Leo Strauss Between Weimar and America

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ISBN 978-3-030-24388-3 ISBN 978-3-030-24389-0 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-24389-0

Cover illustration: Asar Studios/Alamy Stock Photo. Edward Moran, “Statue of Liberty Enlightening the World (The Unveiling of the Statue of Liberty)”, 1886

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

To my mother and father

Acknowledgements

Ten years ago, I first entered the Special Collections Research Center at the University of Chicago Library to burrow into the Strauss archive. I discovered a treasure trove of unpublished documents—audio tapes, transcriptions of lectures and seminars, letters, notebooks, and more. Thanks to the Leo Strauss Center, some of these are now available online, allowing researchers to travel back in time and attend a course with Strauss. The archive personally transported me back to several important seminars and courses given by Strauss: on Hegel, Nietzsche, Thucydides, and—of particular interest to my research—on Marx.

This discovery led me to a reorientation of the doctoral dissertation I had just begun writing at the Department of Political Science at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. I had planned to compare Strauss' understanding of Judaism and Jewishness with that of Hannah Arendt and Isaiah Berlin. Instead, the archive led me down a completely different path, to the Cold War and to Strauss' unpublished seminars on political philosophy. The dissertation was submitted in 2013, and since then the manuscript has been updated, revised and translated into English, while I continued researching Strauss and other nineteenth- and twentieth-century thinkers.

This is an opportunity to thank the people, institutions and foundations whose support enabled and enriched the research that formed this book. I am deeply grateful to my advisors, Steven E. Aschheim and Yaron Ezrahi, and to the members of my dissertation committee: Joseph Mali, Moshe Halbertal and Eyal Chowers. I thank Eugene R. Sheppard,

Thomas Meyer, John P. McCormick, Paul Mendes-Flohr, Avihu Zakai, Robert Howse, and Efraim Podoksik for their insights and helpful advice. I also thank Nathan Tarcov, director of the Leo Strauss Center; Phil Getz, US editor for philosophy and religion at Palgrave Macmillan; the anonymous readers of the manuscript; and my translator, Michelle Bubis.

This study was made possible by the George L. Mosse Program in History at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the Richard Koebner Minerva Center for German History at the Hebrew University, Daat Hamakom—the Center for the Study of Cultures of Place in the Modern Jewish World, the Leo Baeck Institute, and Molad—the Center for the Renewal of Israeli Democracy.

While revising this book, I was also an editor for the Israeli daily *Haaretz*. Through working on various texts for the newspaper and the academic world, addressing different kinds of readers, I learned to appreciate the art of writing. Through closely reading Leo Strauss, as well his followers and critics, I learned—or so I hope—to read between the lines.

Madison
2019

Contents

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

> As Karl Rossmann, a poor boy of sixteen who had been packed off to America by his parents because a servant girl had seduced him and got herself child by him, stood on the liner slowly entering the harbour of New York, a sudden burst of sunshine seemed to illuminate the Statue of Liberty, so that he saw it in a new light, although he had sighted it long before. The arm with the sword rose up as if newly stretched aloft, and round the figure blew the free winds of heaven. (Franz Kafka, *Amerika*)[1]

The political philosophy that emerged in the second half of the twentieth century was not above and beyond history. It was very much of its time, informed by the massive violence, the Holocaust, the ideologies that dominated the political landscape, and the rapid technological advances. History was seared into the flesh of various European thinkers, both Jewish and non-Jewish, such as Hannah Arendt (1906–1975), Eric Voegelin (1901–1985), Max Horkeimer (1895–1973), Theodor Adorno (1903–1969), and Herbert Marcuse (1898–1979).

Many of them had to abandon their homes and seek refuge in other countries, mostly in the United States. Some did not make it across the Atlantic: Walter Benjamin (1892–1940), for instance, ended his life before he managed to flee Europe, and his ideas were adopted and disseminated by others—primarily Arendt, Gershom Scholem (1897–1982), and Adorno. Others, such as Adorno and Horkheimer, chose to leave the United States and return to Germany several years after the end of World War II, having never felt part of American culture

A. Armon, *Leo Strauss Between Weimar and America*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-24389-0_1

and politics. Arendt, Marcuse and others elected to stay in the United States and utterly transformed its political and social thought.[2]

Among these émigré intellectuals was Leo Strauss (1899–1973). One of the most complex and fascinating figures of his time, Strauss has become a highly contested scholar in American discourse in recent years. He is a striking example of a German-Jewish intellectual whose thinking developed as he transitioned from Europe to America—from the Germany of the fallen Weimar Republic and Adolf Hitler's (1889–1945) rise to power to the United States during the Cold War.

History left its mark on Strauss' thought, which first budded in the modern, post-assimilatory world of German Jewry and matured into a coherent political philosophy in the United States. Born in Wilhelmine Germany at the turn of the century, Strauss carried the complicated burden of his German-Jewish identity and philosophical beginnings in the Weimar era into America, where he died in 1973 at the age of 74.

Safe in his new shelter, Strauss looked on as death and destruction spread throughout his homeland on the other side of the Atlantic. With Europe in ruins and the Soviet Union the new threat, Strauss' adopted home became the leader of the Western world. In the United States, Strauss paved his way among the intelligentsia of European émigrés, growing interested in American society and politics and especially in the ideas underlying the giant democracy that was now an economic, cultural, and military superpower.

Strauss' transition into American life would have been easier had he been a staunch supporter of democracy. However, in his formative years, he had spurned the weakness of the Weimar Republic and the values of liberalism, Enlightenment, and democracy. This continued in exile and developed into a political philosophy that encapsulated both a defense of the regime that had taken him in and a rejection of its basic elements.

This new worldview was deeply ambivalent at its core, combining a strong distaste for democracy with a desire to protect it. Although drawn to blatantly anti-liberal and counter-Enlightenment positions, Strauss also acknowledged—at times explicitly, at other times in more subtle, obscure ways—the problematic implications of this line of thinking for politics and violence in the twentieth century. As a result, he developed an anti-modern approach that despaired over the decline of the West while seeking to cure Western philosophy of its intellectual poverty. The land that gave Strauss shelter became a site of philosophical innovation:

a political entity that offered safety yet needed massive improvement. Strauss' worldview found its final form in his unique political teaching, which reached its zenith in the 1950s and 1960s.

Although he was relatively unknown in his lifetime compared to contemporaries such as Arendt, Marcuse, Isaiah Berlin (1909–1997), and Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980), the tables turned posthumously. Following the rise of neoconservatism in the United States in the 1980s, which had its heyday under the 2000–2008 George W. Bush (b. 1946) administration, Strauss came to be perceived as the intellectual founder of the ideology guiding American foreign policy.[3] As a result, recent studies of Strauss have been steeped in the conflict between the American right and left, conservatives and liberals, Republicans and Democrats, Straussians and anti-Straussians. Academic literature about him, replete with both defenses and vilifications, has thrown the study of this influential thinker off course.

An abundance of studies has been published portraying Strauss as a secret mastermind, a proselytizer teaching anti-democratic principles to a select few. His teachings are presented as close to fascism, given their alleged emphasis on the importance of religion, myth, and legitimizing lies for creating national unity—a combination of sorts between Plato's "noble lie" (a concept that Strauss respected and did not denounce), Nietzschean nihilism, and Machiavellian morality. In contrast, some of Strauss' followers or sympathizers view him as a close "friend" and "ally" of liberal democracy, and some even see Strauss as integral to post-World War II liberal thought or as a "man of peace."[4]

The intra-American debate, in which almost every interpretation of Strauss is ideologically aligned, has made it even harder to interpret his work correctly. Scholem called Strauss "Adam Benaftulav"—"a convoluted person" in Hebrew.[5] Unfortunately, the study of this thinker has become no less convoluted. Strauss remains an enigma: his real political views are hard to ascertain, we know little of his private life, he rarely shared personal information in his texts, and a comprehensive biography is yet to be written. Research on Strauss appears, therefore, to have reached a certain saturation point. Countless articles and books on various aspects of his thinking have been published over the past two decades. Numerous scholars have attempted to trace his "intellectual biography," articulate his "intellectual legacy", and reveal "the truth about Leo Strauss."[6]

Several have explored the intellectual origins that shaped the young Strauss in the Weimar Republic, in an attempt to explain the influence that the tempestuous interwar period and major German philosophers such as Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), and Carl Schmitt (1888–1985) may have had on the Straussian worldview.[7] Others have examined his views on Judaism, the Jewish question, Zionism, and the political tension between religion and philosophy.[8] In an autobiographical preface written in 1962 to *Spinoza's Critique of Religion* (1965), the English translation of his first book, *Die religionskritik Spinozas als grundlage seiner Bibelwissenschaft* (1930), Strauss described himself as someone "who found himself in the grip of the theologico-political predicament."[9] Unraveling this predicament has become a major academic mission, the goal being to locate Strauss on the spectrum between "Jerusalem" (revelation) and "Athens" (reason) and to establish whether his thinking was aligned with either or oscillated between the two.[10] "He is a convinced orthodox atheist. Very odd. A truly gifted intellect. I don't like him." Hannah Arendt's rather amusing response to Karl Jaspers' (1883–1969) query about Strauss exemplifies just how hard that mission is.[11]

Eugene R. Sheppard's *Leo Strauss and the Politics of Exile* (2006) ties Strauss' writings with his biography, following the development of his political thought from Weimar to the United States.[12] It is one of the most important studies to date of how Strauss' political thinking took shape. However, Sheppard stops at the end of Strauss' first decade in the United States (1948), prematurely ending the discussion of his philosophy and its encounter with America, which peaked in his later writings and political teaching in the 1950s and 1960s. The present study takes the further step needed to shed new light on Strauss' political thought by closely following its development from the Weimar Republic to the United States, a process that culminated in the formulation of a political credo both in the classroom and in writing.

The word "teaching" has a double meaning. A teacher imparts knowledge in a classroom, guiding pupils and at times also educating them, in an attempt to hone skills and not merely inform them but also endow them with ways of thinking, habits, and behavior. In addition, the Hebrew word for teacher (*moreh*) is morphologically and semantically related to the word *Torah*: a fully-formed doctrine representing a clear worldview and the Hebrew name for the first five books of the Bible, or

the Pentateuch. For example, Maimonides' (1135–1204) *Guide for the Perplexed* is called *Moreh Nevuchim* in Hebrew.

Leo Strauss the teacher had an intricate and enigmatic doctrine of his own. He disseminated his political ideas through interpreting the history of political philosophy, both in class and in writing. Disentangling the web of his thought, therefore, requires an examination both of his classroom teaching and of his writings. Understanding "Strauss the teacher" can help understand "Strauss the thinker." Examining his political teaching and his political philosophy in all forms can help elucidate the motivations that guided him in the 1950s and 1960s, and possibly discover whether Strauss wished to convey a particular message or moral to his pupils and, if so, what that message was.

Penetrating the Straussian "smokescreen" requires a combination of two interpretive approaches. On one hand, while Strauss' voice was in many ways exceptional, he was firmly grounded within his respective intellectual environments, be it in the Weimar Republic, in exile in France or the United Kingdom, or later in the United States. Therefore, Strauss must be historicized—read as an inseparable part of his generation and time, despite his own anti-historicist position.[13]

At the same time, it is also important to unravel the art of Strauss' writing itself, which aspired to rise above time and place. Strauss, the reviver of interest in esoteric writing—a double-layered text that addresses different audiences at the same time—considered style, phraseology, contradictions, and silences in the text to be highly important rhetorical means. Therefore, the possibility that he, too, wrote between the lines cannot be dismissed lightly.[14] Strauss' writing and vocabulary must be thoroughly examined and compared at different points in time in order to locate repetition or similar phrases that appear in several places and see whether they can assist our understanding of the author's views. Only by combining text and context can the subtext, i.e. Strauss' credo, the motivations that guided him—or in the words of Stanley Rosen (1929–2014), Strauss' "political program"—be brought to light.[15]

This study cannot presume to encompass all the fragments that comprise Strauss' thought. The "theologico-political problem" and the tension between philosophy and law in Strauss' interpretation are weighty issues and are crucial to understanding his political thought as a whole. However, they are intentionally allotted only a secondary place in this study, along with a discussion of esoteric writing. Instead, the focus here

is on the importance of history, context, and the Cold War to understanding Strauss' doctrine. This choice, too, is of its time: decades ago, at the height of the Cold War, such a study—if at all published—would have sorely lacked the necessary historical perspective. Now, almost thirty years after the collapse of the Soviet Union and more than forty-five years since Strauss' death, we can examine him in light of the history of the twentieth century and the Cold War and even define him as a prominent Cold War thinker.

Strauss' positions on liberalism and Marxism must be understood in order to reach a better understanding of his doctrine and political motivations. Two major developments are traced in his thinking in the transition from Germany to the United States: an ambivalent attitude toward liberalism and a consistent hostility to Marxism. First examined is Strauss' attitude to liberalism, which grew complex as he moved from Weimar to the English-speaking world. This is followed by an analysis of Strauss' aversion to Marxism and an attempt to understand his political teaching in the context of the Cold War.

The study consists of three major chapters. The first, "The Political Philosophy of Strauss—Its Basis and Its Genesis," describes the intellectual environment that shaped the young Strauss' worldview during the Weimar Republic, outlining areas of change and consistency in his political thinking up until his early days in the United States.

In the early 1930s, after his move to France in 1932 and the Nazi rise to power in 1933, Strauss affiliated himself with the European Right. He identified with the aspiration to tear down modern civilization, which he saw as the spawn of Hobbesian philosophy. He was drawn to Thomas Hobbes' (1588–1679) state of nature and to Schmitt's distinction between friend and enemy, but rejected the "Leviathan" as a political solution centering on the individual and on a discourse of rights. Strauss even compared Hobbes' philosophy to the Marxist ideal, which he saw as the epitome of Western decay.

In contrast to Hobbes (and Spinoza), Strauss admired Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Schmitt as representatives of an exalted philosophy that wished to crush liberalism and its values. Yet years of exile, violence, and perplexity led to a significant change in Strauss' critique of liberalism. From an anti-modern position that entirely ruled out liberalism and modern civilization, Strauss shifted to criticizing modernity from a softer, more accepting position that was—at least outwardly—reconciled with modern thought and did not seek to destroy modernity in one fell swoop.

While Strauss' criticism of Hobbes softened somewhat in the transition from Weimar to the United States, his admiration of Nietzsche and Heidegger grew into ambivalence: he was strongly drawn to their attempt to tear down the foundations of modernity, yet just as adamantly opposed the solution they offered. As a teacher in the United States, Strauss called the German line of thought that was so diametrically opposed to Hobbes' liberalism a dangerous form of nihilism that had sunk to its most despicable low with Hitler's rise to power. This part of the discussion moves from Strauss' early writings, including *Spinoza's Critique of Religion* (1930), to *Natural Right and History* (1953). The latter, an example of how these developments matured into coherent philosophy in the United States, leads into a discussion of Strauss' thought during the Cold War.

The next chapter explores the centrality of Karl Marx (1818–1883) to Strauss' intellectual development. At face value, Marx appears absent from Strauss' critique of modernity: he is mentioned publicly only in passing, in fragmentary ideas, as an example or as a means of illustrating a point. However, this chapter, "Strauss' Marx," shows this impression to be erroneous.

The chapter is primarily based on an unpublished seminar entitled "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," which Strauss taught with Joseph Cropsey (1919–2012) in 1960 at the University of Chicago.[16] The seminar sheds new light both on Strauss' attitude to Marx and on his own teaching in the classroom. It reveals how Strauss' fragmentary, partial engagement with Marx in writing obscured the important role that Marxism played as an intellectual challenge to his later political thinking, exposing little-known sides of Strauss' approach to teaching the history of political philosophy.

Unlike his growing ambivalence toward liberalism and nihilism, Strauss remained steadfast in his aversion to Marx and the Marxist ideal throughout the transition from Europe to America. This hostility took on a different historical form in the United States: from fear of the Marxist ideal in the Weimar Republic, it transformed into an American fear of Communism during the Cold War. In the above-mentioned seminar, Marx occupies a key place in Strauss' description of the crisis of modernity, and is located in the last phase of the second wave of modernity. To understand this, one must follow Strauss' argument, beginning with the first wave of modernity represented by Hobbes and John Locke (1632–1704), followed by a discussion of Jean-Jacques Rousseau

(1712–1778), Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814), Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831), and ending with Marx. The latter, according to Strauss, tried to establish a moral system that would be "more moral than the Platonic-Aristotelian structure," in the hope of creating a utopian, just society of affluence in which scarcity did not exist.[17] Strauss saw this attempt as not only dangerous but doomed to failure and to catastrophic consequences.

Although Strauss highly valued the concept of alienation and integrated it into his critique of modernity, his differences with Marx seem unbridgeable. Marx is described as the precise antithesis of Strauss' position, according to which the Marxist ideal represents Nietzsche's "last man"—a hollow person with no values or aspirations, who treasures freedom above all else. Marx is classified as "the father of Communism" who laid the intellectual foundations for the enemy from the East. The chapter tries to decipher what Strauss meant by this definition and provide the missing link needed to understand Strauss' teaching in the United States.

The final chapter, "Note on the Plan of Strauss' *The City and Man*," ties the previous chapters together in an attempt to understand the manifestations of Strauss' doctrine in postwar America—both the form it took in writing and its intellectual origins.

The City and Man (1964) is read as representative of Strauss' political program. While most commentators on Strauss see controversial essays such as *On Tyranny* (1948), *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (1958), and especially *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (1952) as characteristic of Strauss' later writings, *The City and Man*, which purports to only address pre-modern classical thought, is considered marginal. However, this study will show it to be quite otherwise.

Read from a Cold War perspective, *The City and Man* offers a window onto Strauss' teaching in its purest form: an anti-utopian political manifesto intended to bolster the West against the Communist enemy and urge the free world to mend its ways. Strauss' interpretations of Aristotelian politics, the concept of justice in Plato's *Republic*, and the idea of war in Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*, are prominent examples. It is in this text that Strauss the teacher appears in all his glory; here, the complexities of Strauss' development from Weimar to America visibly converge.

Notes

1. Franz Kafka, *Amerika* (New York: Schocken Books, 1996 [1927]), 3.
2. For a discussion of the twentieth century intellectual immigration from Europe to the United States, see Lewis A. Coser, *Refugee Scholars in America: Their Impact and Their Experiences* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984); Donald Fleming and Bernard Bailyn (eds.), *The Intellectual Migration: Europe and America, 1930–1960* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969); Anthony Heilbut, *Exiled in Paradise: German Refugee Artists and Intellectuals in America from the 1930s to the Present* (New York: The Viking Press, 1983); Henry Stuart Hughes, *The Sea Change: The Migration of Social Thought, 1930–1965* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975); Martin Jay, *Permanent Exiles: Essays on the Intellectual Migration from Germany to America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985); Claus-Dieter Krohn, *Intellectuals in Exile: Refugee Scholars and the New School for Social Research* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993 [1987]); Franz L. Neumann, Henri Peyre, Erwin Panofsky, Wolfgang Köhler, and Paul Tillich, *The Cultural Migration: The European Scholar in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1953). See also Alexander Bloom, *Prodigal Sons: The New York Intellectuals and Their World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); Anson Rabinbach, "German-Jewish Connections: The New York Intellectuals and the Frankfurt School in Exile," *German Politics and Society* 13, no. 3 (Fall 1995): 108–129; Anson Rabinbach, *In the Shadow of Catastrophe: German Intellectuals Between Apocalypse and Enlightenment* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); David Weinstein and Avihu Zakai, *Jewish Exiles and European Thought in the Shadow of the Third Reich: Baron, Popper, Strauss, Auerbach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).
3. The "war of ideas" on Strauss and his followers, who are known as Straussians (the most prominent of these was Allan Bloom, whose 1987 bestseller, *The Closing of the American Mind*, was in many ways a popular translation of Strauss' ideas), may have begun in 1985, when *The New York Review of Books* ran Myles F. Burnyeat's criticism of Strauss' book, *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy*, which was published in 1983 (a decade after he died). Shadia Drury expanded this criticism in *The Political Ideas of Leo Strauss* (1988) and *Leo Strauss and the American Right* (1997), arguing that Strauss did not introduce the United States to conservatism but rather to the right-wing-nihilist European tradition. After 9/11 and the American wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, Strauss and his followers came under even heavier fire and the identification of Strauss with neoconservatism spread through academic publications,

journals, newspapers, and websites. In 2004, the BBC ran a documentary titled *The Power of Nightmares,* directed by Adam Curtis, which centered on an extremely harsh condemnation of Strauss. The documentary described him as the spiritual father of neoconservatism and emphasized his supposed impact on policy makers who pushed for all-out war on the Soviet Union and later called for entering wars in the Middle East. William Altman's *The German Stranger* (2011) may be the most extreme example of hostility toward Strauss. Altman compares Strauss to the protagonist of Orson Welles' 1946 movie "The Stranger," a Nazi criminal working under a false identity as a teacher in a peaceful American town. According to Altman, Strauss the teacher harbored ideas that came close to Nazism and was a foreign element in American academe and democracy. See William H. F. Altman, *The German Stranger: Leo Strauss and National Socialism* (New York: Lexington Books, 2011); Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987); Myles F. Burnyeat, "Sphinx Without a Secret," *The New York Review of Books*, May 30, 1985; Shadia B. Drury, *The Political Ideas of Leo Strauss* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988); Shadia B. Drury, *Leo Strauss and the American Right* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997). See also Aggie Hirst, *Leo Strauss and the Invasion of Iraq: Encountering the Abyss* (New York: Routedge, 2013); Stephen Holmes, *The Anatomy of Antiliberalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996); Harry V. Jaffa, *Crisis of the Strauss Divided: Essays on Leo Strauss and Staussianism, East and West* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2012); Ann Norton, *Leo Strauss and the Politics of American Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004); Nicholas Xenos, *Cloaked in Virtue: Unveiling Leo Strauss and the Rhetoric of American Foreign Policy* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

4. See, for example, Robert Howse, *Leo Strauss: Man of Peace* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Steven B. Smith, *Reading Leo Strauss: Politics, Philosophy, Judaism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006). See also Peter Minowitz, *Straussophobia: Defending Leo Strauss and Straussians Against Shadia Drury and Other Accusers* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2009); Gregory Bruce Smith, "Leo Strauss and the Straussians: An Anti-Democratic Cult?" *PS: Political Science and Politics* 30, no. 2 (June 1997): 180–189. See also Hilail Gildin, "Leo Strauss on the Understanding of the Politically Better and Worse," *Interpretation* 35, no. 1 (Fall 2007): 3–10.
5. Gershom Scholem on Leo Strauss, 1974, ARC.4 1599 11 12, Gershom Scholem Papers, The National Library of Israel, Jerusalem.
6. See, for example, Thomas L. Pangle, *Leo Strauss: An Introduction to his Thought and Intellectual Legacy* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006); Daniel Tanguay, *Leo Strauss: An Intellectual*

Biography (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007 [2003]); Catherine and Michael Zuckert, *The Truth About Leo Strauss: Political Philosophy and American Democracy* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2006). See also Paweł Armada and Arkadiusz Górnisiewicz (eds.), *Modernity and What Has Been Lost: Considerations on the Legacy of Leo Strauss* (Krakow: The Jagiellonian University Press, 2010); Nasser Behnegar, "The Intellectual Legacy of Leo Strauss (1899–1973)," *Annual Review of Political Science* 1 (1998): 95–116; Tony Burns and James Connelly (eds.), *The Legacy of Leo Strauss* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2010); Dinesh D'Souza, "The Legacy of Leo Strauss," *Policy Review* 40 (Spring 1987): 36–43; Rafael Major (ed.), *Leo Strauss's Defense of the Philosophic Life: Reading What Is Political Philosophy?* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013); John A. Murley (ed.), *Leo Strauss and His Legacy: A Bibliography* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2005).

7. On the young Strauss, the origins of his thinking, and his intellectual environment in the Weimar Republic, see Rodrigo Chacón, "Reading Strauss from the Start: On the Heideggerian Origins of 'Political Philosophy'," *European Journal of Political Theory* 9, no. 3 (2010): 287–307; David Janssens, *Between Jerusalem and Athens: Philosophy, Prophecy, and Politics in Leo Strauss' Early Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008); Heinrich Meier, *Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss: The Hidden Dialogue* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Jerry Muller, "Leo Strauss: The Political Philosopher as a Young Zionist," *Jewish Social Studies* 17, no. 1 (Fall 2010): 88–115; Stephan Steiner, *Weimar in Amerika: Leo Strauss' Politische Philosophie* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013); Michael Zank (ed.), *Leo Strauss: The Early Writings (1921–1933)* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002).
8. See Leora Batnitzky, *Leo Strauss and Emmanuel Levinas: Philosophy and the Politics of Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Jeffrey A. Bernstein, *Leo Strauss: On the Borders of Judaism, Philosophy, and History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2015); Kenneth Hart Green, *Jew and Philosopher: The Return to Maimonides in the Jewish Thought of Leo Strauss* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993); Kenneth Hart Green, "Leo Strauss as a Modern Jewish Thinker," introduction to *Leo Strauss, Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity,* Kenneth Hart Green (ed.) (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 1–86. See also Ehud Luz, "Judaism in Leo Strauss' Writings," *Daat: A Journal of Jewish Philosophy and Kabbalah* 26 (July 1991): 35–60 [in Hebrew]; David Novak (ed.), *Leo Straus and Judaism: Jerusalem and Athens Critically Revisited* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1996).
9. Leo Strauss, "Preface to the English Translation," *Spinoza's Critique of Religion* (New York: Schocken Books, 1965 [1930]), 1.

10. See, for example, Heinrich Meier, *Leo Strauss and the Theologico-Political Problem* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). The study of Strauss owes a great deal to Meier, who edited most of his work in several volumes. See Leo Strauss, *Gesammelte Schriften Band 1: Die Religionskritik Spinozas und zugehörige Schriften*, Heinrich Meier (ed.) (Stuttgart: Verlag J.B. Metzler, 1996); Leo Strauss, *Gesammelte Schriften Band 2: Philosophie und Gesetz—Frühe Schriften,* Heinrich Meier (ed.) (Stuttgart: Verlag J.B. Metzler, 1997); Leo Strauss, *Gesammelte Schriften Band 3: Hobbes' politische Wissenschaft und zugehörige Schriften—Briefe*, Heinrich Meier (ed.) (Stuttgart: Verlag J.B. Metzler, 2001).
11. Hannah Arendt to Karl Jaspers, July 24, 1954, Lotte Kohler and Hans Saner (eds.), *Hannah Arendt Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992), 244.
12. Eugene R. Sheppard, *Leo Strauss and the Politics of Exile: The Making of a Political Philosopher* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2006).
13. For a discussion of Strauss' anti-historicist position, see J. A. Cohen and Svetozar Minkov (eds.), *Natural Right and History: Lectures and Essays by Leo Strauss, 1937–1946* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2018); Rafael Major, "The Cambridge School and Leo Strauss: Text and Context of American Political Science," *Political Research Quarterly* 58, no. 3 (September 2005): 477–485; David N. Myers, *Resisting History: Historicism and Its Discontents in German-Jewish Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Nathan Tarcov, "Quentin Skinner's Method and Machiavelli's Prince," *Ethics* 92, no. 4 (July 1982): 692–709; Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," *History and Theory* 8, no. 1 (1969): 3–53; Michael P. Zuckert and Catherine H. Zuckert, *Leo Strauss and the Problem of Political Philosophy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2014).
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16. Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," Spring 1960 (lecture transcript), Box. 35, Leo Strauss Papers, Special Collections Research Center, The University of Chicago Library. In 2019, the seminar was edited by Gayle Mckeen for the Leo Strauss Transcript Project. The references here were taken from the original transcription before the edited version was published. Pagination of the edited version, therefore, may vary slightly from what is referenced here but all quotations accurately conform to that version as well.
17. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 62.

CHAPTER 2

The Political Philosophy of Strauss—Its Basis and Its Genesis

> He knew the experience of a world on the edge of the abyss, the world of the nihilists, of frenzied technology, of unstrained will to power and of destructive philosophy, and there is no doubt that he felt the charm in all of these—with the exception of frenzied technology. His books testify to this, at least implicitly. Medieval philosophy, careful and caring not to destroy, was perhaps closest to his heart, whereas classical philosophy as he described it in his later writings was most in accord with his philosophical politics. And yet he retained, perhaps, what he would have called sobriety. (Shlomo Pines on Leo Strauss)[1]

The tragedy of the Weimar Republic, the fragile democracy that did not know how to defend itself, is by now the stuff of legend.[2] The Republic was born of violence and died of violence. Adolf Hitler may have sealed its death warrant, but Nazism was only one of the many ideas and ideologies that emerged during, or before, its short lifespan. From 1918 to 1933, postwar Germany saw a unique flurry of activity. In the wake of the defeat in the Great War, vastly different schools of thought bubbled and boiled in an electrifying, dangerous frenzy, spanning all walks of life: philosophy, politics, society, culture, literature, and the arts.

It was precisely this prolonged moment of crisis that made the Weimar Republic, and especially its capital, Berlin, one of the liveliest and most cosmopolitan places in Europe.[3] Art, prose, poetry, film, radio, theater, ballet, journalism, and satire all flourished there in the 1920s, placing

A. Armon, *Leo Strauss Between Weimar and America*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-24389-0_2

Weimar at the very forefront of the cultural avant-garde and making it "the first truly modern culture."[4]

At the same time, German philosophy was dumbstruck by the violence, mass killings, and unprecedented destruction that World War I had wrought in Europe. The old world was gone, technology was developing in leaps and bounds, and for the first time, Germany was a mass democracy with a constitution, a vote for all, and a consumerist culture. In "The Storyteller" (1936), Walter Benjamin deftly captured this sense of a crumbling world: "[a] generation that had gone to school on a horse-drawn streetcar now stood under the open sky in a countryside in which nothing remained unchanged but the clouds, and beneath these clouds, in a field of force of destructive torrents and explosions, was the tiny, fragile human body."[5]

While most German liberals and social-democrats embraced democracy and even worked to bolster it, the new regime was met by considerable opposition from both right and left. Although some saw no choice but to grudgingly accept the existence of the Republic, others devoted themselves to its downfall. The Weimar Republic's weakness certainly invited this assault, but the hostility to the values it represented was rooted much deeper—among other things, in anti-Enlightenment ideas, in Romanticism, and in glorification of the German Völkisch movement that rose to prominence in the nineteenth century.[6]

One major view that made its way into the mainstream from the fringes of intellectual thought centered on a sense of crisis, pessimism, and discontentment with civilization in its present form. This spirit—captured, for example, by Oswald Spengler (1880–1936) in his *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (The Decline of the West, 1918)—spread like wildfire through philosophy, theology, and politics, spurring an intellectual revolution against the Republic.[7] Progressive forces were countered: every liberal thesis was matched by an anti-liberal one. Neo-orthodoxy, political theology and existentialism all generated intellectual opposition to liberalism and to neo-Kantianism. Every light had its shadow: Hans Kelsen (1881–1973) was challenged by Carl Schmitt, Ernst Cassirer (1874–1945) faced Martin Heidegger, and Hermann Cohen (1842–1918) and Ernst Troeltsch (1865–1923) contended with Karl Barth (1886–1968) and Franz Rosenzweig (1886–1929). Some of these thinkers, whether intent on developing the Republic or on destroying it, shared a revulsion for the contemporary form that culture, education, and politics were taking and criticized the democratic liberal ideal.[8]

For many Jews in Germany, Weimar became a center of renaissance and revival.[9] The new world and its intellectual riches gave rise to a golden era in Jewish thought, literature, and art—so much so that it is hard to imagine Weimarian culture without them. The new generation of "German Jews beyond Judaism" embraced Enlightenment and democracy in the hope of seizing the opportunity afforded them by the new regime.[10]

Most Jews identified politically and ideologically with the democratic regime and with liberalism. The Weimar Republic offered them both social mobility and proof that their status had already improved. The possibility of an end to the exclusion of Jews from history and society beckoned. However, some Jews joined in the criticism of liberalism (from right or left), voicing disappointment with the weakness of the Republic or rejecting its core values.

Several Jewish groups, mostly Orthodox, opposed the full integration of Jews into German society, fearing assimilation or the draw of burgeoning Jewish nationalism. However, critics of liberalism in Weimar included educated young Jews who, like many of their non-Jewish peers, rebelled against their parents and rejected mainstream culture and its old-world values. They saw the emancipation as an utter failure, a rotten bourgeois illusion.[11] Their rebellion took various forms, such as supporting Zionism, veering sharply left to socialism and Marxism, or adopting a new strain of thought that came to be known as "existentialism." Many were drawn to an archaeological journey into the depths of pre-modern philosophy and theology, which lay buried under the principles of Enlightenment, rationalism, positivism, progress, and liberalism. They were fascinated by history's heart of darkness. Their intellectual curiosity sought the mysterious, the authentic, and the supposedly pure yet disguised truth—all that was alien and unknown. They took up studies that tried to reject liberalism or push its boundaries.

Faith in the harmonious integration of Judaism with rationalism and modernity, as preached by Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786) and Hermann Cohen, was quickly replaced with skepticism, denouncement of Enlightenment, and a search for an alternative, as Steven E. Aschheim aptly described it: "German Jews beyond Bildung and liberalism… sought the ultimate redemptive possibilities of language. Emphasis on origins focused thought on the recovery of lost meanings, on truth as hidden, part of a primal, esoteric structure waiting to be revealed."[12] This generation did not fear catastrophe or the death of traditions,

concepts, and norms. They believed in a truth that lay beyond liberalism, trapped in a basement covered by modern ideas.

Martin Buber (1878–1965) turned his interest to Hasidic Judaism, to cultural Zionism, and to a "community of blood."[13] Gershom Scholem chose the study of Kabbalah and joined the Zionist movement, explaining:

> The reason I embraced Zionism was not that the establishment of a Jewish state (which I defended in discussions) as the main goal of the movement seemed urgent and utterly convincing to me. For me as for many others, this aspect of the movement played only a secondary role, or none at all, until Hitler's destruction of the Jews… Of great importance, however, were tendencies that promoted the rediscovery by the Jews of their own selves and their history as well as a possible spiritual, cultural, and above all, social rebirth. If there was any chance of a fundamental renewal whereby the Jews would fully realize their inherent potential, this—so we believed—could happen only over there, where a Jew would encounter himself, his people, and his roots.[14]

Walter Benjamin was drawn to mysticism and "was the most peculiar Marxist ever produced by this movement," according to Hannah Arendt.[15] She herself devoted her first study to the concept of love in Saint Augustine, under the tutelage of Karl Jaspers. Hans Jonas (1903–1993) chose to explore the depths of Gnosticism; Erich Fromm (1900–1980) was influenced by the Talmud; and Karl Löwith (1897–1973), Herbert Marcuse, and Emmanuel Levinas (1906–1995)—and Arendt, of course—were followers of Heidegger and existentialism.[16]

Leo Strauss was not unusual in this context. What he learned as a young adult about the Weimar Republic was far from positive: he did not have faith in the principles of liberalism, and they were not part of his intellectual toolkit. As a young thinker caught up in the spirit of criticizing Weimarian culture, Strauss made no attempt to bolster the Republic or democracy, or to defend it at all costs. His breeding ground consisted of Nietzsche, existentialism, neo-orthodoxy, and philosophical objection to the ideal of Enlightenment. This was a far cry from the sanctification of equality, human rights, positivism and liberalism that characterized the Weimar constitution and its democratic aspirations. Like many of his peers, Strauss sought an answer that would relieve him of the futile mediocrity of his time, as exemplified by the Weimar Republic.[17]

Spinoza's Critique of Religion (1930)—An Atheist Attack on Enlightenment

On January 30, 1970, in a conversation with his friend, the philosopher Jacob Klein (1899–1978), Strauss described his childhood and summed up the themes that had influenced his life—Judaism, Zionism, Plato, and Nietzsche:

> 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 very little Jewish knowledge. In the Gymnasium I became exposed to the message of German humanism. Furtively, I read Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. When I was 16 and we read the *Laches* in school, I formed the plan, or rather the wish, to spend my life reading Plato and breeding rabbits while 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 17, I was converted to Zionism—to simple, straightforward political Zionism.[18]

In Weimar, the young Strauss began a brief affair with Zionism. He remained sympathetic to the idea of a Jewish state for the rest of his life, but was active in the Zionist movement for only a short time. In his youth he supported the political Zionism promoted by Theodor Herzl (1860–1904) and Leon Pinsker (1821–1891), who strove to revive Jewish politics. "Political Zionism," Strauss later recalled, "was concerned primarily with cleansing the Jews of their millennial degradation, with the recovery of Jewish dignity, honor or pride."[19] He also joined the Blau-Weiss (Blue-White) youth movement, which Scholem described as "a Zionist version of the *Wandervogel* and combined German Romanticism with the neo-Jewish kind."[20]

For Strauss, Zionism in the Weimar period offered an opportunity for Jews like him to belong, having rejected the values of Enlightenment and liberalism, Judaism as a religion, and the life of a Jewish community in the Diaspora. He would later define this as "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."[21]

However, Strauss' active involvement with the Zionist movement and his belief that Zionism could solve the problems of the Jewish people

did not persist. He saw political Zionism as hollow, while the spiritual or cultural Zionism that viewed Judaism as a culture fundamentally misunderstood the essence of Judaism, which Strauss held to be revelation and law. Religious Zionism, with its reliance on obeying religious law (*mitzvot*), was not suitable for non-believers like Strauss.[22]

Strauss' view of Zionism played a relatively minor role in the much broader process that swept him up in the mid-1920s: an attraction to existentialism and rejection of liberalism and Enlightenment. This found expression in the most important text that he published in Weimar: *Die Religionskritik Spinozas* (Spinoza's Critique of Religion, 1930).

At the Akademie für die Wissenschaft des Judentums (Academy for the Science of Judaism), Strauss worked under Julius Guttmann (1880–1950), author of *Die Philosophie des Judentums* (Philosophies of Judaism, 1933), who represented the attempt of modern Jewish philosophy to find a middle road between religion and reason. Although Strauss initially planned to write a study on Baruch Spinoza's (1632–1677) Bible science, he ultimately expanded his focus to Spinoza's entire critique of religion, which centered on objection to revelation.[23]

In a January 1930 correspondence with his friend Gerhard Krüger (1902–1972), Strauss related his motivation and intentions in writing the book on Spinoza. He admitted to feeling uncomfortable with sections that had been the subject of disagreement with his supervisor, Guttmann, as the latter was wary of Strauss' "atheistic" and existentialist views.[24] He also confessed that his relations with his employers had forced him to keep certain views out of the book. However, Strauss confirmed that his study was indeed informed by a spirit of atheism. "One thing, however, was clear to me," he wrote. "I cannot believe in God."[25]

In the book, Strauss did not aim to justify theology or revelation but rather to criticize the Enlightenment's approach to religion from a non-faith position. The result was harsh reactionary criticism of Enlightenment, democracy, liberalism, and modern liberal theology.[26]

The controversy over the *Theologico-Political Treatise* began in Spinoza's lifetime, in the seventeenth century. While opponents saw him as an atheist and as dangerous to religion, Spinoza argued that he was defending true religion from the masses and from "the prejudices of the theologians."[27] At the end of the eighteenth century, more than a hundred years after his demise, Spinoza regained the philosophical center-stage due to the debate over pantheism between Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (1743–1819) and Mendelssohn.[28]

Jacobi, a key figure in the reception of Spinoza's doctrine, criticized pantheism and the rationalism of the Enlightenment, arguing that they necessarily led to atheism. In 1785, Jacobi claimed that Spinozism led to atheism and that Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–1781), one of the most prominent representatives of the Enlightenment, had declared himself a Spinozist shortly before he died. This alleged discovery caused a rift between Jacobi, who represented irrationality, and Mendelssohn, Lessing's close friend, who represented the Haskalah movement of Jewish Enlightenment and argued that reason did not contradict belief in God. Although he objected to irrationality, Strauss was close to Jacobi's view that science could not refute revelation, which is rooted in faith, and that the Enlightenment was closer to atheism than it cared to admit.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the study of Spinoza flourished and he was held in great esteem. Franz Rosenzweig, one of the fathers of existentialism and author of *The Star of Redemption* (1921), noted: "[t]he signature of the Era, in particular of the Jewish Era, became visible with the Spinoza celebrations in the year 1927; with the exception of a few orthodox voices, there was unanimous enthusiasm from the most extreme religious Judaism, to the most extreme national Judaism, for the 'great Jew'."[29]

Despite the zeitgeist, a particularly scathing criticism of Spinoza was written by Hermann Cohen, the leading Jewish thinker of the time. Cohen rejected Spinoza's monism and the unity of God and nature, and tried to ground the essence of Judaism in a moral doctrine influenced by the principles of Kantian philosophy. As one of the intellectuals who ushered in neo-Kantianism, Cohen saw revelation as "the creation of reason."[30] Cohen's idealistic philosophy was optimistic. He believed in progress and redemption and held peace to be "the highest end of all existence and of all moral actions."[31] Cohen vehemently attacked the author of the *Theologico-Political Treatise* in various texts, including in a 1915 essay titled "Spinoza on State and Religion, Judaism and Christianity" and in a 1910 lecture on "Spinoza's attitude to Judaism," which was posthumously printed in 1929. He argued that the excommunicated Jewish philosopher was extremely hostile to Judaism and functioned as an enemy to Jews.[32]

Strauss embarked on his own discussion of Spinoza with a critique of Cohen's 1915 essay. In "Cohen's Analysis of Spinoza's Bible Science" (1924) he defended Spinoza's motivation, arguing that Cohen had gone too far in describing him as an enemy of the Jews. Strauss proposed that

Spinoza had not challenged Judaism itself, but rather the orthodoxy's monopoly over knowledge. "Spinoza was compelled to engage in the critique of the Bible by legitimate motives, whether or not he was full of hatred toward Judaism," he wrote.[33]

Both Strauss and Cohen criticized Spinoza, but for vastly different reasons. Cohen's critique was an attempt to defend theology, revelation, and Judaism in the post-Kantian age of Enlightenment, and to relieve the tension between religion and philosophy. Strauss, like Spinoza, denied the possibility of harmony between the two, yet opposed the way in which the Enlightenment had tried to refute revelation.[34]

According to Strauss, perception of the Bible changed radically after the publication of the *Theologico-Political Treatise* (1670), in which Spinoza explicated his opinions on religion and state as a preface to his moral philosophy. Strauss claimed that Spinoza's critique of revelation laid the foundations for the Enlightenment's position on the matter, arming it with anti-theological power:

> In our time scholars generally study the Bible in the manner in which they study any other book. As is generally admitted, Spinoza more than any other man laid the foundation for this kind of Biblical study… Once it is assumed that the Bible is a literary document like any other, it must be studied and interpreted like any other literary document; it becomes the object of the sciences of culture like all their other objects; the foundation of Biblical sciences is no longer a problem. Hence 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.[35]

Spinoza began the *Treatise* with an address to the "philosophical reader… to those who would show a freer spirit in their philosophy, stood not this one obstacle in the way: the idea that reason should be subordinate to Theology."[36] Philosophy and theology were tied in a master–slave relationship. Potential philosophers who may have been able to think freely were oppressed by the rule of theology. Spinoza wished to set them free and reverse the balance of power. He saw critique of revelation as necessary to the struggle of modern philosophers against theologians. Philosophizing could not begin without calling revelation into question.[37]

According to Strauss, the Enlightenment—represented by Spinoza—obliterated whatever could not be explained rationally and scientifically in order to gain sovereignty and ensure the rule of reason. It did not refute the possibility of revelation but rather mocked it, positioning believers as ignorant. Prophecy and miracles were classified as prejudice or superstition maintained by the primitive, pre-scientific beliefs of earlier times, when philosophy had not yet blossomed into full self-consciousness. Strauss claimed that the *Theologico-Political Treatise* expressed the arrogance of Enlightenment and its aspiration to rule, along with its fear of the power of theology:

> It is easy to understand how mockery came to play so great a role in critique of religion in the Age of Enlightenment. The Enlightenment, as Lessing put it, had to laugh orthodoxy out of a position from which it could not be driven by any other means. For the assertion that God is omnipotent cannot be refuted, but the contrast between divine omnipotence and the use of omnipotence to inspire Moses with the name of a town or a mountain, which that town or mountain will bear only long after the death of Moses, is matter for laughter… Through laughter and mockery, reason overleaps the barriers that she was not able to overcome when she proceeded pace to pace in formal argumentation. But all the self-consciousness of the Enlightenment—historically effective as it was—does not reach the core of revealed religion, but is only a critique of certain consequences and is therefore questionable.[38]

In the January 1930 letter to Krüger, Strauss wrote that "it becomes clear that the Enlightenment owes its victory not to scientific refutation of the claims of revealed religion. It owes its victory to a certain will that one, with a grain of salt [cum grano salis], may call Epicurean."[39] This will was political and preceded science—it was the political motive at the root of science.[40] Epicurean tradition was a will to power that aspired to happiness, safety, and human well-being. It aimed to maximize pleasure and minimize pain and suffering. Strauss criticized the Epicurean will to power adopted by the Enlightenment, as it could only be realized through overcoming and denying fear of the gods and of death:

> The opposite of man's perfect state, *eudaimonia*, is the condition of confusion due to fear. Liberation from fear is achieved by denial of the fearful quality of what is taken to be fearful. It is science which provides proof that there is no cause for fear, that there is nothing to fear. That is the

> very intent and meaning of science: were we not harassed by apprehensions regarding Olympus and death, there would be no need for a science of physics… That science will achieve this, that the unveiling of truth will bring us tranquility of mind and not still greater anxiety, is taken for granted by Epicurus… in the Age of Enlightenment the general concern, in which men of the most varied types concur, is such that recourse must be had to Epicureanism not only for an understanding of man or the understanding and analysis of religion, but also with reference to the motive underlying criticism of religion.[41]

Strauss sought a different, stronger force or will that could rise to the challenge of revealed religion without stooping to mockery or ignoring existential angst. In a letter to Krüger, he noted sparks of this will in the thinking of Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527), Giordano Bruno (1548–1600), and even Spinoza. However, he argued, the new will gained force only with Nietzsche, peaking in Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* (Being and Time, 1927).[42] Relating to Heidegger's "call of conscience," Strauss stated that the philosophy of his German contemporary was the first to enable a proper atheist critique of religion.[43]

For Heidegger, conscience is an exposing, accusatory, unique voice attesting to the forgotten authenticity of *Dasein* ("being-there"). It addresses *Das Man* ("the One" or "the They"), who lives in an alienated, disconnected, artificial environment, and reminds him of his inevitable temporality and mortality. In *Being and Time*, he wrote:

> In conscience Dasein calls itself… "It" calls, against our expectations and even against our will. On the other hand, the call undoubtedly does not come from someone else who is with me in the world. The call comes from me and yet from beyond me … The fact that the call is not something which is explicitly performed by me, but that rather "it" does the calling, does not justify seeking the caller in some entity with a character other than that of Dasein… Uncanniness reveals itself authentically in the basic state-of-mind of anxiety; and, as the most elemental way in which thrown Dasein is disclosed, it puts Dasein's Being-in-the-world face to face with the "nothing" of the world; in face of this "nothing," Dasein is anxious with anxiety about its ownmost potentiality-for-Being. What if this Dasein, which finds itself in the very depths of its uncanniness, should be the caller of the call of conscience? Nothing speaks against this; but all those phenomena which we have hitherto set forth in characterizing the caller and its calling speak for it.[44]

In his daily life, the alienated *Das Man* tries to erase or ignore the existential terror of the world into which humans have been thrown. He tries to forget the inescapability of death, Being-toward-death, and the absence of any essence or purpose preceding existence. It is a life of constantly fleeing authenticity in an attempt to forget it.

Conscience calls on *Das Man* to deal with anxiety, with the nothingness of existence and with the fear of death, rather than try to avoid them. Accepting the terror, he must act in the world and generate life. Accepting nothingness, he must change reality and create his essence. In this creation there is no room for God or for revelation outside Being—everything occurs within it. Philosopher Samuel Hugo Bergman (1883–1975) captured this in his description of Heidegger's philosophy: "[t]he Gates of Heaven have been locked, there is no path leading upwards: religiosity without God… this conscience is not a divine voice. It calls from within me, from my own self. No hand reaches out from above."[45]

Strauss was not a declared student of Heidegger—unlike contemporaries such as Arendt, Jonas, Löwith, Marcuse, and Klein—and did not develop a close personal relationship with him. Yet he undoubtedly admired Heidegger and was influenced by him. In his later writings, Strauss described being in awe of Heidegger and his superior interpretation of Aristotelian philosophy: "I had heard Heidegger's interpretation of certain sections in Aristotle. Sometime later I heard Werner Jaeger [1888–1961] in Berlin interpret the same texts. Charity compels me to limit my comparison to the remark that there was no comparison."[46]

To Strauss, Heidegger—the representative of a new philosophy and father of existentialism—left contemporary greats far behind. Max Weber (1864–1920), a founding father of modern sociology, seemed to him an "orphan child" in comparison. In the famous 1929 debate in Davos with Cassirer, who represented neo-Kantianism, he believed that Heidegger had proved existentialism to have the upper hand.[47]

Later in life, Strauss publicly distanced himself from Heidegger's doctrine. In the preface to the English translation of his book on Spinoza, he claimed: "[i]t was obvious that Heidegger's new thinking led far away from any charity as well as from any humanity. On the other hand, it could not be denied he had a deeper understanding than Rosenzweig of what was implied in the insight or demand that the traditional philosophy, which rested on Greek foundations, must be superseded by a new thinking." He added that with Heidegger there was "no happy ending, no divine shepherd."[48]

In this autobiographical preface, Strauss did not explicitly admit that his interpretation was informed by existentialism. He did state that "the present study [of Spinoza] was based on the premise… that a return to pre-modern philosophy is impossible" and that his worldview had subsequently undergone a "change of orientation."[49] However, in the late 1920s, before the fate of the Weimar Republic became clear, Strauss saw the new thinking promoted by Rosenzweig and Heidegger as key to discussing the theologico-political problem.[50]

Spinoza's Critique of Religion gained Strauss the status of "Germany's last Jewish philosopher," as Zeev Levy put it.[51] After years of humanism, optimism, and attempts to reconcile religion with reason—from Moses Mendelssohn to Hermann Cohen, from the early days of emancipation to the post-world-war despair—German-Jewish philosophy ended with disappointment in these ideas and with a Nietzschean-Heideggerian rejection of Enlightenment, emancipation, and the Haskalah movement. Strauss symbolized the transition of Jewish philosophy from neo-Kantian liberalism to anti-liberal existentialism.[52] From an almost atheist position, Strauss tried to revive the discussion of revelation and to criticize the failure of the Enlightenment to refute it.

Spinoza, Hobbes, and the Fear of Violent Death

If Heidegger was the major, albeit hidden, hero of Straussian writing in the 1920s, the covert foe in *Spinoza's Critique of Religion* was English philosopher Thomas Hobbes. Strauss engaged intensively with Hobbes for more than a decade, in Germany and later in Britain. He devoted as much academic attention to him as to Spinoza, Maimonides, and Plato. Hobbes became the dominant political thinker with whom Strauss contended as an independent researcher, having freed himself from the bonds of the Jewish liberal theology represented by Hermann Cohen and Julius Guttmann.

Strauss' interpretation of Hobbes in his book on Spinoza exemplifies his critique of liberalism, and attests to the influence of German existentialism on his thinking. To him, Hobbes epitomized modernity and its ailments. Strauss shifted the discussion of Hobbes from ontological questions about the fear of death to an anthropological debate over the fear of violent death by human hand. The fear of violent death that so troubled Hobbes drove him, according to Strauss, to locate within the

Epicurean spirit a form of politics that had a single goal—to prevent killing and violence and to preserve life.

Two concepts that became fundamental to Strauss' later thinking, "Jerusalem" (revelation) and "Athens" (reason), took shape in those years. "Jerusalem" appeared already in his early writings on the Jewish question and on Zionism, in *Philosophie und Gesetz* (Philosophy and Law, 1935), and later in *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (1952). The road to "Athens" was paved mostly in the transition from Spinoza's critique of religion to a critique of Hobbes' political thought. To return to ancient Greece, Strauss had to define the principles of modern philosophy and trace its foundations, which he believed were rotten to the core.

Strauss began his long affair with Hobbes in *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*, in which the author of *Leviathan* served as a yardstick for comparing earlier attitudes to critiquing religion—from the pre-modern Epicurus to the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century views of Uriel da Costa (1585–1640) and Isaac La Peyrére (1596–1676). However, Strauss increasingly emphasized the political in his discussion of Hobbes, and especially the fear of violent death, which he saw as the major emotion driving Hobbesian political philosophy and as the source of natural right within that doctrine. Strauss traced the central tenets of this philosophy under the influence of existentialism, concluding that Hobbes' critique of religion came very close to atheism and derived from the principles of his political philosophy.[53]

According to Strauss, Hobbes' political philosophy was based on the contrast between the infinite human desire for recognition and control, on one hand, and the fear of finitude and violent death, on the other—the latter existing equally and mutually for all people in the natural state, as manifested in the war of all against all.[54] Strauss positioned the fear of violent death, along with the need to negate it and replace it with peace and well-being, as the center of Hobbesian motivation—the "Leviathan":

> The conduct of life takes on the character of foreseeing the greatest evil and taking precaution against it. Expectation of future evil is called fear. Fear is not only alarm and flight, but also distrust, suspicion, caution, care lest one fear. Now it is not death in itself that can be avoided, but only death by violence, which is the greatest of possible evils. For life itself can be of such misery that death comes to be ranked with the good. In the final instance, what is of primary concern is ensuring the continuance of life in the sense of ensuring defense against other men. Concern

> with self-protection is the fundamental consideration, the one most fully in accord with the human situation. This is the origin of the distinction made between (moral) good and (moral) evil. The fear of death, the fear of death by violence, is the source of all right, the primary basis of natural right.[55]

Hobbes believed that the desire for recognition spawns violence. Fear of death is a restraining force that leads to a rational search for safety, social order, and protection of life. This creates a politics of rebellion against the dangerous natural state, replacing mutual fear with fear of the regime alone. Religion, like reason, stems from human fear. People fear death and are terrified of humanity's inability to explain natural phenomena. Yet unlike reason, religion cultivates arrogance by promoting ideas such as prophecy or revelation, which supposedly endow one with a higher form of consciousness, a sense of superiority, and an advantage over others. As such, it fails to keep humans safe and must be entirely subjected to the rule of the state.[56] The fear of violent death and the use of reason restrain people, forcing them to be more cautious, calculating, humble, and moderate, and to work together in the service of shared interests, replacing nature with politics.

Thus, Hobbesian thought not only reduces philosophy to the limited domain of fearing mortality, it actually relies on fear of this fear. Hobbes' political philosophy seeks to avoid the possibility of dealing with the inevitable march toward death, with the violence of ceasing to exist, and with the terror that this engenders. Its goal is to eliminate fear of other people and of God, creating a political entity that becomes a repository for this fear and aims to achieve and maintain peace and well-being.

Nietzsche and the existentialists widely discussed philosophy's mortal fear of death. Franz Rosenzweig described it aptly in the beginning of *Der Stern der Erlösung* (The Star of Redemption, 1921), under the motto "In philosophos!" ("Against philosophers!"), where he criticized philosophy and its absurd aspiration to eliminate the fear of death:

> From Death, it is from the fear of death that all cognition of the All begins. Philosophy has the audacity to cast off the fear of the earthly, to remove from death its poisonous sting, from Hades his pestilential breath. All that is mortal lives in this fear of death; every new birth multiplies the fear for a new reason, for it multiplies that which is mortal. The womb of the inexhaustible earth ceaselessly gives birth to what is new, and each

> one is subject to death; each newly born waits with fear and trembling for the day of its passage into the dark. But philosophy refutes these earthly fears. It breaks free above the grave that opens up under our feet before each step. It abandons the body to the power of the abyss, but above it the free soul floats off in the wind… [p]hilosophy smiles its empty smile and, with its outstretched index finger, shows the creature, whose limbs are trembling in fear for its life in this world, a world beyond, of which it wants to know nothing at all. For man does not at all want to escape from some chain; he wants, he wants—to live. Philosophy, which commends death to him as its special little shelter and as the splendid opportunity to escape from the narrowness of life, seems to be only jeering at him. Man feels only too well that he is certainly condemned to death, but not to suicide. And it is only suicide that that philosophical recommendation would truly be able to recommend, not the death decreed for all… Man should not cast aside from him the fear of the earthly; in his fear of death he should—stay. He should stay. He should therefore do nothing other than what he already wants: to stay. The fear of the earthly should be removed from him only with the earthly itself. But as long as he lives on earth, he should also remain in fear of the earthly. And philosophy dupes him of this should when around the earthly it weaves the thick blue haze of its idea of the All… death is truly not what it seems, not nothing, but a pitiless something that cannot be excluded. Even from out of the fog with which philosophy envelops it, its harsh cry resounds unremittingly; philosophy would have liked to swallow it into the night of the nothing, but it could not break off its poisonous sting; and the fear man feels, trembling before this sting, always cruelly belies the compassionate lie of philosophy.[57]

It is hardly surprising that Strauss dedicated his book on Spinoza to Rosenzweig, who died in 1929, and later in life said that he was "thought to be the greatest Jewish thinker whom German Jewry has brought forth."[58] Like Rosenzweig, Strauss believed that philosophy was doomed to fail in its attempt to replace God with humanity and overcome mortality and fear of death, as it was betraying its role by straying thus from the truth. Instead of constructing a political doctrine that tries to eliminate the fear of violent death, this fear must be accepted and embraced as an inseparable part of human existence and politics.

Comments on *the Concept of the Political* (1932)—Schmitt, Kelsen, and Strauss

Strauss took his discussion of Hobbes another step forward in a 1932 critical review of *Der Begriff des Politischen* (The Concept of the Political) by philosopher and jurist Carl Schmitt (an elaboration of an essay under the same title, published in 1927).[59] Schmitt, the author of *Political Theology* (1922), was considered one of the Weimar Republic's leading constitutional theorists. He adamantly opposed the notion of a liberal rule of law and rejected legal positivism, as represented predominantly by Hans Kelsen. Schmitt and Kelsen were polar opposites regarding Weimar's constitution and the philosophy of law. Kelsen supported a liberal constitution and parliamentary democracy, believed in the separation of law from morality and politics, and aspired to a pure theory of law "[whose] aim is to free the science of law from alien elements."[60] He saw the state as a purely legal entity, a closed system of agreements and arrangements made by the legislature. This rational system of legal order has no loopholes or exceptions. It leaves no room for the separate will of the sovereign or for legal ambiguity in which the boundaries of the law can be exceeded.

According to Schmitt, "Kelsen solved the problem of the concept of sovereignty by negating it. The result of his deduction is that 'the concept of sovereignty must be radically repressed.' This is in fact the old liberal negation of the state vis-à-vis law and the disregard of the independent problem of the realization of law."[61] While Kelsen tried to empty sovereignty and politics of meaning, Schmitt wished to revive them and imbue them with power. He claimed that the "sovereign is he who decides on the exception."[62] Power lies not within the closed legal system, but rather in liminal situations and in the responsibility for deciding upon the definition of existential danger. Sovereignty extends beyond the world of modern law, which secularizes theological concepts and tries to eliminate them. Just as miracles and revelation were rejected by the Enlightenment, liberal legal positivism rejected the sovereign's demand for an authority to override the law, including declaring a state of emergency.

Unlike Kelsen, Schmitt sought to restore the lost power of politics, which he believed came before legality. According to Schmitt, every political act or will is driven by the existential distinction between "friend" and "foe." The enemy is not merely an opponent or rival,

but an alien element posing mortal danger. War is the ultimate sphere in which the enemy can be overcome. As long as the division between friend and enemy persists, so will politics and war:

> For to the enemy concept belongs the ever present possibility of combat. All peripherals must be left aside from this term, including military details and development of weapons technology. War is armed combat between organized political entities; civil war is armed combat within an organized unit. A self-laceration endangers the survival of the latter. The essence of a weapon is that it is a means of physically killing human beings. Just like the term enemy, the word combat, too, is to be understood in its original existential sense. It does not mean competition, nor does it mean pure intellectual controversy or symbolic wrestling in which, after all, every human being is somehow always involved, for it is a fact that the entire life of a human being is a struggle and every human being symbolically a combatant. The friend, enemy and combat concepts receive their real meaning precisely because they refer to the real possibility of physical killing. War follows from enmity. War is the existential negation of the enemy.[63]

According to Schmitt, liberal thought knowingly ignores the political and tries to downplay the significance of the enemy, replacing the violence and danger of war with a softened version: legitimate competition in economics and in public discourse. Liberal political thought is anti-political. It seeks to limit violence through law and the state, but in fact promotes a dangerous process of depoliticization and the illusion that the danger inherent to humanity can and should be vanquished.[64] To overcome the weakness of liberalism, Schmitt drew on Hobbes' *Leviathan*, which symbolizes the power of the sovereign—the sole decider who rules while the citizens forgo their rights in order to live under his protection.

In his critical review, "Comments on *Der Begriff des Politischen* by Carl Schmitt," Strauss positioned himself further to the right than Schmitt. In fact, he criticized his contemporary for not going far enough, until the latter seemed the more moderate of the two.[65] According to Strauss, Schmitt ultimately failed in his attempt to overcome the bonds of liberal terminology and morality. Like him, Strauss used Hobbes as a central philosopher to discuss the concept of the political. However, his attitude toward the seventeenth-century thinker was markedly different. Strauss identified Hobbes and Schmitt as the respective prologue and epilogue of liberalism: the former, coming from a non-liberal position,

laid the foundations for liberalism; the latter, in critiquing the liberal, bourgeois culture and politics of the Weimar Republic, tried to uproot these foundations but could not fully free himself from the constraints of liberalism.[66]

In his review, Strauss argued that Schmitt's concept of the political relied on the dangerous nature of humans, as they are capable of inflicting the worst kind of damage on another person: a violent death. The political stems from the natural state, with its basic distinction between friend and enemy on the group level. Enemies enter into a conflict in which humanity's loftiest values, such as courage and bravery, are expressed. War is the pinnacle of this heroic conflict—the setting in which people's best qualities are realized.[67] In contrast, the principles of liberalism lead to depoliticization, neutrality, and detestable compromise, all of which contradict war and the natural state. Liberalism is an attempt to eliminate the political and erase the essence of man. Schmitt's goal was to reconfirm the political through realizing the natural state. He sought to do away with the liberal aspiration to alienate humanity from its dangerous nature. Strauss added a footnote comparing Hobbes to Schmitt in which he noted, regarding Schmitt's concept of the political, that "in fact [Hobbes] is *the* anti-political thinker."[68]

Hobbes and Schmitt operated upon similar yet non-identical premises concerning human nature and the dangers of the conflict inherent to the natural state. While Hobbes believed that humanity must free itself from dependence on the natural state by conquering it and avoiding the danger to the extent possible, Schmitt held that this danger must be embraced as confirmation of the political.

Strauss believed that the source of the "Leviathan", in which people band together to form an artificial state, is fear of the underlying meaning of Schmittian politics and of a violent death. Courage, bravery, heroic death, and the values of war are subsumed to the value of protecting a single life.[69] Hobbes shifted political focus to individual safety and politics gradually grew humanistic. This focus yielded a new political, social, and moral order in which obedience is contingent on the risk it entails for the individual, whose rights and protection precede any duty. Strauss identified Hobbes as the founder of modern civilization, as he provided the legitimization for shattering earlier traditions of political thought. He saw Hobbes as the father of liberalism, although not a liberal himself[70]:

> As soon as "humanity" becomes the subject or object of planning, these principles cannot but lead to the ideal of civilization, i.e. to the demand for the rational and universal society as a single "union of consumers and producers." Hobbes is to a much higher degree than, say, Bacon the originator of the ideal of civilization. By this very fact he is the founder of liberalism.[71]

According to Strauss, Schmitt sought to reject the idea of civilization and realize the political instead—replacing the liberalism that originated with Hobbes and culminated in the philosophy of Kelsen, which to him epitomized the development of liberal thought since the seventeenth century.

While Strauss positioned himself on the extreme right of Schmitt, he placed Kelsen—one of the most ardent advocates of liberalism and legal positivism in the Weimar Republic—to the left of Hobbes, and even tied him to Marxism. In a preliminary draft of a research proposal he wrote in 1931 on Hobbes' political philosophy, Strauss not only tied Hobbes to the liberalism he despised but even argued that the repercussions of Hobbesian thought led to the Marxist ideal. As he wrote but did not elaborate, "[b]esides (against Marxism): the Hobbesian ideal is the ideal of Marxism."[72]

In a 1931 preface to a book he was planning to write about Hobbes, Strauss explained that both in the Hobbesian discourse of rights, in which individual rights preceded duty, and in Kelsen's legal positivism, which aspired to neutrality, the political was emptied of content. The political had become a mere tool in the hands of interested parties, much as Marx defined ideology. "The legal positivism for which every natural right is only the ideology of an interest group thus reveals itself as the ideology of a crypto-Marxist position," he wrote, adding in a footnote that Kelsen's worldview was "Marxist."[73] Strauss' Kelsen represented a covertly Marxist position that saw the political as merely an ideological instrument which ultimately led to a loss of values and moral decay.

Strauss thus located liberalism and Marxism on the same side of the coin, viewing them as the epitome of mediocrity, superficial philosophy, positivism, universalism, futile admiration of progress, and the attempt to destroy the political and defuse its inherent danger: "[t]he condition of legal positivism is peace. Completely apart from the fact that peace

is ambiguous—there is the calm of cemetery and the calm before the storm—it is not granted to man to live simply peacefully."[74]

Marxism was nothing more than another branching-off of liberalism. The sources of both lay in the "Leviathan", which was born in the hope of preventing violent death and sanctifying safety. Hobbes' humanistic ideal contained covert, universal Marxist desires and aspirations, and the liberal discourse represented by Kelsen was no more than anti-philosophical, anti-political, veiled Marxism.

Strauss' position on this reflected his counter-Enlightenment attitude during these years: objection to organizing politics around the individual and his rights, criticism of modern progress and science, and rejection of bourgeois democratic liberalism, which flies in the face of worthy values of war such as dignity and courage that meet the challenge of death instead of shying away from it. However, this critical view also revealed Strauss' attempt to break out of contemporary critiques of liberalism. He concluded his review by stating that "Schmitt is undertaking the critique of liberalism in a liberal world," adding that "the critique of liberalism that Schmitt has initiated can therefore be completed only when we succeed in gaining a horizon beyond liberalism."[75] The exact meaning of this "horizon" remained ambiguous: it was a statement of intention that did not blossom into a clearly formulated worldview at that stage.

Several accounts from the time confirm that just before Strauss took his first steps in the English-speaking world, he identified philosophically with the political Right that spurned any expression of liberalism, while at the same time seeking an alternative to contemporary ideas. The most blatant of these was documented in the correspondence between Strauss and his friend Karl Löwith. In May 1933, he wrote to Löwith from Paris arguing that the right-wing approach, which favored fascism, imperialism, and an authoritarian regime, was a better way of dealing with the vulgar phenomenon of Nazism than the human rights discourse:

> Just because the right-wing oriented Germany does not tolerate us, it simply does not follow that the principles of the right are therefore to be rejected. To the contrary, only on the basis of principles of the right—fascist, authoritarian, imperial—is it possible, in a dignified manner, without the ridiculous and sickening appeal to the "inalienable rights of man," to protest against the repulsive monster [meskine Unwesen]… There is no reason to crawl to the cross, neither to the cross of liberalism, as long as somewhere in the world there is a glimmer of the spark of Roman thought. And even then: rather than any cross, I'll take the ghetto.[76]

This letter, which critics of Strauss have hailed as ultimate proof of his anti-democratic position, is not enough to make a broad statement about his entire worldview. It certainly indicates that his views at the time were far removed from liberalism. Yet it does not prove that Strauss retained this approach after moving from Europe to America, nor does it verify that his later political doctrine preached fascism or was influenced by it.

Understanding Strauss' worldview in the early 1930s requires acquaintance with more sources. One such text is a letter that Strauss wrote to Löwith three months earlier, shortly before the burning of the Reichstag in Berlin. In the letter, Strauss described political reality as a battle between right and left. "I believe the battle at present is not so complicated…," he wrote. "I see a confrontation between two sides: the progressive, Marxist Left and the Right of Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, and Dostoevsky."[77] Marx was positioned on one side and Nietzsche on the other. Marxism and liberalism were united against existentialism. The only possible division was between right and left. Strauss attributed Marxism and liberal or progressive democracy to the left, while Nietzsche and Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855), a forerunner of existentialism, were placed on the right. In another letter to Löwith from June 1935, he admitted that "from the age of twenty-two until I was in my mid-thirties, I believed every word of Nietzsche that I understood."[78]

The letters offer two insights. First, that Strauss, who was born in 1899, admired Nietzsche in his twenties, i.e. for the duration of the Weimar Republic.[79] Second, that in his thirties, exiled from Germany, this admiration was no longer blind but more reserved and doubtful.

Strauss was not a central voice in the liberal-leaning community of German Jewry. However, he was no exception in expressing the confusion, ambivalence, and uncertainty that pervaded this community immediately after the Nazi rise to power, and in offering an alternative approach to the mainstream support of liberalism.[80] German Jewry was diverse and influenced by the philosophical and ideological trends of the era. Many schools of thought within this community shared an aversion to liberalism: the radical right and left, the orthodoxy, conservatives and socialists, and even certain currents within Zionism. From this plethora of ideologies, Strauss took the critique of liberalism with him on his journey toward the liberal English-speaking world, which was to become his sanctuary and eventual home.

The Political Philosophy of Hobbes (1936) and the Question of Reorientation in Strauss' Thought

Strauss' study of Hobbes, which began in the Weimar Republic in the 1920s, culminated in *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes: Its Basis and Its Genesis*, completed in 1934–1935 and published in 1936.[81] The book exemplifies a shift that took place in Strauss' thinking during those years. While he remained consistent in his description of the principles of Hobbesian philosophy already present in the discussion of Spinoza and Schmitt and in his critique of liberalism, Strauss also began to look to the past for alternatives to liberal thought. This took the form of interpreting classical thought, instead of the language or solutions offered by contemporary critiques of liberalism.

While Strauss' point of departure was Heidegger, Nietzsche, and Schmitt, his thinking evolved and eventually deviated from the modern criticism of liberalism and the proposed ways to realize this rejection. He remained steadfast in seeking to expose the roots of modern civilization, but the way to change that world diverged—at least in public—from the views of his spiritual mentors, which he would come to define as violent nihilism. In 1952, in his preface to the English translation of *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, Strauss summarized the views he held when writing the book in the 1930s, including the wish to revive the argument between classical and modern thought: "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 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."[82]

Strauss continued the Nietzschean idea that English thought had reduced and flattened philosophy.[83] He held that Hobbes had torn apart classical tradition and created a new form of political philosophy. This resulted not from adopting mechanical or mathematical principles based on modern science, but rather from a moral conception of humanity. Strauss divided the development of Hobbes' political philosophy into several periods. Initially, the young Hobbes was influenced by Aristotelean philosophy. Then a rift occurred, and Hobbes rejected classical thought. Finally, he created a new political philosophy founded on modern science.[84]

In the preface to his book, Strauss identified Hobbes with the ideal of modern civilization. Regarding Hobbesian philosophy, he wrote: "[t]o indicate its political importance one might stress the fact that the ideal of civilization in its modern form, the ideal of both of the bourgeois-capitalist development and of the socialist movement, was founded and expounded by Hobbes with a depth, clarity, and sincerity never rivaled before or since."[85] In other words, Hobbes was the key to understanding the modern spirit. Modernity drew its strength from centering on humanity as the basis for the best political and social order, in keeping with a worldview that offered no external comfort, purpose, or authority—as opposed to classical philosophy, which saw nature as the highest standard. In modern civilization, the authority of the state and its legitimacy stem from the natural right of the individual rather than from duty or law.

Strauss expanded the discussion he began in the Weimar Republic about Hobbes' conception of morality, which is based on the contrast between a worthy fear of death and contemptible pride and arrogance. Pride stems from the desire for recognition—a boundless thirst that has no connection to reality and encourages delusion. Recognition requires constant reaffirmation by others, generating the need for honor, superiority, control over others, and oppression. In his interpretation, Strauss adopted a Biblical verse from the Book of Job (Ch. 41) that Hobbes quoted at the end of Chapter 28 in *Leviathan* to symbolize the mission accorded to the formidable beast—the restraint of pride: "[t]here is nothing, saith he, on earth, to be compared with him. He is made so as not to be afraid. He seeth every high thing below him; and is King of all the children of pride."[86] Hobbes' Leviathan is an artificial entity that enables humans to control nature and thwart the danger of pride and the war of all against all that occurs in the natural state.

As opposed to pride, fear of death leads to the natural right to preserve life. Death is absolute, and fearing the possibility of violent death strengthens one's sense of reality. This creates wariness devoid of illusion, enabling rational internalization of the need for a state. The Leviathan-state is a defense against the potential enemy lurking in any other person. Fear of the other is replaced by fear of the sovereign, and protection against violent death and fear of it become the essence of politics. Pride blinds, while fear illuminates.[87]

Fear of violent death endows the individual with a natural right to defend his life.[88] Pride, arrogance, and the need for recognition control

public life. In contrast, fear expresses authentic individual sincerity in the private sphere—a deep self-awareness of loneliness, which engenders greater caution and moderation. Hobbes preferred absolute monarchy, as it reduces the public space afforded to the rule of pride.[89]

For Strauss, Hobbes' political philosophy depended on fear of violent death and the attempt to evade it. On one hand, the huge importance of death and fear of it for political thought was acknowledged. On the other hand, this thinking was based on escaping fear and insecurity, reducing the principles of political philosophy and predicating them on the single foundation of preserving life. Hobbes gradually withdrew from respecting honor, courage, and aristocratic Aristotelian virtues into a puritanical form of political thought based solely on fear of death and on ways to evade it by restraining pride and conquering nature. Any value that contradicts fear of death or evasion of it was ruled out or reduced in importance.[90]

The reduction of philosophic principles and the positioning of man as the supreme value of modern civilization also explains why Strauss saw Hobbes as the father of the bourgeois ideal. According to Strauss, Hobbes shifted from an aristocratic morality to a bourgeois one, adopting values such as avoidance of war, pursuit of peace, and protection of body and mind, along with free trade and private property. The image of the ideal bourgeois death—a dignified, peaceful affair that occurs among loved ones, lying on clean white sheets—is no more than deep anxiety over a violent, dirty, humiliating death in the natural state or during war.[91] The bourgeois ideal is driven by the goal of protecting life at any cost and by sublimating violence into competition over property. Self-defense takes the place of self-sacrifice, as Strauss noted in tracing the connection between Hobbes, death, and the bourgeoisie:

> Not only does Hobbes not attack the middle class which is sensibly aware of its own interests, he even provides it with a philosophical justification, as the ideals set up in his political philosophy are precisely the ideals of the bourgeoisie… However much Hobbes personally esteemed the aristocracy, and esteemed the specific qualities of the aristocracy, his political philosophy is directed against the aristocratic rules of life in the name of the bourgeois rules of life. His morality is the morality of a bourgeois world… Hegel's criticism of the bourgeoisie was made possible not only by the new understanding of Platonic political philosophy, but also by the new understanding of the justification of the bourgeois ideal which must be traced back to Hobbes.[92]

In classical philosophy, nature is harmonious and humanity must use reason to act in accordance with the natural state. In contrast, Hobbes' world is defective, lacking direction and an external foothold. In the natural state, humans are born into a reality of absolute fear over their place in the universe.[93] Fear of death stems from the inability to find solace in nature. In a footnote, Strauss commented that for Hobbes, humans are the proletariat of creation: they have nothing to lose by rebelling against the oppressive state of nature.[94]

Like Nietzsche and Heidegger, Strauss tried to uproot modern thought. Unlike them, he sought out the concepts of reason, moderation, and caution advanced by the pre-modern philosophers. He held post-Socratic thinkers as role models, while keeping his distance from pre-Socratic thought, Dionysius, and the irrational. Aristotle, and Plato even more so, provided the intellectual backbone for Strauss' critique of liberalism. The overt use of thinkers such as Schmitt, Nietzsche, and Heidegger dwindled and gradually transformed into public criticism.[95]

In his book on Hobbes, Strauss briefly addressed Nietzsche, Rousseau, and Georges Sorel's (1847–1922) *Réflexions sur la Violence* (Reflections on Violence, 1908) as symbols of a profound but failed response to Hobbes' superficial philosophy. Like Schmitt, these thinkers did not go beyond the liberal, modern horizon, but were a stultified result of it:

> Hobbes, because he renounced all orientation by speech, goes so far as systematically to deny the virtue-character of courage. And just as disdain of speech finally leads to relativist skepticism, the negation of courage leads to the controversial position of courage which becomes more and more acute on the way from Rousseau by Hegel to Nietzsche and is completed by the reabsorption of wisdom by courage, in the view that the ideal is not the object of wisdom, but the hazardous venture of the will.[96]

Strauss saw Hobbes' political philosophy as the epitome of all that was contemptible about liberalism, bourgeois ideals, individualism, compromise, consensus, progress, and technology. He proposed returning to a philosophy that would aspire to extend beyond modernity without relying on seventeenth-century ideas or—at least not explicitly—on the modern vocabulary of sovereignty, the superiority of the nation state, the will to power, and progress. The Straussian alternative certainly did not align Strauss with advocates of democracy, yet it also did not clearly place

him among contemporary thinkers who supported chauvinism, nationalism, and anti-democratic ideas.

While Strauss based his judgment of Hobbes on the contemporary critique of liberalism, his yearning to revive the classical concept of reason tried to break the boundaries of this critique and stand alone. Strauss' choice not to publicly use Nietzsche, Heidegger, or Schmitt requires attention to historical and biographical context. At the time, Strauss was overtly drawing away from the existentialist, historicistic, radical thought that dominated Germany in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, and simultaneously softening his attitude towards the liberal order.

In contrast to Nazi Germany, the English-speaking world became humanity's safe haven. In a 1934 correspondence with Alexandre Kojève (1902–1968), Strauss described how taken he was with British power. "I like this country," he wrote in April, "about which one might say what Diderot said about Hobbes: dry (the pubs close at 10 p.m. sharp here, and the stuff is expensive!), austere and forceful, much more than I do France." In January, he wrote: "I go each day to the British Museum (half a minute's walk) in order to study the English Hobbes literature and the Hobbes-Mss. The English cooking is much more according to my taste than the French. The most important fact: I saw Downing Street, the seat of the greatest power of the world—much, much smaller than the Wilhelmstrasse. I had a very strong impression."[97] Strauss came to England in 1934 and immigrated to the United States in 1938. London, New York, and Chicago replaced Berlin; the English-speaking world replaced Germany and turned into a home, a safe haven for his life and thought.

Strauss in the United States—"German Nihilism" (1941) as a Camouflaged Autobiography

Scholars disagree over the nature of the shift that took place in Strauss' thinking: did he do an about-turn and completely reverse his views, or was it only a minor change, insignificant to his philosophy? Some critics go so far as to claim that it was a semantic, rhetorical, equivocal change intended solely to couch Strauss' critique of liberalism in exoteric language that concealed his true anti-democratic intentions. While Strauss remained steadfast in his rejection of modernity, his attitude to liberalism

altered somewhat after the emigration from Germany. Instead of developing in a linear fashion, his philosophy began to twist and turn, beginning with the book on Hobbes and becoming truly convoluted upon his move to the United States.

A lecture titled "German Nihilism" that Strauss gave in the United States in 1941, three years after immigrating there, exemplified the ambivalence that he had developed since leaving Germany. Strauss published few autobiographical texts. The most famous of these was the abovementioned preface to the English edition of *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*. However, a close reading of "German Nihilism" illuminates many of his positions and views at the most important junctures of his life.[98] The lecture was given in New York, apparently as part of a seminar by the New School for Social Research, where Strauss lectured for the first few years after his immigration before taking a position in Chicago.[99] In the text, first published in 1999, Strauss compared German and English thought, arguing that English philosophy was the source of modernity and German philosophy had emerged as a response to it. That response brought forth German nihilism, which was intent on destroying modern civilization. Strauss saw this nihilism as a rebellion against modern civilization, or, in fact, against the very concept of civilization:

> The modern ideal is of English origin: the German tradition is a tradition of criticism of the modern ideal. While the English found a working amalgamation of the modern ideal with the classical ideal, the Germans overemphasized the break in the tradition so much that they were ultimately led from rejection of modern civilization to the rejection of the principle of civilization as such, i.e., to nihilism.[100]

In this text, "nihilism" served to describe the reaction to modern thought.[101] It epitomized the attempt to reject the principles of modern civilization in favor of the values expressed through war and a state of emergency, and the valorization of self-sacrifice over self-preservation. According to Strauss, German nihilism was unique in its affiliation with Nietzsche and militarism and in its exaltation of the values associated with war.[102] It characterized the young post-war generation, which rebelled against pacifist and universal aspirations, conformism, and the values of liberal democracy:

> The prospect of a pacified planet, without rulers and ruled, of a planetary society devoted to production and consumption only, to the production and consumption of spiritual as well as material merchandise, was positively horrifying to quite a few very intelligent and very decent, if very young, Germans. They did not object to that prospect because they were worrying about their own economic and social position; for certainly in that respect they had no longer anything to lose. Nor did they object to it for religious reasons; for, as one of their spokesmen (E. Jünger) said, they knew that they were the sons and grandsons and great-grandsons of godless men. What they hated, was the very prospect of a world in which everyone would be happy and satisfied, in which everyone would have his little pleasure by day and little pleasure by night, a world in which no great heart could beat and no great soul could breathe, a world without real, unmetaphoric, sacrifice, i.e. a world without blood, sweat, and tears. What to the communists appeared to be the fulfillment of the dream of mankind, appeared to those young Germans as the greatest debasement of humanity, as the coming of the end of humanity, as the arrival of the latest man. They did not really know, and thus they were unable to express in a tolerably clear language, what they desired to put in place of the present world and its allegedly necessary future or sequel: the only thing of which they were absolutely certain was that the present world and all the potentialities of the present world as such, must be destroyed in order to prevent the otherwise necessary coming of the communist final order: literally anything, the nothing, the chaos, the jungle, the Wild West, the Hobbian state of nature, seemed to them infinitely better than the communist-anarchist-pacifist future. Their yes was inarticulate—they were unable to say more than: No! This No proved however sufficient as the preface to action, to the action of destruction. This is the phenomenon which occurs to me first whenever I hear the expression German nihilism.[103]

According to Strauss, this generation of atheists was primarily influenced by Nietzsche:

> Schopenhauer's influence fades into insignificance if compared with that of Nietzsche. Nietzsche asserted that the atheist assumption is not only reconcilable with, but indispensable for, a radical anti-democratic, anti-socialist and anti-pacifist policy… There is no other philosopher whose influence on postwar German thought is comparable to that of Nietzsche, of the atheist Nietzsche.[104]

These young German nihilists sought guidance and found it in contemporary thinkers such as Spengler, Schmitt, Arthur Moeller van den

Bruck (1876–1925), Ernst Jünger (1895–1998), and Heidegger, who overshadowed liberal philosophy and paved the way for Hitler's rise to power as the most vulgar and inferior manifestation of the German nihilist spirit.[105]

In contrast, modern civilization, which is founded on a broad, stable common denominator and on reducing philosophy to the lowest standard possible, is ultimately safer for human society, and citizens need it to protect their lives. Strauss argued that Nietzsche was right in observing that the English mindset contradicted "the philosophic spirit" and devalued the concept of "the philosopher," yet had overlooked the stability, moderation and caution that were part of that spirit.

Strauss saw Jünger as a representative of nihilism, quoting his definition of himself and his friends as "sons, grandsons and great-grandsons of godless men," thereby identifying nihilism with atheism. He also related to two other leading figures that he admired at the time, without addressing them by name: Nietzsche and Churchill. On May 13, 1940, three days after the German invasion of France and less than a year before Strauss' lecture, Churchill delivered a famous speech to the British parliament in which he called for an all-out battle against Nazism, stating: "I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears, and sweat." Strauss valued the British prime minister's determination and his understanding that tyranny must be fought. He saw Churchill as the antithesis to Hitler.[106] In "German Nihilism," Churchill's spirit was placed in contrast with the Communist ideal that terrified the young nihilists. In addition to the quote from Churchill, Strauss referred to his strongest philosophical influence—Nietzsche. "What to the communists appeared to be the fulfillment of the dream of mankind, appeared to those young Germans as the greatest debasement of humanity," he wrote, "as the coming of the end of humanity, as the arrival of the latest man." From *Also sprach Zarathustra* (Thus Spoke Zarathustra, 1883) he borrowed the image of a world so unpalatable to the young nihilists that "one has one's little pleasure for the day and one's little pleasure for the night."[107] Fear of the rise of "the last man" later became a central motif in Strauss' teaching in the United States.

To the nihilists, Nazism was a temporary stage that was essential for breaking with the present and forging a new spirit. Strauss saw World War II as a war between the nihilist world and modern civilization, between Germany and England, and between Adolf Hitler and Winston Churchill. He ended his lecture by saying that due to the nihilist choice

to join Hitler and Nazism, Germany had lost its legitimacy and right to rule.[108]

The question arises what this lecture divulges about Strauss the person. Can the young adult of the Weimar Republic be viewed as part of the postwar generation that criticized liberalism and democracy, admired nihilism, and looked up to Schmitt and Heidegger? Can it be established that in describing the young German nihilists, Strauss was in fact talking about himself? His early writings, his comments on Schmitt's *The Concept of the Political*, and his identification of Hobbes as the father of modern civilization, all indicate that Strauss was greatly enamored of nihilism. Although not necessary a nihilist, he was certainly close to it in his views.

In the Weimar Republic and in his first years as an exile, Strauss admired Nietzsche and Heidegger and criticized Hobbes' morality and political doctrine, which reduced the foundations of philosophy to the single motivation of fearing death. However, as his distance from Germany grew and Nazi power increased, Strauss' opinions of Nietzsche and Hobbes and their worldviews softened somewhat. He acknowledged that Nietzsche's attempt to revive philosophy and forge a new morality had relied on terminology and actions that took a toll on stability and moderation, paving the way for Heidegger and Hitler. In contrast, English thought recognized the importance of preserving and maintaining civilization. Hobbes may have brought forth the lowest form of modern civilization, but he also facilitated stability, security, and a lesser evil than nihilist destruction. This new recognition had a sobering influence on Strauss' thinking and specifically on his view of Hobbes.

Strauss also published two essays in 1941: "Persecution and the Art of Writing" and "The Literary Character of the Guide for the Perplexed," both of which were later published in the book *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (1952).[109] Unlike "German Nihilism," which was published posthumously, these texts became a cornerstone of Straussian philosophy and interpretation. In them, Strauss laid out the principles of exoteric writing, which contains a secret: an esoteric doctrine intended for philosophical debate between a select few, hidden from the masses both in order to defend philosophy from corruption by the public and to protect the public from the subversive search for philosophical truth.

Strauss used a markedly different methodology in these essays than in *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*. In the latter, he traced the development of Hobbes' writing by distinguishing early texts from later ones

and focusing on the existential elements of mortality and fear of death. In contrast, in the essays he discussed exoteric writing by descending into hidden depths within the text itself, centering on the importance of persecution and the philosopher's attempt to protect himself, the public, and philosophy. Strauss saw Hobbes as part of the gradual shift in modern perceptions of the art of writing, identifying him with other seventeenth-century thinkers who wished to broadly disseminate philosophy and "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."[110] Accordingly, in the United States, Hobbes was afforded a position in the chain of esoteric writing. He had aspired to disseminate his philosophy and drastically reduced the use of esotericism, which would all but disappear in the twentieth century.[111]

In the United States, Strauss began to express reservations over his book on Hobbes, and in later texts stopped attributing the advent of modernity to the English philosopher. Instead, he attributed the break with the tradition of classical philosophy to Machiavelli.[112] Hobbes was relegated to a secondary role as an important influence on changing the conception of natural right, but was no longer the central thinker responsible for engendering the first wave of modernity:

> Hobbes was an honest and plainspoken Englishman who lacked the fine Italian hand of his master. Or if you wish, you can compare Hobbes to Sherlock Holmes and Machiavelli to Professor Moriarty. For certainly Hobbes took justice much more seriously than Machiavelli had done. He may even be said to have defended the cause of justice: he denies that it is of the essence of civil society to be founded on crime.[113]

Strauss remained highly critical of Hobbes, but his later reading of the English philosopher was more complex and ambivalent, presenting Hobbes as a thinker who rebelled against philosophical tradition and acknowledged the importance of political philosophy, of nature, and of civilization. At that stage, Strauss interpreted Hobbes as a synthesis between Plato and Epicurus—between the importance of politics and the wishes of the individual. This synthesis eventually led to the creation of an atheist system of political hedonism and laid the foundations

for modern thought. While Strauss criticized Hobbes for his part in the dwindling of the modern spirit, he also held his philosophy to be much worthier than that of his liberal successors and their twentieth-century modern critics: "[n]o sober man could hesitate to prefer Hobbes's enlightened and humane absolute king to the contemporary tyrants whose rule rests on obscurantism and bestiality and fosters these diseases of the mind."[114]

Strauss assumed the existence of varying degrees of responsibility and blame for the destruction of political philosophy in modern times. In the 1920s and 1930s, he saw Hobbes as the father of modern civilization, which encompassed liberalism, socialism, and the bourgeoisie; later, he came to hold Hobbes responsible for the dwindling of political philosophy, yet not as the major cause of it. Having witnessed twentieth-century violence, the older Strauss came to look upon Hobbes' political philosophy in a more favorable light, preferring it both to earlier ideas (Machiavelli) that had corrupted philosophy, and to later ideas (nihilism) that had been born in his lifetime and corrupted humanity.

Strauss' most important book, *Natural Right and History* (1953), summarized his views after World War II and at the beginning of the Cold War. It captured the ambivalence and oscillation in his political thought, including the partial yet unique turn that his philosophy took in the 1930s and 1940s from an anti-liberal opposition to Enlightenment to a critique of liberalism that stood by democracy in its struggle against fascism, Communism, and nihilism.

The book revisited the two heroes of Strauss' youth, Nietzsche and Heidegger, this time as the ultimate representatives of radical, nihilist, dangerous historicism. They had tried to save philosophy from the modern Hobbesian world, yet instead of curing the West of its superficiality, had pushed modernity to its limits. They wished to free humanity, yet wrought devastation.

Strauss discussed two post-Hobbesian attempts to return to pre-modern thought and overcome modern liberal society. Rousseau was responsible for the first, while the second was the work of Nietzsche, "who thus ushered in the second crisis of modernity—the crisis of our time."[115] A large part of the book was devoted to a critique of historicism, which Strauss divided into two kinds: the moderate or theoretical historicism championed by Hegel, and the radical historicism that originated in Nietzschean thought. Strauss emphasized that Hegel avoided relativism: he held that history is progressing toward a fully free human

consciousness, but also believed in the existence of absolute truth, which could be revealed and realized only thanks to his philosophy, which symbolized an end to the progress of history.[116]

Nietzsche rejected Hegelian idealism and saw it as a dangerous absurdity.[117] He ruled out the existence of purpose or rational advancement in history and assumed that any form of understanding is limited to a particular period. An eternal natural truth was rejected in favor of creating values and breaking with tradition:

> According to Nietzsche, the theoretical analysis of human life that realizes the relativity of all comprehensive views and thus depreciates them would make human life itself impossible, for it would destroy the protecting atmosphere within which life or culture or action is alone possible. Moreover, since the theoretical analysis has its basis outside of life, it will never be able to understand life. The theoretical analysis of life is noncommittal and fatal to commitment, but life means commitment. To avert the danger to life, Nietzsche could choose one of two ways: he could insist on the strictly esoteric character of the theoretical analysis of life—that is, restore the Platonic notion of the noble delusion—or else he could deny the possibility of theory proper and so conceive of thought as essentially subservient to, or dependent on, life or fate. If not Nietzsche himself, at any rate his successors adopted the second alternative.[118]

Nietzsche preached human creativity, yet this led to calamitous results. In a lecture titled "What is Political Philosophy?" (1954) delivered in Jerusalem, Strauss went even further in distancing himself from Nietzsche and Heidegger:

> [Nietzsche] 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. He thus prepared a regime, which, as long as it lasted, made discredited democracy look again like the golden age.[119]

The violence in Europe had driven Strauss to the United States. Nietzsche, Schmitt, and Heidegger, all of whom had wielded great

influence on his earlier thought, were no longer his close friends, while Hobbes was no longer the most dangerous foe. After the American victory over fascism, Straussian philosophy could turn to re-examining an old enemy in a new context: Karl Marx during the Cold War.

Notes

1. Shlomo Pines, "On Leo Strauss," *Independent Journal of Philosophy* 5/6, (1988): 171.
2. Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001 [1968]), xiii.
3. On the short history of the Weimar Republic and the reasons for its downfall, see, for example, Peter E. Gordon and John P. McCormick (eds.), *Weimar Thought: Contested Memory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013); Ian Kershaw (ed.), *Weimar: Why Did German Democracy Fail?* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1990); Leonard V. Kaplan and Rudy Kosher (eds.), *The Weimar Moment: Liberalism, Political Theology, and Law* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2012); Eberhard Kolb, *The Weimar Republic* (London: Routledge, 2005 [1988]); Walter Laqueur, *Weimar: A Cultural History* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974); Detlev J. K. Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1992 [1987]); Eric Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).
4. Laqueur, *Weimar: A Cultural History*, 183.
5. Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 2007 [1955]), 84.
6. See, for example, George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1964); Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the German Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961); Zeev Sternhell, *The Anti-Enlightenment Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010). See also Zeev Sternhell (ed.), *The Intellectual Revolt Against Liberal Democracy 1870–1945* (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1996).
7. Spengler's *The Decline of the West* epitomized the pessimism of postwar Germany. First published in 1918, the year the Weimar Republic was established, it was a great success and significantly influenced thinkers at the time. See Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926 [1918]). See also Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

8. Criticism of liberalism was not always tied to political support of anti-democratic or fascist ideas. Heidegger and Schmitt supported Nazism yet Barth, who criticized religious liberalism, vehemently opposed the Nazi attempt to infiltrate the Church.
9. See Michael Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).
10. See George L. Mosse, *German Jews Beyond Judaism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985). See also Steven E. Aschheim, *Culture and Catastrophe: German and Jewish Confrontations with National Socialism and Other Crises* (New York: New York University Press, 1996); Amos Elon, *The Pity of It All: A Portrait of the German-Jewish Epoch, 1743–1933* (New York: Picador, 2002); Frederic V. Grunfeld, *Prophets Without Honour: A Background to Freud, Kafka, Einstein and Their World* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1979); Paul Mendes-Flohr, *German Jews: A Dual Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).
11. On the sea-change in the Jewish community and on children's rebellion against their parents in German society, see Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany*, 1–8, 36–65; Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider*, 113; Yotam Hotam (ed.), *'The Age of Youth': German-Jewish Young Generation and Modern Times* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2008) [in Hebrew]; Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology*, 266–279. See also Walter Benjamin, *Berlin Childhood Around 1900* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006); Gershom Scholem, *From Berlin to Jerusalem: Memories of My Youth* (Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books, 2012 [1980]).
12. Aschheim, *Culture and Catastrophe*, 31, 39.
13. In 1909, Buber called for a "blood community" in a speech titled "Judaism and the Jews" that he gave at the invitation of Bar Kochba, a group of young Jewish intellectuals in Prague. According to Buber:

    > Stirred by the awesomeness of eternity, this young person experiences within himself the existence of something enduring. He experiences it still more keenly, in its manifestness and its mystery, with all the artlessness and all the wonder that surrounds the matter-of-fact, when he discerns it: at the hour when he discovers the successions of generations, when he envisions the line of fathers and mothers that has led up to him. He perceives then what commingling of individuals, what confluence of blood, has produced him, what round of begettings and births has called him forth. He senses in this immortality of the generations a community of blood, which he feels to be the antecedents of his I, its perseverance in the infinite past.

See Martin Buber, *On Judaism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1995 [1967]), 15. Buber later added a qualification to his speech: "[e]vil people have twisted the notion of blood I used here. I therefore declare that in any place in which I used the term blood, I was in no way referring to the racial matter, which I see as baseless, but rather to the contiguity of births in a people." See Martin Buber, *Selected Writings on Judaism and Jewish Affairs* [Teudah ve-Yeud] (Jerusalem: The Zionist Library, 1959), 29 [in Hebrew, freely translated]. See also Paul Mendes-Flohr, *From Mysticism to Dialogue: Martin Buber's Transformation of German Social Thought* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989).

14. Scholem, *From Berlin to Jerusalem*, 54.
15. Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1968), 163.
16. See Hannah Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996 [1929]); Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958). For a discussion of the intellectual interest in Gnosticism, orthodoxy, and Kabbalah, see Benjamin Lazier, *God Interrupted: Heresy and the European Imagination Between the World Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008). For a critical discussion of several of these thinkers, including Arendt, Marcuse, and Löwith, as pupils of Heidegger who disseminated his ideas in the United States, see Richard Wolin, *Heidegger's Children: Hannah Arendt, Karl Löwith, Hans Jonas, and Herbert Marcuse* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). Of the many Jewish thinkers who were forced to flee Germany, the comparison between Arendt and Strauss seems the most complicated and interesting. Both were interested in political philosophy more than in society, economics, or psychology. Their first studies were influenced by existentialism and centered on theology: Strauss delved into Spinoza and the theologico-political problem, while Arendt explored St. Augustine's concept of caritas, or neighborly love. Their escape routes were similar: Arendt fled Germany in 1932, sheltered in France until 1941, and immigrated to the United States, where she died in 1975. Strauss left Germany thanks to a scholarship and lived for a short time in France and then for several years in Britain, until immigrating to the United States in 1938. Unlike several members of the Frankfurt school, both Strauss and Arendt chose to remain in the United States. They saw the Western superpower as a forceful political home and applauded its republican foundations. Both also constantly compared modernity with the classical age and held Greek philosophy to be in many ways superior to modern philosophy. However, while Strauss explicitly opposed modernity and many aspects of democracy, Arendt was more equivocal. She criticized many

elements of the modern era, but was not as hostile to modernity as Strauss. Also, while the later Strauss voiced discomfort with Heidegger and existentialism (at least in public), Arendt remained true to this philosophy, although a large part of her political thought was devoted to dealing with Heidegger's philosophy and overcoming it. Heidegger's engagement with mortality inspired Arendt to focus on natality, and on an active political community bringing the idea of citizenship to life in order to prevent violence and totalitarianism. See Seyla Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt* (London: Sage, 1996); Liisi Keedus, *The Crisis of German Historicism: The Early Political Thought of Hannah Arendt and Leo Strauss* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Peter Graf Kielmansegg, Horst Mewes, and Elisabeth Glaser-Schmidt (eds.), *Hannah Arendt and Leo Strauss: German Émigrés and American Political Thought After World War II* (Washington: German Historical Institute and Cambridge University Press, 1995); Dana R. Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger: The Fate of the Political* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Benjamin Aldes Wurgaft, *Thinking in Public: Strauss, Levinas, Arendt* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

17. In his later autobiographical essay, "Preface to the English Translation of *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*" (1962), Strauss described the weakness of Weimar Republic:

> The Weimar Republic was weak. It had a single moment of strength, if not of greatness: its strong reaction to the murder of the Jewish minister of Foreign Affairs, Walther Rathenau, in 1922. On the whole it presented the sorry spectacle of justice without a sword or of justice unable to use the sword. The election of Field-Marshal von Hindenburg to the presidency of the German Reich in 1925 showed everyone who had eyes to see that the Weimar Republic had only a short time to live: the old Germany was stronger—stronger in will—than the new Germany. What was still lacking then for the destruction of the Weimar Republic was the opportune moment; the moment was to come within a few years. The weakness of the Weimar Republic made certain its speedy destruction. It did not make certain the victory of National Socialism. The victory of National Socialism became necessary in Germany for the same reason that the victory of Communism had become necessary in Russia: the man with the strongest will or single-mindedness, the greatest ruthlessness, daring, and power over his following, and the best judgment about the strength of the various forces in the immediately relevant political field was the leader of the revolution.

See Strauss, "Preface to the English Translation of *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*," 1.

18. Jacob Klein and Leo Strauss, "A Giving of Accounts," *The College* 22, no. 1 (April 1970): 2.
19. Strauss, "Preface to the English Translation of *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*," 4–5. In the preface, Strauss quotes the Zionist leader, Theodor Herzl: "[w]ho belongs and who does not belong, is decided by the majority; it is a question of power… We are a nation—the enemy makes us a nation whether we like it or not." Therefore, by constituting Jews as an enemy, non-Jewish anti-Semitic society in fact enabled Jews to gather around a shared national goal. Strauss accepted the premise of political Zionism, according to which the Jewish liberal aspiration to integrate into non-Jewish society was doomed to failure. Dry law, enlightened as it may be, was subsumed by society, which comprised a weak Jewish minority and a powerful non-Jewish majority that saw the former as an enemy. In his early writings, Strauss quoted a Biblical passage that represented his views at the time: "[a]nd the men of Israel said unto the Hivites, Peradventure ye dwell among us; and how shall we make a league with you?" (Joshua 9:7). The passage is taken from the story of the Gibeonite deception, a Biblical tale that clearly distinguishes friend from foe, and which according to Strauss captured Jewish life in the Diaspora: just as the Gibeonites continued to live as strangers among the Israelites, so the Jews lived as strangers in Europe. The specific quote of the Israelites' suspicion regarding the Gibeonites implies that Strauss may have believed it was justified for non-Jews, the majority, to suspect Jews, the minority. The powerless Jews of Europe must, accordingly, understand the imbalance of power stemming from their position within a strong non-Jewish majority. See Strauss, *The Early Writings (1921–1932)*, 79, 103. See also Sheppard, *Leo Strauss and the Politics of Exile*, 42.
20. Scholem, *From Berlin to Jerusalem*, 58.
21. Strauss, "Preface to the English Translation of *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*," 7.
22. In hindsight, Strauss recalled a meeting with Zeev Jabotinsky, the father of Revisionist Zionism, which demonstrated the limitations of Zionist ideology:

    > Political Zionism was a very honorable suggestion, but one must add that it was also merely formal or poor. I would like to illustrate this. I was myself (as you might have guessed) a political Zionist in my youth, and was a member of a Zionist student organization. In this capacity, I occasionally met Jabotinsky, the leader of the Revisionists. 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"… This Zionism was strictly limited to political action. The mind was in no way employed, or even the heart was in no way employed, in matters Jewish. Now this led very early to a reaction and opposition to political Zionism by cultural Zionism. Cultural Zionism means simply that it is not enough to have a Jewish state; the state must also have a "Jewish culture." In other words, it must have a life of its own. Jewish culture means, the product of the Jewish mind in contradistinction to other national minds. If we look, however, at what this means in specific terms, we see that the rock bottom of any Jewish culture is the Bible, the Talmud, and the Midrash. And if we take these things with a minimum of respect or seriousness, you must say that they were not meant to be products of the Jewish mind. They were meant to be ultimately "from Heaven," and this is the crux of the matter: Judaism cannot be understood as a culture. There are folk dances, and pottery, and all that—but you cannot live on that. The substance is not culture, but divine revelation. Therefore, the only consistent solution, the only clear solution, is that which abandons, or which goes beyond, cultural Zionism and becomes clearly religious Zionism. And this means: return to Jewish faith, return to the faith of our ancestors. But here we are up against a difficulty… What shall those Jews do who cannot believe as our ancestors believed? So while religious Zionism is the only clear solution, it is not feasible, humanly speaking, for all Jews.

See Leo Strauss, "Why We Remain Jews: Can Jewish Faith and History Still Speak to Us? (1962)," *Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity*, 319–320.

23. See Julius Guttmann, *Philosophies of Judaism* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964 [1933]). In 1924, Strauss wrote an essay titled "Cohen's Analysis of Spinoza's Bible Science." Impressed, Guttmann appointed Strauss to be a research assistant at the Akademie für die Wissenschaft des Judentums (Academy for the Science of Judaism). Strauss participated in the activities of the academy, which was established in 1919 on the initiative of Franz Rosenzweig. For a single year, he even attended a study program at Kassel aimed at educating youth about their Jewish heritage. He was a research assistant at the academy until 1932. In his time there, Strauss also worked on collecting and editing the entire works of Moses Mendelssohn. See Martin D. Yaffe (ed.), *Leo Strauss on Moses Mendelssohn* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012).

24. Leo Strauss to Gerhard Krüger, January 7, 1930, Susan Meld Shell (ed.), *The Strauss-Krüger Correspondence: Returning to Plato Through Kant* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 15. See also Leo Strauss, *Gesammelte Schriften Band 3*, 379–380. In a letter to Krüger from October 3, 1931, Strauss noted (28) the obstacles that Guttmann placed before him, describing them as "censorship." In 1931, Krüger published the most perceptive review of Strauss' book to date. See Gerhard Krüger, "Review of Leo Strauss' Die Review of Leo Strauss' *Religionskritik Spionzas als Grundlage seiner Bibelwissenschaft*," *The Strauss-Krüger Correspondence*, 221–226.
25. Ibid., 17.
26. In the preface to his book, Strauss described Spinoza as "the first philosopher who was both a democrat and a liberal. He was the philosopher who founded liberal democracy, a specifically modern regime… 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." At the time of the Weimar Republic, Strauss believed that the emancipation had utterly failed. His goal was to dethrone the intellectual symbol of this project and undermine its basic tenets. See Strauss, "Preface to the English Translation of *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*," 16–17. Strauss' critique of Spinoza was also related to his views on Zionism. He saw Spinoza as a symbol of assimilation and emancipation but also a prophet of political Zionism—a view shared by many Zionist leaders and thinkers, including Moses Hess—based on a famous statement by Spinoza: "[i]ndeed, unless the fundamentals of their religion bring upon them effeminacy of mind and character, I am inclined to believe that, with the opportunity afforded, since human affairs are notoriously changeable, they may again recover their empire, and God elect them to himself anew." See Benedict de Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus: A Critical Inquiry into the History, Purpose, and Authenticity of the Hebrew Scriptures* (London: Trübner & Co., 1862), 87. See also Yirmiyahu Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics: The Marrano of Reason* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 190–204. Strauss mentioned this several times in his discussion of political Zionism. See Strauss, "Preface to the English Translation of *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*," 5; Leo Strauss, "What Is Political Philosophy?" Hilail Gildin (ed.), *An Introduction to Political Philosophy: Ten Essays by Leo Strauss* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 7. In the preface to the English translation of *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*, he added (20–21): "In providing for the liberal state, Spinoza provides for a Judaism that is liberal in the

extreme. The 'assimilationist' 'solution to the Jewish problem' which Spinoza may be said to have suggested was more important from his point of view than the 'Zionist' one which he likewise suggested." See also Victoria Kahn, *The Future of Illusion: Political Theology and Early Modern Texts* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2014).

27. In a letter to Henry Oldenburg, Spinoza noted that one of his reasons for writing was "the opinion which the common people have of me, who do not cease to accuse me falsely of atheism; I am also obliged to avert this accusation as far as it possible to do so." See Spinoza to Henry Oldenburg, letter 30, 1665, A. Wolf (ed.), *The Correspondence of Spinoza* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1928), 206.
28. For a discussion of Spinoza's reception in Europe from the seventeenth to the twentieth century, see Pierre Francois Moreau, "Spinoza's Reception and Influence," Don Garret (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 408–433; Gérard Vallée, *The Spinoza Conversations Between Lessing and Jacobi* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1988). Strauss' attraction to Spinoza may also be connected to his dissertation on Jacobi, which was written under Ernst Cassirer and published in 1921. See also Rodrigo Chacón, "On a Forgotten Kind of Grounding: Strauss, Jacobi, and the Phenomenological Critique of Modern Rationalism," *The Review of Politics* 76, no. 4 (Fall 2014): 589–617; David Janssens, "The Problem of the Enlightenment: Strauss, Jacobi, and the Pantheism Controversy," *The Review of Metaphysics* 56, no. 3 (March 2003): 605–632.
29. Rosenzweig rejected Spinoza's critique of religion and hostility towards revelation. He tried to revive revealed religion after it had been rejected by philosophy and rationalism and diminished by liberal Jewish and Christian theology during the Enlightenment. According to Rosenzweig, theology grew increasingly apologetic in the face of philosophy, which grew in self-confidence from Spinoza to Hegel until:

    > Now an atheistic theology could also be arrived at on the Jewish side. We see this now in our midst. Instead of trying—in the eternity of philosophical thought or in the temporality of the historical process—to show the human under the might of the divine, one tries, on the contrary, to understand the divine as the self-projection of the human into the heaven of myth… The distinction of God and man, this frightful scandal for all new and old paganism, seems to be removed; the offensive thought of revelation, this plunging of a higher content into an unworthy vessel, is brought to silence.

See Franz Rosenzweig, "Atheistic Theology (1914)," Paul W. Franks and Michael L. Morgan (eds.), *Philosophical and Theological Writings* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2000), 17, 19. See also Leora Batnitzky, *Idolatry and Representation: The Philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig Reconsidered* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Nahum N. Glatzer, *Franz Rosenzweig: His Life and Thought* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1998 [1961]); Paul Mendes-Flohr, *The Philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1988).

30. Hermann Cohen, *Religion of Reason Out of the Sources of Judaism* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1972), 72.
31. Cohen, *Religion of Reason Out of the Sources of Judaism*, 447.
32. In an essay that Rosenzweig wrote about Cohen, Strauss was also favorably mentioned: "Cohen treated Spinoza seriously… Apart from a tiny, precious study by Leo Strauss on Spinoza's biblical science compared to his predecessors… I know of not one study that seriously engaged with the problem raised by Cohen." See Franz Rosenzweig, "On Hermann Cohen's Lecture about Spinoza's Approach to Judaism (1929)," *Naharayim* (Jerusalem: The Bialik Institute, 1960), 154–155 [in Hebrew, freely translated].
33. Leo Strauss, "Cohen's Analysis of Spinoza's Bible Science (1924)," *The Early Writings (1921–1932)*, 147. See also Alan Udoff, "On Leo Strauss: An Introductory Account," Alan Udoff (ed.), *Leo Strauss's Thought: Toward a Critical Engagement* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1991), 1–29.
34. Strauss even implied that Cohen's motives were as political as Spinoza's. He claimed that while Cohen would have seen the idea of "a Jewish state" mentioned by Spinoza as diabolical, he would have thought the idea of a socialist state "divine." In other words, Spinoza was not the only one politicizing the Bible. See Strauss, "Cohen's Analysis of Spinoza's Bible Science," 144. Strauss related to Hermann Cohen at length in the English translation of his book about Spinoza. He described Cohen as an optimistic neo-Kantian who presented (360) a political vision no less radical than Spinoza's liberal state. Spinoza preferred kings to prophets, and the law and the state to universal morality. Cohen believed in the progress of universal morality, which was stronger than the particular law of the state. According to Strauss (22), "however justly Spinoza may deserve condemnation for his Machiavelli-inspired hard-heartedness, it is to be feared that Cohen has not remained innocent of his opposite extreme. Since he attacks Spinoza in the name of Judaism, it may suffice here to quote a Jewish saying: 'but for the fear of government, men would swallow each other alive.'"

35. Strauss, *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*, 35.
36. Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, 29, 30. In a later essay in which he adopted a softer approach to Spinoza, Strauss analyzed the addressees of this treatise. See Leo Strauss, "How to Study Spinoza's Theologico-Political Treatise," *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988 [1952]), 162–163, 183–184.
37. Strauss, *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*, 113.
38. Ibid., 143–144, 146.
39. Strauss to Krüger, January 7, 1930, *The Strauss-Krüger Correspondence*, 16.
40. According to Strauss:

> In the extreme case—and the extreme case is the common one—radical criticism of religion is by intent scientific criticism… 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. Were we not in awe of active and effectual gods, science, according to Epicurus' expressed opinion, would be in essential part superfluous. For Epicurus, the basic aim of knowledge is to achieve a condition of *eudaimonia* [happiness], by means of reasoning.

    See Strauss, *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*, 37–38.
41. Ibid., 40, 50.
42. Strauss to Krüger, January 7, 1930, *The Strauss-Krüger Correspondence*, 16.
43. Ibid.
44. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962 [1927]), 320–321.
45. Samuel Hugo Bergman, *Contemporary Thinkers* [Hogey ha-Dor] (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1970 [1935]), 122–123 [in Hebrew, freely translated]. See also Facundo Vega, "'God Is Dead': The Oblivion of Esotericism and *Stimmungen* in Leo Strauss' Heidegger," *Philosophy Today* 62, no. 3 (Summer 2018): 823–845.
46. Leo Strauss, "Existentialism," *Interpretation* 22, no. 3 (Spring 1995): 304.
47. Strauss, "Existentialism," 304. Strauss later described his youthful admiration for Heidegger:

> Nothing affected us as profoundly in the years in which our minds took their lasting directions as the thought of Heidegger… Only this much must be said: Heidegger who surpasses in speculative intelligence all his contemporaries and is at the same

> time intellectually the counterpart to what Hitler was politically, attempts to go a way not yet trodden by anyone or rather to think in a way which philosophers at any rate have never thought before.

See Leo Strauss, "An Unspoken Prologue to a Public Lecture at St. John's College in Honor of Jacob Klein (1959)," *Interpretation* 7, no. 3 (1978), 2. On Heidegger's influence on Strauss' thinking, see, for example, Horst Mewes, "Leo Strauss and Martin Heidegger: Greek Antiquity and the Meaning of Modernity," *Hannah Arendt and Leo Strauss*, 105–120; Steven B. Smith, "Destruktion or Recovery? Leo Strauss's Critique of Heidegger," *The Review of Metaphysics* 51, no. 2 (December 1997): 345–377; Richard L. Velkley, *Heidegger, Strauss, and the Premise of Philosophy: On Original Forgetting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

48. Strauss, *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*, 9, 11.
49. Ibid., 31. See also Martin D. Yaffe and Richard S. Ruderman (eds.), *Reorientation: Leo Strauss in the 1930s* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).
50. Heinrich Meier even referred to a draft study that the young Strauss had written about Hobbes, in which he admitted that Heidegger's language helped him build up the vocabulary he needed to begin his return to the roots of philosophical tradition. See Meier, *Leo Strauss and the Theologico-Political Problem*, 62.
51. Zeev Levy, "Leo Strauss's Relationship to Spinoza," *Daat: A Journal of Jewish Philosophy and Kabbalah* 50–52 (2003): 354 [in Hebrew]. In the Weimar Republic Strauss was, of course, a young, inexperienced thinker. *Spinoza's Critique of Religion* was his most—perhaps only—important work during that period, making a mark on the history of political philosophy and the study of religious and biblical criticism.
52. Peter Eli Gordon, "Science, Finitude, and Infinity: Neo-Kantianism and the Birth of Existentialism," *Jewish Social Studies* 6, no. 1 (1999): 31. Existentialist thought is varied and does not necessarily contradict acceptance of liberal values and confirmation of the Weimar Republic and of democracy; by the same token, it is not necessarily affiliated with violence and fascism. While Heidegger adopted the Nazi ideology, Jaspers opposed totalitarianism and supported democracy. See also Laqueur, *Weimar: A Cultural History*, 205.
53. Strauss, *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*, 101.
54. Ibid., 87–97.
55. Ibid., 93.
56. Ibid., 95.

57. Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005 [1921]), 9–10. See also Peter Eli Gordon, "The Concept of the Apolitical: German Jewish Thought and Weimar Political Theology," *Social Research* 74, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 855–878; Michael D. Oppenheim, "Death and Man's Fear of Death in Franz Rosenzweig's *The Star of Redemption*," *Judaism* 27, no. 4 (Fall 1978): 458–467. For a comparison between Rosenzweig and Heidegger, see Peter Eli Gordon, *Rosenzweig and Heidegger: Between Judaism and German Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).
58. Strauss, "Preface to the English Translation of *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*," 9. For a discussion of Rosenzweig's and Cohen's influence on Strauss, see Leora Batnitzky, *Leo Strauss and Emmanuel Levinas*, 57–116.
59. The review of Schmitt's book was added to the English version of *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*, referred to here (330–351). For the German original, see Leo Strauss, "Anmerkungen zu Carl Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen*," *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik* 67 (1932): 732–749. An English version of the review was also added to the English version of Schmitt's book and to Heinrich Meier's book on the "hidden dialogue" between Schmitt and Strauss. See Meier, *Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss: The Hidden Dialogue*, 89–120; Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007 [1932]), 97–122.
60. Hans Kelsen, *Pure Theory of Law* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967 [1934]), 1. For a discussion of Kelsen's philosophy, see Lars Vinx, *Hans Kelsen's Pure Theory of Law: Legality and Legitimacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
61. Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005 [1922]), 21.
62. Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 5.
63. Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, 32–33.
64. According to Schmitt:

> Liberalism has changed all political conceptions in a peculiar systematic fashion. Like any other significant human movement liberalism, too, as a historical force, has failed to elude the political. Its neutralizations and depolitizations (of education, the economy, etc.) are, to be sure, of political significance… The negation of the political, which is inherent in every consistent individualism, leads necessarily to a political practice of distrust toward all conceivable political forces and forms of state, and government, but never produces on its own a positive theory of state, government, and politics. There exists a liberal policy of trade, church,

and education, but absolutely no liberal politics, only a liberal critique of politics.

Ibid., 69–70.

65. Heinrich Meier argued that the two philosophers—Schmitt, the Nazi jurist, and Strauss, the young Jewish researcher—developed a unique textual dialogue. Strauss' part in it began with his book on Spinoza, but consisted primarily of criticism of Schmitt. In his 1938 book about Hobbes' *Leviathan*, Schmitt mentioned "the Jewish scholar Leo Strauss." In the Weimar Republic, he wrote Strauss a recommendation letter (as did Ernst Cassirer) that facilitated his study scholarships in France and England. See Meier, *Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss: The Hidden Dialogue*, 9; Carl Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes: Meaning and Failure of a Political Symbol* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996 [1938]), 10. See also David Janssens, "A Change of Orientation: Leo Strauss's Comments on Carl Schmitt Revisited," *Interpretation* 33, no. 1 (September 2005): 93–104; John P. McCormick, *Carl Schmitt's Critique of Liberalism: Against Politics as Technology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); John P. McCormick, "European Legitimacy Crises—Weimar and Today: Rational and Theocratic Authority in the Schmitt-Strauss Exchange," Poul. F. Kjaer and Niklas Olsen (eds.), *Critical Theories of Crisis in Europe: From Weimar to the Euro* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016), 53–68; John P. McCormick, "Fear, Technology, and the State: Carl Schmitt, Leo Strauss, and the Revival of Hobbes in Weimar and National Socialist Germany," *Political Theory* 22, no. 4 (November 1994): 619–652.
66. Strauss, "Comments on *Der Begriff des Politischen* by Carl Schmitt," 351.
67. Ibid., 335, 337.
68. Ibid., 339.
69. Ibid., 337.
70. Strauss distinguished between Hobbes and those who followed him. Hobbes was different from other philosophers who later adopted the values of liberalism, as he saw the dangerous nature of humanity as the primary obstacle to civilization. His followers, however, assumed that human nature was inherently good. Hobbes also had low expectations of education, and therefore supported absolute monarchy. The liberalism and democracy of the Weimar Republic epitomized the ideas of those who continued Hobbes' tradition, but Strauss viewed him as the source of these ideas and argued that to understand liberalism, one must understand the transition from a non-liberal view to the basic principles of liberalism—as took place in Hobbes' philosophy.

71. Strauss, "Comments on *Der Begriff des Politischen* by Carl Schmitt," 338.
72. Leo Strauss, "Outline: The Political Science of Hobbes; An Introduction to Natural Right (1931)," Gabriel Bartlett and Svetozar Minkov (eds.), *Hobbes's Critique of Religion and Related Writings* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 154. See also Altman, *The German Stranger*, 206–207; Strauss, *Gesammelte Schriften Band 3*, 196.
73. Leo Strauss, "Foreword to a Planned Book on Hobbes (1931)," *Hobbes's Critique of Religion and Related Writings*, 139, 140. See also Strauss, *Gesammelte Schriften Band 3*, 204. Twenty years later, Strauss returned to Kelsen in the introduction to *Natural Right and History*. Referring to modern social sciences, he wrote:

    > Our social science may make us very wise or clever as regards the means for any objectives we might choose. It admits being unable to help us in discriminating between legitimate and illegitimate, between just and unjust, objectives. Such a science is instrumental and nothing but instrumental: it is born to be the handmaid of any powers or any interests that be. What Machiavelli did apparently, our social science would actually do if it did not prefer—only God knows why—generous liberalism to consistency: namely, to give advice with equal competence and alacrity to tyrants as well as to free peoples.

    Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1965 [1953]), 3–4. In a footnote (4), Strauss referred to *Algemeine Staatslehre* (1925) in which Kelsen wrote: "[i]t is utterly pointless to claim that in a tyrannical regime there is no legal order but only the arbitrary wish of the tyrant… Even a state run by a tyrant relies on some order of human conduct… This very order is the legal order." Strauss noted that Kelsen omitted this passage from the English translation. See Hans Kelsen, *Allgemeine Staatslehre* (Berlin: Verlag von Julius Springer, 1925), 335–336; Hans Kelsen, *General Theory of Law and State* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949). See also David Novak, "Haunted by the Ghost of Weimar: Leo Strauss Critique of Hans Kelsen," *The Weimar Moment*, 393–408.
74. Strauss, "Foreword to a Planned Book on Hobbes (1931)," 140. See also Strauss, *Gesammelte Schriften Band 3*, 204.
75. Strauss, "Comments on *Der Begriff des Politischen* by Carl Schmitt," 351.
76. Leo Strauss to Karl Löwith, May 19, 1933, *Gesammelte Schriften Band 3*, 625. The excerpt, which is combined of translations from German by Eugene Sheppard, Nicholas Xenos, and Susan Shell, was used by the latter to show that Strauss was an adamantly anti-democratic thinker

and maintained these views even after immigrating to the United States. While Sheppard translated "meskine Unwesen" as "repulsive monster," Xenos used "dreadful state of affairs," and Shell preferred "shabby abomination." See Susan Shell, "'To Spare the Vanquished and Crush the Arrogant': Leo Strauss's Lecture on 'German Nihilism,'" *The Cambridge Companion to Leo Strauss*, 185–186; Sheppard, *Leo Strauss and the Politics of Exile*, 61; Xenos, *Cloaked in Virtue*, 21. See also Altman, *The German Stranger*, 225–234; Minowitz, *Straussophobia*, 157–163.

77. Strauss to Löwith, February 2, 1933, *Gesammelte Schriften Band 3*, 620.
78. Strauss to Löwith, June 23, 1935, *Gesammelte Schriften Band 3*, 648.
79. On Nietzsche's influence over Strauss, see Laurence Lampert, *Leo Strauss and Nietzsche* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). Nietzsche's impact on Germany permeated all aspects of social life, leaving its mark on philosophy, politics, culture, philosophy, literature, architecture, dance, and poetry in the country. Nietzsche was simultaneously embraced and shunned by contrasting schools of thought, from the right to the far left. Many condemned his philosophy, viewing it as a symbol of the intellectual degeneration spreading throughout Germany. Others followed him devotedly and used his doctrine for their own ends. Socialists and conservatives, nationalists and anarchists, Protestants, Catholics, and Jews—all engaged endlessly with Nietzschean philosophy and confronted it. At the turn of the century, for many young educated people in Germany and beyond, Nietzsche was the voice of rebellion against the old values. As Stefan Zweig described his schooldays in *Die Welt von Gestern* (The World of Yesterday, 1942): "[d]aily we invented new techniques for using the dull school hours for our reading. While the teacher delivered his time-worn lecture about the 'naive and sentimental poetry' of Schiller, under our desk we read Nietzsche and Strindberg, whose names the good old man had never heard." The young Strauss was no different. He idolized Nietzsche and saw him as a right-wing thinker, but not as a conservative. Nietzsche was seen as the harshest critic of liberal democracy and its values, without wishing to uphold the existing order or rely on traditions of the past. Strauss thought of Nietzsche as a radical, subversive thinker called for shattering the social order and the foundations of democracy in favor of the philosophy and aristocracy of the future, which would be marked by the rise of the *Übermensch*. He saw Nietzschean thought as a revolutionary manifesto against the modern civilization created by Hobbes, and against biblical morality. "God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him"—Nietzsche's famous statement in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* (The Gay Science, 1882)

was not jubilant, but filled with dread. Strauss identified entirely with this position. For a comprehensive discussion of Nietzsche's reception in Germany, see Steven E. Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany 1890–1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992). For the Nietzsche and Zweig quotes, see Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003 [1882]), 120; Stefan Zweig, *The World of Yesterday* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964 [1942]), 38–39.

80. For a discussion of the range of opinions held in the Jewish community in the latter days of the Weimar Republic and after Hitler's rise to power, see Steven E. Aschheim, *In Times of Crisis: Essays on European Culture, Germans, and Jews* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), 24–43; Avraham Barkai and Paul Mendes-Flohr, *German-Jewish History in Modern Times, Volume 4: Renewal and Destruction 1918–1945*, Michael A. Meyer (ed.) (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); Sidney M. Bolkosky, *The Distorted Image: German Jewish Perceptions of German and Germany, 1918–1935* (New York: Elsevier, 1975); George L. Mosse, *Germans and Jews: The Right, the Left and the Search for a "Third Force" in Pre-Nazi Germany* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987 [1970]), 77–115; Donald L. Niewyk, *The Jews in Weimar Germany* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2001 [1980]).

81. Strauss took a draft of the manuscript with him from France to England and completed it in 1935. While working on his research in England, Strauss came across what he believed to be an early manuscript by Hobbes titled "Essayes." He later discovered it had been published in an anonymous collection dated 1620, titled *Horae Subsecivae* and attributed at the time to English nobleman Grey Brydges. The origin of these texts is yet to be ascertained. See Heinrich Meier, "Introduction: The History of Strauss's Hobbes Studies," *Hobbes's Critique of Religion and Related Writings*, 6–8; Noel B. Reynolds and John L. Hilton, "Thomas Hobbes and Authorship of the Horae Subsecivae," *History of Political Thought* 14, no. 3 (1993): 361–380; Arlene W. Saxonhouse, "Hobbes and the 'Horae Subsecivae'," *Polity* 13, no. 4 (Summer 1981): 541–567; Richard Tuck, "Hobbes and Tacitus," G. A. J Rogers and Tom Sorell (eds.), *Hobbes and History* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 99–111. Strauss expressed his excitement over the supposed discovery in correspondence with his friend Alexandre Kojève, as the two planned to write a joint study of Hegel and Hobbes. In a letter from June 1934, Strauss wrote:

> If I had a modest income, I could be the happiest man in the world. I have already written about my Hobbes-find. In the meantime I have copied the manuscript, read and studied it, and

> it is now absolutely certain that it is H[obbes]'s first writing. That is rather nice for all kinds of incidental reasons—but to me it means more: namely the refutation of your own and [Alexandre] Koyré's objection, that my Hobbes interpretation is a willful construction. No, now I can prove that I did not construct.

See Leo Strauss to Alexandre Kojève, June 3, 1934, Victor Gurevitch and Michael S. Roth (eds.), *On Tyranny* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 227. Later, Strauss was less enthusiastic about the book, which he saw as too modern. Looking back on his meetings with Strauss in the 1950s, Isaiah Berlin said: "Leo Strauss is right to think that I disagree with his doctrines in principle. I think his best book is that on Hobbes, which he wrote in England—he told me that he thought it was his least good: so there is an unbridgeable chasm between us". See Ramin Jahanbegloo, *Conversations with Isaiah Berlin* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1991), 32–33.

82. Leo Strauss, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes: Its Basis and Its Genesis* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963 [1936]), xv. In those years, Strauss also published *Philosophy and Law* (1935), in which he critiqued the Enlightenment by returning to medieval Muslim and Jewish thinkers such as Al-Farabi and Maimonides. In many ways, the book symbolized Strauss' rebellion against modern liberal Judaism and against the philosophy of Julius Guttmann, who aspired to harmoniously combine science and Judaism in the modern world. In contrast, Strauss ruled out any possibility of resolving the theological-political problem. He made a point of separating religion from philosophy and cautioned against attempts to synthesize the two as part of the liberal approach to Judaism. Guttmann presented the development of Jewish thought as linear progress and believed in the existence of "philosophies of Judaism." Strauss, who thought this phrase was oxymoronic, saw pre-modern philosophy as superior to what followed and as a worthier representative of reason. In both books, *Philosophy and Law* and *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, Strauss expressed an almost romantic desire to return to the past, to pre-modern Judaism and philosophy. This was characteristic of Strauss' criticism of liberalism and Enlightenment during those years and later, yet also represented his rejection of modern schools of thought that negated liberalism. The rejection took the form of avoiding public use of the modern vocabulary, which Strauss believed contained radical historicism, recklessness, violence, and a lack of moderation, all of which stemmed from the aspiration to undermine the social and political order. On the disagreement between Guttmann and Strauss and the response of the former to criticism by the latter, see Chiara Adorisio, "Philosophy of

Religion or Political Philosophy? The Debate between Leo Strauss and Julius Guttmann," *European Journal of Jewish Studies* 1, no. 1 (2007): 135–155; Leora Batnitzky, "Leo Strauss's Disenchantment with Secular Society," *New German Critique* 94 (Winter 2005): 106–126; Julius Guttmann, "Philosophy of Religion or Philosophy of Law," *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities* 5 (1974): 147–173 [in Hebrew]; Moshe Schwartz, "The Enlightenment and Its Implications for Jewish Philosophy in the Modern Period," *Daat: A Journal of Jewish Philosophy and Kabbalah* 1, no. 1 (Winter 1978): 7–16 [in Hebrew]; Eliezer Schweid, "Religion and Philosophy: The Scholarly-Theological Debate Between Julius Guttmann and Leo Strauss," *Maimonidean Studies* 1 (1990): 163–195; Leo Strauss, *Philosophy and Law: Contributions to the Understanding of Maimonides and His Predecessors* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995 [1935]); Benjamin Aldes Wurgaft, "Culture and Law in Weimar Jewish Medievalism: Leo Strauss's Critique of Julius Guttmann," *Modern Intellectual History* 11, no. 1 (2014): 119–146.

83. Later, Strauss would address Aphorism 252 from Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*, which criticized English thought. "This is not a philosophical race—these Englishmen," wrote Nietzsche. "Bacon signified an attack on the philosophical spirit in general; Hobbes, Hume, and Locke indicated a degradation and depreciation in value of the concept 'philosopher'… what England lacks and has always lacked… real power of intellect, real profundity of spiritual vision, in short: philosophy." See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002 [1886]), 143.
84. Strauss, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, 1–6.
85. Ibid., 1.
86. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996 [1651]), 221.
87. Strauss, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, 112, 130.
88. According to Hobbes, every person is equal in his natural right to defend his life and in using the means to fulfill that right. The question of what consists a good life is replaced by the question of how to defend life, and the gap between the clever minority and the majority concerning "what ought to be" is erased in the short-term Hobbesian effort to find the most efficient ways to protect human life.
89. Strauss, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, 66, 69, 110–112.
90. Ibid., 114, 121.
91. On the bourgeois ideal and death, see George L. Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Middle-Class Morality and Sexual Norms in Modern Europe* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 148.

92. Strauss, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, 118, 120, 121, 123.
93. Ibid., 106–107.
94. Ibid., 125.
95. In that sense, Strauss' book on Hobbes is similar to *Philosophy and Law*, in which he sought an alternative to liberal Jewish thought in early Muslim and Jewish thought. However, he discussed classical philosophy differently in each of the books. In the former, Plato was positioned as the ideal type representing the opposite values of those held by the modern philosopher and was discussed directly, without the mediation of medieval philosophers. In the latter, Plato served merely as a means to understanding the Muslim and Jewish thought of Al-Farabi and Maimonides, respectively, both of whom represent the true Enlightenment, which Strauss prefers to the modern version. In addition, Strauss used a great many secondary sources in his discussion of Hobbes, including a book by Ernst Baker, who wrote the preface to Strauss' book. See Ernst Barker, *Greek Political Theory: Plato and His Predecessors* (London: Methuen, 1960 [1918]).
96. Strauss, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, 164–165. In a footnote (165), Strauss quoted Sorel: "The revolutionary myths… are not descriptions of things, but expressions of a will to act. A Utopia is, on the contrary, an intellectual product." See George Sorel, *Reflections of Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999 [1908]), 28.
97. Strauss, *On Tyranny*, 223, 225.
98. Leo Strauss, "German Nihilism," *Interpretation* 26, no. 3 (Spring 1999): 353–378. On the importance of the lecture, see William Altman, "Leo Strauss on 'German Nihilism': Learning the Art of Writing," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 68, no. 4 (October 2007): 587–612; Howse, *Leo Strauss: Man of Peace*, 25–50; Shell, "'To Spare the Vanquished and Crush the Arrogant': Leo Strauss' Lecture on 'German Nihilism'," 171–192.
99. See Sheppard, *Leo Strauss and the Politics of Exile*, 81–117.
100. Strauss, "German Nihilism," 356.
101. In 1941, Strauss addressed the issue of defining nihilism in at least two cases: in the abovementioned lecture, in which he criticized the definition offered in Hermann Rauschning's *The Revolution of Nihilism* (1939), and in a review of Karl Löwith's *From Hegel to Nietzsche* (1941). See Karl Löwith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche: The Revolution in Nineteenth-Century Thought* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston 1964 [1941]); Hermann Rauschning, *The Revolution of Nihilism: Warning to the West* (New York: Arno Press, 1972 [1939]). For the review, see Leo Strauss, "Review of Karl Löwith *Von Hegel bis Nietzsche*," *Social Research* 8, no. 4 (November 1941): 512–515.

Strauss published his review of Löwith's book in November 1941; the lecture on "German Nihilism" was apparently given earlier that year, in February. The dialogue between Strauss and Löwith lasted from the 1930s to the early 1970s. Strauss agreed with many of Löwith's observations, and wrote in the review: "[t]his book should be of interest to all who wish to understand the emergence of European, and in particular German nihilism […] its thesis is that the philosophic development proceeding from Hegel, which was 'deadly logical ruthlessness,' offers the clue to what is happening in present day Germany." See Strauss, "Review of Karl Löwith *Von Hegel bis Nietzsche*," 512–513.

102. Strauss, "German Nihilism," 355, 358, 369.
103. Ibid., 360.
104. Ibid., 361–362.
105. Ibid., 362, 372.
106. Strauss addressed the "blood, sweat, and tears" speech in several places. See Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, 308. In the winter of 1965, just after Churchill died, Strauss opened the sixth lecture in a course titled "Introduction to Political Philosophy" by describing him as a heroic statesman. However, he noted that the victory over Hitler, which Churchill helped achieve, had given rise to an even worse form of tyranny—the Soviet Union:

> The death of Churchill is a healthy reminder to academic students of political science of their limitations, the limitations of their craft. The tyrant stood at the pinnacle of his power. The contrast between the indomitable and magnanimous statesman and the insane tyrant—this spectacle in its clear simplicity was one of the greatest lessons which men can learn, at any time. No less enlightening is the lesson conveyed by Churchill's failure which is too great to be called tragedy. I mean the fact that Churchill's heroic action on behalf of human freedom against Hitler only contributed, through no fault of Churchill's, to increasing the threat to freedom which is posed by Stalin or his successors. Churchill did the utmost that a man could do to counter that threat—publicly and most visibly in Greece and in Fulton, Missouri… The death of Churchill reminds us of the limitations of our craft, and therewith of our duty. We have no higher duty, and no more pressing duty than to remind ourselves and our students of political greatness, human greatness, of the peaks of human excellence. For we are supposed to train ourselves and others in seeing things as they are, and this means above all in seeing their greatness and their misery, their excellence and their vileness, their nobility and their baseness, and therefore never to mistake mediocrity, however brilliant, for true greatness.

See Catherine H. Zuckert (ed.), *Leo Strauss on Political Philosophy: Responding to the Challenge of Positivism and Historicism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2018), 123. See also Hilail Gildin, "A Response to Gourevitch," Kenneth L. Deutsch and Walter Sofer (eds.), *The Crisis of Liberal Democracy: A Straussian Perspective* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), 118. Churchill had given a speech in Fulton in 1946 about the importance of the Iron Curtain. In a letter to Karl Löwith, Strauss wrote that he had understood that Aristotelian measure of magnanimity thanks to Churchill. See Harry V. Jaffa, "Strauss at One Hundred," Kenneth L. Deutsch and John A. Murley (eds.), *Leo Strauss, The Straussians, and the American Regime* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1999), 44–45; Leo Strauss to Löwith, August 20, 1946, *Gesammelte Schriften Band 3*, 667.

107. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for Everyone and Nobody* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005 [1883]), 16.
108. Strauss, "German Nihilism," 373.
109. See Leo Strauss, "Persecution and the Art of Writing," *Social Research* 8, no. 4 (November 1941): 488–504; Leo Strauss, "The Literary Character of the Guide for the Perplexed," Salo Wittmayer Baron (ed.), *Essays on Maimonides: An Octocentennial Volume* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941), 37–91.
110. Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, 34.
111. Ibid.
112. Leo Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (Glencoe: The University of Chicago Press, 1978 [1958]). In the preface to the new edition of his book on Hobbes in 1963, Strauss explained that he had erred in attributing the origins of modern political philosophy to Hobbes rather than to Machiavelli. As far back as 1937, British philosopher Michael Oakeshott noted in a review of Strauss' book that the reduction of philosophy had begun with Machiavelli. See Michael Oakeshott, "Dr. Leo Strauss on Hobbes (1937)," *Hobbes on Civil Association* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 2012 [1937]), 132–149; Strauss, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, xv.
113. Strauss, "What Is Political Philosophy?" *An Introduction to Political Philosophy*, 49.
114. Leo Strauss, "On the Basis of Hobbes's Political Philosophy," *What Is Political Philosophy and Other Studies* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988 [1959]), 171.
115. Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, 253.
116. Ibid., 29.
117. In 1874, Nietzsche wrote:

> I believe there has been no dangerous change or turn in the German education of this century which has not become more

> dangerous through the enormous influence, continuing to the present moment, of this philosophy, the Hegelian. Truly the belief that one is a late arrival of the ages is paralyzing and upsetting: terrible and destructive it must seem, however, if one day such a belief, by a bold inversion, deifies this late arrival as the true meaning and purpose of all that has happened earlier, if his knowing misery is equated with consummation of world history. Such a way of looking at things has accustomed the Germans to talk of a 'world process,' and to justify their own time as the necessary result of this world process; such a way of looking at things has established history in place of other spiritual powers, art and religion, as solely sovereign in so far as it is 'the self-realizing concept,' in so far as it is 'the dialectic of the spirit of people,' and the 'Last Judgment.'
>
> See Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1980 [1874]), 46–47.

118. Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, 26.
119. Strauss, "What Is Political Philosophy," 57.

CHAPTER 3

Strauss' Marx

> I happen to be opposed to Communism in every way, but precisely for this reason I cannot take the view which a businessman can take: if it comes after my lifetime I don't care. I care very much whether it comes after my lifetime and therefore the real issue is whether it is altogether feasible with—I mean, that they may win militarily I regard as absolutely feasible, but whether it can be at the same time the true liberation of man: that alone is, of course, the question. (Leo Strauss, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx")[1]

> Every action, in the middle of the twentieth century, presupposes and involves the adaption of an attitude with regard to the Soviet enterprise. (Raymond Aron, *The Opium of the Intellectuals*)[2]

In 1962, Strauss explicitly addressed Karl Marx and Friedrich Nietzsche. While the latter was defined as "the stepgrandfather of fascism," the former was termed "the father of Communism":

> Karl Marx, the father of communism, and Friedrich Nietzsche, the stepgrandfather of fascism, were liberally educated on a level to which we cannot even hope to aspire. But perhaps one can say that their grandiose failures make it easier for us who have experienced those failures to understand again the old saying that wisdom cannot be separated from moderation and hence to understand that wisdom requires unhesitating loyalty to a decent constitution and even to the cause of constitutionalism. Moderation will protect us against the twin dangers of visionary expectations from politics and unmanly contempt for politics.[3]

A. Armon, *Leo Strauss Between Weimar and America*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-24389-0_3

These definitions must not be taken lightly as they, to a great extent, epitomize the views that Strauss espoused after moving to the United States. On one hand, he was very cautious when it came to Nietzsche and, unlike Georg Lukács (1885–1971), was careful not to describe him as "the father of fascism."[4] Instead, Nietzsche was partially acquitted. While Strauss tied Nietzsche to fascism (but not to Nazism, which Strauss believed that Nietzsche would have flatly rejected), he refrained from attributing this to a direct, natural connection: not only was Nietzsche not the father of fascism, he was a step-grandfather and therefore no blood relation.[5]

On the other hand, Strauss tied Marx unequivocally to Communism—he held him to be the biological father of Communism, the only remaining enemy of the United States after World War II. How surprising, therefore, that "the father of Communism" was never a central topic of Strauss' investigation. In fact, Strauss barely mentioned him in analyzing the crisis of the West.

Strauss' critique of modernity was teeming with "villains" or "enemies"—philosophers who had broken with the classical tradition. He wrote about Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and many others who rebelled against pre-modern thought or tried to revert to it in various distorted ways, gradually weakening the status of philosophy until it was in real danger. Within the turmoil of modernity, which according to Strauss consisted of three waves, it would make sense for Marx to be included among other modern thinkers accused of reducing philosophy. Yet Strauss barely so much as mentioned him in the same breath as the others.[6]

In describing Heidegger's genius, Strauss delineated what he, too, was attempting to do: "uprooting and not simply rejecting the tradition of philosophy" in order to "see the roots of the tradition as they are."[7] Strauss centered primarily on Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Locke as the philosophers who ushered in modernity. He held that the three broke with philosophical tradition, severed ties with classical thought, and laid the intellectual foundations for the first wave of modernity. Self-preservation, fear of violent death, and self-interest were at the heart of this wave of political philosophy, which formed the basis of bourgeois morality, liberalism, criticism of religion, humanism, and modern economics. Strauss believed that these thinkers had lowered philosophy from its former lofty position, while also constructing a stable and secure political framework compared to the tyrannical regimes of the twentieth century.

According to Strauss, the first wave of modernity led to two ruptures in the history of ideas: one that began with Rousseau, and another instigated by Nietzsche. Both these philosophers had made failed attempts to propose an alternative to the first modern philosophers, in the hope of combating the weakness of modernity and restoring the principles of ancient Greece. But instead of helping the human condition, these critiques made the malaise worse, leading to further dwindling of philosophy and to intellectual decay. The symptoms found their way into all the maladies of the twentieth century: instrumental positivism, radical historicism, violent nihilism, and absolute relativism. Communism and Nazism were the political ideologies that eventually emerged from the whirlwind of modernity.

It would appear that Marx belonged, both ideologically and chronologically, in the first rupture of modernity (the second wave), as a continuation of Rousseau and of German idealism. Yet Strauss was silent when it came to Marx, leaving a large gap missing in his description of the transitions between the waves of modernity.

For instance, in his lecture "What is Political Philosophy?" Strauss addressed German idealism, Hegel, and Kant. However, he concluded his discussion of these thinkers by hastily tying together the ends of this wave and quickly moving on to Nietzsche and the third wave of the crisis of modernity: "[t]he delusions of communism are already the delusions of Hegel and even of Kant. The difficulties to which German idealism was exposed gave rise to the third wave of modernity—of the wave that bears us today. This last epoch was inaugurated by Nietzsche."[8]

Although Communism resulted from the second wave of modernity and Hegelian historicism, "the father of Communism" is conspicuously missing from Strauss' writings. In these texts, Marx functions as an "absent presence" or a "black box." He is supposed to complete the second wave of modernity, yet is absent in a most peculiar way.

The apparently marginal place that Marx occupied in Strauss' later thought is even more surprising given the historical context: teaching political philosophy in the United States during the Cold War. Communism was perceived in the second half of the twentieth century—after the defeat of fascism—as the new and only enemy of Western liberal democracy and of freedom. Many, including Strauss, saw it as a direct product of Marxist thought. During the Stalin era and afterwards, Communism was seen as a form of evil totalitarianism and as the only enemy left for the West to vanquish after Hitler.[9]

There were, of course, various political philosophers who adhered to the principles of Marxism and Communism. Others, such as members of the Frankfurt School and the French existentialists, embraced certain elements of Marxism or "Western Marxism" and tried to adapt it to other schools of thought. Political sociologist Raymond Aron (1905–1983), an especially vehement critic of Communism, defined this pursuit as "the opium of the intellectuals."[10] He and other liberal thinkers such as Isaiah Berlin, Karl Popper (1902–1994), and Jacob Talmon (1916–1980) waged an intellectual war against Communism and Marxist thinkers.[11]

Liberal and conservative thinkers were not the only ones to criticize Marx and the Soviet Union. Hannah Arendt, a political theorist who defied ideological categorization, was greatly influenced by the anarchist and revolutionary socialist discourse of the kind promoted by Rosa Luxemburg (1871–1919), Bernard Lazare (1865–1903), and her second husband, Heinrich Blücher (1899–1970).[12] However, in her most important book, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), Arendt portrayed Stalinist Bolshevism, the secret police, and the Gulag as the epitome of totalitarianism and ultimate evil.[13] If the rise of Nazism marked a burgeoning totalitarian movement, Stalinism was a clear example of a totalitarian regime. It appears that Stalinism, rather than Nazism, was what Arendt had in mind when she discussed totalitarianism as a new kind of a regime—"a totalitarian dictatorship"—and addressed the ties between ideology and terror.[14]

After the book came out, Arendt became broadly known as an expert on totalitarianism and an important political thinker. She was embraced by many who saw the Soviet Union as a totalitarian regime at the height of the Cold War.[15] At that time, she intended to write a book on Marx. *The Human Condition* (1958), for example, was born out of this unfulfilled project.[16]

When it came to Strauss, things were even more complicated—not because he was ambivalent about Marx, but because his hostility to Marx and Marxism remained covert. Unlike many contemporary intellectuals, Strauss refrained from directly discussing pressing political topics and current affairs in his writing.[17] This created the impression that Marx and the Cold War occupied a minor role in his critique of modernity. The aim of this chapter is to expose this impression as wrong and show that Marx was immensely important to the development of Strauss' thought.

Nonetheless, Strauss' silence on Marx—at least in his writings—makes it impossible to fully comprehend how his political philosophy related to the times and to his "philosophical politics" in the United States. This

may explain why many scholars have failed to fully comprehend Strauss' "political program" and read it in the context of his biography, the Cold War, and the influence of Marx.[18]

It is possible, however, to overcome this obstacle by examining unpublished texts, in addition to Strauss' known writings and correspondence. This chapter is built around an as yet unpublished seminar titled "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," which Strauss delivered at the University of Chicago in 1960.

Strauss taught the seminar together with Joseph Cropsey, a loyal follower and his partner in editing the canonical *History of Political Philosophy* first published in 1963.[19] Although the seminar was recorded and even typed up, it was stored in the Strauss archive in Chicago and its transcript is yet to be published.

The seminar offers a glimpse of the unseen. It reveals that Strauss carefully studied Marx in an attempt to understand his writings and the tenets of Marxism. Marx was not, in fact, in the background, but rather a central figure in the crisis of modernity. Strauss identified Marx as the final note in the second wave of modernity and as a major participant in the attempt to eliminate philosophy.

The seminar and other courses that Strauss taught offer a window not only onto Marx as he saw him but also onto Strauss the teacher, peeling away some of the mystery that shrouded him. This mystery led to the development of mythology concerning Strauss, which varied from harsh criticism to boundless admiration. For the first time, Strauss' teaching on Marx can be accessed directly, without mediation, taking the reader back to a University of Chicago classroom in the early 1960s.[20] This journey into the past and into Strauss' thought penetrates the fog of secrecy, esoteric writing, ideologically biased interpretations, and bemusement over Strauss' philosophical intentions that has cloaked Strauss for years.

The seminar is a treasure trove, revealing how Strauss the teacher approached teaching Marx to his American students at the height of the Cold War. It offers the reader a glimpse into the development of Strauss' arguments and the images he used to explain various Marxist terms, into his attitude to his students and his replies to their questions, and above all—helps understand Strauss' goals in teaching the political philosophy of Karl Marx. This chapter aims to delve into the depths of Strauss' thought and extract, like Arendt's description of Walter Benjamin, "the pearls and coral in the depths" that will enable us to understand what Strauss meant by defining Marx as "the father of Communism."[21]

A Journey After the Second Wave of Modernity

The seminar on Marx began on March 30, 1960, and ended two months later, on May 23: sixteen sessions, twice a week—on Monday and Wednesday—delivered alternately by Strauss and Cropsey.[22] Strauss began the seminar with a lengthy introduction in which he acquainted students with the fundamentals of modern thought and the origins of Marx's political philosophy. He started off by describing the first wave of modernity and the philosophy of Hobbes and Locke and continued with discussing the major thinkers of the second wave: Rousseau, Kant, Fichte, and Hegel. The purpose of the introduction was to show how Marx was an inseparable part of the second wave of modernity, and how the Marxist ideal was an essentially modern product, disconnected from the principles of classical thought.

According to Strauss, Hobbes and Locke broke with philosophical tradition and established a philosophy that was "anti-socialistic in this older sense of the word," relying solely on the human fear of death and the importance of self-preservation. Hobbes focused on the fear of violent death, while Locke "softened" the right to self-preservation, transforming it into the right to property.[23]

Along with self-preservation, humans yearn to be happy. However, according to Strauss, Hobbes and Locke saw self-preservation as objective and happiness as subjective, varying between individuals. As the state cannot define happiness, it excludes judgment concerning happiness from the political and aims only to facilitate conditions for the pursuit of happiness, which takes place in society. This creates a sharp division between the political and the social. Fear of violent death is the proper principle, according to Locke and Hobbes, on which to found the state, while every individual's search for happiness occurs only within society.[24]

In the seminar, Strauss addressed the American Declaration of Independence—one of several instances in which the Jewish-German intellectual used examples from American history and politics to explain his arguments. "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness": according to Strauss, this reflected the split between state and society, in which the search for happiness is enabled by the state but realized in society.[25]

Political sociologist Max Weber defined the state as "the form of human community that (successfully) lays claim to the monopoly of legitimate physical violence within a particular territory."[26] This definition, according to Strauss, encapsulated the modern state that grew out of Hobbes and Locke: the state safeguards personal security and law and order, while society is the realm in which freedom and individual fulfillment are pursued. This separation creates tension and other divisions between private and public interests, and between the citizen who strives for law and order and the individual who yearns for personal happiness.[27]

The second wave of modernity criticized the split within humans created by the originators of modernity. Marx, a marked product of this wave, proposed—according to Strauss—that the state be abolished to overcome this split.[28] However, in order to explain Marx's position and how it developed, Strauss tried to first locate him within the history of political philosophy.

"Strauss' Marx" marked the end of modernity's first reaction to the existing split within society and politics, as the last stage of the second wave of modernity. In order to understand Marx, one must study the thinkers of the second wave. Here, perhaps for the first time, Strauss devoted considerable attention to teaching all the major thinkers of that wave: not only Rousseau but also Kant, Fichte, Hegel, and last but not least—Marx.

The first chapter in Strauss' journey toward Marx opened with a discussion of Rousseau, who symbolized the first rupture in modern thought and the attempt to return to the ancient origins of humanity in order to critique modern Western philosophy, which valued accumulation of property and wealth over virtue. Strauss' view of Rousseau, much like his view of Nietzsche, was equivocal. This found expression in the seminar on Marx, in which Strauss said:

> I, for one, cannot help feeling that [Edmund] Burke is a much better helper for practical politics than Rousseau is, but on the other hand one must also say, and especially today when we all are so very conservative, that however impossible Rousseau's doctrine may be, he was a much broader thinker than Burke. Rousseau began to think at the place where Burke stopped thinking.[29]

Strauss admired Rousseau's attempt to return "from the world of modernity to premodern ways of thinking," and claimed that "Rousseau

returned from the world of finance, from what he was the first to call the world of the bourgeois, to the world of virtue and the city, to the world of the citoyen."[30] However, along with other thinkers of the second wave, he "led, consciously or unconsciously, to a much more radical form of modernity."[31]

Strauss chose to present his students with a passage from Chapter 15 of Hobbes' *Leviathan* to illustrate the differences between Hobbes and Rousseau. According to Hobbes:

> The question who is the better man, has no place in the condition of mere Nature; where, (as has been shewn before,) all men are equall. The inequallity that now is, has bin introduced by the lawes civill. I know that *Aristotle* in the first booke of his Politiques, for a foundation of his doctrine, maketh men by Nature, some more worthy to Command, meaning the wiser sort (such as he thought himself to be for his philosophy;) others to Serve, (meaning those that had strong bodies, but were not Philosophers as he;) as if Master and Servant were not introduced by consent of men, but by difference of Wit: which is not only against reason; but also against experience. For there are very few so foolish that had not rather governe themselves, than be governed by others: Nor when the wise in their own conceit, contend by force, with them who distrust their owne wisdome, do they alwaies, or often, or almost at any time, get the Victory. If Nature therefore have made men equall; that equalitie is to be acknowledged: or if Nature have made men unequall; yet because men that think themselves equall, will not enter into conditions of Peace, but upon Equall termes, such equalitie must be admitted. And therefore for the ninth law of Nature, I put this, *That every man acknowledge other for his Equall by Nature*. The breach of this Precept is Pride.[32]

Hobbes criticized Aristotelian natural inequality, arguing that it was inapplicable. He held that inequality is legitimate as long as it is made possible by the power of law, after the state is established. However, Strauss claimed that in fact, Hobbes admitted that the natural state was not necessarily equal (emphasizing Hobbes' use of the conditional: "if Nature have made men unequal"). Rather, people must acknowledge equality even if it does not exist naturally, in order to reach agreement, build a civil society and prevent violent death.[33] Rousseau, in contrast, adamantly rejected a state of inequality. According to Strauss, Rousseau was also the first philosopher to reject the notion of teleology. Hobbes and Locke allegedly argued that there is no purpose to humanity in

the natural state that preceded society, but assumed the natural existence of reason and language that enables the development of the political. "In other words," said Strauss, "Hobbes and Locke are guilty of crypto-teleology."[34]

While Hobbes centered solely on self-preservation, Rousseau fully accepted natural equality between people and rejected inequality under the state. In *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* (Discourse on the Arts and Sciences, 1750), Rousseau reintroduced a discussion of morality, justice, and equality in civil society into political philosophy. According to Hobbes, the sovereign—the "Leviathan"—defines by law how self-preservation is to be ensured. According to Rousseau, this state of affairs robs people of their personal discretion and empties society of moral judgment.[35]

Rousseau strongly opposed natural inequality between people. Inequality is brought about by historical circumstance and social processes. It is the result of damage caused by humans and civilization. However, humans also have the power to change things for the better. Hobbes' state entails fundamental inequality manifested in the relations between ruler and ruled. In contrast, Rousseau held that an equal society in which the citizen is also sovereign is feasible. According to Strauss, Rousseau paved the way for a Marxist understanding of inequality and "takes the great step in that famous liberation from teleology, which is characteristic of modern times."[36]

Rousseau laid the groundwork for Marx's political philosophy not only by formulating the aspiration for equality but also by delineating ways to achieve such equality. Strauss began his discussion with alienation, a key concept in Marx's thought, tracing its importance in Rousseau's political philosophy. Alienation, the general will, and total social collectivization are the means for restoring equality to society:

> Here you have the word alienation which plays such a great role, but in Rousseau the accent is different. The total alienation of every individual is necessary if there is to be decency, if there is to be a just life in society; or as Rousseau also put it, if you want to have freedom and equality every individual must become totally denaturalized, totally collectivized. These things will come up with characteristic modifications in Marx… the principle is, of course, that there is no sphere which can be excluded from social control. The total collectivization of each is the condition for the freedom of each. The formula is identical with Marx and Rousseau. The concrete meaning differs.[37]

With Rousseau, unlike Marx, alienation—transforming the private will or interest into the general will—is a necessary condition for creating a moral, just, and equal society. The general will does not rely on subjugating the individual to the private interests or whims of another, but rather on adapting the individual will to the good of society. The natural state is pre-moral. Morality, which exists in the political state, requires alienation and subjugation in society.[38] According to Strauss, the concept of the social contract and Rousseau's famous saying, "[m]an is born free, and everywhere he is in chains," were intended to explain how the transition from the natural state to subjugation in the social state is legitimate, and to distinguish just subjugation from unjust slavery.[39]

A life of servitude is unhappy. This creates a gap between the happiness of the individual, which used to exist in the natural state, and morality and politics. Morality and law exist in society, which is based on alienation. This society is flawed and far from perfect. It centers on protection of personal property, individual morality, law, political rights, and a free economy. It promotes self-esteem that depends on recognition by the other, competition, and inequality between people.

According to Strauss, Rousseau believed this social contract to be a "fraud"—a means of promoting inequality through legislation and protecting the elevated status of property owners. In Strauss' reading, Rousseau put the problem of inequality in the spotlight and was "only one step here to the formula of [Francois] Babeuf [1760–1797] in the French Revolution, Babeuf: property is theft."[40] The tension between happiness and society in Rousseau's thought led to adoption of his philosophy both by supporters of the rational state, including Hegel and Kant, who believed that the state and law would help solve social problems, and by anarchists inspired by Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862), who objected to the law and to coercion by the government.[41]

According to Rousseau, as society is based on subjugation and alienation, it bars individuals from attaining perfection, which can only exist if a select few withdraw from society. In contrast, Strauss further explained, Marx argued that society could be entirely transformed by eliminating private property and attaining a universal, equal, and just society.[42]

However, the path that Strauss traced from Rousseau to Marx was not complete without a discussion of German idealism and the philosophy of Kant, Fichte, and Hegel. According to Strauss, although Rousseau instigated the first break with modernity, the political philosophy that developed in his wake was primarily German. Marx was already an inseparable

part of German thought—a branch that grew from this body of thought and went on to criticize it. German idealism looked to the state to help solve the problems of mankind. Marx, in contrast, relied on society.[43]

With the rise of German idealism, German thought took over modern philosophy. Strauss' waves of modernity began with the English thought of Hobbes and Locke. Geneva-born Rousseau was responsible for the first rupture. From that moment on, philosophy—at least in Strauss' world—was ruled exclusively by German philosophy: German idealism, Fichte, Kant, and Hegel transferred the primary locus to Germany. Marx ended the second wave of modernity and the third wave, represented by Nietzsche and Heidegger, already relied entirely on German philosophy. Hitler symbolized the barbarity and vulgarization of this philosophy, and of Germany itself.

This fact was paramount to the later Strauss in the United States, who increasingly distanced himself, at least in public, from German thought. Modern philosophy may have been born in England, but it blossomed in German soil. The United States was the territory on which Jewish-German Strauss tried to combat German thought in order to devalue its influence.

That said, Strauss' published texts contain very little substantial discussion of German idealism. His seminar on Marx's political philosophy helps overcome this dearth somewhat, but it is not enough. Other sources are needed in order to understand the great importance that Strauss attached to German idealism, both in his teaching of Marx and in his attempt to explicate the second wave of modernity. One such source is a seminar he gave in 1958, two years before the seminar on Marx, about Hegel's philosophy of history. Together, the two seminars help shed light on Strauss' understanding of how the German idealists laid the foundations for Marx, Marxism, and Communism.

Kant and Fichte served as mediators in the transition from Rousseau to Hegel and Marx. Like Marx, Kant was supposedly not a major part of Strauss' critique of modernity; however, in the seminars on Marx and Hegel, he was presented as the antithesis of Strauss' worldview.[44] Having objected in his Weimarian youth to the German neo-Kantianism of Marburg School members Ernst Cassirer and Hermann Cohen, in the United States Strauss preached in favor of seeking out the natural right.[45] He believed that Kant symbolized political liberalism, which was based on human rights, universal morality, and the superiority of reason while utterly rejecting the authority of nature.

In the seminar on Marx, Strauss continued to compare the ancients with modern thinkers. Concerning Kant, he explained how the philosopher from Königsberg had transformed the concept of reason, and his crucial role in understanding Marx:

> The radical revision of the concept of reason or understanding consists in the—according to Kant—in the discovery of spontaneity of understanding. The understanding is not, as it was for Plato and Aristotle and for the tradition, generally speaking, a receptive faculty, the perception with the mind's eye of "essences." The understanding is productive, not receptive. In one formula of Kant the understanding does not receive passively the laws of nature, the Newtonian laws, say, but the understanding prescribes nature its laws… that means [that] the essence of man is productivity. You see how crucial that was for Marx. I mean, man is not only a being which produces things in order to live from them (that would be purely external and that was never denied), but the essence of man, the core of man, is productivity. The essence of man is productivity and not contemplation. That is the fundamental change… Marx, so to say, is prepared by Kant in the following way. Marx's attempt to understand the higher life of man in the light of economic productivity presupposes a universal philosophy of man in which man as man was understood as productive even in the highest activities… Kant laid the foundation for the understanding of man as essentially creative and not imitative.[46]

"Understanding prescribes nature its laws"—Strauss saw this sentence, which he emphasized and mentioned in several texts and lectures, as the epitome of the modern spirit.[47] He held that Kant's pure reason is a universal act of human creation, spontaneity and legislation or self-definition. Its purpose is to create an independent morality in the world of phenomena perceived by humans.[48] He saw Kant as a radical philosopher of freedom who had liberated human reason from the chains of nature or God. Kant conflated political freedom with moral freedom of choice—unlike Spinoza, for example, whom Strauss defined as "the first philosopher I know of who can be said to be a defender of liberal democracy" and of political freedom, yet who denied the existence of free will.[49] According to Strauss, Kant believed that life according to nature and human autonomy cannot exist together, and that moral judgment releases humanity from the bonds of nature.[50] The only natural right is the right to freedom.[51]

Strauss tied Rousseau's general will to Kant's categorical imperative, which rejects the pre-social natural state and accepts the belief that freedom is realized through generalization of private wills and subjugating them to moral law. According to Strauss, the categorical imperative, "act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law," which Kant put forth in *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* (Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals, 1785), is not concerned with private will but rather with the "universalization of maxims," established by human reason.[52] The imperative expresses the utter subjugation of humanity to its own rules, distancing itself from nature in order to enable the creation of a just global society.

Strauss compared Kant to Aristotle and Plato. The classic Greek philosophers prioritized contemplation, which is based on human limitation and on the Socratic knowledge of ignorance.[53] They aspired to a just society, but understood that the chances of realizing this hope were slim, and that such a society would always be limited by nature. In contrast, Kant held that a life of contemplation centered on receiving information from the world and seeking things "in themselves"—which are inaccessible to humans—is of lesser value than a life of action and creation. A just society, according to him, is possible and does not have to be subjugated to nature or to any authority outside human reason and its laws.[54] Strauss claimed that contemporary liberalism was largely in keeping with the liberalism laid out by Kant:

> For Kant there is only one natural right, and that he calls the right to freedom—I mean external freedom, regardless of what the purpose is. That is what we understand by liberalism. You know? If you say [that] self-preservation is the end, there is the possibility to say self-preservation is better taken care of by a wise benevolent despot than by a republican society. It could be, yes? But if you say the only natural right is the right of freedom regardless of what the purpose is, that's clear: Republican or perhaps even democratic consequences follow from that. And that is the tacit premise of present-day liberalism as it still exists. That doesn't make it a true principle, but still it only shows that these seemingly abstruse reflections of Kant have a very definite and powerful practical political meaning. What we understand by freedom today—by "we" I mean those who do not have their roots in something older than modern thought—is the Kantian notion, freedom which is not freedom for. Freedom itself is the highest good: politically, external freedom; morally, moral freedom.[55]

According to Strauss, Kant's universal society was supposed to be realized through the League of Nations or the United Nations.[56] Strauss saw Hobbes as the herald of modernity, and Kant as the philosopher of freedom and liberalism. However, realizing a just society of this kind does not require people to totally transform or turn into saints. Strauss emphasized the distinction between the individual and society that exists in liberal Kantian politics and morality. Kantian moral principles are made possible by mutual recognition of human rights, which are sanctified for the first time in the history of philosophy. According to Strauss, "only through Kant, through Kant's revolution, do the rights of man, which played such a great role already prior to Kant, become sacred, because they are derivative from a non-utilitarian morality."[57]

This recognition takes place on two levels, in the private domain and in the public domain, and is defined differently in each. In the private domain, recognition of human rights depends on moral conduct. In the public domain, this recognition is enshrined in state laws. However, legal recognition of human rights does not require moral perfection. Aside from protecting human rights and equality before law, the state is indifferent to morality or to the question of what is right. Its role is to be the "night watch" and advance citizens' freedom of choice in running their own lives. The question posed by the Kantian liberal approach is whether such a state can further world justice, even when it refrains from addressing moral issues. Strauss emphasized that Kant's reply to this question was positive, as arises from the philosophy of history in Kantian thought.[58]

Kant was, by Strauss' account, the first important thinker to address the philosophy of history.[59] Strauss stated that Hobbes, who centered on self-preservation and fear of violent death, believed that a rational society was precluded by humanity's fear of hidden forces or of God. This fear could only be dispelled by Enlightenment and by disseminating truth and knowledge.[60] Rousseau, conversely, did not believe that a just, rational society was possible because society creates a split in self-love ("amour de soi" as opposed to "amour propre") and cultivates arrogance, envy, and a passion for accumulating property, all of which lead to disharmony and inequality between people and prevent fulfillment of justice. According to Strauss, Rousseau held that "society itself, prevents, in a way, its own improvement."[61] While Rousseau aspired to return to the natural state in order to overcome the injustice that exists in society, Kant believed in a necessary transition from an unjust society to a just

society. Kant's philosophy of history promotes justice through contradictions. It is a harmony born of disharmony, a need born of a collection of free choices.[62]

Strauss emphasized that Kant's peace, epitomized by the establishment of a federation of republics, was institutional rather than moral.[63] What advances society is not an aspiration to moral perfection but rather selfishness, competition, and arrogance. Societies acknowledge the importance of preventing war and achieving peace not out of concern for the general well-being of the population, but due to narrow considerations of cost and benefit. Instead of good measures, a just society advances by means of legal, political and economic institutions whose role is to encourage competition and prevent violence. Strauss described Kant's "perpetual peace" as "a victory of the spirit of commerce: selfish gain uniting the nations over the spirit of positive religion, which as positive religion is divisive."[64] He explained Kant's view of furthering peace by drawing two examples from current affairs:

> [1] These same motives of shrewd mean calculation will lead, say Mr. [Nikita] Khrushchev [1894-1971], at a certain point, to be in favor of perpetual peace… morality doesn't enter here at all… Khrushchev doesn't become a bit more decent if he sees that the nuclear war doesn't pay. He is the same crook but he acts a bit more rationally, externally… [2] As people argue that whatever Southern people may think about segregation or desegregation, the international situation of the United States forces the United States to give equal rights to the colored people, and, therefore, it has nothing to do with morality, it is simply a calculation of how to keep the United States as strong as possible.[65]

Strauss mentioned the Cold War, the atomic bomb, and American domestic politics. Examples from international relations and daily politics recur several times in Strauss' teaching. They are central to understanding how Strauss tied the history of ideas to the present, and reveal how Strauss' imagination came into play with his students.[66] Soviet Union policy under Khrushchev and the question of segregation, two pressing issues in the United States at the time, found their way into Strauss' teaching. The position of the superpowers regarding nuclear war or peace symbolized utilitarian thinking in international affairs. Domestic policy concerning African-Americans symbolized the same approach in internal affairs.

Strauss moved from Kant to a short discussion of Fichte, the "famous successor to Kant, who in some respects comes closer to Marx than even Hegel."[67] According to Strauss, Fichte accepted Kant's basic assumptions and the superiority of human reason, yet went further than Kant in his political aspirations for a rational universal society.[68] The society that Fichte envisioned did not make do with liberal equality before the law, but saw the very existence of the state as a flawed situation. The state, in this case, is a manifestation of the fact that reason has yet to attain perfection, which is why there is a need to use violence and coercion. Reason for all enables freedom for all. While nature creates gaps between people, reason can reduce this inequality and cultivate personal talent. Reason leads to justice and equality, while nature is an obstacle that generates inequality and injustice. Society is a means for overcoming nature and advancing human perfection, while nature is an enemy that must be restrained and conquered. A rational society must wage war on nature to promote equality.[69]

Strauss emphasized that unlike Marx, Fichte's rational universal society, with its annulment of the state, is unfeasible, as Fichte himself held that society is in a constant process of formulation. Marx, in contrast, claimed that realization of a universal society was possible and that it must be established in the present, not in the future.[70]

However, the road to Marx was not yet complete. Apart from Rousseau, the major thinker in the second wave of modernity was undoubtedly Hegel, with whom Strauss concluded his discussion of German idealism and the lengthy introduction to Marx's political philosophy.[71]

"I am not a Hegelian," Strauss stressed, denying Hegel's notions of progress and historicism and flatly rejecting the idea of the end of history.[72] However, he shared Hegel's criticism of Kant's "perpetual peace." In *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* (Elements of the Philosophy of Right, 1820), Hegel stated:

> The higher significance of war is that, through its agency (as I have put it on another occasion), "the ethical health of nations [Völker] is preserved in their indifference towards the permanence of finite determinacies, just as the movement of the winds preserves the sea from that stagnation which a lasting calm would produce—a stagnation which a lasting, not to say perpetual, peace would also produce among nations"… In peace, the bounds of civil life are extended, all its spheres become firmly established, and in the long run, people become stuck in their ways. Their particular

> characteristics [Partikularitäten] become increasingly rigid and ossified. But the unity of the body is essential to health, and if its parts grow internally hard, the result is death. Perpetual peace is often demanded as an ideal to which mankind should approximate. Thus, Kant proposed a league of sovereigns to settle disputes between states, and the Holy Alliance was meant to be an institution more or less of this kind. But the state is an individual, and negation is an essential component of individuality. Thus, even if a number of states join together as a family, this league, in its individuality, must generate opposition and create an enemy.[73]

Hegel entirely ruled out Kant's aspiration for perpetual peace and Fichte's universalism. According to Strauss, Hegel's "hard common sense" and sober outlook led him to object to these visions and to believe that a world without states would lead to anarchy, while a world that yearned for perpetual peace would end up embroiled in bloody wars in the name of that wish.[74] He argued that Hegel was not enamored of nationalism and was not a fascist because he believed in a constitution and in an independent judiciary charged with protecting human rights.[75] He also noted that although Hegel undervalued the risk of wars between nations in Europe, he was largely correct in thinking "of wars only in the form of continental wars."[76] This same "hard common sense" was adopted by Strauss when he turned to discussing the Cold War.

Strauss defined the connection between Kant and Hegel based on the following formula: while Kant tried to refute the possible existence of metaphysics, Hegel saw the very attempt at refutation as proof of metaphysics.[77] Kant distinguished the world of phenomena from things in themselves. The human mind can only access phenomena—the objects of possible experience—and not things in themselves. Therefore, there is a gap between the world that humans perceive and the real world. "Understanding prescribes nature its laws" implies that nature itself is a product of human understanding and spirit as it is perceived in the world of phenomena.[78]

In contrast, Strauss explained, Hegel saw the human spirit as an inseparable part of the truth, which is distinct from the world of phenomena. Man has access to things in themselves through the human spirit and through correct analysis of human history. History is the key to complete understanding.[79] Strauss described German idealism as a cross between Kant and Spinoza. According to Strauss, German philosophy understood Spinoza's position as pantheism in which the essence of God can

be understood by the human mind. German idealism added historicism to this understanding: God is not merely revealed in the world, but in human action throughout history.[80]

Hegel's philosophy of history is a process of progress and development of reason. The disharmony that led to making a rational decision in Kant's historiosophy is essential to Hegelian dialectics, as a stage in the development of the spirit. Truth has existed as potential from the beginning, but it takes shape throughout the historical process (Strauss gives the famous example of the oak tree, whose seed contains the spark of life; as the tree grows, it generates new seeds).[81] However, the process is not eternal. As it is possible for the spirit to attain full recognition of itself, history—where this recognition develops—is finite. History will expire when a just, rational society is founded.

Strauss noted that according to Hegel, the French Revolution was a major turning point in the development of the human spirit. The revolution symbolized a struggle for recognition of human rights and acknowledgment of the superiority of reason, yet the violence and terror that ensued in its wake proved the opposite: that recognizing rights is not enough. Hegel understood that the state and the authority vested in government were essential to the defense of human rights, and that recognizing these rights does not require equality or bestowing everyone with full political rights.[82]

Hegel supported a hierarchical regime that would distinguish actual recognition of human rights, which centers on renouncing slavery and ensuring freedom of occupation, from governance, which represents reason and should not depend on voters' wishes. According to Strauss, Napoleon and the constitutional Prussian monarchy that followed him epitomized Hegel's desirable regime.[83] In the preface to the English edition of *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*, Strauss wrote:

> The radicalization and deepening of Rousseau's thought by classical German philosophy culminated in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, the legitimation of that kind of constitutional monarchy which is based on the recognition of rights of man, and in which government is in the hands of highly educated civil servants appointed by a hereditary king.[84]

To explain the importance of the state in Hegel's philosophy to his students, Strauss drew on another example from American politics—the Eisenhower administration at the time:

> The recognition of the rights of man is not sufficient. You must also have a government which is capable to protect the rights of man; and while the rights of man are fundamentally egalitarian the need for government cannot be understood in egalitarian terms. Not everyone who has right can therefore have fully political rights. As it was put some time ago by President [Dwight D.] Eisenhower [1890-1969]: Federal employment is a privilege but not a right. Now still more, the presidency of the United States and a cabinet seat in the cabinet is not a right but a privilege.[85]

One wonders why Strauss chose Eisenhower to explicate Hegel, and Khrushchev's Soviet Union to discuss the implications of Marxist philosophy. Strauss sought major contemporary figures to use as analogies for the tradition of Western philosophy. He used them to bridge the gap between the tradition of philosophy and the present-day reality of his students, and to translate German thought into the intellectual world of the United States. Strauss' teaching wove between past and present. It centered on classical and modern thought, but delved once in a while into the here and now.

The Marxist Dream as a Straussian Nightmare—"The End of History" and "The Last Man"

In the seminar on Hegel, Strauss argued that the German philosopher was an anti-democratic liberal, "but this has nothing to do with Hitler," as he recognized human rights and dignity and objected to slavery or degrading forms of punishment.[86] According to Strauss, "[i]t was a modern state that Hegel had in mind, but not the modern democratic state, nor, of course, the modern so-called totalitarian state."[87] Moreover, in the preface to *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*, Strauss emphasized that "[i]t has been said, not without reason, that Hegel's rule over Germany came to an end only on the day Hitler came to power."[88] In other words, Strauss identified pre-Hitlerian politics in Germany with Hegelian thought. To him, Hegel symbolized Germany just as Hobbes and Locke symbolized England.[89] Strauss did not cite the origin of the saying to which he referred in the preface. However, in the seminar on Hegel, Strauss noted three times that the rule of Hegel died the day Hitler rose to power, attributing this saying to Carl Schmitt. In the first instance, he referred to Schmitt as "one of the cleverest public lawyers [in Germany]" without stating his name.[90] In the second

mention, Strauss explicitly named Schmitt, describing him as "the most intelligent Nazi of whom I know."[91] The third time he quoted Schmitt's saying, he referred to him simply as "Nazi."[92]

Yet Schmitt was not the only one to leave a mark on Strauss by identifying pre-1933 Germany with Hegel. The thinker who most influenced Strauss' understanding of Hegelian (and Marxist) philosophy was undoubtedly his friend Alexandre Kojève. Strauss recommended that his students read the Russian-French thinker's "half Marxist, half Hegelian" *Introduction à la Lecture de Hegel* (Introduction to the Reading of Hegel, 1947), calling it "the best book on Hegel in this generation."[93]

Strauss read Hegel and Marx through Kojève's lens, adopting many aspects of the latter's interpretation. The central idea that he borrowed was that of "the end of history." In Kojève's *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, this became an important—and perhaps the central—concept in Hegelian thought. According to Kojève, humanity is primarily defined by its capacity for self-recognition. He held that human history began when man first attempted to overcome natural instincts such as self-preservation and grew willing to die for honor and recognition.[94] This willingness, born of a desire for recognition, led to the development of history as a dialectical struggle between slave and master. The master is prepared to risk his life in order to rule and gain respect, while the slave chooses life over death and therefore prefers to acknowledge his master's authority rather than risk his life.[95]

However, according to Kojève, the master will never be satisfied, as he has won recognition only thanks to the slave, whom the master does not consider human.[96] The master is destined to a "tragic" life, while it is the slave who can reach self-fulfillment and change his reality. The end of history is a concept that belongs to the slave, not the master. The master has forced the slave into a life of labor, but work is powerful—it enables the slave to gather strength and overcome nature with technology. Work empowers and liberates the slave from subjugation to nature and prepares him for a life of freedom. However, absolute freedom can only exist when the slave is able to choose his work independently and live as a free citizen. According to Kojève, Hegel believed that humanity is capable of attaining absolute truth and freedom. This ability is based on political institutions. History will come to an end only once the conflict between master and slave is resolved and the two merge into the citizen of the perfect state.[97] Only this kind of citizen can attain truth, absolute knowledge, and full self-consciousness, living in a perfect state that is universal and homogenous:

> Wisdom can be realized, according to Hegel, only at the end of History. This too is universally understood. It was always known that for Hegel, not only does the coming of Wisdom complete History, but also that this coming is possible only at the end of History. This is known, but why this is true is not always very well understood. And one cannot understand this as long as one does not know that the Wise Man must necessarily be Citizen of the *universal* (i.e., non-expandable) and *homogeneous* (i.e., non-transformable) State. And one cannot know this until one has understood that this State is nothing other than real basis (the "substructure") of the circularity of the absolute System: the Citizen of this State, as active Citizen, *realizes* the circularity that he *reveals*, as contemplative Wise Man, through his System.[98]

Strauss repeated Kojève, claiming that Hegel saw history as a process in which reason progresses until reaching perfection and full self-consciousness. This final rational society contains no contradictions or flaws, and therefore both the dialectical process of history and the decay and the corruption of earlier societies do not necessarily continue to exist within it.[99] He addressed Hegel's famous saying from the introduction to *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* concerning the owl of Minerva:

> A further word on the subject of *issuing instructions* on how the world ought to be: philosophy, at any rate, always comes too late to perform this function. As the *thought* of the world, it appears only at a time when actuality has gone through its formative process and attained its completed state. This lesson of the concept is necessarily also apparent from history, namely that it is only when actuality has reached maturity that the ideal appears opposite the real and reconstructs this real world, which it has grasped in its substance, in the shape of an intellectual realm. When philosophy paints its grey in grey, a shape of life has grown old, and it cannot be rejuvenated, but only recognized, by the grey in grey of philosophy; The owl of Minerva begins its flight only with the onset of the dusk.[100]

Strauss explained that this passage presented the inseparable tie between philosophy and science on one hand, and a process of corruption, on the other. He emphasized that "corruption, of course, has not the meaning in which we see corruption in certain parts of the municipal government of Chicago," but rather of "the loss of orientation, the complete loss, the decline of a nation! Always!."[101] When a society achieves full self-consciousness, philosophy and corruption begin simultaneously.

The accumulation of knowledge leads to questioning assumptions and beliefs that lie at the heart of the political body, shattering its unity. Strauss cited Spengler and his *Decline of the West* as an example of a discussion concerning the notions of corruption and decline, which lead to the end of humanity and civilization. Strauss would use the image of decline several years later, describing the West he lived in as an entity on the edge of an abyss that must restore faith in order to prevent annihilation.[102]

Strauss claimed that according to Hegel, a society or nation could still be corrupt at "the end of history" but that, as opposed to the pessimistic outlook put forth by Spengler, knowledge is what enables humanity to overcome temporary decline and rise again, through reason. However, Strauss argued that the threat of corruption and decay at the end of history was a major problem in Hegelian thought, tying into the most important phrase in Straussian objection to Marxist political thought—"the last man":

> It is one of the greatest difficulties of Hegel that one does not really know whether Hegel was fully aware of what he clearly implied: that with the fulfillment, with the completion of world history, there is now the beginning of a final decay, a final corruption of mankind. This is a problem which we shall later raise in the form of the "last man," where people no longer have any tasks, and where all great social tasks have been solved, and where we have the perfect society. After all really important intellectual tasks have been solved, and when the truth is known in the final system, what will happen then? Triviality? There can be no genuine heroism any more; and whether and to what extent Hegel saw that is, as far as I can see, impossible to decide.[103]

The idea of "the end of history" entailed danger that man would become hollow and decayed, lacking any higher purpose in life. Strauss used Nietzsche's phrase "the last man" as an adequate representation of humanity at the end of history. "The last man" in Nietzschean philosophy was the exact opposite of the "overhuman" or *Übermensch*, who represented the will to power and "the sense of the earth" according to Zarathustra.[104] "The last man" is one who arrogantly claims to be the pinnacle the human race, yet to Nietzsche (and Strauss) is the epitome of mediocrity, of "what is most despicable":

> "So I will speak to them of what is most despicable: and that is the last human." And thus spoke Zarathustra to the people: "the time has now

> come for the human to set a goal to itself. The time has now come for the human to plant the seed of its highest hope. Its soil is still rich enough for that. But this soil will someday become poor from cultivation, and no tall tree will be able to grow from it. Alas! The time will come when the human will no longer shoot the arrow of its yearning over beyond the human, and the string of its bow will have forgotten how to whir! I say to you: one must still have chaos within, in order to give birth to a dancing star. I say to you: you still have chaos within you… Behold! I show to you the last human. 'What is love? What is creation? What is yearning? What is a star?'—thus asks the last human and then blinks. For the earth has now become small, and upon it hops the last human, who makes everything small. Its race is as inexterminable as the ground-flea; the last human lives the longest. 'We have contrived happiness'—say the last humans and they blink. They have left the regions where the living was hard, for one needs the warmth. One still loves one's neighbor and rubs up against him: for one needs the warmth. To fall ill and harbor mistrust is in their eyes sinful: one must proceed with care. A fool, whoever still stumbles over stones or humans! A little poison now and then: that makes for agreeable dreams. And a lot of poison at the end, for an agreeable dying. One continues to work, for work is entertainment. But one takes care lest the entertainment become a strain. One no longer becomes poor or rich: both are too burdensome. Who wants to rule anymore? Who wants to obey? Both are too burdensome. No herdsman and one herd! Everyone wants the same thing, everyone is the same: whoever feels differently goes voluntarily into the madhouse. 'Formerly the entire world was mad'—say their finest and they blink. One is clever and knows all that has happened: so there is no end to their mockery. One still quarrels, but one soon makes up—else it is bad for the stomach. One has one's little pleasure for the day and one's little pleasure for the night: but one honors good health. 'We have discovered happiness'—say the last humans, and they blink."[105]

To Strauss, Nietzsche's nightmare—"the last man"—is the ideal man of Hegel and Marx at the end of history. Strauss also addressed this in his 1957 correspondence with Kojève, which illustrated the differences between the two friends:

> The root of the question is I suppose the same as it always was, that you are convinced of the truth of Hegel (Marx) and I am not. You have never given me an answer to my questions: a) was Nietzsche not right in describing the Hegelian-Marxian end as "the last man"? and b) what would you put into the place of Hegel's philosophy of nature? I am under the impression that you read Plato from your Hegelian point of view without

> sufficiently waiting for what would reveal itself as Plato's view by simply listening to Plato and strictly adhering to his suggestions.[106]

"Was Nietzsche not right in describing the Hegelian-Marxian end as 'the last man'?" asked Strauss, encapsulating in a single sentence his deep aversion to this ideal and his great affinity with Nietzsche. However, according to Strauss, while for Hegel the end of history takes place in a homogenous state ruled by a constitutional monarchy and a bureaucracy, Marxist thought adopts the idea of the end of history as a means of resisting any form of subjugation—a classless society that does not need a state.[107] If the Hegelian "last man" still believed in the existence of authority and inequality, Marx's "last man" denied the very existence of the political and was the utter opposite of what Strauss believed in.

Marx in the Eyes of Strauss—"The Last Man" Wishing to Replace God

In his writings in the United States, Strauss' view of Marxism was similar to that of Nietzsche. According to Strauss, "[n]o one questioned the communistic version with greater energy than Nietzsche. He identified the man of the communist world society as the last man, that is to say, as the extreme degradation of man."[108] Strauss, too, believed that the Marxist ideal of freedom would lead to the rule of "the last man," endangering philosophy and the entire Western world; he saw it as the fundamental difference between Nietzsche' *Übermensch* and "the last man":

> For Marx the coming of the classless society is necessary, whereas for Nietzsche the coming of the Over-man depends on man's free choice. Only one thing is certain for Nietzsche regarding the future: the end has come for man as he was hitherto; what will come is either the Over-man or the Last-man. The last man, the lowest and most decayed man, the herd man without any ideals and aspirations, but well fed, well clothed, well housed, well medicated by ordinary physicians and by psychiatrists is Marx's man of the future seen from an anti-Marxist point of view.[109]

These remarks attest to the rejection of the Marxist ideal by Strauss, an admirer of Nietzsche. While he may have, in later years, objected to

Nietzsche's lack of political responsibility, he certainly looked up him as a teacher and mentor as far as Marx was concerned. Yet to understand the breadth of Strauss' views on Marx, we must go beyond this passage and delve into the entire seminar that he devoted to "the father of Communism."

Having discussed the development of modern ideas from Hobbes to Hegel, the main part of the seminar centered on Marx, including his critique of his predecessors. According to Strauss, Marx saw Hegel as the last phase of philosophy yet rejected Hegelian philosophy and philosophy itself. Instead of philosophical contemplation, Marx favored a life based on labor and action. By rejecting Hegel, he also discarded an entire philosophical tradition that was undemocratic at its core. Hegel believed in a monarchy run by a bureaucratic elite; Marx, according to Strauss, had already embraced the tradition of democratic thought and equality.[110]

The first to discuss Marx in the seminar was not Strauss but rather Joseph Cropsey, one of his followers who specialized in the history of economic thought.[111] The cooperation between the two sheds new light on Strauss the teacher. Apparently, he did not fear teaching by means of mutual work and dialogue; the course was not fully planned but left room for improvisation, spontaneity, and disagreement. Strauss responded to Cropsey's remarks, asked questions, probed certain points, argued at times, and noted that Cropsey and the seminar were introducing him to new aspects of Marxist thought.

Apparently, Strauss did not fear admitting his limitations, either. He acknowledged his general ignorance of economics and of Marxist political economics, in particular, relying along with the students on Cropsey's location of Marx on the timeline of modern economic thought. Strauss adopted Cropsey's interpretation and combined it both in his own critique of modernity and in his teaching of Marx.[112]

In his teaching, Cropsey followed a clearly Straussian line by emphasizing the distinction between modern and pre-modern thought. Cropsey compared Marxist economics with modern, liberal economic thought as promoted by John Locke and Adam Smith (1723–1790), and with Aristotelian economic principles. He argued that, unlike Aristotle and the liberal philosophers, Marx aspired to make economics an inseparable part of life, creating an "absolutization of economics."[113]

According to Cropsey, while Aristotle believed that necessity derived from nature, which is immutable, Marx held that scarcity and human adversity are essentially historical, contingent upon circumstances, and

therefore subject to alteration. Aristotle claimed that necessity could not be completely overcome, while Marx believed that humanity could eliminate it. The two agreed that production was the means for addressing the challenges facing humanity. However, while Aristotelian production was political, Marx's production was economic and anti-political. The last aspect was manifested in Marxist theory in the abolition of the state.[114]

After discussing Aristotle, Cropsey moved on to comparing two schools of thoughts in modern economic philosophy: Locke and Smith versus Rousseau. He argued that while the former two valued a life of affluence and comfort, Rousseau's governing principle was morality. Locke and Smith assumed that nature was dangerous. Therefore, overcoming nature while exploiting its resources could help humanity deal with certain threats. Accordingly, the purpose of economics in an unstable world was to make human life easier, increasing comfort and reducing scarcity. This would become possible thanks to egoistic actions that did not take considerations of the common good into account. Human selfishness would facilitate affluence and security.[115]

Locke and Smith believed in the creation of a society that would prioritize affluence, the protection of private property, and freedom. They favored an economy based on the laws of supply and demand, division of labor, accumulation of capital, and hierarchal relations between employers and employees. Exploitation and inequality were seen as inevitable. According to Cropsey, "Smith said there would be five hundred poor for every one rich. He was willing to face that."[116]

In contrast, Rousseau believed that affluence would engender crime and vice, encouraging man's severance from his natural state, increasing his dependence upon society, and amplifying harmful emotions such as arrogance or envy.[117] On one hand, for Rousseau, affluence was directly linked to crime; Locke, on the other hand, believed that vice was necessary in order to create a flourishing society. While the former held that abandoning the natural state marred human perfection, the latter saw the political transition from the pre-social to the social state as a necessary prerequisite to preventing violent death and meeting the challenges posed by nature.[118]

According to Cropsey, Marx represented a third approach: an attempt to combine Rousseau's emphasis on morality with Smith and Locke's devotion to affluence. Marx as described by Cropsey was a particularly optimistic thinker who believed in the possibility of creating a moral and

affluent society based on human production. He did not see affluence as a corrupting influence in itself. Rather, history was responsible for the moral contamination of humankind and for the exploitation that came with wealth. A differently organized economy could purify affluence of injustice.[119] Marx believed that fathoming the secrets of economics and applying this new understanding to all walks of life would enable humanity to overcome all political problems.

Strauss explicitly adopted Cropsey's position, condensing it into a simple formula: the Marxist ideal as an aspiration that affluence and morality exist side by side.[120] For the first time, Strauss accorded Marx a meaningful role in his critique of modernity. He located Marxism as the final phase of the second wave of modernity—the attempt to resolve the tension between city and man by economic means:

> And the great trumpeter of this moral indignation about the first wave was Rousseau. And out of Rousseau grew then German idealism, culminating in Hegel, and last but not least, Marx. From this point of view I think Marx belongs absolutely to that second wave. And what you said, Mr. Cropsey, that was a very beautiful formulation: abundance plus virtue, comfortable self-preservation plus virtue. What this second wave, as I call it, tried to do was to—on the modern foundation of plain British common sense, comfortable self-preservation—to erect an imposing moral structure which would even, if possible, be more moral than the Platonic-Aristotelian structure. This is, I think, what we are driving at.[121]

In the classical world, the conflict between a life of contemplation and philosophy, on one hand, and the limitations imposed by social conventions, on the other, could not be resolved. Modern thought reduced the lofty ambitions of philosophy, morality, and striving for perfection to feasible goals such as ensuring safety, a life of comfort, and self-preservation. According to Strauss, Marx and his second-wave counterparts criticized this lowering of standards by their predecessors, arguing that it had led to moral corruption. They tried to combine high standards that would be "more moral than the Platonic-Aristotelian structure" with a life of comfort and affluence.[122] Strauss saw the second wave of modernity as an attempt to revive classical values and point philosophy back in its original direction. However, this attempt failed, as it was tainted by modern ideas such as a preference for self-preservation over self-realization or the superiority of history to nature.

By placing economics on a pedestal and trying to retain both affluence and morality, Marx, said Strauss, attempted "to eat the cake and to have it": to attain moral perfection in a life of comfort and to aspire to what was essentially an oxymoron: a "universal aristocracy."[123]

Strauss held that the productive power of man grew to immense proportions in Marx's thought. According to him, in Marx's world, not only would economics create the necessary conditions for self-legislation but "[v]irtue in this modern sense is itself productivity, or if we want to have a more beautiful word still, creativity."[124] Freedom and economics would be linked by human creativity, while nature, politics, and classical philosophy fell by the wayside. For Marx, nature was no more than a tool in the service of humanity, enslaved by human creativity. Strauss, of course, rejected this view and presented the subjugation of nature by Marx's creative man as an attempt to gain ultimate control—to make nature human and, essentially, to become God:

> It is so that man as the conqueror of nature is a god, takes the place of God. Ya, but if this is so, the science of man metaphysics. But in what capacity, may I ask, does man conquer nature? Not a speculator—there he leaves nature alone—but as worker, as industrialist, as engineer, as an "economic being." So it is the economic activity of man, the material production of man, which establishes the unity of man and non-man, and the humanly fine thought is the highest thought, and that highest thought is material production, economics is metaphysics.[125]

From the *Communist Manifesto* to *Capital*—Strauss Delves into Marxist Texts

The first part of the seminar on Marx's political philosophy ended here. Strauss and Cropsey positioned Marx within the crisis of modernity and the history of ideas. Marx was the last phase of the second wave of modernity, coming immediately upon the heels of Hegel and a moment before Nietzsche. He represented the attempt to maintain wealth and morality at the same time, making economics part of every aspect of life, as an absolute solution to humanity's problems in the world. Having established this, Strauss turned to Marx's writings to clarify his arguments.

Strauss addressed five major texts by "the father of Communism" in the seminar: *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), *Critique of Hegel's*

Philosophy of Right (1843), *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (1844), *The German Ideology* (1846), and *Capital* (Volume I, 1867). The most famous of these, *Das Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei* (The Communist Manifesto), was written in relatively accessible prose intended for a broad readership. *Das Kapital* (Capital), the most important and comprehensive of Marx's writings, included his critique of capitalism and the basic tenets of his later economic doctrine, but is considered a difficult and sometimes dull text that requires economic knowledge. This section of the seminar opened with the former text and ended with the latter, but centered on Marx's early writings. In particular, Strauss held that *The German Ideology* was the key to understanding Marx's political thought.

By selecting *The Communist Manifesto* as the first text to unpack with his class in Chicago, Strauss was probably trying to achieve several goals. First, as it was easier to understand than Marx's philosophical or economic writings, he thought it could serve as a straightforward introduction to Marxist theory for his young American students. However, he also wished to show them that the manifesto encapsulated Marxist thought, and that this thought was primarily political rather than economic.[126]

Strauss emphasized that unlike Nietzsche, whose philosophy took on its final form only when he was in his forties, Marx's thought was fully formed by the age of thirty when he published the manifesto.[127] Strauss emphasized that the development of Marx's philosophy began in 1837 and ended in 1846.[128] He claimed that even at a young age, Marx aspired to overcome philosophy, which he saw as an ideology, through social revolution. In contrast, "Nietzsche never overcame and never intended to overcome philosophy."[129]

Strauss centered on Marx's early writings and saw later publications, including *Capital*, as mere derivatives or extensions of a body of thought that had already taken shape in the 1830s and 1840s—before the influence of Darwinism and the emphasis on political economy (*On the Origin of the Species* was published in 1858). By focusing on the manifesto and on Marx's early writings, Strauss wished to show that Marx's basic assumptions concerning humanity were firmly in place before he fully formulated his economic doctrine. Unsurprisingly, Strauss' reading of Marx was highly political, much like his youthful interpretation of Spinoza and Hobbes in Europe: to understand the philosophical, ethical,

and economic ideas of modern thinkers, one must first understand their basic assumptions concerning politics, humanity, and nature.

In the seminar, Strauss argued that *The Communist Manifesto* was a "political statement"—that politics took center stage, while economics and philosophy were demoted to a secondary role.[130] He began his discussion of the manifesto by quoting Marx and Engels on the superiority of politics ("every class struggle, however, is a political struggle"), adding that "contrary to the vulgar Marxist notion, the political is really the more intense, the higher: the transformation of mere quantity, one can say, into quality."[131] He gave Leon Trotsky's (1879–1940) *The History of the Russian Revolution* (1930, English edition published in 1932) as an example, arguing that the economic struggles and strikes described in the book were "chicken feed" that grew interesting only when they turned political.[132]

The emphasis on Marx's early writings was also important because some, such as *Die deutsche Ideologie* (The German Ideology) and *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte aus dem Jahre 1844* (Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844) were first published only in 1932, at the very end of the Weimar era and the same year that Strauss left Germany. This indicates that Strauss' interpretation of Marx in the 1920s was not influenced by these early texts but rather mediated by other thinkers, such as Nietzsche, whose negative view of Marx was adopted by the young Strauss. In the 1920s and 1930s, Strauss focused on the philosophy of Nietzsche and Hobbes and on the question of law in Jewish and Muslim medieval thought, and did not engage directly with Marx.[133] In fact, Strauss only read Marx closely after immigrating to the United States and formulating a comprehensive worldview during the 1950s, at the height of the Cold War. In his published texts, he referred to Marx's early writings in few instances, including a reference to *Karl Marx: die Fruehschriften* and *die Deutsche Ideologie* published in German in 1953.[134]

The publication of these early writings and their translation into English significantly changed overall interpretations of Marx's philosophy in the 1950s and 1960s. No longer perceived solely as a political economist, Marx came to be seen primarily as a thinker with a clearly formulated philosophy and political doctrine from which his approach to economics derived. Erich Fromm's *Marx's Concept of Man* (1961) and Shlomo Avineri's *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx* (1967) were leading examples of the interpretive wave that viewed politics and

philosophy as preceding economics in Marx's thought.[135] According to Avineri, until the discovery of Marx's early writings:

> Discussion about Marx was largely limited to a political and ideological debate between various schools of socialists or between Marxists and anti-Marxists. Since their discovery, the early writings have directed attention to the richness of Marx's philosophical speculation, involving in the debate groups which have not hitherto been concerned with Marx and Marxism… The various economic, social and historical studies undertaken by Marx are but a corollary of the conclusions he drew from his immanent critique of Hegel's political philosophy.[136]

Strauss' reading of Marx, which was based on these early writings, belonged to this new wave in contemporary political science scholarship, and although he never saw himself as an expert on Marx, his seminar is an early example of this new perspective.

The Communist Manifesto was also a good starting point for learning how to approach a text. Here, like his earlier interpretations of seminal philosophical texts, Strauss sought out the author and the reader, asking who wrote the text and for whom was it written. In *Spinoza's Critique of Religion* and in *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, Strauss emphasized that in the *Theologico-Politico Treatise* (1670), Spinoza addressed "the philosophic reader," "the philosophers," or potential philosophers. He concluded that "Spinoza's aim is to liberate philosophy from the theological domination which culminates in the persecution of philosophers by theologians and their disciples."[137]

In his discussion of Maimonides in *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, Strauss argued that the principles of secrecy and concealment existed in the form of correspondence between teacher (author) and pupil (reader) in *The Guide for the Perplexed* (1191). According to Strauss, "it is a book with seven seals," including clues, repetition, and omissions that could afford an understanding of "an esoteric doctrine."[138]

In the seminar on Marx, Strauss asked the students to whom they thought the text was addressed. Marx, the knowledgeable philosopher, was writing for the proletarian readership. According to Strauss, Marx deliberately chose to address this particular audience, with its specific interests, rather than to write universally for all humanity. Only the proletariat had a vested interest in embracing his ideas; other groups had no interest in Marx and Engels' message.[139]

Strauss quoted the opening line of the first chapter of *The Communist Manifesto*: "[t]he history of all society up to now is the history of class struggles."[140] He noted that unlike classical political philosophy, the manifesto did not address the common good of society.[141] Marx's basic assumption was that a common good had never existed. Instead, history was made up of class struggle, with every class fighting for its own interests:

> As long as there is political society, Marx says, there cannot be a common good because political society means coercive society, and that coercive society exists as long as coercion is needed. And, according to Marx's analysis, coercion is needed because of the antagonism of classes and therefore there cannot be a common good.[142]

Strauss noted that Marx did not prove this basic assumption, using examples of various events that, according to him, did not involve class struggle, including two taken from American history: the War of Independence and the Civil War.[143] According to Strauss, Marx's goal in writing the manifesto was to prove not only that a common good had not existed in the past, but that it did not exist in his present, as Strauss chose to quote:

> Modern bourgeois society which has emerged from the decay—or the destruction—of feudal society has not disposed of the class oppositions. It has only put new classes, new conditions of oppressions, new forms of the struggle, in place of the old ones.[144]

Strauss emphasized that in the mid-nineteenth century, the democratic ideal existed but had not yet taken shape in Europe. The democratic idea, said Strauss, "emerged for a moment in France, [18]48, was destroyed by Bonaparte, but it existed in this country but not in Europe, and surely not in semi-feudal Germany or Austria, and still less in Russia; and even in England, as you know, that was touch and go."[145] *The Communist Manifesto* was a political essay that Marx and Engels intended for the proletariat, at a time when the democratic ideal was gradually becoming a reality. This reality preserved oppression, since it operated in the service of the bourgeoisie, making it imperative for the proletariat to come together.

Marx, Strauss continued, believed that every political society, including democracy, entailed coercion and class struggle. Only when society

ceased to be political could there be a common good—the good of the proletariat:

> There will be a common good in the final society. The final society will have a common good, but that common [good] will be no problem, and therefore there will be no need for coercion. The fact that Marx takes the side of the communists presupposes one thing: that communism—the cause of the proletariat, is the cause of man.[146]

Strauss went on to discuss the reasons for oppression according to Marx, who continued Rousseau's rejection of innate evil in human nature. Oppression and injustice were not natural but a social-historic consequence of scarcity. Scarcity prevented the population at large from self-realization, leading to struggles over limited natural resources. The desire to accumulate capital under these conditions led to inequality and oppression. Rousseau held that evil and oppression would not be eliminated by overcoming scarcity, but rather by re-educating humanity, as he described in *Emile* (1762). In contrast, Marx held that the modern age was marked by overproduction and that there was no reason for scarcity.[147] Technology made it possible to overcome a dearth of natural resources. Overproduction and proper distribution of resources could fulfill the needs of humanity, eliminate oppression, and resolve human problems in history once and for all. Strauss explained Marx concisely: "[p]lenty makes oppression superfluous."[148]

Yet despite real affluence, oppression was artificially maintained and enforced by the bourgeoisie. Thus, Strauss emphasized, Marx, who in his later writings defined the United States as "the most modern form of existence of bourgeois society," saw the present as a unique meeting between two absolute classes: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The former, a historical remnant, wished to retain power and superiority.[149] The latter, however, was the absolute class that would eliminate evil and oppression and bring history to an end:

> The present oppression is unique. It is not only one special form of this age-old phenomenon, but it is a unique form. In other words, the two classes which we have now, the bourgeois and the proletariat, are not just two classes like any other classes we have in earlier times. They are the absolute classes, the absolute classes. There is a qualitative difference between these classes now and any other classes. Still more precisely:

> because the class of the future is the proletariat, not the bourgeoisie, the proletariat is the absolute class.[150]

Strauss' Attraction to the Concept of Alienation

Strauss tried to explicate why Marx believed that the bourgeois oppression of the proletariat was unique, and a graver ill than other injustices in history. From there, he moved on to a discussion of a central concept in Marxist thought: alienation. Strauss gave various examples of oppression, including the Spanish treatment of Native Americans in their conquest of South America, the Roman attitude toward slaves, or the systematic execution of Jews in Nazi death camps. All these, he held, were much more cruel and violent than the oppression of the proletariat—worse "than the modern proletarians even in the worst slums of Manchester, or New York, or wherever they were."[151] To explain Marx's position, Strauss noted that his examples of cruel oppression were "bestial." In all these cases, the attackers were intentionally cruel toward the victims, seeing the latter as human creatures worthy of suffering: "[t]hey still treated them as humans in a most inhuman way."[152] In contrast, the oppression of the proletariat was not "bestial" or barbaric, as the victims were not treated as human but rather as commodities.

Moreover, the bourgeois oppression had grown worse because the exploited proletariat was an alienated class. The concept of alienation played a major role in the seminar on Marx, not only because of its centrality to Marx's worldview but also because it was unquestionably the Marxist idea with which Strauss identified most. In fact, it was the major, perhaps only, saving grace of Marx's political philosophy for Strauss:

> My view of Marx does not mean, of course, that I have not learned very much from Marx and, I hope, will still learn much from him. For me the most important point in Marx, the positive point in Marx, is this: his notion of alienation, meaning his attempt to understand modernity in particular as the period of man's alienation.[153]

Alienation presumes conflict and disharmony in the world. An alienated person is flawed in a way that prevents him or her from fully feeling a sense of belonging and affinity with the truth, a state of being that matched Strauss' view of modernity. All three philosophers who most

influenced Strauss—Plato, Nietzsche, and Heidegger—emphasized a gap between the truth and convention, much like Marx's use of alienation. Plato offered an allegory for this tension in the parable of the cave, in which chained humans believe that shadows and echoes are reality. Truth, the sunlight outside the cave, is revealed to the philosopher alone.[154] In Heidegger's doctrine, the flaw is represented by "forgetfulness of being," according to which the philosophical tradition from Plato onwards relinquished ontological being, until the authentic was completely forgotten.[155] According to Nietzsche, Socrates and his successors—Christianity and the slave morality of the Jewish priests—created values that oppressed vitality in the service of a flawed, atrophied negation of life, while the "last man" or the "mediocre spirits" are already the embodiment of estranged and lost souls.[156] In the Marxist notion of alienation and in the philosophy of these three thinkers, humanity was blind to the truth.

Strauss set great store by the allegory of the cave and took it a metaphorical step further. Even as a young scholar in the Weimar Republic, Strauss argued that the modern human was trapped in an artificial shaft within a cave made up of historicism and positivism:

> To use the classical presentation of the natural difficulties of philosophizing, namely Plato's parable of the cave, one may say that today we find ourselves in a second, much deeper cave than the lucky ignorant persons Socrates dealt with. [157]

Indeed, in teaching alienation in Marxist thought, Strauss recalled that Marx had used an image of a cave in an early text.[158] In *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, Marx called the proletariat cave dwellers and described how they differed from prehistoric man:

> This alienation is shown in part by the fact that the refinement of needs and of the means to satisfy them produces as its counterpart a bestial savagery, a complete, primitive and abstract simplicity of needs; or rather, that it simply reproduces itself in its opposite sense. For the worker even the need for fresh air ceases to be a need. Man returns to the cave dwelling again, but it is now poisoned by the pestilential breath of civilization. The worker has only a precarious right to inhabit it, for it has become an alien dwelling which may suddenly not be available, or from which he may be evicted if he does not pay the rent. He has to pay for his mortuary.[159]

According to Marx, while prehistoric man was master of his cave, in modernity he was but a guest. The concept of alienation and the use of the cave allegory highlighted similarities between the respective critiques of modernity put forth by Marx and Strauss. For the latter, the idea of alienation incorporated returning and beginning rather than endless progress: "[t]he very term alienation implies that man was originally not alienated. Otherwise it doesn't make sense."[160] Alienation was a defilement of the original; its cancelation—a welcome return. Strauss again quoted from *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*:

> Communism is the positive abolition of private property, of human self-alienation, and thus the real appropriation of human nature through and for man. It is, therefore, the return of man to himself as a social, i.e. really human, being, a complete and conscious return which assimilates all the wealth of previous development.[161]

Both Strauss and Marx believed that in modern times, humanity had strayed from the truth. While Marx centered on the proletariat's alienation and bourgeois exploitation, Strauss was troubled by what he saw as modernity's break with classical philosophy and the natural right. For both thinkers, modernity was marked by estrangement that imprisoned man within a system of circumstances that barred him from seeing the sunlight beyond the cave. Both believed in a flawless origin that had been marred over time by society.

Marx was not the first to introduce the notion of estrangement into philosophy. However, Strauss noted that his modern version of alienation was unique in its emphasis on the degree to which the proletariat was humiliated.[162] Strauss revisited *The Communist Manifesto* and Marx's critique of liberalism and democracy, which allegedly strove to eliminate oppression in the name of human rights while effectively maintaining it. Rather than curb the tension between master and slave, democracy in fact increased it. Unlike the cruel treatment of slaves in the pre-modern era, the bourgeois master in the industrial age needed the proletarian worker to be both obedient and educated. He needed to control the slave, but also give him the feeling that the enslavement would soon be over: to convince him that he could change his life through education and democracy, while ensuring that the oppression continued.

Strauss also held that alienation and boundless human creation "saved" Marx from an affinity with the two major enemies of humanity in modern times—positivism and radical historicism:

> The ideas of man must be, according to Marx, a product of history… Now what does this mean? We are at the threshold, if this metaphor is bearable, of an old friend of ours. I call that friend by his name: relativism. If all ideas are products of history, then the idea of man as Marx sees it is a product of history and will therefore be superseded in due time by a new idea of man.[163]

Marx's reliance on history and his assertion that "life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life" starkly contrasted the Strauss' belief in an eternal natural right that was independent of historical developments.[164] Having defined Marx as the last phase of the second wave of modernity, Strauss now located him as very close to the major antagonist of his worldview: relativism. However, he did not go so far as to define Marx a relativist. Rather, Marx came close to relativism but narrowly avoided the moral decay that characterized the third wave of modernity. Marx was protected from slipping into the realms of relativity by alienation, which stood against an infinite linear progression of history and required a return of sorts to the original state, in which man would no longer be estranged from himself. Alienation meant a beginning and an end, rather than an endless stream of values that could vary by historical context. Strauss stated that Marx tried to combine lack of belief in eternal values with a return of man to his true, original state:

> How does Marx protect himself against that?… *Aufhebung*—this word—how does he translate the word?… preservation, destruction, and enhancing. "Communism as the positive *aufhebung* of private property, as of human self-alienation, and therefore as real appropriation of the human essence through man and for man; therefore as complete and conscious return of man to himself as a social, i.e., human, man." The word is return, return. History does not have the linear character. The linear character means relativism. History has a cyclical character… There is a beginning and a return to it. Therefore, it is finite… You see, when Marx speaks of alienation he implies, of course, that man was originally with himself or himself, not alienated. In the beginning man is with himself. At the end he is again with himself… in between there is alienation.[165]

Moreover, according to Strauss, the Marxist aspiration to turn economics into metaphysics was an attempt to establish the primacy of human production: economics as the be all and end all of human existence. Humanity produced things and thoughts.[166] Spears and pruning

hooks were a form of creation, and philosophy and religion stemmed from later developments of production throughout history. Strauss emphasized how crucial it was for Marx and Marxism to place materialism or the production of things above idealism or the production of ideas, and that this hierarchy was intertwined with the concept of alienation. Non-estranged, original man began to produce things. Alienation began when thoughts and myths were formed. The aim of Marxism was to replace the alienated soul with a non-alienated existence. Humanity in its original form was untainted. Alienation was a flaw in man's understanding of his world.[167] On one hand, contemplation of the world in the form of myths, philosophies, and religions was an expression of a flawed existential state. Marxism, on the other hand, was pure and free of error. It was the non-alienated substitute for religion and philosophy. Strauss summarized the link between alienation and production as follows:

> We have first an idea of man. This idea of man is exposed to the great difficulty that all ideas are historically conditioned, and therefore in Marx the idea of man may be provisional and be superseded by an entirely opposite idea which no one can know, naturally. Marx disposes of that by conceiving of the historical process as a fundamentally cyclical process, and that is implied in the notion, [that] the historical process is one of alienation and abolition of alienation. Man alienates himself first into products and then he recovers control of his products, takes them back. That is the abolition of alienation, but alienation implies that man is originally with and by himself; originally. And that means more concretely that the production of things is prior to the production of thoughts, of myths. This in its turn presupposes that the so-called economic activity is man's fundamental activity.[168]

In other words, in order to firmly establish Marx's view of humanity and ensure that it remain independent of time and place, Marxist history is a cycle of alienation and elimination of alienation. Alienation is philosophy; its elimination is Marxism. Alienation is the process whereby humanity became enslaved by its inventions: God, religion, the state, morality, and a capitalist economy. Once capital accrued, the pure economy of human production became alien to man, an external and tyrannical force. The elimination of alienation will become possible once people recognize their creative power and regain control of the world.[169] The realization of Marxism will be the end of history—the end of alienation.

Marx was a historicist who believed that historical context determined consciousness. However, Strauss emphasized that Marxist history was not eternal or linear. It aspired to a non-alienated beginning and ending. Alienation presumed a past in which humanity was not alienated. The end of history assumed a similar future. Strauss rejected Marx's reliance on history and his denial of natural right in favor of production. However, he distinguished Marx's desire to return to the origins of mankind, and his belief that his doctrine was the absolute truth, from relativistic views. In that sense, Strauss cleared Marx, "the father of Communism," of the taint of relativism and what he saw as the crime of radical historicism.

Marx was also "acquitted" of collaboration with positivism, which Strauss saw as a dangerous enemy that had brought about conformism and a rejection of philosophy. Strauss especially criticized Max Weber, "the greatest representative of social positivism," for determining that science must be "value free" and morally neutral.[170] Weber rejected value judgments on the assumption that human reason was incapable of resolving problems caused by a conflict of values.

Strauss believed that Weber's positivism "leads to nihilism or to the view that every preference, however evil, base, or insane, has to be judged before the tribunal of reason to be as legitimate at any other preference."[171] He opened his book, *Natural Right and History*, with two quotes from the Bible: the parable of the poor man's lamb (2 Samuel 12), which includes a divine rebuke of King David, and the story of Naboth of Jezreel (1 Kings 21), which depicts the sins of Jezebel and Ahab. Both biblical passages are concerned with politics and ways in which the powerful wrong the weak. According to Strauss, positivism and historicism dulled the unquestionable injustices portrayed in each of these examples:

> It is prudent to grant that there are value conflicts which cannot in fact be settled by human reason. But if we cannot decide which of two mountains whose peaks are hidden by clouds is higher than the other, cannot we decide that a mountain is higher than a molehill? If we cannot decide, regarding a war between two neighboring nations which have been fighting each other for centuries, which nation cause is more just, cannot we decide that Jezebel's action against Naboth was inexcusable? … The belief that value judgements are not subject, in the last analysis, to rational control encourages the inclination to make irresponsible assertions regarding right and wrong or good and bad.[172]

According to Strauss, while Marx did reject philosophy in favor of empirical science, he differed from positivism in his search for a comprehensive metaphysics. Marx came close to twentieth-century positivism but stopped short of it. Strauss held that although a metaphysics based solely on economics was groundless and absurd, it was better than positivism, which he believed had refused "to think about the fundamental questions":

> Here we have another reference to this positivism of Marx… The rejection of philosophy: only positive empirical science can give us revelation about what is… this positivism… is fundamentally different from present-day positivism, and the chief difference, to repeat this point, is that present-day positivism denies wholes. It tries to understand what presents itself as a whole, say, capitalist society, liberal democracy, communism, as the product of more fundamental elements which are present everywhere so that the differences between such wholes come out only as quantitative differences whereas Marx is guided by the Hegelian view that quantity necessarily transforms itself into quality. There are essential differences, according to Marx, not according to the positivists…Economics, let us say, has to do with things-production, not with thoughts-production, and the economics is a science of thing-production in its various stages. This science of thing-production is, according to Marx, although Marx does not use the term, the fundamental science: metaphysics.[173]

Strauss' position was far removed from that of Marx, and he utterly rejected the principles of Marxism. However, he appears to have distinguished Marx from the maladies of modernity and Western society that he beheld after World War II. Although he shunned Marxism and saw Communism as the enemy, perhaps even an absolute, eternal foe, he acknowledged that domestic evils such as the behaviorism, positivism, and relativism that ruled contemporary academia posed no less of a threat to the West.

Overcoming the World of Necessity—Marx as a Radical Philosopher of Freedom

The discussion of alienation, freedom, and the utter subjugation of nature to creative humanity led Strauss to focus on *The German Ideology* and on the tension between idealism and materialism in Marx's early writings. According to Strauss, Marx's philosophy was

"trans-philosophic," a synthesis between materialism and idealism.[174] Materialism was marked by subjugation to nature and by seeing "only the power of nature and man as one natural being among others," while idealism was a rebellion against nature and the freedom to resist it.[175] Marx's doctrine was an attempt to combine a return to nature with creation and freedom. According to Strauss, Marx made an essential distinction between the human and non-human. Humans create and plan. Non-humans do not create. The non-human—animals, plants, and the inanimate world—are merely tools in the hands of humans. They provide humanity with the means to create history.[176] According to Strauss, the essence of man—if such a thing exists—did not interest Marx, who did not recognize its role in changing man's condition for the better. It is not the essence that matters, but rather a correct perception of history. "Marx has played probably a greater role than any other individual in liberating modern man from the old fashioned notions of the importance of the essence of man," said Strauss, who held that only belief in a permanent, unchanging essence of mankind would serve as protection against deteriorating into nihilism and relativism.[177] In that context, Strauss and Marx represented diametrical opposites divided by an unbridgeable gap.

Marx's doctrine focused on man's needs, rather than on his abilities or talents. To explain this position, Strauss used a quintessentially American example, a symbol of American political thought: *The Federalist Papers* (1787–1788), written by founding fathers Alexander Hamilton (1757–1804), James Madison (1751–1836), and John Jay (1745–1829).[178] Strauss presented *The Federalist* as the precise opposite of Marx. He chose to center on one of the most important essays in the book, *The Federalist* No. 10 (written by Madison), which is concerned with protecting the rights of minorities, preventing tyranny, and thwarting the negative effects of factionalism.

Yet Strauss was not interested in the need to protect minorities, in the importance of the republican principle, or in the relationship between governance and representation: he used the essay to point out what the opposite of Marx's view would look like, focusing on the relations between human talent and happiness. *The Federalist* acknowledges the unequal distribution of talent. The government's duty to defend this inequality is paramount:

> The diversity in the faculties of men from which the rights of property originate, is not less an insuperable obstacle to a uniformity of interests.

> The protection of these faculties is the first object of Government. From the protection of different and unequal faculties of acquiring property, the possession of different degrees and kinds of property immediately results: and from the influence of these on the sentiments and views of the respective proprietors, ensues a division of the society into different interests and parties.[179]

According to Strauss, this passage, which encapsulates the basic assumptions of American thought, validated the direct tie between unequal distribution of talent and happiness, or the conditions needed for happiness to exist: inequality in talent or skills enables some people to attain success and happiness and prevents others, less blessed, from fulfilling all their ambitions.[180] Despite the factionalism and clash of interests that arises from protecting unequal talent, it is vital to the republic that this variability be ensured. In contrast, Marx argued that unequal talent did not justify unequal pleasure or happiness. Instead, the focus was on people's needs, and this should be the basis for constructing the proper political regime, which would bring about "the end of history."

Strauss saw modern philosophy as foreign to an immutable natural right, which was external to man and not bound by him. In contrast, according to Marx, modern alienated man was bewitched by all that he has created. God, the state, law, money—humanity created all these, yet was now enslaved by them. Only when man could control creation could he overcome this state of alienation and end history, along with the problems of humanity.[181] A free society would be possible only once alienation was overcome.

Following Kojève, Strauss criticized Marx's concept of freedom. The "last man" at the end of history succeeded in escaping "the realm of necessity" and achieving "the realm of freedom." According to Kojève, the meaning of freedom at the end of history was the end of philosophy: humanity would not change and would no longer need to question the principles underlying its comprehension of the world. Regarding *Capital*, Kojève commented in a footnote on the Marxist distinction between "the realm of necessity," i.e. history, in which humanity fights for recognition and against nature, and "the realm of freedom," which is free of any conflict, both between people and between man and nature:

> The disappearance of Man at the end of History, therefore, is not a cosmic catastrophe: the natural World remains what it has been from all eternity.

> And therefore, it is not a biological catastrophe either: [m]an remains alive as animal in *harmony* with Nature or given Being. What disappears is Man properly so-called—that is, Action negating the given, and Error, or in general, the Subject *opposed* to the Object. In point of fact, the end of human Time or History—that is, the definitive annihilation of Man properly so-called or of the free and historical individual—means quite simply the cessation of Action in the full sense of the term. Practically, this means: the disappearance of wars and bloody revolutions. And also the disappearance of *Philosophy*; for since Man himself no longer changes essentially, there is no longer any reason to change the (true) principles which are at the basis of his understanding of the World and of himself. But all the rest can be preserved indefinitely; art, love, play, etc., etc.; in short, everything that makes Man *happy*. Let us recall that this Hegelian theme, among many others, was taken up by Marx. History properly so-called, in which men ("classes") fight among themselves for recognition and fight against Nature by work, is called in Marx "Realm of necessity" (Reich der Notwendigkeit); *beyond* (jenseits) is situated the "Realm of freedom" (Reich der Freiheit), in which men (mutually recognizing one another without reservation) no longer fight, and work as little as possible (Nature having been definitively mastered—that is, harmonized with Man).[182]

This state of freedom was different from liberal conceptions of freedom, which Strauss defined as relativistic. Of his published writings, in "Relativism" Strauss elaborated on this issue and on Marx, in general. The essay, published in 1961 (a year after the seminar on Marx), criticized the major twentieth-century schools of thought: liberalism, Marxism, and positivism. A major target of Strauss' criticism in this essay was Isaiah Berlin, the historian of ideas, whose "Two Concepts of Liberty" (1958) spearheaded Western liberalism's fight against Communism and other contemporary opponents.[183]

Berlin centered on the concept of liberty and distinguished between "negative freedom," which is primarily "the area within which a man can do what he wants," and "positive freedom," which "derives from the wish on the part of the individual to be his own master."[184] According to Berlin, these two concepts collide. While negative freedom wishes "to curb authority as such," proponents of positive freedom "want it placed in their own hands."[185] Berlin saw a great danger inherent to positive freedom, as the desire to rule could extend beyond the private domain and decline into Rousseau's "general will"—a tyrannical position that, according to Berlin, tries to force its worldview onto others.

According to Strauss, Berlin's "formula" was important "for the purpose of an anti-Communist manifesto designed to rally all anti-Communists."[186] However, he also felt that Berlin and the celebration of liberty represented the crisis of the West and its sluggish slide toward relativism. Strauss paused over Berlin's basic assumptions toward a discussion of establishing the best regime. According to Berlin:

> I must establish a society in which there must be some frontiers of freedom which nobody should be permitted to cross…they may be called natural rights, or the word of God, or Natural Law, or the demands of utility or of the "permanent interests of man"… What these rules or commandments will have in common is that they are accepted so widely, and are grounded so deeply in the actual nature of men as they have developed through history, as to be, by now, an essential part of what we mean by being a normal human being… It may be that the ideal of freedom to live as one wishes—and the pluralism of values connected with it—is only the late fruit of our declining capitalist civilization… "To realise the relative validity of one's convictions," said an admirable writer of our time, "and yet stand for them unflinchingly, is what distinguishes a civilised man from a barbarian." To demand more than this is perhaps a deep and incurable metaphysical need; but to allow it to guide one's practice is a symptom of an equally deep, and more dangerous, moral and political immaturity.[187]

For Strauss, the idea that the frontiers of freedom were changeable, subjective, and equal in status expressed the relativism that marked Berlin and his contemporaries, and symbolized liberalism's loss of faith in itself. Liberalism aspires to make the private sphere a sanctified, absolute principle, yet is historicist by nature and does not believe in immutable principles. "Liberalism as Berlin understands it," said Strauss, "cannot live without an absolute basis and cannot live with absolute basis… Berlin's statement seems to me to be a characteristic document of the crisis of liberalism—of a crisis due to the fact that liberalism has abandoned its absolute basis and is trying to become entirely relativistic."[188]

Strauss held that Western liberalism as preached by Berlin admitted its dependence on historical context and did not believe in eternal truths. In contrast, Marx's conception of freedom aspired to go beyond relativistic historicism and the distinction between "positive" and "negative" liberty. Marx's freedom strove to be universal, an existence that would enable each and every human to develop his or her talents without harming others. It was a freedom of affluence without scarcity that removed

all social and historical obstacles which previously prevented people from fulfilling themselves. This sort of liberty took equality as a given and utterly rejected Aristotelian natural inequality. Only in a society that enabled every person free development could a common good exist: a classless society in which people achieved self-realization.[189]

However, Strauss claimed that Marxism ultimately failed to avoid relativism, relying for his explanation on Marxist theorist Georg Lukács. Strauss valued Lukács and his books *History and Class Consciousness* (1923) and *The Destruction of Reason* (1954). In the seminar, Strauss defined him as "a man of unusual intelligence," adding: "I don't believe there is another Marxist writing in a western language who comes within hailing distance of that fellow."[190]

Lukács, Strauss added, hinted that Marxism did not represent an eternal truth but rather a description of reality relevant to a particular historical context, just as the ideas that drove the French Revolution were true of their time. The revolutionary intellectuals in France aptly analyzed the faults of the monarchy in France, but were wrong in believing that replacing the old regime would promote happiness. Strauss described Lukács as a Marxist thinker who used historicism to undermine fundamental tenets of the Marxist doctrine: belief in the absolute truth of its principles and in the inevitable advancement of good in the world. According to Strauss, even if Marxism was right in analyzing the injustices of capitalism, it would not necessarily set humanity free:

> The application to Marxism is obvious: even if Marxism were the last word regarding the ground of the rottenness of capitalist society and regarding the way in which that society can and will be destroyed, it cannot possibly be the last word regarding the new society that the revolutionary action of the proletariat brings to birth: the new society may be as rich in contradictions and oppressions as the old society, although its contradictions and oppressions will, of course, be entirely novel. For if Marxism is only the truth of our time or our society, the prospect of the classless society too is only the truth of our time and society. It may be prove to be the delusion that gave the proletariat the power and the spirit to overthrow the capitalist system, whereas in fact the proletariat finds itself afterwards enslaved, no longer indeed by capital, but by an ironclad military bureaucracy.[191]

Strauss' Marx adopted the principle of "the end of history" and saw the future Communist revolution as the beginning of a post-historical

or trans-historical era in which humanity would be reborn. Strauss questioned this Hegelian solution. Hegel believed in a teleological process: the human mind striving to achieve full consciousness. According to Strauss, this process did not exist in Marxist thought. Marx ignored the existence of purpose, yet still aspired to an absolute moment in history and sought to resolve the problems of mankind through Communism:

> Marx avoids relativism by fundamentally the Hegelian way… it is a Hegelian solution. There is an absolute; there can be an absolute class because there is an absolute moment in history: the recovery of man, the resurrection of man. But does Marx have a right to such a Hegelian solution? Hegel had a right. Whether Marx has a right is another matter. And Hegel had a right fundamentally because of the teleological character of his conception: the historical process is the unfolding of the mind, and this unfolding is a teleological process. The mind always wanted to know itself, desired that, and then it finally reaches this result in the full consciousness of the mind's activity in Hegelian philosophy.[192]

Marx aspired to the creation of universal humanity, free of worries, at the end of history. By overcoming alienation and abolishing class differences and the state itself, man would be reborn and humanity could exist in global freedom. Strauss referred to Marx's famous saying about a future Communist society:

> Where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening [Strauss quipped that he wondered who would tend to cattle in the evening. AA], criticize after dinner, just as I have in mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic.[193]

According to Strauss, this vision of radical freedom meant that every single person could develop his or her talents without fear of scarcity or war. While Marx saw such a situation as ideal, Strauss imagined it as a nightmare of superficial mediocrity epitomizing the victory of "the last man." Globalization, with the universal person at its center, would eradicate quality and do away with all that is noble in humanity:

> The wealth—the spiritual, intellectual wealth of an individual, which Marx regarded, of course, much more highly than his monetary wealth, depends entirely on the wealth of his actual relations. Now these relations become enormously enlarged as soon as you have a world market. You have relations to all parts of the globe, to all kinds of humanity, and this makes you intellectually or spiritually richer. You only have to think of a man like Shakespeare, who lived a considerable time before the full emergence of the world market, who never left England, who knew what he knew of antiquity in other places from certain books, and he was probably judicious in selecting these books. He should have less intellectual freedom than a globetrotter of the twentieth century? Absurd. This freedom of which Marx speaks here can hardly be desirable one. This ideal can hardly be said to be superior to earlier ideas.[194]

For Strauss, Marx's radical ideal of freedom represented an ultimate victory of the Moderns over the Ancients: vanquishing nature and eliminating natural inequality. Despite the fact that in Marxism, the division of labor was primarily a social matter based on production relations, Strauss centered on natural aspects of it: he chose to quote Marx's saying that it "was originally nothing but the division of labor in the sexual act."[195] If the different reproductive roles of men and women were the primary basis for dividing labor, doing away with this division altogether eventually meant, according to Strauss' Marx, eliminating sexuality and creating global uniformity:

> Now if you think this through, what is the conclusion? It is perfectly—if the division of labor is rooted ultimately in the bisexuality of man—that is the primary form—and the division of labor is to be overcome, let's get rid of the bi-sexuality. Yet don't laugh. I mean, it is silly but it is a very serious problem… I'm not speaking of Mr. and Mrs. Jorgensen in particular, but I'm concerned with the—what—people have given some thought throughout the ages to the question of producing human beings in test tubes.[196]

Thus, Marx's concept of vanquishing nature would radically transform humanity, resulting in biological or even genetic changes made possible by technological advances. It would enslave not only the natural world, but human nature itself.

In the 1960 seminar, discussion of Marx's concept of freedom peaked with the study of *Capital*. Cropsey led most of the discussion, although

Strauss actively participated in it. According to the latter, Marx did not turn his back on his early writings in *Capital*, but rather continued a consistent line of political thought. Strauss emphasized that Marxism was primarily a philosophy of freedom, its goal to fully free humanity. The free individual would be productive; he would subjugate nature and not vice versa; born in a society that knew no want, he would live unbound by the shackles of necessity. Marx symbolized the opposite of Aristotle: although both stood "outside of the capitalistic world," the classical Greek philosopher belonged to the pre-capitalist age while the latter dreamed of a post-capitalist utopia.[197] Marx, a representative of modernity, promoted a world of freedom and total control over nature. Aristotle, a representative of the pre-modern world, stood for a life of necessity constrained by nature. Strauss, a critic of modern philosophy, was naturally closer to the Aristotelian view that nature is superior to humanity.

Total Rule or Total Annihilation—Strauss' Fear of Surrender to Communism

For Strauss, Marx's concept of freedom was intertwined with an inevitable destruction of civilization. A side comment on the conflict between freedom of will and determinism in Marx's thought revealed the full force of his fear of Communism:

> I don't remember a passage in Marx, but in Engels there occurs this remark in the *Anti-Dühring* that this communist world society is bound to come at the peril of the destruction of civilization. There is an alternative… this ultimate alternative, civilization might perish, is admitted by Engels and also by later writers. Now, this is, of course, very grave. There might be people who say let civilization perish rather than get this abomination. Then the whole case is bust wide open. There is where the difficulty arises. Now the tacit premise of Marx, and I think also of [Vladimir] Lenin [1870-1924] and of Khrushchev today, is people are not so foolish to ruin themselves when ruin is obvious. In the case of Hitler ruin was not obvious. There was a fair chance from his point of view, and it was touch and go. But now in the age of thermo-nuclear war, it is impossible to play with that kind of thing. You know, a minimum of common sense suffices to rule that out. It still might accidentally happen.[198]

At first glance, this passage may seem somewhat obscure. Yet reading it closely, along with a comparison to other comments made by Strauss

both in this seminar and in other texts, reveals that this quote actually captured the essence of Strauss' postwar teaching in the United States: fear of the Communist conviction that civilization was destined to be ruined in order to make way for the Communist ideal, and a search for a more powerful alternative.

The passage mentions expressions, persons, and key concepts that recur throughout the seminar and extend beyond Marx and Marxism. Although Strauss was explicitly discussing Marx, he also noted Hitler, Engels, Lenin, and Khrushchev, as well as the demise of civilization and nuclear war.

According to Strauss, Marx and Engels held that a Communist revolution was inevitable. Strauss emphasized that for Marx, there was no alternative to Communism. He repeated George Sands' (1804–1876) quote, with which Marx chose to end *Misère de la philosophie* (The Poverty of Philosophy, 1847): "[c]ombat or death: bloody struggle or extinction. It is thus that the question is irresistibly put."[199] Strauss interpreted this as follows:

> "Struggle or death, bloody war or nothing"—bloody war, that's of course revolution, or nothing. Concretely, communism or the destruction of civilization, communism or the destruction of the human race, perhaps. Is communism preferable to destruction of civilization? A question which we must raise. The very necessity of raising the question proves the need for philosophy.[200]

According to Strauss, Marx and Engels admitted that the alternative to Communism was suicide, or the destruction of civilization. Strauss claimed that Marx and Soviet leaders past and present (such as Lenin or Khrushchev) assumed that no one would choose to fight to the death in order to stop the wheels of revolution from turning, especially if death was a certain outcome. Hitler and "people who say: let civilization perish rather than get this abomination" refused to accept this dictate. In fact, as Strauss noted, Hitler even stood a real chance of defeating Communism without paying the price of collective suicide. In the nuclear age, Strauss explained, war against Communism might mean total annihilation.

Strauss stated that Marx and the Communist leaders believed in historical determinism that would see their vision fulfilled—even as reality proved otherwise. One alternative to this determinism was the option of destroying civilization—suicide—rather than accepting the principles of

Communism. For Strauss, suicide was indeed a destructive option that should be avoided; nevertheless, he reiterated that this kind of destruction of humanity was still an alternative to the victory of Communism:

> At least Engels already admitted and as today is rather obvious for other reasons, there is an alternative which they admit. The alternative is the destruction of civilization, maybe even the destruction of the human race in terms of super weapons which you have now… people may detest the prospect of a communist world society so much that they would use every means against that, and would use things which would bury both sides and not only one side as Khrushchev would. So that alone, I think, shows. In other words, the question of choice cannot be disposed of… even granting that I say there is no human situation in which one can say there is no alternative and therefore the question of choice comes up. I believe that part of the reasoning behind fascism in some so-called gentleman fascists—I believe had this character: rather the destruction of the world than the victory of communism. That showed at least that—the possibility of such a choice. It failed in this form—but there is no—I can only repeat that both Engels and Lenin—and Engels, I'm sure, Lenin, I'm almost sure, say that. The communist—the victory of communism is the only alternative to the destruction of civilization. Yes. But the destruction of civilization is an alternative; even the destruction of the human race is an alternative and today clearer than ever for well known reasons.[201]

"People who say: let civilization perish rather than get this abomination" are revealed in this passage to be the "so-called gentleman fascists" who refused to accept the victory of Communism.

In the seminar, Strauss did not explicitly identify with fascist views of Communism. However, what he taught in 1960 was very similar to a less equivocal view expressed in his 1941 lecture "German Nihilism," discussed here in Chapter 2. In the lecture, which was delivered before the United States joined World War II, Strauss tried to unpack the motivations of nihilists and to understand their willingness to destroy civilization.

While Communism believed in the necessary establishment of a universal society of equals, the nihilists viewed the destruction of civilization as an actual possibility in its own right. They favored this solution over a Marxist utopia, proving that there could always be an alternative to Communism, even if it meant suicide. As detailed in the previous chapter, Strauss accorded the young German nihilists great respect

in his lecture. They were driven to fight Communism not out of economic fear, but rather by their objection to the vision of a flat world, "a planetary society devoted to production and consumption only." For the nihilists, Marx and communism represented the danger of "the last man" taking over the world. Strauss identified with their concern, both in 1941 and two decades later, in his seminar on Marx. In the United States, he publicly condemned the violent solution promoted by fascism and expressed reservations over Nietzsche, who had ushered in the third wave of modernity and radical historicism. However, his worldview remained much closer to that of Nietzsche than to the ideals proposed by Marx and Communism. Nietzsche, "the stepgrandfather of Communism", was a friend, or former friend, while "the father of Communism" was decidedly an enemy. Twenty years after writing "German Nihilism," which was a retrospective look at his time in Germany, Strauss' views had not changed: Marx was an enemy in the early Weimar days, and he was still an enemy in the United States.

However, in the seminar on Marx, Strauss' fear of Communism was limited to a critical study of Marx's political philosophy and a warning against nuclear war. While he described Marx's attempt to abolish philosophy, vanquish nature, and crown "the last man," Strauss did not lay out a fully fledged doctrine on Communism, the Cold War, and the policy that the United States must adopt in order to overcome the enemy from the East. To understand Strauss' view on this issue, one must look to sources beyond the seminar.

Some of these sources are drafts or copies of letters from the early 1960s, written by Strauss or addressed to him. One is a memo from October 24, 1961, that Strauss wrote to Charles H. Percy (1919–2011), a businessman (the president of the Bell and Howell Corporation from 1949 to 1964) and Republican politician (in 1964 he ran for governor of Illinois and lost; in 1966 he was elected senator). Strauss' archive contains several drafts of the memo. One is addressed to Strauss' friend and pupil, Robert A. Goldwin (1922–2010), who was working closely with Percy.[202]

Goldwin studied under Strauss and completed his doctoral dissertation in political science at the University of Chicago in 1963. At the time, he was a lecturer on political science and director of the Public Affairs Conference Center at the University of Chicago. From 1969 to 1973, he was the dean of St. John's College in Annapolis—the last academic institution in which Strauss taught. In 1974, when Donald

Rumsfeld (b. 1932) was appointed White House Chief of Staff, Goldwin joined him as a special advisor (decades later, Rumsfeld went on to serve as secretary of defense under George W. Bush). In his obituary, Rumsfeld wrote that Goldwin was "the Ford administration's one-man think tank, its intellectual compass, and a bridge to a new conservatism—a conservatism that was unashamed to be conservative."[203] According to Rumsfeld, "he helped provide the intellectual underpinning that convinced many Republicans that they didn't have to apologize when they stood for lower taxes or suggested that our strategy against the Soviet Union ought not be placation."[204]

The memo to Percy and Goldwin illuminates Strauss' worldview and is a valuable contribution to the controversy that still rages over Strauss and the Straussians. In the letter, quoted in full below, Strauss argued that the Soviet Union spawned by "the father of Communism" and its utopian ideal were declared enemies of the United States that should be mercilessly fought:

> The major premise of American foreign policy must be: no strengthening of the USSR at the expense of the USA. But concessions regarding Berlin and East Germany push Germany toward the USSR and therefore strengthen the USSR. The conclusion: unless concessions in this respect are accompanied by equally great concessions on the part of the USSR, there must not be the concessions now contemplated. Since it is patent that no acceptable concessions on the part of the USSR are in sight, there must be no concessions on our part. Yet, some people argue, the concessions regarding Berlin and East Germany correspond to the legitimate demand of Russia. They are its only demands, its last demands; thereafter there will be genuine peace. But this argument presupposes that Russia has ceased to be Communist—which is nonsense. There cannot be genuine peace with Communism. The opponents continue to argue as follows: if we do not seek genuine peace, then we heighten the danger of thermonuclear war, which confronts us with the alternative of annihilation or surrender. Without genuine peace, we must face this alternative. There is profound cleavage of opinion in this country as for which of the two alternatives is preferable. The issue will be settled not in journals by the people who call themselves and are called by others, "the intellectuals," but, as is meet in a democracy, ultimately by the majority vote of the people at large. If this issue is brought before the American people, I believe, the large majority will be opposed to surrender—if for no other reason than for this: because the speakers against surrender will be more

> trusted by the American people than the speakers for surrender. To make this point quite clear, further considerable setbacks for the United States (super-Cubas) will bring about an anti-"intellectual" reaction compared with which "McCarthyism" will look like child's play. We must start from the premise that the American people, as a strong, virile, and free people will prefer to perish rather than to surrender. But annihilation and surrender do not exhaust the alternatives. There is the alternative of victory *i.e.*, that the Communists do the surrendering. Above all, there is the alternative of a *modus vivendi*. This is the best alternative for which one can hope in the circumstances. Yet: the possibility of a *modus vivendi* does not exist now—how can you peacefully live together with, or be a good neighbor of, someone who is set to bury you? There cannot be a *modus vivendi* until Russia abandons Communism. In the sense that it cease to act on the premises of Communism; for it is utterly uninteresting to us and the rest of the non-Communist world whether the Russians go on paying lip-service to Communism, provided they have become convinced that the free West is here to stay, and they act on this conviction. To bring about this change of mind, the West must be as tough, and if need be, as brutal as the Communists are to the West. The West must demonstrate to the Communists, by words and deeds which allow no possibility of error, that they must postpone forever the establishment of the Communist world society. But the *modus vivendi* demands also a radical change on our part—a change of outlook or expectations which will necessarily issue in a change of policies. I can only speak of the change of outlook. Hitherto the West has believed in the possibility of a perfectly just society (federationist or unitary) comprising all mankind—a society rendered possible in the first place by universal affluence and ultimately by the increase in human power to be brought about by technology or science. Everyone has now become aware of the fact that the great enterprise which was meant to bring about the abolition of misery, has in fact brought about what we may call the ultimate misery: namely, the possibility that, so to speak, a single tyrant can destroy the human race. We must rethink radically the expectation which has pervaded our thoughts and actions in all domains, that the human condition is thinkable without the accompaniment of misery. By this I do not deny that it is the duty of humanity to relieve misery wherever one can.[205]

The October 1961 memo was not the only letter Strauss sent to Percy. In another letter, dated February, 12, 1963, Strauss wrote:

> I believe that the following points have not been made, or at least have not been made with sufficient audibility: (1) To speak in the only language which Khrushchev understands, Cuba is our Hungary; just as we did not

> make the slightest move when he solved the problem in his back yard, Hungary, he cannot and *will not*, make the slightest move if and when we take care of the problem in our back yard, Cuba. (2) The President has not succeeded in dispelling the impression that what moved him to a moment's action, after which he relapsed into the old inactivity, was not a belated understanding of the true situation but the fear to lose elections… the President has surrounded himself with advisors who are completely deluded about the character of the Communist menace.[206]

These letters delineate a distinction between friend and enemy: Communism is the absolute enemy of the West, and especially of the United States. This foe must be obliterated at any cost, even utter destruction. Paying the price of ruin for victory is always preferable to surrendering. Even if war may bring about annihilation, there must be no dialogue with the Soviet Union; a *modus vivendi* cannot be accepted, as the enemy is not open to negotiation and is intent upon destroying the West.

Strauss opposed any conciliatory gestures toward the Soviet enemy and returned to a position that was very close to "the nihilist nobility": if the choice is between surrender and either victory or annihilation, the second option must be chosen, in order to prevent the disgrace of subjugation to the ideas of "the father of Communism."

Awareness of the existence of nuclear arms and the global danger they signify are apparent here. In his writings, Strauss often criticized the modern attempt to subjugate nature through technology, yet rarely addressed the atomic bomb and the possibility that humanity might annihilate itself with technology of its own making. However, the unpublished seminar on Marx, the letters to Goldwin and Percy and other unpublished seminars such as the seminar on Hegel, all reveal that in the United States, Strauss saw the era in which he was living as the atomic age. In the seminar on Hegel, he was asked whether Engels foresaw the possibility of a cosmic disaster. Strauss replied that, unlike Hegel, "Engels predicts it, surely, but he also says that it is a long way off and for practical purposes we have infinite progress in the future and who cares about what will happen in billions of years—a very good statement for a propagandist but not for a philosopher."[207] At another point in the lecture, Strauss explained the meaning of Hegel's term "the spirit of the age":

> Let us say there are two extreme poles in a given situation, in a given age. Yes? And then there are all kinds of things in between, a whole rainbow.

> But Hegel would contend that the "spirit of the age" is that rainbow, and all the oppositions take place within a common framework. If you take a present day democratic liberal, a communist, a crypto-fascist, a Catholic, and a Muslim, Hegel would say that there are differences, of course, but there is something going through all of them which you would not find in the preceding age. Yes? You must have heard the words "atomic age"? Yes? That would be an example of what he means. Whatever differences there may be, and there are surely some very great differences, everyone today is affected by the fact that he lives in the "atomic age" at least in his thought. No one was affected by that in 1910, to say nothing of earlier times. And Hegel would say that this is what really counts, what gives color to every position taken within the age.[208]

The spirit of the age in the second half of the twentieth century—the age of the Cold War and the period in which Strauss taught in the United States—was marked by awareness of the atomic bomb and the possibility of global annihilation. Strauss' political teaching and his views of the two world powers at the time, the United States and the Soviet Union, were greatly influenced by the knowledge that a third world war would almost certainly bring about utter decimation. On the one hand, like the nihilists and the fascists, Strauss rejected the idea of enslavement to Communism and preferred sacrifice to surrender. On the other hand, unlike the young scholar who lived in the Weimar Republic and was attracted to the anti-liberalism of his time, Strauss of the United States lived in the deathly grip of possible nuclear annihilation. When he taught the history of ideas, he had this possible visage before him and preached the value of moderation in his teaching. In his letters, however, he was—or allowed himself to be—less moderate.

Strauss' defense of America was not a natural choice. It would not have been possible without the lengthy process of gradual change in his thought described in Chapter 2. The West's spirit of freedom and democracy, spearheaded by the United States, had saved civilization from the barbarity of Hitler and Nazism and prevented Communism from taking over after World War II. Strauss, who shared an affinity with anti-democratic views in the Weimar Republic, grew increasingly ambivalent toward liberal American democracy. The United States was undoubtedly a product of modernity, but it was also a stable political entity that had enough power to pull the world back from the brink of the abyss. In contrast, Strauss remained steadfast in his objection

to Communism throughout his life: an enemy remained an enemy. In Weimar as in the United States, he believed that one must never surrender to Communism.

Strauss held that the United States must stand strong in the face of its enemies. However, as an onlooker in the 1950s and 1960s, he was not pleased with the path America had chosen. In the last section of his memo to Goldwin and Percy, Strauss claimed that the West must undergo a reckoning. He saw the liberal American ideal and "the father of Communism" as partners in an attempt to form a global society of affluence that would eradicate misery through technology and subjugation of nature. This effort was, in Strauss' view, a major reason for the closing of the American mind, which placed it at risk of succumbing to tyranny from the East. The United States must grow stronger by rejecting modernity and ceasing its attempts to fulfill the liberal ideal. It must change from the very core. Strauss' contribution to the ideological fight against Communism was encapsulated in his book *The City and Man* (1964).

Notes

1. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 165.
2. Raymond Aron, *The Opium of the Intellectuals* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1962 [1955]), 55.
3. Leo Strauss, "Liberal Education and Responsibility," *Liberalism: Ancient and Modern* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1968), 24.
4. In his book, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany 1890–1990*, Steven E. Aschheim described the reception of Nietzsche in political life and culture in Germany and noted two extreme attitudes toward him. At one end of the scale lay Walter Kaufmann, who saw Nietzsche as a humanist philosopher and criticized what he called "the Nietzschean legend," which was responsible for a distorted interpretation of his works. At the other was Georg Lukács, to whom Nietzsche was "an inherently proto-Fascist thinker, father to a nazism which, given the logic and dictates of historical developments, was inexorably bound to faithfully reflect his ideas." See Steven E. Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany 1890–1990*, 4. See also Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950); Georg Lukács, *The Destruction of Reason* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1981).
5. See also Strauss, "Existentialism," 306.

6. In the famous lecture "What Is Political Philosophy?" that Strauss gave in Jerusalem in 1954, Marx was mentioned only once, under the title "Machiavellian." See Strauss, "What Is Political Philosophy?" 41.
7. Strauss, "An Unspoken Prologue to a Public Lecture at St. John's College in Honor of Jacob Klein (1959)," 2.
8. Strauss, "What Is Political Philosophy?" 56.
9. See, for example, Jefferey C. Isaac, "Critics of Totalitarianism," Terence Ball and Richard Bellamy (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 181–201; Paul Thomas, "Critical Reception: Marx Then and Now," Terrell Craver (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Marx* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 29. See also Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Schocken Books, 2004 [1951]); Edward Hallett Carr, *The Soviet Union Impact on the Western World* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947); Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965 [1956]); Abbott Gleason, *Totalitarianism: The Inner History of the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Walter Laqueur, *The Fate of the Revolution: Interpretations of Soviet History* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967); Achim Siegel (ed.), *The Totalitarian Paradigm After the End of Communism: Towards a Theoretical Reassessment* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998); Stephen J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).
10. See Aron, *The Opium of the Intellectuals*. See also Perry Anderson, *Considerations on Western Marxism* (London: Verso, 1979 [1976]); Terrance Ball and Richard Bellamy (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Political Thought*, 217–318; Daryl Glaser and David M. Walker (eds.), *Twentieth-century Marxism: A Global Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2008).
11. See Isaiah Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969); Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (London: Routledge, 2012 [1945]); Jacob L. Talmon, *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1952).
12. Hans Morgenthau, "Hannah Arendt 1906–1975," *Political Theory* 4, no. 1 (February 1976), 6–7.
13. On the prominence of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* as Arendt's most important book, see, for example, Ronald Beiner, "Hannah Arendt and Leo Strauss: The Uncommenced Dialogue," *Political Theory* 18, no. 2 (May 1990), 251; Margaret Canovan, *Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of Her Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 7.

14. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 397, 408, 411, 413.
15. See, for example, Carl J. Friedric (ed.), *Totalitarianism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954).
16. According to Arendt, Marx venerated labor and satisfaction of basic needs over work or action, which are higher levels of the *vita activa*. She saw Marx as responsible for the devaluation of action in the modern age. See Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).
17. See Nathan Tarcov, "Leo Strauss and American Conservative Thought and Politics," *Nomos* 56 (2016): 381–401.
18. For an exception, see Jean-François Drolet, "The Cryptic Cold War Realism of Leo Strauss," *International Politics* 46 (2009): 1–27. The few attempts made to understand Strauss' thinking in the United States in the spirit of his time centered on his response to the rise of behaviorism and positivism in academic research in the United States, which he, of course, rejected. See John G. Gunnell, *The Descent of Political Theory: The Genealogy of American Vocation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993). Other studies, which were written from a Straussian viewpoint, noted the Cold War and described the anti-Communist spirit among Strauss and his students, but did not expand on the subject. Supporters of Strauss often argue that as a critic of liberalism and modernity, Strauss sided with democracy and the West in the battle against Communism. Yet his aim was not to defend notions such as positive or negative liberty but rather philosophy itself and the foundations of the classical natural order, which could exist in the American republic. See, for example, Deutsch and Murley (eds.), *Leo Strauss, The Straussians, and the American Regime*; Deutsch and Sofer (eds.), *The Crisis of Liberal Democracy*; Zuckert, *The Truth About Leo Strauss*. See also Thomas West, "Leo Strauss and the American Founding," *The Review of Politics* 53, no. 1 (Winter 1991): 157–172. For a conservative critique of Strauss in America, see Paul Edward Gottfroed, *Leo Strauss and the Conservative Movement in America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Grant N. Havers, *Leo Strauss and Anglo-American Democracy: A Conservative Critique* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2013).
19. Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey (eds.), *History of Political Philosophy* (Chicago: Rand McNally College Publishing Company, 1972 [1963]). Cropsey also wrote the essay on Marx included in the book (755–781).
20. The Leo Strauss Transcript Series, initiated by the University of Chicago's Leo Strauss Center, recently published some annotated and edited transcripts of Strauss' courses. See Richard L. Velkley (ed.), *Leo Strauss on Nietzsche's Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Chicago: University

of Chicago Press, 2017); Catherine H. Zuckert (ed.), *Leo Strauss on Political Philosophy*; Robert Howse's *Leo Strauss: Man of Peace* (2014) is an example of a recent study that relies heavily on Strauss' transcribed courses.

21. Hannah Arendt, "Walter Benjamin 1892–1940," *Men in Dark Times*, 205.
22. Cropsey gave nine of the sixteen lectures, and Strauss seven. A session that Strauss held on April 18, 1960, is missing from the transcript.
23. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 1. See also Leo Strauss, "Critical Note: Locke's Doctrine of Natural Law," *The American Political Science Review* 52, no. 2 (June 1958): 490–501; Leo Strauss, "On Locke's Doctrine of Natural Right," *Philosophical Review* 61, no. 4 (October 1952): 475–502; Strauss, "What Is Political Philosophy?" 50–51.
24. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 1–2. Strauss (1) employed various examples of subjective happiness: "[s]omeone finds his happiness in eating a special kind of cooked apples and another in reading novels; others perhaps even in writing novels and so on: infinitely subjective and nothing can be built on that."
25. This was not the first time Strauss used the American Declaration of Independence as an example. *Natural Right and History* opens with a discussion of the Declaration, illustrating the West's loss of belief in natural rights and arguing that American universities had adopted the German tendency toward relativism:

> What was a tolerably accurate description of German thought twenty-seven years ago would now appear to be true of Western thought in general. It would not be the first time that a nation, defeated on the battlefield and, as it were, annihilated as a political being, has deprived its conquerors of the most sublime fruit of victory by imposing on them the yoke of its own thought. Whatever might be true of the thought of the American people, certainly American social science has adopted the very attitude toward natural right which, a generation ago, could still be described, with some plausibility, as characteristic of German thought. The majority among the learned who still adhere to the principles of the Declaration of Independence interpret these principles not as expressions of natural right but as an ideal, if not as an ideology or a myth. Present-day American social science, as far as it is not Roman Catholic social science, is dedicated to the proposition that all men are endowed by the evolutionary process or by a mysterious fate with many kinds of urges and aspirations, but certainly with no natural right.

See Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, 1–2.

26. Max Weber, "Politics as Vocation," David Owen and Tracy B. Strong (eds.), *The Vocation Lectures* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2004 [1919]), 33.
27. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 1–2.
28. Ibid., 2.
29. Ibid.
30. Strauss, "What Is Political Philosophy?" 51–52.
31. Ibid.
32. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 107.
33. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 3–4.
34. Ibid., 5.
35. Ibid., 4. Jean-Jaques Rousseau, "Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts," Donald A. Cress (ed.), *The Basic Political Writings* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2011 [1750]), 1–25. Strauss claimed that Hobbes' and Rousseau's concept of self-preservation presumed that life is worthy or worth preserving, while Nietzsche and existentialism negated the positive nature of Rousseau's "sentiment of existence" and saw existence as a curse rather than a blessing. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 8.
36. Ibid., 5.
37. Ibid., 6.
38. Strauss quoted a paragraph from the chapter titled "On the Social Pact" in Rousseau's *Du contrat social* (The Social Contract, 1762). According to Rousseau, "[t]hese clauses, rightly understood, all come down to just one, namely the total alienation of each associate with all of his rights to the whole community: For in the first place, since each gives himself entirely, the condition is equal for all, no one has any interest in making it burdensome to the rest." See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings*, Victor Gourevitch (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997 [1762]), 50.
39. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 7. For Rousseau's saying, see Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, 41.
40. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 7. Strauss also used the famous saying by Anatole France about "the majestic equality of the laws, which forbid rich and poor alike to sleep under the bridges, to beg in the streets, and to steal their bread." See Anatole France, *The Red Lily* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1925 [1894]), 91.
41. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 7.
42. To illustrate the fundamental difference between Rousseau and Marx, Strauss discussed two twentieth century schools of thought: Freudian

psychoanalysis and Marxist existentialism. According to Strauss, Sigmund Freud represented Rousseau's line of thinking and was diametrically opposed to Marx. Like Rousseau, in *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (Civilization and Its Discontents, 1930) Freud ruled out the possibility of bridging the gap between civilization and happiness. Culture generates suffering, and this suffering cannot be resolved through social means. Marxist existentialism diverges from Marxist tradition in acknowledging that solving social problems does not resolve the existential problems of mankind. See Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 17–18.

43. Ibid., 8.
44. On the importance of Kantian philosophy to Strauss' critique of modernity, see Robert Howse, *Leo Strauss: Man of Peace*, 149–181; Thomas Meyer, "Immanuel Kant und Leo Strauss," *Zeitschrift für Kulturphilosophie* 4, no. 1 (2010): 111–129; Robert B. Pippin, *The Persistence of Subjectivity: On the Kantian Aftermath* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005). For a discussion of Kant in a Straussian spirit, see Pierre Hassner, "Kant," Strauss and Cropsey (eds.), *History of Political Philosophy*, 554–593.
45. For a discussion of neo-Kantianism, see, for example, Peter E. Gordon, "Neo-Kantianism and the Politics of Enlightenment," *The Philosophical Forum* 39, no. 2 (2008): 223–238; Thomas Willey, *Back to Kant: The Revival of Kantianism in German Social and Historical Thought 1860–1914* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1978). In 1971, Strauss commented on his view of neo-Kantianism:

> When I was still almost a boy, Husserl explained to me who at that time was a doubting and dubious adherent of the Marburg school of neo-Kantianism, the characteristic of his own work, in about these terms: "the Marburg school begins with the roof, while I begin with the foundation." This meant that for the school of Marburg, the sole task of the fundamental part of philosophy was the theory of scientific experience, the analysis of scientific thought. Husserl however had realized more profoundly than anybody else that the scientific understanding of the world, far from being the perfection of our natural understanding, is derivative from the latter in such a way as to make us oblivious of the very foundations of the scientific understanding: all philosophic understanding must start from our common understanding of the world, from our understanding of the world as sensibly perceived prior to all theorizing. Heidegger went much further than Husserl in the same direction: the primary theme is not the object of perception but the full thing as experienced as part of

> the individual human context, the individual world to which it belongs.

See Leo Strauss, "Philosophy as Rigorous Science and Political Philosophy," *Interpretation* 2, no. 1 (1971): 2–3 (first published in *Iyyun—A Hebrew Philosophical Quarterly* 20 [1969]: 14–22) [in Hebrew].

46. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 10, 13, 14. See also Leo Strauss, "Hegel," Fall 1958, Box. 9. Leo Strauss Papers, Special Collections Research Center, The University of Chicago Library, Lecture 1, 4. The link that Strauss found between human production in Kant's philosophy and creative humanity in Marx's thought was similar to Hannah Arendt's use of Kant in *The Human Condition*. In an attempt to describe the "homo-faber," Arendt addressed Kant's categorical imperative and accepting man as an end rather than as a means. In that context, she quoted two philosophers: Kant in *The Critique of Judgment* and Marx in *Das Kapital*. According to Arendt, Kant argued in favor of subjugating nature to humanity: "[t]o degrade nature and the world into mere means, robbing both of their independent dignity." This process, which defines homo-faber, reached its apex in Marx's philosophy, which devalued "forces of nature" that do not depend on mankind and are not the result of labor. Both Strauss and Arendt saw the use of production and subjugation of nature as negative and anti-political. In *The Human Condition*, homo-faber is in a higher position than that of labor and humanity as "animal laborans" that is invested solely in survival and self-preservation, but has not yet attained the degree of action and "vita active," where political life is fulfilled. See Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 156. *The Human Condition* was first published in 1958, before Strauss gave his seminar on Marx. However, in a 1962 correspondence between Karl Löwith, Strauss noted that he had not read Arendt's essays on political philosophy. In July 17, 1963, after the publication of Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Strauss wrote to Ernst Simon:

> As for Arendt, *Commentary* asked me some time ago to write a critique of that thing. I refused because I do not wish to have anything to do with this kind of people whom I insist of calling intellectuals. I felt that the best man to take up the case would be you. One reason was my recollection of a very beautiful article you wrote on the way people went to their death in their extermination camps. Another reason was that Arendt wrote in *Commentary* an article on Herzl (the only thing of hers which I ever read) which was a disgraceful piece of sheer debunking, and in addition of merely repeating an obvious point which you had made in your youth in a German article, but with the

difference that you were open also to the greatness of Herzl whereas she was not. I regard her a kind of scandal monger, which does not mean of course that she cannot do quite a bit of harm. See Strauss to Löwith, April 2, 1962, *Gesammelte Schriften Band 3*, 689; Leo Strauss to Ernst Simon, July 17, 1963, Box. 4, Folder. 17. Leo Strauss Papers, Special Collections Research Center, The University of Chicago Library. Kant greatly influenced the development of Arendt's political philosophy. Arendt, who was also born in Königsberg, noted in her famous interview with Günter Gaus that she began reading Kant at a young age. Along with the existentialism of her mentors, Karl Jaspers and Martin Heidegger, Arendt was drawn to various aspects of Kant's political philosophy. The "right to have rights," a concept mentioned in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, was to a large degree influenced by the importance attributed to recognizing human rights in Kantian philosophy. Toward the end of her life, Arendt taught a seminar on Kant's political philosophy and her last work, *The Life of the Mind*, which was published posthumously, was an incomplete attempt to deal with Kant's philosophy, and especially with his *Critique of Judgment*. Arendt's concept of spontaneity was also influenced by Kant. Arendt saw human spontaneity and plurality among people as essential to realizing the political and the human, and viewed totalitarianism as an attempt to destroy both. See Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 298; Hannah Arendt, "What Remains? The Language Remains: A Conversation with Günter Gaus (1964)," Jerome Kohn (ed.), *Essays in Understanding 1930–1954* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1994), 9; Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978); Ronald Beiner (ed.), *Hannah Arendt: Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

47. See Strauss, "Hegel," Lecture 1, 4; Strauss, "The Living Issue of German Postwar Philosophy," *Leo Strauss and the Theologico-Political Problem*, 119; Strauss, "The Three Waves of Modernity," *An Introduction to Political Philosophy,* 88; Zuckert (ed.), *Leo Strauss on Political Philosophy*, 195. See also Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987 [1790]), 19; Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, James W. Ellington (ed.) (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2001 [1783]), 58.
48. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 11.
49. Strauss, "Hegel," Lecture 11, 7.
50. Ibid., Lecture 1, 5, 7; Lecture 11, 7. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 12.
51. Strauss, "Hegel," Lecture 11, 8.

52. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 12. For Kant's discussion of the categorical imperative, see Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Mary Gregor (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003 [1785]), 31–34.
53. In "What Is Political Philosophy?" (37–38), Strauss wrote:

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

In the seminar on Marx (14), Strauss also addressed the differences between perceptions of art in the classical period and in the modern era. He claimed that while the art of the past imitated nature, contemporary art was an expression of human creativity.

54. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 13. In the seminar (15), Strauss addressed the Kantian conception of responsibility, whereby the individual must act in the world both as creator and as a future member of it. In many ways, this definition encapsulated the principles of John Rawls' "veil of ignorance," according to which a just society is possible when the persons planning it cannot know the position they will occupy in it. Strauss, who objected to Kantian philosophy and rejected neo-Kantianism in Germany, would probably have rejected Rawls' neo-Kantian philosophy for its abstraction and denial of nature. Rawls became the leading political philosopher of the 1970s and 1980s, to a large extent replacing the generation of Jewish-German émigrés including Arendt, the Frankfurt School, and Strauss, and drastically changed American philosophy. On the differences between Strauss and Rawls, see Clemens Kauffmann, *Strauss und Rawls, das philosophische Dilemma der Politik* (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 2000).
55. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 16. In fact, with his discussion of Kant, Strauss filled a missing gap in his critique of liberalism. The critique began with a discussion of Hobbes'

political philosophy, which broke with tradition, and ended with a denouncement of Isaiah Berlin's liberalism, which Strauss saw as the epitome of relativism. Kant served as a bridge in rejecting natural rights and centering on freedom and human rights, which lie at the heart of the twentieth century liberal position.

56. Ibid., 18. Strauss, "Hegel," Lecture 1, 11.
57. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 19.
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid., 20. In his discussion of Kant in *Natural Right and History*, Strauss relied on *The Philosophy of Kant*, edited by Carl J. Friedrich. In the seminar on Marx, Strauss referred to *The Critique of Judgment* in his discussion of Kant's philosophy of history. He did not explicitly mention Kant's *Zum ewigen Frieden. Ein philosophischer Entwurf* (*Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*, 1795) but did use the phrase "a people comprised of devils" that appears in it. In *Perpetual Peace* (124), Kant wrote:

> As hard as it may sound, the problem of organizing a nation is solvable even for a people comprised of devils (if only they possess understanding). The problem can be stated in this way: "so order and organize a group of rational beings who require universal laws for their preservation—though each is secretly inclined to exempt himself from such laws—that, while their private attitudes conflict, these nonetheless so cancel one another that these beings behave publicly just as if they had no evil attitudes." This kind of problem must be solvable. For it does not require the moral improvement of man; it requires only that we know how to apply the mechanism of nature to men so as to organize the conflict of hostile attitudes present in a people in such a way that they must compel one another to submit to coercive laws and thus to enter into a state of peace, where laws have power.

See Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, 15. See also Carl J. Friedrich, *The Philosophy of Kant* (New York: Modern Library, 1949); Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays on Politics, History, and Morals* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983 [1795]), 124. In his writings, Strauss also barely addressed the philosophy of history of Giambattista Vico, who is considered a founding father of modern historicism. Only in his preface to the seventh edition of *Natural Right and History* (1971) did Strauss admit (7) that:

> Since the time when I wrote the book, I have, I believe, deepened my understanding of "natural right and history." This applies in the first place to "modern natural right." My view was confirmed by the study of Vico's *La scienza nuova seconda* which is devoted

to a reconsideration of natural right and which is not properly approached and understood by those who take "the historical consciousness" for granted.

60. Strauss, "Hegel," Lecture 1, 12.
61. Ibid., 13.
62. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 21.
63. Ibid., 22.
64. Ibid. In the seminar on Marx (19), Strauss emphasized Kant's objection to revolution because any conspiracy entails lying and deceit. In *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, Hannah Arendt pointed out an important aspect of Kantian thought that was diametrically opposed to Straussian political thought. According to Arendt, Kant was a philosopher of the public realm. Strauss, in contrast, was a philosopher of secrecy and concealment. Political agitation and conspiracy can exist in Straussian thought. In the philosophy of Kant and Arendt, they are forbidden. See Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 42–51.
65. Strauss, "Hegel," Lecture 1, 13.
66. Strauss' use of such examples reveals a difference between his classroom teaching and his writing. In each case, the target audience was different. In his writings, Strauss addressed philosophers, scholars, and other readers and refrained from referring to current events or daily reality. In the classroom, however, he used examples suited to the audience, which was composed of American students in their twenties. For a discussion of politics and political imagination, see Raymond Geuss, *Politics and the Imagination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).
67. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 23.
68. In the seminar on Marx (24), Strauss compared Fichte's conception of intimacy with that of Aristotle's. In the classical world, intimacy was not created in politics or in society but in friendship between individuals. In Fichte's world of Enlightenment, intimacy was tied to expansion of reason and philosophy. The more rational society is, the closer people are to each other. For Strauss' discussion of friendship in the classical world, see Leo Strauss, "Restatement on Xenophon's *Hiero*," *On Tyranny*, 194–195.
69. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 25.
70. Ibid. See also Jacob L. Talmon, *Romanticism and Revolt: Europe 1815–1848* (London: Jarrold and Sons, 1967), 81–134.
71. In *Natural Right and History* (279), Strauss wrote:

    The connection between the developed form of "the philosophy of freedom," i.e., German idealism, and Rousseau, and hence Hobbes, was realized by no one more clearly than by Hegel. Hegel noted the kinship between Kant's and Fichte's idealism and "the anti-socialistic systems of natural right," i.e., those natural

> right doctrines which deny man's natural sociality and "posit the being of the individual as the first and highest thing."

In the introduction to *Philosophy and Law* (1935), Strauss addressed in a footnote the early essays by Franz Rosenzweig, *Hegel und der Staat* (Hegel and the State, 1920) and by Ernst Simon, "Ranke und Hegel" (Ranke and Hegel, 1928) as representative of Hegel's revival in Germany during the first decades of the twentieth century. Strauss was famously influenced by Rosenzweig, by existentialism, and by Nietzsche, who critiqued Hegel's historicism and his attempt to delay atheism, in contrast to Schopenhauer. In *The Gay Science* (aphorism 357), Nietzsche wrote:

> Hegel in particular was a delayer par excellence, in accordance with his grandiose attempt to persuade us of the divinity of existence, appealing as a last resort to our sixth sense, "the historical sense." As a philosopher, Schopenhauer was the first admitted and uncompromising atheist among us Germans: this was the background of his enmity towards Hegel. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 219; Franz Rosenzweig, *Hegel und der Staat* (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2010 [1920]); Ernst Simon, "Ranke und Hegel," *Historische Zeitschrift* 15 (1928): 1–204; Strauss, *Philosophy and Law*, 27.

72. Strauss, "Hegel," Lecture 5, 5.
73. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991 [1820]), 361–362. For a discussion of Hegel's view of war, see Shlomo Avineri, *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 194–207. See also Michael Schlie, "Words Without Desire: Strauss, Hegel, and Political Violence," *The Review of Metaphysics* 66, no. 3 (March 2013): 519–544; Steven B. Smith, "Hegel's View on War, the State, and International Relations," *The American Political Science Review* 77, no. 3 (September 1983): 624–632.
74. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 25.
75. Strauss, "Hegel," Lecture 10, 1. Strauss' position was completely different from that of Karl Popper, who saw Hegel as one of the fathers of nationalism and totalitarianism. In *The Open Society and its Enemies* (1945), Popper wrote: "But Hegel not only developed the historical and totalitarian theory of nationalism, he also clearly foresaw the psychological possibilities of nationalism." See Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, 275.
76. Strauss, "Hegel," lecture 4, 17. According to Shlomo Avineri, "[w]hen Hegel envisaged wars as waged on limited basis, he made the same misjudgment which had led him to underestimate the enormous force of

modern nationalism: he totally failed to see the prevalence of modern, total war." See Avineri, *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State*, 205.

77. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 26.
78. Strauss, "Hegel," Lecture 1, 7.
79. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 27.
80. Strauss, "Hegel," Lecture 1, 6. For a discussion of Hegel's historicism, see Frederick C. Beiser, "Hegel's Historicism," Frederich C. Beiser (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 270–301. See also Sara MacDonald and Barry Craig, *Recovering Hegel from the Critique of Leo Strauss* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014).
81. Strauss, "Hegel," Lecture 2, 16. See also Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Terry Pinkard (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018 [1807]), 12.
82. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 28. Strauss, who used the word "scandal" to describe the terror that erupted after the French Revolution, came close to the conservative position espoused by Edmund Burke in *Réflexions sur la Révolution de France* (Reflections on the Revolution in France, 1791) and saw the French Revolution as a "philosophical revolution" that ended in utter failure. "Burke was satisfied that the French Revolution was thoroughly evil. He condemned it as strongly and as unqualifiedly as we today condemn the Communist revolution," wrote Strauss in *Natural Right and History*, tying criticism of the French Revolution to condemnation of Communism. "He regarded it as possible that the French Revolution, which conducted 'a war against all sects and all religions,' might be victorious and thus that the revolutionary state might exist 'as a nuisance on the earth for several hundred years'." See Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, 317–318. Strauss' negative view of the French Revolution was hardly unusual in twentieth century teaching of political philosophy, which in many ways continued the path forged by Burke. These teachings centered on a comparison between the French Revolution and the American Revolution. In most cases, the violence and terror that reigned in the wake of the French Revolution were emphasized in contrast to the success of the American Revolution in establishing a stable constitutional regime. In that context, Strauss did not differ from Arendt, who extolled the American Revolution and condemned the French Revolution. Arendt wrote:

> The sad truth of the matter is that the French Revolution, which ended in disaster, has made world history, while the American Revolution, so triumphantly successful, has remained an event

of little more than local importance. See Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin Books, 1987 [1963]), 56.

83. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 28. In his seminar on Hegel, Strauss emphasized the historical context that played such a significant role in the writing of *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (1820). Strauss noted how the political changes that took place in Germany after the defeat of Napoleon required Hegel to adapt his writing to the new reality, in which Prussian rule was growing stronger. On Hegel's attitude to Napoleon, see Avineri, *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State*, 175. Unlike Strauss, Avineri (168) described Hegel's view of the regime as ambivalent: "[w]hile he undoubtedly gives the bureaucracy a dominant position in his state, Hegel is much concerned to limit and balance its power." Regarding the gap between leadership and public opinion, Avineri quoted Hegel's *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (335):

> Since it contains no criterion of discrimination and lacks the ability to raise its own substantial aspect to [the level of] determinate knowledge, the first formal condition of achieving anything great or rational, either in actuality or in science, is to be independent of public opinion. Great achievement may in turn be assured that public opinion will subsequently accept it, recognize it, and adopt it as one of its prejudices. Every kind of falsehood and truth is present in public opinion, but it is the prerogative of the great man to discover the truth within it. He who expresses the will of his age, tells it what its will is, and accomplishes this will, is the great man of the age. What he does is the essence and inner content of the age, and he gives the latter actuality; and no one can achieve anything great, unless he is able to despise public opinion as he here and there encounters it.

84. Strauss, "Preface to the English Translation of *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*," 2.

85. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 28. See also Strauss, "Hegel," Lecture 5, 11. In February 1953, at the annual message to the congress on the state of the union, president Eisenhower said:

> The safety of America and the trust of the people alike demand that the personnel of the Federal Government be loyal in their motives and reliable in the discharge of their duties. Only a combination of both loyalty and reliability promises genuine security. To state this principle is easy; to apply it can be difficult. But this security we must and shall have. By way of example, all principal new appointees to departments and agencies have been investigated at their own request by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Confident of your understanding and cooperation, I know that

> the primary responsibility for keeping out the disloyal and the dangerous rests squarely upon the executive branch. When this branch so conduct itself as to require policing by another branch of the Government, it invites its own disorder and confusion. I am determined to meet this responsibility of the Executive. The heads of all executive departments and agencies have been instructed to initiate at once effective programs of security with respect to their personnel… These programs will be both fair to the rights of the individual and effective for the safety of the Nation. They will, with care and justice, apply the basic principle that public employment is not a right but a privilege.

See Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1953* (Washington, DC: Federal Register Division, National Archives and Records Service, General Services Administration, 1960), 24–25. In April, 1953, Eisenhower signed Executive Order 10450 empowering federal agencies to investigate federal employees and determine whether they were a threat to national security. According to the order, "any criminal, infamous, dishonest, immoral, or notoriously disgraceful conduct" or "habitual use of intoxicants to excess, drug addiction, sexual perversion" posed security risks, making homosexuality grounds for firing a federal employee or for barring gay and lesbian applicants from federal employment.

86. Strauss, "Hegel," Lecture 9, 15. Strauss defined (15) whipping as an easy and "relatively innocent" punishment compared to punitive methods employed "in a number of so-called totalitarian countries today. And Hegel even rejected that as being incompatible with the dignity of man."
87. Ibid., Lecture 9, 16.
88. Strauss, "Preface to the English Translation of *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*," 2.
89. Strauss, "Hegel," Lecture 11, 4. See also Strauss, *On Tyranny*, 223, 225.
90. Strauss, "Hegel," Lecture 4, 17.
91. Ibid., Lecture 6, 17.
92. Ibid., Lecture 9, 16.
93. Ibid., Lecture 4, 17. For Kojève's book, see Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* (New York: Basic Books Publishers, 1969 [1947]). In his book on Hobbes (58), Strauss noted that he and Kojève were planning to co-author a study of Hobbes and Hegel. The project did not come about, but Strauss held that Hegel's view of the relations between master and slave was directly influenced by Hobbes:

> Kojève knows as well as anyone living that Hegel's fundamental teaching regarding Master and Slave is based on Hobbes' doctrine of the state of nature. If Hobbes' doctrine of the state of nature is

abandoned *en pleine connaisance de cause* (as indeed it should be abandoned), Hegel's fundamental teaching will lose the evidence which it apparently still possesses for Kojève. Hegel's teaching is much more sophisticated than Hobbes', but it is as much a construction as the latter. Both doctrines construct human society by starting from the untrue assumption that man as man is thinkable as a being that lacks awareness of sacred restraints or as a being that is guided by nothing but a desire for recognition. See Strauss, "Restatement on Xenophon's *Hiero*," 191.

94. Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, 6–7.
95. Ibid., 16.
96. Ibid., 19.
97. Ibid., 44. In fact, although Kojève initially defined the transition into citizenship as a merging of master and slave, he later admitted in a footnote (225) that at the end of the dialectical process, the master is killed:

    In truth, only the Slave "overcomes" his "nature" and finally becomes Citizen. The Master does not change: he dies rather than cease to be a Master. The final fight, which transforms the Slave into Citizen, overcomes Mastery in a *non-dialectical* fashion: the Master is simply killed, and he dies as Master.

98. Ibid., 95–96. After the fall of the Soviet Union, it was Francis Fukuyama who made the most significant attempt to translate Kojève's ideas into contemporary politics. Fukuyama claimed that with the victory of capitalism and liberalism over Communism, history was drawing close to an end. See Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: The Free Press, 1992). For a discussion of this idea, see Barry Cooper, *The End of History: An Essay on Modern Hegelianism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984); Patrick Riley, "Introduction to the Reading of Alexandre Kojève," *Political Theory* 9, no. 1 (February 1981): 5–48; Michael S. Roth, "A Problem of Recognition: Alexandre Kojève and the End of History," *History and Theory* 24, no. 3 (October 1985): 293–306. See also Timothy W. Burns and Bryan-Paul Frost (eds.), *Philosophy, History, and Tyranny: Reexamining the Debate Between Leo Strauss and Alexandre Kojève* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016); Shadia B. Drury, *Alexandre Kojève: The Roots of Postmodern Politics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994); Victor Gourevitch, "Philosophy and Politics, I," *The Review of Metaphysics* 22, no. 1 (September 1968): 58–84; Victor Gourevitch, "Philosophy and Politics, II," *The Review of Metaphysics* 22, no. 2 (December 1968): 281–328; Alexandre Kojève, *Outline of a Phenomenology of Right* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2000 [1943]); Jeff Love, *The Black Circle: A Life of Alexandre Kojève* (New York: Columbia

University Press, 2018); James H. Nichols, *Alexandre Kojève: Wisdom at the End of History* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007); Robert B. Pippin, "Being, Time, and Politics: The Strauss-Kojève Debate," *History and Theory* 32, no. 2 (May 1993): 138–161.

99. Strauss, "Hegel," Lecture 4, 17,
100. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, 23.
101. Strauss, "Hegel," Lecture 11, 20.
102. Leo Strauss, *The City and Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 2–3.
103. Strauss, "Hegel," Lecture 11, 20.
104. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 66–67.
105. Ibid., 15–16. See also a seminar on Nietzsche that Strauss delivered in 1967: Leo Strauss, "Nietzsche," Winter 1967, Box. 13, Leo Strauss Papers, Special Collections Research Center, The University of Chicago Library.
106. Strauss, *On Tyranny*, 291.
107. Strauss emphasized that the major difference between Kojève and Marx centered on their attitude toward the state. While Marx aspired to cancel the state, Kojève sought to leave the state in place and find a middle way between the United States and the Soviet Union: "[m]ore socialism than we have now in the United States and more liberty than you have now in Soviet Russia." See Strauss, "Hegel," Lecture 4, 18.
108. Strauss, "Existentialism," 314.
109. Strauss, "The Three Waves of Modernity," 97.
110. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 32.
111. In 1957, Cropsey published a book on Adam Smith. In 1964, he edited a collection of essays in honor of Leo Strauss' 65th birthday. See Joseph Cropsey (ed.), *Ancients and Moderns: Essays on the Tradition of Political Philosophy in Honor of Leo Strauss* (New York: Basic Books Publishers, 1964). See also Joseph Cropsey, "On the Mutual Compatibility of Democracy and Marxian Socialism," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 3, no. 2 (Spring 1986): 4–18; Joseph Cropsey, *Polity and Economy: An Interpretation of the Principles of Adam Smith* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1957).
112. In the seminar on Marx, Strauss repeatedly alluded to his ignorance of economics. For example, in one class, Strauss asked Cropsey: "[b]ut the question which would interest me as a complete ignoramus in economics is this: what did economics do, in a nutshell, after Marx?" See Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 64.
113. Ibid., 35, 42, 61.
114. Ibid., 40.
115. Ibid., 56–58.
116. Ibid., 57.

117. In *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among Men, 1754), Rousseau described how affluence exacerbated the maladies of man:

> Savage man, when he has eaten, is at peace with all nature, and the friend of all his fellow-men. Is it sometimes a question of his disputing over his meal? He never comes to blows without having first compared the difficulty of winning with that of finding his sustenance elsewhere. And since pride is not involved in the fight, it is ended by a few swings of the fist. The victor eats; the vanquished is on his way to seek his fortune, and everything is pacified. But for man in society, these are quite different affairs. It is first of all a question of providing for the necessary and then for the superfluous; next come delights, and then immense riches, and then subjects, and then slaves. He has not a moment's respite. What is most singular is that the less natural and pressing the needs, the more the passions increase and, what is worse, the power to satisfy them.

See Jean-Jaques Rousseau, "Discourse on the Origins of Inequality," *The Basic Political Writings*, 90–91.

118. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 59.
119. Ibid., 59–61.
120. Ibid., 62.
121. Ibid.
122. Ibid.
123. Ibid., 62–63.
124. Ibid., 63.
125. Ibid., 91.
126. Ibid., 73.
127. In the seminar on Nietzsche (1967), Strauss distinguished between different periods of Nietzschean thought. The first period, which was devoted to classical studies under the influence of Richard Wagner and Arthur Schopenhauer, saw the publication of *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik* (The Birth of Tragedy, 1872) and *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* (Untimely Meditations, 1873–1876). The second period was marked by a move to historicism and an "adventure into positivism," exemplified primarily by *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* (Human, All Too Human, 1878). According to Strauss, the third period began after Nietzsche realized that positivism was nothing but nihilism that should be overcome. This yielded *Also sprach Zarathustra* (Thus Spoke Zarathustra, 1883–1885) and *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (Beyond Good and Evil, 1886). See Strauss, "Nietzsche," Lecture 1, 3.
128. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 73.

129. Strauss, "Nietzsche," Lecture 1, 3.
130. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 73.
131. Ibid. See also Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "The Communist Manifesto (1848)," Terrel Carver (ed.), *Marx: Later Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 9.
132. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 73. The surprising allusion to Trotsky's *The History of the Russian Revolution* offers an important insight into the socialist and Communist literature that Strauss read in addition to several of Marx's writings. Strauss did not think of himself as a specialist in Marxist and socialist literature, but certainly exhibited an interest in it. See Leo Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1964 [1930]).
133. In a footnote to *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*, Strauss mentioned (275) Marx's doctoral dissertation, *Differenz der demokritischen und epikureischen Naturphilosophie* (The Difference Between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature, 1841). Marx is also mentioned in a footnote to the book on Hobbes, in which Strauss compared (125) Marx's proletarian revolution with Hobbes' rebellion against nature—albeit without referring to any of Marx's writings.
134. See Siegfried Landshut (ed.), *Karl Marx: die Fruehschriften* (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1953); Karl Marx, *die Deutsche Ideologie* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1953). Strauss referred to Marx's early writings in an essay on relativism published in 1961, in an essay on Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil* published in 1973, and in *The City and Man*. See Leo Strauss, "Relativism," Helmut Schoeck and J. Wiggins (eds.), *Relativism and the Study of Man* (Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1961), 157. Leo Strauss, "Note on the Plan of Nietzsche's Beyond Good and Evil," *Interpretation* 3, no. 2 (1973), 112. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 40.
135. See Shlomo Avineri, *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), first published in Hebrew in 1967; Erich Fromm, *Marx's Concept of Man* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1961). See also Donald Clark Hodges, "The Young Marx—A Reappraisal," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 27, no. 2 (December 1966): 216–229.
136. Avineri, *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx*, 1, 5.
137. Strauss, *Persecution and The Art of Writing*, 163.
138. Ibid., 55. *The Guide for the Perplexed* opens with an epistle to a pupil in which Maimonides explains his motive for writing:

> I began to let you see certain flashes and to give you certain indications. Then I saw that you demanded of me additional knowledge and asked me to make clear to you certain things pertaining to divine matters, to inform you of the intentions of the Mutakallimūn

> in this respect, and to let you know whether their methods were demonstrative and, if not, to what art they belonged… Your absence moved me to compose this Treatise, which I have composed for you and for those like you, however few they are. I have set it down in dispersed chapters. All of them that are written down will reach you where you are, one after the other. See Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed* (Chicago: The Chicago University Press, 1969 [1191]), 3–4.

139. Strauss distinguished between the twentieth-century conception of "interest" and the term as used by Marx. He held that the former had already lost its political meaning and now meant little more than a particular concern of an individual or sector of society. In contrast, Marx's discussion of interests was always embedded in the political. Strauss gave societies for the protection of cats as an example of the contemporary weakening of the term "interest," referring to Arthur Bentley's *The Process of Government* (1908) on the impact of groups and organizations on politics. See Arthur F. Bentley, *The Process of Government: A Study of Social Pressures* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1908).
140. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 75. See also Marx and Engels, "The Communist Manifesto," 1.
141. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 74–75.
142. Ibid., 80.
143. Ibid., 75. There have, of course, been attempts to prove how American history is partly based on class struggle. See, for example, Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States* (London: Routledge, 2015 [1980]). Strauss did not center on this aspect and would probably not have accepted such interpretations.
144. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 75. See also Marx and Engels, "The Communist Manifesto," 2.
145. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 75.
146. Ibid., 80.
147. Ibid., 76.
148. Ibid.
149. Marx, "Introduction to the *Grundrisse*," *Marx: Later Political Writings*, 150.
150. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 77.
151. Ibid.
152. Ibid.
153. Ibid., 140.
154. Plato, *The Republic*, G. R. F Ferrari (ed.) (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2000), Book 7, 514a–517a, 220–222.

155. Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism (1947)," David Farrel Krell (ed.), *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 208.
156. See, for example, Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 144; Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 193–194. See also Walter Kaufmann, "The Inevitability of Alienation," *Revue européenne des sciences sociales* 18, no. 52 (1980): 29–42.
157. Strauss, "Review of Julius Ebbinghaus, On the Progress of Metaphysics (1931)," *The Early Writings (1921–1932)*, 215.
158. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 78.
159. Karl Marx, "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts (1844)," T. B. Bottomore (ed.), *Karl Marx: Early Writings* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 169.
160. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 84.
161. Marx, "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts," 155.
162. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 78.
163. Ibid., 83.
164. See Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, R. Pascal (ed.) (New York: International Publishers, 1939), 15.
165. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 83.
166. Ibid., 87.
167. Ibid. According to Strauss (ibid.), the ideas of Marxism would replace the alienated thought that developed throughout history:

    > There is an essential connection between the concept of alienation and the primacy of material production. The intellectual production is already the alienation and the end of the progress will be that you have an intellectual production which destroys the alienated intellectual production, i.e. all myths, religions, philosophies: Marxism… The whole Marxian doctrine depends on that because if the production of myths is coeval with the productions of things, then the production of myths might affect the production of things and then it is impossible to give a materialistic philosophy of history.

168. Ibid., 88.
169. Ibid, 90.
170. Strauss, "What Is Political Philosophy?" 19. Regarding Strauss' view of Weber, see Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, 36–78. See also Nasser Behnegar, *Leo Strauss, Max Weber, and the Scientific Study of Politics* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003). Clark A. Merrill, "Spelunking in the Unnatural: Leo Strauss' Ambiguous Tribute to Max Weber," *Interpretation* 27, no. 1 (Fall 1999): 3–27.
171. Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, 42.
172. Strauss, "What Is Political Philosophy?" 19.

173. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 89, 100.
174. Ibid., 125.
175. Ibid., 95. For a discussion of the importance that Marx attached to materialism, see Avineri, *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx*, 96–104.
176. Strauss (101 in the seminar on Marx) quoted from *The German Ideology* (16):

> Since we are dealing with the Germans, who do not postulate anything, we must begin by stating the first premise of all human existence, and therefore of history, the premise namely that men must be in a position to live in order to be able to "make history." But life involves before everything else eating and drinking, a habitation, clothing and many other things. The first historical act is thus the production of the means to satisfy these needs, the production of material life itself. And indeed this is an historical act, a fundamental condition of all history, which today, as thousands of years ago, must daily and hourly be fulfilled merely in order to sustain human life.

According to Strauss, this passage summarized the essence of Marx's doctrine concerning the creative individual and the primacy of materiality over spirit. Further on, however, Strauss described the tension between mind and matter in Marx's thought. He argued that the need to survive in a material sense does not rule out the possibility of a primitive "sheep-like" consciousness that may not be a social product, but rather an innate human trait. According to Marx:

> Consciousness is therefore from the very beginning a social product, and remains so as long as men exist at all. Consciousness is at first, of course, merely consciousness concerning the immediate sensuous environment and consciousness of the limited connection with other persons and things outside the individual who is growing self-conscious. At the same time it is consciousness of nature, which first appear to men as a completely alien, all powerful and unassailable force, with which men's relation are purely animal and by which they are overawed like beasts; it is thus a purely animal consciousness of nature (natural religion) …This beginning is as animal as social life itself at this stage. It is mere herd-consciousness, and at this point man is only distinguished from sheep by the fact that with him consciousness takes the place of instinct or that his instinct is a conscious one. This sheep-like or tribal consciousness receives its further development and extension through increased productivity, the increase of needs, and, what is fundamental to both of these, the increase of population.

See Karl Marx, *The German Ideology*, 19–20. Strauss saw the above passage as "absurd." As he put it (103, 105): "Now is this not amazing? Is

not fantastic?… Who has ever heard of brutes possessing a religion?… no man in his senses has ever credited brutes with religion and Marx, in a way, is compelled to do so—to do so, because of the dogmatic position he takes."

177. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 108.
178. Alexander Hamilton, James Madison and John Jay, *The Federalist with Letters of "Brutus,"* Terence Ball (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003 [1788]).
179. Ibid., 41.
180. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 122.
181. Ibid., 90–91.
182. Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, 158–159. Kojève refers to this distinction in Marx's *Capital*:

> The realm of freedom really begins only where labor determined by necessity and external expediency ends; it lies by its very nature beyond the sphere of material production proper. Just as the savage must wrestle with nature to satisfy his needs, to maintain and reproduce his life, so must civilized man, and he must do so in all forms of society and under all possible modes of production. This realm of natural necessity expands with his development, because his needs do too; but the productive forces to satisfy these expand at the same time. Freedom in this sphere, can consist only in this, that socialized man, the associated producers, govern the human metabolism with nature in a rational way, bringing it under their collective control instead of being dominated by it as a blind power; accomplishing it with the least expenditure of energy and in conditions most worthy and appropriate for their human nature. But this always remains a realm of necessity. The true realm of freedom, the development of human powers as an end in itself begins beyond it, though it can only flourish with this realm of necessity as its basis. The reduction of the working day is the basic prerequisite.

See Karl Marx, *Capital 3* (New York: Penguin, 1991 [1894]), 958–959. For a discussion of the connection between necessity and freedom in Hegel and Marx, see, also Ian Fraser, *Hegel and Marx, The Concept of Need* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998). Strauss referred to this footnote in a response to Kojève's criticism of his *On Tyranny* as an example of the condition of citizens in the final state. See Strauss, *On Tyranny*, 212.

183. Isaiah Berlin, *Two Concepts of Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958). For a discussion of the essay, see George Crowder, *Isaiah Berlin: Liberty and Pluralism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004), 64–94. See also

Arie M. Dubnov, *Isaiah Berlin: The Journey of a Jewish Liberal* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

184. Berlin, *Two Concepts of Liberty*, 7, 16.
185. Ibid., 51.
186. Strauss, "Relativism," 138.
187. Berlin, *Two Concepts of Liberty*, 50, 57.
188. Strauss, "Relativism," 138.
189. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 80, 86.
190. Ibid., 85.
191. Strauss, "Relativism," 147.
192. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 132.
193. Marx, *The German Ideology*, 22.
194. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 133.
195. Marx, *The German Ideology*, 20.
196. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 134.
197. Ibid., 151. Strauss (150) addressed Engels to illustrate the essential difference between the Communist ideal and a world bound by natural law. He quoted two passages from *Socialisme utopique et socialisme scientifique* (Socialism: Utopian and Scientific, 1880) on necessity (in the capitalist and pre-Communist society) and freedom (in the post-capitalist and Communist society):
    1. Pre-Communist society (the world of necessity):
       But the production of commodities, like every other form of production, has it peculiar inherent laws inseparable from it; and these laws work, despite anarchy, in and through anarchy. They reveal themselves in the only persistent form of social inter-relations, i.e., in exchange, and here they affect the individual producers as compulsory laws of competition. They are, at first, unknown to these producers themselves, and have to be discovered by them gradually and as a result of experience. They work themselves out, therefore, independently of the producers, and in antagonism to them, as inexorable natural laws of their particular form of production. The products govern the producers.
    2. Communist society (the world of freedom):
       The Laws of his own social action, hitherto standing face to face with man as laws of nature foreign to and dominating him, will then be used with full understanding, and so mastered by him.

    While nature governs the world of necessity, in the world of freedom humanity subdues nature entirely. See Friedrich Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* (New York: International Publishers, 1969 [1880]), 59, 72.
198. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 72–73.

199. Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr and Company, 1920 [1847]), 191.
200. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 127. For other views of violence in Marxist political thought, see, for example, Avineri, *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx*, 202–249; Bikhu Parekh, "Marxism and the Problem of Violence," *Development and Change* 23, no. 3 (1992): 103–120; Adam Schaff, "Marxist Theory on Revolution and Violence," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 34, no. 2 (April–June 1973): 263–270.
201. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 109–110.
202. In the biography, *Charles Percy: Strong New Voice from Illinois*, Martha Cleveland wrote:

> Percy and Goldwin had worked closely together… Percy was a trustee of the University of Chicago and several other universities, and Goldwin became his consultant on education activities, as well as his political confidante. Goldwin, later to earn his Ph.D. and become "Dr." Goldwin and a faculty member of Kenyon College, Gambiere, Ohio, already was well on his way to becoming a respected national authority on government. Because of his expertise in this field and mutual interests and friendship that he and Percy had, the two became teacher and pupil.

See Martha Cleveland, *Charles Percy: Strong New Voice from Illinois* (Jacksonville: Harris-Wolfe and Co., 1968), 40. For a discussion of Strauss, Goldwin, and Percy, see Alan Gilbert, "Segregation, Aggression, and Executive Power: Leo Strauss and 'The Boys'," *Nomos* 56 (2016): 407–440; Peter Minowitz, "What Was Leo Strauss?" *Perspectives on Political Science* 40, no. 4: 218–226; Catherine and Michael Zuckert, *The Truth About Leo Strauss*, 197–227.
203. Donald Rumsfeld, "Tribute to Robert A. Goldwin, 1922–2010," *American Enterprise Institute*, 15 January 2010, http://www.aei.org/publication/tribute-to-robert-a-goldwin-1922-2010/.
204. Ibid.
205. See Leo Strauss to Charles H. Percy, October 24, 1961, Box 5, Folder 11, Leo Strauss Papers, Special Collections Research Center, The University of Chicago Library. See also Leo Strauss to Robert A. Goldwin (undated), Box 4, Folder 8, Leo Strauss Papers, Special Collections Research Center, The University of Chicago Library. On August 30, 1962, Percy sent a letter to President John F. Kennedy, suggesting that "our position be based on the argument that Stalin got us all into the present mess and that it is a grave question how both sides can get out of it safely. Khrushchev should be reminded empathically and repeatedly that impetuous efforts to remove 'inconveniences' in the

face of our powerful opposition will increase the likelihood, if not create the certainty, of that global conflagration all sane men wish to avoid." Robert Goldwin attached a handwritten note to a copy sent to Strauss, which read: "Mr. Percy asked me to send you this copy of his correspondence with the president, thinking that, since you had so much to do with initiating it, you might be interested to see the evidence that the message was received." See Robert A. Goldwin to Leo Strauss (undated), Box 4, Folder 8, Leo Strauss Papers, Special Collections Research Center, The University of Chicago Library. The memo was not the first time Strauss mentioned McCarthy or McCarthyism. In 1954, he wrote: "[d]angers [to intellectual freedom] are caused, not only by men like Senator McCarthy but by the absurd dogmatism of certain academic 'liberals' or 'scientific' social scientists as well." See Leo Strauss, "On a Forgotten Kind of Writing," *Chicago Review* 8, no. 1 (Winter-Spring 1954): 65–66.

206. Leo Strauss to Charles H. Percy, February, 12, 1963, Box 5, Folder 11, Leo Strauss Papers, Special Collections Research Center, The University of Chicago Library.
207. Strauss, "Hegel," Lecture 3, 10.
208. Ibid., Lecture 12, 8.

CHAPTER 4

Note on the Plan of Strauss' *The City and Man*

> The crisis of our time may have the accidental advantage of enabling us to understand in an untraditional or fresh manner what was hitherto understood only in a traditional or derivative manner. This may apply especially to classical political philosophy which has been seen for a considerable time only through the lenses of modern political philosophy and its various successors. (Leo Strauss, *The City and Man*)[1]

Soon after Strauss' death in 1973, Allan Bloom (1930–1992) published an obituary that is still the best summation of Strauss and the development of his thought.[2] According to Bloom, Strauss' writings can be divided into three phases, each of which delved deeper into the history of political philosophy than the one before. In the first stage, the writings of "the pre-Straussean Strauss," as Bloom calls him, had not yet blossomed into independent thought. In these early works, including *Spinoza's Critique of Religion* (1930), *Philosophy and Law* (1935), and *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes* (1936), Strauss still relied on existing traditions. "It is no accident that the Hobbes book, the book he liked the least, remains the one most reputed and uncontroversial in the scholarly community," noted Bloom.[3] In the second stage, Strauss discovered the principles of esoteric writing and the ancient world. Seminal works of this period included *On Tyranny* (1948), *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (1952), and *Natural Right and History* (1953); here, Strauss reformulated the rift between Greek philosophy and modern thought and recognized in his interpretation of the former a possible alternative

A. Armon, *Leo Strauss Between Weimar and America*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-24389-0_4

to the shortcomings of the present day. He broke with convention and developed his own readings, entering into a profound investigation of Xenophon and his view of tyranny.

Bloom saw this stage as a bridge to the third and final phase of Straussian thought, which began with *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (1958) and increasingly focused on Greek philosophy with *The City and Man* (1964), *Socrates and Aristophanes* (1966), and *The Argument and the Action of Plato's Laws* (1975). This was Strauss' metamorphosis, when he left all trappings of modernity behind. He cut himself off almost entirely from contemporary academic discourse, threw off the shackles of modernity and identified with the classical philosophers. According to Bloom, "Strauss' writings of the first period were treated respectfully, as scholarly productions of a man with somewhat eccentric interests. Those of the second were considered perverse and caused anger. Those of the third period are ignored." Yet the writings of this last period are the truest reflection of the Straussian world in the United States and stand out in comparison to previous works, which Bloom called a mere "prolegomena" to "the great Strauss."[4]

The City and Man, which was published after the seminar on Marx, represents the final phase.[5] The book begins with a discussion of Aristotle's *Politics*, moves on to Plato's *Republic*, and ends with Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*. Modern thinkers are barely mentioned: Marx, for example, appears only twice. It is steeped in the past and appears to have no ties to the present. *Natural Right and History*, which is widely considered Strauss' major work, deals with the crisis of modernity and the danger of violent nihilism in the twentieth century. *The City and Man* is considered, in contrast, less important—as merely an interpretation of classical Greek thought.

However, after discussing the Straussian reading of Marx's political philosophy in the previous chapter, we can approach *The City and Man* from a somewhat different perspective. It is suggested here that Strauss intended the book to be much more than a commentary on antiquity. In fact, it is a political text that, with typical Straussian caution, used a reading of classics to lay out guidelines for present-day action in the age of the Cold War and the atomic bomb. As such, *The City and Man* exemplifies Strauss' teaching, his "political program," in the United States.[6]

Strauss makes no attempt to hide his views between the lines. In the preface, he makes it clear that the discussion of classical Greece is not driven by archaeological or nostalgic interest, but rather by the

dangerous feebleness of the present: "[t]he crisis of our time, the crisis of the west."[7] Strauss is not evading reality, but rather wishes to play an active role in it. His writing is meant to have an impact on the world, and his choice to address classical texts is driven by much more than a love of contemplation.[8]

In many of his earlier writings, including *Natural Right and History* and "What Is Political Philosophy?" Strauss addressed "the crisis of modernity" rather than "the crisis of the West." In *The City and Man* Strauss relates only to the West, which is under existential threat by the powerful enemy from the East—Communism. Both East and West share modernity and its break with the tradition of political philosophy, but Strauss seeks to aid the recovery of the West alone. The West must be strengthened, the East weakened. Also, in earlier texts, Strauss turned to the roots of political thought and to the works of Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, among others, to explain the emergence of nihilism and the barbarity of Nazism. In the preface to *The City and Man*, Strauss focuses on the twentieth century, and especially the Cold War; the rest of the book is concerned with ancient Greece. Strauss does not outline the origins of the modern crisis, nor is he interested in German fascism. Instead, he describes a disease and its remedy. The preface relates to the problem; the discussion of classic philosophers offers the solution.

Strauss also sees the idea of the end of history and "the Owl of Minerva" as elements in the crisis plaguing the West. He notes Spengler's *Decline of the West* as a portrayal of the fear that humanity will stagnate once it has achieved its goals. According to Strauss, although the West ruled most of the world before World War I, now—more than at any other time in history—"the West's very survival is endangered."[9] He refers to one text only, in which the enemy was born—the *Communist Manifesto*:

> Some decline of the West has taken place before our eyes. In 1913 the West—in fact this country together with Great Britain and Germany—could have laid down the law for the rest of the earth without firing a shot. Surely for at least a century the West controlled the whole globe with ease. Today, so far from ruling the globe, the West's very survival is endangered by the East as it has not been since the beginning. From the *Communist Manifesto* it would appear that the victory of Communism would be the complete victory of the West—of the synthesis, transcending the national boundaries, of British industry, the French Revolution and

> German philosophy—over the East. We see the victory of Communism would mean indeed the victory of originally Western natural science but surely at the same time the victory of the most extreme form of Eastern despotism.[10]

The *Communist Manifesto* and its authors, who were educated within the tradition of German philosophy, appeared to be an inseparable part of Western thought. Yet when Communism triumphed in the East, it brought forth a form of tyranny that now threatened the very existence of the West, and quickly transpired to be fundamentally different from liberal aspirations. According to Strauss, while some liberals initially saw a potential ally in Communism, the actions of the Communists quickly made it clear that this was not another extension of the West, but a tyrannical enemy every bit as dangerous as fascism. Accepting the fact that this was no friend, but a foe was a long and painful process. Despite the appearance of a single family with a shared mission, it transpired that Communism did not share the ideas of the West and, in fact, was far removed from them:

> For some time it appeared to many teachable Westerners—to say nothing of the unteachable ones—that Communism was only a parallel movement to the Western movement—as it were its somewhat impatient, wild, wayward twin who was bound to become mature, patient, and gentle. But except when in mortal danger, Communism responded to the fraternal greetings only with contempt or at most with manifestly dissembled signs of friendship; and when in mortal danger, it was eager to receive Western help as it was determined to give not even sincere words of thanks in return. It was impossible for the Western movement to understand Communism as merely a new version of that eternal reactionism against which it had been fighting for centuries.[11]

Strauss states that the West had lost faith in itself and in the meaning of its goals. The fascists and their allies had, in fact, strengthened the West's resolve to overcome tyranny. Communism, however, caused a crisis once its true nature became apparent and it "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 and refuted by its own principle."[12] Fascism defined itself from the beginning as an enemy of liberal thought, yet Communism blurred the distinction between friend and foe.

These are not the words of a classicist emerging for a moment from his time and place of interest. They are definitive political statements at the height of the Cold War and an explicit joining of ranks with the West in its battle against the enemy in the East. Strauss believed that the Soviet Union, the despotism of the East, had drawn a clear line between Communism and the West, exposing the nature of humanity and of politics—i.e., that evil in society cannot be overcome and that any attempt to do so is bound to fail and may lead to tyranny:

> It became clearer than it had been for some time that no bloody or unbloody change of society can eradicate the evil in man: as long as there will be men, there will be malice, envy and hatred, and hence there cannot be a society which does not have to employ coercive restraint. For the same reason it could no longer be denied that Communism will remain, as long as it lasts, in fact and not merely in name, the iron rule of a tyrant which is mitigated or aggravated by his fear of palace revolutions. The only restraint in which the West can put some confidence is the tyrant's fear of the West's immense military power.[13]

The position that Strauss presents here is hyper-realistic and anti-utopian. Evil and malice exist and therefore cannot be severed from the need for politics, law, and order. Communism has proven that trying to fulfill the Marxist and liberal ideals of a universal society that overcomes nature and eradicates violence merely aggravates that violence, yielding terror and tyranny. Strauss describes the present as a dangerous world beset by war between regimes and ideologies: the liberal democracy of the West, led by the United States, versus the tyrannical Soviet regime born of the political philosophy of Marx, "the father of Communism."

In this state of war, Strauss—the critic of modernity—sides with Western democracy. Never an ardent supporter of the regime, he sees himself rather as an unwilling ally. As he wrote at the time: "We are not permitted to be flatterers of democracy precisely because we are friends and allies of democracy."[14] In the United States, Strauss carefully examines his newfound friend and finds it dangerously weak. The West is atrophied and lost. As the East grows stronger, the West sinks further into an ideological crisis, with military deterrence remaining its sole vanguard against Communist victory.

Changing this will take a strengthening of the American spirit. In the United States, Strauss strove to teach the West to carefully examine

itself closely and undergo a reckoning. He believed that the West should repent and change course, abandoning modern ideals in favor of the principles of ancient Greece:

> The experience of Communism has provided the Western movement with a twofold lesson: a political lesson, a lesson regarding what to expect and what to do in the foreseeable future, and a lesson regarding the principles of politics. For the foreseeable future, there cannot be a universal state, unitary or federative. Apart from the fact that there does not exist now a universal federation of nations but only of those nations which are called peace-loving, the federation that exists masks the fundamental cleavage. If that federation is taken too seriously, as a milestone on man's onward march toward the perfect and hence universal society, one is bound to take great risks supported by nothing but an inherited and perhaps antiquated hope, and thus to endanger the very progress one endeavors to bring about. It is imaginable that in the face of the danger of thermonuclear destruction, a federation, however incomplete, of nations outlaws wars, i.e. wars of aggression; but this means that it acts on the assumption that all present boundaries are just, i.e. in accordance with the self-determination of nations; but this assumption is a pious fraud of which the fraudulence is more evident than the piety. In fact, the only changes of present boundaries for which there is any provision are those not disagreeable to the Communists. One must also not forget the glaring disproportion between the legal equality and the factual inequality of the confederates. The factual inequality is recognized in the expression "underdeveloped nations." The expression implies the resolve to develop them fully, i.e. to make them either Communist or Western, and this despite the fact that the West claims to stand for cultural pluralism. Even if one would still contend that the Western purpose is as universal as the Communist, one must rest satisfied for the foreseeable future with a practical particularism.[15]

In the preface, Strauss does not mince words and makes his suggestions crystal clear. He calls for Western civilization to maintain particularism and give up on the dream of a utopian universal society. Such a society cannot exist as long as an enemy like Communism does, with its real threat of nuclear annihilation. At the heart of *The City and Man* lies a rejection of the idea that a perfect society can exist. Strauss, a non-liberal thinker who chose to side with liberal democracy in its battle against the Soviet Union, wishes the West to survive. However, he does not flinch at exposing what he sees as liberal hypocrisy, such as proclaiming "multiculturalism" while forcing weaker groups to adopt certain values.

While the West aspires in theory to universal equality, in practice its members cooperate thanks to mutual recognition of existing particular borders between states, and it is marked by inequality between strong and weak states.

East and West are divided between conflicting views in a fight for world domination, each with expansionist aspirations. According to Strauss, this clash of civilizations can be likened to the war between Christianity and Islam.[16] One cannot remain neutral in such circumstances. For the time being, the West must confine itself to preserving and advancing itself. Striving for universalism may create an upheaval that would put the very existence of civilization at risk:

> All this amounts to saying that for the foreseeable future, political society remains what it always has been: a partial or particular society whose most urgent and primary task is its self-preservation and self-improvement. As for the meaning of self-improvement, we may observe that the same experience which has made the West doubtful of the viability of a world-society has made it doubtful of the belief that affluence is the sufficient and even necessary condition of happiness and justice: affluence does not cure the deepest evils.[17]

Self-preservation, or, in its negative form, fear of violent death, is a principle that Strauss identifies with Hobbesian political philosophy. Although holding the protection of life as the highest value is inferior to classical thought, Strauss acknowledges that this provides essential security and stability to a society that is at war. He accepts the principle of self-preservation as one of the two pillars of Western thought, the other being self-improvement. Since Locke, the improvement of living conditions has been linked to affluence and comfort. However, a secure and affluent society is not strong enough to withstand an existential threat. Marx aspired to an affluent and moral society but strove to realize this ideal by overcoming nature and achieving total freedom, equality, and universalism. Strauss wished to offer an alternative to the principle of affluence in order to strengthen the West. Politics in the twentieth century must safeguard the modern need for self-preservation while altering the principles of self-improvement. Only by doing so will the West regain power and confidence. The agents of this transition to the pre-modern alternative are classical thinkers Aristotle, Plato, and Thucydides.

Each of these thinkers discussed a key aspect of political philosophy that the West must now adopt and improve in order to fend off the external threat of Communism and the domestic threat of feebleness. According to Strauss, the West must change its approach to the political, to justice, and to war. Aristotle's teachings center on the classical concept of the political; the discussion of Plato revolves around justice and the possibility of a perfect and just society; and in his meditations on Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*, Strauss discusses war. The preface is a public statement of Strauss' pedagogical goals. In the rest of the book, he presents a call to action in his unique interpretive way.

This is not necessarily esoteric writing masking a truth intended solely for philosophers. Rather, Strauss is using a reading of classical texts to make a statement about the present—by implication only. Strauss' texts can therefore be read in two ways: as merely an interpretation of the ancient world within the confines of pre-modern thought, or as instructions to a perplexed reader seeking guidance on how to deal with contemporary existential threats. In keeping with the previous chapters, our reading is of the second kind.[18] Strauss was not a master of esoteric writing—he was a master of subtext.

Aristotle's *Politics*—Liberal Education and the Rule of the Gentleman

The first chapter of *The City and Man* is devoted to the Aristotelian conception of politics. Aristotle's philosophy, like that of Plato and Socrates, is far removed from modern Western thought. Modernity sees nature as its enemy and strives to overcome it, as nature restricts humanity and makes happiness impossible. To break loose, humanity must rebel by using science and technology. As Strauss put it, "[s]cience ceases to be proud contemplation and becomes a humble and charitable handmaid devoted to the relief of man's estate. Science is for the sake of power, i.e. for putting at our disposal the means for achieving our natural ends. Those ends can no longer include knowledge for its own sake; they are reduced to comfortable self-preservation."[19] Strauss makes a distinction between the classical concept of nature and modern "growth." The latter entails the movement of changing history, while nature is constant and stands in contrast to varying social conventions.[20]

According to Strauss, although Socrates was the first political philosopher, Aristotle was "the founder of political science."[21] Both pondered what constitutes the best regime and tried "to replace opinion about the nature of political things by knowledge of the nature of political things," assuming that humans can achieve only partial knowledge[22]:

> Socrates, then, viewed man in the light of the mysterious character of the whole. He held therefore that we are more familiar with the situation of man as man than with the ultimate causes of that situation. We may also say he viewed man in the light of the unchangeable ideas, i.e., of the fundamental and permanent problems. For to articulate the situation of man means to articulate man's openness to the whole. This understanding of the situation of man which includes, then, the quest for cosmology rather than a solution to the cosmological problem, was the foundation of classical political philosophy.[23]

According to Strauss, Aristotle shared the view that political philosophy sought to discover the best regime that can exist in accordance with nature. Yet unlike his predecessors, he separated the discussion of the whole from the study of politics, going beyond a single, eternal principle of the political to examine the variety of regimes it includes. For the first time, politics became a discipline.

Aristotle believed that politics were inferior to philosophy but nonetheless essential to the individual and to his relationships with others. The political does not center on metaphysics but rather on morality and humanity; its subject is not the hermit philosopher, but rather society at large. Only a handful of philosophers can live the life of contemplation necessary to realize the full potential of human consciousness. The masses are more suited to a life of seeking pleasure and "appear completely slavish, since the life they decide on is a life for grazing animals."[24] Political life, however, is relevant neither to the masses nor to a select few. It is intended for citizens: a group of "gentlemen," an aristocracy of magnanimous people who work for the common good guided by the principle of *phronesis*—practical wisdom, moderation and prudence.[25]

The principle of *phronesis* is higher to the arts, which deal with human creation. On one hand, creation is narrow—it cares nothing for the common good. On the other hand, it is limitless: creation seeks to fulfill its potential regardless of other considerations. Creation cannot be reined in

and bears no political responsibility. Only moderation and sound judgment can restrain and control human production, allowing for the existence of a political society in which all modes of human creativity operate in full harmony. Law is the creation of the legislator, but it must uphold the common good, which can only be served if moderation and sound judgment are strictly observed.[26] These virtues are acquired through experience and are not suited to everyone, as Aristotle lamented: "[p]rudent young people do not seem to be found."[27]

Politics are meant for "gentlemen." They are the only ones worthy of being legislators and determining policy. Aristotle himself is a philosopher. He engages with broader and more subversive ideas than the citizen. The philosopher seeks the truth. He is not bound by moral conventions and can go beyond *nomos*. However, to protect philosophy from society, he must—as in the Platonic allegory of the cave—return to the city and to morality by cultivating the "gentleman" legislator. The philosopher must serve as a political guide to the perplexed and create an "enlightened statesman."[28]

Strauss accepts this Aristotelian position. As a teacher in the United States, he criticized great modern philosophers such as Nietzsche, who emerged from the alienated cave and touched on the truth in his philosophical journey but lacked political responsibility and failed to teach his followers how to implement his doctrine. Despite the tension between philosophy and politics, the philosopher is part of the city. He is able to leave its gates but must educate the legislators on the political, on reason and on common sense in order to be able to return to the city and live in it freely.

This view of *phronesis* also highlights differences and similarities between Strauss and Hannah Arendt, who tried to bridge the gap between Aristotle and Kant's *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (*Critique of Judgment*, 1790). Strauss accepts Aristotle's aristocratic, non-democratic tenet that political judgment and the notion of citizenship do not belong with the masses, but rather with a select experienced few. Arendt agrees that the idea of full citizenship is neither a given nor universal but requires active participation in politics. However, judgment and a sense of community can exist without experience.[29]

Arendt sees *phronesis* and common sense as virtues that come very close to Kant's judgment and to his version of "common sense," according to which the individual needs a "broadened mind" in order to think

beyond his subjective perspective, from the perspective of another, and even identify with that perspective.[30] In Arendt's own words:

> The Greeks called this ability "phronesis" or insight, and they considered it the principal virtue or excellence of the statesman in distinction from the wisdom of the philosopher. The difference between this judging insight and speculative thought lies in that the former has its roots in what we usually call common sense, which the latter constantly transcends. Common sense— which the French so suggestively call the "good sense," *le bons sens*—discloses to us the nature of the world insofar as it is a common world; we owe to it the fact that our strictly private and "subjective" five senses and their sensory data can adjust themselves to a nonsubjective and "objective" world which we have in common and share with others. Judging is one, if not the most, important activity in which this sharing-the-world-with-others comes to pass.[31]

Despite the great similarity between Aristotle and Kant, *phronesis* is not sufficient. This virtue is intended for those with experience only, it cannot include a broader range of citizens, and it does not require dialogue between members of the political community. In contrast, Kant's "common sense" does not depend only on experience or intellectual capacity, but rather on aesthetic judgment and a shared taste. The "broadened mind" requires the presence of another and communication, and is possible thanks to imagination—"the ability to make present what is absent."[32] According to Arendt:

> Critical thinking, while still a solitary business, does not cut itself off from "all others." To be sure, it still goes in isolation, but by the force of imagination it makes the others present and thus moves in a space that is potentially public, open to all sides; in other words, it adopts the position of Kant's world citizen.[33]

The meaning of being able to imagine the general perspective is the ability to think as a "world citizen" who wishes, just like Kant, for perpetual peace.

In contrast, Strauss would have utterly rejected the Kantian position as interpreted by Arendt. He held that morality must not depend on taste, on the common good, or on communication between people. The ideal of perpetual peace is false, and trying to rely on this sort of "common sense" and on a broadened mind is doomed to failure.

The Straussian worldview presents itself as anti-modern and especially anti-Kantian, attempting to return to Plato and Aristotle and eliminate any mark left by the modern thinkers, from Machiavelli to Heidegger. Arendt's position is less critical of modernity and more eclectic than Strauss'. She favors a return to the values of ancient Greece and to the polis, and criticizes modern philosophy for emptying the concept of political action from any meaning. However, she is also greatly influenced by Enlightenment thinkers, especially Kant, and tries to broaden the boundaries of the political to include the entire population in an age of liberal democracy.

Strauss' attempt to return to classical Greece and ensure a life of happiness and nobility relies on education.[34] Strauss focused on the meaning of the term "liberal education" and incorporated it into his political teaching.[35] In *The City and Man* and in several essays from the 1950s and early 1960s, Strauss strove to restore liberal education to its former glory and implement it in the United States as "the ladder by which we try to ascend from mass democracy to democracy as originally meant."[36]

Strauss saw the classical liberal education as a means of cultivating judgment and political responsibility in a nuclear age marked by nihilism and an existential threat from the East. He believed that education was the only safeguard against vulgarity and conformism:

> On the whole the view has prevailed that democracy must become rule by the educated, and this goal will be achieved by universal education. But universal education presupposes that the economy of scarcity has given way to an economy of plenty. And the economy of plenty presupposes the emancipation of technology from moral and political control. The essential difference between our view and the classical view consists then, not in a difference regarding moral principle, not in a different understanding of justice: we, too, even our communist coexistents, think that it is just to give equal things to equal people and unequal things to people of unequal merit. The difference between the classics and us with regard to democracy consists exclusively in a different estimate of the virtues of technology. But we are not entitled to say that the classical view has been refuted. Their implicit prophecy that the emancipation of technology, of the arts, from moral and political control would lead to disaster or to the dehumanization of man has not yet been refuted. Nor can we say that democracy has found a solution to the problem of education… Democracy has not yet found a defense against the creeping conformism and the ever-increasing

> invasion of privacy which it fosters. Beings who look down on us from a star might find that the difference between democracy and communism is not quite as great as it appears to be when one considers exclusively the doubtless very important question of civil and political liberties, although only people of exceptional levity or irresponsibility say that the difference between communism and democracy is negligible in the last analysis. Now to the extent to which democracy is aware of these dangers, to the same extent it sees itself compelled to think of elevating its level and its possibilities by a return to the classics' notions of education: a kind of education which can never be thought of as mass-education, but only as higher and highest education of those who are by nature fit for it. It would be an understatement to call it royal education.[37]

According to Strauss, the concept of a "liberal education" is not the opposite of a "conservative education," but rather encapsulates rich knowledge coupled with broad horizons (liberality) based upon the Western canon. He held that contemporary conservativism "is identical with what originally was liberalism" and that "a hundred pages—no, ten pages—of Herodotus introduce us immeasurably better into the mysterious unity of oneness and variety in human things than many volumes written in the spirit predominant in our age."[38] In that sense, classical philosophy is liberal. It is not conservative as it is not bound by tradition; yet it is not modern-liberal, either, because it does not focus on rights or support universalism.

For Strauss, "liberal education is education in culture or toward culture. The finished product of a liberal education is a cultured human being."[39] He wishes to focus on culture in Western democracy. However, in a "multicultural age," he believes that the notion of "culture" has drifted far from its original meaning, which was closely tied to agriculture. In other words, culture originally related to ongoing cultivation, whether of land or of man. To depict the current state of human culture, Strauss proposed that it is "as if someone would say that the cultivation of a garden may consist of the garden's being littered with empty tin cans and whisky bottles and used papers of various descriptions thrown around the garden at random."[40] In other words, the era in which he lived was marked by an eclectic assortment of subcultures. It needed liberal education as a means of developing civil responsibility in society and training the gentleman to rule it.

According to Strauss, much like Marx's aspirations, democracy strives to be a "universal aristocracy."[41] Yet in reality it has gone in the opposite direction, becoming a democracy of the masses that is governed by mass culture and venerates mediocrity:

> Roughly speaking, democracy is the regime in which the majority of adult free males living in a city rules, but only a minority of them are educated. The principle of democracy is therefore not virtue, but freedom as the right of every citizen to live as he likes.[42]

The purpose of a liberal education is to stem the tide of moral corruption:

> Democracy is then not indeed mass rule, but mass culture. A mass culture is a culture which can be appropriated by the meanest capacities without any intellectual and moral effort whatsoever and at a very low monetary price. But even a mass culture and precisely a mass culture requires a constant supply of what are called new ideas, which are the products of what are called creative minds: even singing commercials lose their appeal if they are not varied from time to time. But democracy, even if it is only regarded as the hard shell which protects the soft mass culture, requires in the long run qualities of an entirely different kind: qualities of dedication, of concentration, of breadth, and of depth. Thus we understand most easily what liberal education means here and now. Liberal education is the counterpoison to mass culture, to the corroding effects of mass culture, to its inherent tendency to produce nothing but "specialists without spirit or vision and voluptuaries without heart."[43]

Strauss argues that, contrary to the Aristotelian position, society in the modern age has expanded to include areas that are beyond politics or are "supra-political," such as art, morality and science, gaining strength at the expense of the political. Modern Western culture has eliminated hierarchy and become a society of equals. At its center is neither religion nor philosophy, but rather an arbitrary assortment of elements of equal value, one of them being politics.[44] Modern thinkers have lowered philosophy's standards, abandoning the life of contemplation and human perfection in favor of ensuring a safe, comfortable existence. Modern teaching has turned its back on the liberal education that was intended for a select few, adopting instead a view of mass democracy. The distinctions between philosopher and non-philosopher, between gentleman

and non-gentleman, have become blurred. "The understanding of virtue as choiceworthy for its own sake," writes Strauss, "gave way to an instrumental understanding of virtue: honesty is nothing but the best policy, the policy most conducive to commodious living or comfortable self-preservation."[45]

Modern education has also separated science from philosophy. Science has become the master, philosophy—the slave. Science has shaken off responsibility for, and debate concerning, morality and values, leaving democracy bereft of responsible political leadership. Technology cannot rein in the masses, nor can the masses control technology. A liberal education in a twentieth-century mass democracy is intended to restore political responsibility to a society that has lost all authority and faith in itself. Strauss emphasizes that it is "the necessary endeavor to found an aristocracy within democratic mass society."[46] The gentleman is an undemocratic product whose role is to strengthen democracy.

Strauss explains that Aristotle objected to democracy as the rule of the masses because he believed in a fundamental contradiction between philosophy and the masses. Aristotle believed in political inequality, given the unequal division of skill and talent by nature and compounded by a natural need for authority—for a ruler and a subject, or a master and a slave. Philosophy and the search for truth and happiness are reserved for a select few: for the philosopher and, to a lesser degree, for the gentleman. This does not contradict Aristotle's opinion that political association is in the nature of humanity. Nature allows man to exist and live peacefully with others, and provides the necessary conditions for a handful of individuals to achieve self-fulfillment and happiness. "Man has no right to complain and to rebel" against nature, was Strauss' summary of Aristotle on this point.[47]

In contrast, modern democracy, under the influence of the Enlightenment, believes in harmony between mankind and philosophy: philosophy is meant for all and exists within society and politics. The modern position is anti-Aristotelian. While philosophy and the masses can exist in harmony, humanity and nature cannot. Nature has become the enemy, preventing humankind from fulfilling its potential. To attain happiness, man must overcome nature, conquer it and rule it. Modernity has become a war on nature:

> The difficulty is indicated by the term "state of nature" which means no longer a completed and perfected but the initial state of man. This state is,

> because it is entirely natural, not only imperfect but bad: the war of everybody against everybody. Man is not by nature social, i.e. Nature dissociates men. This however means that nature compels man to make himself social; only because nature compels man to avoid death as the greatest evil can man compel himself to become and to be a citizen.[48]

Modern society and "that kind of egalitarianism which is most characteristically modern," Strauss holds, strives to resolve the inequality inherent to nature by forming a rational society.[49] Modern rationality is the opposite of wild, mysterious nature. If such a society can rule nature, humanity will be able to attain happiness and equality, freed of coercion and of the state:

> On the basis of the break with Aristotle, one could come to believe in the possibility of the simply rational society, i.e. of a society each member of which would be of necessity perfectly rational so that all would be united by fraternal friendship, and government of men, as distinguished from administration of things, would wither away… In such a society, which is rational precisely because it is not natural. i.e. because it has won the decisive battle against nature, everyone is of necessity happy if happiness is indeed unobstructed virtuous activity; it is a society which therefore does no longer have any need for coercion.[50]

At this point, Strauss refers to Rousseau and, in a footnote, to several protagonists of the second wave of modernity: Fichte, Hegel, and more importantly, Marx and Engels, bringing us back to the seminar on Marx.[51] The latter two epitomize the anti-Aristotelian modern view and are diametrically opposed to Strauss' position.

Strauss moves on to discuss citizenship, regimes, and corruption, explaining how Aristotle distinguished the good person from the good citizen ("[a] good Communist cannot but be a bad citizen in a liberal democracy and vice versa").[52] The definition of "a good citizen" depends on the type of regime, and "only when a regime is in a state of decay can its transformation into another regime become publicly defensible."[53] A regime is stable when its citizens believe in it and are loyal to it. If the regime is not "defensible," its stability is in danger:

> Every political society derives its character from a specific public or political morality, from what it regards as publicly defensible, and this means from what the preponderant part of society (not necessarily the majority)

> regards as just. A given society may be characterized by extreme permissiveness, but this very permissiveness is in need of being established and defended, and it necessarily has its limits: a permissive society which permits to its members also every sort of non-permissiveness will soon cease to be permissive; it will vanish from the face of the earth.[54]

A society can be open but at the same time it must believe in itself, justify its principles, and fight anyone who wishes to destroy it.

It is not hard to fathom Strauss' aim in his discussion of Aristotelian politics. The United States is a liberal democracy with an open, lenient society. To progress, it must curb its downward spiral into vulgarity and prevent destabilizing ideas and ideologies, such as Communism, from seeping in. The solution lies in teaching—in a liberal education that will create leadership for the American administration. Like a frenzied horse, liberal democracy is galloping at full speed toward a democracy of the masses—and to eventual slaughter. Only an experienced jockey can save it from chaos and confusion by stopping the blind race toward the slaughterhouse and turning back toward a safe haven. The jockey is the well-trained aristocratic gentleman. Leo Strauss saw himself as the jockey's trainer, the philosopher returning to the cave in order to teach a select minority about political life—about the city and man.

Plato's *Republic* as an Anti-Utopian Prescription Against Communism

Strauss' discussion of Aristotelian politics served as an introduction. *The City and Man* opens with Aristotle and closes with Thucydides. Yet the most important of its three chapters is the middle one—a Straussian reading of Plato's *Republic*. It contains the central messages that Strauss wishes to convey to his readers. Plato's voice is conveyed by his characters, while Strauss speaks through his interpretation.

In all his writings, Strauss carefully avoided using modern terms and "isms" such as socialism, feminism, or modernism. He believed that modern thinkers had invented new names for concepts that had existed for generations and favored the original usage. For example, he preferred the term "tyranny" over "totalitarianism" to describe the despotic regimes of the twentieth century, and remained loyal to the traditional division of regimes—monarchy and tyranny, aristocracy and oligarchy, democracy and mass rule—making no attempt to invent new terms.[55]

Unlike Arendt in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), Strauss believed that Communism and Nazism fell within the definition of a tyrannical regime and did not constitute a new phenomenon. According to Strauss, the vocabulary of politics was signed and sealed in ancient Greece and anything else is mere repetition. Even the term "esoteric writing," which is commonly associated with Strauss, was not a twentieth-century invention but a term that had fallen out of use and Strauss chose to revive.[56]

Yet in the chapter on Plato, the word "communism" (lowercase in the original) appears dozens of times. The ideal of a classless society marked by equality and freed of alienation dates back to prehistory, and naturally existed in ancient Greece. But the word "communism" is integral to the modern age. It entered into circulation before the *Communist Manifesto* but is identified primarily with the authors of that text.

Strauss wanted his readers to feel an immediate associative connection between the ideas laid out in *Republic* and Communism. He inserted the modern word, which is so closely identified with Marx, into a reading of a Platonic text from the fourth century BC. Strauss was not the first to use the term "communism" to teach Plato—many of his contemporaries did so. Yet given the complexity of Strauss' writings, cautious reader would do well to reflect on the choice of this particular word and its frequent repetition throughout the text.[57]

Strauss offered a vastly different interpretation of the *Republic* from the accepted reading, focusing on irony as a major literary device that Plato used in his arguments.[58] He defined the *Republic* as "the broadest and deepest analysis of political idealism ever made."[59] To him, it is a timeless ironic parable that is just as relevant to twentieth-century readers facing the crisis of the West and Marx's conception of justice.

Many contemporary interpretive readings, such as Karl Popper's *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (1945), presented Plato as a utopian, anti-democratic Communist who fathered totalitarianism. According to Popper:

> Summing up, we can say that Plato's theory of justice, as presented in the *Republic* and later works, is a conscious attempt to get the better of the equalitarian, individualistic, and protectionist tendencies of his time, and to re-establish the claims of tribalism by developing a totalitarian moral theory… he successfully enlisted the humanitarian sentiments, whose strength he knew so well, in the cause of the totalitarian class rule of naturally superior master race.[60]

In contrast, Strauss presents Plato as a cautious, moderate philosopher using Socratic dialogues to caution against the danger of trying to create a perfect and just universal society. Strauss sees the *Republic* as "the most magnificent cure ever devised for every form of political ambition."[61] Strauss' Plato is a patently anti-utopian philosopher discussing justice and politics with an ironic wink. A philosophical call for a communist society with no private property or families in the service of an equal and universal justice becomes, under Strauss' pen, a dialogue actually aimed at the exact opposite: proving that such a society cannot exist, thereby shattering Marxist and liberal dreams.[62]

According to Strauss, the major characters in the Platonic dialogue that come into contact with Socrates represent a range of regimes with different perceptions of justice. The characters represent politics, thus urging the philosopher to discuss justice.[63] Cephalus and Polemarchus, father and son, represent oligarchy and democracy, respectively. Cephalus is a wealthy, selfish old man who sets great store by private property and tradition. He says that age, which releases man from Eros and pride, coupled with fear of punishment by the gods after death, aids moderation. He sees justice as telling the truth and repaying debt, while private property and debt are determined by law.[64] Socrates easily refutes this position: in some situations, such as returning a weapon to a friend who has gone mad, the debt must not be repaid.[65] Cephalus' son, Polemarchus, represents democracy. Although he initially defines justice much like his father, he quickly discovers, with Socrates' help, significant differences between them. Unlike his father, Polemarchus believes in a common good. Justice is not only about returning property to its rightful owner or telling the truth, but also about entitlement and benefit. Justice is "the one that gives benefits and injuries to friends and enemies."[66] This view, which ties justice to a political (almost Schmittian) distinction between friend and enemy, assumes the existence of wars and closed societies. Justice protects the city from evil-wishers. In *Natural Right and History*, Strauss calls this view "citizen morality," which is vital to ensuring the safety of the city.[67] However, he writes:

> Citizen-morality suffers from an inevitable self-contradiction. It asserts that different rules of conduct apply in war than in peace, but it cannot help regarding at least some relevant rules, which are said to apply to peace only, as universally valid. The city cannot leave it at saying, for instance,

> that deception, and especially deception to the detriment of others, is bad in peace but praiseworthy in war… To avoid this self-contradiction, the city must transform itself into the "world state."[68]

Strauss is referring here to the dialogue between Socrates and Polemarchus. The philosopher challenges Cephalus' son, leading him to a different concept of justice—one that negates the argument that the just must harm strangers, who are enemies of the city.[69] Friend can be revealed as enemy, enemy may transpire to be friend, and telling the two apart requires both knowledge and discretion. Not every person has these skills.[70] Also, while dispossession is not a just act, stealing information from one's enemy at wartime is commendable. "The just man, then, as it seems, has come to light as a kind of robber," says Socrates, and the principles of justice lose some of their generalizability.[71] As injured animals grow worse, so human virtue suffers a blow when people are harmed. "Cooling is not the work of heat, but of its opposite… Then it is not the work of the just man to harm either a friend or anyone else… but of his opposite, the unjust man."[72] The justice proposed by Socrates is beneficial to a true friend and avoids harm to people. It cannot contain any wrongdoing.[73]

According to Strauss, the view of justice promoted by Polemarchus and Socrates can lead to two kinds of rule, if the aim is to go beyond the boundaries of the city and a closed society: the rule of the philosopher, who can tell friend from foe and determine the appropriate reward for every person, or "absolute communism," in which private property and family are abolished:

> If justice is to be good or salutary, one might be compelled to demand that everyone own only what is "fitting" for him, what is good for him and for as long as it is good for him. We might be compelled to demand the abolition of private property or the introduction of communism. To the extent to which there is a connection between private property and the family, one would even be compelled to demand in addition the abolition of the family or the introduction of absolute communism, i.e. of communism regarding property, women, and children. Above all, very few people will be able to determine exactly what things and what amount of things are good for each individual, or at any rate for each individual who counts, to use; only men of exceptional wisdom are able to do this. We shall then be compelled to demand that society be ruled by simply wise men, by philosophers in the strict sense of the wielding absolute power.

> Socrates' refutation of Cephalus' view of justice contains then the proof of the necessity of absolute communism as well as the absolute rule of philosophers.[74]

According to Strauss, a view of justice that is based on entitlement and a common good raises the question who decides what is a just reward and how resources should be properly allocated. While very few people—philosophers—can correctly answer these questions, the political alternatives that arise are the rule of the philosopher-king or a communist rule that abolishes private property as a solution to the problem of distributive justice. Strauss states that while Polemarchus changes his opinion under the influence of Socrates and adopts a consistent view, the proposed solution is absolute communism:

> Polemarchus' opinion properly understood is the only one among the generally known views of justice discussed in the first book of the *Republic* which is entirely preserved in the positive or constructive part of the work. This opinion, to repeat, is to the effect that justice is full dedication to the common good; it demands that one withhold nothing of his own from his city; it demands therefore by itself absolute communism.[75]

With Socrates' generous assistance, Polemarchus comes to believe in the democratic aspiration for a "world-state." Yet according to Strauss, Socrates held—unlike Marx—that an individual or a group cannot rule over humanity with total justice. The rulers of the "world-state," which extends beyond the city and politics, cannot be flesh and blood but only a god or nature. Mankind can only be free if it obeys divine or natural law: "[t]heir obedience to the law which orders the natural city, to the natural law, is the same thing as prudence."[76] Marx wanted to overcome nature and establish a universal society ruled by humans. In contrast, classical Greek philosophy believed that man must remain subjected to nature and operate according to natural law.

The city is the realm of politics. Marx and Socrates both propose that humanity go beyond the boundaries of the city. The former, a product of modern philosophy, strove to abolish politics in order to form a just society of equals. The latter, the symbol of ancient Greece, argued that the city must disappear so that justice can fully blossom, while admitting that this is impossible as humanity needs the political in order to survive. The philosopher can go beyond the city, but humanity must remain within its confines.

Having concluded his discussion of oligarchy and democracy, Strauss shifts to the character that represents tyranny in the *Republic*—Thrasymachus. This sophist, described by Plato as a shameless savage, has no interest in the common good. He sees justice merely as a means to serve "the advantage of the stronger" rather than society at large.[77] Justice requires complete obedience to the law as laid down by the sovereign. According to Thrasymachus, the man who seeks the common good is a miserable slave and the evil-doer is master.

According to Strauss, Thrasymachus represents the city and is rightfully enraged with Socrates, who questions its very foundations: politics and law, the distinction between friend and enemy, war, and private property. Speaking on behalf of the city, Thrasymachus stands in opposition to Socrates, Polemarchus, and the vision of a "world-state." Strauss is ambivalent about Thrasymachus. Not only does he refrain from flatly rejecting the city's position, he attributes to Thrasymachus "common sense" and "the most obvious, the most natural, thesis regarding justice."[78] In fact, Strauss writes, "without 'Thrasymachus' there will never be a just city."[79]

Yet Thrasymachus' view gradually softens. According to Strauss, this view requires taming and guidance by the philosopher, who returns to the cave. The city must accept that justice cannot depend on the arbitrary whims of the ruler. The use and abuse of the ruler's power must be replaced with wisdom, responsibility, and knowledge.[80] People may indeed tend to help others only in exchange for personal benefit, but behaving unjustly to one another leads to factionalism and discourages political association. According to Strauss, Thrasymachus argues that justice is negative and unnecessary within the city, while Socrates holds that it is indeed negative, but necessary.[81] A city of justice must avoid harm to its subjects. It must ensure the welfare of its members and educate them to act in the interest of the common good rather than for personal benefit alone.[82] The city must aspire to justice that is determined by wisdom and knowledge. Justice can exist in the city only as a combination of Socrates and Thrasymachus—of the universal and the particular. Through Socrates, Plato knowingly relinquishes the vision of the "world-state," while Thrasymachus and others like him gradually come to understand, through Plato's teaching, the importance of seeking wisdom and natural right, both of which are essential to proper rule of the city.

Strauss' interpretation of Plato's writings and his distinction between the esoteric and the exoteric were greatly influenced by his understanding of the medieval Platonic philosopher Al-Farabi (c. 870–950). In "Farabi's Plato" (1945) and in *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, Strauss addressed the possibility raised by Al-Farabi that a perfect political arrangement is impossible. He noted that Al-Farabi differentiated between "Socrates' way" and "Plato's way." Socrates tried to go beyond the boundaries of the city and of convention in order to reach truth and universal justice. Yet this choice resulted in his death and the execution of philosophy. In contrast, Plato chose life and the experience of constant tension between politics and philosophy:

> The Platonic way, as distinguished from the Socratic way, is a combination of the way of Socrates with the way of Thrasymachus; for the intransigent way of Socrates is appropriate only for the philosopher's dealing with the elite, whereas the way of Thrasymachus, which is both more and less exacting than the former, is appropriate for his dealings with the vulgar. What Farabi suggests is that by combining the way of Socrates with the way of Thrasymachus, Plato avoided the conflict with the vulgar and thus the fate of Socrates. Accordingly, the revolutionary quest for the other city ceased to be necessary: Plato substituted for it a more conservative way of action, namely, the gradual replacement of the accepted opinions by the truth or an approximation to the truth. The replacement of the accepted opinions could not be gradual, if it were not accompanied by a provisional acceptance of the accepted opinions. We may say that Farabi's Plato eventually replaces the philosopher-king who rules openly in the virtuous city, by the secret kingship of the philosopher who, being "a perfect man" precisely because he is an "investigator," lives privately as a member of an imperfect society which he tries to humanize within the limits of the possible.[83]

Plato uses the characters in the dialogue to find the proper formula for a just society. Such a society cannot attain the degree of perfection that would eliminate politics and the city. However, it must guard philosophy and contain it. The gap between philosophy and politics is eternal, as their fundamental aims are diametrically opposed. Yet a meeting between the two yields a compromise that enables a shared existence: the city strives for justice and philosophy publicly accepts the idea of boundaries.

Before Strauss' Plato can present his political doctrine, however, he must hear from the aristocracy, represented by Athenians

Glaucon and Adeimantus. Strauss notes that unlike the three former characters—Cephalus, Polemarchus, and Thrasymachus—these two brothers are gentlemen with a keen interest in politics and in issues of justice. He states that the two believe in the existence of justice and wish to improve the city, yet are aware of the prejudices of the masses.[84] Thrasymachus represents one such prejudice by stating that "doing injustice is naturally good, and suffering injustice bad," and that "no one is willingly just but only when compelled to be so. Men do not take it to be a good for them in private, since wherever each supposes he can do injustice, he does it."[85]

Another prejudice lauds justice for the wrong reasons. In Adeimantus' words: "fathers say to their sons and exhort them, as do all those who have care of anyone, that one must be just. However, they don't praise justice by itself but the good reputations that come from it."[86] As the brothers are aware of this popular approach, they demand that Socrates argue in favor of justice as a virtue and prove that it is worthy in its own right, rather than as a means of promoting personal status.

Glaucon is the first to mention the origins of justice and formulate a social contract. While Thrasymachus believes that justice serves the stronger, Glaucon holds that it is the advantage of the weak. People are naturally interested in personal gain and harm others in order to attain it. Those who cannot perpetrate injustice or prevent their own suffering join forces and determine what is legal and what is just. The strong who commit injustice need no justice or contract. The helplessness of the weak compels them to cooperate with other victims of injustice.[87] Justice is a product of the city. Both go against nature.[88]

Socrates rises to the challenge posed by the aristocratic brothers and takes them to the very edge of politics. In the example of the small and large letters, he argues that to properly understand what justice is, one must first discuss the idea of the state. Justice can only prevail if the best city is founded—one that does not go against the laws of nature but abides by them. All individuals are selfish, but they understand that they cannot fill their natural needs alone. Human needs become the basis for establishing the state, and political association and accepting the common good reveal themselves as essential: "each of us isn't self-sufficient but is in need of much… So, then, when one man takes on another for one need and another for another need, and, since many things are needed, many men gather in one settlement as partners and helpers, to this common settlement we give the name city."[89]

Strauss reminds the reader that there are three phases to the establishment of the good city, each expressed in the demands made by Glaucon and Adeimantus: the healthy city or "the city of pigs"; the purified city, which is the city of the armed camp; and finally, the ideal city, "the city of beauty," ruled by the philosophers.[90]

According to Strauss, the healthy city fulfills physical needs that are essential to self-preservation. It allows natural inequality to exist: all of its members have a natural skill that enables them to specialize in a particular line of work. Full cooperation between people who trade the fruits of their labor drives the state in perfect unison. The healthy city is happy and vegetarian. It has no poverty, means of coercion, or war. A natural invisible hand ensures that private property is protected and every person gives as much as he can and takes as much as he needs. According to Strauss, the healthy city is marked by perfect harmony between the private and public good. In his words, "the healthy city is happy because it is just and it is just because it is happy. It is just without anyone concerning himself with justice; it is just by nature."[91]

Strauss holds that this is the city of "the puritan," Adeimantus.[92] Justice is easy, natural and convenient, and the citizens live quite simply. As Socrates put it:

> Won't they make bread, wine, clothing, and shoes? And, when they have built houses, they will work in the summer, for the most part naked and without shoes, and in the winter adequately clothed and shod. For food they will prepare barely meal and wheat flour… And so they will live out their lives in peace with health, as is likely, and at last, dying as old men, they will hand down other similar lives to their offspring.[93]

But Glaucon disapproves, calling it "a city of pigs." He demands that citizens not only aim for self-preservation but also be willing to sacrifice themselves; that they not only fulfill the basic needs of the body but also wish for recognition and a luxurious life. The healthy city may be just, but it is soulless. It lacks excellence, fame, virtue, and heroism—all of which stem from the desire to go beyond necessity and basic survival needs. According to Strauss, such a city requires humankind to be utterly innocent. Evil lies dormant there:

> Because virtue is impossible in the healthy city, the healthy city is impossible. The healthy city or any other form of anarchic society would be possible if men could remain innocent; but it is the essence of innocence that it is easily lost; men can be just only through knowledge. "Self-realization" is not essentially in harmony with sociability.[94]

According to Strauss, Glaucon's city can only come into being once the healthy city declines and people no longer make do with self-preservation, but are also interested in a life of pleasure and capital gain. Social harmony vanishes, replaced by a struggle over territory and control in which friend is distinguished from enemy. War is above all else, and the guard or warrior rule supreme.

However, he emphasizes, in this city justice is no longer natural. Education is needed in order to prevent injustice and bloodshed.[95] Those who bear arms must be instilled with courage and moderation. They must act as watchdogs: love their masters and devour the masters' enemies. Without education, Glaucon's vision could end in disaster.[96] It is the task of the educator to prevent a massacre, and of the ruler to rein in the aggression of those who hold power. According to Strauss, the goal of the republic is to educate citizens to practice the art of moderation.[97]

Censorship, concealment, and myth are all central to this doctrine. Strauss explains that the healthy city needs no lies: as it is bereft of luxury and Eros and exists without coercion, there is no need for falsehood. However, since the healthy city cannot exist, the implication is that humankind needs lies—noble lies.[98] Such city is based on fraud. The guards must believe that they have to serve the city loyally and obey it at all times. For that to happen, they must believe that they were raised naturally, even though their education and upbringing were in fact artificial, and that they belong to a single nation united against its enemies. In Strauss' concise words: "the fraternity of all human beings is to be replaced by the fraternity of all fellow citizens."[99] Citizens must believe that the city is natural and that its hierarchy was determined by perfect, immutable gods who are "wholly free from lie."[100]

Strauss qualifies this reading with an important addition—that as these incentives are not enough to ensure obedience, Socrates introduces the idea of communism:

> Yet unless one ascribes a weight not warranted by the text to the divine sanction mentioned, one must admit that the suggested incentive is not sufficient. It is for this reason that Socrates introduces at this point the institution of communism: the incentive to justice still being insufficient, the opportunity for injustice must be removed. In the extremely brief discussion of communism regarding property the emphasis is on "housing": there will be no hiding places. Everyone is compelled always to live, if not in the open, at least within easy inspection: everyone may enter everyone else's dwelling at will… no one can be happy through injustice because injustice, in order to be successful, requires a secrecy which is no longer possible.[101]

According to Strauss, Socrates proposes that any possibility of privacy be abolished so as to prevent any conspiracy to commit injustice. Communism here is the elimination of concealment. When man becomes transparent, he can no longer hurt others. Communism means abolishing injustice in order to achieve equality. Eliminating private property is one means of ensuring transparency. Another is canceling the nuclear family and establishing "absolute communism."[102] Family and private property together constitute an independent unit that does not rely on the state. Doing away with them removes the hiding place they offer. Needless to say, this view is far from Strauss' own position. He holds that truth is dangerous, while concealment is vital to society and philosophy. Democracy aims to be transparent, but in order to protect it, full exposure must be prevented.

Transparent man is an entirely abstract figure. Absolute communism requires taking humanity to extreme abstraction in order to prohibit injustice.[103] Strauss believes that the biggest victim of communism is Eros.[104] There is a gap between justice and Eros, in any form it takes. At the lowest level, Eros manifests as tyranny, self-love and a desire for control. In its highest form, Eros drives philosophy: a love of wisdom and desire for infinite knowledge. In the city, Eros is worn down and replaced by justice.[105] The just city relies on labor and art. It is not erotic, although both justice and Eros are basic human needs.[106] Eliminating the possibility of injustice and stripping people of their bodies and desires are attempts to elevate the city to a degree of divinity.

In the perfect city, justice contains no Eros.[107] It prevents tyranny but is equally at odds with philosophy and with the desire for knowledge.

Philosophical truth belongs to all, but the philosopher, who wishes to emerge from the cave into the light of day, must lead a private life of contemplation, isolated from society and from the justice of the city. There is a gap between man and the city, as there is between the philosopher and justice in the perfect society.

Strauss discusses the massive problem created by dividing the city into guards, who live in a communist framework without families, and private property owners, who are not restricted to such conditions. While guards are not supposed to know who their parents are, the offspring of private property owners—whether skilled or not—grow up knowing their families. This makes it difficult to move between groups, although the criterion for belonging to a certain group is skill rather than heritage.[108] According to Strauss, one way to solve this problem is to control childbirth rates and expand communism beyond the class of guards. Regarding the latter, he notes that Socrates leaves the issue unresolved.[109] Thus, if communism is limited, justice in the city is limited no less, while privacy—which enables injustice to occur—continues to exist among philosophers and traders. Together, these issues call into question the feasibility of a just society and whether nature can enable a communist society to exist.[110] Strauss hints that Plato's presentation of a perfect society based on absolute communism via Socrates is intentionally flawed, so as to convey the message that such a society is impossible and communism cannot survive:

> Socrates thus leaves open the question of the possibility of the good city, i.e. of the just city, as such. And this happens to his listeners, and to the readers of the *Republic,* after they have brought the greatest sacrifices—such as the sacrifice of *eros* as well as the family—for the sake of justice… the just city is only "in speech": it "is" only by virtue of having been figured out with a view to justice itself or to what is by nature right on the one hand and the human all too human on the other. Although the just city is of decidedly lower rank than justice itself, even the just city as a pattern is not capable of coming into being as it has been blueprinted; only approximations to it can be expected in cities which are in deed and not merely in speech.[111]

The perfect society remains no more than an idea. It cannot exist in reality; humanity can come close, but never attain it. The closest approximation of the perfect city is the rule of a philosopher-king, who is supposed to overcome the disparity between a life of contemplation and a

life of action and resolve the tension between philosophy and politics. For such a regime to come into being, the masses must accept the supremacy of the philosopher, while he must relinquish his fundamental opposition to politics and return to the cave, accepting the authority and responsibility entailed in leadership. Only the reign of the philosopher can bring about "'the cessation of evil', i.e. both private and public happiness."[112] According to Strauss, Socrates implies that such harmony cannot be: the masses are the enemies of philosophy, while the philosopher has no interest in a political life, which curtails Eros and the desire for knowledge. The just city is, therefore, no more than a pipe dream—an impossible utopia:

> The just city is then impossible. It is impossible because it is against nature. It is against nature that 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"… The just city is against nature because the equality of the sexes and absolute communism are against nature.[113]

In *The City and Man*, Strauss defines utopia as "the belief that the cessation of evils is possible."[114] Socrates' communist vision is an attempt to fulfill just such a messianic belief. In that sense, Socrates and Marx are one and the same. Yet while Strauss' Plato presents the Socratic vision ironically, warning the readers that absolute communism is dangerous, Strauss' Marx is profoundly serious in his proposal to eliminate evil. In a sense, Strauss believed that Marx lacked the humor and lightheartedness that abound in the Platonic dialogues. A perfect just society is at odds with philosophy, with nature, and with the limitations that nature places upon the city and the political:

> The *Republic* cannot bring to light the nature of the soul because it abstracts from the body and from *eros*; by abstracting from the body and *eros*, the *Republic* in fact abstract from the soul; the *Republic* abstract from nature; this abstraction is necessary if justice as full dedication to the common good of a particular city is to be praised as choiceworthy for its own sake… The teaching of the *Republic* regarding justice can be true although it is not complete, in so far as the nature of justice depends decisively on the nature of the city… The *Republic* then indeed makes clear what justice is. As Cicero as observed, the *Republic* does not bring to light the best possible regime but rather the nature of political things—the nature of the

> city. Socrates makes clear in the *Republic* of what character the city would have to be in order to satisfy the highest need of man. By letting us see that the city constructed in accordance with this requirement is not possible, he lets us see the essential limits, the nature, of the city.[115]

The communist vision transcends the city. It is an attempt to eradicate politics and philosophy, replacing them with a universal society of equals. Yet this venture, according to Strauss, is doomed to failure. Humanity is subject to the city by nature. The boundaries of politics cannot be breached.

Strauss also addresses Socrates' discussion of regime change in Book Eight of the *Republic*.[116] He focuses on transitions between lesser regimes (oligarchy, democracy, and tyranny) and not on the preferred one—aristocracy, which is the rule of wisdom, and timocracy, or the rule of honor. Socrates describes the development of these regimes as filial: democracy grew out of the demise of oligarchy, and tyranny is the son of democracy.

Oligarchy is a lowly political arrangement because it is ruled by desire for money. It is guided not by knowledge or respect, but by the accumulation of capital and greed. As for democracy, Socrates (and Strauss) are ambivalent. On one hand, it is the most colorful and "fairest regime," allowing philosophy to exist.[117] The philosopher does not have to participate in political life, leaving him free to pursue a life of contemplation. He cannot be free in the other, lesser regimes.[118] On the other hand, Strauss emphasizes that in the end, Socrates sees democracy as inferior even to oligarchy, since it does not provide for the well-being of non-philosophers. Democracy puts freedom on a pedestal. The result is anarchy and a loss of self-restraint, as described in *the Republic*: "there is neither order nor necessity in his life, but calling this life sweet, free, and blessed he follows it throughout."[119] To describe the democratic individual and mindset in the *Republic*, Strauss uses Marx as an example:

> That procedure—a consequence of the parallel between the city and the individual—consists in understanding the man corresponding to an inferior regime as the son of a father corresponding to the preceding regime. Hence the democratic man comes to sight as the son of an oligarchic father, as the degenerate son of wealthy father who is concerned with nothing but making money: the democratic man is a drone, the fat, soft,

> the prodigal playboy, the Lotus-eater who, assigning a kind of equality to equal and unequal things, lives one day in complete surrender to the lowest desires and the next day ascetically, or who according to Marx's ideal "goes hunting in the morning, fishing in the afternoon, raises cattle in the evening, devotes himself to philosophy after dinner," i.e., does all the time what he happens to like.[120]

Marx's vision—Strauss' nightmare—reflects the decline of democracy, the rule of the slaves, the victory of "the last man." Yet this victory does not last forever. Instead, it gives rise to an even worse form of rule, tyranny. This is the ultimate victory of Eros over justice, moderation, and philosophy. In Socrates' words: "[t]yranny is probably established out of no other regime than democracy, I suppose—the greatest and most savage slavery out of the extreme of freedom."[121]

Strauss traces these transitions between regimes and sees his example—Marx's ideal of freedom—as a dangerous doctrine that will bring calamity in its wake: a totalitarian Stalinist tyranny that will annihilate philosophy and freedom. In this sense, Marx is "the father of Communism."

Violent Teachers—Strauss, Thucydides, and the Peloponnesian War

From 1970 until his death in 1973, Strauss taught at St. John's College in Annapolis. In late 1972 and in the first few months of 1973, he taught a seminar, one of the last he was to teach, on Thucydides and *The History of the Peloponnesian War*.[122] Unlike the seminar on Marx and other classes he had taught in previous decades, in this seminar Strauss was weak and ill. His voice sounded slightly different, slower and shakier, and instead of lecturing before the students, the seminar was largely based on students reading out passages. Strauss would stop the student once in a while, offer comments, answer questions, and ask the student to read out another passage from Thucydides to further the discussion. The seminar was based, among other things, on Strauss' interpretation of the Greek historian, which was published in the last part of *The City and Man*.[123]

In the first two chapters of the book, which are devoted to Aristotle and Plato, Strauss' teaching is anti-utopian yet deals with philosophy and questions concerning what is good, what is just, and what constitutes a proper education. The third chapter diverges from philosophy

and the philosopher, focusing instead on history and the historian. From discussing what makes a just society, Strauss shifts to a discussion of the most extreme state of emergency—war. This opens up the possibility of discussing worldlier, more political matters such as international relations and a reality of war between nations or empires. In the seminar on Thucydides, Strauss quoted Nietzsche's observation in *Götzen-Dämmerung* (Twilight of the Idols, 1889) that Thucydides counters Platonic boredom and seeks reason in reality, rather than in morality or ideals.[124]

According to Strauss, while Plato was a political philosopher, Thucydides was a "philosophic historian."[125] He uses the former to discuss the good society in times of peace, and the latter to consider the city at war. Strauss notes that "[a] light veil of sadness covers Thucydides' somber wisdom; the highest is of extreme fragility."[126] Unlike philosophy, Thucydides remains within the city, as "[p]olitical 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."[127] War determines the boundaries of politics and of cities, stretching humanity's abilities to the utmost. Self-fulfillment is possible within the boundaries of the city and of politics, but not beyond. However, Thucydides is no Machiavellian. He does not deal in realpolitik and separates the noble from the lowly:

> Other contemporary readers are reminded by Machiavelli's teaching of Thucydides; they find in both authors the same "realism," i.e., the same denial of the power of the gods or of justice and the same sensitivity to harsh necessity and elusive chance. Yet Thucydides never calls in question the intrinsic superiority of nobility to baseness, a superiority that shines forth particularly when the noble is destroyed by the base.[128]

Strauss emphasizes repeatedly that Thucydides saw the Peloponnesian War (431–404 BC) as the "greatest war" in human history: a total, universal battle that outdid the Trojan War and the Greco-Persian Wars.[129] He believes that Thucydides intended his study to remain relevant for posterity, "a possession for all times" that would serve not only as a source of information about the particular case of ancient Greek warfare, but also as a guide for other turbulent times and future wars.[130] "The Peloponnesian war is the climactic war. Being both universal and climactic, it is the complete war, the absolute war. It is *the* war, war writ

large."[131] According to Strauss, war reveals the pinnacles of Greek history and human ability. It is a "violent teacher," as Thucydides called it, since it teaches man of violence.[132]

Strauss is interested in Thucydides' motives and asks several questions: Why did he choose the history of the Peloponnesian War? Why does this ancient conflict represent total war? What makes his study timeless? What message did Thucydides wish to convey to contemporary and future readers? How can present-day wars be informed by a particular event that occurred thousands of years ago? To answer these questions, Strauss dissects war and exposes a series of contradictions contained within the violent conflict in ancient Greece: war and peace, Sparta and Athens, rest versus motion, necessity and justice, a life of action versus a life of contemplation, and culture as opposed to barbarism.

According to Strauss, Socrates and Thucydides agree that history—the actions of individuals in the world—is a dialectical process of motion and rest. "Motion" is a state of destruction, insecurity, discomfort, mass migration, excitement, and war. "Rest" is marked by tranquility, development, construction, and peace.[133] While the Platonic dialogues discuss the good city in a state of rest, Thucydides described the city in its greatest moment of trial—an extreme state of motion and upheaval. He enters spheres that philosophy cannot reach:

> Thucydides' theme is the greatest war known to him, the greatest "motion." The best city described in the *Republic* (and in the *Politics*) is at rest. But in the sequel to the *Republic* Socrates expresses the desire to see the best city "in motion" i.e. at war; "the best city in motion" is the necessary sequel to the speech on the best city. Socrates feels unable to praise properly, to present properly the best city in motion. The philosopher's speech on the best city requires a supplement which the philosopher cannot give. The description of the best city which avoids everything accidental deals with a nameless city and nameless men living in an indeterminate place and an indeterminate time. Yet a war can only be a war between this particular city and other particular cities, under these or these leaders, at this or that time. Socrates seems to call for the assistance of a man like Thucydides who could supplement political philosophy or complete it.[134]

Peace is a state of rest that enables civilizations to develop and progress. Greece in all its glory was built in peace. This was preceded by a period of constant motion, fear, insecurity, and barbarity. The concept of motion changed once peace began to flourish. The Peloponnesian

War was not a barbaric war but an upheaval of Greek repose. War and peace are intertwined and mutually dependent, teaching humanity of its limitations.[135]

Motion and war, in Strauss' interpretation, are not only destructive, and peace is not all positive. Humanity develops in times of peace and aspires to reach them ("Pericles, as opposed to the fickle multitude, represents superhuman rest in the midst of human motion") but peace can also lead to stagnation.[136] Strauss demonstrates this point by referring to Alcibiades' speech in Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*: "[t]he city, like everything else, will wear out of its own accord if it remains at rest, and its skill in everything will grow out of date… a city which is active by nature will soon ruin itself if it changes its nature and becomes idle."[137] The intrinsic tie between war and peace or "the interplay of motion and rest" can lead to disaster and a return to barbarism and chaos, yet may also raise mankind to new heights.[138]

In Strauss' thought, "Jerusalem" and "Athens" are two cities that symbolize the tension in Western tradition between theology and philosophy. The discussion of the Peloponnesian War centers on "Athens" and Greece, with a further division between two cities: "Athens" and "Sparta." These cities represent both the superiority and the lowliness of the classic Greek world. There are advantages and disadvantages to each. Athens represents restlessness and motion, while Sparta represents rest and moderation.[139] The two cities are at war, and during lulls in the fighting maintain "a kind of Cold War."[140]

"Thucydides of Athens" and Strauss of Chicago are ambivalent here. The most famous speech in the book is undoubtedly Pericles' Funeral Oration (Book Two, 35–46), which is a song of praise to Athenian democracy. There is no equivalent speech singing the praises of Sparta; it appears that Thucydides, who frequently incorporated speeches into his *History of the Peloponnesian War*, was emphasizing the superiority of Athenian society and policy through the voice of the Greek politician and military leader. However, according to Strauss, the speech does not prove that Thucydides favored Athens over Sparta.[141] In many ways, Strauss argues, Thucydides is close to the Spartan ideal. In the third book of *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, the author describes cruel "unrest within the city" (*stasis*).[142] Troubled by unrest, the cities have decayed—virtue is seen as vice and what was once considered unworthy is now popular:

> What used to be described as a thoughtless act of aggression was now regarded as the courage one would expect to find in a party member; to think of the future and wait was merely another way of saying one was a coward; any idea of moderation was just an attempt to disguise one's unmanly character; ability to understand a question from all sides meant that one was totally unfitted for action. Fanatical enthusiasm was the mark of a real man, and to plot against an enemy behind his back was perfectly legitimate self-defence. Anyone who held violent opinions could always be trusted, and anyone who objected to them became a suspect. To plot successfully was a sign of intelligence, but it was still cleverer to see that a plot was hatching… In short, it was equally praiseworthy to get one's blow in first against someone who was going to do wrong, and to denounce someone who had no intention of doing any wrong at all.[143]

According to Strauss, this implies that Thucydides saw a sick city as careless and rash, while the healthy city exercises prudence. Moderate Sparta, the symbol of rest and "a style of republican simplicity and equality" is less flawed than Athenian society, which lacks self-restraint.[144] The leaders of Athens, including Pericles, are no different.[145] Strauss claims that in terms of morality, "Thucydides' taste is the same as that of Plato and Aristotle."[146] All four thinkers—Strauss, Thucydides, Plato, and Aristotle—see moderation as a political virtue of the highest kind.

Yet while the Spartan regime is healthier and more stable than Athens, the Athenian individual is more skilled than his rival. Athenian boldness leaves moderation behind, leading to supreme heights of leadership and self-fulfillment. Sparta had no Pericles or Thucydides. According to Strauss, Athenian Thucydides is proof of man's ability to go beyond good citizenship and create an eternal masterpiece. Democracy in Athens is inferior and declining, but enables sparks of genius and reason. In his own words: "Sparta did not, like Athens, bring forth lions… As little as there would be an Achilles or an Odysseus for us without Homer, so little would there be a Pericles for us without Thucydides."[147]

The war between Athens and Sparta exposes another contradiction that lies at the heart of the real reason for war: tension between what is "just or right", on one hand, and "necessity" or "compulsion", on the other. Strauss emphasizes Thucydides' view of the subject: "[b]ut the real reason for the war is, in my opinion, most likely to be disguised by such an argument. What made war inevitable was the growth of Athenian power and the fear which this caused in Sparta."[148] The military conflict did not erupt because Athens breached the peace treaty or because

of the local clash between the Corcyraeans and Corinthians (435–431 BC), which supposedly set off the chain of violent events: "Thucydides distinguishes the truest and least avowed cause of the war from the openly avowed and less true causes. The truest cause was the Athenians' compelling the Spartans to wage war against them and the most avowed cause was the Athenians' alleged breach of the treaty."[149] In the seminar on Thucydides, Strauss compared this to the eruption of World War I. He argued that the war broke out not because of the assassination of Austro-Hungarian Archduke Franz Ferdinand (1863–1914) in June 1914, but due to a "cordial agreement" (Entente Cordiale) between France and Britain in 1904, which improved relations between the two countries and led them to cooperate against their joint enemy—Germany.[150]

So, the war did not break out because of any breach of treaty, but due to the very fact of Athenian expansion—Athenian imperialism. Strauss does not question whether the war was just or not, nor does he examine the morality of breaching agreements. He centers on a single nation's fear of the power of another nation, and especially on the feeling that each of the nations is facing an existential threat.

Athens was an empire whose expansion threatened Sparta to such an extent that there was no choice but to go to war. One battle or another and agreements breached here and there are of lesser importance. The Athenians compelled the Spartans to fight them for fear of subjugation to Athenian imperialism.[151] Justice is secondary to necessity. What is right, what is proper, rights and human rights—none of these dictate the path of total war. Rather, it is decided when one or all parties involved are left no choice but to wage war. According to Strauss, Thucydides believed neither in justice nor in fate. Necessity outweighs justice. It restricts cities from always acting according to principles of justice.[152] Strauss also notes that according to Thucydides, anyone who reverts to arguments concerning justice is weak or wrong.[153] However, justice (*dike*) and necessity (*ananke*) do not always contradict each other. Sometimes, necessity is a justification. For Sparta, going to war was a necessity. It justified injustice and a breach of treaty:

> Sparta indeed broke the treaty, but she was compelled to do so because she saw that a large part of Greece was already subject to the Athenians, hence feared that they would become still stronger and hence was forced to stop them before it was too late. Compulsion excuses; it justifies an act which in itself would be unjust.[154]

Strauss emphasizes that Athens, too, was knee-deep in necessity and overcome by fear: "Athens was herself compelled to increase her power or was prompted by fear of the Persians and of the Spartans to found her empire and to enlarge it."[155] Athens was forced to expand; Sparta was forced to fight. Both nations found themselves in an arms race on the way to (almost) inevitable war.[156]

Despite this slippery slope, war was not a necessity. Mankind should be guided by neither justice nor necessity, but rather by moderation and sound judgment. Strauss defines Thucydides as the epitome of the moderate historian and uses him to preach caution and political discretion without reverting to human rights discourse and the modern vocabulary:

> Thucydides does not say that necessity simply rules the relation between cities. For example, he does not say that the Peloponnesian War was simply necessary. There exist alternatives. There is room for choice between sensible and mad courses… there is room even, within limits, for choice between just and unjust courses. Still, the virtue which can and must control political life, as Thucydides sees it, is not so much justice as moderation. Moderation is something more than long-range calculation. It is, to use the language of Aristotle, a moral virtue. In most cases moderation is produced by fear of the gods and of the divine law. But it is also produced by true wisdom. In fact, the ultimate justification of moderation is exclusively true wisdom. For, by denying the power of gods, Thucydides does not deny the power of nature, or more specifically the limitations imposed on man by his nature. There are then natural sanctions to immoderate courses. Immoderate courses may succeed, for chance is incalculable. But precisely for this reason, for the reason that immoderate policy counts on chance, it is bad: it is not according to nature.[157]

Moderation overrides discussions of justice and necessity. It is the most important political virtue in times of war. The Athenian empire is a clear example of humanity's lack of moderation. Athens expanded too far. Strauss argued that "[t]here are limits beyond which expansion is no longer safe. There are powers which are 'saturated'."[158] Pericles' Athens strove to rule the world and achieve universal fame. Strauss remarked on this aspiration that it is "boundless striving for ever more; it is wholly incompatible with moderation."[159] He also stated that reading Thucydides makes readers wiser. They understand that his masterpiece was possible in Athens, which epitomized Greek culture.[160] Through it, they understand the limitations of mankind and politics.

In discussing the empire and freedom, Strauss also makes the only reference in this chapter to twentieth-century events. Just as Athens and Sparta were actually both empires, so the Soviet Union is as much an empire as Britain:

> The Spartans were as "imperialist" as the Athenians; only their empire was so to speak invisible because their empire had been established much earlier than the Athenian empire and had reached its natural limit; it was therefore no longer an object of surprise and offense. By overlooking this fact, one moves in the direction of the supreme folly committed during World War II when men in high places acted on the assumption that there was British Empire and British imperialism but no Russian Empire and Russian imperialism because they held that an empire consists of a number of countries separated by salt water.[161]

Strauss compares the Peloponnesian War to World War II, in which the British and Soviet empires fought together against Nazism. He does not explicitly analogize the ancient empires to the modern ones, but discusses aspects of war that he believes are just as relevant now as they were in ancient Greece. After Hitler was defeated, the United States took over the role of leader of the free world instead of the British Empire. Russian imperialism was its only remaining enemy. War between these two empires in a nuclear era could become "the greatest war." Thucydides should be revisited in order to gain insights into the present. Thus, while at face value, Strauss' political teaching centered on war and peace in ancient Greece and preached moderation, at the same time it directed Western readers to analyze their reality and reformulate political thought at a time of peace and of cold war between two nuclear empires in the twentieth century.

Notes

1. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 9.
2. Allan Bloom, "Leo Strauss: September 20, 1899–October 18, 1973," *Political Theory* 2, no. 4 (November 1974): 372–392. See also Werner J. Dannhauser, "Leo Strauss: Becoming Naïve Again," *The American Scholar* 44, no. 4 (Autumn 1975): 636–642; Stanley Rosen, "Leo Strauss in Chicago," *Daedalus* 135, no. 3 (Summer 2006): 104–113.
3. Bloom, "Leo Strauss: September 20, 1899–October 18, 1973," 383.
4. Ibid., 386.

5. For a review of *The City and Man* by one of Strauss students, see Seth Benardete, "Leo Strauss' *The City and Man*," *The Political Science Reviewer* 8 (Fall 1978): 1–20. For a study focusing on Strauss and *The City and Man*, see Brett A. R. Dutton, *Leo Strauss's Recovery of the Political: The City and Man as a Reply to Carl Schmitt's The Concept of the Political* (PhD dissertation, University of Sydney, 2002).
6. See also Jordi R. Sales-Coderch, "Engaged Citizenship," Antonio Lastra and Josep Monserrat-Molas (eds.), *Leo Strauss, Philosopher: European Vistas* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016), 67–79.
7. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 1.
8. The prefaces and introductions that Strauss wrote for his books provide central insights into his worldview—especially as his position is usually implicitly woven into readings of other thinkers. The preface to the English translation of *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*, undoubtedly Strauss' most important autobiographical work, offers readers insights into how he saw the development of his thought during the Weimar era. The preface to *The City and Man* is not biographical but does explain Strauss' analysis of the present and his intentions.
9. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 3.
10. Ibid., 2–3.
11. Ibid., 4–5.
12. Ibid., 4. Strauss even used (5) present-day examples relating to the Cold War, such as the 1961 assassination of Congolese prime minister Patrice Lumumba or the execution of Hungarian leader Imre Nagy in 1958. According to Strauss, a Communist who argued that the murder of Lumumba must be condemned hinted that some murders, such as that of Nagy, could be condoned.
13. Ibid., 5.
14. Strauss, "Liberal Education and Responsibility," 24.
15. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 5–6.
16. Ibid., 6.
17. Ibid.
18. Many followers and critics of Strauss believe that he not only restored the idea of esoteric writing to its former glory—exoteric writing for the masses and esoteric writing for select philosophers or educated readers—but also applied it in his philosophical politics. However, it is hard to establish whether Strauss meant to use esoteric writing himself. According to Nathan Tarcov, Strauss would have criticized his own followers for seeing classical philosophy as a solution to contemporary maladies and warned them against a distorted interpretation of this body of thought. Tarcov's claim is based on a 1946 critical essay by Strauss, "On a New Interpretation of Plato's Political Philosophy," in which he

argued, contrary to the usual Straussian reading, that modern problems cannot be resolved with the help of ancient texts. See Tarcov, "On a Certain Critique of Straussianism," 4–8. Another reason why Strauss may not have used esoteric writing himself is that philosophers traditionally employed this tactic during periods of oppression and terror, which was unnecessary under a liberal democracy. Yet in *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, Strauss directly addressed the question of whether a liberal society requires exoteric literature (36–37). His answer was education:

> Exoteric literature presupposes that there are basic truths which would not be pronounced in public by any decent man, because they would do harm to many people who, having been hurt, would naturally be inclined to hurt in turn him who pronounces the unpleasant truths. It presupposes, in other words, that freedom of inquiry, and of publication of all results of inquiry, is not guaranteed as a basic right. This literature is then essentially related to a society which is not liberal. Thus one may very well raise the question of what use it could be in a truly liberal society. The answer is simple… The works of the great writers of the past are very beautiful even from without. And yet their visible beauty of those hidden treasures which disclose themselves only after very long, never easy, 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.

For a discussion of Strauss' esoteric writing, see Melzer, *Philosophy Between the Lines: The Lost History of Esoteric Writing*, 383–384; Stanley Rosen, *Hermeneutics as Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987). See also S. B. Drury, "The Esoteric Philosophy of Leo Strauss," *Political Theory* 13, no. 3 (August 1985): 315–337; Robert Howse, "Reading Between the Lines: Exotericism, Esotericism, and the Philosophical Rhetoric of Leo Strauss," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 32, no. 1 (1999): 60–77.

19. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 42.
20. Ibid., 16.
21. Ibid., 21.
22. Strauss, "What Is Political Philosophy?" 5.
23. Ibid., 38.
24. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Terrence Irwin (ed.) (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1999), 4.
25. Strauss uses the word "prudence" but refers to the Greek *phronesis*, the virtue of moral thought, which can be translated as "practical wisdom," "wisdom," or "moderation and sound judgement." For example, the translation of *Nicomachean Ethics* by Hackett Publishing uses "prudence." See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 89–92.

For a discussion of Strauss' interpretation of Aristotle, see, for example, Susan D. Collins, "Aristotle's Political Science, Common Sense, and the Socratic Tradition in *The City and Man*," Timothy W. Burns (ed.), *Brill's Companion to Leo Strauss' Writings on Classical Political Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 443–472; Rosen, "Leo Strauss and the Possibility of Philosophy," 559; Zuckert and Zuckert, "Why Strauss Is Not an Aristotelian," *Leo Strauss and the Problem of Political Philosophy*, 144–166. See also Ronald Beiner, *Political Judgment* (London: Methuen, 1983); Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981); C. D. C. Reeve, *Practices of Reason: Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995); Richard S. Rudeman, "Aristotle and the Recovery of Political Judgment," *The American Political Science Review* 91, no. 2 (June 1997): 409–420; Peter J. Steinberger, *The Concept of Political Judgment* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993).

26. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 24–25.
27. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 93.
28. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 28.
29. See, for example, Seyla Benhabib, "Judgment and the Moral Foundations of Politics in Arendt's Thought," *Political Theory* 16, no. 1 (February 1988): 29–51; Maurizio Passerin d'Entrèves, *The Political Philosophy of Hannah Arendt* (London: Routledge, 1994), 101–138; Andrew Norris, "Arendt, Kant, and the Politics of Common Sense," *Polity* 29, no. 2 (Winter 1996): 165–191; Peter J. Steinberger, "Hannah Arendt on Judgment," *American Journal of Political Science* 34, no. 3 (August 1990): 803–821.
30. Arendt's argument is based on "Of Taste as a kind of *sensus communis*," a subchapter of Kant's *Critique of Judgment*. According to Kant:

    > It seems that we usually [use a negative term and] call someone limited (of a narrow mind as opposed to a broad mind) if his talents are insufficient for a use of any magnitude (above all for intensive use). But we are talking here not about the power of cognition, but about the way of thinking [that involves] putting this power to a purposive use; and this, no matter how slight may be the range and the degree of a person's natural endowments, still indicates a man with a broadened way of thinking if he overrides the private subjective conditions of his judgment, into which so many others are locked, as it were, and reflects on his own judgment from a universal standpoint (which he can determine only by transferring himself to the standpoint of others).

    See Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, 161.

31. Hannah Arendt, "The Crisis in Culture: Its Social and Its Political Significance," *Between Past and Future: Six Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: The Viking Press, 1961), 221. See also Maurizio Passerin d'Entrèves, "Arendt's Theory of Judgment," Dana Villa (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hannah Arendt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 245–260.
32. Beiner (ed.), *Hannah Arendt*: *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 65.
33. Ibid., 43.
34. Strauss emphasizes that the classical city strives for the highest good—happiness. The polis does not distinguish between the happiness of the individual and that of society. Happiness is identical for all, regardless of history and subjective desires. It depends upon maintaining virtue and morality. In contrast, modernity assumes that a single higher good cannot be defined and that notions of happiness vary based on time and place. Modern happiness is individual; the state must ensure the conditions for its existence. Strauss sees the American Declaration of Independence, which enshrines the right of every person to pursue happiness, as the ultimate expression of the modern view. See Strauss, *The City and Man*, 31.
35. Ibid. In *Politics*, Aristotle claims that education is the polis' most important means of achieving the proper and necessary unity, as opposed to the Platonic attempt to ensure complete unity through abolishing private property. According to Aristotle:

    > No one will doubt that the legislator should direct his attention above all on the education of youth; for the neglect of education does harm to the constitution… for the exercise of any faculty or art a previous training and habituation are required; clearly therefore for the practice of excellence.

    See Aristotle, *The Politics and The Constitution of Athens*, Stephen Everson (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 195. Aristotle also differentiates (196) between a liberal and mechanical education: "[a]ny occupation, art, or science, which makes the body or soul or mind of the freeman less fit for the practice of exercise of excellence, is mechanical; wherefore we call those arts mechanical which tend to deform the body, and likewise all paid employments, for they absorb and degrade the mind." The mechanical also appears in his discussion of citizenship, in which Aristotle distinguishes between true citizens, on one hand, and mechanics or "mercantile life," on the other. In an aristocracy, the latter are excluded from citizenship, or are considered at best a low form of citizens, as they can never fulfill themselves and the good. Only when the radical democracy was founded did the working classes become regular citizens. Statesmen must avoid a mechanical education (67–68).

36. Strauss, "What Is Liberal Education?" *Liberalism: Ancient and Modern*, 5. "What Is Liberal Education?" was first published in 1959. In 1962, Strauss also published an essay titled "Liberal Education and Responsibility." Both were reprinted in *Liberalism: Ancient and Modern*. In 1967, Strauss published another essay titled "Liberal Education and Mass Democracy," combining major portions of the two above-mentioned essays. See Leo Strauss, "Liberal Education and Mass Democracy," Robert Goldwin (ed.), *Higher Education and Modern Democracy* (Chicago: Rand Mcnally, 1967). On Strauss' educational philosophy, see Timothy Fuller, "The Complementarity of Political Philosophy and Liberal Education in the Thought of Leo Strauss," *The Cambridge Companion to Leo Strauss*, 241–262; Walter Nicgorski, "Leo Strauss and Liberal Education," *Interpretation* 13, no. 2 (1985): 233–250; J. G. York and Michael A. Peters (eds.), *Leo Strauss, Education, and Political Thought* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2011).
37. Strauss, "What Is Political Philosophy?" 36–37.
38. Strauss, "Liberal Education and Responsibility," 23; Strauss, "Preface," *Liberalism: Ancient and Modern*, vii.
39. Strauss, "What Is Liberal Education?" 3.
40. Ibid., 4.
41. Ibid.
42. Strauss, "Liberal Education and Responsibility," 12.
43. Strauss, "What Is Liberal Education?" 5. Here, Strauss quotes Max Weber, who cautioned against "disenchantment of the world" resulting from rationalization. According to Weber, rationalization promotes freedom and the ability to learn, through use of reason, how to navigate the modern world—but may also trap humans in an "iron cage," enslaving them to bureaucracy and making them "the last men":

    > No one knows who will live in this cage in the future, or whether at the end of this tremendous development entirely new prophets will arise, or there will be a great rebirth of old ideas and ideals, or, if neither, mechanized petrification, embellished with a sort of convulsive self-importance. For the last stage of this cultural development, it might well be truly said: "specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart; this nullity imagines that it has attained a level of civilization never before achieved."

    See Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958 [1904]), 182. See also Lawrence A. Scaff, *Fleeing the Iron Cage: Culture, Politics, and Modernity in the Thought of Max Weber* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).
44. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 33.
45. Strauss, "Liberal Education and Responsibility," 20–21.
46. Strauss, "What Is Liberal Education?" 5.
47. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 41.

48. Ibid., 43.
49. Ibid., 40.
50. Ibid., 38, 40.
51. Ibid., 40. In *Anti-Dühring*, Friedrich Engels used the image of withering away in connection with the state:

> As soon as there is no longer any class of society to be held in subjection; as soon as, along with class domination and the struggle for individual existence based on the former anarchy of production, the collisions and excesses arising from these have also been abolished, there is nothing more to be repressed which would make a special repressive force, a state, necessary. The first act in which the state really comes forward as the representative of society as a whole—the taking possession of the means of production in the name of society—is at the same time its last independent act as a state. The interference of the state power in social relations becomes superfluous in one sphere after another, and then ceases of itself. The government of persons is replaced by administration of things and the direction of the processes of production. The state is not "abolished." It withers away.

See Frederick Engels, *Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science (Anti-Dühring)* (New York: International Publishers, 1939 [1878]), 306–307. In the seminar on Marx (72), as mentioned in Chapter 3, Strauss referred to *Anti-Dühring*: "I don't remember a passage in Marx, but in Engels there occurs this remark in the *Anti-Dühring* that this communist world society is bound to come at the peril of the destruction of civilization."

52. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 45–46.
53. Ibid., 48.
54. Ibid. According to Strauss (48):

> A Fascist or Communist might claim that he undermines the constitution of the United States out of loyalty to the United States, for in his opinion the Constitution is bad for the people of the United States; but his claim to be a loyal citizen would not be recognized. Someone might say that the Constitution could be constitutionally changed so that the regime would cease to be a liberal democracy and become either Fascist or Communist and that every citizen of the United States would then be expected to be loyal to Fascism or Communism; but no one loyal to liberal democracy who knows what he is doing would teach this doctrine precisely because it is apt to undermine loyalty to liberal democracy.

55. In the preface to *On Tyranny*, Strauss wrote that the political scientists of our time have failed to comprehend the true meaning of tyranny:

> Our political science is haunted by the belief that "value judgments" are inadmissible in scientific considerations, and to call a regime tyrannical clearly amounts to pronouncing a "value judgment." The political scientist who accepts this view of science will speak of the mass-state, of

> dictatorship, of totalitarianism, of authoritarianism, and so on, and as a citizen he may wholeheartedly condemn these things; but as a political scientist he is forced to reject the notion of tyranny as "mythical." One cannot overcome this limitation without reflecting on the basis, or the origin, of present-day political science. Present-day political science often traces its origin to Machiavelli.

See Strauss, *On Tyranny*, 23–24.

56. According to Strauss, most eighteenth-century thinkers still believed in the existence of public (exoteric) as opposed to hidden (esoteric) writing: "Lessing, who was one of the most profound humanists of all times, with an exceedingly rare combination of scholarship, taste and philosophy, and who was convinced that there are truths which should not or cannot be pronounced, believed that "all ancient philosophers" had distinguished between their exoteric and their esoteric teaching." See Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, 28. Strauss stated that Lessing had been the last of the great thinkers to use esoteric writing and that "he wrote between the lines about the art of writing between the lines." See Leo Strauss, "Exoteric Teaching," *Interpretation* 14, no. 1 (January 1986 [1939]), 52. See also Till Kinzel, "Lessing's Importance for the Philosopher," *Leo Strauss, Philosopher: European Vistas*, 101–115.
57. This is not the first instance in the book in which Strauss ties modern and pre-modern vocabularies. He defines the worldview of sophist Thrasymachus, who sees justice as merely obedience to the law and the will of the strongest, as "legal positivism." See Strauss, *The City and Man*, 76. In the chapter on Plato in his *History of Political Philosophy*, Strauss emphasizes that Plato was no liberal-democrat, nor a fascist or Communist like Marx. This qualification is absent in *The City and Man*. While the former book is an introduction to the philosophical canon, the latter has different pedagogical aims. See Strauss and Cropsey, *History of Political Philosophy*, 9.
58. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 51.
59. Ibid., 127.
60. Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, 113. In Strauss' correspondence with Eric Voegelin, the two did not conceal their deep aversion to Popper's views. On April 10, 1950, Strauss asked Voegelin what he thought of Popper:

> May I ask you to let me know sometime what do you think of Mr. Popper. He gave a lecture here, on the task of social philosophy, that was beneath contempt: it was the most washed-out, lifeless positivism trying to whistle in the dark, linked to a complete inability to think "rationally," although it passed itself off as "rationalism"—it was very bad. I cannot imagine that such

> a man ever wrote something that was worthwhile reading, and yet it appears to be a professional duty to become familiar with his productions. Could you say something to me about that—if you wish, I will keep it to myself.

See Leo Strauss to Eric Voegelin, April 10, 1950, Peter Emberley and Barry Cooper (eds.), *Faith and Political Philosophy: The Correspondence Between Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin, 1934–1964* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 66–67.

61. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 65.
62. Using irony to interpret the *Republic* was not common among twentieth-century historians of ideas, and many found Strauss' reading absurd. However, it did find favor among some. Philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer, the author of *Wahrheit und Methode* (Truth and Method, 1960) who criticized the endless search for a hidden truth in Strauss' interpretations, admitted that Strauss made a great contribution to deciphering the Platonic dialogues and to interpreting philosophy at a time of persecution and censorship. See Ernst L. Fortin, "Gadamer on Strauss: An Interview," *Interpretation* 12, no. 1 (1984), 6. Strauss' pupil Allan Bloom accepted his teacher's basic assumption that the *Republic* contains irony and expanded this interpretation. The Cold War, which is implied in Strauss' reading, becomes explicit in Bloom's. See Allan Bloom, "Interpretive Essay," *The Republic of Plato* (New York: Basic Books, 1968). Other pupils of Strauss tried to interpret the *Republic*, too, some reaching different conclusions than those of their teacher. See, for example, Stanley Rosen, *Plato's Republic: A Study* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005). On Strauss' readings of Plato and the classical philosophers, see David Bolotin, "Leo Strauss and Classical Political Philosophy," *Interpretation* 22, no. 1 (Fall 1994): 129–142; G. R. F. Ferrari, "Strauss's Plato," *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics* 5, no. 2 (Fall 1997): 36–65; Alessandra Fussi, "Loyalty and Love of Wisdom in Plato's Republic," *Leo Strauss, Philosopher: European Vistas*, 67–79; Dale Hall, "The Republic and 'The Limits of Politics'," *Political Theory* 5, no. 3 (August 1977): 293–314; George Klosko, "The 'Straussian' Interpretation of Plato's 'Republic'," *History of Political Thought* 7, no. 2 (Summer 1986): 275–294; Linda R. Rabieh, "Leo Strauss on the Politics of Plato's Republic," *Brill's Companion to Leo Strauss' Writings on Classical Political Thought*, 323–343; Costas Stratilatis, "Reading the Republic: Is Utopianism Redundant?" *History of Political Thought* 29, no. 4 (Winter 2008): 565–584; Catherine H. Zuckert, *Postmodern Platos: Nietzsche, Hiedegger, Gadamer, Strauss, Derrida* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 104–128; Zuckert and Zuckert, "Strauss's New Reading of Plato," *Leo Strauss and the Problem of Political Philosophy*, 117–143.

63. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 130.
64. Ibid., 68, 76.
65. Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, 7 [331] (all quotes and references from the *Republic* in this chapter are taken from Bloom's translation).
66. Ibid., 8 [332].
67. Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, 149.
68. Ibid.
69. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 71.
70. Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, 10 [334].
71. Ibid.
72. Ibid., 12–13 [335].
73. In the *Republic*, harming enemies is the sole responsibility of the guards, whose education makes them a "noble puppy": they learn to be "gentle to their own and cruel to enemies." See Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, 52 [375].
74. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 69.
75. Ibid., 73.
76. Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, 150.
77. Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, 16 [339].
78. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 75.
79. Ibid., 123. According to Shadia Drury, Strauss saw the approach of Thrasymachus, who represented tyranny, as more balanced than that of Socrates, who was accused of political irresponsibility. In contrast, Steven B. Smith claims that according to Strauss, Socrates tamed Thrasymachus and used him to find the proper balance between freedom and necessity, and between philosophy and politics. See Drury, *The Political Ideas of Leo Strauss*, 61–89. See also Minowitz, *Straussophobia*, 141–178; Steven B. Smith, "Leo Strauss' Platonic Liberalism," *Political Theory* 28, no. 6 (December 2000): 787–809; Zuckert and Zuckert, *The Truth About Leo Strauss*, 155–194.
80. Bloom, "Interpretive Essay," 328.
81. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 83.
82. Ibid., 79.
83. Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, 16–17. See also Leo Strauss, "Farabi's Plato," *Louis Ginzberg: Jubilee Volume* (New York: The American Academy for Jewish Research, 1945), 357–393. See also Rémi Brague, "Athens, Jerusalem, Mecca: Leo Strauss's 'Muslim' Understanding of Greek Philosophy," *Poetics Today* 19, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 235–259.
84. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 63, 86.
85. Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, 36 [358], 38 [360]. Glaucon (38) gives the example of a person who could become invisible. From that moment

on, he could not help performing injustices. In such a case, "no one, as it would seem, would be so adamant as to stick by justice and bring himself to keep away from what belongs to others and not lay hold of it, although he had license to take what he wanted from the market without fear, and to go into houses and have intercourse with whomever he wanted, and to slay or release from bonds whomever he wanted, and to do other things as an equal to a god among humans."

86. Ibid., 40 [362].
87. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 86–87.
    Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, 25 [347], 36–37 [358–359]. Also, when Strauss discusses Glaucon (88–89), he takes the unusual step of comparing him with several symbols of modern political thought: Hobbes, Kant, and the American Declaration of Independence. According to Strauss, Glaucon presumed natural inequality and preferred tyranny. This type of regime allows for fulfillment of the natural right of the strongest individual. Hobbes presumed—or at least, argued in favor of—natural equality and fear of death as the basis of the social contract. Socrates, like Glaucon, presumed natural inequality, but he also objected to tyranny. Strauss added that unlike Socrates, Hobbes did not distinguish king from tyrant. He also argued that the concept of justice that Glaucon demands from Socrates to prove is very similar to Kant's view, which assumes the apriori existence of morality and of justice that is independent of nature. Unlike Kant, Strauss claims that Glaucon does not seek "the good will," which is limitless, but rather honor, as referenced in the American Declaration of Independence. The Declaration ends with a commitment by the representatives of the state to uphold it: "[w]e mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor." Strauss reads this sentence as meaning that (sacred) honor is more important than life and property. His mention of the Declaration is but one example of Strauss' frequent use of American values to explain classical concepts.
88. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 89, 93.
89. Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, 46 [369].
90. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 93.
91. Ibid., 94.
92. Leo Strauss, "The Problem of Socrates: Five Lectures," Thomas L. Pangle (ed.), *The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism: An Introduction to the Thought of Leo Strauss* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 174.
93. Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, 49 [372].
94. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 95.
95. Ibid., 96.

96. Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, 56 [378].
97. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 97.
98. The "noble lie" [414] is translated by Yosef Liebes into Hebrew as a "useful lie" (282). Liebes uses (231) "stories about the gods" in Hebrew and Bloom (56) translates it into English as a "speech about the gods." See Plato, *Politeia* (Tel-Aviv: Schocken Books, 1979) [in Hebrew].
99. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 102.
100. Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, 61 [382]. See also ibid., 56 [379], 93 [414].
101. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 103. In the *Republic*, Socrates emphasizes that to prevent the guards from performing injustice, private property must be abolished: "see if this is the way they must live and be housed if they're going to be such men. First, no one will possess any private property except for what's entirely necessary. Second, no one will have any house or storeroom into which everyone who wishes cannot come." See Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, 95 [416].
102. See, for example, Strauss, *The City and Man*, 69, 73, 115. For Plato's discussion of abolishing the institution of family, see Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, 101 [423–424], 127–147 [449–468].
103. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 69, 96, 109.
104. According to Strauss, passion and love are unruly human emotions that cannot be predicted. As such, they are at odds with politics and the state, which wishes to eliminate privacy:

    > Lovers are not necessarily fellow citizens (or fellow party-members); in the good city *eros* is simply subjected to the requirements of the city: only those are permitted to join each other for procreation who promises to bring forth the right kind of offspring. The abolition of privacy is a blow struck at *eros*… Both the erotic association and the political association are exclusive, but they are exclusive in different ways: the lovers seclude themselves from the others (from "the world") without opposition to others or hate of the others, but the city cannot be said to seclude itself from "the world": it separates itself from others by opposing or resisting them; the opposition "We and They" is essential to the political association.

    See Strauss, *The City and Man*, 111.
105. Ibid., 110–112. According to Strauss, evidence of this abstract conception of man is found in the fact that Socrates' ignores procreation as a basic need of society and in his saying, "that love has from old been called a tyrant" (*The Republic of Plato*, 253). However, Strauss notes (101, 112) that Eros plays a major role in educating the guards about loving aesthetics and creating harmony within the soul.
106. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 99–100, 112.
107. Ibid., 110.

108. Ibid., 113.
109. Ibid., 114.
110. Ibid., 114–115.
111. Ibid., 117–118, 121.
112. Ibid., 122. Strauss refers readers to a passage by Socrates in the *Republic*: "Unless," I said, "the philosophers rule as kings or those now called kings and chiefs genuinely and adequately philosophize, and political power and philosophy coincide in the same place, while the many natures now making their way to either apart from the other are by necessity excluded, there is no rest from ills for the cities, my dear Glaucon, nor I think for human kind, nor will the regime we have now described in speech ever come forth from nature, insofar as possible, and see the light of the sun. This is what for so long was causing my hesitation to speak: seeing how very paradoxical it would be to say. For it is hard to see that in no other city would there be private or public happiness."
See Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, 153–154 [473].
113. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 127. This reading of Plato should be evaluated against Strauss' own comparison between classical and modern liberalism, in which he argued that evil is necessary:
> As it seems to me, the cause of this situation is that 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 rational society… 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. By 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 uncreated, which is the home of man because it is the home of the human mind.

See Strauss, "What Is Liberal Education?" 8.
114. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 129.
115. Ibid., 138. Strauss refers the reader to a discussion of necessary evil in two other texts by Plato: *Laws* and *Theaetetus*. In the latter, Socrates states that evil cannot be abolished:
> But, Theodorus, it isn't possible that evils should be destroyed; because there must always be something opposite to the good. And it isn't possible for them to become established among the gods; of necessity, they haunt our mortal nature, and this region here. That's why one ought to try to escape from here to there as quickly as one can. Now the way to escape is to become as nearly as possible like a god; and to become like a god is to become just and religious, with intelligence.

See Plato, *Theaetetus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 55 [176].

116. Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, 221–249 [542–569]. According to Strauss (130), the division of regimes is immeasurably deeper and broader than the explanations concerning democratic versus authoritarian personalities that dominated post-WWII research.
117. Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, 235 [557].
118. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 131.
119. Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, 240 [561].
120. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 132–133.
121. Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, 242 [563].
122. Leo Strauss, "Thucydides," 1972–1973 (lecture transcript), Box. 10, Folder 3–4, Leo Strauss Papers, Special Collections Research Center, The University of Chicago Library.
123. In addition to the third chapter on Thucydides in *The City and Man*, Strauss wrote several other papers on the Greek historian. See Leo Strauss, "Greek Historians," *Review of Metaphysics* 21, no. 4 (June 1968): 656–666; Leo Strauss, "Preliminary Observations of the Gods in Thucydides' Work," *Interpretation* 4, no. 1 (January 1974): 1–16; Leo Strauss, "Thucydides: The Meaning of Political History," *The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism*, 72–102. In addition to the 1972–1973 seminar on Thucydides at St John's College, Strauss taught a seminar on Thucydides at the University of Chicago in 1962–1963. On Strauss and Thucydides, see, for example, Howse, *Leo Strauss: Man of Peace*, 123–148; Seth N. Jaffe, "The Straussian Thucydides," Christine Lee and Neville Morley (eds.), *A Handbook to the Reception of Thucydides* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 278–295; Emil A. Kleinhous, "Piety, Universality, and History: Leo Strauss on Thucydides," *Humanitas* 14, no. 1 (2001): 68–95; Sophie Marcotte-Chenard, "What Can We Learn from Political History? Leo Strauss and Raymond Aron, Readers of Thucydides," *The Review of Politics* 80, no. 1 (January 2018): 57–86; Clifford Orwin, "Reading Thucydides with Leo Strauss," *Brill's Companion to Leo Strauss' Writings on Classical Political Thought*, 50–75. See also Norton, *Leo Strauss and the Politics of American Empire*, 177–200.
124. Strauss, "Thucydides," Lecture 4, 107. In *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche argues that while Plato was a coward, Thucydides did not flinch from reality:

> Plato is boring. —In the end, I have a deep distrust of Plato: I find him so much at odds with the basic Hellenic instincts, so moralistic, so proleptically Christian… my *cure* for all things Platonic has always been *Thucydides*. Thucydides, and perhaps Machiavelli's *Principe*, are most closely related to me in terms of their unconditional will not to be fooled and to see reason in *reality*, —not in "reason," and less even in

> "morality"… In the end, what divides natures like Thucydides from natures like Plato is *courage* in the face of reality: Plato is a coward in his face of reality— *consequently*, he escapes into the ideal; Thucydides has *self*-control, and consequently he has control over things as well…

See Friedrich Nietzsche, "Twilight of the Idols (1899)," Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman (eds.), *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols and Other Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 225–226.

125. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 236.
126. Strauss, "Thucydides: The Meaning of Political History," 101. See also Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli*, 292. In *The City and Man* (226), Strauss refers the reader to a passage in Plato's *Laws*, in which the Athenian stranger defines the city as a tragedy:

> As for what they call the "serious" poets, our tragic poets, suppose some of them should at some time come to us and ask something like this: "strangers, shall we frequent your city and territory or not? and shall we carry and bring along our poetry, or what have you decided to do about such matters?" What kind of a reply regarding these matters would we correctly give to the divine men? For my part, I think it should be as follows: "best of strangers," we should say, "we ourselves are poets, who have to the best of our ability created a tragedy that is the most beautiful and the best; at any rate, our whole political regime is constructed as the imitation of the most beautiful and best way of life, which we at least assert to be really the truest tragedy.

See Plato, *The Laws of Plato* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), 208–209 [817].

127. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 240.
128. Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli*, 292.
129. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 140, 145, 150, 154, 155, 157, 158, 160, 217, 240.
130. Ibid., 142–143.
131. Ibid., 155. See also Strauss, "Thucydides: The Meaning of Political History," 81. According to Thucydides:

> And with regard to my factual reporting of the events of the war I have made it a principle not to write down the first story that came my way, and not even to be guided by my own general impressions; either I was present myself at the events which I have described or else I heard of them from eye-witnesses whose reports I have checked with as much thoroughness as possible. Not that even so the truth was easy to discover: different eye-witnesses give different accounts of the same events, speaking out of partiality for one side or the other or else from imperfect memories. And it may well be that my history will seem less easy to read because of the absence in it of romantic element. It will be enough for me, however, if these words of mine are judged useful by those who want to understand

> clearly the events which happened in the past and which (human nature being what it is) will, at some time or other and in much the same ways, be repeated in the future. My work is not a piece of writing designed to meet the taste of an immediate public, but was done to last forever.

See Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War* (New York: Penguin Books, 1965), 24–25 [Book One, 22].

132. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 162. Strauss refers to Thucydides' definition of war—πόλεμος βίαιος διδάσκαλος—in Book Three of *The Peloponnesian War*, translated into English as "stern teacher," "hard master," and "violent master," among others. In the seventeenth century, Thomas Hobbes preferred "a most violent master" for his translation of the book. In the nineteenth century, Richard Crawley used "rough master," and Benjamin Jowett—"hard master." Rex warner (1954, 1965) translated it as "stern teacher":

> In the various cities these revolutions were the cause of many calamities—as happens and always will happen while human nature is what it is, though there may be different degrees of savagery, and, as different circumstances arise, the general rules will admit of some variety. In times of peace and prosperity cities and individuals alike follow higher standards, because they are not forced into a situation where they have to do what they do not want to do. But war is a stern teacher; in depriving them of the power to easily satisfying their daily wants, it brings most people's minds down to the level of their actual circumstances.

See Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, 208 [Book Three, 82]. See also Richard Crawley (trans.), *Thucydides History of the Peloponnesian War* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1910 [1874]), 224; Benjamin Jowett (trans.), *Thucydides* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1881), 222; Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War: The Complete Hobbes Translation*, David Grene (ed.) (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989 [1628]), 204.

133. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 156. See also Strauss, "Thucydides: The Meaning of Political History," 82. Strauss uses (82) the Greek *kinesis* to describe the movement of war. The word, which first appears in the beginning of Book One of *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, has been translated variously as "disturbance," "upheaval," "movement," "commotion," and "motion." See also Christina A. Clark, Edith Foster, and Judith P. Hallett (eds.), *Kinesis: The Ancient Depiction of Gesture, Motion, and Emotion* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015).

134. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 140. In Plato's *Timaeus*, Socrates claims:

> My feelings are rather like those of a man who has seen some splendid animals, either in a picture or really alive but motionless, and wants to see them moving and engaging in some of the activities for which they are appear to be formed. That's exactly what I feel about the society we have described. I would be glad to hear some account of it engaging in transactions with other states, waging war successfully and showing in the process

> all the qualities one would expect from its system of education and training, both in action and negotiation with its rivals.

See Plato, *Timaeus and Critias* (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), 31 [19].

135. Strauss, "Thucydides: The Meaning of Political History," 84.
136. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 160.
137. Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, 422 [Book Six, 18]. Strauss refers to Alcibiades' speech, in which he urges Athenians to embark on the Sicilian Expedition.
138. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 160.
139. Ibid., 148.
140. Strauss, "Thucydides," Lecture 10, 326.
141. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 161–162. See also Strauss, "Thucydides: The Meaning of Political History," 86.
142. Ibid., 156.
143. Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, 242–243 [Book Three, 82].
144. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 146.
145. According to Strauss (ibid., 152–153), the might of Athens under Pericles did not prove that Thucydides saw the Athenian regime as superior to others. In fact, Strauss believes, Athenian democracy contained a tyrannical element, as it was controlled by a single ruler—Pericles. This regime was therefore inferior. "It indeed saved democracy from itself and increased Athens' power and splendor beyond anything achieved earlier, but it had to rely constitutionally on elusive chance: on the presence of a Pericles." Strauss adds (193) that after Pericles, Athens lacked any kind of "public-spiritedness."
146. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 146.
147. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 213, 230. See also Strauss, "Thucydides: The Meaning of Political History," 89. In *The City and Man* (213), Strauss refers to Aristophanes' *Frogs*, in which Aeschylus says: "[i]t is not very wise for city states to rear a lion cub within their gates; But if they do so, they will find it pays to tolerate its own peculiar ways." See Aristophanes, *Frogs and Other Plays* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007), 187.
148. Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, 25 [Book One, 23].
149. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 179. See also S. N. Jaffe, *Thucydides on the Outbreak of War: Character and Contest* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Donald Kagan, *The Outbreak of the Peloponnesian War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969); Geoffrey Ernest Maurice de Ste. Croix, *The Origins of the Peloponnesian War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972).
150. Strauss, "Thucydides," Lecture 3, 67. Strauss adds that the two first speeches in *History of the Peloponnesian War* (Book One, 32, 37), i.e., the speech of the Corcyraeans and the response of the Corinthians, begin with the words "justice" and "necessary." The Corcyraeans open thus:

> Men of Athens, it is but *justice* that such as come to implore the aid of their neighbours (as now do we), and cannot pretend by any great benefit or league some precedent merit, should, before they go any farther, make it appear, principally, that what they seek conferreth profit, or if not so, yet is not prejudicial at least to those that are to grant it; and next, that they will be constantly thankful for the same; and if they cannot do this, then not to take it ill though their suit be rejected.

The Corinthians begin their response as follows:

> These Corcyraeans in their oration having made mention not only your taking them into league, but also that they are wronged and unjustly warred on, it is also *necessary* for us first to answer concerning both those points, and then afterwards to proceed to the rest of what we have to say: to the end you may foreknow that ours are the safest demands for you to embrace, and that you may upon reason reject the needy estate of those others.

See Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War: The Complete Hobbes Translation*, 20, 23.

151. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 174–175. See also Christopher Bruell, "Thucydides' View of Athenian Imperialism," *The American Political Science Review* 68, no. 1 (March 1974): 11–17.
152. Strauss, "Thucydides: The Meaning of Political History," 89. See also Strauss, *The City and Man*, 185.
153. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 191.
154. Ibid., 182. Strauss refers to *The Peloponnesian War* (Book Four, 92), in which a Theban commander speaks in favor of fighting the Athenians:

> Men of Boeotia, it ought never to have entered into the head of any of us, your generals, that we should avoid battle with the Athenians simply because we no longer find them in our own country. They came here across the frontier, they have built a fortified post here, and their intention is to lay waste our land. They are therefore, I should imagine, still our enemies in the place from which they set out to do us harm; indeed they are our enemies wherever we may manage to catch them… it is your tradition to fight a foreign army of invasion, whether it is in your country or anywhere near it. Much more should we do so in the case of the Athenians, who also share the same frontier with us. In all relations with one's neighbors freedom is the result of being able to hold one's own, and as for these neighbors, who, not content with those close to them, are trying to spread their domination far and wide, with them we must simply fight it out to the last.

See Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, 282.

155. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 183.
156. According to Strauss (*The City and Man*, 185–189), justice and nobility come into question in *The Peloponnesian War* only when two cities go to war with more or less equal power, so that a balance of terror exists between them and each has the capacity to force its will upon the

other. For example, a discussion of what is right and proper is possible but not necessary regarding war between Athens and Sparta. Yet if the power lies firmly with one party, the weaker opponent has little choice left and must weigh cost and benefit rather than justice. If the balance of power is not even, the necessity to go to war no longer holds. In this context, Strauss addresses the Athenians' cruel conquest of weak Melos. The Athenian empire wanted to gain hold over the neutral island, but its residents refuses to surrender and were easily defeated. According to Strauss (189):

> One can explain Thucydides' implicit judgment on the action of the Melians in two ways which are not mutually exclusive. The city may and must demand self-sacrifice from its citizens; the city itself however cannot sacrifice itself; a city may without disgrace accept even under compulsion the overlordship of another city which is much more powerful; this is not to deny of course that death or extinction is to be preferred to enslavement proper… virtue is useless without sufficient armament.

The relationship between justice and necessity is not clear, especially because necessity, or compulsion, is not fixed concept but rather changes according to many variables. "The very least one would have to say is that there are different kinds of compulsion," concludes Strauss (210).

157. Strauss, "Thucydides: The Meaning of Political History," 90.
158. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 191.
159. Ibid., 228.
160. Strauss, "Thucydides: The Meaning of Political History," 90–91.
161. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 191.

CHAPTER 5

Epilogue

> I used to run into Davarr on the street, and it was hard to imagine that this slight person, triply abstracted, mild goggles covering his fiery judgements, was the demon heretic hated by academics in the U.S. and even abroad. (Saul Bellow, *Ravelstein*)[1]

Isaiah Berlin often referred to Jewish-English historian Lewis B. Namier (1880–1960), who compared European Jews in the modern era to an iceberg melting under the sunlight of the Enlightenment and the Emancipation.[2] This gradual disintegration undermined the shape, structure, and behavior of closed Jewish society. According to Namier, the change took the form of evaporation (assimilation) and a powerful drifting away of contemporary ideological currents that eventually came to a stop in the "puddles" of various communities (including Zionism). Much of this Jewry was annihilated in the Holocaust, but considerable numbers flowed into the sea: to the Mediterranean, on the way to the Land of Israel, or to the Atlantic ocean, on the way to the new world—the United States of America. This transition began the last phase (to date) of German Jewry—immigration and adaptation to a new home; integration and metamorphosis, a last spark and dying out, respite, safety, old age, and death.

It was out of this hotchpotch of Germany, Jewry, Judaism and Zionism, refuge, immigration, America, and the history of Western philosophy, that the thought of Leo Strauss came into being. It is

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https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-24389-0_5

his philosophy that teaches us about the twentieth century and the helplessness, destruction, and glimmer of hope that it left in its wake.

Strauss, the critic of modern civilization, found himself in the very heart of American liberal democracy. He had come there not as a guest, but seeking shelter. The political entity against which he had railed was now a sanctuary that welcomed him and offered safety. Looking back, he saw a world going up in flames. Distant Europe had failed: although it had reached sublime philosophical peaks, it had also plummeted to the depths of Nazi barbarity and was currently partly held captive by the tyranny of Communism. Saving his new home from a similar fate became the overarching goal of Strauss' teaching in the United States, which he saw as a mirror image of Europe and the place where humanity and the West stood a second chance. It was a role model for a world untainted by incurable malady—a world that must be defended at all cost from itself and from external enemies by constantly reshaping it for the better. By teaching and interpreting the history of political philosophy, Strauss tried to prevent "the closing of the American mind" and work to reinforce it.

In America, Strauss was a revered yet controversial scholar. His political philosophy was born of the existential turmoil caused by the most violent century in history. The guide to the perplexed was a perplexed guide, a product of "the traumatic years of the 1930s," to quote historian Walter Laqueur's (1921–2018) description of the mark left on many intellectuals who emigrated from Germany to the United States. According to Laqueur:

> They were newcomers to America and did not feel certain things in their bones which were altogether obvious to native Americans of a far less intellectual sophistication. Their European experiences in the 1930s had traumatized them. Most of their social intercourse was with fellow émigrés, their panic moods feeding and reinforcing each other. Few had an opportunity to come to know the real America. To mention a minor but significant fact—few could drive a car (including Hannah Arendt, Marcuse, Leo Strauss and most of the Frankfurt school), which limited their radius of movement. Thus imagination had to compensate for lack of knowledge of reality.[3]

Strauss' imagination and vocabulary were born in Germany. They became reality during the Cold War in the United States. In his youth in the Weimar Republic, Strauss was a staunch opponent of Enlightenment

ideas. World War I, "the world of yesterday," and the establishment of the Weimar Republic—the liberal democracy with its "short, hectic, and fascinating life" that went from crisis to crisis until its ultimate demise—were intertwined with Strauss' life in Germany.[4]

Weimar's weakness as a democracy greatly influenced the development of Strauss' worldview, which gravitated at the times toward critiques of democracy, liberalism and Enlightenment. Like many of his generation, he was influenced by schools of thought that rejected liberalism and democracy and felt threatened by the Marxism and Communism that were gaining force in Europe. For Strauss, these were enemies, not friends: both liberalism and Communism shared a modern, universal ideal that aspired to a Kantian "perpetual peace," to enforced equality, to overcoming nature, and to abolishing philosophy and the political. They epitomized the exact opposite of Strauss' position.

During that period, Strauss devoted most of his time to criticizing the ideas of the Enlightenment, Spinoza's critique of religion, and Hobbes' political philosophy, approaching them all from an almost atheistic, existential position. He held that Hobbes and Spinoza had tried to eliminate orthodoxy, God, and any other authority external to humanity and put man in their place. Their philosophy was humanistic and centered on the individual and on overcoming nature. Hobbes' *Leviathan*—the epitome of the modern sovereign ideal—was an artificial political institution created by humans to replace God. Strauss saw Hobbes as the father of all sin—a non-liberal philosopher whose rejection of Western philosophical tradition had paved the way for the liberal worldview that was estranged from duty, nature, and pre-modern philosophy. His Hobbes was convicted of laying the cornerstone of modern civilization and creating a new world that gave rise to socialism and to a discourse of rights.

However, the rise of National-Socialism and the persecution of Jews as part of a renewed form of political anti-Semitism forced Strauss to leave Germany in the early 1930s for France, and later move to England. Until 1938, when he found political asylum in the foreign world of the United States (becoming an American citizen in 1944), Strauss lived as a refugee, stripped of citizenship and rights. His heavy critique of liberal tenets such as the fear of death and the importance of protecting life were replaced by the prospect of European Jewry facing annihilation.

Over the course of those years, Strauss also began to gradually withdraw from proposed alternatives to liberalism, recoiling both from modernity and liberalism and from their detractors.

The development of Strauss' writing and teaching outside Germany was marked by this upheaval in his philosophy. Slowly, Strauss toned down his criticism of the liberal order and of Hobbes, its spiritual father, and the distance from the Europe in which he had grown up became not only physical but intellectual.

Once exiled from Nazi Germany, Strauss' adaptation to life in the safe haven of the United States brought with it a gradual withdrawal from ideas that had influenced him in the 1920s and from his negative regard for certain elements in modern civilization. It was not a clear and full cut with past beliefs, but rather a complicated web of thought that remained equivocal, in keeping with the ambivalence and intellectual crisis that marked Strauss' thought in the transitional period of the 1930s and 1940s.

In exile—in Europe and later in America—Strauss did not transform into an ardent supporter of liberalism. The foundations of his critique of liberalism and modernity were laid long before his exile and were too entrenched to change. Nevertheless, with this staunch position, certain significant changes did take place.

As part of the turmoil of the 1930s, Strauss' critique of liberalism took on a different form: while he still considered modern civilization inferior and undesirable, he came to see it also as a protector of life and security. His attitude toward the German philosophers he had looked up to—Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger and Carl Schmitt—and to modern criticism of liberalism grew ambivalent. Although breaking with liberalism remained a worthy cause, he also saw it as a failed attempt and a destructive nihilism that necessitated caution, moderation, and responsibility. Eventually, he described these positions as ultimate expressions of the most dangerous form of radical historicism: Nazism, which devastated humanity and philosophy.

Strauss' philosophical ambivalence yielded political teaching in the United States that in many ways resembled detoxification: a deep attraction toward critiques of liberalism and the seductive charm of nihilism, along with an understanding that the form this criticism had taken in the twentieth century had brought about mass destruction. This is most aptly captured in Shlomo Pines' observation about Strauss (quoted here in Chapter 2): "[h]e knew the experience of a world on the edge of the abyss, the world of the nihilists, of frenzied technology, of unrestrained will to power and of destructive philosophy, and there is no doubt that he felt the charm in all of these—with the exception of frenzied

technology."[5] In his political teaching in the United States, Strauss tried to prevent the calamitous consequences of the critique of Enlightenment and of German philosophy—the intellectual world that, although it had enabled him to delve into the profound depths of philosophy, had left scorched earth in its wake.

Strauss came to value the protection that modern Western civilization offered humanity, reason, Jews, and his own life. The need for safety was now up close and personal. This led to a partial change in his thought, regarding both liberalism and its founding father, Hobbes. In England, and later in the United States, Strauss still looked down on Hobbesian philosophy as political hedonism: "[n]ot heroes, if fratricidal and incestuous heroes, but naked, shivering poor devils were the founders of civilization."[6]

However, this form of politics, which ultimately took shape in the English-speaking world, was stable, moderate and far less dangerous than the violence and extremism of the twentieth century. The product of Hobbesian philosophy was inferior, but the modern nihilistic alternatives to liberal democracy promoted by Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Schmitt were far more destructive. Nazism was the calamitous result of turbulent modernity and Strauss, who felt an affinity with anti-democratic right-wing ideas, had to move away and align himself with democracy.

In Strauss' anti-modern philosophy, the shallow puddle of liberal democracy became the lesser evil compared to the political product of nihilism and radical historicism. The aspiration to break the spirit of modernity did not wane, but realizing that nihilism lacked any political responsibility whatsoever transported Strauss into new realms. He understood that philosophical truth was dangerous and subversive. Saving humanity requires defending philosophy, protecting it from society and vice versa. In short, one must act, write, and above all teach differently: access to the truth must be entrusted to responsible hands and kept safely in the dark. In contrast, the citizen needs civilization and a liberal education, rather than philosophy, to prevent an outbreak of violence. Modern civilization is contemptible but must not be forcefully destroyed; instead, it must be gradually changed with cautious restraint. America and the West need "gentlemen." They need aristocracy in democracy.

Endorsing moderate modern civilization and taking a public stand against destructive nihilism laid the foundations of a fragmented Straussian teaching that tried to reject any indication of nihilism

imported from Germany or forged in the liberal American democracy. At the same time, however, Strauss emphasized his sympathy for esoteric writing that contains a revolutionary secret and subversive, critical, anti-modern, undemocratic views. His political teaching revolved around the forced distance he had to put between himself and the nihilist "aristocracy." He found the alternative he sought in the pre-modern classical world—in ancient Greece, in medieval Jewish and Muslim philosophy, and in the classical "natural right" that rejects any hint of modern positivism, relativism, and historicism. The shining beacon was Plato's political philosophy, which embodied the gap between superficial liberalism, on one hand, and irresponsible critiques of liberalism, on the other.

However, the complex process that Strauss' views of liberalism underwent represents only one aspect of his political teaching in the United States: on the other side of the coin lay his views of Communism and its "spiritual father," Karl Marx.

Strauss began to engage with Marx and his ideas while still in the Weimar Republic, in the 1920s and 1930s, and carried this fascination with him to his new political home in the United States. In Weimar, Strauss' objection to Marx stemmed from an ideological affiliation with the contemporary anti-liberal, anti-democratic, anti-socialist European right wing. Under the influence of Nietzsche, who feared the rule of "the last man," Strauss saw Marx and Marxism as ideological enemies. He even claimed that Hobbes, founder of liberalism, and Hans Kelsen, who was a representative of contemporary liberalism, shared Marx's aspiration to do away with the political and eliminate the distinction between friend and enemy.

The fact that Strauss somewhat softened his view of the liberal-democratic order and aligned himself with the West in its battle against German tyranny had no impact on his views of Marx and of Communism. Toning down his criticism of liberal democracy created a rift of sorts in his critique of modernity: liberalism and modern civilization remained inferior, but were stable and certainly less violent than revolutionary attempts to abolish them. Marxism, on the other hand, remained contemptible and dangerous. Strauss fit smoothly into the trend of intellectual warnings against a new form of evil emerging after the defeat of Nazism in the war—Communism during the Cold War, under Joseph Stalin (1878–1953) and later under Khrushchev and Leonid Brezhnev (1906–1982). In other words, if Strauss' view of liberalism revealed signs of distaste or ambivalence, his critique of

Communism remained steadfast. Taking an ambivalent approach to liberalism enabled Strauss, a prominent critic of liberalism, to accept liberal democracy and even see the regime that had provided him a safe haven as a friend. His hostility to Marx and Marxism, however, enabled him to join the American battle against Communism in the historical context of the Cold War.

In the upheaval of transitioning from Europe to the United States, a single buoy emerged that enabled Strauss to reconcile his views with the post-World War II liberal world and the defeat of Nazism: the Cold War. As a critic of modernity and friend of revolutionary nihilists, Strauss found an audience among the conservative American right. The common denominator was seeing Communism as the enemy and an aversion to liberal values and Enlightenment. Both feared nuclear war with the Soviet Union, the spread of the Communist ideology throughout the world, and infiltration of "red" sympathy into American political and cultural institutions. Here, Strauss shed Weimar and put on the United States. Leaving his anti-democratic Nietzschean garments and 1920s anti-liberal robes behind, he donned a uniform suited to the Cold War: defending the United States from Communism, whether at home or abroad.

Strauss joined forces with the West to overcome the philosophy of Marx. Liberal democracy had defeated fascism, and now it must overcome the Soviet Union and grasp the dangers inherent to Marxism. For Strauss, Marx's vision was the epitome of the Nietzschean nightmare: a flat, hollow world with no hierarchy, no depth, no greatness, and no law—a true danger to philosophy and to mankind.

Strauss saw "liberal education" as democracy's safeguard against declining toward Marx's vision. Education is the only means available in a democracy to battle blind obedience to conventions. To prevent a blurring of the differences between democracy and Communism, the former must make room for an education not intended for the masses.

Analyzing unpublished seminars that Strauss taught in the University of Chicago in the 1950s and 1960s offers insights into Straussian teaching. They are key to understanding Strauss, primarily as they reveal that he was just as interested in the present as he was in pre-modern history. As these seminars show, fear of the possibility that Marxism and Communism would triumph in the nuclear age was important, perhaps even crucial, to Strauss' thought.

Strauss began the seminar on Marx with a detailed description of the first wave of modernity, but moved on to focus largely on the second wave—the first crisis of modernity, marked by Rousseau and German idealism. Strauss claimed that Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Immanuel Kant, and G.W.F Hegel are the foundations on which Marx's political thought were built. Rousseau's critique of political inequality and the Hobbesian natural state; Kant's vision of perpetual peace and a universal society, along with a rejection of natural authority; and Hegel's end of history, which Alexander Kojève re-formulated and Strauss saw as the victory of "the last man"—all these became an inseparable part of the philosophy of Marx, which strove, according to Strauss, to turn metaphysics into economics, replace God with man, and eliminate the political with a violent revolution that put the West at risk.

Strauss thought that in order to overcome the disaster of Communism, liberalism must accept basic assumptions that are in conflict with its principles. It must extend beyond the liberal boundaries and adopt a different attitude to the world. To overcome Communism, the enemy must be understood, and Marx's philosophy closely examined. Marx is a dangerous thinker and responsible political philosophy must fight him, as Strauss stated in "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx":

> I happen to be opposed to communism in every way but precisely for this reason I cannot take the view which a businessman can take: if it comes after my lifetime I don't care. I care very much whether it comes after my lifetime, and therefore the real issue is whether it is altogether feasible with—I mean, that they may win militarily I regard as absolutely feasible but whether it can be at the same time the true liberation of man, that alone is, of course, the question.[7]

In his teaching, Strauss tried to combat the view that humanity can be released from the bonds of nature and that evil can be eliminated. He saw Marxism not only as "the opium of the intellectuals" but as a deadly poison that could strike a lethal blow to Western philosophy.

Strauss hoped that liberal democracy would vanquish Communism, yet could not use the liberal vocabulary that contrasted with his worldview. He tried to formulate an alternative to the destructive forces of his time and to revive a pre-modern world and classical canon in American democracy. To that end, he created a unique form of teaching that used classical Greek texts ranging from Plato to Thucydides to illuminate the

present and caution against Marx's vision. As shown in the previous chapter, *The City and Man* epitomizes Straussian teaching: it relies on the past to elucidate the present and warn of the future.

On January 27, 1965, Strauss wrote a letter to Hasso Hofmann (b. 1934), then a young scholar who had just completed a study of Carl Schmitt and his *Legalität und Legitimität* (Legality and Legitimacy, 1932).[8] Strauss complemented Hofmann on his study, but added several critical comments. One related to the notion of "Heimat" (homeland or fatherland):

> What does not come out in your presentation is the importance of S[chmitt]'s German patriotism. By this I mean that his German patriotism is the crucial and decisive ingredient of his scientific doctrine. He is opposed to Communism not only on general grounds but also and above all because any world state or world society is destructive of the Heimat… it is of course true that Heimat is itself a universal concept, but it is of its essence that it hallows the particular community as particular community in its uniqueness and thus points away from all universalism. Here is the basis of his opposition to all "normativities." Since the Heimat is today threatened as it never was, it must be *affirmed*, and thus it takes on the character of the norm… This is the basis of what he means by homogeneity… I am therefore not as sure as you are that S[chmitt]'s theory of legitimacy is "wholly irrational": after all, self-determination of nations recognizes nationalism.[9]

America became Strauss' new Heimat. He wished to defend it and saw himself as an ally of democracy, a friend of the world's new empire. In accordance with his understanding of Schmitt, Communism was an enemy—an aspiration for a universal society or state that would endanger particularism and possibly tear down the walls of his adopted home. Strauss' rejection of the Marxist idea of freedom as a manifestation of "the last man" reflects this fear. This is one reason why anti-Marxism became such a crucial, yet subterranean, force in his political teaching in the United States.

Strauss was aware of the importance of anti-Communism to his thought and his American experience. On October 2, 1961, Benjamin Mandel (1887–1973), a former House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) official, and at the time a research director for the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee (SISS), sent Strauss a letter, inviting him to participate "as a patriotic service" in a symposium titled

"Anti-Communist Education." The aim of the symposium was "primarily to develop an alert and well-informed citizenry adequately equipped to meet the problems of the Soviet propaganda offensive."[10]

Strauss was asked to choose a topic such as textbooks, school and college syllabi, "philosophical consideration behind anti-Communist education," "use of television and radio," or "mistakes to avoid," and present a study for the symposium.[11] Strauss replied a few days later, on October 11, politely turning down the invitation but offering insights of his own into anti-Communist education. He explained that while he did not object to the project, he believed it was not broad enough in scope:

> I am in entire sympathy with the Committee's fundamental objective. All the greater is my regret that I cannot comply with your request. I shall not trouble you with a statement about the state of my health. I believe that I can best discharge the patriotic duty that you speak of and that I acknowledge by doing my teaching and research, for that work has always had an unmistakable anti-Communist intention and effect… I must confess that my reaction to your suggestion is also based on broader considerations. Generally speaking, I believe that the plan as stated by you is too narrowly conceived: 1) What is the use of the best syllabi, if the teachers are uninspiring? It is misleading to over-emphasize syllabi with the thought in mind that any teacher can be made inspiring by equipping him with a set of educational "methods." Experience has not shown that anyone inculcated with a certain pedagogical method automatically becomes a good teacher. A revision of the prevailing notions as to the importance of educational methods seems to be prerequisite to taking up the problem of syllabi. More generally, the problem of anti-Communist education is posterior to the problem of education simply. 2) The danger of conversion of Americans to Communism is at present time much smaller than that of softness toward Communism. That softness is fed by a variety of opinions, the refutation of which would simply be more important at the present time than the refutation of Communism proper. I have in mind such opinions as the following: "better red than dead" and its tacit premises, like the "relativism" so powerful in the social sciences today… Another of the opinions which I have in mind is a misguided notion of civil liberties that amounts to a denial of the fact that a free society has the right and duty to protect itself against the most dangerous enemies. This applies both to the political enemies of a free society and to the enemies of society as such, *i.e.*, ordinary criminals. How easily this approach goes together with moral relativism I need hardly to point out to you. The result of their conjunction is a weakening of the support for a free society. 3) Above all, what is

> the use of anti-Communist indoctrination, however competent, if it is not accompanied by consisted and concerted anti-Communist action on the part of all the three branches of government as well as the press and other means of communication? At the present time every smile in our direction on the part of that vicious clown Khruschev is hailed by both official spokesmen of the government and by influential journalists as a sign of a profound change of policy. One cannot measure the effect of the fact that the individual mentioned is constantly referred to in the press by endearing expressions like "Nikita" and "Mr. K." He and his fellows are treated in a different way than were Hitler and his fellows, although the former are more dangerous to the United States than were the latter.[12]

Thus, in the United Sates, Strauss was deeply concerned over moral decay, corruption, relativism, and the gradual decline of the West. He thought that education and a return to pre-modern thought were the best cure against this contemporary erosion. They could fortify America in its war, the "greatest war" of modernity, against the Soviet Union. Strauss' teaching and his interpretation of political philosophy indeed had "an unmistakable anti-Communist intention and effect." These were clearly expressed in his letters, seminars, and the book *The City and Man*.

Strauss, the critic of liberalism, saw Communism as an absolute enemy and aligned himself with America. In his mind, the Cold War was a war of good against evil, of the forces of light against the forces of darkness. The darkness was all-encompassing, while the Western light shone, albeit weakly. In his unique teaching, Strauss tried to share this pale light—with no choice but to carry the torch himself.

Notes

1. Saul Bellow, *Ravelstein* (New York: Penguin Books, 2015 [2001]), 87.
2. Isaiah Berlin, *Personal Impressions* (New York: The Viking Press, 1981), 63.
3. See Walter Laqueur, "The Arendt Cult," *Journal of Contemporary History* 33, no. 4 (October 1998): 490–491. The events of the 1930s undoubtedly had a great influence on Strauss, and Laqueur. However, even if many of these thinkers did, indeed, live in a bubble, talking about "the real America" or "knowledge of reality" is highly problematic. Does America have a truth value? Is there a single America and can reality be fully known, or do we have many different viewpoints that combine to create the world in which we live? Laqueur's derision of

the émigré intellectuals' grasp on reality seems to have been exaggerated and somewhat ironic, if one examines how his worldview was formed, as well as the views of other contemporary historians such as Peter Gay, Fritz Stern, George L. Mosse and others. See, for example, Steven E. Aschheim, *Beyond the Border: The German-Jewish Legacy Abroad* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); Udi Greenberg, *The Weimar Century: German Émigré and the Ideological Foundations of the Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); Philip Stelzel, *History After Hitler: A Transatlantic Enterprise* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019).

4. Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider*, v.
5. Shlomo Pines, "On Leo Strauss," 171.
6. Strauss, "What Is Political Philosophy?" 49.
7. Strauss and Cropsey, "The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx," 165.
8. See Hasso Hofmann, *Legitimität gegen Legalität: Der Weg der politischen Philosophie Carl Schmitts* (Berlin: Luchterhand Verlag, 1964); Carl Schmitt, *Legality and Legitimacy*, Jeffrey Seitzer (ed.) (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004 [1932]).
9. Leo Strauss to Hasso Hofmann, January 27, 1965, Box. 5, Folder. 24. Leo Strauss Papers, Special Collections Research Center, The University of Chicago Library. See also Howse, *Leo Strauss: Man of Peace*, 50.
10. Benjamin Mandel to Leo Strauss, October 2, 1961, Box. 4, Folder. 13. Leo Strauss Papers, Special Collections Research Center, The University of Chicago Library.
11. Ibid.
12. Leo Strauss to Benjamin Mandel, October 11, 1961, Box. 4, Folder. 13. Leo Strauss Papers, Special Collections Research Center, The University of Chicago Library.

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https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-24389-0

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https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-24389-0