of what is held sacred indicates why the philosopher, were he to offer political guidance (e.g., as in the Laws), must compel himself to undergo "obfuscation." Strauss, discussing the Laws, writes:

To doubt the sacredness of the ancestral means to appeal from the ancestral to the natural. It means to transcend all human traditions, nay, the whole dimension of the merely human. It means to learn to look down on the human as something inferior or to leave the cave. But by leaving the cave one loses sight of the city, of the whole political sphere. If the philosopher is to give political guidance, he must return to the

interpreted by the latter, or, more precisely, the very possibility of Divine revelation in the precise sense of the term. That denial was presented by them in the form of what claimed to be a demonstrative refutation. The defender of religion had to refute the refutation by laying bare its fallacious character. On the level of the refutation and of the refutation of the refutation, i.e., on the level of 'human wisdom,' the disputation between believer and philosopher is not only possible, but without any question the most important fact of the whole past."

PAW 106-107.

1 "Sparta," 532.
cave: from the light of the sun to the world of shadows; his perception must be dimmed; his mind must undergo an obfuscation. But this obfuscation, this acceptance of the political perspective, this adoption of the language of political man, this achievement of harmony between the excellence of man and the excellence of the citizen, or between wisdom and law-abidingness is, it seems, the most noble exercise of the virtue of moderation. For moderation is not a virtue of thought: Plato likens philosophy to madness, the very opposite of sobriety or moderation; thought must not be moderate, but fearless, not to say shameless. But moderation is a virtue controlling the philosopher's speech.

From the philosopher's point of view, would biblical religion similarly require of him an "obfuscation"? Halevi (as we saw above), "defending morality itself and therewith the cause, not only of Judaism, but of mankind at large," rejects the philosophers' political guidance; he, as it were, says "No thank you!" to their self-imposed "obfuscation" and moderation -- they are still "too much" philosophers and therefore their political guidance is detrimental to morality.

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1WPP? 32.


3PAW, 141.

4Aristotle's political science may be seen as a case in point. Strauss suggests that the philosopher, in the attempt to upgrade the gentleman, downgrades piety. He writes: "When the philosopher Aristotle addresses his political science to more or less perfect gentlemen, he shows them as far as possible that the way of life of a perfect gentleman
But Halevi's view is perhaps not typical. By and large, the "apology" of Socrates -- the defense of philosophy -- has been successful.

points toward the philosophic way of life; he removes a screen. He articulates for his addressees the unwritten nomos which was the limit of their vision while he himself stands above that limit. He is thus compelled or enabled to correct their opinions about things which fall within their purview. . . . He must deny explicitly or tacitly that habits as highly praised as sense of shame and piety are virtues. The gentleman is by nature able to be affected by philosophy; Aristotle's political science is an attempt to actualize this potentiality." C&M, 28. Cf. Milton: "Piety and justice . . . are our foundresses . . . with perfect sympathy, whenever they meet, kiss each other." NR, 144-145, n. 20. Also see CM, 240-241, where Strauss suggests that for classical political philosophy "the concern with the divine has become identical with philosophy." Accordingly, classical political philosophy presupposes but does not exhibit clearly "that understanding which is inherent in the city as such, in the pre-philosophic city, according to which the city sees itself as subject and subservient to the divine in the ordinary understanding of the divine or looks up to it."

The fact that the philosopher induces men who "are the perfect incarnation of the spirit of laws: of lawfulness, of law-abidingness" "to participate in the conversation about wine drinking, about a pleasure that is forbidden to them by their old laws" supports Halevi's view. The philosopher "loosens" their said "categoric" adherence to the laws and public morality of their city. See WPP? 31-32.

According to Strauss, it appears least typical of modern thought and of pre-modern Christian thought. See LAM, 15 ff., NR, 164 and PAW, 21. Cf. Father Fortin, HistPP, 242-243, Ponder this statement of Strauss's: "History of philosophy is a modern discipline, a product of modern philosophy. And modern philosophy emerged by way of transformation of, if in opposition to, Latin or Christian scholasticism. Modern students are therefore tempted to interpret Jewish medieval
Strauss observes:

The political action of the philosophers on behalf of philosophy has achieved full success. One sometimes wonders whether it has not been too successful.

In any case, one may well appreciate why the best defense of Socrates is that which emphasizes his moderation which is not a virtue of thought and covers up his wisdom: "the concealment of Socrates' sophia is the defense of Socrates." The defense of Socrates, Strauss suggests, is the conscious aim of the Xenophontic and Platonic portrayals of Socrates: their Socrates is the antithesis of philosophy on analogy to Christian scholasticism or to conceive of Maimonides as the Jewish counterpart to Thomas Aquinas. A special effort is needed to realize the fundamental difference between Jewish medieval philosophy and Christian scholasticism." Husik, xxvii.

OnTyr, 220-221.

By Xenophon, according to Strauss; see X's Socrates, 120. Strauss suggests in one place that "Plato's Republic as a whole ... can best be described as an attempt to supply a political justification for philosophy by showing that the well-being of the political community depends decisively on the study of philosophy." WPP? 93. Strauss observes that Xenophon and Plato both mention the name of Socrates in no title except that of the Apology of Socrates. C&M, 56.
the Socrates indicted by Aristophanes in *The Clouds*.  

Strauss writes:

He [the Xenophontic and Platonic Socrates] is a man of  
the greatest practical wisdom, or at the very least of the  
greatest longing for it. He is the only truly political  
Athenian; he respects not only the fundamental requirements  
of the city but all her laws; he is the best of citizens and in  
particular a model soldier; he is the unrivaled master in  
judging human beings and in handling them, in knowing souls  
and in guiding them; he is the erotic man par excellence and  
a devotee of the Muses, especially of the highest Muse; he is  
of infinite patience with stupidity and of never-failing urbanity.  

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1 Strauss states: "One can easily receive the impression that Plato and Xenophon presented their Socrates in conscious contradiction to Aristophanes' presentation. It is certainly impossible to say whether the Platonic-Xenophontic Socrates owes his being as much to poetry as does the Aristophanean Socrates. ... It is almost equally difficult to say whether the profound differences between the Aristophanean Socrates and the Platonic-Xenophontic Socrates must not be traced to a profound change in Socrates himself: to his conversion from a youthful contempt for the political or moral things, for the human things or human beings, to a mature concern with them." S&A, 314. Also see 316, n. 20.

2 Both Plato's and Xenophon's "contradiction" of Aristophanes' presentation of Socrates are not without ironic and comic aspects. See C&M, 51-61, and *X*'s *Oeconomicus*, 112 and 163-164. Also see *X*'s *Socrates*, 170.

3 S&A, 314. Note that this statement gives prominence especially to practical aspects of Socrates, to Socrates in his "external" proportions, e.g., his actions: it says less about his sophia.
Strauss is faithful to the Platonic-Xenophonic presentation, he is likewise a stout defender of Socrates. The statement most often reiterated in the corpus of Strauss's works is to the effect that Socrates and the tradition of political philosophy issuing from him refused to separate moderation from wisdom. As a champion of Socrates, Strauss defends Socrates (by faithfully expounding Plato and Xenophon) not only against the attacks of his contemporaries -- Aristophanes, above all, but, in addition, performs the formidable task of defending Socrates against the challenges, attacks and misappropriations of moderns. It is not, however, simply an "additional," or, entirely, a different task. Strauss suggests that Aristophanes' "political posture seems to foreshadow Nietzsche's political posture,"¹ and Nietzsche's "attack on Socrates must be understood primarily as a political attack."² Strauss appears to

¹S&A, 314.
²S&A, 7. Strauss distills the spirit of Nietzsche's attack on Socrates in a single paragraph. S&A, 7. He concludes: "Whereas Aristophanes presents the young Socrates, Nietzsche's attack is directed against the Platonic Socrates: Nietzsche . . . uses Aristophanes' critique of the young Socrates as if it had been meant as a critique of the Platonic Socrates. He seems to imply that Aristophanes would have attacked the Socrates who defended justice and piety on the same ground on which he attacks the Socrates who assailed justice or piety, or that the Platonic Socrates is as remote from the Marathon fighters as is Aristophanes' Socrates." S&A, 8. The quotations cited in this chapter
suggest that it is Aristophanes, above all, who is to be credited with informing the popular image of the philosopher as a 'lean and hungry "egghead" withdrawn into his think-tank' caring about the city which sustains him, a sower of dissension who alienates the young from their parents and from their parents' good old-fashioned religion and morality, a man who would be a leader of souls but is deficient as a knower of souls and is inept in judging human beings and in handling them -- a man deficient (in contradistinction to the poet) in *phronesis*. Is Nietzsche's the only modern attack which is foreshadowed by Aristophanes? One wonders if perhaps Aristophanes did not at least contribute to what Kojève calls "the popular image of

indicate that Strauss does not think Nietzsche is simply wrong: part -- albeit the more muted part -- of the defense of Socrates subjects the justice and piety of the city to radical questioning and questions whether the virtue of the Marathon fighters is or could conceivably be superior to the virtue of the philosopher.

the philosophic existence" (which he suggests was inspired by the

"Epicurean" attitude"). Kojève describes it:

According to this image, the philosopher lives "outside the world": he retires into himself, isolates himself from other men, and has no interest in public life; he devotes all his time to the quest for "truth," which is pure "theory" or "contemplation" with no necessary ties to "action" of any kind.

Both Kojève and Aristophanes indict the philosopher for his inaction and indifference -- for his failure to actively serve his "city";

Aristophanes invokes the good old-fashioned morality of the Marathon fighters and Kojève invokes "an element of Biblical origin." 1

1 OnTyr, 159.

2 (Strauss's words.) OnTyr, 202. This points to the affinity between the gentleman's morality and biblical morality discussed above. Indicative of this affinity are some of the specifics of Aristophanes' indictment of Socrates' Socrates' teaching, leads to father beating and permissiveness regarding incest -- destruction of the family "the cell of the city." See S&A, 40 and 313. Not Plato, not Xenophon, and not Strauss really defend Socrates against Aristophanes' charges on these counts -- on the contrary. Strauss states: "Aristophanes pointed to the truth by suggesting that Socrates' fundamental premise could induce a son to beat up his own father, i.e., to repudiate in practice the most natural authority." NR, 93. Strauss observes: "One of the charges against Socrates was that he subverted the authority of the fathers. One might expect or at least wish to read a discourse by which Socrates led back, or tried to lead back, a rebellious son to due respect for his father. There is no such discourse. Lamprocles never called Socrates 'father'." X's Xenophon, 42, and see 132-133: "Socrates . . . asserts that . . . he merely has followed the maxim that one should obey experts
Strauss faithfully following the lead of Plato and Xenophon takes on, as it were, both Aristophanes and Hegel-Kojève in his defense of Socrates. Against Hegel-Kojève, one must bring to bear a consummate understanding of the quarrel between ancients and moderns (to say nothing of what "the biblical orientation" is).

It is impossible to say how far the epic-making change that was effected by Machiavelli is due to the indirect influence of the Biblical tradition, before that change has been fully understood in itself.

Again and again, Kojève hurls the epithet "Epicurean" at the Xenophon-Strauss philosopher. Strauss, as we shall see, hurls it right back, characterizing "the motive of the heart" of modernity rather than parents." Also see OnTyr, 93, and 139, n. 26. On permissiveness toward incest, see C&M, 117, and X's Socrates, 112-113. (At one point in the talks with Strauss, I observed that there appeared to be an inverse relation between the importance of family and philosophy. Strauss heartily agreed. "Strauss Talks")

1 See George Grant, Technology and Empire (House of Anansi, 1969), 84. Ibid. See Grant's entire article "Tyranny and Wisdom."

2 OnTyr, 197.
as "Epicureanism"¹ in contradistinction to the more "socially responsible" and moderate earlier political philosophy. We leave this for later.

Have we perhaps been unfair in our attempt to contrast the pious adherent of Jerusalem and the philosopher by looking at the philosopher only on the giddy heights of his "ascent" and not paying sufficient attention to his "descent,"² by focusing on his "trying to transcend humanity,"³ rather than on his relation to the cave-dwellers? Strauss writes:

Machiavelli separates wisdom from moderation. The ultimate reason why the Hiero comes so close to the Prince is that in the Hiero Xenophon experiments with a type of wisdom which comes relatively close to a wisdom divorced from moderation . . . ⁴

¹Discussed in Chapter IV below. The Strauss-Kojève controversy is discussed at some length in my M.A. thesis. See G.P. Grant, op. cit.

²See "Wild," 354 and 361-362 and n. 49.

³On Tyr, 213.

⁴Ibid., 197.
Xenophon's experimenting is perhaps illustrative of "ascent" -- of the "giddy heights." It would indeed be onesided, to say the least, not to see that in fact Xenophon does not separate wisdom from moderation -- not to register the central practical axiom of the Hiero: "no laws, no liberty." Strauss states:

All specific suggestions made by Simonides flow from this implied axiom, or reveal their political meaning in its light.

Certainly one must pay sufficient attention to the philosopher's moderation, to his political philosophy. (Chapter III below in part pays attention to political philosophy.) But, no, we were not unfair.

Consider this statement of Strauss's:

The philosophers are not as such a constituent part of the city. . . . There is a fundamental disproportion between the philosopher and the city . . . . Philosophy can then live only side by side with the city. In all actual cities -- the philosopher does not owe his highest gift of human origin

\[\text{OnTyr, 71. Similarly illustrative: Strauss speaks of the extreme questioning of law in Plato's Statesman (Cohen's RR xxxvi) and yet can say without inconsistency that "the Statesman shows explicitly the necessity of the rule of laws." HistPP, 51. This all makes very good sense given "the absence of absolute rule of the wise" "who do not desire to rule."} \]
to the city and therefore is not under an obligation to do the work of the city. In entire agreement with this, Plato suggests in his Crito, where he avoids the very term "philosophy," that the philosopher owes indeed very much to the city and therefore he is obliged to obey at least passively even the unjust laws of the city and to die at the behest of the city. Yet he is not obliged to engage in political activity. The philosopher as philosopher is responsible to the city only to the extent by doing his own work, by his own well-being, he contributes to the well-being of the city; philosophy has necessarily a humanizing or civilizing effect. The city needs philosophy, but only mediately or indirectly, not to say in a diluted form. Plato has presented this state of things by comparing the city to a cave from which only a rough and steep ascent leads to the light of the sun: the city as city is more closed to philosophy than open to it.

And consider by contrast: on the basis of Scripture are we to suspect that Moses was disinclined to descend to the people? 2 Did he not

1 Lam. 15.

2 Luther suggests precisely this: "Nothing is more inimical to faith than law and reason, and these two cannot be overcome without great effort and labor, yet they must be overcome if you wish to be saved. When, therefore, conscience frightens you with the law . . . conduct yourself as if you had never heard anything of the law but rather as if you are ascending into darkness, where neither law nor reason give light but only the riddle of faith. . . . Thus the gospel leads us beyond and above the light of law and of reason into the darkness of faith, where light and reason have nothing to do. Moses on the mountain, where he speaks with God face to face, has, makes and employs no law; only when he comes down from the mountain is he a law-giver and does he rule the people through law. So let the conscience be free from the law, but let the body obey it." L. Shestov, Athens and Jerusalem, (Ohio U.P., 1966), 202-203. (What makes Luther's statement sensational (to me at least) is that it turns the more common or customary view upside down.) See Paw, 89-92, n. 155. See Guide xxxii-xxxiv, and xxxix-xlII.
ascend for the sole purpose of bringing down the Law to the people?

Biblical prophets were hardly permitted to be "rugged individualist."

Strauss, after quoting Isaiah 6, remarks:

Isaiah, it seems, volunteered for his mission. Could he . . . refuse to volunteer? . . . Jonah ran away from his mission; but God did not allow him to run away; He compelled him to fulfill it. Of this compulsion we hear in different ways from Amos and Jeremiah. Amos 3:7-8: 'Surely the Lord God will do nothing but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets. The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord God hath spoken; who will not prophesy? The prophets overpowered by the majesty of the Lord, by His wrath and His mercy, bring the message of His wrath and His mercy Jeremiah 1:4-10. . . .

Goethe was apparently deeply impressed by the subordination of the "individualism" of the prophets. Strauss notes:

Goethe makes on the proper occasion the following remark: '(der Poet und der Prophet) sind von Einem Gott ergriffen und befeuert, der Poet aber vergeudet die ihm verliehene Gabe im Genuss, um Genuss hervorzubringen, Ehre durch das Hervorgebrachte zu erlangen, allenfalls ein bequemes Leben.'

And, it was Goethe who offered the shocking suggestion that Moses committed suicide. Robert Sacks defends Goethe against the

\[1\] J&A, 24.
abuse of his detractors, not because he affirms Goethe's suggestion but because that suggestion bespeaks a deep appreciation of the overriding importance of tradition and the "problems... concerning the stature of Moses": Sacks explains:

Nothing could have been possible had he not almost become a god. Everything would have failed had he achieved that state. His death scene reads as follows:

1 So Moses the servant of the Lord died in the land of Moab according to the word of the Lord... but no man knoweth of his sepulchre to this day. And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died, his eye was not dim nor was his strength abated. (Deut. 34:5-7)"

2 Had Moses died one day in front of the people and his grave been known, he would either have lost his position or apotheosis would have been inevitable..."

What strikes me, from Goethe's remarks, is that whereas the life of the philosopher (and the life of the poet) can be seen and even plausibly "justified" in hedonistic terms, 2 this is not true of the

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1 The Lion and the Ass, 493-494.

2 Or we may put it in terms of self-sufficiency. The height Moses achieved was to be "the servant of the Lord." (The Hebrew word for servant is identical to the Hebrew word for slave.) The highest ascent man is capable of appears to be from a slave of Pharaoh to the "slave of God." Indeed, this is the movement of the Children of Israel, from slaves of Pharaoh to "slaves of God," as it were.
life of the true servant of the Lord. From the perspective of the servant of the Lord, would not philosophers (and poets) appear to be "Epicurean"? (Strauss's denial that "the philosophic life can be understood in hedonistic terms" is not pertinent here in that he certainly does not deny the supreme (even "divine") pleasurable nature of the philosophic life.\(^1\) Scripture does not appear to associate pleasures\(^2\) even in a "secondary" way with the life of Moses or that of the prophets. The concept of "Divine pleasure," well known to the Greeks, appears to be alien to the Bible as is a concept like the Indian Ananda: God as far as I know, is never described as blissful.\(^3\) He is described above all as caring and, as it were, "working hard" at His cares and concerns, mainly centered on educating man to justice or righteousness.\(^4\) In response

\(^1\)See OnTyr, 219.

\(^2\)In saying this, I do not for a moment disagree with Strauss's saying: "The biblical experience is not simply undesired or against man's grain: grace perfects nature, it does not destroy nature." SCR, 10.

\(^3\)Sir Ernest Barker's note on the "confusion" of "bliss" and of "blessedness" may be of interest. See his The Politics of Aristotle (Oxford U. P., 1958), lxxvi, n. 1.

\(^4\)See "Hillel Lecture" -- Q&A, 11.
to my raising a question about the Talmud and philosophy, Strauss opined that in the view of traditional Judaism philosophers of all schools would have been seen as "Epicurean."\(^1\)

The individualism ascribed by Hegel and others to Protestantism is noted by Strauss with "no comment." Strauss writes:

Hegel merely rephrases Plato's statement [adding "Religion" to "Staatsmacht... und... Philosophie"][\(^2\)]. The reason for his rephrasing it is his awareness of the absence from Plato's thought of the principle of 'subjective freedom,' that is, of the 'Protestant conscience.' Hegel is so far from being a 'totalitarian' that he rejects Plato's political philosophy precisely because he considers it 'totalitarian.'\(^3\) Plato, he asserts, did not know the idea of freedom, an outgrowth of the Christian doctrine that 'the individual as such has an infinite value'; according to Plato

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\(^1\) "Strauss Talks"

\(^2\) Weiss asserts: "There is in fact no word for 'conscience' in biblical or rabbinic Judaism. The concept of the conscience originates with the Roman Stoics, whose writings were unknown in the Judeo-Arabic world." (Maimonides does speak of "an inborn disposition" but Weiss says: "According to Maimonides, an 'inborn disposition' is not necessarily reliable." Weiss, 128-129.)

\(^3\) Strauss argues that the ideal state according to Koève-Hegel hardly improves on Plato. He writes: "There are [according to Koève] 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?" OnTyr, 222.
man is free only in so far as he is a philosopher. Whatever may
have to be said about Hegel's attempt to trace to Christianity
the idea of the freedom of the individual, or of the rights of
man, he saw with unsurpassed clarity that when Plato indicates
the absolute superiority of "the individual" to society or the
state, he does not mean every individual, but only the
philosopher.

Strauss does obliquely comment about "subjective freedom" in
Judaism. In discussing Cohen's Religion of Reason, he writes:

Cohen discusses the intra-human relations first on the
political and legal level. He takes his bearings by the
talmudic concept of the sons of Noah and the seven command-
ments given to them. The sons of Noah do not have to adhere
to the religion of Israel, i.e., they do not have to acknowledge
the only God although they are forbidden to blaspheme and to
worship other gods; they are not believers and yet may be
citizens of the Jewish state. In this way Judaism laid the
foundation for freedom of conscience and for toleration. Cohen
does not claim to have proved that Judaism has laid the
foundation of conscience of all Jews.

1 Strauss notes: "Respect for every man as bearer of the
rational faculty is; of course, Kantian rather than Platonic or

2 "Wild," 358.

24. **Patris and Politeia and Jew**

There is another very important sense in which Strauss subordinates the "individualism" of the Jew: to his people. He denies to the Jew the "individualism" and "cosmopolitanism" that he admires and stoutly defends in others -- both ancients and moderns.

On the one hand, Strauss writes contra "liberals who hold that morality is historical or of merely human origin":

The greatest enemies of civilization in civilized countries are those who squander their heritage because they look down on it or on the past; civilization is much less endangered by narrow but loyal preservers than by the shallow and glib futurists who, being themselves rootless, try to destroy all roots and thus do everything in their power in order to bring back the initial chaos and promiscuity. The first duty of civilized man is then to respect his past.

On the other hand, he stoutly defends Xenophon's lack of patriotism.²

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¹ *LAM*, 40-41. Cf. Strauss's "Preface to the 7th Impression (1971)" of NR.

² *OnTyr*, 101. "Xenophon . . . was induced to accompany Cyrus, an old enemy of Athens, on his expedition against his brother by the promise of Proxenus, an old guest-friend of his, that he would make him a friend of Cyrus if he would come. Proxenus, a pupil of Gorgias, of a man who had no fixed domicile in any city, explicitly stated that he himself considered Cyrus worth more to him than his fatherland.
He has added an Appendix to Xenophon's Socrates expressly devoted to fending off a hasty judgment on Xenophon or "being carried away by blind indignation." In defense of Xenophon, Strauss writes in his Appendix:

"Patriotism is not enough" and hence . . . there are times and circumstances in which it is more noble to desert to the enemy and to fight against one's fatherland than to do what is ordinarily most noble.

Xenophon does not say in so many words that he might conceivably come to consider Cyrus' friendship preferable to his fatherland; but he certainly was not shocked by Proxenus' statement and he certainly acted as if he were capable of sharing Proxenus' sentiment. Socrates had some misgivings regarding Xenophon's becoming a friend of Cyrus and he advised him therefore to consult Apollo about the journey; but Xenophon was so anxious to join Cyrus or to leave his fatherland that he decided at once to accept Proxenus' invitation. Even after everything had gone wrong with Cyrus' expedition, Xenophon was not anxious to return to his fatherland, although he was not yet exiled. If his comrades had not passionately protested, he would have founded a city in some barbarian place; not Xenophon, but his opponents, felt that one ought not to esteem anything more highly than Greece. Later on, he did not hesitate to accompany Agesilaus on his campaign against Athens and her allies which culminated in the battle of Coronea." OnTyr, 101-102.

The modern, of whose individual "individualism" and "cosmopolitanism" Strauss speaks with admiration, is Kurt Riezler -- a friend and colleague of Strauss's.¹ Strauss writes:

The young Riezler was a nationalist politically. He was not a nationalist tout court. He distinguished genuine cosmopolitanism from spurious and superficial cosmopolitanism, and he discerned the root of the former in the depth of the

¹See WPP? 233.

²It was not "genuine cosmopolitanism" which was "politically relevant." Strauss writes: "The politically relevant cosmopolitanism was supported by the modern economic-technological-scientific development. But this development did not strengthen, it rather weakened, the human in man. It increased man's power but not his wisdom. One could see with special clarity in Germany, that this development was accompanied by a decay of the spirit, of taste, of the mind. It compelled men to become ever more specialist, and at the same time it tempted them with a sham universality by exciting all kinds of curiosities and stimulating all kinds of interests. It thus made ever more difficult concentration on the few things on which man's wholeness entirely depends. Riezler found the intellectual root of the politically relevant cosmopolitanism in what he called the modern ideal. He discerned in that ideal three elements. The first was the belief that human life as such, i.e., independently of the kind of life one leads, is an absolute good. The second, derivative from the first, was universal and unqualified compassion or humanitarianism. And the third was "materialism," i.e., an overriding concern with pleasure and unwillingness or inability to dedicate one's life to ideals. This analysis is not very much liked today but it is historically correct. To see how it leads on to the defense of nationalism, we shall express Riezler's thought as follows. The modern ideal does not leave room for reverence, the matrix of human nobility. Reverence is primarily, i.e., for most men at all times and for all men most of the time, reverence for one's heritage, for tradition. But traditions are essentially particularistic, and therefore akin to nationalism rather than to cosmopolitanism." WPP? 236-237.
individual. The individual is part of his nation, but he is not merely part of his nation: "he has his own task, his own goal, and his own value." The nation is then not the only way to eternity. Only individuals, and not nations, can engage in the quest for truth, and this quest unites individuals belonging to different nations.

The young Strauss was "a nationalist [a Zionist] tout court!" (but stopping short of rifle practice).  

Strauss denies to the Jew what he defends in Xenophon. Strauss, it seems, would even circumscribe the less radical "individualism" and "cosmopolitanism" of Riezler. In the case of a Jew, the latter part of his statement about Riezler quoted above, starting from: "The individual is part of his nation . . . .", does not apply without qualification. Why not? Why does his defense of Xenophon on the ground that the regime is higher not apply to Jews? Does not Strauss compare patris and politeia to Israel and Torah?

1WPP? 240.

2Strauss recalls meeting the celebrated militant Zionist leader Jabotinsky. "He asked me, 'What are you doing?' I said, 'Well, we read the bible, we study Jewish history, Zionist theory, and, of course, we keep abreast of developments, and so on.' He replied, 'And rifle practice?' And I had to say 'no.'" "Hillel Lecture," 10.
Recall his saying:

The relation between one's own and the good finds its political expression in the relation between the fatherland and the regime. In the language of classical metaphysics, the fatherland or the nation is the matter whereas the regime is the form. The classics held the view that the form is higher in dignity than the matter. One may call this view "idealism." The practical meaning of this idealism is that the good is of higher dignity than one's own, or that the best regime is a higher consideration than the fatherland. The Jewish equivalent of this relation might be said to be the relation between the Torah and Israel.

And Strauss emphasizes:

God rightly demands that He alone be loved unqualifiedly. God does not command that we love His chosen people with all our hearts, with all our soul and with all our might.

And again he says:

The false prophets trust in flesh even if that flesh is the temple in Jerusalem, the promised land, nay, the chosen people itself.

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1 WPP 35-36.

2 "J&A," 17.

3 Ibid., 25.
Strauss is critical of theologians who put Israel first and foremost -- higher than, or more primary, than Torah. Against Friedrich Gogarten's assertion that the prophets heard that word only "by virtue of their close union with their nation" Strauss comments:

"Nevertheless [they] did not receive their message from the nation, but directly from God."¹ And against Franz Rosenzweig, he writes:

When speaking of the Jewish experience, one must start from what is primary or authoritative for the Jewish consciousness and not from what is the primary condition of possibility of the Jewish experience: one must start from God's Law, the Torah, and not from the Jewish nation. But in this decisive case Rosenzweig proceeds in the opposite manner; he proceeds, as he puts it, "sociologically." . . . Maimonides, proceeded in the first manner: traditional Jewish dogmatics understood the Jewish nation in the light of the Torah; it was silent about the "presupposition" of the Law, viz. the Jewish nation and its chosenness.² [just as "the Bible does not say that the primary election of Abraham was preceded by Abraham's righteousness."³]

All of this reinforces our question, "Why not?"

¹ SCR, 295-296, n. 229.
² Ibid., 13.
³ "J&A," 15.
There are two (not unrelated) reasons "why not": One is the "historical" peculiarity of the Jewish people and the other is its essential peculiarity.

Strauss's Zionist conviction remained his abiding conviction.

There is no "individualistic" solution to "the Jewish problem":

Political Zionism was concerned primarily with cleansing the Jews of their millennial degradation, with the recovery of Jewish dignity, honor or pride. The failure of the liberal solution meant that Jews could not regain their honor by assimilating as individuals to the nations among which they lived or by becoming citizens like all other citizens of the liberal states: the liberal solution brought at best legal equality, but not social equality . . . . To quote Herzl . . . ; "We are a nation -- the enemy makes us a nation whether we like it or not." 1

The essential "peculiarity" of Israel is the "peculiar"

Jewish union of the "carnal" and the "spiritual," of the "secular" and the "eternal," of the "tribal" and the "universal": the Torah which contains the promise of the eventual redemption of all children of Adam (cf. Maimonides, Mishneh Torah H. Melakhim XI-XII) was given to, or accepted by, Israel alone. 2

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1SCR, 4-5. It is on this ground that Strauss faults "the deepest analysis ever made" -- Nietzsche's -- of assimilation. See "Hillel Lecture," 16.

2LAM, 266.
This is given expression in the Olenu prayer which Strauss calls "the greatest expression surpassing everything that any present day man could write" (and which he suggests expresses the fact that "the Jewish people and their fate are the living witness for the absence of redemption!" -- the "meaning of the chosen people." \(^1\)

(Here is the prayer:

It is our duty to praise the Master of all, to exalt the Creator of the universe, who has not made us like the nations of the world and has not placed us like the families of the earth; who has not designed our destiny to be like theirs, nor our lot like that of all their multitude. We bend the knee and bow and acknowledge before the supreme King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be he, that it is he who stretched forth the heavens and founded the earth. His seat of glory is in the heavens above; his abode of majesty is in the lofty heights. He is our God, there is none else; truly he is our King, there is none besides him, as it is written in his Torah: "You shall know this day, and reflect in your heart, that it is the Lord who is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath, there is none else.""

We hope therefore, Lord our God, soon to behold thy majestic glory, when the abominations shall be removed from the earth, and the false gods exterminated; when the world shall be perfected under the reign of the Almighty, and all mankind will call upon thy name, and all the wicked of the earth will be turned to thee. May all the inhabitants of the
world realize and know that to thee every knee must bend, every
tongue must vow allegiance. May they bend the knee and prostrate
themselves before thee, Lord our God, and give honor to thy
glorious name; may they all accept the yoke of thy kingdom, and
do thou reign over them speedily forever and ever. For the
kingdom is thine, and to all eternity thou wilt reign in glory,
as it is written in thy Torah: "The Lord shall be King forever
and ever." And it is said: "The Lord shall be King over all
the earth; on that day the Lord shall be One, and his name One." )

No, Torah and Israel is not the strict equivalent of politeia and
patris. (As Strauss points out,⁴ there is no biblical term for politeia,
just as there is no term for nature; perhaps these "lacks" indicate
the peculiar intimacy of Torah and Israel: the Torah is "ours" and
yet not simply "our own" because it is God-given.) No, a Jew
marching with her enemies against Israel out of attachment to the
superior regime of the enemy is not to be suffered. And no, in the
case of a Jew, it cannot simply be said without qualification "the
individual is part of his nation, but he is not merely part of his nation:
'he has his own task, his own goal, and his own value.'" The Jew is

⁴ WPP? 34.
part of his nation whether he likes it or not. Whether he likes it or not, "his . . . own task, his own goal and his own value" is not simply separable from his people's fate and from that of the state of Israel. 1

25. Love of Neighbor -- How Difficult It is

Strauss, following Xenophon, distinguishes the philosopher from the ruler or political man in a way which may be said to bring out well the distinction between Moses and the prophets and philosophers (which thus brings out a cardinal distinction between the pious adherent of biblical tradition and the philosopher and again points to an affinity between the political man and the pious man in contradistinction to the philosopher). Strauss writes:

Even if they [the philosophers] would grant that the life of the ruler is in a certain respect superior to the life of the wise man, they would wonder whether the price which has

1Strauss writes that Zionism "brought about the establishment of the state of Israel and therewith that cleansing which it had primarily intended; it thus procured a blessing for all Jews everywhere regardless of whether they admit it or not." SCR, 5.
to be paid for that superiority is worthwhile. The ruler cannot escape envy but by leading a life of perpetual business, care and trouble the ruler whose specific function is "doing" or "well-doing" has to serve all his subjects, Socrates, on the other hand, whose specific function is "speaking" or discussing, does not engage in discussion except with those with whom he likes to converse. The wise man alone is free.

1 Moses escaped neither envy nor "perpetual business, care and trouble." See, for example, Exodus 18:14 ff. and Deut. 1:9 ff. (Socinus, apparently deeply impressed by the "toil and trouble" of Moses' life, contrasts his conspicuous lack of reward to that attained by Christ: "the far greater good . . . -- resurrection." See SCR, 66.) In Judaism, piety requires loving acceptance upon oneself of the "yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven" or the "yoke of the Torah and commandments." By contrast, the philosopher, it appears, seeks to avoid "yokes" and in so far as he is compelled to bear them, he seeks to transcend their constraining burdensomeness. One is tempted to transform Strauss's famous formulation, "Modern man as little as pre-modern man can escape imitating nature as he understands nature" (Macchi, 298) and apply it as follows: The man of the pagan world as little as the man of the biblical world can escape imitating the gods or God as he understands them. In the pagan world "the Divine" is pure pleasure (OnTyr, 137, n.6), whereas the biblical adherent par excellence "understandeth and knoweth" "That I am the Lord who exercise lovingkindness [hesed], Justice, and righteousness, in the earth; For in these things I delight, Saith the Lord." Jer. 9:23 (cf. Guide, 636-637). The adherent of biblical tradition is instructed: "As He is gracious, so be you also gracious; as He is merciful, so be you also merciful." Siphre on Deut:10-12. (Cf. B.T. Sotah, 14a, De'ot 1:6 and Guide 123-128.) See Grant, op. cit., 106.

2 OnTyr, 86-87.
Yes, Strauss positively presents as a "virtue" the philosopher's indifference to being beneficent. Strauss writes:

Each man loves what is somehow his own, his private possessions; admiration or praise is concerned with the excellence regardless of whether it is one's own or not. Love as distinguished from admiration requires proximity. The range of love is limited not only in regard to space but likewise . . . in regard to time. . . . Desire for "inextinguishable fame," as distinguished from desire for love, enables a man to liberate himself from the shackles of the Here and Now. The limits of love coincide normally with the borders of the political community, whereas admiration of human excellence knows no boundaries. . . . Admiration is as much superior to love as the man of excellence is to one's benefactor as such. To express this somewhat differently, love has no criterion of its relevance outside itself, but admiration has . . . . The wise man is as self-sufficient as is humanly possible; the admiration which he gains is essentially a tribute to his perfection, and not a reward for any services.

Strauss, in a note, refers without comment to Cardinal Newman's comment on Peter 1, 8: "St. Peter makes it almost a description of the Christian, that he loves whom he has not seen."^2

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1 OnTyr, 92-93.

2 Ibid., 134, n. 51.
Does Strauss suggest that this is humanly impossible?¹ Not impossible, but certainly extreme and immoderate -- and perhaps even more than "human."² Strauss applies the word "extreme" to love of neighbor in two very disparate contexts -- early and late.

¹Not even Nietzsche simply denies the "experience" outright. Consider aphorism 60 of Beyond Good and Evil: "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 délicatesse, 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!"

²That is, not within the "typical" or "normal" human range -- and certainly requiring a superhuman ground. On the all-too-human level, Strauss may be said to suggest that classical philosophy viewed it as impossible. Strauss leaves little doubt that classical thinkers took as axiomatic the egoistic or mercenary basis of love (on the all-too-human level): "However benevolent a man may be to another man, he is more benevolent to himself." See XI's Oeconomicus, 174. Also see 167-168 and 200: "As he [Socrates] declares on his oath, i.e., in the greatest seriousness, men believe by nature that they love those things by which they are benefited -- just as most men believe that their benefactors are by this very fact good men." Cf. OnTyr, 92 and 217.
The first is in the note in which he discusses his assertion that moderns characteristically make the extreme their norm and take the extreme for the typical. He gives the following example (among others): "So wird . . . die extreme ('theologische') Tugend der Liebe zur 'natürlichen' ('philosophischen') Tugend; . . ." Recall the passage quoted above in which Strauss points out "a contradiction" in Maimonides' "juxtaposition" of wisdom and piety. "Piety . . . consists in deviating somewhat from the middle toward one or the other extreme."² Strauss there suggests that "the difficulty is solved somehow in the fifth chapter of the De'ot:

Maimonides therein moves from the theme of the wise man in the strict or narrow sense as defined above to the "disciple of the wise" i.e., the Jewish sage who is both wise and pious or in some respects wise and in others pious [i.e., extreme] . . . . The transition is illustrated by Maimonides' interpreting the commandment to love one's neighbor as meaning that everyone is obliged to love every Jew [which is pious -- extreme -- rather than wise], . . ., as well as by his here qualifying the duty to be truthful by the requirements of peace [which is wise rather than pious]. . . .³

¹P&G, 13-14, n. 1. (This is the longest footnote in the book and possibly the longest Strauss ever wrote.) Note the word "extreme" occurs even in the German.

²"Notes," 277.

³Ibid., 278.
26. Strauss's "Restatement on Xenophon's Hiero"\textsuperscript{1}: Love and the Philosopher

In his "Restatement on Xenophon's Hiero," Strauss points to the incompleteness of Xenophon's analysis of the motivations of the two ways of life, especially as reflected in Simonides' speech on honor. (Strauss appears to suggest that this "Restatement" does not repudiate what he had said earlier; rather, it "completes" it.)\textsuperscript{2}

Strauss "completes" it by attempting to clearly distinguish "Socratic eros" from the eros of the political man. The philosopher strives to detach himself from "love based on need in the common meaning of"

\textsuperscript{1}The last chapter of OnTyr in which Strauss rebuts Kojeve. It may also be found in WPP? 95 ff.

\textsuperscript{2}Strauss states: "What Xenophon indicated in the Hiero about the motivations of the two ways of life is admittedly incomplete. How can any man in his senses ever have overlooked the role played by ambition in political life? How can a friend of Socrates ever have overlooked the role played by love in the philosophic life? Simonides' speech on honor alone, to say nothing of Xenophon's other writings, proves abundantly that what Xenophon indicates in the Hiero about the motivations of the two ways of life is deliberately incomplete." OnTyr, 211.
of need," from the "mercenary love" by which political men are dominated: 1 "the political man is consumed by erotic desire . . ., in principle for all human beings." 2 But erotic desire craves reciprocity: "The political man is characterized by concern with being loved by all human beings regardless of their quality." 3 The political man loves out of a need to be loved; this need is the root motivation of his benefactions: the more and better he can benefit others, the more they will love him; for "all men by nature believe they love those things by which they believe they are benefited." 4 By contrast, the philosopher "constantly nourished by genuine attachment to eternal things, i.e., by philosophizing," 5 tries"to transcend humanity (for wisdom is divine), . . . to make

1 OnTyr, 217.
2 Ibid., 212.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid., 217.
5 Ibid., 216.
it his sole business to die and to be dead to all human things,"\(^1\)

not least, "to be dead" to the need which dominates and animates
the political man (which is represented in the Hiero by the ruler's
interest in sexual pleasures in contradistinction to Simonides' disinterest in sex and far greater interest in food).\(^2\) If "dead" to
the need to be loved, the philosopher need not be a benefactor;\(^3\)

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\(^1\) OnTyr, 213.

\(^2\) ("Kojève regards it particularly unfortunate that Xenophon tries to establish a connection between the 'tyrannical' desire and sexual desire." -- Strauss. OnTyr, 211.) The enjoyment of food does not as such require any other human being. Cf. X's Socrates, 148, on "the strictly private, partnerless character of Socrates' dancing." Hiero's sexual craving was not "common": he craved homosexual love. This points to his uncommon appreciation of philosophers. See OnTyr, 135-136, n. 60. Strauss writes: "This [his concern with the pleasures of homosexuality] connect him with Socrates: love of men seems to bespeak a higher aspiration than love of women." See X's Socrates, 156; cf. 172-175. One may want to bring to bear on this point Genesis 2 starting from verse 18. "It is not good that the man should be alone." -- to the end of the chapter. One will recall Sacks' comment that the Bible distinguishes Israel from Egypt and Canaan not so much explicitly and primarily in "theological" terms but emphatically in terms of "sexual morality": homosexuality is "an abomination." Leviticus 20:18 and 18:22.

\(^3\) He is free to choose whom he will benefit, if and when he chooses. We may note this qualification: "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 service of human beings and has to pay for them with services of his own [although his soul need not be in them] if he does not want to be reproved as a thief or fraud." (E.g., Socrates being a soldier.) OnTyr, 213.
Likewise he does not need what is anyone's own -- as far as possible -- including his own; he is as free from love of one's own as is humanly possible. It is in this sense -- not in the sense of law-abidingness nor helping others -- that Socrates claims to be supremely just. ¹

Now the philosopher is certainly a "lover" but unlike the political man, not primarily of his own or of those he would make his own.

As philosopher, he is attached to a particular type of human being, namely to actual or potential philosophers or to his friends. His attachment to his friends is deeper than his attachment to other human beings, even to his nearest and dearest, as Plato shows with almost shocking clarity in the Phaedo. ²

¹X's Socrates, 131. "Talking big," Socrates "points out the contrast between his self-sufficiency and the others' lack of it; in particular he refused to accept gifts, though many desired to give him things; one is tempted to say that he lived like a god among human beings." Strauss observes: "It must have been particularly galling to his listeners to hear that during the siege (when Athens was starved into surrender) 'the others' pity themselves while he was in no way in greater straits than when the city was at the height of her prosperity." ibid., 132.

²OnTyr, 214.
The philosopher's "Socratic eros" draws him to well-ordered souls.

Strauss explains:

The philosopher's attempt to grasp the eternal order is necessarily an ascent from the perishable things which as such reflect the eternal order. Of all perishable things known to us, those which reflect that order most, or which are most akin to that order, are the souls of men. But the souls of men reflect the eternal order in different degrees. The philosopher who as such has had a glimpse of the eternal order is therefore particularly sensitive to the difference among human souls. In the first place, he alone knows what a healthy or well-ordered soul is. And secondly, precisely because he has had a glimpse of the eternal order, he cannot help being intensely pained by the aspect of a diseased or chaotic soul, without regard to his own needs or benefits. Hence he cannot help being attached to men of well-ordered souls: he desires 'to be together' with such men all the time. He admires such men not on account of any services which they may render to him but simply because they are what they are. On the other hand, he cannot help being repelled by ill-ordered souls. He avoids men of ill-ordered souls as much as he can, while trying of course not to offend them. Last but not least, he is highly sensitive to the promise of good or ill order, or of happiness or misery, which is held out by the souls of the young. Hence he cannot help desiring, without any regard to his own needs or benefits, that those among the young whose souls are by nature fitted for it, acquire good order of their souls. But the good order of the soul is philosophizing. The philosopher therefore has the urge to educate potential philosophers simply because he cannot help loving well-ordered souls.

1 OnTyr, 215.
(Strauss is forced to admit that "one does not have to make that assumption in order to be a philosopher, as is shown by Democritus and other pre-Socratics, to say nothing of the moderns. If one does not make the assumption mentioned, one will be forced,¹ it seems, to explain the philosopher's desire to communicate his thoughts by his need for remedying the deficiency of 'subjective certainty' or by his desire for recognition or by his human kindness."")²

¹ The force of "forced" is that it undoes Strauss's contention that the philosopher does not need to be benefited, that in contradiction to the political man he does not require requital of his "Socratic eros." See the bottom of OnTyr, 214. On 218, 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 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."

² OnTyr, 216.
27. The Contrast and Affinity with Biblical Teaching

It is at this point difficult to compare biblical teaching. We must leave open questions like these: Granting that biblical piety at its height is not mercenary, does it advocate "transcending" or detachment from needs through attachment to God? Or does the Bible teach hallowing them in a way which does not mean detachment from them? Recall Strauss's exalting of Isaiah:

In the light of the purity which Isaiah understood when he said of himself, "a man of unclean lips in the midst of a nation of unclean lips," the very Parthenon is impure.

The verse (6:5) he refers to reads:

Then I said, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.

1"Lecture," 12.

Is Strauss saying that the Bible teaches an even more radical detachment than the philosophers? In any case, the affinity between philosophy and the Bible that Strauss expressed in terms of "the concern with purity and purification" may now be seen more clearly. Both, as Strauss emphasizes, command restraint and the due subordination of the passions to "man's deepest desire": the longing of the soul for the eternal. Mere political solutions

1 Maimonides' Guide, and certainly Strauss's "reading" of it, leaves no doubt that Maimonides embraces the first alternative, but Maimonides suggests that it is so high or so radical an achievement as to be almost more than human; he suggests that it was achieved perfectly and permanently only by Moses: "All the prophets, when the prophetic power left them, returned to their tents, that is, attended to the satisfaction of their physical needs. Moses, our teacher, never went back to his former tent. He accordingly permanently separated himself from his wife, and abstained from similar gratifications. His mind was clearly attached to the Rock of the Universe. The Divine glory never departed from him . . . and he was sanctified like the angels." Yesodo HaTorah, 7:6. (Cf. OnTyr, 210: "Xenophon goes so far as not to count the husband of Xanthippe among the married men.")


3 Recall, for example, the statement beginning, "Syntheses effect miracles . . . ." OnTyr, 205.
which ignore or estrange man from this deepest desire cannot bring about true satisfaction or happiness. On the bases of both the Bible and classical philosophy, Strauss seems to suggest, the modern project of forcing down to earth the heavenly city of God or guaranteeing the just society by emancipating the passions is highly questionable (which is why these traditions had to be radically modified by early moderns and why they felt obliged to effect a new theologico-political "environment"). Strauss, at the conclusion of his discussion of "modern solutions" puts it succinctly and eloquently:

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.

In light of Strauss's statement, we may also see more sharply and appreciate better the contrasts between the philosopher and the political man and the pious adherent of Jerusalem. Consider Maimonides' enumeration of the acts of lovingkindness incumbent upon every Jew:

Those [acts of lovingkindness] clearly incumbent upon every Jew . . . :
To visit the sick, to comfort mourners, to carry out the dead, to arrange a wedding for a bride, to

\[WPP\] 55.
be hospitable to guests, to attend to all the burial needs, to walk before it (the corpse), to lament, to dig (the grave), to bury, and also to make the bride and groom rejoice and to supply them all their needs.

All this seems utterly remote from the philosopher's grand concerns.

Neither do the immediate concerns of political men have much in common with the questions that engage the philosopher -- questions like these: "What is the city?" "What is a statesman?" "What is rule over human beings?" 2 Compare Aristotle's enumeration of the subjects about which political men deliberate:

... revenues, expenditures, war and peace, military power, defense of the country, food supply, and last but not least, legislation and its relation to the various regimes.

Now, compared to the philosopher, the political man is presented in the "Restatement" as mercenary. This seems not quite evident in Aristotle's enumeration (perhaps because he would stress nobility). Xenophon brings out more clearly the continuum of selfishness and

1 Weiss, 236.

2 X's Socrates, 71.

3 Ibid.
nobility. Consider his enumeration (yet another list) of the elements of the happiness at which the gentleman aims:

... health, strength of the body, honor in the city, good will on the part of his friends, and in war safety with honor and honorable increase of wealth. ¹

Strauss observes:

This enumeration shows why there is no radical separation of the economic, or private, in the political life. To the gentleman "wealth is pleasant because it enables a man to honor the gods magnificently; to assist his friends in their need, and to contribute toward the adornment of the city." ²

Strauss comments:

These purposes for which wealth is to be used and which justify the concern with the acquisition of wealth are not selfish; this is perhaps sufficient reason for Socrates to call them, not indeed pleasant, but noble; to this extent the pupil Socrates has become convinced by Ischomachos' defense of the perfect gentleman's way of life. ³

Is there a "mercenary" element to be discerned in acts of lovingkindness? According to Weiss, Maimonides suggests that such acts are not strictly or directly or simply mercenary; there

¹ Xenophon's Oeconomicus, 162.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.
is no question of direct requital from the recipient; but there is a
general wish for similar kindnesses to be shown one when one is
in a similar situation. Weiss writes:

All deeds of lovingkindness show beneficence "toward one
who has no right at all to claim this from you" or "in a greater
measure than he deserves it" to visit the sick, to comfort the
mourner, to be hospitable are not predicated upon the right
of the other person. The bride and the groom cannot by right
expect their new household to be furnished. Even the dead
cannot be said to have the right of burial. Since the recipient
has no claim on you, "deeds of lovingkindness in essence
(begufo) have no measure." Their-excess cannot be delineated.

Gemilut chasadim is interpreted by Maimonides as falling
under the commandment to love thy neighbor as thyself.
The Hebrew verb gml in the expression gemilut chasadim
means to "repay" or to "requite," a meaning which is preserved
in Maimonides' interpretation. Every person would like to be
treated with lovingkindness -- to be visited when sick, etc.
and for this reason one should act toward self interest, but not
self interest alone. Whatever act of kindness we might want,
we want for our own sake. The very nature of deeds of loving-
kindness requires that they be performed for the sake of the
other person. Furthermore, to perform deeds of lovingkindness
is an obligation imposed by the Law; that is, it is a commandment
and not merely to be done out of self interest.

A kind of equality is implied in gemilut chasadim, an equality
of what might be called the human condition. Every person is
subject to illness and death; every bride and groom have certain
needs; every person must rely at times on the hospitality of
strangers.

1Apparently, in contradistinction to the hungry who by right are
to be fed and the naked who by right are to be clothed, for these are
matters of "justice."

2Weiss, 237-239.
This "equality of the human condition" bears on "externals"; the "equality of the human condition" is an equality of the needs of the body. ¹ Weiss writes:

Love your neighbor as you love your own body, Maimonides says. Love of one's own body may be said to be natural to man. To love someone else in the same way is beneficence. The way of "wisdom" takes its bearings from the needs of a man's own body. Love of neighbor goes beyond what is dictated by nature. ² If love of neighbor or acts of lovingkindness were mercenary, then one may argue that they are "dictated" by nature or at least that they are defensible on that basis. But Weiss asserts: "Human nature strictly understood does not provide the basis for lovingkindness." ³

¹ Maimonides is an egalitarian to this extent only. Weiss writes: "One could not be required to care for the mind of another person in the same way one cultivates his own mind, because of the differences in intellectual capacity. In a letter to his son Maimonides counsels: 'Serve your friends and your relatives as (you serve) your body and (according to) your strength . . . only take great care lest you serve with your soul, for that is the divine part.'" (Is it significant that "friends" precede "relatives"?) Weiss, 243. (Cf. OnTyg, 213: "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.")

² Weiss, 243.

³ Weiss, 249.
What then is its basis? Let Strauss answer:

The one thing needful is righteousness or charity; in Judaism these are the same. This notion of the one thing needful is not defensible if the world is not the creation of the just and loving God, the Holy God. The root of injustice and uncharitableness which abounds is not in God but in the free acts of his creatures, in sin.

28. The Greek Ruler and the Jewish King

In Jerusalem, even for the king there is no proper pride.

Weiss writes (of Maimonides on the king):

Everyone who comes before him bows to the earth. He is accorded every honor due a royal position and yet, "just as Scripture apportions to him great honor, and everyone is obliged to honor him, so too it commanded that his heart within him be lowly (sha'el) and pierced, as it is said, 'and my heart is pierced within me'."

But according to the "Restatement," according to both Strauss and Kojève, a good ruler should crave recognition. Strauss writes:

The concern with being recognized by others is perfectly compatible with, and in fact required by the concern essential to the ruler who is the ruler of others. ¹

¹"Hillel Lecture," 16.

²Weiss, 145-146. The king is permitted ministerial hauteur. The possible need for a show of hauteur, Weiss tells us, is never mentioned for the wise man or pious man in the Mishnah Torah. (They are permitted a ministerial show of anger.) See Weiss, 147-148.

³OnTyr, 218.
Weiss takes up this question:

Aristotle makes us wonder whether the regime is fundamentally defective which regards extreme humility as the moral quality par excellence. Since Maimonides requires that the king be extremely humble, what is the motivation which will assure the king's preference of the public good over his private well being?

According to the Mishnah Torah, a king is required to have fear of Heaven. He is not expected to be on so high a level that he serves God solely out of love. . . . Even if he has much wisdom, but no fear, he is not made king. (The character of the wisdom is not specified.) However, if he has fear but no wisdom, he may rule, since he can be taught wisdom. Fear of heaven would motivate the king to be scrupulous in following the Law, which is directed to the public good. The king is decidedly subordinate to the Law. Fear of Heaven eliminates the need for love of honor in the ruler.

1 Weiss also adduces Aristotle's objection to humility (and in a way which seems to me to beg the question) suggests that that objection would not hold against the biblical view of humility. He writes: "According to Aristotle, 'small souled' or humble men claim less than they deserve. They have an unduly low estimate of their capacities. Their most serious defect is that they stand fast even from noble actions and undertakings, deeming themselves unworthy, and from external goods no less." Weiss counters: "The objection would . . . not hold against the biblical view of humility because of the power of God to help the humble. For example, Moses thought he was unworthy to go before Pharaoh to demand the freedom of the Hebrew slaves (Exodus 3:11-4:13). However, with the help of God, Moses was able to perform great deeds. The possibility of divine aid was not considered by Aristotle, or rather, this possibility was tacitly rejected." Weiss, 271, n. 3.

2 Weiss, 272-273.
29. **Aristotle's Gentleman Contrasted to Maimonides' Jewish "Wise" Man and "Pious" Man**

To balance the general suggestions made earlier about the affinity of the adherent of Jerusalem and the gentleman, we would here draw some detailed contrasts. It will be recalled that Strauss stated: "One may say that what Maimonides calls wisdom is moral virtue in Aristotle's sense. . . ." \(^1\) But the Jewish wise man's "wisdom" is influenced by biblical piety. \(^2\) Weiss puts it: "The mean is to some extent Judaized in the Mishneh Torah." \(^3\) He explains:

The Maimonidean mean is more severe than that of Aristotle. For example Aristotelian moderation gives a man more leeway for enjoyment of bodily pleasures than does the Maimonidean ethic. Aristotle defines moderation as the mean with respect to pleasure than than confining it strictly to need. Maimonides' focus on the needs of the intellect limits desire more strictly than does a focus upon gracious manner of living. . . .

The difference in the material basis of life between the Jew and the gentleman plays a certain role. Since Maimonides' 'wise man' is assumed to work for a living, he must keep his

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\(^1\)"Notes," 277.

\(^2\)Ibid., 278.

\(^3\)Weiss, 257.
desires to a minimum. He does not have the independent source of income which gives the gentleman leisure. The attitude of the Law towards work can be seen from the following: A man should do everything possible to avoid the need to accept charity, "and even if he were a wise and honored man, but poor, he should labor in a craft, even a repulsive craft, and not be dependent on his fellow creatures." For Aristotle, it goes without saying that a gentleman would not earn his livelihood from a repulsive craft.

The "wise man" does not have, or at least need not have, the polished grace of a gentleman. Maimonides does not include wit because of the strict sexual code which is part of the Law: "Jesting (or laughter) and levity lead to sexual sin." Aristotle says about those who are deficient in anger: "It is thought that they do not feel or resent an injury and that if a man is never angry he will not stand up for himself; and it is considered servile to put up with an insult to oneself or suffer one's friends to be insulted." A gentleman does not allow himself or his friends to be degraded. His intolerance of insult is part of his nobility. For Maimonides' "wise man," anger is strictly pragmatic, to prevent the repetition of a "big thing." Anger at insult is not an integral part of the way of "wisdom." The "wise man" is not so concerned as the gentleman with his dignity. The gentleman's anger must be understood in conjunction with his noble pride. His serenity may at times be sacrificed to his concern with honor.

The gentleman's noble actions show a grandeur not found in the way of "wisdom" or piety. The gentleman's virtue does not have primarily a negative aim -- to quiet the passions -- but rather to develop positive capacities for excellence.

Maimonides sees man as a political being because man needs society in order to fulfill his bodily needs. This view
differs to some extent from that in Aristotle's Politics, where man is regarded as a political animal because life in a polis is essential to human excellence. The city has a more noble function than to serve the bodily needs of man. For Maimonides, the city exists for the sake of mere life although an urban society presumably is also essential for the transmission of texts needed for contemplation.

The gentleman's nobility is the goal of ethics and hence the goal of politics was not accepted by him, although he knew the Nicomachean Ethics.

The contrast between the Greek gentleman and the pious Jew (according to Maimonides) will be even more extreme than that between the Jewish "wise" man or "disciple of the wise" and the gentleman. 3 Weiss writes:

The most obvious difference between the gentleman and the pious man is that the former aims at the mean whereas the latter leans toward the extreme.

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1 Weiss notes: "There is no rabbinic or biblical word for the 'noble.' The difference between the Greek and Hebrew languages is not the decisive consideration, however. The difference between the ethics of the gentleman and the 'wise man' is the difference between the two modes of life." Weiss, 260-261, n.4.

2 Weiss, 257-262.

3 Weiss boldly puts forward an engaging suggestion of formal resemblance between the gentleman and the pious Jew. It is worth noting: "The pious man, whose intellectual capacity may prevent him from attaining the knowledge of the wise man, is considered superior to the multitude. Like the gentleman, the pious man does more than is required by the letter of the Law. Like the gentleman, he generally does not follow the Law because of fear of punishment. Both may be said to gain distinction on the basis
The gentleman's magnanimity, or noble pride, must be contrasted with the extreme humility of the pious Jew.

Love of honor remains fundamental to the gentleman's motivation and may move him to perform great deeds. For the Jew, love of God excludes acting for the sake of one's own honor. It is also noteworthy that a religious motivation is not part of the gentleman's conduct. Pagan piety is not one of his virtues, although the gentleman's munificence involves giving money generously for services rendered to the gods.

The magnanimous man looks down upon most people because they do not measure up to his perfect virtue. His conviction that he deserves to be honored shows itself in the way he comports himself, for example, in his slow gait and

of their moral virtue rather than wisdom. The gentleman's love of the noble or love of honor must be sharply distinguished from the pious man's exceptionally devout obedience to the Law of God. To serve God out of love excludes the desire for any honor. But neither the pious man nor the gentleman have the low mercenary motivation of the multitude. One might say that in the Jewish community, the pious man takes the place of the gentleman as the exceptional man, not necessarily distinguished by wisdom, but who is looked up to by people. Jewish ethics as interpreted by Maimonides sets forth the way of piety for those who are not necessarily wise but are drawn to do higher things than the average man." Weiss, 266. Also noteworthy is the following expression of contrasts "reported" by Strauss: "Mr. [Arthur] Cohen rightly rejected the common Christian notion of Jewish 'pharisaism': no Jew who ever took the Torah seriously could be self-righteous, or believe that he could redeem himself from sin by the fulfillment of the Law or underestimate the power of sin over him. The true 'Pharisee' in the Christian sense is not the Pharisee proper, but Aristotle's perfect gentleman who is not ashamed of anything or does not regret or repent anything he has done because he always does what is right or proper." LAM, 268.
deep voice. His every action bears the stamp of his superiority, even though he may on occasion speak of himself with ironic self-depreciation. His recognition of his superiority is like the crowning ornament. He takes pleasure in his awareness of his excellence. The perfect gentleman, unlike the pious man, takes pride in his superiority. The pious man is a superior human being but his superiority is very much subdued. He certainly does not wear his piety on his sleeve. His behavior and outward appearance are lowly, and when he walks he looks downyward, as if he were praying.

The magnanimous man is concerned with preserving his position of superiority in the eyes of others. . . . He treats men of high position and good fortune with a certain haughtiness, lest there be any question as to who is superior. The pious man, however, is lowly before everyone. He even honors those who insult him, which the man of noble pride would hardly do.¹

30. Conclusion

We conclude: It would appear that the pious man and the gentleman are on the one hand more alike in contradistinction to the philosophers in actively "keeping their brothers" and in their singleminded devotion to the traditions and institutions of their respective communities. On the other hand, on perhaps a more profound level, there is an affinity between the pious man and the philosopher in their "concern with purity and purification," in their

¹Weiss, 269-271.
looking up to and being directed towards what transcends the
political. Though the pious are essentially beneficent and
philosophers are not, each -- in contradistinction to the gentleman --
strives in his way toward transcending or subordinating completely
love of one's own or the mercenary. Each strives in his own way
toward attachment to a lovable Eternal.¹

A central difficulty in our discussion is that the motivation
of the pious has not been treated adequately. Strauss discusses
"Socratic eros" and the eros of the political man, but does not speak
anywhere of the "eros" of the pious. (Neither, according to Weiss,
does Maimonides make it clear.)

Above all, we have attempted to show the fundamental
irreconcilability between the respective ways of life. We have followed
out and filled in (with the help of Weiss) Strauss's suggestion that this
is to be seen all the more clearly precisely from Maimonides¹
attempt to "juxtapose" "wisdom and piety."

To the biblical question "Am I my brother's keeper?" we have
elicited these answers:

The philosopher: No, not any more than I must be in order
to show my brothers that my activity is not subversive and as much

¹Of course, the philosopher may deny any such Eternal -- as
Epicurus and many modern philosophers do. See LAM, viii. And note:
the Platonist nonetheless "has infinitely more in common with a philo-
sophic materialist [or denier of any such Eternal] than with any non-
philosophic believer however well-intentioned." "FP" 392.
as I need to in order to fish for potential philosophers and to find friends. (In practical terms this "no" turns out to be more like a "yes" than at first appears -- as may be seen in the discussion of political philosophy in the next chapter.)

The gentleman: Yes, indeed! I dedicate my life to "keeping my brothers," to ruling them and fighting for them; my life is a life dedicated to the service of my brothers. (But on Strauss's analysis this dedication shows itself to be mercenary, guided by the ambition to win fame and the love or recognition of all brothers.)

The pious man: Yes, because God commands it. To love God is to love my fellow and not merely his mind or beautiful soul but to lovingly care for his bodily needs.
CHAPTER III

LEO STRAUSS'S PHILOSOPHIE UND GESETZ
ON PLATONIC POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY AND MAIMONIDES --
THE "ARISTOTELIZING" "CLASSIC RATIONALIST IN JUDAISM"

"Judaism on the one hand, Aristotelianism on the other, certainly
supplied the greatest part of the matter of Maimonides' teaching.
But Platonic political philosophy provided at any rate the framework
for the two achievements by which Maimonides made an epoch in
the history of Judaism: for his codification of the Jewish law [Mishneh
Torah] and for his political defense of the Jewish law [Guide of the
Perplexed]."

1 Ralph Lerner opens his essay on Maimonides (HistPP, 203)
with the following observation: "A discussion of medieval Jewish
political philosophy might appear to suffer from a serious, perhaps
hopeless, difficulty. Is there any reason to assume that the subject
matter exists? Little in the present-day historical literature sug-
gests that it does. When the medieval Jewish philosophers appear at
all in current histories, they do so mainly for their antiquarian
interest, as links in a chain of the transmission of ideas. This
neglect is even more pronounced in the histories of political thought;
medieval Jewish writers appear to be regarded as irrelevant. It
would not be difficult to find some plausible reason for this neglect:
a people that for more than a millennium was unable to lead an
autonomous political life and that for the most part was firmly ex-
cluded from governance and administration is not a likely source of
independent political reflection. Yet for all its plausibility, this
assumption is false; the fact remains that problems that we can recog-
nize as falling within the province of political philosophy are discussed
in the writings of medieval Jews." Cf. PAW, 8.

2 Abravanel, 98. (I believe this writing was the first Strauss
wrote in English. See 97, n. 1, there.)
1. Introduction

This chapter focuses primarily on Strauss's discussion in *Philosophie und Gesetz*, his first, major, important and little known work on Maimonides (and the only book he addressed to a Jewish audience). At the conclusion of the chapter, the significant "moments" in the "development" of Strauss's understanding of Maimonides are indicated. In terms of the discussion of the chapter, it is there suggested which aspects of his earlier view remain unmodified by later "development." It may be said here at the outset that, above all, the place of Platonic political philosophy in the thought of Maimonides as discerned by Strauss in the early 30's remains in place and unmoved by later advances in Strauss's understanding of Maimonides; indeed, its place -- thanks to Strauss's discovery of it -- is today practically taken for granted.

This chapter does not attempt to encompass Strauss's exposition of Maimonides' thought. It attempts to indicate the lines of Strauss's early "Beiträge" to the understanding of Maimonides and his predecessors and to reflect Strauss's first "glimmer of light," the light he discerned in Maimonides' enlightenment and rationalism, in contradistinction to modern Enlightenment
and rationalism. The central statement of Chapter II suggests what "Jews of the philosophic competence of Halevi and Maimonides took . . . for granted that being a Jew and being a philosopher are mutually exclusive; yet Maimonides is a rationalist -- the "Klassiker des Rationalismus" in Judentum." Does he then compromise or sacrifice Judaism? Or, does he, like Aquinas, "free philosophy from the philosophers" (as A. C. Pegis puts it)? How does Maimonides' rationalist approach to the Bible and Jewish tradition significantly differ from that of modern Jewish rationalists? These are some of the questions that will be raised in this chapter and will engage us in this chapter and in the next.

It may be well here to recall again Strauss's "starting point": Strauss came to see that "the last word and ultimate justification" of the Enlightenment critique of the traditions of Jerusalem and Athens was existentialist atheism; this moved him to ascertain "whether enlightenment is necessarily modern enlightenment," whether the

1PAW, 19.


3WPP? 285

4P&G, 28.
self-destruction of reason was not the inevitable outcome of modern rationalism as distinguished from pre-modern rationalism, especially Jewish medieval rationalism and its classical (Aristotelian and Platonic) foundation. 

2. Political Philosophy Its Two Significations and Strauss's Chapter Headings "Die gesetzliche Begründung der Philosophie" and "Die philosophische Begründung des Gesetzes"

 Strauss opens his Philosophie und Gesetz with the following: "NACH EINEM WORTE HERMANN COHENS IST MAIMUNI DER 'Klassiker des Rationalismus' im Judentum." He closes with a discussion of another "Wort" of Hermann Cohen's: "Maimuni war in tieferem Einklang mit Platon als mit Aristoteles." In the pages between, he elaborates the connection between Maimonides' rationalism and his fundamental Platonism. It may be said that in large measure Strauss's writings on Maimonides and his predecessors (Farabi, above all) are a gloss elaborating and validating Cohen's "Wörte," but "in einem genaueren Sinne ... als Cohen ... wohl gemeint hat." 

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1 SCR, 31.
2 P&G, 119.
3 P&G, 9.
Strauss illumines the Platonic political superstructure of Maimonides' philosophizing. It was hardly noticed before Strauss brought it into brilliant light; it is now visibly prominent: a contemporary or future student of Maimonides can hardly overlook it.

What effected this illumination? Strauss tells us that it just happened,¹ that it seemed like a "fortuitous stumbling" on a discovery.

He writes in a statement indicative of his position:

Der Notwendige Zusammenhang zwischen Politik und Theologie (Metaphysik), auf den wir wie zufällig gestossen sind, verbürgt, dass die von der Platonischen Politik (und nicht vom Timaios oder der Aristotelischen Metaphysik) aus einsetzende Interpretation der jüdischen Philosophie des Mittelalters die für die mittelalterlichen Philosophen selbst im Vordergrund stehenden metaphysischen Probleme nicht aus den Augen verlieren kann. Und dieses Vorgehen muss so wenig eine Unterschätzung dieser Probleme zur Folge haben, dass es vielmehr die einzige Gewähr für das Verständnis ihres eigentlichen, d.h. ihres menschlichen Sinnes bietet. Geht man hingegen von den metaphysischen Problemen aus, so verfehlt man, wie die Geschichte der bisherigen Forschung deutlich zeigt, das politische Problem, in dem sich doch nichts Geringeres als die Grundlegung der Philosophie, die philosophische Aufklärung der Voraussetzung des Philosophierens verbirgt.

¹Strauss opens his introductory essay to the 1963 English edition of the Guide, speaking of "the plan of the Guide as it has become clear to me in the course of about 25 years of frequently interrupted but never abandoned study." Clearly "about 25 years" must be given extended latitude. Strauss's earliest published article, "Cohen's Analyse der Bibelwissenschaft Spinozas," Der Jude, VIII (1924), indicates that he had already at least begun struggling to understand Maimonides, as early as the early 20's.
In Strauss's view, what is saliently new and significant in the achievement peculiar to Maimonides and his predecessors is indicated by his chapter headings, "Die gesetzliche Begründung der Philosophie" and "Die philosophische Begründung des Gesetzes."

As is obvious at a glance, these headings appear to point not to matters metaphysical or physical, but to the political. Strauss maintains that it is in political philosophy more so than in metaphysics that one discerns the "newness" and singular achievement of medieval Islamic and Jewish thinkers.

These imposing chapter headings which may be rendered roughly as "the Law-ful\(^1\) grounding [or justification] of philosophy' and 'the philosophic grounding [or justification] of the Law' will lead us into Strauss's view of Maimonides' rationalism, and in particular, in its relation to political philosophy.

3. The Meanings of "Political Philosophy"

First we must let Strauss tell us what is meant by "political philosophy." He offers the following as a general definition:

In the expression "political philosophy," "philosophy" indicates

\(^1\)Gesetzlich is usually translated "legal." In order to keep "Law" fully visible in the adjective, I employ the unfelicitous "lawful" for which I apologize.
the manner of treatment: a treatment which both goes to the
roots and is comprehensive; "political" indicates both the sub-
ject matter and the function: political philosophy deals with
political matters in a manner that is meant to be relevant for
political life; therefore its subject must be identical with the
goal, the ultimate goal of political action. 1

He adds: "Political philosophy is the attempt truly to know both the
nature of political things and the right, or the good, political order." 2

Elsewhere Strauss explains "political philosophy" by relating it to
the question "Why philosophy?" and a second deeper signification of
"political philosophy" emerges.

Left to themselves, the philosophers would not descend again
to the "cave" of political life, but would remain outside in what
they considered "the island of the blessed" -- contemplation of
the truth.

But philosophy, being an attempt to rise from opinion to
science, is necessarily related to the sphere of opinion as its
essential starting point, and hence to the political sphere.
Therefore the political sphere is bound to advance into the focus
of philosophic interest as soon as philosophy starts to reflect on
its own doings. To understand fully its own purpose and nature,
philosophy has to understand its essential starting-point, and
hence the nature of political things.

The philosophers, as well as other men who have become
aware of the possibility of philosophy, are sooner or later driven
to wonder "Why philosophy?" Why does human life need philosophy,
why is it good, why is it right, that opinions about the nature of

1 WPP? 10.  
2 Ibid., 12.

3 Cf. C&M, 20: "In its original form political philosophy broadly
understood is the core of philosophy or rather 'the first philosophy.'"
the whole should be replaced by genuine knowledge of the nature of the whole? Since human life is living together or, more exactly, is political life, the question "Why philosophy?" means "Why does political life need philosophy?" This question calls philosophy before the tribunal of the political community: it makes philosophy politically responsible. . . this question, once raised, forbids the philosophers any longer to disregard political life altogether. Plato's Republic as a whole, as well as other political works of the classical philosophers, can best be described as an attempt to supply a political justification for philosophy by showing that the well-being of the political community depends decisively on the study of philosophy. Such a justification was all the more urgent since the meaning of philosophy was by no means generally understood, and hence philosophy was distrusted and hated by many well-meaning citizens. . . .

To justify philosophy before the tribunal of the political community means to justify philosophy in terms of the political community, that is to say, by means of a kind of argument which appeals not to philosophers as such, but to citizens as such. To prove to citizens that philosophy is permissible, desirable or even necessary, the philosopher has to follow the example of Odysseus and start from premises that are generally agreed upon, or from generally accepted opinions: he has to argue ad hominem or "dialectically." From this point of view the adjective "political" in the expression "political philosophy" designates not so much a subject matter as a manner of treatment; from this point of view, I say, "political philosophy" means primarily not the philosophic treatment of politics, but the political, or popular, treatment of philosophy, or the political introduction to philosophy -- the attempt to lead the qualified citizens, or rather their qualified sons, from the political life to the philosophic life. This deeper meaning of "political philosophy" tallies well with its ordinary meaning; for in both cases "political philosophy" culminates in praise of the philosophic life. At any rate, it is ultimately because he means to justify philosophy before the tribunal of the political community, and hence on the level of political discussion, that the philosopher has to understand the political things exactly as they are understood in political life. 2

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1 This is the second rare instance of "I say."

2 WPP? 92-94.
It may be seen that these two meanings of political philosophy correspond to the aforementioned chapter headings: "Die gesetzliche Begründung der Philosophie" is related to political philosophy in the second "deeper meaning" of the term, and "Die philosophische Begründung des Gesetzes" is political philosophy in its "ordinary meaning." The "deeper meaning" of political philosophy is a primary Platonic concern, and it is not Aristotelian but Platonic politics, which addresses itself to divine laws (Laws) or to legislating philosopher kings (Republic). 1 Political philosophy then, in both senses relating to these chapter headings, bespeaks a Platonic lineage. 2

4. Difference Between Plato and Aristotle Not a Central Theme But Not Ignored in Strauss's Work

Strauss has not thematically expounded differences between Plato and Aristotle. He gives the impression that it is less important and less urgent to make clear differences between Plato and Aristotle than to understand clearly the quarrel between ancients and moderns.

1See PAW, 10.

2After Plato, Strauss names Farabi and Maimonides among those who ably defended philosophy before the tribunal of their respective communities. "This defense of philosophy before the tribunal of the city was achieved by Plato with a resounding success. . . . What Plato did in the Greek city and for it was done in and for Rome by Cicero . . . It was
Strauss mentions Erich Frank's view of fundamental opposition between Plato and Aristotle without giving the slightest indication as to whether he agrees with Frank or not. He there leaves the impression that it matters little whether his readers subscribe to Frank's view of such fundamental opposition or not, that it certainly matters less than seeing clearly the more fundamental opposition between ancients and moderns. He writes:

Cohen understood Plato in the light of the opposition between Plato and Aristotle -- an opposition that he understood in the light of the opposition between Kant and Hegel. We, however, are more impressed than Cohen was by the kinship between Plato and Aristotle on the one hand and the kinship between Kant and Hegel on the other. In other words, the quarrel between the ancients done in and for the Islamic world by Farabi and in and for Judaism by Maimonides." OnTyr, 220. Note Strauss's omission of Aristotle. This omission points to the "omission" of the Politics from the philosophic sources of Maimonides and his predecessors. Strauss tells us: "The [precarious] status of philosophy in the Islamic-Jewish world resembled . . . its status in classical Greece," PAW, 21. The classic source of the recognition of this precariousness and the defense against it is the Republic and not the Politics: "Aristotle's Politics . . . presupposes a larger measure of agreement between philosophy and the city and hence a greater openness to philosophy on the part of the city than Plato's Republic," HistPP, 225. It should then not be surprising that the "chapter headings" necessary to understanding Maimonides correspond to Platonic political philosophy in particular.

1"Wild," 348.
and the moderns seems to us to be more fundamental than either the quarrel between Plato and Aristotle or that between Kant and Hegel.

But dispersed throughout Strauss's writings one finds comments -- some less explicit than others, bearing on the difference between Plato and Aristotle.

Strauss's more explicit statements on the opposition between Plato and Aristotle occur in his early writings, in *Philosophie und Gesetz* and *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, in particular. The following is perhaps the most explicit of all such early statements. (As indicated in Chapter II above, these early statements on Plato seen in the light of Strauss's later writings, indicate "development" and its direction.)

... Plato lehrt nicht weniger entschieden als Aristoteles, dass die Glückseligkeit und die eigentliche Vollkommenheit des Menschen im reinen Betrachten und Verstehen besteht. Der grundsätzliche Unterschied zwischen Platon und Aristoteles zeigt sich allein in der Art, wie sie sich zu der Theorie als der höchsten Vollkommenheit des Menschen verhalten. Aristoteles gibt sie völlig frei; vielmehr: er belässt sie in ihrer natürlichen Freiheit. Plato hingegen gestattet den Philosophen nicht, 'was ihnen jetzt gestattet wird', nämlich das

1"J&A," 23.

5. **The Contrast Between Christian Scholasticism and Maimonides**

   Strauss at several points underscores the contrast between scholasticism and Maimonides and his predecessors. This serves, among other purposes, to bring into relief the Platonism of the Jewish and Islamic thinkers. The contrast is drawn with respect to both meanings of political philosophy. On the level of the "deeper meaning" Strauss indicates the contrast as follows:

   This difference [in sources] is particularly striking in the case of practical or political philosophy. The place that is occupied in Christian scholasticism by Aristotle's *Politics*, Cicero, and the

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Roman Law, is occupied in Islamic and Jewish philosophy by Plato's Republic and his Laws. Whereas Plato's Republic and Laws were recovered by the West only in the fifteenth century, they had been translated into Arabic in the ninth century. Two of the most

1 Strauss quotes Sir Ernest Barker: "For a thousand years the Republic has no history; for a thousand years it simply disappeared. From the days of Proclus, the Neo-Platonists of the fifth century, almost until the days of Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola, at the end of the fifteenth, the Republic was practically a lost book." Strauss adds: "The same holds true, as far as the Latin Middle Ages are concerned, of the Laws." Abravanel, 96, n. 2. Strauss "pictures" the contrast in this way: "I have read that in some Italian pictures Plato is represented holding in his hand the Timaeus and Aristotle his Ethics. If a pupil of Maimonides or of the Islamic philosophers had found pleasure in representations of this kind, he might have chosen rather the inverse order: Aristotle with his Physics or Metaphysics and Plato with his Republic or Laws." Ibid., 96-97.

2 Is this difference in availability of sources to be accounted for simply as historical accident? Strauss voices his suspicion: "One cannot avoid raising this question, especially since the circumstance that the Politics was not translated into Arabic may well be, not a mere matter of chance, but the result of a deliberate choice, made in the beginning of this medieval development." Ibid., 97. He goes even further: "Ce choix n'est pas dû au hasard: Averroès n'a pas pu commenter ces traités d'Aristote parce que leur réception aurait rendu impossible l'explication philosophique de la Charîa." "Qr," 4. Father Ernest Fortin of Assumption College leaves little doubt. "The evidence at hand suggests that the Politics of Aristotle had been rendered into Arabic at an early date and, in any event, its contents were known to the Islamic and Jewish philosophers through excerpts from that work as well as through the Nicomachean Ethics and other works of Aristotle. Likewise, the existence and part of the substance of the Republic and the Laws were familiar to the Western authors from Aristotle's Politics and from earlier Roman and Christian adaptations or discussions of those works by such writers as Cicero and Augustine. Yet, contrary to what was usually done in similar cases, no effort appears to have been made by either group to
famous Islamic philosophers wrote commentaries on them: Farabi on the Laws, and Averroes on the Republic. The difference mentioned implied a difference, not only in regard to the content of political philosophy, but, above all, in regard to its importance for the whole of philosophy. Farabi, whom Maimonides, the greatest Jewish thinker of the Middle Ages, regarded as the greatest among the Islamic philosophers, and indeed as the greatest philosophic authority after Aristotle, was so much inspired by Plato's Republic that he presented the whole of philosophy proper within a political framework.

obtain copies or translations of the missing texts. On the strength of that and related evidence it is not unreasonable to suppose that the use of the Politics by the Christian authors, and of the Republic and the Laws by the Arabic and Jewish philosophers, was at least partially the result of a deliberate choice dictated by the circumstances of the political life in these different religious communities."

HistPP, 224.

1 PAW, 9. See Strauss's studies of Farabi, "How Farabi read Plato's Laws" in WPP? and "Farabi's Plato," Louis Ginzberg Jubilee Volume (American Academy for Jewish Research, 1945), 357-393 -- hereafter, "FP". This passage from the latter work (366), is apposite to our discussion: "That question [Why philosophy?] cannot be answered but with a view to the natural aim of man which is happiness, and in so far as man is by nature a political being, it cannot be answered but within a political framework. In other words, the question 'why philosophy?' is only a special form of the general question 'what is the right way of life?', i.e. of the question guiding all moral or political investigations. This question and the answer to it which are strictly speaking merely preliminary, can nevertheless be described as philosophic since only the philosopher is competent to elaborate that question and to answer it. One must go one step further and say, using the language of an ancient, that sophia and sophrosyne, or philosophy (as quest for the truth about the whole) and self-knowledge (as realization of the need of that truth as well as of the difficulties obstructing its discovery and its communication) cannot be separated from each other. This means, considering the relation of the questions 'why philosophy?' and 'what is the right way of life?' that one cannot become a philosopher without becoming engaged in the scientific investigation concerning justice and the virtues.'" (Farabi's silence on the Ideas is most striking, as Strauss notes: "A Platonist who would adopt such a view, might be expected to refer to the 'ideas' of justice and the other virtues: Farabi is completely silent about these as well as about any other 'ideas.'") "FP," 364.
Father Fortin writes:

Unlike Alfarabi and his successors, Aquinas was rarely forced to contend with an antiphilosophic bias on the part of the ecclesiastical authorities. As a Christian he could simply assume philosophy without becoming publicly involved in any argument for or against it. Not only was philosophy already accredited in the West and officially sanctioned by Canon Law but a knowledge of it was required of all students of theology. It is typical of the Christian society of the Middle Ages, in contrast to the Islamic and Jewish communities, that its churchmen were also schoolmen. This unique state of affairs appears to have engendered a preference for Aristotle's *Politics*, which presupposes a larger measure of agreement between philosophy and the city and hence a greater openness to philosophy on the part of the city than Plato's *Republic*. The canonical status which philosophy enjoyed in the Christian world helps to explain at the same time why Aquinas was able to discard as unnecessary or irrelevant the esotericism common to much of the ancient philosophic tradition and purposely affected by many of the Church Fathers with whose works he was acquainted.

... One must still ask how philosophy came to be received by Christianity in the first place and why the Aristotelianism of Aquinas and his disciples eventually replaced the Platonism of the Fathers as the traditional form of Christian theology. The clue to this deeper problem is to be sought ultimately in the difference between Christianity and either Islam or Judaism as religious and political societies. Christianity ... first comes

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1 Note: "Aristotle ... treats the habit of irony primarily as a vice." C&M, 51. Both Strauss and Fortin find revealing (and adduce) "the fact that the reasons which Maimonides had invoked to justify the concealing of philosophic truths from the multitude could be used by Aquinas to show instead why, in addition to supernatural truths, God has seen fit to reveal certain natural truths or truths that are accessible to human reason and experience alone." HistPP, 225. Cf. PAW, 20.

2 Strauss writes: "To understand these obvious differences, one must take into consideration the essential difference between Judaism
to sight as a faith or as a sacred doctrine, demanding adherence to a set of fundamental beliefs but otherwise leaving its followers at liberty to organize their social and political lives in accordance with norms and principles that are not specifically religious. This basic difference goes hand in hand with the difference that one notes in regard to the order of the sacred sciences within each religious community. . . . The highest science in Christianity was theology, whose prestige far exceeded any that was ever accorded to theological speculation in the Jewish and Arabic traditions. The same essential difference led to the further consequence that Christian society, and it alone, was ruled by two distinct powers and two distinct codes of law, one ecclesiastical or canonical and the other civil, each with its own sphere of competence and each relatively free in principle from interference on the part of the other. To the first belonged the care of directing men to their supernatural end; to the second, that of directing them to their earthly or temporal end. The upshot was that one was usually able to study political phenomena in the light of reason alone without directly challenging the established religious authority or running the risk of an open confrontation with it. As

and Islam on the one hand and Christianity on the other. Revelation as understood by Jews and Muslims has the character of Law (torah, shari'a) rather than of Faith. Accordingly, what first came to the sight of the Islamic and Jewish philosophers in their reflections on Revelation was not a creed or a set of dogmas, but a social order, if an all-comprehensive order, which regulates not merely actions but thoughts or opinions as well. Revelation thus understood lent itself to being interpreted by loyal philosophers as the perfect law, the perfect political order." PAW, 9-10.
a result, such specific issues as the origin of divine and human laws, the relation between the two, and the communication of divine laws through the medium of prophecy or revelation, which, as Avicenna observes, are discussed as political themes by Plato but not by Aristotle, were no longer seen to be as pertinent to the Christian philosophers as they had been to their Muslim and Jewish counterparts.

6. **Abravanel's Anti-Political Political Thought**

This contrast (adumbrated just above) and the centrality of Platonic political philosophy to Maimonides' rationalism are brought out clearly in Strauss's discussion of the opposite position of Don Isaac Abravanel, the most famous commentator of the Guide. Abravanel's reading of the Guide is "literal" and pious -- some might call it "fundamentalist."  

Abravanel has to be characterized, to begin with, as a strict, even passionate adherent of the literal interpretation of the Guide... Those commentators, who were under the spell of Islamic philosophy rather than of Christian scholasticism, are vehemently attacked by Abravanel, who finds words of the highest praise for the Christian scholastics. But Abravanel

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2 It may seem ironic that his fame rests not least on his brilliant political career: few Jews have risen to the exalted political eminence under Christian kings achieved by Abravanel.

3 See *Abravanel*, 103-104 and 128.

4 Notwithstanding the fact that Abravanel was "the first Jew who became deeply influenced by Christian political thought" "there is scarcely any other philosopher whom Abravanel admired so much, or whom he followed as much, as he did Maimonides." *Ibid.*, 126 and 95. Abravanel is often accused of inconsistency. See *Ibid.*, 104.
accepts the literal teaching of the Guide not only as the true expression of Maimonides' thought; that literal teaching is at the same time, if not identical with, at least the framework of, Abravanel's own philosophy.

Strauss writes of Abravanel's opposition to Maimonides, driving home the pointed contrast:

The unphilosophic, to some extent even anti-philosophic, traditionalism of Abravanel accounts for the fact that for him political philosophy loses the central importance which it had for Maimonides. From what has been said about Maimonides' philosophy of Judaism, it will have appeared that the significance which he actually attaches to political philosophy is in exact proportion to his rationalism: ... it means, in principle, interpreting Judaism as a whole as a perfect law in the Platonic sense. Accordingly, a follower of Maimonides, who rejected the thoroughgoing rationalism of the latter, as did Abravanel, deprived by this very fact political philosophy of all its dignity. One cannot raise the objection against this assertion that the Christian scholastics, while far from being radical rationalists, did indeed cultivate political philosophy. For the case of those scholastics who were citizens of existing states was obviously quite different from the case of the Jewish medieval thinkers. For a medieval Jew, political philosophy could have no other field of application than the Jewish law. Consequently, the

1Abravanel, 101.
value which political philosophy could have for him was entirely dependent on how far he would accept philosophy in general and political philosophy in particular as a clue to the understanding of the Jewish law. Now according to Maimonides, the prophet, who brought the law, is a philosopher statesman, and at least the greater part of the Mosaic law is concerned with the "government of the city." 

Abravanel, on the other hand, denies that philosophy in general is of the essence of prophecy. As regards political philosophy in particular, he declares that the prophet does not stoop to such "low" things as politics and economics. He stresses in this connection the fact that the originator of the biblical organization of jurisdiction was not Moses, but Jethro. In making these statements, Abravanel does not contest that Moses, as well as the other prophets, exercised a kind of government. As we shall see later, he even asserts this expressly. But he obviously does not accept the view, presupposed by Maimonides, that prophetic government is a legitimate subject of political philosophy. Political philosophy, as he understands it, has a much more restricted field than it had for Maimonides; it is much more of the Aristotelian than of the Platonic type. Abravanel's depreciation of political philosophy, which is a consequence of his critical attitude towards Maimonides' rationalism, thus implies a decisive limitation of the content of political philosophy.  

For Maimonides, the major political figures -- and, therefore, subjects duly dealt with by political philosophy -- are the prophet, the king, and the Messiah. For Abravanel the prophet and the Messiah are far above politics. Abravanel "stressed in his writings the Messianic hopes more
than any other Jewish medieval author, and he was the first to give the Messianic beliefs of Israel a systematic form." \(^1\) For him, the Messiah is associated with a miraculous new order; "the Messiah not less than the prophets, belongs to the sphere of miracles, not of politics." \(^2\)

Abravanel's anti-political understanding of Scripture is strained. \(^3\) In his opposition to kingship he breaks with Jewish tradition and goes against the traditional and simple apparent meaning of Deut. 17:14 ff. which Jewish tradition understands as an emphatic commandment to institute a king. Strauss writes:

Abravanel denies that Deut. xvii, 14 ff. expresses a command to institute a king in Israel. According to him, that passage merely gives permission to do this. We need not examine

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\(^1\) Abravanel, 108. Strauss explains Abravanel's ardent Messianic longings: "Abravanel [1437-1508] was a contemporary of the greatest revolutions in the history of the Jewish diaspora, and of that great revolution of European civilization which is called the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the modern period. Abravanel expected the coming of the Messiah in the near future. He saw signs of its imminence in all the characteristic features of his time, from the increase of heresies and unbelief down to the appearance of the 'French disease.' " \(^\text{Ibid.}\).

\(^2\) Ibid., 109. By contrast, Maimonides' portrait of the Messiah is emphatically political. Here is Strauss's sketch of it: "The Messiah . . . is, in the first instance, a king, obedient to the law, and a successful military leader, who will rescue Israel from servitude, restore the kingdom of David in the country of Israel.

\(^3\) Strauss indicates this in his notes. \(^\text{Ibid.}\). See his notes from 109-125.
whether his interpretation is right or not. What matters for us is, that the interpretation rejected by Abravanel was accepted as legally binding by Jewish tradition which was, as a rule, decidedly in favour of monarchy. The traditional interpretation had been accepted in particular by Maimonides, who had embodied it in his great legal work as well as in his Sepher ham-Misvot [sic].

Strauss shows that "Abravanel's interpretation, which is directly opposed to that of the Jewish tradition, is in substance identical with that implied in the Vulgate." Strauss points to borrowings from the Postilla of Nicolas of Lyra.

establish universal peace, and thus create, for the first time in history, the ideal earthly condition for a life devoted to knowledge. . . . Even according to the literal teaching of Maimonides, the Messiah does not work miracles, and the Messianic age in general does not witness any alteration of the ordinary course of nature . . . [T]hat age is not the prelude to the end of the visible world: the present world will remain in existence for ever." Strauss observes: "Maimonides' rationalism accounts in particular for the fact that he stresses so strongly the character of the Messiah as a successful military leader -- he does this most definitely by inserting his thematic treatment of Messianology within that section of his great legal work which deals with 'the kings and their wars'. For military ability or deficiency seems to be the decisive natural reason for the rise or decline of states. Maimonides, at any rate, thinks that the reason for the destruction of the Jewish state in the past was the neglect of the arts of war and conquest. Accordingly, he expects that military virtue and military ability will play a decisive part in the future restoration of the Jewish state." Ibid., 106-107.

1Strauss impressively marshals evidence from all the great Jewish commentators up to the contemporary commentary of Buber-Rosenzweig, indicating the preponderant consensus that the Deut. passage is a commandment to institute a king.

2Ibid., 119. The incorrect spelling is probably a typographical error. The last word should read "ha-Misvoth."

3Ibid., 120. Strauss adds: "Abravanel is, of course, much more explicit than the Vulgate can be." See Ibid., notes 2 and 3.

4Ibid., 121.
Now Strauss clearly recognizes that "both the Jewish and the Christian traditions, and in particular both the Jewish and the Christian Middle Ages, were in favour of monarchy."

"Anti-monarchist statements are, in both traditions, exceptional up to the humanist age." Strauss "dares," on the basis of a close comparative study,\(^1\) to make this statement:

We find that the Jewish Bible shows not the slightest sign of an anti-monarchist trend, based on theocratic assumptions. The only exception to this rule in the Christian Bible is the explanation of the passage in question given by Paulus of Burgos, i.e. by a baptized Jew. The result of this comparison confirms our impression that the immediate origin of Abravanel's anti-monarchist\(^2\) conclusions from his theocratic premises has to be sought for, not in Jewish, but in Christian sources.

Of Christian origin is, above all, Abravanel's general conception of the government of the Jewish nation. According to him, that government consists of two kinds of governments, of

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\(^1\) Strauss is careful to specify precisely what he compares.

Ibid., 123.

\(^2\) Abravanel's "inconsistency" should be noted. Strauss writes:

"In spite of his strong indictment of monarchic government, Abravanel no less strongly contends that, if in a country a monarchy exists, the subjects are bound to strict obedience to the king. He informs us that he has not seen in the writings of Jews a discussion of the question whether the people has the right to rebel against the king, or to depose him in case the king becomes a tyrant, and that the Christian scholars who did discuss that question, decided that the people had such a
a government human and of a government spiritual or divine. This distinction is simply the Christian distinction between the authority spiritual and the authority temporal.  

Strauss concludes:

His [Abravanel's] political ideal is of a strictly hierocratic character. It deserves to be stressed that he adopted the views of the extreme papalists. He had preferred Christian scholasticism to the philosophy of the Jewish rationalists, and he arrived at a political ideal which was nearer to the ideal of Gregory VII and Innocent III than to that of Maimonides.

right... Abravanel, who had spoken about this subject 'before kings with their wise men', judges that the people has no right to rebellion or deposition, even if the king commits every crime. For the people has, when crowning the king, made a covenant with him by which it promised to him obedience; 'and that covenant and oath was not conditional, but absolute; and, therefore, he who rebels against the king is guilty of death, whether the king is righteous or wicked; for it is not the people that inquires into the king's righteousness or wickedness'. Besides, the king represents God; he is an image of God as regards both absolute power (the extra-legal actions of the king correspond to the miracles) and unity (the king is unique in his kingdom, as God is unique in His universe). The king is, therefore, entitled to a kind of honour which has something in common with the honour owed by man to God. Consequently, any attempt on the side of the people to depose or to punish their king, is in a sense sacrilegious." [Strauss goes on to note that there is no inconsistency of theses: "If the second argument used by him in support of his thesis, that the people has no right to depose or punish a tyrannous king, is inconsistent with his denial of the value of monarchy, the thesis itself is perfectly consistent with his main contention, that monarchy, as such, is an enormous danger and a great evil."] Ibid., 114-116.

Ibid., 123-124.
He had undermined Maimonides' political philosophy of the law by contesting its ultimate assumption that the city is "natural," and by conceiving of the city as a product of human sin, i.e., he had started from unpolitical, and even antipolitical premises and he arrived at the political creed of clericalism.

7. Gersonides: A Truer Aristotelian

Neither Abravanel nor Marsilius of Padua were Aristotelian rationalists. Both were at odds with the scholastic spirit of

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1 Abravanel, 126-127.

2 Strauss helpfully relates Marsilius' doctrine to both Maimonides and to Aquinas: "His [Marsilius'] doctrine of the human law is reminiscent of Maimonides' suggestion according to which the human law serves no higher goal than the perfection of man's body, whereas the divine law brings about the perfection of both the body and the mind. But Maimonides held that the divine law is essentially rational and not, as it is according to Thomas, supra-rational. One may say that Marsilius combines Maimonides' view of the human law with Thomas' view of the divine law and thus arrives, within the confines of political philosophy, at the conclusion that the only law properly so called is the human law which is directed toward the well-being of the body. Marsilius was driven to take this view to some extent by his anticlericalism." LAM, 201.
rationalism. Each challenges the claim of the sufficiency of reason: Abravanel is radically anti-rational and Marsilius denies a central scholastic conviction: natural law. Therefore, the example of Levi ben Gershom (Gersonides) is adduced as an additional indication of the "Herabsetzung" of the political, by "the truest disciple of Aristotle whom medieval Jewish philosophy produced."

Gersonides' rationalism tends toward the extreme view according to which "sacred doctrine" -- the theoretical truths of Revelation -- are accessible to unassisted human reason. Levi ben Gershom, precisely because of his Aristotelian rationalism, does not

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1 This spirit is perhaps exhibited by the opening of the Summa Theologica which Strauss contrasts to the opening of the Guide: "Nothing is more revealing than the difference between the beginnings of the Guide and the Summa. The first article of the Summa deals with the question as to whether the sacred doctrine is required besides the philosophic disciplines: Thomas as it were justifies the sacred doctrine before the tribunal of philosophy, whereas Maimonides ... needed much more urgently a legal justification of philosophy." PAW, 20.

2 Abravanel, 110.

3 LAM, 200.

4 See P&G, 122.

5 PJ, 224. This characterization of Gersonides is quoted by Strauss in P&G, 57. Strauss quotes from the German edition of 1933. The English translation is not a translation of that edition, but of a later expanded and revised Hebrew version. I have left Strauss's page references to the German edition and have noted the page references to the English version, in most cases.
deem Revelation and the prophet to be especially appropriate or
particularly concernful subjects of philosophical investigation.

Strauss writes:

. . . Lewi erkennt weder prinzipiell übervernünftige
Wahrheiten an, die allein durch die Offenbarung verbürgt
werden können, noch schreibt er der Prophetie einen wesentlich
politischem Sinn zu: seiner Lehre zufolge ist die Funktion der
Prophetie vorzüglich mantisch. Also erst bei Lewi haben wir
es mit einem 'offenbarungsglaubigen Rationalismus' zu tun,
der, ohne Interesse an Offenbarung zu haben, dennoch an
Offenbarung glaubt und die Offenbarung wie alle anderen
Tatsachen zum Gegenstand der philosophischen Untersuchung
macht.

Strauss asserts that this extreme lack of concern with Revelation
as a paramount political phenomenon arises only upon the decay
("Zersetzung") of Platonism. He writes:

. . . gerade bei Lewi kann man sehen, wie dieser 'offen-
barungsglaubige Rationalismus' nur durch die Zersetzung des
Platonismus möglich geworden ist: Lewi erklärt ausdrücklich,
dass menschliches Vorsorgen für den Bestand der menschlichen
Verbände, wie Platon es für notwendig hielt, grundsätzlich
entbehrl ich ist, weil dieser Bestand durch die Vorsorge hin-
länglich verbürgt ist; der Platonische Idealstaat braucht nicht
erst von Menschen, und sei es auch von Propheten, hergestellt
tzu werden -- die von der Vorsorge regierte Welt und Menschentwelt
ist bereits der ideale Staat,² Die Vorsorge, die nach der Lehre
der islamischen Aristoteliker und Maimunis die Bedingung dafür

¹P&G, 66-67.

²Cf. NR, 144.
ist, dass das Desiderat einer prophetischen Gesetzgebung und Staatsgründung notwendig erfüllt wird, lässt es nach Lewis Behauptung nicht einmal zu diesem Desiderat kommen. Während nach Platon die Frage nach dem Gesetz, vor die Notwendigkeit menschlicher Fürsorge für den Menschen ihren Grund in dem Ausbleiben der göttlichen Fürsorge hat (Politikos 274d) und demgemäß die Verwirklichung des idealen Staates vom Zufall abhängt (Rep. 499b und Legg. 710c-d), während bei den mittelalterlichen Vorgängern Lewis infolge des im Glauben an die Vorsehung begründeten Glaubens an die Offenbarung der ideale Staat 'nur' seine Fragwürdigkeit verliert, verliert der ideale Staat infolge der durch Lewi vollzogenen 'Radikalisierung' der Vorsehungsidealität überhaupt seinen Sinn. Lewi nähert sich also nicht bloss dem 'neuzeitlichen Deismus' (228) -- er nähert sich damit zugleich in erstaunlicher Weise derjenigen modernen Politik, die zuerst ausdrücklich, später unausdrücklich auf Grund eines scheinbar radikalisierten, in Wahrheit abstrakten, die Macht des Bösen überschreitenden Vorsehungsüberzeugens die Wirksamkeit des Staates in die allernngsten Grenzen einschließen zu können glaubt.

8. Aspects of the Impact of Jerusalem on Platonism

Granting that the framework of Maimonides' philosophizing is of Platonic descent, we must not lose sight of the opposition of Athens and Jerusalem and its impact on the way--and why--Maimonides is a Platonist. As Strauss tells us:

Le caractère médiéval de la politique de Maimonide et des


P&G, 66. Numbers in parentheses in the quotations from P&G refer to Die Philosophie des Judentums.
falasifa n'est pas contredit par le fait qu'elle n'est autre chose qu'une modification, quoique considerable, d'une conception antique.

The pervasive specific difference, Strauss asserts, is this: "The medieval world is distinguished both from the classical and from the modern world by the fact that its thought, was fundamentally determined by the belief in Revelation."²

But it is the moderns, not the medievals, who radically modify the classical tradition to the point of "la rupture." To quote Strauss's French statement again:

Car il y a un accord profond entre la pensée juive et musulmane d'une part et la pensée antique d'autre part: ce n'est pas la Bible et le Coran, c'est peut-être le Nouveau Testament, c'est certainement la Réforme et la philosophie moderne qui ont amené la rupture avec la pensée antique. L'idée directrice sur laquelle Grecs et Juifs sont d'accord, c'est exactement, l'idée de la loi divine comme d'une loi une et totale qui est en même temps loi religieuse, loi civile et loi morale.

¹ "Qr," 2.

² Abravanel, 97.

³ "Qr," 2. As far as I know, Strauss nowhere elaborates his view of the contribution of "la Réforme" to "la rupture." On the contrary, his writings suggest that the break with the classical tradition is the conscious intention of modern political thought beginning with Machiavelli (a Renaissance Mediterranean Catholic): "la Réforme," more precisely, Puritanism, is implicated only as a "natural carrier" of the new understanding of social reality. Consider this passage in criticism of the Weber thesis: "The general conclusion: one cannot trace
The pervasiveness of the revelational traditionalism characteristic of the Middle Ages affected non-believers as well. Perhaps the most obvious demonstration of this fact is what is known about the availability of classical literary sources. We have noted Straussian suggestion that religiously motivated selection may account for the unavailability of Aristotle's Politics in the Islamic world. Even non-believers like Fārābī, in so far as they were "loyal," were the capitalist spirit to the Reformation.

Within the Renaissance an entirely new spirit emerged, the modern secular spirit. The greatest representative of this radical change was Machiavelli and there is a straight line 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 or science both natural and moral than, e.g., Lutherans because Calvinism had broken with 'pagan' philosophy (Aristotle) most radically; Puritanism was or became the natural carrier of a way of thinking which it had not originated in any way." "La Réforme" hardly "conceives of the social order as based not on pietà and virtue but on socially useful fashions or vices." And only out of such a "new understanding of social reality," Strauss asserts, can the spirit of capitalism emerge. Leo Strauss, "Comment," Church History, XXX:1 (March, 1961), 100-102. See also NB n. 22, 60-61. (May it be that Strauss wrote the French statement while still under the sway of Weber whom he at one time regarded "as the incarnation of the spirit of science and scholarship"? "Accounts," 3.) Cf. "Wild," 338.

1 See n. 2, 344, above.

2 Strauss writes, "Revelation was the determining factor with the Islamic philosophers as well as with the Jewish and Christian philosophers. But, as was clearly recognized by such contemporary and competent observers as Ghazzālī, Maimonides, and Thomas Aquinas, the Islamic philosophers did not believe in Revelation properly speaking. They were philosophers in the classical sense of the word: men who would hearken to reason, and to reason only. . . . Consequently
confronted by and confronted the revelational tradition of their community (especially is this so when the respective revelation is conceived of as primarily political). ¹

But Strauss emphasizes, notably, in his studies of Farabi ² that though medieval thinkers were not or could not be literally true to Plato, they were not on this account less true Platonists. Strauss's admiration for Farabi as a "true Platonist" shines forth clearly, in his discussion of Farabi's conspicuously non-literal approach to Plato:

Farabi's silence about the ideas and about the immortality of the soul shows certainly that he does not hesitate to deviate from the letter of Plato's teaching if he considers that literal

they were compelled to give an account of the Revelation which they had to accept and which they did accept, in terms of human reason. Their task was facilitated by the fact that Revelation, as understood by Jews or Muslims, had the form of law," Abravanel, 97.

¹ Again, this is Platonic: that is, Plato clearly recognizes that the politics and gods of the city are intertwined, nay, fused. It is Platonic too with respect to the resemblance of the tension between the "loyal" philosopher and the city. See "Sparta," 531-533, in particular.

² "FP," and "How Farabi Read Plato's Laws."
teaching erroneous. He may have believed that Plato himself considered the doctrines in question merely exoteric. But he may, or he may not have believed that the teaching which he ascribes to Plato by his silence as well as by his speech, was the Platonic teaching; he certainly considered it the true teaching. His Plato is then not a historical work. ... He presents, not so much the historical Plato, as the typical philosopher who, as such, after having reached maturity of the mind, "comme un homme qui marche seul et dans les ténèbres," has to start afresh and to go his own way however much he may be assisted by the exertions of his teachers. His attitude to the historical Plato is comparable to the attitude of Plato himself to the historical Socrates, and to the attitude of the Platonic Socrates himself to, say, historical Egypt: "With what ease dost thou, o Fârâbî, invent Platonic speeches." By this very fact he reveals himself as a true Platonist. For Platonists are not concerned with the historical (accidental) truth, since they are exclusively interested in the philosophic (essential) truth. Only because public speech demands a mixture of seriousness and playfulness, can a true Platonist present the serious teaching, the philosophic teaching, in a historical, and hence playful, garb. The sovereign use which Fârâbî makes of the historical materials, presupposes of course that such materials were at his disposal. For the historian, it is of utmost importance that the extent, and the character, of the information available to Fârâbî, be established as exactly as possible. But even this cannot be done properly, if one does not bear in mind the non-historical purpose of the Plato: a number of apparently fanciful remarks on the purport of various dialogues may be due to Fârâbî's desire to intimate an important philosophic truth rather than to misinformation. To consider the author of the Plato a mere epitomist of a lost Greek text, means to disregard, not only the admiration which men of the competence of Avicenna and Maimonides felt for Fârâbî, but likewise the exceedingly careful wording of the Plato itself. ... It may be added that by transmitting the most precious knowledge, not in "systematic" works, but in the guise of a historical account, Fârâbî indicates his view concerning "originality" and "individuality" in philosophy: what comes into sight as the "original" or "personal"
"contribution" of a philosopher is infinitely less significant than his private, and truly original and individual, understanding of the necessarily anonymous truth. ¹

Strauss suggests that "the best clue to the understanding of their [Maimonides' and his predecessors'] teaching is supplied by the Laws." ² (Strauss also stresses the importance of the Republic, I submit that the Republic is central to "die gesetzliche Begründung der Philosophie" and the Laws, to "die philosophische Begründung des Gesetzes." As we have seen, the former corresponds to the "deeper" meaning of political philosophy, and thus the Republic may be said to be more profoundly central to these thinkers. ³

Let us attempt to see something of the way Plato's Laws were taken up by these thinkers.

Because Strauss underscores the prominent importance of the Laws, one would expect that he would have written on it at length; and in this expectation one is disappointed: he has written very little

¹"FP," 376-377. ²Abravanel, 98.

³Strauss observes: "Derivates from the root klm occur quite frequently in . . . [Fārābī's] Summary[ of Plato's Laws] (twenty-six times, I believe). On the other hand they are completely absent from the Philosophy of Plato. As Fārābī elsewhere explains, kālām, or discussion of the roots of the laws or religions, is the art of defending the laws or religions. We shall venture to describe the relation of the Summary and the Philosophy of Plato as follows: the Philosophy of Plato presents Plato's philosophy whereas the Summary presents his art of kālām." Also see "FP," 358.
indeed on the Laws. He has nowhere discussed (in print) the "true meaning" of the Laws; he has written only several paragraphs devoted to the Laws as part of larger studies; he has not given the Laws the attention he has devoted to the Republic or the Politics.

This may reflect his conviction that the Laws deal with a political order inferior to that of the Republic. It "builds" a city which defers to the body and to "a god" in contrast to the Republic which projects the simply best city which defers to neither.  

1 It is perhaps foolhardy to speculate on why someone does not write more on what he proclaims to be important. One can say, with little risk, that Strauss feels the Republic and the Politics are the paramount classical sources which instruct us in understanding the political -- the nature of the city and its limits, and such instruction is urgently required in the face of "the crisis of the West." See the Introduction to C&M, 1-12. (After completing the thesis, I learned of the publication of Leo Strauss's, The Argument and the Action of Plato's Laws (University of Chicago Press, May, 1975). It is perhaps significant that Strauss apparently regarded publishing this work on the Laws a lesser priority.)

2 Strauss writes: "The Republic and the Statesman transcend the city in different but kindred ways. They show first how the city would have to transform itself if it wishes to maintain its claim to supremacy in the face of philosophy. They show then that the city is incapable of undergoing this transformation. The Republic shows silently that the ordinary city -- i.e., the city which is not communistic and which is the association of the fathers rather than of the artisans -- is the only city that is possible. The Statesman shows explicitly the necessity of the rule of laws. The Republic and the Statesman reveal, each in its own way, the essential limitation and therewith the essential character of the city. They thus lay the foundation for answering the question of the best political order, the best order of the city compatible with the nature of man. But they do not set forth that best possible order. This task is left for the Laws. We may then say that the Laws is the only political work proper of Plato." HistPP: 51-52.
What Strauss does say about the Laws does indicate why it might have become important to philosophizing adherents of a revelation which is primarily, or in large measure, law. Consider the following passages:

... while in the Republic education to moderation proves to culminate in the love of the beautiful, in the Laws moderation rather takes on the colors of sense of shame or of reverence.¹

The most conspicuous part of the legislation proper [of the Laws] concerns impiety, which is of course treated within the context of the penal law. The fundamental impiety is atheism or the denial of the existence of gods. Since a good law will not merely punish crimes or appeal to fear but will also appeal to reason, the Athenian stranger is compelled to demonstrate the existence of gods and, since gods who do not care for men’s justice, who do not reward the just and punish the unjust, are not sufficient for the city, he must demonstrate divine providence as well. The Laws is the only Platonic work which contains such a demonstration. It is the only Platonic work which begins with “A god.” One might say that it is Plato’s most pious work, and that it is for this reason that he strikes therein at the root of impiety, i.e., at the opinion that there are no gods. The Athenian stranger takes up the question regarding the gods, although it was not even raised in Crete or in Sparta; it was, however, raised in Athens.²

Stability is guaranteed by obedience on the part of the large majority of citizens to wise laws which are as unchangeable as possible...³

¹ HistPP, 54. ² Ibid., 59. ³ Ibid., 60.
Also consider the following excerpts from Strauss's longest discussion of the Laws:

The character of classical political philosophy appears with the greatest clarity from Plato's Laws, which is his political work par excellence... At the beginning one receives the impression that the Athenian has come to Crete in order to study there the best laws. For if it is true that the good is identical with the ancestral, the best laws for a Greek would be the oldest Greek laws, and these are the Cretan laws. But the equation of the good with the ancestral is not tenable if the first ancestors were not gods, or sons of gods, or pupils of gods. Hence the Cretans believed that their laws were originated by Zeus, who instructed his son Minos, the Cretan legislator. The Laws opens with an expression of this belief. It appears immediately afterwards that this belief has no other ground, no better ground, than a saying of Homer -- and the poets are of questionable veracity -- as well as what the Cretans say -- and the Cretans were famous for their lack of veracity.¹ However this may be, very shortly after its beginning, the conversation shifts from the question of the origins of the Cretan laws and the Spartan laws to the question of their intrinsic worth: a code given by a god, by a being of superhuman excellence, must be unqualifiedly good. Very slowly, very circumspectly does the Athenian approach this grave question. . . . [H]e has to apprehend that his suggestions will be odious; not only as innovations, but above all as foreign, as Athenian: deep-seated, old animosities and suspicions will be aroused by his recommendations.

¹Farabi points to the distinction between the true legislator and impostors. He imputes to Plato's Laws the warning against impostors. See How Farabi Read... "WPP 150-151.

²Strauss paraphrases Farabi: "While, as Plato makes clear, the laws are superior to wisdom of every kind, it is right, as he intimates, to examine the laws, i.e., not indeed to examine their origin or efficient cause, but to discover in what way their particular stipulations are agreeable to right reason. Such examination presupposes clarity as to what constitutes the virtuous city." Ibid.
The *Laws* begins with the word "God": it is the only Platonic dialogue which begins in that manner. There is one and only one Platonic dialogue which ends with the word "God": the *Apology of Socrates*. In the *Apology of Socrates* an old Athenian philosopher, Socrates, defends himself against the charge of impiety, of not believing that the gods worshiped by the city of Athens exist. It seems that there is a conflict between philosophy and accepting the gods of the city. In the *Laws* an old Athenian philosopher recommends a law about impiety which renders impossible the conflict between philosophy and the city, or which brings about harmony between philosophy and the city. The gods whose existence is to be admitted by every citizen of the city of the *Laws* are beings whose existence can be demonstrated.

Strauss, of course, is hardly inattentive himself to the way the *Laws* were "read" by thinkers of the period: he suggests that "three different ways" were open to the "Muslim reader":

He could reject Plato's claim by contending that Plato lacked completely the guidance supplied by Revelation. He could use the Platonic standards for judging, or criticizing, specific Islamic institutions, if not for rejecting Islam altogether. He could contend that Islam, and Islam alone, lives up to the true standards set forth by Plato, and on this basis elaborate a purely rational justification of both the content and the origin of Islam.²

(I believe it might be said that Maimonides availed himself of all "three ways" at once.) Strauss, discussing Farabi's *Summary of

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¹ WPP 29-33. Cf. "Notes," 276. Muḥsin Mahdi sums up the resemblances between the *Laws* and Islam (and they would hold good for Judaism as well): "Both begin with a god as the ultimate cause of legislation and consider correct beliefs about divine beings and the world of nature as essential for the constitution of a good political regime. In both, these beliefs should reflect an adequate image of the cosmos, make accessible to the citizens at large (and in a form they can grasp) the truth about divine things and about the highest principles of the world, be conducive to virtuous action, and form part of the equipment.

² WPP 144.
whether the bewildering features of the Summary cannot be partly understood if one takes into consideration Fārābī's awareness of the fundamental difference between Islam and Plato's philosophic politics. Fārābī may have rewritten the Laws, as it were, with a view to the situation that was created by the rise of Islam or of revealed religion generally. He may have tried to preserve Plato's purpose by adapting the expression of that purpose to the new medium. Desiring to act appropriately with a view to what is useful, he may have desired to ascribe his revised version of Plato's teaching to the dead Plato in order to protect that version, or the sciences generally speaking, especially by leaving open the question as to whether he agreed with everything his Plato taught and by failing to draw a precise line between his mere report and his independent exposition.¹

necessary for the attainment of ultimate happiness. Both consider the functions of the founder and legislator, and after him of his successors in the leadership of the community, of absolutely central importance for its organization and preservation. Both are concerned with the giving and the preserving of divine laws. Both are opposed to the view that mind or soul is derivative from body or is itself bodily -- a view that undermines human virtue and communal life -- and to the timorous piety that condemns man to despair of the possibility of ever understanding the rational meaning of the beliefs he is called upon to accept or of the activities he is called upon to perform. Both direct the eyes of the citizens to a happiness beyond their worldly concerns." HistPP, 183.

¹ WPP, 144.
It is then clear that whether the Muslim or Jewish thinker was pious or not -- even, a believer or not -- his reading of the Laws can hardly be oblivious to the particular revelation which pervasively informs his world. And though, notwithstanding any modifications of his Plato's Laws, he may well have been a "true Platonist," nevertheless those modifications are significant, as indicated by the following examples. Strauss tells us that Farabi "conceives of the Laws, not, as Plato himself had done, as a correction of the Republic, but as a supplement to the Republic; whereas according to Plato the Republic and the Laws deal with essentially different political orders (politeia)."

Not less comprehensive or significant is the modification we discern in Maimonides who deviates from Plato and from Farabi as well, in his insistence on the supremacy of Law in his "political science." (Recall Yehuda Halevi's criticism of the lack of "categoric laws" in the "religion of the philosophers.") It is Plato's view even in the Laws, Strauss says, that "laws are only second best:

\[1\] "FP," 380, n. 55. Strauss notes: "Farabi's view is closely akin to that of Cicero . . . according to whom the Republic deals with the best political order and the Laws deal with the best laws belonging to the very same best political order." Ibid.
no law can be as wise as the decision of a truly wise man on the
spot."¹ Farābī, according to Strauss, is even more emphatic:

It is as if Farābī had interpreted the absence of Socrates from
the Laws to mean that Socrates has nothing to do with laws,
and as if he had tried to express this interpretation by suggesting
that if per impossibile the Laws were Socratic, they would not
deal with laws.

² Strauss comments on Maimonides' "political science" as it emerges
from his Treatise on the Art of Logic (Milḥot ha-higgayon, his youthful
"philosophic book").

According to Farābī, whom Maimonides regarded as the
philosophic authority second only to Aristotle, the unchangeable
divine law . . . is only a substitute for the government of a
perfect ruler who governs without written laws and who changes
his ordinances in accordance with the change of times as he
sees fit. The rule of living intelligence appears to be superior
to the rule of law. There is then a form of sound political
governance which is akin to the governance of the household, or
to paternal rule, in that it pays due regard to time and place
as well as to what is good for each individual -- the form of
political governance which Plato and Aristotle had praised most
highly. Maimonides mentions the rule of living intelligence in
the household and the rule of law in the city; he does not mention
the rule of living intelligence in the city . . . [1] It is quite certain
that he omitted the rule of living intelligence in the city or nation.

¹HistPP, 60. ²WPP? 153.

³WPP? 158. Strauss writes: "We are tempted to say that the Logic
is the only philosophic book which Maimonides ever wrote." See WPP? 169.

⁴WPP? 163-164.
And the reason for this omission is hardly based on purely philosophic grounds; on the contrary, from the following it is to be seen that Maimonides agrees with the philosophical assessment of the rule of living intelligence as superior to the rule of nomoi, but agreeing with Halevi he contrasts the nomoi of the philosophers with God's Law and finds them and human intelligence inferior. Strauss writes:

In his thematic discussion of nomos in the Guide, he suggests that the nomos, in contradistinction to the divinely revealed law, is directed only toward the well-being of the body and is unconcerned with divine things. The nomos is, then, essentially the order of a "civil state" as distinguished from a "religious state." One might think that the philosophers did not admit the possibility of a "civil state": according to them, divine worship is an essential function, and in a sense the primary function, of civil society. But this objection overlooks the fact that while the nomos must indeed be strengthened by myth or by a "governmental religion," that religion is not part of the primary intention of the nomos and of the association which is ordered by it.

Whereas the nomos entails a religion that is in the service of government, the divinely revealed law which is a subject of the same branch of political philosophy as the nomos puts government in the service of religion, of the true religion, of the truth. The divinely revealed law is therefore necessarily free from the relativity of the nomos, i.e., it is universal as regards place and perpetual as regards time. It is then a much loftier social order than the nomos. Hence it is exposed to dangers which did not threaten the pagan nomoi. For instance, the public discussion of "the account of creation," i.e., of physics, did not harm the pagans in the way in which it might harm the adherents
of revealed laws. The divinely revealed laws also create dangers which did not exist among the Greeks: they open up a new source of disagreement among men. . . .

. . . Maimonides . . . forces us to consider the effects produced upon the character of laws by the change from paganism to revealed religion.

9. "Was hat der Jude mit Platon oder Aristoteles zu schaffen"? 2

These modifications of Plato by medieval "Platonists" are clearly significant. Above, we indicated why they are to be considered fundamentally Platonists, but more substance is required. We may well keep in mind these questions. Why, despite the significant modifications mentioned and the implicit critique of Plato they entail, may Maimonides yet be called a Platonist? Why are

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1 WPP? 164–165. See Strauss's interesting note on Hugo Grotius' mistaken view "that there is a genuinely Jewish doctrine of natural law." (Maimonides does not use the term.) Strauss points out that "Maimonides makes it clear that only the first two propositions [of the Decalogue] are 'rational,' whereas the eight others belong to the class of generally accepted and of traditional opinions (Guide, II, 33)." Strauss suggests that Maimonides did not use the term because he concurs with Averroes and Marsilius holding "that the ius naturale can only metaphorically be called 'natural.'" PAW, 96–97, n. 4, 5. Strauss epitomizes the view of Marsilius as follows: "According to Marsilius of Padua, natural right as Aristotle meant it is that part of positive right which is recognized and observed everywhere (divine worship, honoring of parents, raising of offspring, etc.); it can only metaphorically be called natural right. The dictates of right reason regarding the things to be done (i.e., natural law in the Thomistic sense), on the other hand, are not as such universally valid because they are not universally known and observed." Leo Strauss, "Natural Law," Encyclopedia of Social Sciences. See LAM, 201.

2 P&G, 69.
Maimonides and his predecessors so conspicuously Aristotelian if they are fundamentally Platonists? Most basic of all: given the opposition of Athens and Jerusalem, what kind of status can philosophy have in Jerusalem? Strauss, as always, is helpful in pointedly putting the question:


In one place, and only there, Strauss offers this explanation: "Et c'est ... en partant des exigences de la politique platonisante de Farabi qu'on peut et doit comprendre la réception de la physique d'Aristote: le platonisme ne donnait pas (ou ne semblait pas donner) des garanties suffisantes contre les superstitions de l'antiquité mourante; la renaissance, menacée par des spéculations hybrides, de la politique platonicienne n'était pas possible sans l'aide de la physique d'Aristote, laquelle sauvaît la base de la recherche de Socrate et de Platon, le monde du sens commun." "Or," 6. Is this perhaps what Maimonides has in mind when he advises: "The writings (literally: words) of Aristotle's teacher Plato are in parables and hard to understand. One can dispense with them for the writings of Aristotle suffice. ..." The translator of the Guide, S. Pines, notes: "Now the Guide itself is an example of the philosophic views of veiled language and the need, the political necessity, to employ it constitutes one of the main themes of this work. It is a theme, moreover, that is bound up with others as, or even more, important: for instance, prophecy, the function of the philosopher in human society. ... As Leo Strauss has shown Maimonides' views on these matters were in the last analysis determined by Plato's position. ..." Translator's Introduction, Guide, lix, and xxvi.
Was hat der Jude mit Platon oder Aristoteles zu schaffen, dass er an ihrer Tür wachen sollte, um von ihnen Weisheit zu lernen? Sind die Werke dieser Philosophen nicht profane Bücher, die das Herz mit erdichteten Meinungen und irregen Ansichten verführen?  

In the attempt to speak to these questions, we shall follow Strauss's discussion of the previously mentioned chapter headings.  

Just as Strauss begins and concludes his Philosophie und Gesetz with insightful remarks of Hermann Cohen's and draws out of them a significance not fully or strictly intended by Cohen, so Strauss in the middle section of the book proceeds in an ad hominem way to make over -- to make his own -- the terms and comments of Julius Guttmann. It is in making "ganz zu eigen" Guttmann's assertion that the chief achievement of Jewish medieval thought is "Religionsphilosophie" that Strauss expounds "die gesetzliche Begründung der Philosophie," which

1P&G, 68-69.

2For the most part, in P&G.

3Perhaps this may be said to be Strauss's application of Socratic-dialectic. It does appear to be a way which he favors. It perhaps suggests why Strauss wrote so many book reviews. Some of his best writing, and often a special élan, is to be found in his reviews. Recall Strauss saying that "the philosopher has to . . . argue ad hominem or 'dialectically.'" The book review is a genre of modern letters which invites ad hominem or dialectical response.
Unter allen Umständen ist die mittelalterliche Philosophie von der antiken wie von der modernen durch die Situation verschieden, die mit der Wirklichkeit der Offenbarung gegeben ist. Nicht nur muss jeder mittelalterliche Philosoph ausdrücklich oder wenigstens stillschweigend, aufrichtig oder wenigstens nach aussen ihm bei der Behandlung aller wichtigen Fragen auf die Offenbarung Rücksicht nehmen; vielmehr ist für alle mittelalterlichen Philosophen, soweit sie Juden bleiben wollen, wenigstens 'die formale Anerkennung der Autorität der Offenbarung ... selbstverständliche Voraussetzung (259). ... Die Anerkennung der Autorität der Offenbarung ist 'selbstverständlich'. Die mittelalterlichen Philosophen bemühen sich zwar, die Möglichkeit der Offenbarung philosophisch und die Wirklichkeit der Offenbarung historisch darzutun; aber diese Begründungen bestätigen doch nur, was schon vor der Begründung feststand, sich 'von selbst' verstand. Denn die Möglichkeit der Offenbarung folgt aus ihrer Wirklichkeit, ihre Wirklichkeit aber ist unmittelbar bekannt, trotz und wegen der vermittelnden Tradition unmittelbar bekannt. An der übermenschlichen Weisheit und Gerechtigkeit der Tora sieht der sehende Jude, an der übermenschlichen Schönheit des Qur'an sieht der sehende Muslim, dass die Offenbarung wirklich ist. Die Anerkennung der Autorität der Offenbarung ist Voraussetzung des Philosophierens als solchen. Diese Voraussetzung geht allem Philosophieren voraus; 'sie wird nicht vom menschlichen Denken zugrunde gelegt, sondern sie ist zuvor dem menschlichen Denken auferlegt. Weil die Anerkennung der Autorität der Offenbarung früher ist als das Philosophieren und weil die Offenbarung von Menschen ganz beansprucht, darum wird nunmehr das Philosophieren nur möglich als geboten durch das offenbare Gesetz. Es ist nun also nicht mehr in das Belieben des zum Philosophieren geeigneten Menschen gestellt, ob er philosophieren
will oder nicht, derart, dass er die naturlichen Folgen seines 
Beliebens zu tragen hütte und weiter nichts; es ist nun nicht 
mehr unbestimmt, ob der Philosoph durch sich selbst oder 
durch eine Autorität zum Philosophieren bestellt ist (vgl. Platon, 
Apol. 28d... 2 la-b und Phaidon 60 e-61 a); sondern der einzige 
Gott verpflichtet die dazu geeigneten Menschen durch einen 
offenbaren, eindeutigen, einfachen Befehl seines offenbarten 
Gesetzes zum Philosophieren. So lehren auch und gerade die 
'radikalsten Denker' des Mittelalters, allen voran Ibn Ruschd 
selbst. Aus der neuen Situation des Philosophierens, der 
Gebundenheit durch die Offenbarung, geht also eine neue 
Aufgabe der Philosophen, ihre Verantwortung vor der Offenbarung, 
hervor. Ihre 'exoterischen' Schriften haben nicht so sehr die 
Funktion, die Menschen zum Philosophieren zu überreden oder 
anzutreiben, als vielmehr Vermöge einer 'gesetzlichen 
Spekulation' zu zeigen, dass das Philosophieren Pflicht ist, dass 
es in seiner Form und in seinem Gehalt der Meinung der Offen-
barung entspricht. In diesem Sinne machen wir uns die Behauptung 
Guttmann's, die originale Leistung des Mittelalters sei die 
'Religionsphilosophie', ganz zu eigen: die mittelalterliche 
(islamische und jüdische) Philosophie unterscheidet sich von der 
antiken sowohl wie von der modernen Philosophie charakteristisch 
dadurch, dass sie, sich selbst als durch Offenbarung gebunden 
und ermächtigt verstehend, als ihr erstes und dringlichstes Anliegen 
die Grundlegung der Philosophie in einer 'gesetzlichen Begründung 
der Philosophie ansieht.

The Law-ful basis and precept of philosophizing affords, and 

indeed commands, 'freedom to philosophize, "eine vollständige Freiheit... 
ganz oder beinahe so frei ist," as that which the non-adherent philo-
sopher may enjoy.² Maimonides and his predecessors are ardent.

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¹P&G, 47-48. The relevant passage from which Strauss is quoting is to be found in Guttmann's PJ, 244-245. Guttmann speaks of "the authoritarian concept of religion which governs the entire Jewish tradition, and with it, all Jewish philosophy of religion. [Then follows the sentence quoted by Strauss] The formal acknowledgment of the authority of revelation was also a self-evident assumption for the most radical thinkers of the Jewish Middle Ages, insofar as they wanted to be considered Jews."

²P&G, 48.
champions of this freedom (for the few who are fit to philosophize).

It is in this freedom grounded in the Law and issuing from it that the Revelation of the Law is treated philosophically. This thematic philosophical treatment of Revelation is "die philosophische Begründung des Gesetzes." One will readily avoid confusing it with "die gesetzliche Begründung der Philosophie" if one underscores the primary adjective in each. "Gesetzliche" indicates that the Gesetz is prior to any philosophizing, whereas "philosophische" emphasizes philosophical investigation of the Gesetz. Strauss expresses the difference as follows:

Die ... philosophische Begründung des Gesetzes unterscheidet sich von der gesetzlichen Begründung der Philosophie dadurch, dass diese als Grundlegung der Philosophie allem Philosophieren vorangeht, während jene ein Teil des philosophischen Lehrgebäudes selbst ist. Die Offenbarung, vor der sich die Philosophie als solche zu verantworten hat, ist also für die Philosophie nur ein Thema unter anderen. Und zwar ist sie keinesfalls das erste oder das zentrale Thema: an erster Stelle steht viel eher

1 Cohen (quoted by Strauss, P&G, 119) remarks on Maimonides' "Enthusiasmus für die reine Theorie": "Was Maimuni von Aristoteles nicht bloss gelernt hat, sondern worin er ihm bei aller Tiefe der Differenz ein Vorbild und ein Leiter war und blieb, dass der Enthusiasmus für die reine Theorie, für die wissenschaftliche Erkenntnis um ihrer selbst willen und als letzten absoluten Zweck des menschlichen Daseins." But Cohen recognizes that Maimonides can afford to follow his theoretical bent because he is grounded in the Law. Strauss writes: "Cohen spricht es aus: Maimuni 'unterschätzte die Gefahr, die in der Herabsetzung der Ethik bei Aristoteles gelegen ist. Auch konnte er von seinem Standpunkte aus diese Gefahr leichter übersehen, weil er ja den Wert der Ethik in seiner Religion geborgen sah.'" P&G, 122.
die Logik, und im Mittelpunkt steht viel eher die Metaphysik.¹

Though it be only "ein Teil" and not the central one, the philosophical treatment of revelation is of singular importance because therein one discerns "die philosophische Grundlegung der mittelalterlichen Philosophie."²

But what does it mean to subject revelation to philosophic scrutiny? If reason or philosophy is sufficient, what need is there for revelation? More, why should the philosopher be particularly interested in it, much less subject himself to its prescriptions?

These are questions Strauss puts to Guttmann, who asserts that "uneingeschränkte Rationalismus" predominates particularly in the Jewish thought of the period. Indeed, Guttmann goes so far as to

¹P&G, 48-49.

identify the relation of revelation and reason as conceived in this
medieval period with that which prevailed in the modern Enlightenment.

Strauss quotes him:

Noch die Aufklärung des achttzehnten Jahrhunderts fasst,
goweit sie am Offenbarungsglauben festhält, das Verhältnis
von Vernunft und Offenbarung in grundsätzlich gleicher Art.

\[^{1}\text{P\&G, 50.} \]

The pertinent passage from which Strauss quotes
reads in Guttmann's PeL, 63, as follows: "What is the purpose of a
revelation of truths, if reason can apprehend them through its own
powers? In reply, Saadia propounded the idea of the pedagogic value
of revelation. This idea, which became very influential in medieval
thought, was developed in two directions. In the first place, revelation
seeks to make the truth available to every man, even to those who are
unable to think for themselves. Secondly, it seeks to protect the
philosophers themselves from the uncertainties and inconstancies of
thought, and to give them from the very beginning that absolute truth
at which their thought would arrive only after sustained and protracted
effect . . . The notion appears in Maimonides, from which it passes
to Christian scholasticism, which had already been prepared for it by
similar views in ancient Christian theology. Even the modern Enlighten-
ment of the eighteenth century, insofar as it maintains the idea of
revelation, views the relationship between religion and revelation in
fundamentally the same manner."

The last is the sentence quoted.

Strauss's immediate reply cites another statement of Guttmann's which
clearly distinguishes the view of moderns who identify the truths of
"gefundene Menschenverstandes" with revealed truths and the medieval view
which maintains that only the most gifted few can -- after many long
years of the utmost intellectual exertion -- arrive at the truths of
Strauss opposes this position of Guttman's in the strongest terms:

Wir müssen gestehen, dass uns der so verstandene 'offenbarungsgläubige Rationalismus' -- nicht nur sachlich unhaltbar, das ist er auch nach Guttmanns Ansicht (s. bes. 218f.), sondern vor allem -- in sich selbst unverständlich zu sein scheint. Wir geben zu: auch wer glaubt, dass die Offenbarung dem Philosophen nichts sage, was er sich selbst nicht sagen kann, kann dennoch an Offenbarung 'glauben', d. h. zur Kenntnis nehmen, dass eine Offenbarungsurkunde existiert, und dass alle von ihm selbständig gewonnenen Einsichten sich, wenn auch mehr oder weniger verhüllt, in dieser Urkunde finden. Aber da er sie in dieser Urkunde gar nicht wiederfinden konnte, wenn er sie nicht auf dem Wege eigenen Nachdenkens zuerst gefunden hat: welches Interesse hat er dann an Offenbarung? ... Das Faktum der Offenbarung, so verstanden, ist ein factum brutum, das, wie alle facta bruta, für neugierige Tatsachen- und Ursachenjäger 'interessant' sein mag, aber eben darum den Philosophen nichts angeht. Wer so an Offenbarung 'glaubt', behält wirklich wie Lessing sagt, nur den Namen bei und verwirft die Sache.

Guttmann appears to cast all medieval Jewish thought into the mold of his understanding of Saadia. He asserts that

vor allem, sie ["die Mehrheit der späteren jüdischen Religionsphilosophen"] leugnen, dass es irgendeinen Überschuss des Offenbarungsinhalts über den Bereich der Vernunft hinaus gebe.

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1 See PJ, 202. Guttmann, speaking of a post-Maimonidean thinker, says that "he approximates the older idea when he says that the divine law has a bearing on truth, even for those souls who are more perfect than the ordinary run of human beings. The Torah refers to those philosophic truths which are within the grasp of the human intellect and to those prophetic truths which the unaided intellect cannot attain."

2 P&G, 51-52.

3 Saadia Ibn Joseph (882-942) -- Gaon of the Sura Academy.
Guttmann asserts that they hold that the content of "göttlichen Offenbarung...mit dem der Vernunft identisch [ist]." Guttmann explains:

Das hat mehr als die bloss negative Bedeutung, dass es zwischen beiden keinen Widerspruch geben kann, es besagt positiv, dass die Vernunft von sich aus den Inhalt der Offenbarungswahrheit zu erkennen imstande ist. Das gilt gleichmässig für den theoretischen wie für den sittlichen Gehalt der Offenbarung.

What then is the purpose of revelation? According to Guttmann, its purpose is pedagogic. It makes the highest truths easily accessible to all, to those who could not have arrived at them independently as well as to philosophers who are thus protected from "the uncertainties and inconsistencies of thought." What Strauss does not question is the adequacy of Guttmann's understanding of Saadia. He does vehemently oppose Guttmann's characterization of medieval Jewish rationalism (and as we indicated, even Guttmann has difficulty maintaining it consistently).

1 Quote by Strauss, P&C, 50. See Guttmann's PJ, 62-64. What Strauss denies above all is Guttmann's assertion that the following is true of most Jewish medieval thinkers. "Both fundamental metaphysical truth and the moral demands of revelation are evident to our unaided reason...agreement with reason...[is] a necessary precondition for the acceptance of any doctrine claiming the status of revelation." PJ, 63.

2 See 376, n.1, and 380, n.1, above.
Halevi and Maimonides. He responds emphatically: [However one conceives of Maimonides' "Ausgleich" of reason and Revelation, he must recognize that]


As for Saadia, Strauss says:

Der Umstand insbesondere, dass Saadia die Identität von Offenbarung -- und Vernunftwahrheit lehrt, -- gesetzt dass er das wirklich tut --, kann bei einem summarischen Urteil über die jüdische Philosophie des Mittelalters getrost vernachlässigt werden, aus demselben Grund und mit demselben Recht, mit dem Guttmann bei seiner summarischen Vergleichung von mittelalterlicher und moderner Philosophie von Saadia absicht; denn Saadia, der vor der eigentlichen Entfaltung der Philosophie lebte, kann gar nicht eine so klare Vorstellung von den Schwierigkeiten, die Lehren der Offenbarung allein durch die Vernunft zu erkennen,

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1 P&G, 56.

2 This is the entire extent of Strauss's questioning the adequacy of Guttmann's understanding of Saadia: "gesetzt dass er das wirklich tut," Guttmann acknowledges: "... the tensions implicit in the ambiguous identification of reason and revelation are discernible in Saadia. In his systematic discussion of the problem he demands that the believer approach philosophy with the prior conviction of the truth of revelation. The task of philosophy was merely to provide rational proof of what was already known through revelation. Elsewhere, however, Saadia declares agreement with reason to be a necessary precondition for the acceptance of any doctrine claiming the status of revelation. Although Saadia makes this statement explicitly only with regard to the ethical teaching of religion, its validity may justifiably be extended to
At issue between Guttman and Strauss is the centrality of "das politische Problem." For Guttman, the problem, the central concern and the hallmark of medieval Jewish thought and its singular achievement, is "das Problem des Verhältnisses von theoretischem
to the whole theoretical content of the Torah." PJ 63. But Guttman labels Saadia's ethical rationalism as "somewhat superficial," "utilitarian," and "primitive." Guttman's dissatisfaction with Saadia's "rationalism" is evident in the following comment "No less primitive is the argument -- used by many later Jewish thinkers -- contending that these commandments [the "ethical rational" ones] need supplementing by means of revelation. The required supplements are mere legal technicalities and are not distinguished from the ethical commandments themselves." PJ, 70. There appear to be "tensions" discernible in Guttman's view of Saadia. Strauss takes note of them in P&G, 32-33, n. 1, and here says no more than "gesetzt dass er das wirklich tut." I have the impression that Strauss is not much interested in Saadia because he does not consider him as significant as later thinkers. Saadia is not mentioned by Strauss in any other writing. See n. 1 below.

1 P&G, 56. 'See also P&G, 32-33, n. 1, where he says that "die eigentliche Auseinandersetzung zwischen Bibel und Philosophie findet erst nach der Heraufkunft des Aristotelismus statt." Guttman agrees. See PJ, 136, and 143. What Strauss appears to suggest is that the rise of medieval Aristotelianism tended to purify the prevalent adulteration of philosophy with theology. This is perhaps implicit in his suggestion noted above, 373, n. 1, as to why the falsa and Maimonides, though fundamentally Platonists, insisted on the pre-eminence of Aristotelian natural science. He seems to suggest that there was or could be no true or pure confrontation of Jerusalem and Athens while the Kalam and Platonism "menacée par des spéculations hybrides" predominated. Strauss then apparently shares Maimonides' "diagnosis" of Saadia: he
und religiosem Wahrheitsbewusstein." This is not to suggest that a "Sachkenner" like Guttman misses salient points which Strauss discerns and underscores. Strauss hastens to say so:

Es wäre vermessener, wenn wir den Anspruch erheben wollten, einen Sachkenner wie Guttmann über Tatsachen zu belehren, die ihm selbstverständlich bekannt sind.

To state the case, it may be said that the difference between Strauss and Guttmann is one of emphasis or of the proper Rangordnung. But this difference is profound and all-important. Strauss asserts that Guttmann's view is colored by a modern lens which was ground and polished by a Christian theologian out of the modern "Idee des Naturrechts"; such a lens obscures the "antiken Idee des Gesetzes als einer einheitlichen, totalen Ordnung des menschlichen Lebens"; such a lens, because it magnifies "innerlichkeit" and "religiösen

was afflicting with "the sickness of the Mutakallimun" (see Chapter 6 of Maimonides' "Eight Chapters"). Strauss characterizes Maimonides' opposition to the Kalam as follows: "... Maimonides insists on the necessity of starting from evident presuppositions, which are in accordance with the nature of things, whereas the kalam proper starts from arbitrary presuppositions, which are chosen not because they are true but because they make it easy to prove the beliefs taught by the law." PAW, 40. See PJ, 413, n. 14. Strauss dearly appreciates Maimonides' striving to clearly distinguish that which he assents to because it is rationally demonstrated and that which he assents to because he is a Jew and so accepts what has been promulgated by Revelation. (Maimonides' discussion of Creation is a prime example, both of his distinction and of his opposition to the Kalam because it fails to do so.) Strauss applauds moderns, in so far as they tried to purify political philosophy and restore its independence of theology. See NR, 164.

1P&G, 60.
2Ibid., 60.
Bewusstsein' deprecates "was wesentlich nicht aus der 'Innerlichkeit' hervorgehen kann". — Gesetze in particular. Guttmann demotes what Strauss discerns as pre- eminent. Strauss writes:

[For Guttmann], . . das Problem der religiösen Wahrheit als das Problem des Verhältnisses von theoretischem und religiösem Wahrheitsebewusstsein [ist ihm] zur zentralen Problem der 'Religionsphilosophie', und der bemüht sich daher, das Aufkeimen dieser Fragestellung in der mittelalterlichen Philosophie zu verfolgen. So erweckt seine Darstellung den Anschein, dass für die Rationalisten des Mittelalters die Mitteilung von Wahrheiten, und nicht die Verkündung des Gesetzes, der primäre Zweck der Offenbarung sei. Und da nach der Ansicht dieser Rationalisten die durch Offenbarung mitgeteilten Wahrheiten auch der ungeleiteten Vernunft zugänglich sind, so entsteht der noch bedenklicher Anschein, dass diese Philosophen der Offenbarung zuletzt und im Ernst eine bloss volkspädagogische Bedeutung zugesprochen hätten: der gesellschaftsgründende, staatsgründende Sinn der Offenbarung wird bei Guttmann zu einem Nebenwirke. Da also dieses Verfehlen des leitenden Gedankens der mittelalterlichen Philosophen die Folge der modernen Fragestellung Guttmanns ist, und das Festhalten an dieser Fragestellung die Folge der Überzeugung ist, dass eine gewisse Überlängenheit der modernen über die mittelalterliche Philosophie bestehe, so möchten wir meinen, dass der Historiker der mittelalterlichen Philosophie gut daran tue, wenigstens heuristisch die unbedingte Überlegenheit der mittelalterlichen Philosophie über die moderne anzunehmen.

1 P&G, 61-62.

2 Ibid., 60-61.
Strauss does seem to present the more balanced view: that is, he hardly downgrades the "Mitteilung von Wahrheiten" purpose of revelation, whereas Guttman certainly demotes "das politische Problem." Strauss indeed emphasizes that the "Mitteilung von Wahrheiten" purpose of revelation is central in Maimonides' conception of it and because of this he is at odds with his Islamic predecessors, and because of it the political purpose of prophecy is less explicit in Maimonides than in the writings of his predecessors. Strauss explains:

... warum die in ihr überall durchschimmernde politische Ausrichtung nicht in gleicher Weise ausdrücklich wird wie in der Prophetologie der islamischen Aristoteliker; diese Tatsache hat ihren Grund wohl darin, dass für Maimuni zum Unterschied von seinen islamischen Lehrern die Offenbarung auch die Funktion hat, Lehren mitzuteilen die von der Vernunft nicht hinreichend verbürgt werden können.

1 See Guttman's P.I. Guttman's discussion of Maimonides begins on 152. It takes over 20 pages before he gets around to a discussion of the Torah "as a political law." He reaches this conclusion (180): "... hence the fact that the Torah is a political law does not detract from its essential purpose. ..."

2 P&G, 65.
10. "... all the difference in the world"

The question of the **Zweck** of revelation comes to the fore; it appears central to understanding medieval Jewish thought. It is evidently at issue in the disagreement between Strauss and Guttmann. Strauss maintains that according to Guttmann there is no good reason why a philosopher should pay heed to revelation or, indeed, be particularly interested in it, since he can fully discover for himself any and all revealed truths. Guttmann answers the question, "Why revelation?" with the suggestion that it is needed for pedagogic purposes. This does not satisfy, Strauss asserts, because philosophers do not feel the need, and, indeed, do not need this pedagogy. Why then should they be so concerned with "Religionsphilosophie"? Strauss's position, boldly put, is that "die Verkündung des Gesetzes der primäre Zweck der Offenbarung sei." Against Guttmann he argues: "Auf Grund von Guttmanns Darstellung war er deshalb unverständlich, weil aus ihr nicht hervorging, welches Interesse die 'offenbarungsglaubigen Rationalisten' an Offenbarung hatten."

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1. **P&G**, 60.

But to leave it at that is to give Strauss too facile a victory, and it does not get to the base of Strauss's position. Strauss's position in the understanding of the thought of the period encompasses extreme rationalists like Gersonides and even Averroes. Now Strauss himself tells us that Ibn Rushd, in contrast to Maimonides, proclaims the sufficiency of unaided reason and apparently denies that revelation is a source of supra-rational truth. Can, then, Strauss's challenge to Guttmann be turned back on himself? What is the "Intresse" of Averroes in revelation? Why should he be so concerned with it? Why does a rationalist such as he, defer to it and heed its precepts, and even more, in the case of Averroes, dedicate his life -- as a jurist -- to its application and promulgation? What fundamentally differentiates such a pre-modern thinker's conception of the relation of reason to revelation from that of the Enlightenment which Guttmann alleges conceives of this relation "in fundamentally the same manner"?

In addition to questions such as these, this criticism of Strauss's position by Professor Steven S. Schwarzchild will serve to elicit a fuller understanding of Strauss's position: Schwarzchild writes:

Julius Guttmann... in his Philosophies of Judaism, repeatedly makes the interesting point that, at least

philosophically, though not halakhically, the actual content of their thinking was at least as true to genuine Judaism as were the universally acknowledged classic philosophers of the Jewish Middle Ages, and furthermore the mediaevals.

1 This statement speaks an enormity: One's thinking can be true to genuine Judaism -- indeed, more true -- though one rejects Halakhah. In view of this statement, it is a wonder that Strauss is awarded even "partial validity." At least Guttman acknowledges ruefully the denuding impact of casting off the "yoke" of Halakhah. The following is an apparently the statement of Guttman's alluded to by Schwarzhild: "Despite the fact that the medieval thinkers were, in their total personalities, far more deeply rooted in the tradition and substance of Jewish life, and that belief in the divine authority of revelation was self-evident to them, the modern thinkers, in their theoretical explanation of Judaism, upheld with greater staunchness the true meaning of its central religious doctrines ["basic principles of ethical personalist religion"]." Pj, 349. See 348. But let us not overlook this statement of Guttman's: "... Jews played a vital role in the philosophic movement of thought in all lands of European culture; and especially in Germany, the birthplace of modern Judaism, they achieved important results. But the overwhelming part of this philosophic work had no connection with Judaism per se, and belongs rather to the general history of philosophy of the various European nations. During the course of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the modern period, Judaism was an independent and spiritually all-encompassing culture based completely on religious grounds, with the ability to absorb even those philosophic endeavors which lacked a direct relationship to Jewish religion. But modern European culture detached spiritual life from its anchorage in religious tradition, and thus destroyed the foundations of the traditional unity of Jewish culture. Henceforth, Judaism would be bounded by religious life in its narrowest and specific sense, and all other cultural spheres, including philosophy, would be outside its boundaries.

Even the most general questions of philosophy of religion would, for the most part, be treated independently of their connection with Judaism, and this would be true even of those thinkers who were in complete harmony with Judaism...
were at least as much influenced by non-Jewish thinkers, Aristotle, Plotinus, Averroes, etc., as were the men of the 19th century by Kant and Hegel. (Leo Strauss argues against this, with only partial validity, that, though both groups may have arrived at similar philosophic conclusions, the mediaevals did so on the basis of accepting the reality of Revelation, whereas the moderns did on the basis of autonomous reason, and that this makes all the difference in the world. Not completely -- if, as, for example, Saadia and Maimonides surely did, the mediaevals in fact set up reason as the ultimate criterion of Revelation.) . . . It might furthermore be pointed out about these men that, whatever their divergences from Jewish law, their posture against what they regarded as the distortions of Biblical faith at the hands of Christianity was extremely militant, at least as much as that of the mediaevals, and

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1 Guttmann apparently wavers in this conviction. See P&G, 32-33. That is, at times he appears to agree with Strauss that notwithstanding "alien" influences, pre-modern thought was more compatible to Judaism, or that the sacrifice of Jewishness incurred was negligible compared to the sacrifice of Judaism brought by moderns to the altar of "autonomous reason." Is his position correctly represented by Schwarzchild? Where does Strauss say that "both groups may have arrived at similar conclusions"? Macchi, 232.

2 On the basis of the statements quoted on 389, n. 1, it is questionable both ways whether even Guttmann agrees that the conclusions were similar: on the basis of the first statement, it seems that before Kant and Schleiermacher, philosophic conclusions "true to genuine Judaism" were hardly possible; from the second, one infers that the mediaevals were engaged in an altogether different kind of Jewish "Religionsphilosophic."

3 Note that this is precisely the coupling -- of Saadia and Maimonides -- which Strauss objects to in Guttmann. Schwarzchild apparently spurns not only the position of Strauss which he cites but Strauss's reading of Maimonides as well.
much more than that of most 20th century Jewish thinkers. The accusation of rampant assimilationism on their part must, therefore, be heavily qualified. 1

1. Schwarzchild, op. cit., 97. I have cited Schwarzchild's statement because of the usefulness of its simply stated criticism of Strauss, but I find the concluding statements of the note especially confounding. If a Jewish thinker throws out Halakhah, if he disregards the traditional sense of Creation and Revelation, why is not the indictment of "assimilationism" justified? What is the substance of Jewishness which these modern thinkers manfully uphold? Is it a kind of secularized Jewish chauvinism which gives rise to their "militant" posture? If such is the case, how can it be said not to conduce to assimilationism? Do not such thinkers, by removing all substantial "obstacles," pave the way for the assimilation of their posterity? Heinrich Heine's posture against Christianity hardly restrained him from "rampant assimilationism." (The irony, if one accepts Strauss's "diagnosis," is that Guttman and Schwarzchild assert the more genuine Jewishness of modern thinkers precisely because they are subject to a modern Christian bias.)

Does Schwarzchild believe that "autonomous reason" was revealed at Sinai? If "autonomous reason" is the source of opposition to "Christian distortions," why then is such opposition particularly Jewish? What sense does it make to speak of "Jewish transcendentals" (see p. 82 of the article cited) if it is the view of a thinker who denies the reality of Revelation and claims to have reached his conclusion on the basis of "autonomous reason"? Schwarzchild truly discerns that there are differences in the conclusions of "autonomous reason" depending on whether it is the "autonomous reason" of a Jew or of a Christian. As Strauss points out with reference to H. Cohen: "The truth of traditional Judaism is the religion of reason or the religion of reason is secularized Judaism, but the same claim could be made for Christianity, and however close secularized Judaism and secularized Christianity might come to each other, they are not identical, and as purely rational they ought to be identical." SCR, 8.

Perhaps Schwarzchild may look again at "le querelle des anciens et des modernes:" He states (p. 83 of the article cited): ". . . the amazingly unilinear thrust of the entire course of Jewish philosophic thought becomes clear: the will of God and man transcends the iron chains of the nature of God, man, and the world." Does this eloquent formulation take due cognizance of "le querelle. . . ."?
Schwarzhchild denies Strauss's assertion of the central importance of "die gesetzliche Begründung der Philosophie"; as indicated above, this corresponds to political philosophy in its "déeper meaning." Schwarzhchild then rejects Strauss's assertion of the centrality of political philosophy.

If we were to focus exclusively on Maimonides (as Strauss reads him in Philosophie und Gesetz), Strauss's "answer" to the attack by Schwarzhchild would be easy and compelling, for it is evident that the conviction exemplified by Maimonides that Revelation is needed and that men of science, not less but more acutely than others, realize or should realize their dependence on it, is a political judgment on philosophy and an assertion of the central political importance of Revelation. The propositions that the guidance requisite to man's highest perfection can issue only from God and that "He has given us the Torah" ("Guidance"), indicate clearly that Revelation is conceived in a framework of political philosophy. It is hardly to "set up reason as the ultimate criterion of Revelation." On the contrary, it is a "Kritik" and this "Kritik" is put forward rationally or philosophically; it is ultimately grounded "on the basis of accepting the reality of Revelation" — on the basis of a certainty which is prior
to any philosophizing. As Strauss has said:

"Die mittelalterlichen Philosophen bemühen sich zwar, die Möglichkeit der Offenbarung philosophisch und die Wirklichkeit der Offenbarung historisch darzutun; aber diese Begründungen bestätigen doch nur, was schon vor der Begründung feststand, sich 'von selbst' verstand. Denn die Möglichkeit der Offenbarung folgt aus ihrer Wirklichkeit, ihre Wirklichkeit aber ist unmittelbar bekannt, trotz und wegen der vermittelnden Tradition unmittelbar bekannt."

Revelation can only "really" matter, if it is "really" needed -- only if "eine leidenschaftliche Angewiesenheit zu ihr hintriebe." Strauss expounds this and asserts that it is exemplified par excellence in Maimonides:

(\[\text{Ein Interesse an Offenbarung kann es nur geben, wenn man der Offenbarung bedarf. Der Philosoph bedarf der Offenbarung, wenn er weiss, dass sein Erkenntnisvermögen principiell unzulänglich ist, um die Wahrheit zu erkennen. Die Überzeugung von der Unzulänglichkeit des menschlichen Verstandes zur Erkenntnis der Wahrheit, d. h. der entscheidend wichtigen Wahrheit, ist die Möglicherheitsbedingung dafür, dass ein Philosoph als Philosoph Interesse an Offenbarung hat. Von dieser Überzeugung ist der Klassiker des jüdischen Rationalismus im Mittelalter, ist Maimuni erfüllt.}\]

(This is seen most clearly in Strauss's exposition in Philosophie und Gesetz of creation and prophecy.)

But, is what may be true of Maimonides, valid for all thinkers of the period? What about Ibn Ruschd

\[P&G, 47.\]
\[Ibid., 52.\]
who insists on the sufficiency of reason? What about Gersonides who explicitly opposes Maimonides' critique of reason and in particular the latter's assertion of its insufficiency to demonstrate revealed truths like Creation? Strauss maintains that close scrutiny even of these extreme rationalists establishes his position that (in Schwarzchild's words) "the medievals did so [philosophizing] on the basis of accepting the reality of Revelation, whereas the moderns did on the basis of autonomous reason," and that this makes all the difference in the world. With specific reference to Jewish and Islamic medieval thinkers, Strauss asserts:

Wie immer man aber unsere querelle des ancens et des modernes wird entscheiden müssen oder mögen: feststeht, dass für die mittelalterliche Philosophie im Gegensatz zur modernen nicht nur die Anerkennung der Offenbarungsautorität 'selbstverständliche Voraussetzung', sondern auch die 'philosophische Rechtfertigung' dieser Anerkennung ein wesentliches Anliegen ist.¹

What has Strauss to say to Schwarzchild's assertion that "the medievals were at least as much influenced by non-Jewish thinkers, Aristotle, Plotinus, Averroes, etc.,² as were the men of the 19th century by Kant and Hegel."³ Clearly Strauss hardly denies such

¹P&G, 43. ²Why is Plato not mentioned? ³Strauss's view of the moderns is the theme of the next chapter. I am attempting to restrict discussion of the moderns in this chapter to what is necessary for bringing into greater relief Strauss's understanding of the pre-modern position and to indicate his conviction that the contrast "makes all the difference in the world."
facts; indeed as we have seen, he contributes significantly to establishing such links as facts. He does deny the validity of the inference drawn from the facts by Guttman and Schwarzhchild. His "answer" to Schwarzhchild is to be discerned in his questioning of Guttman's assertion of the superior genuinely Jewish thought of moderns. According to Guttman, "die Religion der Bibel hat ihre Eigenart in dem ethos des Personalismus ihres Gottesbewusstseins."  

The influence of Greek thought, Guttman maintains, alienated Jewish thought from "das Zentrum der biblischen Religion." In modern thought, Guttman asserts, "das Zentrum" is "gesichert," "nicht exegetisch, nicht theologisch, sondern durch die Analyse des 'religiösen Bewusstseins' welche Analyse durch die 'epochmachende' Leistung Schleiermachers inauguriert worden ist."  

Guttman accuses Jewish medieval thought of "der Verrat des biblischen Erbes um einer fremden 'Frömmigkeit' willen." Strauss responds that the moderns are more

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1P&G, 42. The rendering of this in PJ, 5, reads: "The distinctiveness of biblical religion is due to its ethical conception of the personality of God." (An example of loss in translation.)

2P&G, 42.

3P&G, 42. Guttman's views cited here by Strauss are not in PJ but in a lengthy article "Religion und Wissenschaft im mittelalterlichen und im modernen Denken." See P&G, 30, 1.

4P&G, 43.
grievously culpable of betrayal because they consciously, even conscientiously, destroy the substance of the biblical tradition. Strauss writes:

Und zwar scheint uns der durch die moderne Philosophies begangene Verrat um vieles schlimmer zu sein als die Verfehlung der Früheren: nicht nur weil die Modernen durch eine moderne Instanz, nämlich durch ihre eigene historische Forschung, über die Gefahr eben dieses Verrats unzweideutig belehrt sind, sie also wissentlich tun, was die Früheren versehentlich getan haben; 1 nicht nur weil sie den Glauben an die Offenbarung preisgegeben haben, der für die Früheren 'selbstverständliche Voraussetzung' war; sondern vor allem, weil die Modernen ihren Verrat in viel verdeckterer und eben darum 'substanzieller zerstörender Weise begehen. So müsste weingstens der urteilen, der die jüdische Tradition als Richterin über das moderne Denken anerkennt. 2

Gutmann, notwithstanding the allegation of betrayal against the premoderns, does explicitly acknowledge the 'substanz-zerstörender' impact of modern thought (as indicated above). It appears to be Gutmann's view

1 Cf. SCR, 3: "One cannot help comparing the period of German Jewry with the period of Spanish Jewry. The greatest achievements of Jews during the Spanish period were rendered possible partly by the fact that Jews became receptive to the influx of Greek thought, which was understood to be Greek only accidentally."

2 P&G, 43.
that precisely because modernity is a secularization of the biblical heritage which rejects Grecized medieval philosophy, it enables thought to be truer to biblical Gottesbewusstseins, but because it is secularization it has destroyed the Lebenssubstanz of biblical piety and the traditional substance of biblical doctrines. This paradoxical position which tends to sanctify a gross disproportion between life and thought, Strauss asserts, is a particularly modern one.¹ He writes:

Diese Meinung² ist . . . zweideutig; sie ist aber nicht nur zweideutig, sondern auch paradox, da sie ein paradoxes Missverhältnis zwischen Leben und Denken statuiert. Dieses Missverhältnis mag der modernen Denkweise ohne weiteres einleuchten; man wird nicht leugnen können, dass es dennoch bedenklich ist.

¹Strauss, in several places, associates this disproportion particularly with Romanticism. See "Collingwood" and "Wild."

We may note additional paradoxicality in Guttmann's position. On the one hand, he recognizes that the modern 'mechanistische Umbildung' der Metaphysik in der Neuzeit insbesondere bei Spinoza den Bruch mit der Offenbarungsreligion notwendig machte (295, vgl. auch 156); aber dieser Verlust wird dadurch aufgewogen, dass gerade aus dem Geist der 'personalistischen Frömmigkeit' der Bibel die 'Neigung zu mechanistischer Auffassung der Nature', die Perhorreszierung der Annahme nach Zwecken handelnder Kräfte als 'einer Art von Polytheismus' hervorgehen kann und in der Neuzeit tatsächlich hervorgegangen ist (18 f. und 151).  

The paradoxical aspect of this conclusion is heightened by the following consideration. Guttmann admits that the "grundsätzlichen Umbildungen" of classical philosophy wrought by the medievals were "den durch die moderne Philosophie vollzogenen Bruch mit der antiken Denkweise geschichtlich ermöglicht haben," and that these "Umbildungen" issue from fidelity to "der personalistischen Religiosität der Bibel." At the same time he fully recognizes that the break inaugurating modernity was en pleine connaissance de cause anti-biblical, and yet

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1 P&G, 33.
2 P&G, 45.
3 P&G, 45.
he asserts that this turning, inspired and fired by "anti-theological ire,"¹ is more truly expressive of "dem Geist der 'personalistischen Frömmigkeit' der Bibel."² Does the paradoxicality³ of Guttman's position perhaps suggest the difficulty attaching to the assertion that modern thought expresses more genuinely or is more true to the "Religiosität der Bibel"?⁴

II. "Die gesetzliche Begründung der Philosophie" and the Extreme Rationalists Averroes and Gersonides

Let us now again look at Strauss's assertion that die gesetzliche Begründung der Philosophie is the key characteristic of thinkers of this period—even of the extreme rationalists. Our aim is a deeper understanding of Strauss's position.

The impact of "the reality of Revelation" was tremendous in the tremors it generated in the very ground of philosophy. This historical fact of the pervasive impact of revelation gave rise to new

¹Strauss's phrase. WPP, 44. Cf. LAM, 201.
²P&G, 45.
³The paradoxicality of his position may be said to be to Gutmnn's credit, for it indicates his appreciation of the pre-modern and his refusal to simple-mindedly celebrate progress.
⁴See Introduction to P&G in Chapter IV below.
obstacles and new problems which did not confront classical philosophy.

Strauss writes:

Das durch die Offenbarung aufgegebene Problem ist
insofern das Problem der mittelalterlichen Philosophie, als
die Offenbarung für diese Philosophie konstitutiv ist. Durch
die Wirklichkeit der Offenbarung hat sich die Situation der
Philosophie von Grund auf geändert. Wir können uns keinen
autoritativeneren Zeugen für diese Tatsache wünschen als Maimuni.

Maimonides enumerates three obstacles to philosophy discerned by the
pagan philosopher Alexander of Aphrodisias. Maimonides adds a fourth,
prevalent "in our time." This is to say that the first three are natural
obstacles and therefore constant; the fourth is "new," historical --
and unknown to the pagan society of Alexander. Maimonides states:

Alexander of Aphrodisias says that there are three causes of
disagreement about things. One of them is love of domination and
love of strife, both of which turn man aside from the apprehension
of truth as it is. The second cause is the subtlety and the
obscurity of the object of apprehension in itself and the difficulty
of apprehending it. And the third cause is the ignorance of him
who apprehends and his inability to grasp things that it is
possible to apprehend . . . However, in our times there is a
fourth cause that he did not mention because it did not exist among
them. It is habit and upbringing. For man has in his nature a love

1 P&G, 45.
of, and an inclination for, that to which he is habituated. . . .
For this reason, . . . man is blind to the apprehension of the
ture realities and inclines toward the things to which he is
habituated. This happened to the multitude with regard to the
belief in His corporeality and many other metaphysical subjects.
All this is due to people being habituated to, and brought up on,
texts that it is an established usage to think highly of and to regard
as true and whose external meaning is indicative of the corporeality
of God and of other imaginings with no truth in them, for these have
been set forth as parables and riddles.

Why is this "new" obstacle peculiar to adherents of Jerusalem? Were
there no revered texts in Athens, the external meaning -- if not the
inner meaning as well -- of which, habituated one to "imaginings with
no truth in them"? Strauss draws this distinction and comments:

Nun hat es den Griechen wahrlich nicht an Schriften gefehlt,
welche die Körperlichkeit Gottes zu lehren schienen und nicht
nur schienen; aber diese Schriften haben die griechische
Philosophie nicht beeinträchtigt, weil sie nicht autoritativ waren.
Nicht also die Gewöhnung an Schriften überhaupt, die Herrschaft
einer Tradition überhaupt, sondern die Gewöhnung an Schriften
von unbedingter Autorität, die Herrschaft einer Tradition von
unbedingter Autorität führt zu einer besonderen Erschwerung des
Philosophieren's; die Tatsache, dass eine auf Offenbarung beruhende
Tradition in die Welt der Philosophie eingebrochen ist, hat die
natürlichen Schwierigkeiten des Philosophieren's, die mit dem

Einsicht beruht der Kampf der modernen Aufklärung gegen die
'Vorurteile'." P&G, 46, n.1.
"Hüllen"-Dasein des Menschen gegeben sind, um die geschichtliche Schwierigkeit vermehrt.

An additional all-important difference is that a corporeal conception of deity is hardly forbidden to the Greek, whereas in Maimonides' view the eradication of any vestige of corporealism is a paramount aim of Scripture and of the Jewish tradition. He recognizes that it is an enormously difficult task because in all times there is a tendency to succumb to a corporealistic conception of deity and a corresponding corporeally indulgent way of life. These following comments of Strauss make clear Maimonides' view.

The chief reason why it is so urgent to establish the belief in God's incorporeality... is supplied by the fact that that belief is destructive of idolatry. It was of course universally known that idolatry is a very grave sin, nay, that the Law has, so to speak, no other purpose than to destroy idolatry (I 35, III 29 end). But this evil can be completely eradicated only if everyone is brought to know that God has no visible shape whatever or that He is incorporeal. Only if God is incorporeal is it absurd to make images of God and to worship such images. Only under this condition can it become manifest to everyone that the only image of God is man, living and thinking man, and that man acts as the image of God only through...

1 P&G, 46.

2 The quoted references in parentheses are to the Guide.
worshipping the invisible or hidden God alone. Not idolatry but the belief in God's corporeality is a fundamental sin. Hence the sin of idolatry is less grave than the sin of believing that God is corporeal (I 36). This being the case, it becomes indispensable that God's incorporeality be believed in by everyone whether or not he knows by demonstration that God is incorporeal. With regard to the majority of men it is sufficient and necessary that they believe in this truth on the basis of authority or tradition, i.e., on a basis that the first subsections of the Guide are meant to supply. The teaching of God's incorporeality by means of authoritative exegesis, i.e., the most public teaching of God's incorporeality, is indispensable for destroying the last relics of paganism; the immediate source of paganism is less the ignorance of God's unity than the ignorance of His radical incorporeality (cf. I 36 with M. T., H. 'Abodah Zarah I 1). ¹

Maimonides never forgot the power of what one may call the inverted Sabianism that perpetuates corporeality through unqualified submission to the literal meaning of the Bible and thus even outdoes Sabianism proper. . . . Sabianism proper was not completely eradicated and could be expected to have a future (cf. I 36). One is entitled to say that Maimonides regarded the step that he took in the Guide as the ultimate step in the decisive respect, namely, in the overcoming of Sabianism. As he modestly put it, no Jew had written an extant book on the secrets of the Law 'in these times of the exile' (I Introd.). At the beginning, the power of Sabianism was broken only in a limited part of the world through bloody wars and through concessions to Sabian habits; these concessions were retracted almost completely by the post-Mosaic prophets, by the Aramaic translators, and by the Talmud, to say nothing of the cessation through violence of the sacrificial service, and the conversion of many pagans, which was assisted by military victories, to Christianity or Islam. Now the time has come when even the vulgar must be taught most explicitly that God

¹Guide, xxi-xxii.
is incorporeal. Since the Bible suggests corporealism, the vulgar will thus become perplexed. The remedy for this perplexity is the allegoric explanation of the corporealistic utterances or terms that restores the faith in the truth of the Bible (I 35), i.e., precisely what Maimonides is doing in the Guide. But the progress in overcoming Sabianism was accompanied by an ever increasing oblivion of Sabianism and thus by an ever increasing inability to remove the last, as it were, fossilized concessions to Sabianism or relics of Sabianism. Maimonides is the man who finally eradicates Sabianism, i.e., corporealism as the hidden premise of idolatry, through the knowledge of Sabianism recovered by him. He recovered that knowledge also through his study of Aristotle, who after all belonged to a Sabian society (II 23).

The weeding-out of corporealism proceeds pari passu with the watering of asceticism.

Strauss then hardly suggests that for Maimonides, exegesis simply precedes speculation. But to deny that exegesis simply precedes speculation is not simply to "set up reason as the ultimate criterion of Revelation." Strauss expresses the difficulties rather than offering simple formulas. He puts this difficulty in the following way:

The fundamental difficulty of how one can distinguish the supra-rational, which must be believed, from the infra-rational, which ought not to be believed, cannot be solved by recourse to

1\textsuperscript{Guide}, xli-xlili. On Aristotle as an idolater, see xxii and xxiii.

2\textsuperscript{Guide}, xxviii. See also liii.

3 See \textit{Guide}, xxiii.
the fact that we hear through the Bible, and in particular
through the Torah, 'God's book' par excellence (III 12), not
human beings but God Himself. It is indeed true in a sense
that God's speech gives the greatest certainty of His existence,
and His declaring His attributes sets these attributes beyond
doubt (cf. I 9 and II, II 11), but God Himself cannot explain clearly
the deepest secrets of the Torah to flesh and blood (I Introd., 31
beginning), He 'speaks in accordance with the language of the
children of man' (I 26), things that might have been made clear
in the Torah are not made clear in it (I 29), God makes use of
ruses and of silence for only 'a fool will reveal all his purpose
and his will' (I 40; cf. III 32, 45 and 54) and, last but not least,
as Maimonides explains in the Guide, God does not use speech,
in any sense (I 23) and this fact entails infinite consequences.
One is therefore tempted to say that the infra-rational in the Bible
is distinguished from the supra-rational by the fact that the former
is impossible whereas the latter is possible: biblical utterances
that contradict what has been demonstrated by natural science or
by reason in any other form cannot be literally true but must have
an inner meaning; on the other hand, one must not reject views the
contrary of which has not been demonstrated, i.e., which are
possible -- for instance, creation out of nothing -- lest one
becomes thoroughly indecent (I 32, II 25). Yet this solution does
not satisfy Maimonides.

But even if this were simply the solution (as it would appear to be for

Averroes' the problem which it resolves would not arise if not for the

1 Guide, xxviii-xxix. See also xxxvi and ponder this enigmatic
comment of Strauss's: "... the science of the Law is something
essentially different, not only from the post-biblical or at any rate
extra-biblical legal interpretation of the Law, but from wisdom, i.e.,
the demonstration of the views transmitted by the Law, as well."

2 Maimonides (1135-1204) and Averroes (1126-1198) were contem-
poraries. There is "no clear evidence" that Averroes influenced
prior "given" reality of Revelation." However extreme his rationalism, however unreserved his claim for the sufficiency of (unaided) human reason, the philosophizing adherent addresses himself to the "Sacred Scripture" of his religious community -- to what is "first for us."

Accordingly, the priority of this "given" obtains even for so "extreme" a rationalist as Averroes -- even though his starting point is the certainty of the sufficiency of reason to arrive at the truths "preinscribed" in the Koran. Strauss asserts that the question of the sufficiency of reason is secondary. What is of primary importance is that the adherent accepts the priority of the Gesetz and its authority: by its authority, he philosophizes. Strauss concludes:


We return to the question of "Interesse" and Strauss's argument against Guttmann.

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1 See Strauss's discussion, P&C, 71-75.

2 P&C, 79.

3 In the section specifically devoted to Ibn Ruschd (P&C, 69-75), Strauss does not discuss this question.
Strauss's "Interesse" argument opposes Guttmann's view that for most Jewish thinkers the purpose of revelation is solely pedagogic, because they hold the truths of revelation to be accessible to unaided human reason. Strauss bristles at this assertion and adduces the "Interesse" argument which is exemplified by Halevi and Maimonides: philosophers are needful of revelation; without it they cannot achieve the highest truths which in turn are necessary for the right way of life. For Averroes, the highest truths are no less accessible to the philosopher than they are to the prophet, but the prophet, not the philosopher, is (and only he can be) the "Verkünder des Gesetzes" of the right way of life (for the philosopher qua philosopher is not necessarily gifted as a legislator). Therefore, the revealed Gesetz is primary and prior for the philosopher as well, and, therefore, the philosopher must defer to the prophet; he must, as it were, obtain his "license" to philosophize from the prophet; philosophizing must be authorized by the Gesetz just as every human activity is subject to its authority. ¹ Strauss explains why even the rationalist who claims to be

¹ "Die Philosophie hat also zunächst keinerlei Vorrang vor irgend einer anderen menschlichen Tätigkeit; wie jede andre menschliche Tätigkeit steht sie unter dem Gesetz, hat sie sich vor dem Gesetz zu verantworten." P&G, 70.
able to arrive at the revealed truths through unaided reason is dependent on revelation and ought defer to the prophet:

Der Philosoph ist auf Offenbarung angewiesen, so wahr er ein Mensch ist; denn als Mensch ist er ein politisches Wesen und also eines Gesetzes bedürftig, und als vernünftigem Menschen muss ihm alles daran gelegen sein, unter einem vernünftigen, d. h. auf die dem Menschen eigentümliche Vollkommenheit ausgerichteten Gesetze zu leben. Dieses Gesetz kann der Philosoph aber weder sich selbst noch anderen geben; denn er kann als Philosoph zwar die Principien eines Gesetzes überhaupt und insbesondere die Principien des vernünftigen Gesetzes erkennen; er kann aber niemals die konkreten Einzelbestimmungen des idealen Gesetzes dividieren, durch deren genaue Festlegung das Gesetz allersetst anwendbar, vielmehr überhaupt -- Gesetz wird. Der Philosoph hat also ein Interesse an Offenbarung, weil er wesentlich Mensch und der Mensch wesentlich ein politisches Wesen ist.

The "Interesse" of the philosopher, even of the extreme rationalist, in revelation, is then very serious, and precisely because he is a philosopher he may well devote himself to the science of its Law as Averroes did in his official capacity as a jurist (Chief Justice of Cordova). Though he may not need its theoretical guidance, he is

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1 P&G, 59-60.

2 Lerner and Mahdi, op.cit., 186.
dependent on its practical guidance, especially regarding the particulars of everyday right living. Because philosophizing requires justification before the bar of the revealed Gesetz, to achieve it the philosopher must become a master exegete. Again, this makes for "Interesse" and requires the careful and diligent attention of the philosopher to the scriptural text. Die gesetzliche Begründung der Philosophie guarantees that the philosopher cannot be indifferent to revelation, whereas if the purpose of revelation did not include the "Verkündung des Gesetzes" then why should the philosopher have any special interest in revelation? Thus, we see that Strauss's challenge to Guttmann is consistent and valid. Indeed, we may say that the more extreme Averroes may be considered in his rationalism, the more tellingly does his case corroborate Strauss's position. For die gesetzliche Begründung der Philosophie characterizes Averroes' thought even though he denies any "Überschuss der Theoretischen Lehren der Offenbarung über die den Vernunft" and teaches "die Suffizienz des menschlichen Verstandes." Even so extreme a rationalist cannot be

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1 Strauss writes: "... Averroes, needed... urgently a legal justification of philosophy, i.e., a discussion in legal terms of the question whether the Divine Law permits or forbids or commands the study of philosophy..." (Like Maimonides and in contrast to Aquinas) PAW, 20.

2 P&G, 79.
said to philosophize "on the basis of autonomous reason"; he philosophizes "on the basis of accepting the reality of Revelation." It is true that his reason is "autonomous" in that it is free and unrestricted in its career, but this freedom and "autonomy" is seen as commanded by the revealed Gesetz, the better to know God and the more deeply to appreciate the "vorgeschriebene Wahrheiten." ¹

¹ Strauss writes: "...es gibt für Ibn Ruschd Dogmen, zwar sind diese Dogmen der selbständigen Vernunft des Menschen zugänglich, also nicht 'Dogmen' im Sinne von übertreiblichen Wahrheiten; aber die Anerkennung oder Leugnung dieser Vernunftwahrheiten hat durchaus den Charakter und die Folgen der Anerkennung oder Leugnung eines Dogmas. Nimmt man an dem Wort 'Dogmen' Anstoss, so muss man wenigstens sagen: es gibt für Ibn Ruschd vom Gesetz vorgeschriebene Wahrheiten. Die vom Gesetz ermächtigte Philosophie ist also nicht derart frei, dass sich schlechterdings nicht von vornherein sagen lüste, was sie lehren wird; es ist nicht so, als ob sie gänzlich ungeleitet ihren Weg ginge, um dann an dessen Ende Überraschung festzustellen, dass das, was sich ihr ergeben hat, auch und schon durch das Gesetz gegeben ist; ihre Ergebnisse sind ihr vielmehr schon von vornherein, eben durch das Gesetz, bekannt, und der Irrtum bezüglich dieser Ergebnisse ist ihr von vornherein als unentschuldbar angekündigt. Diese Bindung der Philosophie drückt sich bereits in ihrer Definition aus: sie ist nichts anderes als Erkenntnis Gottes von der Schöpfung her. Die Philosophie tut zuletzt nicht mehr, als die allen Muslimen durch das Gesetz zugängliche Erkenntnis zu vertiefen und zu beweisen." P&C, 74.
But does not Averroes "set up reason as the ultimate criterion of Revelation"? Yes, if that means revelation cannot contradict reason, but it is not this a priori certainty which authorizes reason as the "criterion of Revelation." Strauss quotes Averroes:

"Da nun diese Gesetze Wahrheit sind und sie zu der Spekulation aufrufen, die zur Erkenntnis der Wahrheit führt, so wissen wir Muslimen positiv, dass die mittels der Demonstration vorgehende Spekulation nicht zum Gegenteil dessen führt, was im Gesetz Offenbart ist; denn die Wahrheit streitet nicht mit der Wahrheit, sondern stimmt mit ihr überein und bezeugt sie."

Strauss comments:


This is to say that if reason is "set up as the ultimate criterion of Revelation," it is not Averroes who set it up as such; it is "set up"

\[P\&G, 71.\]
in principle prior to any thinking; its ground is not autonomous reason; rather, reason requires a grounding and a justification—"die Gesetzliche Begründung..." Strauss concludes "dass ibn Ruschd nicht etwa der Voltaire des zwölften Jahrhunderts gewesen ist." Surprisingly, Guttman concurs.


2 P&G, 75.

3 But this is part of the often noted passage which— at odds with his position generally—recognizes that "acknowledgement of the authority of revelation was also a self-evident assumption for the most radical thinkers of the Jewish Middle Ages..." Guttman goes on to say that they "assented to the absolute truth of every word of the Torah. Truth was conclusively given in the Torah, and hence there was firm limit to the freedom of philosophical speculation. This freedom was that of interpreting the meaning of the Torah."... Philosophic radicalism revealed itself only in the boldness and recklessness of such interpretation. Even such a thinker as Gersonides wanted nothing more than to establish the true meaning of the Torah with the aid of philosophy. The same was true of Averroës with regard to Islam. He, too, did not merely pretend to recognize the authority of Islam; we have every reason to believe his statement, but we should also bear in mind that his naturalistic interpretation of revelation was not identical with that of revealed religion itself." (But Averroës evidently thought so; if Guttman doubts this, then why "believe his statement"? PJ, 244-45.) But in the next paragraph Guttman indicates that like Schwarzschild he does not consider this recognition of authority all important and he speaks of Averroës "claiming for philosophy the sovereign right of finding the truth, and with it establishing the meaning of revelation." PJ, 245. Cf. n. 1 above. Strauss, in explicit and perhaps conscious opposition, states that for Averroës "die Philosophie ist nicht souverän."
Strauss sees Levi ben Gershom's position on the relation of reason to revelation as in the middle between Averroes' "Suffizienzbehauptung" and Maimonides' "Insuffizienzbehauptung." Gersonides' position may for the most part be characterized as a synthesis of Maimonides and Averroes.¹

Gersonides opposes Maimonides' assertion of the insufficiency of reason to demonstrate Creation, but acknowledges that he cannot do it. That he cannot do it is not decisive because he recognizes a likely progression in knowledge: someone in the future may be able to demonstrate it. In principle, the sufficiency of reason is not impugned: what is now insoluble need not remain so, for wisdom builds like a human pyramid, later generations achieving greater heights by standing on the shoulders of men of science of the past.² But this "Suffizienzbehauptung" does not appear to be his last word. In his Torah-commentary


² Strauss notes: "Der Glaube an die Möglichkeit des Fortschritts der Wissenschaft ist hier natürlich nicht Glaube an die Möglichkeit eines unendlichen Fortschritts." P&G, 81, n.1.
Rabbi Levi writes (in the words of Strauss's paraphrase):

... es sei unwahrscheinlich, dass ein Philosoph auf dem Wege der Spekulation die Wahrheit über die Schöpfung erkenne, wenn er sich bei seiner Untersuchung nicht durch die Tora leiten lasse. ...

And he goes on to say that he himself, in his thinking about Creation, "in wunderbarer Weise' geleitet worden" by the Torah account of Creation. Though this need not be seen as an "Insuffizienzbefugung" it perhaps disposes one to wonder and to look hard for indications of such in Gersonides' writing. Strauss finds several indicative passages crowned by this unequivocal "Insuffizienzbefugung" in Rabbi Levi's introduction to his Torah-commentary: "dass es uns unmöglich sei, die in der Schöpfung enthaltene Weisheit und Gnade völlig zu erkennen." Strauss discerns the "Lösung" of this apparent contradiction in another apparent contradiction. In one place Gersonides says "dass

1 PG, 83.


3 PG, 85.

4 PG, 85.
der Mensch gerade nach der Erkenntnis dieser 'tiefen Gegenstände'
[Gestirne] ein grosses Verlangen habe: denn unser Verlangen nach
der Erkenntnis eines Dinges ist um so stärker, je herrlicher das
Ding ist, so dass wir nach der schwachen Erkenntnis des herrlichen
Dinges ein grösseres Verlangen haben als nach der vollkommenen
Erkenntnis des niedrigen Dinges." \(^1\) But in his argument against
Maimonides, he had said that "das Verlangen, die Wahrheit über
das Schöpfungsproblem zu erkennen, ist natürlich; ein natürliches
Verlangen kann aber nicht auf grundsätzlich Unerreichbares gehen . . . . \(^2\)

Strauss's "Lösung" suggests that Gersonides' "Suffizienzbehauptung" is
not the assertion that in principle there is nothing which is not accessible
to unaided reason; it is the assertion that there is nothing which ought
to restrict man's rational search for knowledge of even the most
difficult, distant and profound things. And this is his argument with
Maimonides: man ought not to set \textit{a priori} limits to his thinking and

\(^1\) P&G, 85.

\(^2\) Maimonides warns against overreaching "great longing." The
mark of the wise man is that he knows that "man's intellect indubitably
has a limit at which it stops," and he is clear about his own limit. See
searching; man ought to follow his longing to apprehend even what is
most difficult and inaccessible; what man profoundly longs to know,
he will, over the course of generations, come to know better and better;
but however far man may progress in his knowledge he will not, because
he cannot, achieve full, perfect comprehension of the ultimate Wisdom
(‘Weisheit’) and Grace (‘Gnade’). Strauss writes:

... die Erkenntnis der Gegenstände, nach der Mensch das
stärkste Verlangen hat, ist, weil diese Gegenstände die erhabensten,
vom Menschen hinsichtlich Wesen und Ort am meisten abstehenden
sind, höchst schwierig; aber -- dafür ist die Naturlichkeit des
Verlangens ein hinreichendes Zeichen -- sie ist nicht unmöglich;
daher folgt aus der Schwierigkeit der Untersuchung nicht, dass
wir von dieser Untersuchung unsere Hände zu lassen haben', sondern
im Gegenteil die besondere Löfflichkeit und Dringlichkeit der
Untersuchung. Wenn also Lewi in gewisser Weise die Insuffizienz
des Menschen behauptet, so folgt daraus jedenfalls nicht eine
Einschränkung der Freiheit des Forschens; denn es folgt aus
der Insuffizienz, wie Lewi sie behauptet, nicht, dass sich eine
feste Schranke des menschlichen Forschens angeben lässt.

Die Einschränkung der philosophischen Freiheit, die auch
Lewi anerkennt, ist in Wahrheit viel radikaler: sie tritt nicht
am Ende der Philosophie auf, sondern sie liegt der Philosophie
zugrunde. 'Es darf uns nicht verborgen bleiben, dass es uns
unmöglich ist, in Vollkommenheit zu erkennen, welche Weisheit
und Gnade im Sein der Torwa enthalten ist; vielmehr wissen wir
hiervon wenig und erkennen wir hiervon viel; so wie es uns
unmöglich ist, in Vollkommenheit zu erkennen, welche Weisheit
und Gnade im Sein der existierenden Dinge, so wie diese sind,
enhalten ist; vielmehr erkennen wir von der Weisheit, die in
ihrer Schöpfung enthalten ist, wenig.' Die Torwa ist wie die
Welt ein Werk der unendlichen Weisheit und Gnade und also dem
endlichen Verstand nur zu einem geringen Teil erkennbar; die Tora ist selbst eine Welt, in welcher der Mensch lebt, um deren Verständnis er sich nach Kräften bemühen soll, die aber immer mehr an Weisheit und Gute enthält, als der Mensch einzusehen vermag. Daher ist sie -- nicht etwa eine Schranke für die Forschung, denn die Forschung kommt bei der Aufdeckung der in ihr enthaltenen Weisheit und Gnade an keine Schranke, sondern -- eine Richte für die Forschung. Die Tora ist -- wie die Welt, als 'Welt' -- vor der Philosophie.¹

Strauss concludes: "Der Primat des Gesetzes steht für Lewi ebenso fest wie für Maimuni und Ibn Ruschd."²

Thus, we have attempted to show that the "Primat des Gesetzes" obtains even for the most extreme rationalists. Their philosophizing is grounded in revelation, and however high they may soar philosophically, they stand on that ground, and philosophy so grounded is not identical to philosophy untethered to revelation as a ground. Therefore, medieval thought is distinguished both from classical philosophy and modern thought. Salient aspects of the significant difference between the medieval thought considered here and modern thought will be discussed below in Chapter IV.

¹P&C, 85-86.

²Ibid., 86.
We have labored in this chapter to elaborate the main lines of Strauss's position in Philosophie und Gesetz which is summed up in the following quintessential statement:

Die Männer, von deren Lehre aus das philosophische und also ungläubige Fundament der mittelalterlichen judischen (und islamischen) Philosophie am ehesten zugänglich wird, die mittelalterlichen Rationalisten also, haben, sei es mehr, sei es minder ausführlich und zusammenhängend, eine gesetzliche Begründung der Philosophie, d. h. eine Rechtfertigung des Philosophieren vor dem Forum der Offenbarung, entwickelt. Diese Tatsache bereits ist -- selbst in dem Falle, dass dieser oder jener Rationalist die gesetzliche Begründung der Philosophie nicht ehrlich gemeint, nur zur Beschwertigung der Verdächtigen anderer geschrieben hat -- ein hinlänglicher Beweis dafür, dass die Wirklichkeit der Offenbarung, des offbarten Gesetzes, die massgebende vorphilosophische Voraussetzung dieser Philosophen ist. Mögen sie immer, nachdem sie sich der Erlaubtheit oder Gebotenheit des Philosophieren als solchen versichert haben, die Möglichkeit der Offenbarung philosophisch aufklären, ja sogar schliesslich die Vernunft als alleinige Richterin über die Wahrheit oder Falschheit von Offenbarungen ansehen -- vor allen derartigen Bemühungen und Überzeugungen, vor allem Philosophieren steht das Faktum der Offenbarung fest. Es macht dabei keinen Unterschied, ob dieses Faktum auf Grund unmittelbarer Einsicht in die übermenschliche Herkunft der Offenbarungsurkunde oder auf Grund eines mittelbaren, historischen Beweises anerkannt wird; denn sowohl jene unmittelbare Einsicht als auch dieser Beweis sind unabhängig von aller spezifisch philosophischen Überlegung, insbesondere von der Reflexion über die Möglichkeitsbedingungen von Offenbarung überhaupt, sind der Sache nach früher als die gesetzliche Begründung der Philosophie und damit als das Philosophieren selbst.

1 P&G, 68.
12. Conclusion: The Three Major Moments in the Development of Strauss's Understanding of Maimonides

The understanding of Maimonides presented in Philosophie und Gesetz is Strauss's first word. His last word is his introductory essay to the 1963 English edition of the Guide (and his "Notes" on the Mishneh Torah -- 1967). That "last word," as was admitted at the outset, is not fully comprehended by this writer. With this limitation duly registered, we proceed to briefly discuss Strauss's "development."

First, it should be emphasized that Strauss's bringing to light the Platonic superstructure and "das politische Problem" in Maimonides and his predecessors in Philosophie und Gesetz was a most significant milestone which once achieved permitted no turning back. To repeat the soberly objective acknowledgement of Guttmann: "Leo Strauss, in his book Philosophie und Gesetz was the first to treat of the value of the doctrines of the Islamic Aristotelians concerning the political function and goal of prophecy, the dependence of this doctrine upon Plato, and its influence upon Maimonides."¹ Strauss's "Beiträge Zum Verständnis Maimunis Und Seiner Vorläufer" is, in this respect,

¹ PJ, 434, n. 125.
now simply authoritative. (One appreciates just how "simply authoritative" it is upon reading Professor Ralph Lerner's "Moses Maimonides": the essay seems at times almost to paraphrase sections of Strauss's early work.)

Strauss suggested that there were three "moments" in the "development" of his understanding of Maimonides:

1) Pre-1938, Europe -- Philosophie und Gesetz (1935);
2) Post-1938, U.S.A. -- "The Literary Character of the Guide for the Perplexed" (1941);

(1954-1955, Israel. This was the year Strauss spent at Hebrew University. Strauss credited Gershom Scholem, his good friend and adversary, with spurring him on to renewed study of the Guide and even with influencing the direction of his attention. Scholem challenged Strauss saying that the first part of the Guide (I believe, the first forty

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1 1938 is the year Strauss indicated was the turning point. "Strauss Talks." I suspect he already made some further progress in his understanding of Maimonides in the preceding years. I believe that anticipations of 'The Literary Character . . . " may be discerned in his 1937 "On Abravanel's Philosophical Tendency and Political Teaching." As it was noted earlier, Strauss credits the leisure afforded him by his job of research assistant to Salo Baron with enabling the advance in his understanding of Maimonides and resulting in 'The Literary Character . . . ."
or so chapters were mentioned) were a planless mishmash. Strauss
returned to the Guide focusing on the "planlessness" and the plan of
the Guide. That focus is evident in "How to . . . Study the Guide . . ."
Scholom too, Strauss suggested, made him more deeply aware of the
fact that the rise and height of Jewish thought -- i.e., Halevi (1085-1141)
and Maimonides (1135-1204) -- and of Kabbalistic speculation, occurs
in the aftermath of the Crusades which "culminated not accidentally,
in the murder of whole Jewish communities."¹ In the face of Jewish
suffering on a scale unprecedented heretofore, the traditional Galut
"theology"² came to be questioned and reexamined, giving impetus to
philosophizing (and Kabbalistic speculation). Accordingly, Strauss in
his renewed study of the Guide focused more sharply on Maimonides'
chapters on providence and its implication for understanding other parts
of the Guide.³)

Let us turn to the writings mentioned and address their salient
differences. It will be recalled that in Chapter II it was suggested that
Strauss's early apprehension of natural right leaned to the "extreme"--

¹SCR, 3.

²See Ralph Lerner's "Moses Maimonides," HistPP, 203-221. Also
see Y. F. Baer, Galut (Schocken Books, 1947), 9-13, and 27 ff.

³Strauss Talks!. It should be noted that Strauss was extremely
generous in giving credit to his friends for his discoveries -- as is
indicated by "Accounts," 3-4.
which he later warns against -- of conceiving nature as the authority and thus blurring the distinction "by which philosophy stands or falls, the distinction between reason and authority." He warns: "By submitting to authority, philosophy, in particular political philosophy, would lose its character; it would degenerate into ideology, i.e., apologetics for a given or emerging social order, or it would undergo a transformation into theology or legal learning." 1 In Philosophie und Gesetz, Strauss transgresses his later caveat as is indicated quickly by this sentence:

Was Platon gefordert hat: dass die Philosophie unter einer höheren Instanz, unter dem Staat, unter dem Gesetz stehe, das ist im offenbarungsglaubigen Zeitalter erfüllt. 2

Now the young Strauss's "transgression" is grievous. Strauss would later not hesitate to condemn it. But would Strauss later simply repudiate it? The statement is right -- on the provisional or exoteric level: the philosopher, and especially the philosophizing adherent of biblical religion, indeed intends to leave the impression that qua philosopher or philosophizing adherent, he is most loyal and that philosophizing conduce to obeying the law and to submitting to its authority. 3 And this is

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1 NR, 92.
2 P&G, 121.
3 Cf. OnTyr, 220.
not simply a "lie." To present one's thought in the framework of a political justification -- recall the deeper meaning of political philosophy" and "die gesetzliche Begründung der Philosophie" -- is to defer, to begin with, to "accepted opinions." ¹ Strauss's error in Philosophie und Gesetz then may be said to be an "error of levels"; presenting the provisional or esoteric teaching as the teaching simply. A writing based on that kind of error is of interest even or especially after the error is discovered. Strauss, in fact, did not simply repudiate Philosophie und Gesetz (especially as it pertains to Maimonides). He said to me, "Sure it's right, but only on the provisional level of the Guide." ² "The Literary Character of the Guide ... " which -- Strauss reports -- made Klein exclaim "We have rediscovered esotericism," ³ emphasizes the "wisdom," "ascent," or esoteric teaching of the Guide -- one is tempted to say -- at the expense of the "image," "descent," or

¹ "WPP?" 93.

² Strauss Talks"

exoteric teaching. It heavily underscores his radical heterodoxy. It may be an overstatement to say that Maimonides' heterodoxy is toned down in the later introduction to the Guide, but certainly it is balanced "by a greater emphasis on Maimonides' perplexities than on his certainties, and in particular on his vigorous and skillful defense of the Law."¹ In several places in the later writing, Strauss makes a point of suggesting that however far or "far out" Maimonides' heterodox thinking may go, it remains "intellectualization of the Torah."²

In the writings prior to the 1963 introduction to the Guide, Strauss takes literally Maimonides' identification of the "secrets" of the Torah with physics and metaphysics, that is, the identification of the esoteric teaching of revelation and of philosophy. He states there explicitly that Maimonides' "intention is to show that the teaching of these philosophic disciplines... is identical with the secret teaching of the Bible. The demonstration of such identity is no longer the duty

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¹ Guide, lvi. This is Strauss's own characterization of his introductory essay.

² Guide, xlv. See also xlix.
of the philosopher, but is incumbent upon the student of the true science of the law." In his 1963 introduction to the Guide, he explicitly repudiates the assertion of this identity between the esoteric teaching of philosophy and the "secrets" of the Torah:

The Guide is a single whole. What then is the bond uniting its exegetical and its speculative ingredients? One might imagine that while speculation demonstrates the roots of the Law, exegesis proves that those roots as demonstrated by speculation are in fact taught by the Law. But in that case the Guide would open with chapters devoted to speculation, yet the opposite is manifestly true. In addition, if the exegesis dealt with the same subject matter as that speculation which demonstrates the public teaching par excellence, namely, the roots of the Law, there would be no reason why the exegesis should be secret. Maimonides does say that the Account of the Beginning is the same as natural science and the Account of the Chariot is the same as divine science (i.e., the science of the incorporeal beings or of God and the angels). This might lead one to think that the public teaching is identical with what the philosophers teach, while the secret teaching makes one understand the identity of the teaching of the philosophers with the secret teaching of the Law. One can safely say that this thought proves to be untenable on almost every level of one's comprehending the Guide: the nonidentity of the teaching of the philosophers as a whole and the thirteen roots of the Law as a whole is the first word and the last word of Maimonides. What he means by identifying the core of philosophy (natural science and divine science) with the highest secrets of the Law (the Account of the Beginning and the Account of the

1 PAW, 45-46.
Chariot) and therewith by somehow identifying the subject matter of speculation with the subject matter of exegesis may be said to be the secret par excellence of the Guide.

Accordingly, it follows that the true science of the Law cannot be the demonstration of that identity as had been concluded in the 1941 writing. ²

To state the matter as succinctly as Maimonides does in the last chapter, the science of the Law is something essentially different, not only from the post-biblical . . . legal interpretation of the Law, but from wisdom, i.e., the demonstration of the view transmitted by the Law, as well. ³

These differences between the earlier and later understanding of Maimonides do not significantly modify Strauss’s argument with Guttmann or Schwarzchild’s with Strauss. Nothing need be added to the forceful "answer" Strauss’s Introduction to Philosophie und Gesetz makes to Schwarzchild. ⁴ The later changes in Strauss’s position are more pertinent perhaps to his argument with Guttmann. Guttmann (and I, certainly) cannot say definitely because as Guttmann observes, "Concerning . . . [Maimonides'] esoteric doctrine he [Strauss] has not

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¹ Guide, xvi-xvii.

² See PAAW, 92-93.

³ Guide, xxxvi. The central consideration leading to his conclusion is Maimonides' thematic discussion of providence. Ibid.

⁴ See below Chapter IV.
yet expressed himself in a systematic way, and thus it is impossible
to form a decisive estimate of his position."¹ Guttmann does not
in his note respond to Strauss's indictment of the inadequacy of a
Schleiermacher-inspired approach to Maimonides. It can be said
definitely that no later modification in Strauss's position modifies
this indictment in the least.

As was indicated, whatever Strauss's last word on the esoteric
teaching of Maimonides, Strauss leaves no doubt, both early and late,
that Maimonides "vigorously and skillfully" defends what is "first
for us!" "the community of the adherents of the law": e.g., a unique
supra-rational revelation and creatio ex nihilo.² He makes this
very clear in a very late -- 1972 -- statement contrasting Maimonides
(though he does not name him) and Hermann Cohen.

The Jewish religion might be understood as revealed religion.
In that case the philosopher would accept revelation as it was
accepted by Jews throughout the ages in an uninterrupted tradition
and would bow to it; he would explicate it by the means of philosophy
and especially defend it against its deniers or doubters, philosphic
and nonphilosophic. But this pursuit would not be philosophic since

¹ PJ, 434, n. 125.
² Strauss writes: "As Maimonides indicates when explaining the
account of the revelation on Mount Sinai, the beautiful consideration of
the text is the consideration of their outer meaning." Guide, xxxvi.
³ Cf. Bokser, op.cit.
it rests on an assumption that the philosopher as philosopher cannot make or on an act of which the philosopher as philosopher is not capable. Cohen excludes this manner of understanding the relation between philosophy and Judaism by speaking of the religion of reason. "Revelation is (God's) creation of reason." Revelation is not "an historical act." For Cohen there are no revealed truths or revealed laws in the precise or traditional sense of the terms.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{1}Cohen's RR, xxiii.}\]
CHAPTER IV

LEO STRAUSS
ON MODERN ENLIGHTENMENT AND BIBLICAL TRADITION

1. Introduction

In relation to our discussion of Strauss's early work on Maimonides in Chapter III, this chapter goes both forward and back. It goes forward from medieval thought to modern thought, in attempting to make clear the ground of Strauss's assertion (stated in Chapter III) of the greater "betrayal" or destruction of biblical tradition by modern thinkers. It goes back -- and brings us full circle -- to the starting point of Strauss's "going back" to Maimonides. That starting point, the final outcome of modern enlightenment or rationalism, was the alternative -- apparently the only alternative: unenlightened or "irrational" orthodoxy or atheism -- the latter commended, if not commanded, by modern enlightenment to all men of probity. In the Introduction to Philosophie und Gesetz, Strauss thematically discusses how modern thought arrives at this ultimate conclusion; he discusses the movements of modern thought from the radical enlightenment (Spinoza) to the final atheism with a good conscience (Nietzsche). We end with a question with which Strauss began: Must
enlightenment necessarily mean modern enlightenment "as distinguished from pre-modern rationalism, especially Jewish medieval rationalism and its classic (Aristotelian and Platonic) foundation"? ¹

2. **The Theologico-Political Garden**

Strauss maintains -- as was maintained generally until modern times -- that human culture takes place within a theologico-political garden: the theological tradition and the political order delimit and lay out the "given" plot within which culture takes place; these are prior to any culture and its products. It follows that to revolutionize a culture, to effect a basic change in direction, to turn it and to redirect it toward different goals, and, indeed, to change the meaning of culture, requires radical modification of the theologico-political frame. The more radical the modification, the more radially far-reaching the consequent changes in culture and its products. The term "theologico-political" gains prominence in the Enlightenment. In our minds, it is associated primarily with the kind of treatises produced by Enlightenment writers. The reason that the term is associated with work of this period

¹SCR, 31, and P&G, 28.
primarily is because of the conscientious attacks against the
theological and political traditions launched by thinkers whose
explicit aim it was to make sure the triumph of new modes and orders.
This type of treatise intended not only to provide a blueprint for the
new "orders" -- it deliberately set out to undermine the traditional
theologico-political frame. Strauss notes:

Sind "Religion" and "Politik" die die "Kulture" transzendierenden
oder, um genauer zu sprechen, die ursprünglichen Tatsachen.

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1 R.C. L. Strauss defends his assertion (against Sabine's
criticism) that the chief aim of B.S.'s Theologico-Political Treatise
is "to refute the claims which have been raised on behalf of revelation
throughout the ages": "Sabine 'should have preferred to believe that
Spinoza was quite honest when he said that the chief aim of his book
was to advocate freedom of speech and of investigation, rather than
"to refute the claims which have been raised on behalf of revelation
throughout the ages" as Strauss says." The chief aim, or, according
to the full title of the Theologico-Political Treatise, the sole aim of
that work, is to advocate freedom of philosophizing. But, as Spinoza
says in the preface, he cannot successfully defend that freedom without
drawing the reader's attention to the chief prejudices regarding religion,
i.e., especially to the prejudice that philosophy must be the handmaid
of theology: he must advocate the radical separation of philosophy and
theology. But such a radical separation appeared to him unreasonable
if theology or the Bible could be assumed to teach theoretical truth.
He was therefore compelled to try to show that the Biblical teaching
has no cognitive value whatever: he was compelled to try to refute the
claims which have been raised on behalf of revelation throughout the
ages. It is legitimate to designate as the chief aim of a book that aim
which the author consciously pursues in a very large part of the book,
provided his having attained that aim is the necessary and sufficient
condition for his other aim or aims becoming defensible." WPP? 226-227.
so ist die radikale Kritik des "Kulture"-Begriffs nur in der Form eines "theologisch-politischen Traktats" möglich der allerdings, wenn er nicht wieder zur Grundlegung der "Kultur" führen soll, die genau entgegengesetzte Tendenz wie die theologisch-politischen Traktate des siebzehnten Jahrhunderts, besonders diejenigen von Hobbes and Spinoza, haben muss. Die erste Bedingung hierfür wäre freilich, dass diese Werke des siebzehnten Jahrhunderts nicht mehr, wie bisher fast immer geschehen ist, im Horizont der Kulturphilosophie verstanden würden.  

As was clearly recognized by the fathers of the new political science (and as indicated by the hyphen), the theological and the political cannot be sundered. What has politics to do with theology? And what has theology to do with politics? Somehow the answer to the first question is simpler and more readily apparent than the answer to the second question which requires that it be answered by a particular theology. But on an obvious level, unless theology teaches a "beyond good and evil" doctrine, it grounds knowledge of good and

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1 P&G, 31-32, n.1. Strauss indicates that the expression of his realization of this "erste Bedingung" is to be found in his "Comments on Carl Schmitt's Der Begriff des Politischen" SCR, 331 - 351.
evil and guides us in the right way of life. (And even a "beyond good
and evil" doctrine is not strictly apolitical, especially in what it
denies.)

The simple answer to the first question is to be seen in a
modern context in Strauss's discussion of Schmitt's Der Begriff Des
Politischen:

This characterization [by Schmitt of the modern age as "the
age of depoliticization"] surely does not mean that in the nineteenth
and twentieth centuries politics do less to determine men's fate than
in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. . . . What has changed

1 The Vedantic theology of Brahman and the theology of Epicurus
come close to what may be regarded as non-political theologies because
in these instances what is said about the god or gods is severed from
the question of how men may best live together. More than that, it is
maintained that a deity who cares is a deficient deity. Both insist,
in their respective ways, that to be truly god the deity must be uncaring,
oblivious to human things and to the world and, indeed, totally
unconscious. (See Strauss's remark about "Hindus," NR, 130.)

2 A good example is Nietzsche or rather Nietzsche's impact.
Strauss characterizes the impact of Nietzsche as follows: "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.
After having taken upon himself this great political responsibility, 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? 55. (Nietzsche
himself, according to Strauss, was concerned with the noble and the
base. See WPP? 26, and SCR, 12.)
fundamentally is not the fact of struggling, but the object of the struggle. What is the object of the struggle depends on what is regarded as important, as authoritative. Different centuries regard different things as authoritative: in the sixteenth century, it was theology, in the seventeenth metaphysics, in the eighteenth morals, in the nineteenth economics, and in the twentieth century technology. In each century a different substantive concern is the central concern. Politics, since it does not have a substantive field of its own, is thus never the "central field." Whereas the "central fields" vary, politics remains constantly determinative of men's fate. But in this function, politics is always dependent on what is at any given time man's ultimate concern. "Even the State (draws) its reality and strength from whatever is at the time the central concern, because the decisive themes of contention between the groupings of friend and foe are determined by the substantive concern which is authoritative at the time." The precise significance of the de-politicizing that is characteristic of the modern age is therefore to be discerned only by understanding which law prevails in the "sequence and gradation of the varying central fields." This law is the "tendency towards neutralization," in other words, the effort to reach a base, which "makes security, evidence, agreement and peace possible." Agreement and peace are meant in the sense of agreement and peace at any price. Yet agreement can always be reached in principle about the means to an already established end, whereas the ends are always controversial: we disagree with one another and with ourselves always only about the just and the good (Plato, Euthyphro 7 b-d and Phaedrus 263 a). If therefore one wishes agreement at any price, there is no other way than to abandon altogether the question of what is right and to limit one's concern exclusively to the means. Thus it becomes intelligible that modern Europe after it had decided to seek for a neutral plane as such in order to escape from the struggle about the right faith, arrived eventually at the faith in technology. "The plausibility of today's widely held belief in technology depends upon another belief, i.e. that technology is the absolutely and finally neutral ground ... As compared with theological, metaphysical, moral and even economic questions, over which controversy may well be never-ending, the purely technical problems have a quality refreshingly objective: they are
capable of completely convincing solutions..." But this neutrality of technology is only apparent. "Technology is always instrument and weapon alone, and for the reason that technology serves everyone, it is not neutral." In this characteristic of apparent neutrality we plainly see the absurdity of the attempt to discover a "ground absolutely and finally neutral," or to reach agreement at any price. Agreement at any price is possible only as agreement at the price of the meaning of human life, for such agreement is possible only when man abandons the task of raising the question regarding what is right, and when man abandons this question, he abandons his humanity.

And recall Strauss reminding us that "political understanding or political science cannot start from seeing the city as the Cave but it must start from seeing the city as a world, as the highest in the world; it must start from seeing man as completely immersed in political life." And what is first for us is not the philosophic understanding of the city but that understanding which is inherent in the city as such, in the pre-philosophic city according to which the city sees itself as subject and subservient to the divine in the ordinary understanding of the divine or looks up to it."
3. Strauss's Theological Focus on Modernity Follows (the More Political Focus Not Treated Here)

Strauss tells us that the abiding theme of his investigations has remained "das theologisch-politische Problem." That this is so is immediately apparent on the surface: Strauss, the professor of political science, evinces inordinate theological interest. Strauss, the Jewish scholar, is inordinately concerned with political thought Strauss does not make the separation as completely as it is usually made by contemporary scholars and thinkers. This complete separation became the norm, or usual only quite recently -- as Strauss indicates in the following remark:

It is sufficient to contrast the work of the four greatest philosophers of the last forty years -- Bergson, Whitehead, Husserl, and Heidegger -- with the work of Hermann Cohen in order to see how rapidly and thoroughly political philosophy has become discredited. \(^1\)

The last part of this remark perhaps provides a hint as to why Strauss came to focus more sharply on and to emphasize the "political" whereas earlier the "theological" appeared to be at the center of his focus. \(^2\)

Strauss's third book -- after Spinoza's Critique of Religion and Philosophie und Gesetz -- was The Political Philosophy of Hobbes (1936).

\(^1\) WPP? 17.

\(^2\) Again, it should be noted that this is a loose generalization, for Strauss was hardly neglectful of the political earlier: his "Comments on Carl Schmitt's Der Begriff Des Politischen" was published in 1932. And it must be remembered that his most important works -- his last word -- on Maimonides issued in the 60's.
Strauss tells us in his American Preface to that work what prompted his turning to that subject:

I had seen that the modern mind had lost its self-confidence or its certainty of having made decisive progress beyond pre-modern thought; and I saw that it was turning into nihilism, or what is in practice the same thing: fanatical obscurantism. I concluded that the case of the moderns against the ancients must be reopened, without any regard to cherished opinions or convictions, sine ira et studio.  

As early as 1936, he saw what in his introduction to The City and Man he calls "the crisis of the West."  

What follows is devoted to his more "theological" focus on modernity; specifically, we begin, considering why it leads Strauss to characterize modernity as "Epicurean." The more "political" focus which leads Strauss to characterize modernity as "the Machiavellianization of the West" will not be treated here.  

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2Recall his opening: "It is not self-forgetting and pain-loving antiquarianism nor self-forgetting and intoxicating romanticism which induces us to turn with passionate interest, with unqualified willingness to learn, toward the political thought of classical antiquity. We are impelled to do so by the crisis of our time, the crisis of the West." C&M. 1. Recall that it is in that Introduction that Strauss's statement of "return" is to be found. C&M, 11.

3This characterization is quite compatible with the "epicurean" designation which Strauss retains and later reiterates -- as we shall see.

4Strauss's understanding of modernity, primarily in terms of the new political science, is the major theme of my M.A. thesis. As indicated above, a special effort has been made in this thesis not to encroach on the area of my M.A. thesis.
The more "theological" focus on modernity requires confronting modern thought with medieval thought, whereas the more "political" focus draws one's attention to the classics.¹ (This is not to say that classical sources are unimportant for the modern critique of biblical tradition; we will demonstrate the contrary below.) The great modern political thinkers explicitly demand the direction of one's attention to the classics. Strauss writes:

Up to the present day no adherent of the modern principles has been able to assert them with any degree of definiteness without explicitly and more or less passionately attacking the classical principles. Therefore a free examination of the modern principles is necessarily based on their conscientious confrontation with those of classical philosophy.

To confront them with the principles of mediaeval philosophy would not suffice. Generally speaking, mediaeval philosophy has in common with modern philosophy the fact that both are influenced, if in different ways, by the teaching of the Bible. That influence does not necessarily become a subject of critical investigation if modern philosophy is confronted with mediaeval philosophy, whereas it necessarily comes immediately to the center of attention if modern philosophy is confronted with classical philosophy. Besides, it was classical rather than mediaeval philosophy which was attacked by the founders of modern philosophy. At any rate, the founders of modern political philosophy conceived of their work as directed

¹This is not to deny that the 'anti-theological ire' of moderns is directed against the medievals, against what Hobbes calls "the kingdom of darkness." Strauss clearly recognizes this as indicated in his observation: "Modern natural law was partly a reaction to this absorption of natural law by theology. The modern efforts were partly
against classical philosophy in all its forms; in the passages of their writings where they state their intention most clearly they do not even mention mediaeval philosophy as a significant opponent.

4. The Peculiar Epicureanism of Modernity

In the theological --- or perhaps one should say, in the anti-theological sphere---moderns drew inspiration from classic sources, above all, from the Epicurean tradition of critique of religion. What was most "new" was the target --- biblical

based on the premise, which would have been acceptable to the classics, that the moral principles have a greater evidence than the teachings even of natural theology and, therefore, that natural law or natural right should be kept independent of theology and its controversies. The second important respect in which modern political thought returned to the classics by opposing the Thomistic view is illustrated by such issues as the indissolubility of marriage and birth control. A work like Montesquieu's Spirit of Laws is misunderstood if one disregards the fact that it is directed against the Thomistic view of natural right." NR, 164.


2Strauss writes: "The justification of that assumption, i.e. the critique of the opposed presupposition, that of revealed religion, is the true foundation of Biblical science in the modern sense. It is for this reason and only for this reason that Spinoza's work is of fundamental importance. The context to which it belongs is the critique of Revelation as attempted by the radical Enlightenment. That critique in its turn is only one particular form, one particular stage of the critique of religion which was originated in Greek antiquity and continued and renewed in the age in which belief in Revelation predominated." SCR, 35. There were, of
traditions\(^1\) -- and the "activist" zeal of the attackers, and the new lethal weapons forged by the new political and natural sciences.\(^2\)

Strauss quotes this quip of Burke's (I believe more than once):

Boldness formerly was not the character of atheists as such. They were even of a character nearly the reverse; they were formerly like the old Epicureans, rather an unenterprising race. But of late they are grown active, designing, turbulent, and seditious.\(^3\)

Strauss writes:

In Epicureanism generally, premodern thought seems to come closer to modern thought than anywhere else. No premodern

course, non-Epicurean Roman sources to draw upon for the critique of biblical religion. See Karl Löwith's comparison of Nietzsche's critique of Christianity with that of Celsus and Porphyry. K. Löwith, Meaning in History (Phoenix Books, University of Chicago Press, 1964), 220. Strauss, in his Appendix to SCR, shows the ample use Spinoza made of classic sources -- of Tacitus, in particular.

\(^1\) It is not insignificant whether the critic of biblical traditions is a pagan critic or one bred in that biblical tradition. As Strauss puts it: "Criticism changed its character not only because the object of criticism had changed with the transition from paganism to revealed religion but also because the critics' attitude ceased to be pagan under the influence of revealed religion." SCR, 46; and see, 30. Also see LAM, 261.

\(^2\) Again we note the difficulty of speaking of what was happening in theology and in the new sciences separately. The impetus driving both the critique of religion and natural science was a political motive force. Likewise, the critique of religion lent impetus to the new science and perhaps somewhat informed its direction; to prove, if not the impossibility of miracles and prophecy, then at least the unknowability of such; at very least, the new epistemology fitted hand-in-glove the critique of religion. The new natural science, in turn, could establish the new political direction as "scientific" and invalidate teleological political science as "unscientific." (See the Introduction to P&G below.) Epicurean influence infected all three areas.

\(^3\) NR, 169.
writer seems to have been as deeply moved as Lucretius was by the thought that nothing lovable is eternal or sempiternal or deathless, or that the eternal is not lovable. Apart from this, it may suffice here to refer 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.

(And that is why, Strauss tells us, "the most extensive discussion [in the book] is devoted to Lucretius' poem.")

Strauss hardly slights the significant radical newness of the modern appropriation of Epicureanism. Strauss is emphatic in his remarks following upon the quotation from Burke quoted above.

Political atheism is a distinctly modern phenomenon. No premodern atheist doubted that social life required belief in, and worship of, God or gods. If we do not permit ourselves to be deceived by ephemeral phenomena, we realize that political atheism and political hedonism belong together. They arose together in the same moment and in the same mind. [Hobbes1]

Strauss initiates his discussion of Epicureanism and modern thought with an important and difficult question: Is the new modern natural science and modern critique of religion animated by a "political" motive which has its source in an original interest springing from

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1 LAM, viii. Strauss elaborates his discernment of the Epicureanism of moderns first in Spinoza's Critique of Religion (1930). He repeats it in Philosophie und Gesetz (1935), in his 1962 Preface to SCR, which appears to be a verbatim English rendering of the statement in P&G; and we find it again put most emphatically in the quotation above from LAM (1968).

2 Ibid.

3 NR, 169.

4 In SCR.
the heart, in an original motive"? What prompts this question?

Strauss observes:

These early [seventeenth century] critics of religion speak with a naiveté, which never ceases to startle us, of the happiness which they owe to their science, and which they confidently expect to receive from their science -- the liberation from religion. By this happiness they do not mean the joy of disinterested investigation aiming, it is true, at results, but not at these or those particular results. Their interest aims at particular results. Their particular happiness requires that they should arrive at particular "truths." Their scientific inquiry serves a particular purpose. And is this purpose not prior to the pursuit of science? Does it not define the limits of their questioning? Does it not foreshadow their answers? Certainly these metaphysicians by their systems prove that the interest which directs their science is the only justifiable human interest, the sole interest in harmony with nature and with truth. But is the reality and the effectiveness of this interest due to its scientific foundation? Is it not much more plausible and convincing that this interest guides their science, and by so doing directs the scientific justification adduced for the interest? ... We must assume the possibility here adumbrated that the criticism of religion undertaken, in intent scientific and objective, nevertheless has its origin in an original interest springing from the heart, in an original motive. This possibility becomes reality, if ever, in the philosophy of Epicurus. Epicurus' criticism of religion is one source, and the most important one, of seventeenth century criticism of religion.

Epicurus is conscious of his motive. It is expressly the root first of his criticism of religion and then of his science.

1 SCR, 37-38.
Strauss proceeds to present the Epicurean teaching. Here, quoted at length, are excerpts from Strauss's sketch of Epicureanism:

For Epicurus, the basic aim of knowledge is to achieve a condition of eudaimonia, by means of reasoning. This eudaimonia does not consist in the scientific investigation itself; science is no more than the indispensable means of attaining the condition. The concrete meaning attached to eudaimonia defines the task of science as the elimination of all fear of the gods. . . . What is to be understood as the greatest pleasure is not, however, the highest possible surplus of any pleasure over the pain mingled with it, but the purest pleasure, free of any pain. The elimination of every pain -- this is "the limit for the magnitude of pleasure." The greatest pleasure is thus unambiguously defined as the purest pleasure. What above all imperils purity of pleasure is the recall of past pain and the premonition of future pain. Pleasure must be safeguarded not only against the admixture of present pain, but also against the intrusion of past and future pain. The security of pleasure is for Epicurus only the more general form of the achievement of pure pleasure. But it is manifest that, if certainty is divorced from its association with purity of pleasure, and one can disregard the particular premise that the greatest pleasure is the purest, then pleasure may also be understood and desired as secure. This observation is necessary for understanding the Epicurean tradition in criticism of religion. Epicurus' critique of religion is founded on the achievement of security divorced from the achievement of purity. . . . Epicurus cannot but direct the whole of his energy to the elimination of this anxiety by which all pleasure is brought to nothing: The fear of the gods and fear of death.

It is to be conceded that . . . it is in no sense to be said that Epicurus consciously reconstructs the world as a figment in harmony with his impelling interest. Rather is it that his dominant will to self-liberation from fear predisposes him to seek out and prefer facts which work for equanimity and consolation. It is not only the specific scientific findings which are modified by this tendency, but the specific scientific approach as a whole. . . . If science is to do away with fear and confusion of mind, there must first of all be unambiguous
criteria which permit the final settling of at least those questions which touch on principles. It is for this reason that dialectic is rejected, and only a few rules, and those unconditionally valid, are admitted to be "canonic." This underlies the insistence on maximum simplicity, palpability and clarity. The truths unveiled by reason using these epistemological principles must at all times be ready to hand in the form of propositions, to quell perturbation in the moment of its arising. This explains the terse formulation of the basic propositions -- those most frequently needed -- into apothegms, designed to be learned by heart. Let it be borne in mind that it is not truth qua truth which brings calm, but the particular truth that there is no ground for fear. The world itself must be of such a nature that we need not fear finding ourselves confronted with surprising, dangerous occurrences. A soothing regularity and necessity must prevail. This necessity must not tyrannize over us, it must leave us our freedom. Hence the notorious resotto the theory of the arbitrary movements of atoms, so that human tranquillity may persist, even in the face of the otherwise inexorable necessity of atomic events.

Epicurus' concern is for tranquillity of mind and life unbeset by fear. He sets his face resolutely against all that confuses and disturbs. The drive behind his philosophy is of such nature that it must have affected not only the adherents of a particular school of philosophy, i.e. those who choose a certain particular means. Rather is it the case that in Epicureanism a universal human motive for rebellion against religion finds its expression -- the most

1SCR, 274-275, n. 10. Strauss justifies his assumption of the primacy of the motive in Epicurus' philosophy as established.
universal human motive, which changes little, if at all, amid all the modifications and developments in the evolution of human consciousness.

It is from the proof of the thesis "nihil ex nihilo" that physics takes its very first step, so that on the basis of this proposition it may cut away every available ground for the perplexing and frightening belief in gods who create and rule. It is in this Epicurean context that we find the confrontation of the "mythical" and the "scientific" categories; on the one hand, the indeterminate and the sudden, the jump, the discontinuous (for the explanation of which recourse must be had by foeda religio to the doings of the gods), and on the other hand, the definite, the gradual, growth, the continuous, from which, as the genuine and only real progress of events, the merely apparent irregularity can be comprehended "without divine aid," by the assumption of minute, no longer visible changes. This shows the direct connection between the epicurean intention and the choice of a system of physics such as that of Democritus.

Democritus holds the view that belief in the gods stems from fear. It is not the mere perception of striking natural phenomena as such or an inference drawn from these, but fear of such occurrences, the experience of feeling imperiled by them, that leads to the belief in gods, to fear of the gods. We may take Democritus as the originator of the theory on which, as on a foundation, the theories of Hobbes, Spinoza, Hume, Holbach, Feuerbach, Bruno Bauer, Marx take their stand to characterize and define a great tradition which extends into the present. The school of Epicurus is the first torch-bearer of this tradition.

If we summarize the conceptions of religion prevailing in Epicurean thinking, which are demonstrably present in the work of Lucretius, and which were handed down in various ways to the

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"It is strange to hear Strauss speak in terms of "evolution of human consciousness." Strauss tells us in the Preface that at the time, he was subject to the "powerful prejudice, that a return to pre-modern philosophy is impossible." SCR, 31."
seventeenth century, we find a characteristic conviction that there is a fundamental cleavage between science and religion: to the effect that fear of the gods can arise and persist only on condition that knowledge of real causes is lacking. Fear of the gods arises from the powerful effect which cosmic events have on us. Especially important are the exceptional and striking events -- those which alarm and imperil. Experience of mortal danger, which leads to despair and to contempt of human resources -- this is the mood which is most favorable to the birth of religion. The real perils are reinforced in this effect by imaginary ones experienced in dreams. It is science that frees us from the onus of religion, itself born of terror and dream.

Epicureanism, as it is received by the seventeenth century, is blended with other pre-modern currents of critique of religion.

Those of greatest moment are Averroism and Machiavellianism.

Indicative of this blending of Averroism with Epicureanism is this comment of Strauss's:

It is significant that to the legendary Averroës is ascribed the tenet that pleasure is the highest good.

He goes on:

After the rediscovery of Epicurean philosophy by the humanists -- a discovery which reaches its climax in the work on Epicurus by Gassendi -- the two traditions are fused in the thought of the free-thinkers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

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1 SCR, pp. 38-46.

2 SCR, 48.
Averroes' view of religion differs significantly from Epicurus'. Strauss points this out in his depiction of the Averroistic position:

Civil government, which regulates and supervises only external human actions, is not in itself sufficient for orderly corporate life within society. Religion is a regulator of order in social life. It bears on the life of the populace. It is not a necessary and spontaneous product of the life of the many, but a code of law prescribed for the many by higher intelligences (prophets). Religion is not by nature but by institution. Here we have a sharp contrast between the Epicurean and the Averroist conception of religion.

What then is the connection between them? The naturalistic conception of prophecy. Strauss writes:

According to Averroism, the gift which enables the prophet, as distinct from the philosopher, to perform his function is imagination, the capacity which operates most purely in our dreams. Prophecy, born of the joint activity of imagination and intelligence, makes its appeal to the imagination of the many. Prophecy appeals to the striving of the many after material satisfactions in order to move the many to externally virtuous behavior (the many being considered incapable of true virtue). Religion is thus an excellent means also for princes to restrain their peoples and to exact obedience. This conception of religion, which found crude expression in the catch-phrase of the three impostors, is originally supported by the interest in theory as the perfection of man. It is this very connection which is still an element in Spinoza's thinking.

Averroism is given fresh impetus by Machiavelli who finds religion good for the people and the people good because of it (in contrast to the

1 SCR. 47.
2 SCR. 48.
corruption rife amongst princes and priests). Strauss comments:

This combination penetrates the "polities" of the seventeenth century. Become an article of faith, it is taken up also in the Epicurean movement of the age. That movement is not guided by political fervor, but by Epicurean hostility toward religion... The campaign against fear becomes a campaign against the way in which kings and priests use this fear for the increase of their own power.

Why, if these three elements were so intermingled, does Strauss refer to the seventeenth century critique of religion as "Epicurean"? He says:

We have preferred the name of Epicurus for the reason that of the three motives which brought forth that criticism --

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1 SCR, 49. From the footnote reference on this passage, SCR, 275, n.17, it is clear that Strauss has in mind primarily Spinoza. It would apply less to Hobbes whose hostility to religion is derivative from "political fervor." Hobbes stands out as the least "Averroistic" of early modern thinkers. Locke would moderate "injudicious" Hobbes in a direction back toward "Averroism" and Rousseau would correct Hobbes by a conscious choice of a made-to-order "impostor." There are several positions or facets of positions which can be associated with Averroes: 1) his own, that the truths of revelation are not inaccessible to unaided human reason and perhaps Locke is the modern who exemplifies this view in its modern variations as is suggested by the title The Reasonableness of Christianity; 2) impious Averroism as indicated by "the three impostors" and exemplified well by Spinoza: there is no truth in claims to revelation and no truths clearly propounded by the alleged revelation except practical ones which induce obedience of the citizenry. Religion is theoretically bankrupt and politically salutary. Philosophers should not be put upon by theologians. The business of theologians is to foster obedience; theoretical truths are no concern of theirs. 3) The Averroistic interpretation of Aristotle in contrast to Aquinas which suggests: "The dictates of right reason regarding the things to be done (i.e., natural law in the Thomistic sense) ... are not as such universally valid because they
ataraxia, theory, virtù -- the first is the least mediate, in the sense of not having been called forth under pressure from a particular historical situation. The meaning of the term is originally defined by the opposition to religion.

Let us pause here for reflection on what has been indicated by the extensive quotations. We have seen that Strauss, notwithstanding his later stress on political thought and, therefore, Machiavellianization, is even then partial to characterizing modernity in terms of Epicureanism. This perhaps bespeaks his abiding conviction that modernity profoundly opposes significant elements of biblical religion and, in particular, "stern" biblical morality. It also reminds us of his conviction that the question, *quid sit deus*, is coeval with philosophy, so though he may address himself primarily to modern political philosophy, he is not unmindful of the "theological"

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are not universally known and observed." Leo Strauss, "Natural Law," Encyclopedia of Social Sciences. The exoteric Locke can be linked with 1). Strauss also links him with the view expressed in 3) in his "Locke's Doctrine of Natural Law" (WPP: 197-220); the last word (in both senses) is "Averroes."

1SCR, 49.
question. Speaking of Heidegger's thought, he expresses the "answer" to that question implicit in modern thought (and it may be said to be an "Epicurean" one):

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.

These last words indicate that Strauss came to focus more centrally on political thought because he came to see more clearly perhaps than he had in his early writings that it was the modern concern with power and its overarching immoderate ambitions (not least, including immoderate expectations from new social sciences) which drive modernity. In the context of our discussion, this means he came to see modernity as above all the Machiavellianization of the West. Machiavellianization differs from Epicureanism and Averroism in its knocking theory off its pedestal and putting it to work generating

\[WPP? \, 55.\]
power, power for the relief of man's estate, power sufficient to guarantee the political (and economic) good, conceived as collective selfishness. Discussing Hobbes, Strauss notes:

The abandonment of the primacy of contemplation or theory in favor of the primacy of practice is the necessary consequence of the abandonment of the plane on which Platonism and Epicureanism had carried on their struggle. For the synthesis of Platonism and Epicureanism stands or falls with the view that to understand is to make.¹

Strauss states there:

It was Machiavelli, that greater Columbus, who had discovered the continent on which Hobbes could erect his structure.²

Strauss started with Spinoza, for whom indeed ataraxia is a chief objective and "biblical science" an important project. Focusing on Spinoza, one will appreciate and emphatically underscore Epicureanism. Strauss's study of Spinoza led him to Hobbes.³ Focusing on Hobbes, one comes to appreciate the "straight line which leads from Machiavelli to Bacon [and] Hobbes," and one appreciates the "political fervor" and even public-spiritedness which animates this "line." Strauss writes in the Preface:

The great revolt against traditional thought or the emergence of modern philosophy or natural science was completed prior to Spinoza.

¹ NR, 177, n. 11.
² Ibid., 177.
³ Strauss writes: "Hobbes is much less interested than is Spinoza in a specific Bible science. For him, the political preoccupation plainly predominates." SCR, 104.

One may go further and say that, far from being a revolutionary thinker, Spinoza is only the heir of the modern revolt and the medieval tradition as well. At first glance he might well appear to be much more medieval than Descartes, to say nothing of Bacon and Hobbes. The modern project as understood by Bacon, Descartes and Hobbes demands that man should become the master and owner of nature; or that philosophy or science should cease to be essentially theoretical. Spinoza, however, attempts to restore the traditional conception of contemplation: one cannot think of conquering nature if nature is the same as God. Yet Spinoza restored the dignity of speculation on the basis of modern philosophy or science, of a new understanding of "nature." He thus was the first great thinker who attempted a synthesis of pre-modern (classical-medieval) and of modern philosophy.

Not Averroism and not Epicureanism and not both together effect the radical turning which demotes theory or depreciates contemplation; on the contrary. The specific difference then of modernity comes to sight, first and foremost, as Machiavellianization.

We may say that the founders of modernity make classical materialism which was notoriously apolitical ardently political, or we may (as Strauss does) speak of their synthesizing Epicureanism and Platonism on the plane of making. How does this come to be? What are the seeds of this striking contrast between classical materialism and modern materialism? What, above all, has intervened between

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1 SCR, 15-16.
classical materialism and modern materialism, is biblical religion, all-pervasive biblical religious tradition. One could not easily have been a "pure" or outspoken Epicurean in pre-modern times. That is, one could not have simply opposed or rejected biblical religion in the way Epicureans opposed religion; no, the unbeliever would have had to contend with biblical religion which imperiously pervaded all of life; one could not easily be as apolitical or retiring as classical materialists, which suggests why to be an Epicurean in such times one had to be an Averroist. If this is so, it would help us to understand how the synthesis of Platonism and Epicureanism, political idealism and apolitical materialism came to be seen as "natural" for thinkers like Hobbes, for Averroes (and Machiavelli) are modifiers and heirs of modifiers of Platonic political philosophy, or of classical idealism.\(^1\)

Strauss observes:

Fear of God as taught by the Bible took the place once occupied by fear of the gods, and brought forth a new type of criticism. It was now not only the Epicurean concern which induced men to undertake criticism of religion; every concern indifferent to revelation, or at least to conformity with revelation, led to heresy, denial or doubt. Whereas Epicurus had led the battle against

religion by means of theory, but not for the sake of theory, now it was also and in particular the representatives of pure theory (to the extent that their theories taught a different doctrine than did religion), who found themselves obliged to wage a more or less concealed war against religion. For it was no longer possible, or not yet possible, simply to disregard religion or to live as if religion did not exist. Even those whose original position towards religion was one of indifference or disbelief found themselves obliged to come to grips with religion at every step. A tradition which has remained active for about five hundred years within Western Christianity traces this type of criticism back to Averroes.

1 Strauss is clearly aware of the peculiarities of the Enlightenment appropriation of Epicureanism. He takes pains to indicate these and yet maintains that to label the spirit of the age "Epicurean" is appropriate. Strauss, for example, points out that the modern "discoverers" of Epicureanism, Valla and Gassendi, were attracted to Epicurus out of "a Christian interest."

Epicurus' theory that human virtues develop out of animal instincts is affirmed as in harmony with the Christian mistrust of purely human virtue, for the sake of humiliating human pride in its own virtues. Epicurean animalism and Christian pessimism converge. They enter into a union to which the most famous monument is Rochefoucauld's Maxims and Reflections. In the context of this association, which marks the basic departure from the original (anti-religious) motive, the Epicurean concern and the Epicurean concept are still effective.

1 SCR, 47.
2 Ibid., 50.
Strauss discerns that "more than a few religious positions did in actual
fact not only satisfy the Epicurean motive but intended to satisfy it."\(^1\)
But Strauss adds: "This fact loses its importance as soon as positions
of this kind are recognized as insufficiently radical and to be excluded
from the range of radical reflection."\(^2\) Which, I believe, is to say
that it is not Gassendi but Hobbes who informs modernity, and not
Socinus\(^3\) but Spinoza who founds the science of biblical criticism.

\(^1\) SCR, 108.

\(^2\) Ibid., 108.

\(^3\) Strauss writes: "The significance of Socinianism within the
field of criticism of religion becomes manifest in its criticism of
Mosaic law. The Socinians contest the validity of this law mainly on
two grounds: the first is the inhuman hardness of that law, and the
second is its lack of any teaching on the immortality of the soul. This
charge demonstrates the . . . impulse toward the mitigation of the
harshness of existence, toward tranquillity. . . ." SCR, 65. It is on
this basis that Socinus grounds his assertion of the superiority of
Jesus to Moses: Moses' life of toil and trouble went uncompensated,
whereas Jesus received the ultimate compensation -- resurrection.
SCR, 65. There is an affinity between this Socinian view of Adam and
Epicurean anthropology. This is to be seen in the following quotation
from Dilthey: "In opposition to the theory of the original perfection
of man, the Socinians, with sound feeling and incipient anthropological
insight, assume man in his first emergence as it were still wrapped
in swaddling clothes, totally without experience, knowing neither good
nor evil and yet for all that, destined to be lord of the earth. They
demonstrate not only the non-sense in the Oriental picture of man's
life as originally of endless duration, but also the nonsense in the
theory of a righteousness due to creation: moral perfection is not
innate; it must always be acquired." Quoted in SCR, 69. This is to
suggest that Socinus plants the seeds for viewing human history from
Adam as emergence from the primitive natural state to higher stages as
growth from infancy to maturity. Finally, we would note the harmony
Strauss also draws attention to the intense religious strife peculiar to the epoch in which the Enlightenment critique of religion was produced. Strauss reminds us that classical Epicureans (e.g., Lucretius) countered charges that their doctrine was destructive of the foundations of the city because they attacked piety with the charge that "no power bore guilt for more fearful crime than did religion itself." Strauss observes:

Lucretius cites the sacrifices of Iphigenia as a case in point.

His successors in later centuries had no difficulty in remarking, instead of the mythical example, the atrocities being committed before their eyes in the name of religion. The ancient Epicurean motive, opposition to religion in the name of human peace of mind, took on, in the age of the Inquisition and of the wars of religion, a compelling topicality which Epicurus himself could never have foreseen. It must however be borne in mind that of Socinus' views with the modern temper in respect to the modern resolve to liberate man by his own sustained effort. See C&M, 42. Strauss writes: "Socinus' assertion of the original imperfection of man signifies that perfection, and in particular moral perfection, can be acquired only by human effort and action. Man's moral effort is, according to Socinus, not left without direction: the directives are 'innate' in him. His goodness or badness therefore depends entirely on what the originally imperfect man, 'inexperienced in good or evil,' does with this seed of goodness which is given him by nature. It depends entirely on the way in which his nature is trained and nurtured. The correlate of this proposition that man is by nature imperfect is the belief that man's own achievement, in the sense of how he cultivates his natural endowment, is decisive. Socinus, a whole-hearted believer in revelation, asserts this only in relation to the moral effort of the individual. . . . The specific cast of mind of the modern centuries, the belief in method, in culture -- let us not forget that 'culture' means 'culture of nature' -- implies directedness towards the future, belief that perfection is to be sought in the future, the denial of perfection as lost forever, as not to be recovered by human striving. This is the attitude that supports Socinus' attack on the dogma of original sin . . . ." SCR, 70-71.
the original Epicurean motive was concern for peace of mind — and this concern is the prevailing one also in the case of Lucretius, whereas in later centuries criticism of religion aimed predominantly toward peace within society.

May the modern striving for peace not be seen simply as a reaction to the strife and persecution of the epoch? Strauss puts this question and answers by distinguishing between "two cases." He writes:

Two cases must be distinguished here. The interest in social peace is preferable to senseless conflict between the different religions, confessions and sects. This type of criticism, which is prompted by desire for peace, usually takes its stand on the theoretical criticism of the doctrines of the various currents within revealed religion, even of revealed religion itself. Yet, social peace may be sought as a good so absolute that already the peace-endangering manifestations of essentially particular revealed religion — not "common to all men" — may count as a decisive argument against revealed religion. Only in the first case is the criticism accidental, in deciding against revealed religion from the fact of religious persecution. It is accidental to the extent that its cause, the particular social conditions of the century, must be taken as the distinctive reason. In the second case, the criticism of religion directed by interest in social peace is no less primary than was Epicurus' own.

Strauss grants that Epicureans' prime concern was peace of mind and that of moderns, peace within society. "But is it possible to combine

1 SCR, 51.

2 SCR, 51-52.
individual peace of mind and peace within society under the formal heading "Life in tranquillity and absence of fear." Strauss finds this heading more informative than "hedonism."

This heading is certainly no more formal than the traditional term "hedonism" which no one would discard as meaningless. In our context the formal heading is preferable, because it regains the distinction which makes criticism of religion possible: "not pleasure merely, but certainty of pleasure." This kind of hedonism we can call Epicureanism, and mean by the term not the teachings of a philosophic school as handed down to us, but the original inclination of the human heart -- an inclination of the heart which found its classical expression in the philosophy of Epicurus.

He also prefers it to "eudaimonism"; he asserts that the spirit of the Enlightenment "is not properly defined as 'eudaimonistic.'" He writes:

For in the final instance, the heart of the matter is not that regard for happiness is the principle of the morality of that age, but rather that this regard conditions also the answers given by the science of the period, and the regard for the truth is narrowed to interest in truth which consoles.

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1. SCR, 51.
2. SCR, 51.
3. SCR, 60. Strauss writes in his "Notes on Lucretius": "If one does not know precisely how they [the heavenly bodies] are moved, one is tempted time and again to relapse into the ancient fears of harsh, omnipotent lords. Epicurus' divine sayings about the immortal gods are less useful for the liberation from religion than his astronomy." LAM, 120. He also observes there: "Epicurus set forth his teaching regarding the gods and especially their existence in his Letter to Menoeceus, which is in fact devoted to ethics; he has found no place for it in his physics, that is, his teaching regarding the whole." LAM, 130. These comments suggest that strictly according to the Epicurean school, 1) even a doctrine of blissfully inactive gods is not as consoling as science
For example, both the rejection and acceptance of doctrines of
immortality in that age may issue from or at least be compatible
with the same Epicurean interest.¹

Strauss underscores yet another important deviation from
Epicurus' teaching by his modern followers. He writes:

When Epicurus contests the dreadful illusion of belief in active
gods, his opposition is directed originally and above all against
the terrifying, and not against the illusory character of that
belief. What he seeks is certain pleasure. This he finds in the
memory of past pleasure, pleasure no longer present in
experience. For pleasure present, pleasure in the moment of

and 2) as with Hobbes, there is a fundamental opposition between reason
and religion: the attempt to scientifically ground theological doctrine,
however consoling, is not a project, to say the least, which would be
encouraged by the Epicurean school; they prefer the consolations of
"pure" science. It is this which seems to point to the difference between
"radical"Enlightenment and the more moderate Enlightenment exemplified,
say, by Leibniz and Mendelssohn.

¹In his chapter on DaCosta, who rejects both eternal damnation
and beatitude, Strauss points out: "The Epicurean motive undergoes no
essential change by modification in its field of application and in
particular by limitation of that field. It has already been pointed out that interest
in peace and tranquility in life does not of necessity demand criticism
of religion. . . . If God is venerated as pure mercy and loving-kindness
in such a way as expressly to deny the conception of God as judge and
avenger, or to divest it of any concrete significance in life as lived under
the eye of God, the Epicurean interest is not only compatible with religious
concepts, but must recognize the religious concepts as those fulfilling the
Epicurean requirement to the highest degree, for they best further peace
of mind and liberation from fear, and must therefore be recognized as
uniquely consolatory and therefore true. It is then sufficient to contest
experience, is at hazard, basically uncertain. Admittedly, the memory of pleasures past is itself present pleasure. But the particular quality of remembered pleasure is that it is always present, unthreatened by any hazards to come. . . . DaCosta, and this would be true of Hobbes and other influential moderns] on the other hand, is concerned with the real, in other words, the present good. He opposes belief in immortality not only because this belief "torments him and weighs him down." because it is cause for fear, but as much because this belief decoys us away from the only real and assured good and ill, the present good and ill, because this belief is a delusion. For this reason, liberation of the mind by the action of the mind is not enough. It becomes needful to ensure present good, exposed as it is to the onslaught of men and of events, by external measures. Above all it becomes necessary to ensure external peace, social peace. The fearful aspect of religion is now seen mainly in its devastating effect on social peace. Religion is to be fought against as the origin of the most heinous crimes. Emphasis shifts more and more away from the task of the individual living in seclusion to achieve self-liberation from fear of the gods and of death, by his recognition of true causes. Emphasis falls now on liberating human

'through religion' which insults God by 'presenting Him as the most cruel executioner and terrible torturer to the eyes of men,' to contest this religion as the source of the most besetting 'terrors and fears.'" SCR, 59. Moses Mendelssohn comes to a conclusion opposite to DaCosta's but, nonetheless, compatible with the Epicurean motive. Strauss quotes him: "Can one in our times, for instance, really still say that the belief in eternal life makes death a matter of fear for us, so that, in order to be freed from this fear, one must lay aside this prejudice? Or is it not the case that the most reasonable part has the most consolatory thoughts of the future, which make of death even an object of desire? Whoever would set out to-day to write on les vaines terreur de la mort must rather assert that the soul is immortal." SCR, 59-60.
society from its worst enemies (the "priests") by political action. The battle against religion becomes a bitter and passionate attack on other men, who are arraigned as responsible for the unendurable condition of social hostility and are branded as enemies of humanity.

Strauss concludes: "The Epicurean interest now takes on a charge of moral content which is not to be accounted for by that interest itself." ²

Strauss sums up his analysis and discerns these moments in the modern critique of religion:

1) The authentic Epicurean with tranquillity of mind (the halcyon or calm of the soul) receded, and interest in peace of within society took foremost place. 2) Thus religion is rejected, not primarily because it causes distress of mind, but essentially because the hopes which it awakens are illusory. 3) The reliance on man's achievement, on labor, on culture and progress, opposes the belief in the original perfection of man, and -- thought through to its final consequences -- opposes any interest in, or belief in, revelation.

In Hobbes, the consummation of all these is to be seen clearly -- in "classic form." Strauss speaks of the Epicurean like "integral breadth and depth of Hobbes' critique of religion."

His philosophy is the classic form in which the positivist mind comes to understand itself. His critique of religion, implied in that self-understanding, is the classic manifestation of the positivist attitude to religion. ... For analysis of religion, the explanation of religion in terms of human nature, is the complement and culmination of critique of religion. The more definite the break

¹SCR, 60-61. ²Ibid., 62. ³Ibid., 86.
with religion, the more compelling is the obligation to supply such an analysis. If the critic finds himself in radical opposition to religion, he cannot rest content with merely refuting the teachings of religion, so that religion and critique of religion, still seem in principle to belong to the same plane of thought. He finds himself compelled to uncover the origin from which the whole complex of fallacious thinking characteristic of religion arises. Thus with Hobbes, critique of religion once more takes on the archetypal originality, the integral breadth and depth, which characterized that critique in the case of Epicurus and of Lucretius. He grasps afresh -- and in a manner entirely different -- that religion and science are by their nature opposed.

And precisely Hobbes' "servent" political concern most significantly informs and distinguishes his critique of religion. Strauss writes:

Anthropology (philosophia moralis et civilis) works toward an aim other than that of physics. Physics sets out to serve man's dominion over things, but anthropology serves peace. Now, without peace, science is impossible, culture is impossible. The purpose of anthropology is more urgent than the purpose of physics. Furthermore, the aim of physics cannot be clearly established except by starting from the aim of anthropology. For effort directed towards mastery over things, toward communia hujus vitae, does not contain within itself its own measure and restraint. By its very nature it leads to mastery over men, leads to hate and strife, to the war of all against all, which it cannot of itself bring to an end, and thus it brings about its own undoing. It becomes limited, and justified within limits, only through the most radical consideration, through regard for the fragility of the human body, through fear of death by violence and through our desire for security. Only thus is the unambiguous distinction between good and evil to be ascertained. With this is also given the peculiar

\[\text{SCR}, 86-87.\]
character of Hobbes' criticism of religion. Religion is rejected as a creation of vanity, desire for status and reputation, overestimation of one's own powers, the tendency to over-tender self-assessment. When Hobbes enunciates this view, he is not merely continuing the traditional hostile arguments against priests who are set on gaining wealth and advancement for themselves. It would be more natural to assume that the antithesis gloriantio-modestia as the ultimate antithesis which is the basis of morality, represents the secularized form of the antithesis superbia-modestia. If the root of all evil is gloriantio, then the religious illusion is not contested as illusion in the sense corresponding to the spirit of physics, as an attempt made with insufficient means; it is contested for the reason of its origin in gloriantio. Judged from the standpoint of physics, physics and religion surely spring from the same root: they differ only in that one has method and the other has not. Not until we come to anthropology, which is animated by the spirit of peace and civil society, do we find reason and religion opposed one to the other, from beginning to end.

It may be an overstatement but not a misleading one² that what issues from Hobbes' critique is the identification of biblical religion with madness, and of science with sober sanity. In Hobbes, the polemic against "priests" as perverters of Scripture and the theme of "Judea versus Rome" (as Nietzsche puts it) gain new heights of prominence.

¹ SCR, 94-95.
² See SCR, 96.
These are not new issues, but Hobbes puts more clearly and more forcefully than his predecessors the alleged subversive danger to public safety and to sovereignty -- to public sanity -- which is threatened by "Judea" and its "priests." Later thinkers who address themselves to this issue are addressing themselves to Hobbes, as indeed they must do on practically every important issue in modern political thought. It is interesting to note that Hobbes' rejection of the "Averroistic" position upholding the political salutariness of religion is in turn rejected by Spinoza, Locke, Rousseau and by most subsequent modern political thinkers. Nietzsche restores on a much more radical plane the campaign against what is illusory, however salutary, but even Nietzsche discerns salutariness in religion, whereas for Hobbes religion is above all a menace. In this respect, he is more purely "Epicurean" than later thinkers.  

Epicureanism influenced not only the modern critique of religion and modern natural science but also the new political science, the new anthropology, the new epistemology, the new theology --

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1 This perhaps suggests another reason why Hobbes did not bother to found, as did Spinoza, a "science of the Bible."

2 See Strauss's "last word" on Hobbes, WPP? 170-197. See especially 182 ff., beginning with the statement, "The most significant element of Hobbes' view of the whole is his view of the deity." (Strauss, in the "Preface To The 7th Impression (1973)" of NR, implies it is his "last word" on Hobbes.)
modern thought generally. What first and foremost does this
modern Epicureanism oppose? Plato and Aristotle and the tradition
stemming from them? Yes, but, as indicated above, modern Epicureanism
is informed by precisely that tradition and manifests the public-spiritedness
and concern with the political good typical of the classical idealistic tradition.
It would then be more accurate to speak of modern Epicureanism, as
Strauss does, as a radical modification of classical political philosophy
rather than in terms of "pure" opposition. "Opposition" -- more or less
"pure" -- better describes the relation and attitude of modern Epicureanism
particularly to Judaism and Calvinism: that is, it zealously opposes biblical
traditions which most prominently exhibit a) the appearance of a stern
morality or "code" of obedience by the appearance of anti-philosophical
attitudes and c) the appearance of a God who is awesomely transcendent.
Such a God must certainly appear as the arch-menace to an Epicurean
because such a God may well appear to him to be the ultimate
threat to peace of mind. If, indeed, Epicureanism is a

1See, for example, C&M, 10.

2That is, traditions which are conspicuously intransigent and
intractable -- to being made more compatible with Epicureanism. See 459, n. 1, above, and SCR, 59.
significant element in modern rationalism. It follows that Calvin's theology and Judaism will not find favor in its eyes. It also follows that an orthodox Calvinist and traditionalist Jew would find it difficult to articulate their respective positions in the "language" of modern thought. Consider the passage in Deuteronomy which Strauss, following Maimonides, quotes: "Observe . . . and do them [God's statutes and ordinances]; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples." But precisely obedience enjoined to "statutes and ordinances" decreed by God is what moderns associate not with "wisdom and understanding" (as they conceive it), but with unfreedom and irrationalism, with tutelage and ignorance, with prejudice and the kingdom of darkness -- and even with madness. Strauss indicates the general distaste of the Enlightenment generally toward Judaism and Calvinism in the following passage:

To the "carnal" attitude of fear Spinoza opposes the "spiritual" attitude of love. He understands only the absolute antithesis: fear -- love; he does not understand the fear of God, which is the precondition and an ingredient of love of God. The battle he fights against Judaism is a battle against fear of God. Great as is the difference between the gnostics, Marcion, the Socinians, the English deists among themselves, and however wide a gap may yawn between all these and Spinoza, there is one element which all of them have in common: a revulsion against

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1 See SCR, 277, n. 30, and 278, n. 39. Strauss quotes Tertullian's discernment of "an inconsistent form of Epicureanism" in Marcion. Strauss also points to an affinity between the Gnostics, Deists, Socinians
the jealous God of Wrath shown in Scripture, in favor of the God of Love. With this truly world-historical opposition to Judaism that occurs partly within Christianity and partly only as a stirring on the borders of Christianity, Spinoza's critique converges — . . . . Both Epicurean critique of religion, and the critique more or less closely connected with Christianity and directed against the Jewish conception of God, have this in common, that they intentionally, or only by their effect, further consolation and tranquillity of mind, and security and amelioration of life. Interest in security and in alleviation of the ills of life may be called the interest characteristic of the Enlightenment in general. This movement sought in every way open to it to assure greater security and amelioration of life, and it waged war, in every way open to it, on "persecution" — at

and Marcion. (This implies that modernity inclines toward Marcion, an "inconsistent" "Epicurean.") Strauss quotes Diestel, a historian of theology: "They (sc. the Socinians) above all sought to prove that the Law is done away with, and hence also the judicial ordinances. For in these we find much which is in conflict with the promise of eternal life revealed in the New Covenant, and in conflict also with the highest and purest love which is prescribed in the Evangel. Here one already senses that polemic peculiar to deism which was to arise much later. In that polemic, the specifically New Testament conception of mercy and loving-kindness is applied as the decisive standard to the revelation as conveyed in the Old Testament. This in its turn calls into question the identity of the two Testaments." Strauss comments: "Here Diestel has particularly in mind Morgan . . . Morgan's view of the Old Testament conception of God and also his view of Mosaic law are in striking harmony with the corresponding teachings of the Gnostics and of Marcion. There is need for investigation of the relation between the gnostic and the Epicurean tradition. It would seem to me that such investigation must take its bearings from the point of view adopted by Tertullian in his critical disquisition on Marcion's conception of God." Here is the quotation from Tertullian (Strauss quotes the Latin): "If (Marcion) chose to take any one of the school of Epicurus, and entitle him God in the name of Christ, on the ground that what is happy and incorruptible can bring no trouble either on itself or anything else (for Marcion, while poring over this opinion (of the divine indifference), has removed from him all the severity and energy of the judicial character), it was his duty to have developed his conceptions into some imperturbable
first only on religious persecution, then consistently on every form of persecution, indeed on every infringement of full freedom for expression of opinion. Nothing could be more odious to the Enlightenment than the conception of God as a terrible God, in which the severity of mind and heart, the spirit of the Book of Deuteronomy, finds its ultimate justification. [And Strauss pointedly notes: "Calvin cites the stipulations in Deuteronomy for the execution of Servetus, for which he took the responsibility."
]
Therefore Max Scheler is wide of the mark when he writes "In all previous atheism (in the broadest sense of the word) ... the existence of God is taken as desirable in itself, but either as not provable, or else as not directly or indirectly conceivable, or as refutable by the course of events in the world." The exact contrary is the case. All previous atheism -- in the "broadest" sense of the word, which sets out not from the formalized concept of God, but from the concrete Biblical conception, and which is current in the seventeenth century -- did indeed also consider the existence of the God of the Bible as "refutable," but in the first instance as "undesirable."  

and listless god (and then what could he have had in common with Christ, who occasioned trouble both to the Jews by what He taught, and to Himself by what He felt?), or else to have admitted that he was possessed of the same emotions as others (and in such case what would he have had to do with Epicurus, who was no friend to either him or Christians?)." Roberts and Donaldson, eds., "Tertullianus Against Marcion," Anti-Nicene Christian Library, Vol. VII, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1868, 48-49.

1 SCR, 299, n. 274.

2 SCR, 208-209.
We have tried to indicate quickly Strauss's "theological" view of the Enlightenment and, in particular, his discernment of its Epicureanism. Strauss's "theological" consideration of modern thought after the Enlightenment is contained in his Introduction to Philosophie und Gesetz. We present it in full (excepting the last paragraph which effects the transition to the study of Maimonides to which the rest of the volume is devoted). Strauss's Introduction will bring us full circle, back to "the theologico-political predicament" from which he -- and we -- started.
5. The Introduction to Philosophie und Gesetz.

Hermann Cohen once called Maimonides the "classic rationalist" in Judaism. This remark strikes us as true in a stricter sense than Cohen is likely to have intended: the rationalism of Maimonides is the truly natural form, the standard, which is carefully to be safeguarded from every falsification, and which, therefore, proves to be the stumbling

\[1\] (This translation has benefited enormously from the collaboration of Professor Claude Billigher, Department of Mathematics, McMaster University. I acknowledge his most generous help for which I am deeply grateful.) This translation demonstrates that the best translation of Leo Strauss is by Leo Strauss. The translator therefore strives to be consonant with the author's English usage, to be informed and guided by the author's English writings and generally to defer to the author—all of which is not necessarily to do him justice. The one writing, above all, which is authoritative for this translation is the author's Preface to SCR. The Preface is to be found in an unedited version in LAM, 224. We follow the more widely circulated and more edited version of the Preface as it appears in SCR.

\[ii\] This work begins and ends with Hermann Cohen. In 1970, the author, in his informal spoken "account" of himself, begins his post-Gymnasium "intellectual history" with Hermann Cohen; Cohen is the first contemporary thinker mentioned: "Cohen attracted me because he was a passionate philosopher and a Jew passionately devoted to Judaism." "Accounts," 3.

* Numbers in the margin indicate the corresponding page numbers of the German edition. The translator's notes will be indicated by Roman numerals and enclosed in brackets. German terms will not appear in the text itself. Sometimes they will be noted by the translator with or without comment. In a few instances, they will appear within brackets in the author's notes.
block against which modern rationalism comes to grief. The purpose of the present volume is to awaken a prejudice in favor of this apprehension of Maimonides, but especially, to engender doubt about the powerful opposite prejudice.

Even someone who is free of all natural longing for the past, even someone who believes that, because the present is the age in which man has attained the hitherto highest level of self-consciousness, nothing really can be learned from the past -- even he, once he endeavors in earnest to become clear about the present thus assessed, comes up against Maimonides' teaching. For such an endeavor can succeed only if at every moment one confronts modern rationalism as the source of the present with medieval rationalism. If such a confrontation is undertaken in earnest -- that is, with the question open as to which of the two opposing rationalisms is the true rationalism -- then the following result

[i] The German "Stein des Anstosses" looms larger and more damaging than the English "stumbling block."

[ii] "stößt auf." The author, in using this verb here, refers the reader back to the "Stein des Anstosses" of the first paragraph.

ensues: medieval rationalism -- whose classic exponent for us is Maimonides -- initially taken as merely an instrument for a keener cognition of the distinctiveness of modern rationalism, becomes during the course of the investigation the standard, measured by which modern rationalism reveals itself to be a "pseudo-rationalism." By precisely this result, the self-evident starting position -- that self-understanding of the present is a necessary and meaningful undertaking -- attains a not self-evident vindication: the critique of the present, the critique of modern rationalism as the critique of modern sophistic, is the necessary starting point, the constant concomitant, and the unmistakable hallmark of the search for truth possible in our age.

["einem blossen Mittel ... scharfer zu erkennen."]

I suspect the author may have had in mind Averroes' argument that just as the sharpest instrument irrespective of origin should be used for slaughtering according to Islamic ritual, so analogously, is it the religious duty of gifted Muslim thinkers to master the philosophy of earlier great thinkers irrespective of their religion. The author cites and discusses this argument of Averroes' below. See P&G, 70.

["Scheinrationalismus." The author may have pointedly chosen to use this strong adjective, "schein," to characterize modern rationalism because it is one used by the latter in derogation of pre-modern thought: e.g., modern positivism's characterization of the concerns of earlier thought as "Scheinfragen" -- "pseudo-questions." The same applies to "Sophistik," "sophistic." Cf. PAW, 155. The author speaks there of "pseudo-philosophy."]

"Irrationalism" is but a species [Spielart] of modern rationalism which itself is already "irrationalistic" enough.

["Sophistik"]
The present situation of Judaism, as such — that is, considered apart from the basic constitution of Judaism which is not touched in it or by it — is determined by the Enlightenment. For all the manifestations peculiar to the present direct one back — provided one does not let oneself be deceived by foreground pretensions and pretexts — to their origin in the Enlightenment, i.e. the movement of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries initiated by Descartes' Meditations and Hobbes' Leviathan. This fact is difficult to dispute; what alone may indeed be disputed is its scope and significance. For the premises on which the present age and that of the Enlightenment agree have now become so axiomatic that we are accustomed to notice and take seriously only, or pre-eminently, the opposition between the Enlightenment and the present. The Enlightenment seems to have been long since "overcome"; its legitimate, but now "trivial" concerns seem to have received their full due; its "shallowness" on the other hand, seems to have lapsed into well-deserved contempt. How far removed from our age seems the quarrel over the issues of verbal inspiration of Scripture or its mere-humanity, the actuality or

[1 "Nur-Menschlichkeit"]
impossibility of biblical miracles, the eternity and hence immutability or the historical mutability of the Law, ¹ and the creation of the world or its eternity; all discussion now takes place on a plane on which the great issues debated by the Enlightenment and orthodoxy no longer even need to be raised; indeed, in the end, they are to be rejected as "pseudo-issues." ² Were this the end of the matter, the Enlightenment's influence on Judaism would then in fact be as unworthy of serious consideration and concern as it is presumed to be, indeed not by all contemporaries, but surely, by all contemporary "movements." ³ Are the premises of the Enlightenment, however, really trivial? Is the Enlightenment really a contemptible foe?

¹ "Gesetz." "Law" -- here and throughout the Introduction -- is simply the equivalent of Torah. The author writes in the Preface to Husik, xxiii: "... Judaism is Law, divine, unchangeable, all-comprehensive law. Judaism means the Torah and the correct translation of Torah is law." ² "falsch gestellt!" ³ Why the quotation marks? Perhaps they indicate an ironic smile.
If the belief in the creation of the world, in the actuality of biblical miracles, and in the absolute binding authority and essential immutability of the Law predicated on the revelation at Sinai is truly the basis of the Jewish tradition, then it has to be said that the Enlightenment has undermined the foundation of Jewish tradition. The radical Enlightenment— one thinks of Spinoza— intentionally did just this from the beginning en pleine connaissance de cause. And what of the moderate Enlightenment? The moderate Enlightenment's attempt to mediate between orthodoxy and the radical Enlightenment, between the belief in revelation and the belief in the self-sufficiency of reason, was to be soon requited with the contempt from which it cannot be redeemed by even the most fair-minded historical judgment. Later thinkers, seeing that the attack of Hobbes, Spinoza, Bayle, Voltaire, and Reimarus could not be repulsed with the defense weapons of a Moses Mendelssohn, for example, acknowledged the Enlightenment to be right over against orthodoxy. So, at first, they

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[1 Cf. SCR, 28: "If orthodoxy claims to know that the Bible is divinely revealed, that every word of the Bible is divinely inspired, that Moses was the writer of the Pentateuch, that the miracles recorded in the Bible have happened and similar things, Spinoza has refuted orthodoxy. But the case is entirely different if orthodoxy limits itself to asserting that it believes the aforementioned things, i.e. that they cannot claim to possess the binding power peculiar to the known."]

[11 This French phrase is favored by the author. See, for example, his OnTy, 205. The French phrase is used here because it conveys fully the weight of "mit vollem Bewusstsein." ]
accepted all the actual or supposed results and all the explicit and
implicit premises of the critique of miracles and of biblical
criticism, but then, through their counter-attack instituted sub-
sequently against the (radical) Enlightenment, they reconstructed
the foundation of the tradition according to their own opinions. In
other words: the later thinkers, having recognized that every com-
promise between orthodoxy and Enlightenment is untenable, effected
a transition \(^1\) from the plane on which the Enlightenment and orthodoxy
had fought one another and on which the modern Enlightenment had
striven for a compromise to another "higher" plane which, as such,
made possible a synthesis of Enlightenment and orthodoxy. On this
newly achieved plane, the later thinkers accordingly reconstructed
the foundation of the tradition -- but of course, since in a synthesis
it can hardly be otherwise -- in a modified "interiorized" form.

Now it is not very difficult to see that the "interiorization" \(^2\) of
concepts like creation, miracle, and revelation robs these concepts
of their whole sense. The "interiorization" of these concepts differs

\(^1\) "Überschritt." This term has the "neutral" meaning we
have given it here, but it also has the meaning we customarily
associate with the term "transgression" -- "overstepping legitimate
bounds."

\(^2\) "Verinnerlichung!"
from a denial of their significance only by virtue of the perhaps
not good, but doubtless well-meaning, intention of its originators.
If God did not create the world in the "external" sense, if He did
not actually create it, if creation then cannot also be asserted with
theoretical intent -- as simply true, as the creation-fact, then
creation in all honesty has to be denied, or at least all talk of
creation avoided. Now the basis of all "interiorizations" of the
basic assertions of tradition is that from the premise of "reflection," ^
from the vantage point of the "higher" plane of the post-Enlightenment
synthesis, the relation of God to nature is no longer intelligible and
hence no longer even of interest.

That the "interiorizations" so commonplace today are actually
denials is a plain fact obvious to the unprejudiced eye; that it becomes

[^i] "reflektierten" Voraussetzung." I believe that what the
author means here is explained by what he writes in "Wild," 329-330:
"... [nineteenth century] thinkers, guided by Schiller's distinction
between naive and sentimental poetry, conceived of the thought of
the classics as 'naive,' that is, as related to life directly, and for
this reason lacking the 'reflection' of the modern 'self-consciousness'.
The view prevailed, and is still prevalent, in spite of or because of the
discovery of 'history,' that classical philosophy did not raise the truly
fundamental questions of a 'reflexive' character which concern
'subjectivity,' and which were raised with increasing clarity in the course
of the modern development."]
LEAVES 478 AND 479 OMITTED IN PAGE NUMBERING.
observed is due exclusively to the circumstance in which we find ourselves: we most immediately — i.e., so long as we do not expressly fight against our prejudices by historical recollection — are completely under the spell of the mode of thinking produced by the Enlightenment and consolidated by its proponents and opponents.

This prejudice is evidenced especially in the manner by which the

[["Vorurteile", ]

[ "Befangenheit." It should be noted that "Befangenheit," unlike "prejudice," "Vorurteil" and "préjugé," contains no element of "judging." The core signification of the term is "unfreedom" — constraint, inhibition and tutelage. Cf. SCR, 178-181: "The word 'prejudice' is the most appropriate expression for the dominant theme of the Enlightenment movement, for the will to free, open-minded investigation: 'prejudice' is the unambiguous polemical correlate of the all-too-ambiguous term 'freedom'."

What is felt from within as fidelity, as obedience, appears to the positive mind as stupidity, imprisonment in prejudices. To that mind as stupidity, imprisonment in prejudices. To that mind 'rebellion' is 'liberation,' 'to become an apostate' is 'liberty.' The contraries — prejudice-freedom correspond strictly to the contraries obedience-rebellion, and strictly contradict them.

[The struggle of the Enlightenment against prejudice has an absolute meaning. For this reason the age of prejudice and the age of freedom can stand opposed to one another. For the age of freedom can stand opposed to one another. For the age of freedom it is essential that it be preceded by the age of prejudice. 'Prejudice' is an historical category. This precisely constitutes the difference between the struggle of the Enlightenment against prejudices and the struggle against appearance and opinion with which philosophy began its secular journey."

Cf. Karl Löwith's "play" on "Befangenheit" noted below by the author. Cf. also the author's note 1, P&G, 46. In the context here, the English "prejudice" is really much too mild: what is intended is the thralldom indicated in the previous sentence.]
"interiorization" of the basic assertions of Jewish tradition is justified. Take any such "interiorization" and its unimpeachability can in all likelihood be avouched by searching out and adducing one or another dictum of this or that traditional authority. Such, in truth, belated validations -- ignoring completely the unscrupulousness with which dicta are very often torn out of context and adduced as decisive evidence -- rest, however, on one or both of the following two fallacious procedures. First, one invokes against the orthodox "external" understanding such evidence as belongs to an immature level of formulation of the faith. In this way, one is able to fend off, for example, the doctrines of verbal inspiration, of creation as creation out of nothing, and of the immortality of the individual. Now regardless of when these doctrines historically first arose, they stand in a relation of coherence of such logically compelling necessity with doctrines of undisputed biblical origin that they can hardly be called into doubt -- if one's intention is to remain in accord with the "religion of the prophets." By invoking against the integral expression of the Jewish tradition only those of its elements in the foreground of the Bible and in particular of

[ i "Irrtümer."]

[ ii Cf. what the author says about Cohen's critique of Spinoza, SCR, 27.]
the later prophets, one is following the method of the Enlightenment, the method that has become recognized as authoritative above all by "religious liberalism." This latter fact is common knowledge, and as liberalism has recently been discredited -- partly for very good and partly for very poor reasons -- the biblicistic or historical critical method is used less and less to "overcome" orthodoxy. Hence, secondly, one invokes against orthodoxy extreme utterances boldly expressed within the Jewish tradition. In this way one can fend off, for example, the doctrines of the absolute immutability of the Law and of miracles. However well-documented and however oft-repeated an extreme utterance may be, it is one thing boldly to venture a very "daring," very "free" utterance empowered in the first place by a firmly based belief in creation, miracles, and revelation; it is quite another thing to appropriate for a foundation an utterance so-based, for, according to its own proper sense, to detach it from its basis is mis-leading, indeed, tantamount to turning it upside down. By now making

[i "befolgen" -- "following," as in "following orders" or "following blindly."]

[ii Cf. SCHR, 2.]

[iii "biblizistische"]
an extreme utterance -- as it were the tip of a pyramid -- the
foundation of the Jewish tradition, one shows again that one is com-
pletely enmeshed in the Enlightenment mode of thinking. For just
this characterizes the Enlightenment: that, in its supposed or
only pretended "immanent" critique and progressive development
of the tradition, it makes extremes of the tradition the foundation of
a position that in truth is totally irreconcilable with the tradition. 1

1 "befangen."

1Cf., for example, Spinoza’s justification of his anti-nomianism
through recourse to the verse that compares man in the hand of God
to clay in the hand of the potter; cf., my work Die Religionskritik
Spinozas, Berlin, 1930, 191 ff. [In the English edition, SCR, cf. 201 ff.]
The assertion advanced here in the text is meant more in the sense of
a principle than it might seem at first; it is to be extended to the
philosophical tradition as well, and then this would be its purpose: it
is of the essence of the Enlightenment -- in so far as it is more than a
restitution of older positions -- to make extremes of the tradition (or
the polemic against extremes of the tradition) the foundation of a
position totally irreconcilable with the tradition. The aim of the
Enlightenment was the rehabilitation of the natural by means of the
denial (or circumscription) of the supernatural; its achievement,
however, was the discovery of a new "natural" foundation that, far from
being natural, is, on the contrary, the residuum of the "supernatural,"
as it were. It was in this sense that, at the beginning of the modern age,
the extreme possibilities and demands disclosed by the founders of both
the religious and philosophical traditions from the natural and typical
became axiomatic and "natural." Accordingly, these possibilities
and demands were not thought of as extreme and, therefore, as requiring
radical justification; on the contrary, they themselves served as the
Since it is thus established that the "interiorization" of
the basic assertions of tradition robs these assertions of their
sense, that not only every compromise between orthodoxy and

"natural" foundation for the negation of re-interpretation not only of
the supernatural but also and especially [auuch und gerade] of the
natural and typical; in contrast to ancient and medieval philosophy
which understands the extreme from the typical, modern philosophy,
in its origin and wherever it is not restating older doctrines, under-
stands the typical from the extreme. Thus, in heedless disregard
of the "trivial" question of the nature and teachability of virtue, the
extreme ("theological") virtue of love is transformed into the
"natural" ("philosophical") virtue. Likewise, the critique of the
natural ideal of courage undergoes transformation; this critique,
which the founder of the philosophical tradition carried through in
connection with his disclosure of an extreme (hence, during this
earthly life, unrealizable) ideal of knowledge (cf. Plato's Protagoras,
349b and Laws 630c) and in such a way, of course, -- that the
virtue-character of courage as such was left still acknowledged --
this critique is in modern times so "radicalized" that the virtue-
character of courage as such is denied outright. Likewise, the
extreme case of the right of urgent need is made the foundation of
natural right. Likewise, the polemic against the extreme possibility
of miracles becomes the foundation of the new "idealistic" turn of
philosophy. The natural foundation, intended by the Enlightenment but
instead buried particularly by it, can become accessible only if the
Enlightenment's fight against "prejudices" -- carried on, pre-eminently
by empiricism and modern Historie -- be accordingly carried through
to the end: i.e. that the Enlightenment critique of tradition be radicalized,
as was done by Nietzsche, into a critique of the principles of tradition
(the Greek as well as the biblical) so that an original understanding of
these would again be made possible. To this end, and only to this end,
is the "historicization" ["Historisierung"] of philosophy justified and
necessary: only the history of philosophy makes possible the ascent
out of the second "unnatural" cave in which we are fallen, less through
tradition itself than through the tradition of polemic against the tradition,
into that first "natural" Cave pictured by Plato's simile, and wherefrom
to reach the light is the original meaning of philosophizing. [On the term
of courage and Hobbes's, see the author's Hobbes, 146-147. Also see the
author's "Sparta." On the "second cave," see the author's "Collingwood.
Also see the author's PAW, 155-157 and his WPP?, 73-77.]
Enlightenment but also every synthesis of these opposing positions then proves finally to be untenable, that hence the alternative, orthodoxy or Enlightenment, can today no longer -- or rather, not even yet today -- be evaded, therefore, one must first of all descend at least to the level of the classical quarrel between the Enlightenment and orthodoxy, onto a plane on which the one eternal truth was fought for and could be fought for, because the natural longing for truth was not yet deadened by the new dogma that "religion" and "science" each intends its own designated sphere of "truth." To reach this plane, one is not required to distance oneself very far from the circle of enchantment of the present: the radical Enlightenment lives still today, and what is more, in a certain respect, that is, as regards its ultimate and most extreme consequences, it is today more radical by far than in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; and still today orthodoxy lives on. The quarrel feasible now without further ado between the Enlightenment and orthodoxy must be "re-enacted,"

[i] "Veranstaltungen"

[ii] "wiederholt." The author will again and again couple it with "wieder verstanden" -- "again understood." The author uses the English term "re-enact" most frequently in "Collingwood." He writes there (p. 582): "One cannot understand the chain of reasoning without 're-enacting' it, and this means without examining whether or not it is valid. One cannot understand premises without understanding them as premises, i.e., without raising the question whether they are evident or intrinsically necessary. For if they are not evident, one must look for the supporting
better -- as one recognizes if one does not shut one's eyes deliberately -- the already long and still yet enduring quarrel between the Enlightenment and orthodoxy must again be understood.

But has not the demand for a re-enactment or a renewed understanding of this quarrel already long since been tacitly fulfilled? What end would it then serve to stir up again what has at long last come to rest? Is not critique of "interiorizations," on which that demand for re-enactment most immediately rests, to crash-through doors already opened? Was not precisely the insight into the questionableness of the "interiorizations," in which the nineteenth century in general acquiesced, the genuine, if oft-concealed stimulus of the movement whose objective is a return to tradition reasoning. The supporting reasoning, a crucial part of the teaching of the author as the author understood it, might easily pass unnoticed if one failed to look for it, and one is not likely to look for it unless one is prompted to do so by a realization of the invidious character of the premises unconcerned. Therefore, the establishment of the fact (if it is a fact) that an author makes a dogmatic assumption may be said to be inseparable from the interpretation of the author in question." He criticizes Collingwood (p. 575): "Collingwood understood . . . the thought of a time in the light of its time. He did not then re-enact that thought. . . . Collingwood's attitude towards the thought of the past was in fact that of a spectator which sees from the outside the relation of an earlier thought to its time."
and whose exemplary and unforgettable expression is the development, if not the teachings, of Hermann Cohen? 

Has not the situation of Judaism changed from the ground up in the course of the last generation, thanks to that movement? That the situation of Judaism has changed in consequence of the movement of return is conceded; that it has changed from the ground up must be disputed. It has not changed from the ground up because over the entire career of the movement of return no systematic recollection of the quarrel between Enlightenment and orthodoxy and no systematic revision of the

\[i\] I presume the author means the "personal" "development" of Hermann Cohen, i.e. of his passionate attachment to Judaism.

\[i\] We here ignore completely the fact that the significance of the original, not "interiorized" sense, of the basic assertions of tradition is hardly brought out and given its due, even by Cohen and Rosenzweig.

\[ii\] "Von Grund auf." The author uses this German phrase only in these three sentences here. To indicate this fact, I have reverted to what in English is a colloquialism (which may well derive from the German idiom).

\[iii\] "Grundsätzliche." The meaning intended here by this term and by "systematic" is "on principle."

\[iv\] "Revision." Throughout, such words common to both German and English have not been changed even where the author's use of them may not be common in English. The sense of the term here is quite strictly literal; it does not mean "emendation."
results of this quarrel had taken place. And yet, according to the
intention especially of that movement, nothing should have been
more necessary than such recollection and revision. The return
to tradition was not carried through without reservations by even
the most significant representatives of this turning. To the last,
Cohen, in the name of freedom and in behalf of the autonomy of
man, raised express reservations over against the tradition. ii And
Franz Rosenzweig, who went the way of Cohen, at least in a certain
respect further than Cohen himself, left no doubt that he could make
his own neither the traditional belief in immortality nor the appre-
hension of the Law allegedly characteristic of contemporary German

[ i Cf. SCR, 13-14: "... Rosenzweig's return was not unqualified.
The Judaism to which he returned was not identical with the Judaism of
the age prior to Moses Mendelssohn... Rosenzweig never believed
that his return to the Biblical faith could be a return to the form in
which that faith had expressed or understood itself in the past."

[ ii Cf. Cohen's RR, xxiv-xxv. The author there addresses a
central and difficult issue: Cohen's conception of the relation between
religion and philosophy, between Cohen's Religion of Reason and his
System of Philosophy. The author writes: "The obscurity... is
ultimately due to the fact that while Cohen had a rare devotion to
Judaism, he was hardly less devoted to what he understood by culture
(science and secular scholarship, autonomous morality leading to
socialist and democratic politics, and art); hence his insistence in
particular on the 'methodic distinction between ethics and religion.'
Man's moral autonomy must not in any way be called in question."
orthodoxy. 1 The Enlightenment origin of these or related reservations1 -- readily to be discerned upon closer inspection -- Cohen and Rosenzweig admit without the least hesitation. Now precisely

[1 Cf. SCR, 14: "Rosenzweig could not believe everything that his orthodox Jewish contemporaries in Germany believed. His system of philosophy supplies the reasons why he thought that in spite of their piety they were mistaken. He had discussed by themselves two points regarding which he disagreed with them and which are of utmost importance. First, he opposed their inclination to understand the Law in terms of prohibition, denial, refusal and rejection rather than in terms of command, liberation, granting and transformation, and proposed the opposite inclination. It is not immediately clear, however, whether the orthodox austerity or sternness does not rest on a deeper understanding of the power of evil in man than Rosenzweig's view, which is at first glance more attractive. Second, Rosenzweig was unable simply to believe all Biblical miracles. . . . The orthodox Jew would reproach himself for his doubts as for failings on his part, for he would not determine what he is obliged to believe by his individual and temporary capacity or incapacity to believe . . . ."

The author dedicated SCR "To the memory of Franz Rosenzweig".]

1Respecting Martin Buber's reservations, cf. the exchange [Auseinandersetzung] between him and Rosenzweig reprinted in Zweitromland (pp. 48 ff.).

[II Rosenzweig, it appears, was relatively less "hesitating" than Cohen. Cf. the author's comments (SCR, 27): "Rosenzweig finds Cohen guilty of injustice to Spinoza not because of defective objectivity but rather because of defective 'subjectivity,' i.e. of 'insufficient reflection about the conditions and foundations of his own person. He ought to have made his attack with a clear consciousness of the fact that, not indeed he himself, but the times which had born and raised him, Cohen himself, would not have been possible without Spinoza.' . . . Cohen accuses Spinoza of blindness to Biblical prophetism, but this phenomenon as Cohen understood it was brought
because the return to tradition claims connection with a "new thinking", these or related reservations surely require a coherent systematic justification on that new basis. And it could hardly be asserted that there has ensued such a justification -- necessarily, entailing a partial justification of the Enlightenment -- sufficient to satisfy reasonable requirements. Instead, the return to tradition was carried out by way of critical discussion of solely the post-Enlightenment.

to light by what he calls the historical understanding of the Bible, and this understanding is not possible without higher criticism of the Bible, i.e. without a public effort which was originated with the necessary comprehensiveness by Spinoza. . . . [F]or Cohen, Biblical criticism is a matter of course. Similarly, he states that Spinoza opposed rabbinical Judaism, especially its great concern with the ceremonial law, and that his sharp opposition had a certain salutary effect on the liberation of opinion; he notes without any disapproval that 'modern Judaism' has freed itself from part of the ceremonial law; he fails to admit that modern Judaism is a synthesis between rabbinical Judaism and Spinoza. . . . In brief, Cohen does not discuss at all the issue between Spinoza and Jewish orthodoxy, i.e. the only issue with which Spinoza could have been concerned, since there was no modern or liberal Judaism in his time. One may say that in his critique of Spinoza Cohen commits the typical mistake of the conservative, which consists in concealing the fact that the continuous and changing tradition which he cherishes so greatly would never have come into being without conservatism, or without discontinuities, revolutions, and sacrileges committed at the beginning of the cherished tradition and at least silently repeated in its course."

[For the author's brief exposition of the "new thinking," see SCR, 8 ff. Karl Löwith writes: "The 'new thinking' was a phenomenon characterizing a whole generation deeply impressed by the bankruptcy of the bourgeois-Christian world and the emptiness of the academic routine. Maliciously one could call it a philosophy and theology of 'inflation,' as R. Otto once put it to me." See his Nature, History, and Existentialism (Northwestern U. P., 1966), 53, n. 5.]

[ii "Auseinandersetzung"]
synthesis, Hegel in particular. A direct and thematic engagement with the Enlightenment was deemed dismissable because it was assumed -- in the sense of the "overcome" Hegelianism logically -- that, in "overcoming" Hegelianism, the Enlightenment, which was "sublated" within Hegelianism, was "overcome" along with it.

But in fact, the very critique of Hegelianism by its nature led to a rehabilitation of the Enlightenment. For what except a rehabilitation of the Enlightenment was the critique of the "interiorizations" perfected by the nineteenth century following of Lessing -- above all -- the critique on which the return to tradition rested? Have the traditional assertions also and especially an "external sense," then

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1 The first writings of Rosenzweig (Hegel und der Staat) and, also of Ernest Simon (Ranke und Hegel) are devoted to critical discussion [Auseinandersetzung] of Hegel.

[1] "Auseinandersetzung." The author makes clear that his study of Spinoza was an attempt to do what the "movement of return" should have done and did not. He writes (SCR, 27): "Cohen took it for granted that Spinoza had refuted orthodoxy as such. Owing to the collapse of 'the old thinking' it became then necessary to examine the Theologico-political Treatise with a view to the question of whether Spinoza had in fact refuted orthodoxy." Cf. PAW, 142-143. Also see "Accounts," 4.


[iii] As is well known, "in Lessing's view there was no philosophy but the philosophy of Spinoza." The author briefly discusses Spinoza's influence on the nineteenth century in the Preface, SCR, 17; also see PAW, 142, and WPP, 177.

[iv] "auch und gerade". The author persisted in using this idiom in his English writings, though "also and especially" is not quite idiomatic in English.
the Enlightenment's attack, which was levelled against the
"externally", understood traditional assertions exclusively (against
their "inner" sense, Hobbes, Spinoza, Voltaire had not and would
not have written a single line), was not based on an elemental mis-
understanding of the tradition. This fact should have been granted
and emphasized; more than that, since part of the Enlightenment
critique of tradition was accepted albeit in a not very clear manner,
it should have been granted and emphasized that the quarrel between
the Enlightenment and orthodoxy was far from being without substance
and, on the contrary, is even now by no means disposed of. But
neither the one nor the other has been granted and emphasized, as
all who have attentively observed the movement under discussion
can attest. 1 Hence, especially if the motive of this movement is

1 "nicht bloss nicht gegenständlos." The German multi-negative
construction makes a stronger statement, but in an English sentence three
or four negatives are too much.

1 This observation applies as well to the most significant critique
by far of the Enlightenment that has come to light in the course of the
movement of return: Cohen's critique of Spinoza's Theologico-political
Treatise. I refer, provisionally, to my article "Cohen's Analyse der
Bibelwissenschaft Spinoza's" (Der Jude, VIII, 1924, pp. 295-314).
[Cohen's critique of Spinoza is discussed by Strauss in his Preface to
SCR, 18 ff. The Der Jude article does not appear in the bibliography
of the author's writings at the end of Ancients and Moderns. In response
to my inquiry, Dr. Cropsey informed me that this was due simply to its
not having been known to the compilers of the bibliography at the time.]
justified, it is of utmost importance that the classic quarrel between
the Enlightenment and orthodoxy be re-enacted or again understood.

For, unless we are to believe that the world's history -- that, indeed, the history of but two to three centuries -- is the world's
judgment, the acclaimed "victories" of the Enlightenment over
orthodoxy have by no means rendered this quarrel groundless. Now
in truth, as the Enlightenment, especially, still knew, victories are
"very ambiguous demonstrations, or better... no demonstrations at
all of the rightness of a cause," and, hence, "he who succeeds and he
who rightfully deserves to succeed are all-too-seldom one and the same
person." ¹ It then becomes necessary to distinguish between the suc-
c essful party -- that is, the Enlightenment -- and the party that
rightfully deserves to succeed -- that is, according to Lessing's law,
presumably, orthodoxy. In other words: it then becomes necessary to
cultivate a critical stance toward the victory of the Enlightenment, and
as matters lie, this means fetching forth those dusty books ¹ that are

¹ Lessing, Gedanken über die Hërrnhuter, near the beginning.
[Cf. WPP? 61: "If... we do not worship 'success' as such, we cannot
maintain that the victorious cause is necessarily the cause of truth."]

¹ For a thematic discussion of the reading of old books, see
PAW, 154 ff. and WPP? 227 ff...}
regarded the classic documents of the quarrel between the Enlightenment and orthodoxy. And, to be sure, one must pay attention to the arguments of both parties. Only if this is done, more precisely, only if one holds that quarrel in its elaboration before one's eyes may one hope to be able to attain a view, uncorrupted by prejudice, regarding the hidden premises of both parties, and therewith, arrive at a well-founded judgment about the rightful and unrightful in their quarrel.

Critical examination of the arguments and counter-arguments put forth in this quarrel leads to this result: refutation of the "externally" understood basic assertions of tradition is out of the question. For all

[1 "Recht und Unrecht." "Unrightful" is found in Webster's Third International Dictionary.]

[1 Respecting this statement and what follows below, cf. Strauss, Die Religionskritik Spinozas, pp. 3 ff., 61, 85, 124 ff., 194 ff., and 200 ff. [In the English edition, the corresponding pages will be after those of the German edition.]

[II The similarity between the Introduction and the Preface to SCR becomes especially marked beginning with this paragraph here and the paragraph there, SCR. 28, beginning: "The results of this examination ... ." The similarity becomes an identity; where it does -- the author's own translation will be enclosed in quotation marks. Differences will be noted. Where the German contains additional words or variants, these will be translated and inserted in our text within square brackets. In the few instances where the author's English translation contains terms not in the German text, these terms will be duly noted. (It's more usual the other way around.)]
these assertions rest on the irrefutable premise that God whose will is unfathomable is omnipotent. Given that God is omnipotent, then miracles and revelation in general, and hence biblical miracles and revelation in particular, are possible. True, orthodoxy and hence the Enlightenment too, are concerned less with the possibility or impossibility of biblical miracles and revelation than with the actuality or non-actuality of biblical miracles and revelation; in fact, however, practically all Enlightenment attempts to prove the non-actuality of biblical miracles and revelation rest on the explicit or implicit assumption that the impossibility of miracles and revelation in general is well-established or demonstrable. Nevertheless, particularly the most radical Enlighteners in the course of their critique experienced -- they at least vividly sensed, though they may not have clearly recognized -- that, in consequence of the irrefutability of the ultimate premise of orthodoxy, all specific assertions resting on this premise are unshakable. Nothing demonstrates that this is so more clearly than the weapon of combat which the Enlighteners favored most and which they used so adroitly and

[1] "beruhen." Generally, this term has been translated quite literally "rest" because the author appears to favor "rest" in his English writings; e.g., SCR, 28.]
wielded so masterfully, so much so, that it -- one might say, it alone -- was decisive for the victory of the Enlightenment over orthodoxy: this weapon is mockery. As Lessing, who surely knew whereof he spoke, put it -- "by means of mockery, they attempted to 'laugh' orthodoxy 'out' of its position from which it could not be dislodged by any proofs supplied by Scripture or by reason."\(^1\) The Enlightenment's mockery of traditional doctrine is then hardly the consequence of a prior refutation of these doctrines; it does not express the astonishment of men without prejudice at the power of obviously absurd prejudices; on the contrary, mockery is itself the refutation: by means of mockery first and foremost, is effected the liberation from "prejudices" allegedly already cast off previously; at the very least, mockery is the albeit subsequent, but nonetheless decisive legitimation of this freedom\(^1\) however otherwise achieved.

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\(^1\) The quotation marks here indicate the author's verbatim translation, SCR, 29; they should not be thought to indicate a direct quotation from Lessing.

\(^1\) Afterwards, when the rather questionably achieved and legitimated freedom became a possession taken-for-granted, one could presume to claim to understand the tradition better than it understood itself, and thereby, to hold it at arm's length in equivocal "reverence." The disdainful indignation at the Enlightenment's mockery correlative to this "reverence" is as far removed from the zealous indignation of orthodoxy as the synthesis characterized above is from orthodoxy: mockery does much more justice to orthodoxy than the later "reverence."
The importance of mockery in the Enlightenment critique of religion is then an indirect proof of the irrefutability of orthodoxy. Hence, orthodoxy, in essence unchanged, was able to outlast the attack of the Enlightenment and all later attacks and retreats.

Even though the Enlightenment's attack on orthodoxy founedered, the fight between the two enemy forces yielded a positive result having highly important consequences for the Enlightenment: the Enlightenment -- it may provisionally be said -- succeeded on its part in defending itself against the attack of orthodoxy. To give an example that is more than merely an example: although the Enlightenment was indeed unable to prove the impossibility or the non-actuality of miracles, it was able to demonstrate the unknowability of miracles as such and thereby, to secure itself against the claims of orthodoxy. What is true of the offensive critique of the Enlightenment is then not true of its defensive critique. As a result of the quarrel between the Enlightenment and orthodoxy, it became clearer and better known than before that the premises of orthodoxy -- the actuality of creation, miracles and

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1 Cf. SCR, 28-29.

That one must distinguish in principle between orthodoxy as such on the one hand, and the utterances of many of its apologeticists and all of its "systematic philosophers" on the other hand, needs no further elaboration.
revelation -- are not known (philosophically or historically) but are only believed, and hence do not have the binding force peculiar to the known. Nor is this all. Whereas pre-Enlightenment science was in a certain harmony with the doctrines of faith, the new science which proved itself in the fight against orthodoxy -- if indeed it did not have its very raison d'être therein -- stood in an oft-hidden, but at bottom ever efficacious and hence ever re-emerging opposition to faith. Consequently, the cultivation of the new science increasingly fostered the view that the fundamental teachings of tradition are to be regarded as merely believed, whereas on the premises of the older science, these were deemed validly knowable as well. The destruction of natural theology and natural right prepared -- to say the least -- in the age of the Enlightenment, is the most important example, indeed, the authentic hallmark of this development. Its final outcome is that unbelieving science and faith no longer have as in medieval times the common basis on which a meaningful quarrel between belief and unbelief is possible and that, on the contrary, any understanding of even the mere possibility of an opposition between them was about to be lost: in the

\[i"\text{immer wirksam, daher immer wieder hervorbrechenden.}"\]
world created by the Enlightenment and its heirs, in the world of "modern culture," orthodoxy really had no part; were it to remain true to itself, it would have no access at all to this world; as a not-understood vestige of a forgotten antiquity, more condemned than wondered at, it outlasted the nineteenth century.

The Enlightenment was then not to be discouraged from construction of its world because of the collapse of its attack on orthodoxy. On the contrary, it must be said that the Enlightenment was compelled to the construction of a world precisely because of this collapse. For the Enlightenment was not satisfied to spurn the assertions of orthodoxy as not known but merely believed; being subject to the impress of the claims of these assertions, it wanted to refute them. The assertions, that the world is the creation of the omnipotent God, that therefore miracles within it are possible, that man is in need of revelation for the guidance of his life, are, however, refutable neither by experience nor by recourse to the principle of contradiction; for neither does experience tell against the guidance of the world and of man by an unfathomable God, nor does the concept of an unfathomable God contain a contradiction within itself. "The

[1Cf. SCR, 28.]
genuine refutation of orthodoxy would require the proof\(^1\) that the world and human life are perfectly intelligible without the assumption of a mysterious \(^{\text{ii}}\) God; \([\text{i.e.}]\) it [the refutation of orthodoxy] would require at least\(^{\text{iii}}\) the success of the philosophic system: man has to show himself theoretically and practically as the master of the world and the master of his life; the merely given world must be replaced by the world created by man theoretically and practically\(^{\text{iv}}\); then orthodoxy would be more than refuted, it would be rendered "obsolete."\(^{\text{v}}\)

Animated by the hope of being able to "overcome" orthodoxy through the perfection of a system and, consequently, scarcely noticing the

\(^1\) In the German text the first part of this sentence reads: "Would one refute orthodoxy, no other way remained, therefore, than to prove . . . ."

\(^{\text{ii}}\) "unergründlichen." This is the German term for "unfathomable" as well.

\(^{\text{iii}}\) Not in the German text.

\(^{\text{iv}}\) This quoted translation is from SCR, 29.

\(^{\text{v}}\) "Überlebt" -- very literally, "outlied."
collapse of its proper attack on orthodoxy, the Enlightenment, aspiring to victory by a truly Napoleonic strategy, accordingly left in its rear the impregnable fortress of orthodoxy, telling itself that the enemy would and could not risk any offensive. Renouncing the impossible, direct refutation of orthodoxy, the Enlightenment applied itself to its very own work -- the civilization of the world and of man. And had the work succeeded, then quite possibly no further proof of the rightness of the Enlightenment's victory over orthodoxy would have been required, just as no further proof was believed to have been needed so long as it appeared to be succeeding. But doubts about the success of civilization soon turned into doubt about the very possibility of civilization. "Eventually the belief that by pushing ever farther back the 'natural limits' man will advance to ever greater freedom, that he can subjugate nature and prescribe to it its laws [and "generate" it by the power of pure thought] begins to wither." What then is left in the end of the success of the Enlightenment? What ultimately reveals itself to have been the basis and justification of this success?

[SCR. 30. The following terms have quotation marks around them in the German text: "Freiheit" -- "freedom", "unterwerfen" -- "subjugate", and "seine Gesetze vorschreiben" -- "prescribe... its laws". The "and" is mine.]
Despite appearances to the contrary, the Enlightenment's critique of orthodoxy is actually merely defensive; it rests on the radical disclaimer of a refutation of orthodoxy: not the impossibility, but only the unknowability of miracles has been demonstrated by the Enlightenment, more precisely, the unknowability of miracles on the premises of the new natural science. The new natural science then appears to be the true justificatory argument of the Enlightenment.

That the belief that the science of Galileo, Descartes and Newton had refuted the science of Aristotle and the picture of the world explicated by it -- the picture of the world that is also the Bible's -- was most immediately decisive for the success of the Enlightenment, is in point of fact incontestable. This success was merely put off, not put in question, by the harmonizations of the "modern picture of the world" and the Bible that sprouted forth in wild profusion especially

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[i \text{ Cf. SCR. 212 ff.}]  
[ii \text{ "Rechtsgrund" commonly means "legal title." It is not translated here as such lest it be unclear to English readers. The OED defines "title" as follows: "That which justifies or substantiates a claim; a ground of rights; hence an alleged or recognized right." If one could be sure that the reader would so understand "title," then indeed "title" is precisely what is meant. But this is but one of ten meanings of "title."}]

in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and which today are still attempted often enough; for, in the end, these harmonizations work as vehicles of the Enlightenment and not as dams against it; for the radical Enlightenment, the moderate Enlightenment is the best first fruit. Having been made acceptable by the moderate Enlightenment, the new natural science, the collaborator and torch-bearer of the radical Enlightenment, commenced its triumphal progress. But precisely the new science could not long uphold its claim to have brought to light the truth about the world as it is "in itself"; the new science's "idealistic" construction of itself already was inherent in its basic approach. Modern "idealism," which consummates itself in the discovery of the "aesthetic" as the truest insight into human creativity on the one hand, and in the discovery of the radical "historicity" of man and his world as the ultimate "overcoming" of even the idea of an eternal nature and an eternal truth on the other hand, finally understands

\[ ^{i} \text{"Siegeszug" can also mean "winning streak."} \]
\[ ^{ii} \text{"Auslegung"} \]

For this reason, the Enlightenment could not, and -- so far as it understood itself -- could not aspire to, prove the impossibility of miracles, but only their unknowability.
modern natural science as one historically conditioned form of
"interpretation of the world" among others; it makes possible, therefore,
the rehabilitation of the "natural world view" on which the Bible rests.
Once modern "idealism" thoroughly prevails, the Enlightenment's
victory over orthodoxy then loses its original, decisive justification;
the demonstration of the unknowability of miracles as such becomes invalid.
For only on the premises of modern natural science are miracles as such
unknowable. So long as this science was deemed valid as the only way to
the one truth, one could rest easy in the view, attested to by historical
research, that assertion of miracles is relative to the pre-scientific
stage of humanity and hence has no dignity whatsoever. But, finally
it becomes apparent that the facts attesting to this view permit the
opposite interpretation: In the final analysis, is not the intention radically
to secure oneself against miracles the motive of the very notion of science
that informs modern natural science? Was the the "once-and-for-all"
modern scientific "interpretation of the world," according to which,
certainly, miracles are unknowable, not thought out expressly for the

[i]"kraftlos."]  
[ii]"Dignität."]  
[iii]Cf. SCR, 213-214.]
purpose of rendering miracles unknowable so that man would be
shielded from the grasp of an omnipotent God?  

Modern natural science could thus be the basis or the means of
the victory of the Enlightenment over orthodoxy only so long as the
old notion of truth, shaken already by modern science, still ruled the
hearts of men and still determined, in particular, their apprehension
of modern science. Moreover, the attempt to justify the modern ideal --
the ideal of civilization -- by means of modern natural science was
feasible for a time, only because the new science was believed to be
the sufficient foundation of the new ideal, just as the old concept of
nature had indeed been the sufficient foundation of the old ideal. But
one deluded oneself. Inevitably one could not fail to realize that the
"end -- and value-free" nature of modern science can tell man nothing
about "ends and values," that the "Is," in the sense in which modern
natural science understands it, conceals within itself no indications
whatsoever which point to the "Ought." ii that, in light of this modern
premise, the traditional view that the right life is a life according to

ii  [ Cf. C&M, 7, and LAM, 205 ff.]  
[ "or "intervention" -- "Zugriff." ]
nature becomes meaningless. Seeing, therefore, that modern science cannot justify the modern ideal and yet that the connection between the modern ideal and modern science is unmistakable, one finds oneself driven to question whether it is not actually the other way around -- that the modern ideal is the basis of modern natural science, whether it is not then also and especially a new belief rather than the new knowledge that justifies the Enlightenment.

Put in the latter form, the question loses the odium which understandably adheres to the question of the moral origin of modern science. For even the most faithful devotees of this science grant that the ascendance of a new ideal, a new image of the right life for man -- if only second after natural science in its impact -- was decisive for the victory of the Enlightenment over orthodoxy. And, in fact, according to their view, this significant role is to be ascribed to the ideal of freedom conceived as

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1 On the last point, cf. Nietzsche's Beyond Good and Evil, aphorism 9.

["ob denn nicht also auch und gerade."]

[ Cf. SCR, 29.]

[ "Vorstellung."]
the autonomy of man and his culture. But this view can be upheld only
by confusing "freedom" understood as autonomy, be it, with "freedom"
of conscience, or with the "freedom" to philosophize, or with political
"freedom," or with the autarky ideal of the philosophical tradition.

Freedom as the autonomy of man and his culture is neither the original
nor the final justification of the Enlightenment. On the contrary, this
ideal was viable only during a quiescent interim period when the fight
against orthodoxy appeared to have been fought to its end and when as
yet the revolt of the forces unchained by the Enlightenment had not
yet broken out against their liberator -- when, as it were, living in a
comfortable house one could no longer see the foundation on which the
house was erected. In this epoch, having achieved definitive entrée into
the state of civilization, the state of nature, which alone made possible
legitimation of civilization, could be forgotten, and consequently, in
place of the elementary ideal of civilization as the self-assertion of
man against overpowering nature, one could posit the "higher" ideal
of culture as the sovereign creation of the spirit. The Jewish tradition
more aptly answers the question about the origin of the Enlightenment

[ Cf. SCR, 336-339. ]
ideal than does the philosophy of culture. The Jewish tradition, in many if not all cases, characterizes the defection from the Law and rebellion against the Law as Epicureanism. Whatever facts, impressions or suspicions may have led the rabbis to this characterization, to this accounting for the defection, it is substantiated by historical investigation of original Epicureanism. Epicurus is truly the classic exponent of the critique of religion. His whole philosophy, as no other, puts first and foremost, the fear of supernatural powers and of death as the danger menacing man's felicity and tranquillity; indeed, this philosophy is scarcely anything else than the classic remedy for putting to rest fear of the numen and of death by showing them to be "no thing." The influence of the Epicurean critique on the

\[ \text{"Kulturphilosophie."} \]
\[ \text{The translator of SCR prefers "classical." See SCR, 42.} \]
\[ \text{Cf. SCR, 42 ff.} \]
\[ \text{"indem sie sie als 'gegenstandlos' erweist." The antecedent of "sie" may be "die Furcht" --"fear"; it should then be rendered "by showing the fear . . . to be 'objectless'" or "'without substance.'"} \]
Enlightenment reveals itself, if one retraces the Enlightenment's every step from its beginnings to Anatole France: the Epicurean critique is the foundation, or more precisely, the foreground of the Enlightenment critique. The Epicurean critique then undergoes an essential modification in the age of the Enlightenment. To be sure, the Enlightenment is also and especially concerned with man's felicity and tranquillity which are menaced especially or exclusively by his religious imaginings, but the Enlightenment understands this felicitous tranquillity, this peace, in principle differently than original Epicureanism: the Enlightenment so understands "peace" that for its sake, civilization, the subjugation and improvement of nature — particularly human nature, becomes necessary. “Whereas Epicureanism

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[i] Cf. SCR, 46 ff.
[ii] "auch und gerade"
[iii] "Vorstellungen"
[iv] Preceding the sentences which follow next, the author writes in the Preface, SCR, 29: "Characteristically common modern belief is indeed no longer Epicurean. It is no longer cautious or retiring, not to say cowardly, but bold and active."
fights the religious 'delusion' i because of its terrible character, modern unbelief [the Enlightenment] fights it ii because it is a delusion: regardless of whether religion [the religious delusion] iii is terrible or comforting, qua delusion it makes man oblivious of the real goods, of the enjoyment of the real goods [it turns one away from the real 'this-world' iv to an imaginary 'Beyond' v, and thus seduces them into being cheated of the real, 'this-worldly' goods by their [avaricious clergy] vi spiritual or temporal rulers who 'live' from that delusion. Liberated from the religious delusion, awakened to sober awareness of his real situation, taught by bad experiences that he is threatened by a stingy, hostile nature, man recognizes as his sole salvation

i i"Wahn" is not in quotation marks. "Wahn," "Illusionen," and "Vorstellungen" are all rendered by the author "delusion."

ii i"religiösen Vorstellungen."

iii "Illusionen."

iv "'Diesseits'"

v "'Jen seits'"

vi "habuchtigen Klerus'. Here is the most notable difference of all: the German text does not mention "temporal rulers" at all."
and duty, not so much 'to cultivate his garden' as in the first place to
plant a garden by making himself the master and owner of nature."

This "gross" view, understandably, has long since been "overcome"
by a view which renders transparent the tendency that heralded and
betrayed itself in the turn from Epicureanism to the Enlightenment. Its
ultimate and purest expression is that "the religious delusion" is
rejected not because it is terrible but [because it is wish-fulfilling,]
because it is comforting: religion is not a tool which man has forged for
dark reasons in order to torment himself, to make life unnecessarily
difficult, but a way out chosen [by man] for [very] obvious reasons [in
order to make life easier] in order to escape from the terror, the
exposedness and the hopelessness of life which cannot be eradicated
by any progress of civilization. A new kind of fortitude which forbids
itself every flight from the horror of life into comforting delusion, which
accepts the eloquent description of 'the misery of man without God' as
an additional proof of the goodness of its cause, reveals itself eventually
as the ultimate and purest ground for the rebellion against [the tradition
of] revelation. This new fortitude, being the willingness to look man's

[SCR, 29.]

[ "Vorstellungen" -- not in quotation marks in the German text. ]

[ "exposedness" -- not in the German text. ]

[ Not in quotation marks in the German text. ]
forsakeness in its face, being the courage to welcome the most
terrible truth [being the hardness to resist the human inclination to
delude oneself about one's predicament], is 'probiti, 'intellectual
probiti. "\(^{i}\) Pressing the alternative, Enlightenment or orthodoxy,
it is this probity, "intellectual probity," that commands spurning

\(^{i}\text{This new probity is not the same thing as the old love of truth:
by the expression "intellectual conscience" is meant the 'inner' mastery
of science over man, and, to be sure, not just any science, but only
modern science." (G. Krüger, Philosophie und Moral in der Kantischen
Kritik, Tübingen, 1931, p. 9, n. 2.) The openness characterizing this
probiti is "the openness of being-not-constrained-by transcendent
ideals." ['die Unbefangenheit des Nichtbefangenseins in transzendenten
Idealen'] (K. Lowith, "Max Weber und Karl Marx," Archiv für Sozialwis-
senschaft und Sozialpolitik, Volume 67, p. 72 f.). This apprehension of
probiti calls to mind this definition of critique: "La critique . . . a pour
essence la négation du surnaturel." In opposition to this came the
retort: "L'essence de la critique, c'est attention." (A. Gratry, Les
sophistes et la critique, Paris 1864, p. 9.) The contrasting of probity
to the love of truth is to be understood in the sense of this retort: the
open avowal of atheism and the resolute intention to draw from it every
consequence -- in particular, to reject the semi-theism which was the
dogmatic and in bad faith [unredich] premise of the post-Enlightenment
synthesis, together with all its implications, as for example, the belief
in progress -- is doubtless more honest [redlicher] than all compromises
and syntheses; but if atheism -- admittedly undemonstrable -- is made a
positive dogmatic axiom, then the probity it expresses is something
absolutely other than the love of truth.

\(^{30} \text{SCR, 30. The German text ends after the first mention of
"probiti," but the next sentence in the German text begins, "this probity,
'intellectual probity' . . . ." There, "probiti" is not in quotation marks.}

\(^{ii}\text{"Probiti" is one of those rare English words which cannot be
used in an adjectival form. The employment of "in bad faith" is awkward
and even an embarrassment (as used in the translation of the author's
note 1, just above).}
all attempts to "mediate" between the Enlightenment and orthodoxy --
those of the moderate Enlightenment and particularly those of the
post-Enlightenment synthesis -- not merely as inadequate, but above
all, as in bad faith, and because this probity believes that it finds the
deepest bad faith in the principles of the tradition itself, it enjoins
renouncing even the word "God," "This final\textsuperscript{i} atheism with a good
conscience, or with a bad conscience, is distinguished by its con-
scientiousness [by its morality]\textsuperscript{ii} from the [conscienceless] atheism
at which the past shuddered."\textsuperscript{iii} The."Epicurean," who, amidst the
persecutions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries became trans-
formed into an "idealist" -- who, instead of wishing "to live securely
and retiredly\textsuperscript{iv} learned to fight and die for honor and truth -- finally
is transformed into the "atheist" who rejects belief in God out of con-
sicence. Clearly then, this atheism, compared not only with original
Epicureanism but even with the most radical atheism of Enlightenment

\textsuperscript{i} Not in the German text.]

\textsuperscript{ii}"Moralität."

\textsuperscript{iii} \[SCR. 30.\]

\textsuperscript{iv} Here I borrowed from the author -- \textsuperscript{SCR. 30, at the top of the
page.}
times, is a descendant of the tradition rooted in the Bible: this atheism accepts the thesis, the negation of the Enlightenment on the basis of a moral disposition, which the Bible alone made possible. Even though this atheism refuses to present itself as a "synthesis" of Enlightenment and orthodoxy because it does not want in any way to veil its unbelief, yet it itself nevertheless is the latest, most radical and most unassailable harmonization of these opposing positions. "This atheism, the heir and judge of the belief in revelation, of the secular struggle between belief and unbelief, and finally of the short-lived but by no means therefore inconsequential romantic longing for the lost belief, confronting orthodoxy in complex sophistication formed out of gratitude, rebellion, longing and indifference, and in simple probity, is according to its claim as capable of an original understanding of the human roots of the belief

[i]"Gesinnung"

[ii] Cf. SCR, 12.

[iii] The German text makes clear that the author here by "secular struggle" intends "the hundreds, even thousands years old struggle."

[iv] Should the editor have deleted this "as"? Consider: "as capable . . . as . . . no . . . philosophy . . ."
in God, as no earlier, no less complex-simple philosophy ever was.

The last word and the ultimate justification of [the Enlightenment] Spinoza's critique is the atheism from intellectual probity which overcomes orthodoxy radically by understanding it radically, i.e. without the polemical bitterness of the Enlightenment and the equivocal reverence of romanticism."

Hence, unveiled at last as the "truth" of the alternative, orthodoxy or Enlightenment, is the alternative: orthodoxy or atheism. That this is so, orthodoxy, with an enemy's eye, recognized early from the beginning. By now, even the enemies of orthodoxy no longer dispute it. The situation thereby created, the contemporary situation, seems to offer no way out for the Jew who cannot be orthodox and who must find the only "solution of the Jewish problem" possible on the ground

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[As the square brackets indicate, the German text has "Enlightenment" in place of "Spinoza's." This suggests that Strauss identified the Enlightenment or rather its most radical attack on the tradition with Spinoza.]

[ii] Not in the German text.

[iii] SCR, 30. Except for the slight differences noted, the author has supplied a perfect verbatim translation of his own work written thirty years earlier. Clearly, incomparably the best translation of Leo Strauss is by Leo Strauss.
of atheism, pure political Zionism -- considered in earnest and for the
duration -- highly honorable, certainly, but not a sufficient answer.

This situation not only seems to lack a way out; there really is no way
out as long as one clings to modern premises. Faced at last in the
modern world only with the alternative, orthodoxy or atheism, and yet
on the other hand, recognizing that the desideratum of an enlightened
Judaism is not to be denied, one finds oneself obliged to ascertain
whether enlightenment is necessarily modern enlightenment. Unless it
is known from the start what cannot be known from the start -- that only
new, unheart of, ultra-modern thoughts can clear away our dilemma,
one finds oneself induced to approach the medieval enlightenment, the
enlightenment of Maimonides, for help.

[*"Auskunft,"* It is the kind of answer one seeks when lost, when
inquiring about directions, when searching for the way out.]}
APPENDIX A. LETTER TO THE EDITOR National Review January 5, 1957

The State of Israel

For some time I have been receiving NATIONAL REVIEW, and I agree with many articles appearing in the journal. There is, however, one feature of the journal which I completely fail to comprehend. It is incomprehensible to me that the authors who touch on that subject are so unqualifiedly opposed to the State of Israel.

No reasons why that stand is taken are given: mere antipathies are voiced. For I cannot call reasons such arguments as are based on gross factual error, or on complete non-comprehension of the things which matter. I am, therefore, tempted to believe that the authors in question are driven by an anti-Jewish animus; but I have learned to resist temptations. I taught at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem for the whole academic year of 1954-1955, and what I am going to say is based exclusively on what I have seen with my own eyes.

The first thing which strikes one in Israel is that the country is a Western country, which educates its many immigrants from the East in the ways of the West: Israel is the only country which as a country is an outpost of the West in the East. Furthermore, Israel is a country which is surrounded by mortal enemies of overwhelming numerical superiority, and in which a single book absolutely predominates in the instruction given
in elementary schools and in high schools: the Hebrew Bible. Whatever the failings of individuals may be, the spirit of the country as a whole can justly be described in these terms: heroic austerity supported by the nearness of biblical antiquity. A conservative, I take it, is a man who believes that "everything good is heritage." I know of no country today in which this belief is stronger and less lethargic than in Israel.

But the country is poor, lacks oil and many other things which fetch much money; the venture on which the country rests may well appear to be quixotic; the university and the government buildings are within easy range of Jordanian guns; the possibility of disastrous defeat or failure is obvious and always close. A conservative, I take it, is a man who despises vulgarity; but the argument which is concerned exclusively with calculations of success, and is based on blindness to the nobility of the effort, is vulgar.

I hear the argument that the country is run by labor unions. I believe that it is a gross exaggeration to say that the country is run by the labor unions. But even if it were true, a conservative, I take it, is a man who knows that the same arrangement may have very different meanings in different circumstances.

The men who are governing Israel at present came from Russia at the beginning of the century. They are much more properly described as pioneers than as labor unionists. They were the men who laid the
foundations under hopelessly difficult conditions. They are justly looked up to by all non-doctrinaires as the natural aristocracy of the country, for the same reasons for which Americans look up to the Pilgrim fathers. They came from Russia, the country of Nicolai the Second and Rasputin; hence they could not have had any experience of constitutional life and of the true liberalism which is only the reverse side of constitutional democracy adorned by an exemplary judiciary.

On Page 16 of the November 17 issue of the REVIEW, Israel is called a racist state. The author does not say what he understands by a "racist state," nor does he offer any proof for the assertion that Israel is a racist state. Would he by any chance have in mind the fact that in the state of Israel there is no civil marriage, but only Jewish, Christian and Moslem marriages, and therefore that mixed marriages in the non-racist sense of the term are impossible in Israel? I am not so certain that civil marriage is under all circumstances an unmitigated blessing, as to disapprove of this particular feature of the State of Israel.

Finally, I wish to say that the founder of Zionism, Herzl, was fundamentally a conservative man, guided in his Zionism by conservative considerations. The moral spine of the Jews was in danger of being broken by the so-called emancipation which in many cases had alienated
them from their heritage, and yet not given them anything more than merely formal equality; it had brought about a condition which has been called "external freedom and inner servitude": political Zionism was the attempt to restore that inner freedom that simple dignity, of which only people who remember their heritage and are loyal to their fate, are capable.

Political Zionism is problematic for obvious reasons. But I can never forget what it achieved as a moral force in an era of complete dissolution. It helped to stem the tide of "progressive" levelling of venerable, ancestral differences; it fulfilled a conservative function.

Chicago, Illinois

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----- Two days with Leo Strauss in Annapolis, Maryland, June, 1973.

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