RECOVERING POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

THE STRAUSS-KRÜGER CORRESPONDENCE

Returning to Plato through Kant

EDITED BY
SUSAN MELD SHELL

Recovering Political Philosophy

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Postmodernism's challenge to the possibility of a rational foundation for and guidance of our political lives has provoked a searching re-examination of the works of past political philosophers. The re-examination seeks to recover the ancient or classical grounding for civic reason and to clarify the strengths and weaknesses of modern philosophic rationalism. This series responds to this ferment by making available outstanding new scholarship in the history of political philosophy, scholarship that is inspired by the rediscovery of the diverse rhetorical strategies employed by political philosophers. The series features interpretive studies attentive to historical context and language, and to the ways in which censorship and didactic concern impelled prudent thinkers, in widely diverse cultural conditions, to employ manifold strategies of writing, strategies that allowed them to aim at different audiences with various degrees of openness to unconventional thinking. Recovering Political Philosophy emphasizes the close reading of ancient, medieval, early modern and late modern works that illuminate the human condition by attempting to answer its deepest, enduring questions, and that have (in the modern periods) laid the foundations for contemporary political, social, and economic life. The editors encourage manuscripts from both established and emerging scholars who focus on the careful study of texts, either through analysis of a single work or through thematic study of a problem or question in a number of works.

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Series Editor Preface

Palgrave's *Recovering Political Philosophy* series was founded with an eye to postmodernism's challenge to the possibility of a rational foundation for and guidance of our political lives. This invigorating challenge has provoked a searching re-examination of classic texts, not only of political philosophers but of poets, artists, theologians, scientists, and other thinkers who may not be regarded conventionally as political theorists. The series publishes studies that endeavor to take up this re-examination and thereby help to recover the classical grounding for civic reason, as well as studies that clarify the strengths and the weaknesses of modern philosophic rationalism. Interpretative studies in the series are particularly attentive to historical context and language and to the ways in which both censorial persecution and didactic concerns have impelled prudent thinkers, in widely diverse cultural conditions, to employ manifold strategies of writing—strategies that allowed them to aim at different audiences with various degrees of openness to unconventional thinking. The series offers close readings of ancient, medieval, early modern, and late modern works that illuminate the human condition by attempting to answer its deepest, enduring questions, and that have (in the modern periods) laid the foundations for contemporary political, social, and economic life.

This volume contains the first complete translation into English of the extant correspondence between Leo Strauss and Gerhard Krüger, together with seven essays that illuminate some of the philosophic implications and themes of the interchange—which was interrupted by the ascent of the Nazis to power, with any serious possibility of resumption foreclosed by Krüger's mentally debilitating strokes in the early 1950s. As Strauss put it

in an autobiographical note he published in 1964, "the philosophical interest in theology linked me with Gerhard Krüger"; "the theologico-political problem has since then remained *the* theme of my undertakings." The seven essays in this volume exhibit profound disagreement over how to interpret the dialogue between Strauss and Krüger, given that both are reacting to the shattering effect of Heideggerian historicism. One reading sees a decisively Socratic-rationalist Strauss debating a confirmed Augustinian-Christian-Platonic Krüger. The other sees two slowly maturing thinkers struggling to find a response to the reopened challenge of Christian and Jewish orthodox belief—with Krüger drawn to Kant and Augustine, and Strauss moving from Spinoza toward Maimonides, while both treasure the example of the Platonic Socrates's skepticism. The reader of this volume is thus invited to join in a provocative debate.

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Abbreviations

Titles of Leo Strauss's Writings

CaM "Cohen and Maimonides." Translated by Martin D. Yaffe and Ian Moore. *LSMC* 173–222.

GS-2 *Gesammelte Schriften,* Band 2*: Philosophie und Gesetz—Frühe Schriften*. Herausgegeben von Heinrich Meier. Stuttgart und Weimar: J. B. Metzler Verlag, 1997; 2nd rev. printing, 1998; 3rd printing, 2004.

GS-3 *Gesammelte Schriften*, Band 3: *Hobbes' politische Wissenschaft, and zugehörige Schriften-Briefe*. Herausgegeben von Heinrich Meier. Stuttgart und Weimar: J. B. Mutzler Verlag, 2001; 2nd rev. ed. 2008.

HCR *Hobbes' Critique of Religion and Related Writings.* Translated and Edited by Gabriel Bartlett and Svetozar Minkov. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2011.

ISP "The Intellectual Situation of the Present." Appendix B in *Reorientation: Leo Strauss in the 1930s.* Edited by Martin D. Yaffe and Richard S. Ruderman. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

JPCM *Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity.* Edited by Kenneth Hart Green. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997.

LAM *Liberalism Ancient and Modern*. New York: Basic Books, 1968.

LSEW *The Early Writings (1921–1932)*. Translated and Edited by Michael Zank. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2002.

LSMC *Leo Strauss on Maimonides: The Complete Writings*. Edited by Kenneth Hart. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2013.

LSTPP *Leo Strauss and Leo Strauss Theological-Political Problem*. Edited by Heinrich Meier. Cambridge University Press, 2006.

NRH *Natural Right and History*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1953.

OPS *On Plato's "Symposium."* Edited by Seth Benardete. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2001.

PAW *Persecution and the Art of Writing*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1952.

PLA *Philosophy and Law: Contributions to the Understanding of Maimonides and His Predecessors*. Translated by Eve Adler. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1995.

PPH *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes: Its Basis and Its Genesis*. Translated by Elsa M. Sinclair. Reprint. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952.

RCPR *The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism*. Edited by Thomas L. Pangle. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1989.

RSP "Religious Situation of the Present." Appendix B in *Reorientation: Leo Strauss in the 1930s*. Edited by Martin D. Yaffe and Richard S. Ruderman. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

SCR *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*. Translated by Elsa M. Sinclair. New York: Schocken Books, 1965.

WIPP *What is Political Philosophy? And Other Studies*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1959.

Other Titles

PMKK Gerhard Krüger. *Philosophie und Moral in der Kantischen Kritik* (Philosophy and Morality in the Kantian Critique) Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1931; 2nd ed., 1967.

CHAPTER 1

Editor's Introduction

Susan M. Shell

Between 1928 through the mid-1930s, Leo Strauss and Gerhard Krüger carried on a philosophically intense exchange, until the war and related events cut that correspondence short. A series of debilitating strokes in the early 1950s prematurely ended Krüger's intellectual career, foreclosing the possibility of further serious engagement after the war. By that time, however, their respective intellectual paths, which had once closely coincided, had diverged. Still, a series of late exchanges concerning Krüger's 1969 *Festschrift*, to which Strauss contributed, testifies to their enduring mutual attachment.

Of the two, Strauss is by far the better known, having gone on to a distinguished academic career in the United States, where he wrote many important works in political philosophy, as well as founded an influential philosophic "school." Although relatively obscure today, Krüger was, at the time of their major correspondence, certainly the more professionally successful and personally fortunate of the two.

Krüger was born in Berlin in 1902 into a comfortable Protestant family. He briefly attended the University of Jena before moving to Tübingen, and then Marburg, where he studied religion with Rudolf Bultmann, and philosophy under Paul Natorp, Nicolai Hartmann and Martin Heidegger,

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completing a dissertation on Kant under Hartmann in 1925. From 1929 until 1933, Krüger taught at the University of Marburg, and then at Göttingen and Frankfurt. Krüger's public opposition to Nazism retarded his academic advancement and led to his mandatory enlistment in the German army from 1939 to 1940, and from 1943 to 1944, during which time he briefly served as an interpreter in occupied Paris. Krüger was called to a chair at the University of Münster in 1940, and was professor of philosophy at the University of Tübingen from 1946 to 1950, where he came under the powerful influence of the Catholic theologian Romano Guardini. In 1950 Krüger converted to Catholicism. Prior to his 1953 stroke, he held a chair at the University of Frankfurt.

From the beginning, Krüger, who was widely regarded as perhaps Heidegger's most gifted student, pursued an independent path. Like Strauss, Krüger found himself in more or less open revolt against the academic neo-Kantianism then fashionable. For Krüger no less than Strauss, Heidegger's "destruction" of the philosophic tradition opened up the prospect of a genuine recovery of ancient thought. Krüger's own bent might be accurately described as Christian neo-Platonist. His dissertation on Kant established the direction of his early thought: namely, to recover the Platonic foundations of Kant's thought by detaching them from his entanglement in the distorting presuppositions of modern natural science.

Like the young Strauss, Krüger turned to Plato for the sake of inquiring into "the right order of human things." Deeply dissatisfied with positivism and relativism, as well as the neo-Kantianism still academically fashionable, Krüger saw in Plato an anticipation of the insight that only the "knowing faith" of Augustine (and Thomas) could adequately express. Krüger explored these and related themes in books on Kant and Plato, as well as a long essay on Descartes that Strauss would especially praise. Like Strauss, Krüger was interested in uncovering the origins of modernity, which he specifically linked to a modern "self-consciousness" founded in an explicit revolt against the commanding presence of the Christian God, and ultimately dependent upon revelation. As such, modern thought was founded in disobedience, and hence in an unacknowledged religious awareness that had been unavailable to Plato. In this theological sense, at least, Krüger's thought remained "historical"; Christ's "factual dominance over the spirit of post-ancient humanity" made a full recovery of the ancient approach neither desirable nor possible, as Krüger saw it, Strauss's objections to the contrary.

Still, during the years spanning the period of Strauss's own "reorientation," and during which he was making some of his own most decisive discoveries, Krüger offered Strauss both invaluable professional and practical support, and a unique sort of intellectual friendship in common pursuit of the "right order of human life."

There are several factors that make the correspondence between Strauss and Krüger especially timely.

First, like members of the generation that came of age in the waning days of Weimar, we live in a time in which the reigning liberal assumptions find themselves under intense and increasing pressure. Although we may not seem to face what Strauss called in 1933 the "whole modern world… cracking at the seams" it is hard to avoid the suspicion that for us as well the "'structure of [liberal democratic] knowledge' in which we live" is "brittle and full of gaps." That it is at just such times, according to Strauss, that "*questioning* begins" [Strauss to Krüger, 22 July 1933, unsent], and there is the hope of an exemplary path of insight into and beyond the current period of liberal self-doubt. Questioning, as Strauss here opines, is a perennially available human possibility that is especially facilitated by such moments of political and moral disarray and decay, in which the prevailing norms that shape one's primary experience of the world lose their apparent self-evidence. Strauss sees in the "cracking" walls of the modern world a partial repetition of the sophistical disruption of the ancient polis and its ways that provoked Plato's "second sailing."

> The original fact is a *given* law, as even psychoanalysis involuntarily confirms; a law that need not be sought in the first place. Somewhere on earth, at some point in time, human beings saw themselves deprived of such a law and therefore *inquired* about a law, i.e. about *the natural* law that would be valid for *human beings* as such. Since then philosophy has been in existence, for the loss [Wegfall] of the given law and the search for *the* law seems to me to mark philosophy. Socratic-Platonic philosophy inquired about order, it even inquired about "the laws." Until proven wrong I would maintain that it is *the* philosophy for this reason, and that all other philosophies can only be understood as leading to it or as originating from it. For every other philosophy presupposes in one way or another that the βιος θεωρητικος is the right βιος--for Socrates-Plato, however, it is precisely this presupposition that is problematic. [Strauss to Krüger, 27 December 1932 (second draft; unsent)]

The questioning that initiates the project of modernity, which Strauss here especially associates with Hobbes's attempt to establish natural right on an "indefeasible" basis, is less than radical because it takes the "rightness" of the theoretical life for granted. For Socrates-Plato, on the other hand, the "essence of virtue" is problematic, that is, remains a primary subject of inquiry. It is in this deepest sense that all subsequent modern thought is "progressive," moving forward from an assumed base that Nietzsche's own questioning of the traditional Socrates, in the name of courage or *andreia*, finally brought to light. [Strauss, 27 December 1932 (definitive version)]

Modernity represents, in Strauss's account in the pages of this correspondence, an attempted recovery of the original freedom to philosophize on the natural basis preceding the emergence of Christianity:

> Since the seventeenth century, the real point [Sinne] of the struggle with tradition was to recover the Greek freedom of philosophizing. It was really a Renaissance movement. In all "foundations" [Grundlegungen], in all psychology and all historicism there is this striving: to find, to find *again*, an original, *natural* basis. [Strauss to Krüger, 17 November 1932]

"Historical consciousness," as Strauss here presents it, is the non-self-transparent version of an attempt whose "primordial form" [Urform] consists in the "battle against prejudices"—a battle specifically directed against the predominating ethos of Christianity, and which neither the Greeks nor the Platonizing Muslim and Jewish philosophers had to confront. Christianity, so conceived, represents a "distraction" that must be overcome if philosophizing on a "naïve" or "natural" basis is to be possible once again.

We may ourselves be so shaped by "historical consciousness," so mired in the shallow eddies of post-modernism or, alternatively, a complacently resistant moralism, that we no longer speak of "historical consciousness" at all, a term that still contains the memory of another form of "consciousness," one which was *not* thoroughly conditioned and contingent and in which knowledge of "natural right" could still seem possible, as it seemed, say, to Hobbes. Strauss's and Krüger's shared quest for "the right ordering of human things"—a quest revealed here with a singularly fresh urgency—remind us of that possibility with the peculiar force of ongoing mutual discovery, albeit along what prove to be increasingly divergent paths.

This brings us to the second reason for the timeliness of the correspondence: Krüger's alternative appreciation of the importance of Christianity, which represents, on his account, a new dispensation for human understanding that fundamentally alters the philosophic horizon by making "science," as the Greeks understood it, newly problematic. From this alternative point of view, the battle against "prejudices" is both deeper and more fundamental than the struggle against "doxa" or opinion as Plato understood it. Hence Krüger's basic "reservation" against Strauss's description of modernity as a "second cave." To be sure, he had earlier acceded to Strauss's metaphorical description of the peculiar *cul de sac* into which modern thought, and historicism in particular, has led us. Still, as he now adds, from such detour, if it is one, there is no simple egress:

> If one understands why we are sitting in the second cave, then it is impossible to understand this "prison" as a floor of the *Platonic* prison. Looking back from here it is rather the *Platonic* position that becomes in need of revision. *The problem of "prejudice" is, after all, more radical than that of the δόξα* (to use your words). The concept of "naturalness" and of "being human" must therefore be determined starting from here. The unity of the concepts "science" and "philosophy" is not as directly graspable (by taking antiquity as the standard [in der Messung an der Antike]) as you suppose. I certainly understand your motive of combatting historicism, but in my opinion one cannot shake it off by defiantly ignoring it (and you do not really [im Grunde] do this), but by reducing it to its substantive [sachliche] and historical core: Christ's factual dominion [Herrschaft] over the spirit of post-ancient humanity. However, this dominion has become indirect in modernity; yet it is you who take it to be factually unbroken by claiming that the "situation" of modern thought is essentially determined by opposition to revealed religion. Now, the denaturing of the Christian "bondage" of humans in historicism is undoubtedly a special kind of imprisonment: there can be philosophical liberation from this cave. But when you define the second cave as the original *ground* of historicism, then there is no Socrates for this just as there is no Newton for a blade of grass. [Krüger to Strauss, 4 December 1932]

Krüger's basic disagreement with Strauss emerges with particular clarity in his essay on Descartes, which he completed in 1933 and published in 1934. The new horizon opened up by Christianity is the introspective self-awareness that becomes possible only in the presence of the Christian God, whether or not one deems oneself a "believer." Self-consciousness *in*

corum deo or before the searcher of hearts necessarily gives rise to new doubt as to the adequacy of human reason in pursuing the "good" in Plato's sense; whether it issues in philosophic humility or outright rebellion (as with Descartes) that insight, unavailable to Plato, cannot now be disregarded or otherwise ignored. Our own "lived experience," unlike that available to Plato, opens up the possibility of a "hopeful knowledge" that is deeper than "science" in either the modern or the original Platonic sense, and by which our reception of nature as a "binding" order oriented toward the good must now take its bearings. Though Plato asked the right questions, his answers necessarily remained defective, deprived as they were of reflective depth.

> Philosophically, the matter seems to be such that we must repeat the ancient and genuine philosophical questions, but in the insurmountable factual [faktische] situation that philosophizing is no longer as self-evident [selbstverständlich] as it was then. This *new* thing, this newly arisen problem for philosophy, can only be posed within a philosophy of world history, but that means in the analysis of the ground of "reflection" that is *originally* discovered in the face of revelation. Now, one can experience this as a "hateful fatality" or as a glimmer of hope in the night of our perplexity – that is simply a matter of our "worldview" and our personal ability of *doing* anything in this condition. But if one wanted to claim to find the true and *nonarbitrarily* authoritative [das Wahre und unwillkürlich Maßgebende] somewhere else, we would have to understand ourselves worse than we two do [sich schlechter verstehen als wir zwei es tun]. [Krüger to Strauss, 29 December 1932]

For Krüger, the true measure [*Maßstab*] takes the form of a binding law our inadequacy to which revelation makes newly and undeniably evident. It is no longer possible to philosophize "naively" or to simply follow the logos where it leads us.

To this, Strauss replies that depth and radicality are not the same. The order that we experience as a "command" does not have "the character of a law in the actual sense." "More originary than bindingness is *what* is binding" and takes on the character of bindingness only "for us humans":

> Platonic philosophy is concerned with the knowledge of this 'What' that does not itself have the character of a law in the proper sense, and Kant takes account of this radical problem by recognizing the "*holy* will" (if only in a sense that is limited from the outset by the theological tradition). The

> question of the law first comes up in the context of the question of *applying* the measure to human beings. And it is only with respect to human beings that the difference between a knowledge that is commanded and a "merely" true knowledge makes any sense. [Strauss to Krüger, 18 August 1934]

Strauss distinguishes, accordingly, between the "practical knowledge" that originally *motivated* philosophy and set it on the right track" and "the original *theme* of philosophy":

> Philosophy that is called upon [aufgerufene] through the law does not inquire about the law, but about the right order of human life and thus about the principle of order. But this question cannot turn into the natural-theological one if one does not want to become embroiled in the difficulties involved in a grounding of knowledge in belief; rather, it must be asked and answered in the manner of Plato's critical philosophy. [Ibid.]

Krüger, following Kant, privileges the practical over the theoretical, rather than treating the former as merely leading toward the latter; the philosophy called forth by the law, on Strauss's alternate account, does not inquire about the law but the correct order of human life, and thus forthwith about the principle of order as such. In short: the original motive that sets philosophy on the right track is not its ultimate subject of inquiry.

Krüger, however, stands by what he regards as the "lived experience" of the present moment: Strauss, too, as Krüger pointedly notes, responds to a demand for a return to naivete whose realizability is itself a matter of belief or faith. Might the "opinion" in favor of atheism by which Strauss claims to take his bearings itself "take[s] its measure from [messen Sie… an]" a "*modern* idea of knowledge"? Might not Plato's "critical philosophy," as Strauss here archly describes his own approach, be uncritically dogmatic in its outright rejection of the possibility of what Krüger calls "hopeful knowledge"? [Krüger to Strauss, 2 June 1935] In short: by beginning with his own unbelief, does Strauss not set the problem up "one step too late"? For the ultimate point is, as Krüger insists, the truth, not whether or not one is personally up to meeting its demands.

In sum: the correspondence presents Strauss's most direct early confrontation with the challenge of Christian revelation in particular, or of what he here pointedly refers to as the combination of a *nomos* tradition and a tradition of questioning, which precisely as a tradition is no longer genuine questioning.

With this exchange, late in 1935, the philosophic conversation between Strauss and Krüger comes to an effectual close, before the more dramatic rupture of the war years brings all communication to an end. Krüger will become increasingly preoccupied with questions of rational theology, that is, with that combination of a "nomos-tradition" and a "tradition of questioning" that Strauss had held to be ultimately responsible for the current spiritual crisis. Strauss, for his part, will deepen his study of the Islamic/Jewish medieval alternative: that is, of a *nomos* tradition that naturally gives rise to philosophic questioning, without being tempted by the peculiar "sublations" offered by Christianity. At the same time, with the advent of the war years, and his own growing personal distress, not to mention that of German Jews more generally, Strauss will come to have a greater appreciation for the virtues of that combination—that is, for figures like Winston Churchill, as well as British "muddling through" more generally.

This brings me to a third way in which these letters are timely: namely in bearing witness to "the theological political problem" as directly experienced by two serious thinkers who were also members of two "nations" between which all conversation ceased for a time to be possible. That problem, which Strauss once called the "*the* theme" of all his studies (see Appendix II to this volume), emerges in these letters early on, when Strauss contrasts the political divisions among men that he regards as inevitable with the agreement possible through the "giving and receiving of reasons" [δουναι και δεξασθαι],[1] which he translates into "modern terms" as "probity" [Redlichkeit].

> [T]he struggle between "left" and "right" is the struggle between utopian dizziness/fraud [utopistischem Schwindel] and sobriety…. In opposition to agreement at any price, conflict is truer. But only peace, i.e. agreement in the truth, can be the last word. That this agreement of reason is possible--I firmly believe [firmiter credo]. [Strauss to Krüger, 19 August 1932]

Probity is a biblically inflected version of the ancient giving and receiving of reasons, and a disposition that Strauss here especially associates with Nietzsche. Probity, so understood, is the secularized Christian disposition by which Christian belief itself is finally shaken "to its foundations," paving the way for an understanding of history that is (once again) "naive" and, accordingly, a philosophizing that once again is "natural." [Strauss to Krüger, 12 December 1932, first draft of letter from 27 December 1932]

Indeed, Strauss goes so far as to suggest that by separating natural and positive law, church and state, Christianity disrupts the concrete *nomos* (be it Greek, Arab, or Jewish), the "one binding norm" that leads most directly to a life of happiness that "consist[s] in theory":

> Natural law does not play a role in Jewish-Arabic philosophy, at least not the role that it has in the Christian development. This is connected with the fact that for Jews and Arabs, the positive law is at once political and "ecclesiastical" law. The positive law of Moses or Mohammed is the *one* binding norm that suffices for leading life toward happiness [Glückseligkeit] (consisting in theory). Moses or Mohammed are understood as philosopher-legislators. The presupposition for this is the notion [Vorstellung] going back to the Platonic state. [Strauss to Krüger 3 March 1930]

As the presupposition that modern philosophy can live neither with nor without, Christianity is the distant historical source of the belief that all thinking is the product of its time and place—an effusion of a particular national spirit and nothing more. With the decay of Christianity, Europe seemed for a moment to be poised between two possibilities: a return to a forthright acceptance of the inevitability of division within and among peoples—to the "sobriety" of the "right" as opposed to the "utopian dizziness" of the "left"—or to the darker re-barbarization—the outright rejection of both civilization and the science to which civilization is essentially open—toward which Germany proved in the event to be headed.

In 1931, Strauss already complains of the "disgraceful nationalizing of all good things, and thus also of science," further noting the not "inconsequential fact" that, "given the question of what nation I belong to, I would answer: Jew, and *not* German." [Strauss to Krüger, 23 May 1931] Two months later, he attributes his "deepest resistance" to energetically seeking a German university post (despite Krüger's efforts on Strauss's behalf) to the "fact that [he] take[s] 'over-foreignization' ['Überfremdung'] of German universities to be tenable for neither side: neither for the Germans nor for the Jews." [Strauss to Krüger, 25 July 1931] In short, the inroads of what Strauss would later call "faustic" as opposed to genuine science already seem well advanced.

There can be no question that Krüger shared Strauss's general view on the essential universality of science nor is Krüger's eagerness to offer Strauss whatever professional and personal help he can ever in doubt. Strauss acknowledges, with a characteristic delicacy, the significance of

Krüger's aid when he writes, in an otherwise routine letter of thanks, "please forgive me for not suppressing the reflection that there are human beings upon whom one can rely." [Strauss to Krüger, 12 December 1931]

At the same time, Krüger's letters also make clear his own apprehensions with regard to the political situation in Germany and beyond. As he writes to Strauss in Paris, in April 1933 (a moment in which Strauss could still express hopeful expectations of Mussolini):

> Since world history will soon have put an end to liberalism everywhere, the great and real problems can finally be understood again. But it will be hard going on this ground, and one has to know what one can stand up for. You can imagine that I am becoming more dogmatic under these circumstances; I am thinking of doing so publicly. [Krüger to Strauss, 19 April 1933]

In sum: these letters bear witness to the respective efforts of two serious men with shared political sympathies to articulate a decent political alternative to the perceived weaknesses of a "liberalism" unable, as they both still saw it, to defend itself. Their differing views of the historical role of Christianity—for Strauss, an ultimate root of the historicist trap, for Krüger, the path out of the present darkness—would shape their increasingly divergent understandings of what Krüger calls "lived experience" and Strauss the "natural" or "pre-scientific" understanding of the world. But it also presaged a practical alliance between knowledge and faith on which students of Strauss would later build in the context of an ascendant liberal democratic west that had met the test that Weimar failed. Whether, and how, liberal democracy will continue to meet that test is perhaps the most urgent, if not important, question that these letters pose today.

This volume presents the first complete translation in English of the extant correspondence of Leo Strauss and Gerhard Krüger, along with seven interpretive essays on some of its philosophic and historical implications. Thomas Pangle sets their conversation in the context of Strauss's discoveries in the early 1930s of a new way of understanding "the right order of human things" based partly on a restoration of the "common ground" between reason and revelation. The remaining authors specifically address the themes of Plato (David Jannsens and Daniel Tanguay), Kant (Luc Langlois and Susan Shell), and natural right and history broadly conceived (Alberto Ghibellini and Richard Velkley). In keeping with the overall spirit of the correspondence, the collective aim of these essays is more to raise questions than to resolve them.

As a final note: I would like to gratefully acknowledge the very generous assistance of Heinrich Meier, Timothy Burns, Thomas Pangle, Nathan Tarcov, Jennie Strauss Clay, Donald Maletz, Eric Watkins, Robert Faulkner, Anna Schmidt, Svetozar Minkov, Michael Resler, and Jerome Veith. Additionally, I would like to acknowledge the help of Jonathan Yudelman, Rachel Pagano, and Kaishuo Chen for their invaluable editorial and research assistance through all stages of the project.

I would also like to thank Heinrich Meier and the publisher J. B. Metzler for their kind permission to make use of the original (German) version of the correspondence (*GS* II, 2001, 377–454); and Timothy W. Burns, Editor of *Interpretation: A Journal of Political Philosophy*, for his kind permission to reprint Donald Maletz's translation of Strauss's "Preface to Hobbes' *Politische Wissenschaft*." Thomas Pangle's essay previously appeared in *Reorientation: Leo Strauss in the 1930s*, ed. Martin Yaffe and Richard Ruderman (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). The original French version of Luc Langlois's essay appeared under the title "Finitude morale et ontologie de la creation: L'interprétation kantienne de Gerhard Krüger," in *Archives de philosophie*, vol. 74, 2011/1, 129–147. An earlier version of "Gerhard Krüger and Leo Strauss: The Kant *motif*," appeared in my Introduction to Strauss's Kant Seminars, published online by the Leo Strauss Archive. I am grateful to Nathan Tarcov, Director of the Archive, for his kind permission to make use of this material.

Note

1. Cf. Plato, *Republic* 531e.

CHAPTER 2

Leo Strauss: Gerhard Krüger Correspondence 1928–1962

Jerome Veith, Anna Schmidt, and Susan M. Shell

1

Berlin, 24 September 1928.
[postcard]

Dear Dr. Krüger![1]

Since the second copy of my work is still with my superior, I must turn to you and sincerely request that you return the copy in your possession to me soon. In order to avoid surprises I need to review the whole thing again carefully. Allow me to remind you of your promise to tell me candidly and in detail what you think of my claims.

Translated by Jerome Veith, Anna Schmidt, and Susan M. Shell (All insertions in square brackets are our own or those of the editors, Heinrich and Wiebke Meier. We have unified the date format of the letters and, for the sake of clarity, silently extended initials to full names. –Tr)

J. Veith • A. Schmidt

S. M. Shell (✉)
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S. M. Shell (ed.), *The Strauss-Krüger Correspondence*, Recovering Political Philosophy, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-74201-4_2

With distinguished regards,
Yours humbly,
L Strauss

my address:
Berlin W 30
Motzstrasse 35a
c/o Arend.

2

Berlin W 30, 28 November 1929.
Bayerischer Platz #3.

Dear Mr. Krüger,

I had promised to send you the typescript of my work immediately upon arriving in Berlin. When I arrived, the first galleys were waiting for me. So I told myself that I would wait until the whole thing was printed. Now that time has come. I am thus sending you the complete galleys. Of course, you can get a regular copy once the book appears, but it will still take some time until it is published. The galleys are missing an appendix, but it only contains philological material (source citations).

I would be very happy if you went through the trouble to share with me your overall judgment and—especially—your concrete concerns. Particularly, what do you think of the attempt to understand the Enlightenment in terms of Epicurus, or in contradistinction to him [von Epikur aus, bzw. in Abhebung gegen ihn, zu verstehen]? Your lecture on Hume has clearly shown me the limits of this attempt. But doesn't one fail to understand most important elements of the Enlightenment in exclusively taking one's bearings from the will to "autonomy"? I would very much like to debate with you this question of the correct approach to interpreting the Enlightenment.

Are you familiar with Tetens[2]' critique of the beatitudes? It reminds me very much of Kant's, which I learned about from your work. Felix Günther[3]—a student of Lamprecht's[4]—has written on Tetens' "The Science of the Human Being: A Contribution to German Intellectual Life in the Age of Rationalism" (Gotha, 1907). You can find some interesting information in the book. I assume you are not familiar with it.

Greetings to you, and please send my greetings to your wife,

Cordially,
Leo Strauss

3

Berlin, 7 January 1930.
Bayrischer Platz 3.

Dear Mr. Krüger,

I would like to thank you today already for your letter that will be of great help in channeling my general discontent with my work into concrete doubts and into changes in my previous way of questioning. Moreover, I would already now like to give you some responses to your critique, responses that I can state more clearly than in the work itself, now that a year has passed since I finished it. By the way, it was my position of employment that forced me to remain silent about certain things in the work, since my supervisor was of the opinion that my primitive interest in answering the question that the Enlightenment had in mind endangered the "objectivity" of the investigation. Not to mention the fact that my society (the Academy for the Science of Judaism) would not have tolerated my atheistic presupposition being openly exposed as the starting point of my inquiry. I resigned myself—to the detriment of the intelligibility of my book. Otherwise, *I* did not lose much in doing this. I do not think that actual research depends all that much upon so-called freedom of thought. So much by way of an apology for the peculiar, *fundamentally* unnecessary trouble that I caused you, as the reader of my book. Now I would like to briefly convey to you the actual core of my reflections—which did not come out clearly enough in my work partly for the reason just mentioned, partly because of that proverbial "helplessness." What I mean is the question: How was it possible for the Enlightenment to have been *victorious*? The typical view, still held by Franz Rosenzweig,[5] claims that the Enlightenment defeated Scholasticism but not revelation [Offenbarung], the world of the Bible. For me, the critique of miracles serves to indicate the inadequacy of this response: the concept of miracles is biblical, and in the wake of the Enlightenment it has lost its force and truth. (Today it is

an embarrassment; at your convenience, please read Rosenzweig's "Star of Redemption" p. 119ff.[6] Rosenzweig recognized that the problem of miracles is central; and look in what way he was forced to "*interpret*" the Enlightenment critique of miracles in order to be able to affirm the miracle—and what a miracle!) [um das Wunder—und was für ein Wunder!—behaupten zu können.] Yet what has the Enlightenment succeeded in with regard to miracles? It only succeeded in securing itself, i.e. the *already* enlightened human being, against miracles. It created a position that is unattainable for miracles. But a miracle, according to its own meaning, can be experienced as a miracle only on the basis of faith [Glaube]. Thus, the Enlightenment advance is rendered powerless. [Yet] apparently [offenbar] not—as I claim, again by pointing out the fact that belief in miracles has become powerless. No later than at this point 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. *This* will does not seem to me to be a legal ground [Rechtsgrund] of the Enlightenment against revealed religion. The indication for this is the fact that the understanding of religion stemming from Epicureanism's basic attitude [Grundgesinnung] is evidently inadequate to anyone who understands a prayer in an even only intellectually anticipatory fashion [der ein Gebet auch nur intellektuell vorgreifend versteht]. In order for the social victory of the Enlightenment—which is not a binding fact—to become a total victory, *another* will had to arise against revealed religion. I see indications of such a will in Macchiavelli, Bruno, and Spinoza (naturally, the "pantheism" of the latter two doesn't count here), its most extreme expression [Darstellung] reached in Nietzsche, and its completion attained in—*Being and Time*; I mean in the interpretation of the *call* of conscience and in the answer given there to the question of *who* is calling. It is only on the basis of Heidegger's Dasein interpretation that an adequate *atheistic* interpretation of the Bible should be possible [dürfte … möglich sein]. The progress that the critique of religion owes to Heidegger becomes most evident when one confronts Heidegger's view of the relation of "seeing" (θεωρειν) and "hearing" with certain statements in Feuerbach's Essence of Religion.) Religion will only have been overcome when it can be adequately interpreted atheistically. Thus: the Enlightenment's victory, i.e. the victory of the "scientific worldview"—by which I *only* mean the loss of the possibility of believing in miracles—is defensible only on the basis of a certain *attitude*, not on the basis of this worldview itself.

The general tendency just sketched fits with the distinction between the ancient (Epicurean) critique and the modern critique that aims at social peace. The latter becomes the goal because the point is no longer primarily to get rid of *awful* delusion, but to get rid of delusion, *delusional happiness*, in the interest of establishing *real* happiness. In line with this general tendency, it bears noting that in this turn toward "reality" Nietzsche's position is also prepared.

I approached the work without any methodological reflections or certainties. Perhaps because I am not fit for reflections beyond a certain limit of abstraction. In this regard, I would simply ask you—and Klein—to help me gain footing. One thing, however, was clear to me: that I *can*not believe in God. I worked it out this way: there is an *idea Dei innata, omnibus hominibus communis* [innate idea of God, common to all men]; I can give or withhold my assent to this idea; I believed that I had to withhold it; I had to make clear to myself why. I had to justify myself before the forum of the Judaic tradition; and this without any reflections drawn from the philosophy of history, simply because I would not have considered it defensible to surrender out of levity and convenience a cause for which my ancestors had borne everything thinkable. Thus I asked myself: why? The Jewish tradition itself, which designates the heretic simply as the Epicurean, gave me the nearest [nächste] answer. I therefore began to explore the Epicureans and soon gained the conviction that these ancients had hit the nail on the head with their designation: "proximally" ["zunächst und zumeist"] the apostasy was in fact of "Epicurean" provenance. But not always. I tried to gain clarity about the various reasons for atheism; *hence* the seemingly typographical presentation in the first section of my work, and really *not* from some romantic delight in the "richness of life." The "typology" has its model much more in something like Fr. Buddeus' listing of the various reasons that lead people into unbelief. I concede to you, of course, that this orientation is no longer defensible on the basis of my presuppositions; also, that certain unbridled formulations concerning Epicureanism as an eternal possibility for human beings are very much in need of reexamination. However, I cannot yet adopt as my own your fundamental theses regarding the exclusively historical [geschichtlich-exklusiv] determination of man.

I wanted to write you a few pages more. But I must now get to bed, and I will certainly not get around to writing in the next few days. I will therefore delay my response to your actual concerns. I will wait until I have in my hands your critique of my work in its entirety.

I hope that this letter, despite its incompleteness, helps a little in your reading of my work.

In thanking you again—especially for getting me the Mendelssohn-reference—I send my greetings to you and your wife.

Yours,
Leo Strauss

8 January 1930.

I am just today getting around to mailing the letter to you. Since I would like now to continue the investigation, begun in the work that I sent you, in the form of an analysis of Hobbes' anthropology, it would be especially helpful—aside from your comments in general—to know of any concerns you may have about my conception of Hobbes, admittedly only intimated in my work (§4 of the Introduction and pp. 222ff.). If anything strikes you, please make a note of it.

4

Berlin-Neutempelhof, 3 March 1930.
Hohenzollernkorso 11.

Dear Mr. Krüger,

I have to ask you a favor out of the blue. I heard from Klein that you are giving an Augustine seminar in the winter. I'm planning on coming to Kirchhain in December. Might I give a presentation in your seminar? I'd like to talk about "Enlightenment in the Middle Ages." I would however only treat the Jewish and Islamic development. But given the numerous and important analogies to the Christian development what I'd say would fit within the framework of your seminar. I'm writing you now already because, in order not to get bogged down, I would like to have the obligation of finishing a particular investigation, however loose that obligation may be.

I began my work about a Jewish scholastic—Gersonides—as a pure "work of scholarship," and also because I have to deliver any old works of erudition [irgendwelche Elaborate] to the people who are paying me. But I soon realized that this work can't be carried out so mindlessly, simply because the subject matter is too exciting. It deals with the problem of that moderate (i.e. non-atheistic) Enlightenment about which I learned quite a few things from your work on Kant. Looked at superficially, the

situation in the Jewish-Arabic Middle Ages is similar to that of the eighteenth century: prevalence of belief in providence, of belief in a benevolent God over belief in a God who calls one to account, and *therefore* belief in the sufficiency of reason. Upon closer inspection, however, there are significant differences. In the eighteenth century, primacy of morality (veneration of Socrates); in the Middle Ages, primacy of theory. In the eighteenth century, the "moral law" is developed as natural right that requires the supplement of a positive, civil law. Natural law does not play a role in Jewish-Arabic philosophy, at least not the role that it has in the Christian development. This is connected with the fact that for Jews and Arabs, the positive law is at once political and "ecclesiastical" law. The positive law of Moses or Mohammed is the *one* binding norm that suffices for leading life toward happiness [Glückseligkeit] (consisting in theory). Moses or Mohammed are understood as philosopher-legislators. The presupposition for this is the notion [Vorstellung] going back to the Platonic state. The Jewish-Arabic Middle Ages are thus in this respect much more "ancient" than the eighteenth century; by connecting to the ancient idea of a concrete *nomos* and *nomothetes*, it is more able to accept the concrete revelatory order than is the natural right- [naturrechtliche] eighteenth century.

I hope to be able to tell you something more precise, thought-through and intelligible about this in the winter. I would be grateful if you could let me know soon whether it is possible to fit in my lecture in the manner I proposed.

Please give my greetings to your wife, and warm wishes to you.

Yours,
Leo Strauss

P.S.: I completely forgot to explain why I asked the favor of you of all people. This is of course because I would like to hear your opinion of my view.

5

Kirchhain, 27 February 1931.
Dear Mr. Krüger,

The passage on "politics and cosmos" is at *Nicomachean Ethics* VI, 7 (1141a21).

I've also included the "Konspektivismus,"[7] and would kindly ask you to pass it along to Gogarten. I'm thinking of developing it such that I make the critique from the second half explicit, especially by showing how Mannheim remains completely "helpless" when he inquires about [nach… fragt] politics as a science and about utopia without having been enlightened by Plato (excuse the barbaric sentence!). I will bring out this tendency by giving the whole piece the title: "Sophistry of our Time" [Sophistik der Zeit]. I will include the theses that I explained in my lecture on the religious situation of the present (the second cave, etc.). I am hopeful that, reworked in the way that I have now planned, the essay will provide insights and amusement to you – in any case be much better than it is now. So then: If Gogarten[8] is willing to recommend the expanded and improved essay to a suitable publisher—be it as a contribution to a journal or as a booklet on its own—I will gladly begin working on it.

On Sunday, I am returning to Berlin. I don't want to say my final goodbye without thanking you again with all my heart for the important and varied suggestions and instruction that you have given me through your lecture and in private conversation. I also want to thank your wife again for her kindness.

With cordial greetings to you and your wife,
Yours
Leo Strauss

6

Berlin-Neutempelhof, 7 May 1931.
Hohenzollernkorso 11.

Dear Mr. Krüger,

Along with this letter, I am sending you the page proofs of the second volume of the Mendelssohn anniversary edition, which I co-edited. I supplied "Pope ein Metaphysiker," "Sendschreiben an den Magister Lessing," "Kommentar zu den 'Termini der Logik,'" and "Abhandlung über die Evidenz." If you could look at my introductions at your convenience, I would be very grateful to hear your opinion of the theses I present there (e.g. with respect to Rousseau).

Last Monday, I gave a lecture on Cohen[9] and Maimonides. I tried to show that, *despite everything*, Cohen is still right in his claim that Maimonides is *fundamentally* a Platonist and *not* an Aristotelian. Of

course, one cannot demonstrate this as *directly* as Cohen has. This lecture was the first time that I publicly voiced my thesis about Islamic-Jewish scholasticism (that it understands revelation through the framework staked out in Plato's *Republic* and *Laws*). It's too bad that you weren't there; I would have liked to hear your opinion. You would have also seen how much I profited from your Plato lectures.

Klein[10] told me that you're immersed in your work. I hope that you will nevertheless still come to Berlin before the year is out.

Please send my regards to your wife, and my warmest wishes to you,

Yours,

Leo Strauss

7

Wandlitzsee, 23 May 1931.

Dear Mr. Krüger,

I am using the peace and quiet of Pentecost to write you about a matter that I've been mulling over for quite some time. It is a matter that concerns my person, and nothing more. I must therefore apologize in advance that, of all people, I am bothering you with it, who are up to your ears in work. But a chain of events has made it such that the only way to promote my matter – at least as far as I can see—leads through you. So…

Klein told me that you occasionally asked him in Marburg why I wasn't pursuing my Habilitation, to which he responded that my situation was fine as it was, and at least financially better off than that of a *Privatdozent* [private lecturer]. In this, Klein underestimated how much it would mean to me not to always have to sit alone in my Neutempelhof digs, but instead to be driven by teaching duties to much more diligent work and to have my work stimulated in many respects. And he forgot that, in as much at is humanly possible to judge, my current financial foundation wouldn't be shaken by pursuing a Habilitation. In short, I would very much like become habilitated.

There are, of course, private and non-private reservations I have against it. Private: against becoming dragged into the "worldly life" (for apparently life at a university is not exactly a *vita contemplativa*); my convenience and still other things revolt against this. Non-private reservations: these concern my being Jewish [Judentum]. Given the disgraceful nationalizing of all good things, and thus also of science, it is not an indifferent

fact that if I were asked what nation I belong to [welcher Nation ich sei], I would answer: Jew, and *not* German. I could leave no doubt about this in a potential Habilitation process, and this would further increase the difficulty of the Habilitation that a Jew already has. But *despite all reservations* it seems to me good and right to undertake the necessary steps to undertake a Habilitation.

And now you will be amazed on whom my eyes have fallen: Tillich[11]! It speaks for him that he is not an anti-Semite, that as a consequence of his conspectivism he does not demand allegiance to some position approved by him, that he is in Frankfurt. For, whatever one may say against Frankfurt, I would prefer it to Giessen and the like—by the way also for economic reasons.

Klein and I had thought up the possibility of Tillich together. Then Klein told me that you know Tillich, are on his good side.

Dear Mr. Krüger! After this preparation I can formulate my request: When you see Tillich in Frankfurt and have the chance, can you make him aware of me in an appropriate manner?

The whole matter has the catch that, for financial reasons, I would hardly be in a position to visit Tillich in Frankfurt this year. With the funds I have available, I need to travel to Cassirer in Hamburg, in order to make sure that in case of being asked he at least wouldn't do anything *against* me. Since I thus can't even see Tillich for the time being I am all the more interested in his hearing my name from you. Since he is "open for anything new," he may perhaps look favorably on my conjectures about Islamic scholasticism and about Hobbes.

I would be happy to hear from you soon about how you receive my request and how you judge the prospects.

In asking you *not* to think of "the devil to whom one shouldn't give an inch," and in also asking you to send my regards to your wife, I am sincerely

Yours,

Leo Strauss

8

Berlin, 1 June 1931.

Dear Mr. Krüger,

I left the letter alone for over a week. Since I still stand behind it, I will send it off. Receive it kindly!

In the meantime, I have come into full possession of your Kant book and into ownership of half of it. I will read it very soon, or more precisely, study it. I already glanced at the Introduction and Conclusion, which give a clear picture of your *tendency*: instead of understanding Plato by way of Kant—as the Neo-Kantians do—[you] conversely allow Plato to put Kant, and especially us, in question.

By the way, have you sent your book to *Ebbinghaus*[12]? If not, I would highly recommend it; for he will surely find in your work the words for many things**,** words he so often seems to lack.

In any case, I thank you kindly for your book, the study of which will surely be very useful to me once I have made some further progress myself—it is becoming ever clearer to me that *Hobbes* faced the same problem as Kant; the parallels are surprisingly extensive.

Thank you for you kind and interesting letter of 12 May. The prospect of having you review my work continues to please me. Whether or not I review your book depends on whether Hinneberg[13] has already assigned it, and whether there are several months' time to write the review. I am very busy in the coming months, since I have to write an article on a somewhat intricate subject for the Academy's correspondence page.

If I had the money, I would come to Marburg to deliver my Cohen-Maimonides talk to you and others who are interested. I believe that you and I could agree on this subject. I am very interested in your suggestion about a possible presentation to the Kant-society in Marburg, and would be very pleased if that could be arranged without much effort.

In refraining from yet another *captatio benevolentiae*,[14] but in thanking you again I remain with greetings to you and your wife,

Yours,

Leo Strauss

9

Berlin, 28 June 1931.

Dear Mr. Krüger,

Thank you very much for your kind, extensive, and highly instructive letter. I really did not count on your writing so soon, and am all the more delighted. The prospects, however, that you offer me (Teddy Wiesengrund,[15] Mannheim,[16] Horkheimer,[17] etc.) are less delightful. But since one can't expect a mutton to have five legs, I'll take a bite out of the

sour apple. I believe that my rural background alone is sufficient to protect me from the conspectivist *crepe de chine* spirit. Social duties would be awful. But they would merely be awful; they wouldn't drive me crazy in the main respect. In any case, many thanks for your investigations and your continued readiness to take my interests into account.

Of course I would be very interested in your lecture. Could you not provide me with your concept [Konzept] on short notice? Klein and I would probably be able to decipher it together.

I re-read the first sixty pages of your book. Whether it's a matter of it being in print, or whether you changed some details, I like the book even *more* than in manuscript form. Of course, it has in part become more difficult on account of the revising and shortening (§9 in particular is very difficult). Because of its focus on Hobbes, §8 is just what I was looking for [ein gefundenes Fressen]. A small cosmetic error: the question mark on p. 61 after "Manes." Manes is—or is considered to be—the founder of Manichaeism (cf. Bayle, Dict., article on Manichéens, first sentence). Please take heed of this in the second edition.

In am just finishing an essay in which, among other things, I deal with the Platonism of Arabic-Jewish philosophy. I would very much like to send you a typescript of this essay; that way I could take your concerns into account.

Many greetings to your wife,
Yours,
Leo Strauss

When you see them, please thank Gadamer[18] and Löwith[19] many times in my name for what they have been sending me.

10

Berlin, 8 July 1931.

Dear Mr. Krüger,

Pardon me for bothering you yet again, but this time it is a matter that can be settled with a postcard. So, then:

A good acquaintance of mine and a good friend of Erich Frank,[20] who has occasionally spoken to Frank about me, has spontaneously offered to write to Frank and ask him to intervene with Tillich on my behalf. Do you consider that opportune? Does Tillich think well of Frank? Regardless of a

"parallel action" on Frank's part, would you be willing to speak to Tillich on occasion? After all, with your theological intentions I think you're simply more "interesting" to Tillich than Frank is, and thus your word counts for more than Frank's. Even if it doesn't count for *more*, it at least counts *differently*, by which I mean that it vouches for something other than Frank's judgment does.

It borders on criminality that I'm taking up so much of your valuable time out of pure egotism; I can only hope to convince you, through occasional demonstration of my altruistic side, that I'm not completely immoral.

I would like to *confide* something to you that concerns you no less than me. I am worried that Klein, by all appearances, is not working enough. I could imagine that if he were forced to give a talk on one of the topics that he wants to treat (e.g. cause and causality) would provide a healthy compulsion to finish something. That can hardly be arranged here in Berlin; at least, *I* don't see a possibility. Could you not gather together a circle of interested people in Marburg? The financial side of it would be unimportant; an honorarium wouldn't be necessary, and I could somehow drum up the travel expenses here in Berlin. If you cannot entirely understand my concern [Sorge] please just believe me anyway. Perhaps I just know the dangers to which Klein is subject owing to his *phlegma* particularly well after years of almost daily interaction. "Exhortations" are entirely inappropriate; the only thing one can do is something like what I suggested. I recently spoke with Frau Herrmann about this matter. (The thought of writing to you only arose after this conversation. Perhaps I will also not tell her that I wrote to you.) Frau H. and I were of the same opinion that we need to talk independently with Klein about his work in the near future. It would be very welcome support for this "action," you would be doing Klein a huge favor, if you could exert some pressure by making such a suggestion.

Klein would be very angry at me for this "solicitude" [Fürsorge]; but you will understand that there are situations in which one may no longer pay heed to *sensitivities*. Despite all reservations, then, I am sending this letter. Cordial greetings to you and your wife,

Yours,

Leo Strauss

11

Berlin-Neutempelhof, 25 Juli 1931.

Dear Mr. Krüger,

Please forgive me for not answering your letter promptly, as would really have been proper, but I had so many things on my mind! Immediate worries about money, long-term worries about money—the danger of dismantling [Abbau]—my sister taking her doctoral exam (philosophy with Hartmann, who implored her, "Not one bit of epistemology?" but then rested content with Plato's ideas-hypothesis doctrine in the *Phædo* and similar things). I'm picking up my pen during my first sigh of relief, as it were, in order to thank you from the bottom of my heart for your very great and certainly anything but pleasant efforts on behalf of my earthly future. The negative result of these efforts could not put me in a bad mood, as the reason for it stands in preestablished harmony with my convictions about "cultural politics." My deepest resistance against any effort on my part to find a place in a German university arose from the very fact that I take the "hyper-foreignization"/"foreign infiltration" ["Überfremdung"] of German universities to be supportable [tragbar] for neither side: neither for the Germans nor for the Jews. And it is indefensible to claim a right for oneself, thinking oneself somehow entitled to it, while one calls the general right into question. I am thus not as dissatisfied with the negative result as you might have thought. But again—to conclude the episode—my most heartfelt thanks!

As regards Klein, I felt it appropriate to share your letter with Frau Herrmann. Of course, I take full responsibility for this. As things are, it was necessary and right.

I am sending along my essay. I would be grateful if you could look over it soon. It would suffice for you to look at pages 1–5 and 23–37; the middle part is much too "medieval." You will see how much I learned from you. I could not cite you for technical reasons. Since I only have a few copies of the typescript, I would be grateful if you could send it back to me shortly.

With cordial greetings to you and your wife,

Yours,

Leo Strauss

12

3 October 1931.

Dear Mr. Krüger,

Your letter is much appreciated. I would have written you long ago, had I not feared to come across as the annoying admonisher—even without repeating my request. Now that the worst is behind you—you've read my "book"—my concerns are gone.

I am in great difficulty: my institution is under threat of dissolving. I have to be prepared to have nothing [vis-à-vis de rien zu stehen] as of January 1. And Kirchhain can no longer serve as a last resort. Since I have no "connections" whatsoever, I don't see a way out, and am thus somewhat at a loss. (Please be so gracious as to excuse the effect that has on this letter.) As bad luck would have it, I don't have anything finished to the extent that I could attempt any steps on its basis. "Hobbes" still needs a year of intensive work. The only powerful person that I know is Hinneberg—don't laugh! But I cannot seek him out; I have to wait until he invites me. He would only invite me if my book were well reviewed. You can thus understand that I am replying to you immediately.

1) You do not know Spinoza. But you do know the dominant position, e.g. from Dilthey's[21] *Gesammelte Schriften* II. You therefore know what I *do not* take heed of, if you prefer: what I forget or do not understand, what Dilthey understood: "Pantheism." Besides, the book is being reviewed by someone who knows Spinoza. You may limit yourself in your review to the problem of the Enlightenment in general.

2) There is *no* literature on my book's topic that is worth noting. As regards literature, you would need to consider works on the history of exegesis and hermeneutics in general (A. Merx, C. Siegfried, A. Schweitzer, et al.). But this literature generally circumvents the problem of presupposing unbelief.

It may reassure you to know that "the greatest authority on Spinoza in the world" (!)—the Jesuit Dunin-Borkowski[22] (his book *The Young Despinoza* is in the Marburg philosophical library) has twice reviewed the book favorably. I am including excerpts of these reviews with the request to send them back at some point. D's emphasis on my work's contributing to "apologetic science" presumably means the same as what you called "impartiality."

My work's mistakes are all too familiar to me: don't pull any punches, also not in the review itself! I would be very grateful, however, if you could articulate the actual intention of the book more clearly than I was able to due to the censorship I found myself under.

We still have to correspond about Calvin. Right now, I don't have the leisure for it. I believe you that, seduced by Barth[23] and Gogarten, I underestimated the role of natural theology in Calvin. My writing, after all, is nothing but a *response* of unbelief to the belief of Barth's and Gogarten's observance—at least that is the intent. Please just do not misunderstand me to have been of the opinion, at the time I wrote the book, that one must remain satisfied with a difference of "standpoints" in the face of the belief character [Glaubenscharakter] of both opposing positions (theism and atheism). The fact that Nietzsche's critique exists, even if only by intention, always counted as proof to me that one cannot remain satisfied with ceremonial bows to the other position.

I must conclude. Before your letter arrived, I already wrote a long letter to Löwith, and now I must go.

Please pardon the unease [Nervosität] of this letter.

Many kind regards to you and your wife, and my dearest thanks for your friendly efforts,

Yours,

Leo Strauss

13

Berlin, 15 October 1931.

Dear Mr. Krüger,

You will think: "There he is again, the old nuisance." But at least this time it is not about the review. If Hinneberg has exhorted you regarding the review via Gadamer, it is really not my fault and attributable only to H's avuncular concern about my "career." This time it's not about the review, then, but about the following: after her doctoral defense, my sister is sitting jobless in Kirchhain, and would at least like not to forget everything she has learned. She would therefore like to use the Marburg library. For this, she needs a faculty member to vouch for her. Would you be willing to vouch for my sister on the basis of my vouching for her? If yes, it would probably be easiest if you could kindly let her know (Bettina Strauss, Kirchhain, Römerstrasse) when she can come by to speak with you about this.

I heard from Klein that my last letter to you made a very gloomy impression. I am sorry for that. In the meantime, I have recovered from the initial shock. In the spirit of my great teacher, I will try in the war of all against all to defend my life and limbs according to my powers, to which I am entitled according to natural right.

As concerns the topic of Hobbes, I am in the process of, or actually already finished, showing that his "political science" represents a repetition of Socratic *techne politike*, a repetition, however, that very much flattens the Socratic problem. I believe that it will in this way become possible to determine precisely what is popularly called rationalism. Your Kant book will come in very handy for this; to me it is ever clearer that the problem of Hobbes has the same structure as that of Kant.' The *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* is an apolitical, thus narrower repetition of the "political science." At the moment, I am investigating the critique of natural right on the part of the professional jurists. A hair-raising thoughtlessness, this critique! Once I have developed my meta-critique, I will present it to you. As much as our opinions concerning natural theology may diverge, we will likely come to an agreement on the necessity and possibility of natural right. Now that Plato has taught me the untenability of the Hobbesian premises [des H.schen Ansatzes], Hobbes no longer suffices for me as a guarantor of the possibility of natural right in a world without providence; my guarantor is—Plato. Do you happen to be familiar with the myth of the *Statesman?*

I have now discovered a fourth man who shares our opinion concerning the present as a second cave: Ebbinghaus. His talk "On Progress in Metaphysics"[24] contains several quite excellent formulations; I will make note of the talk in DLZ [*Deutsche Literaturzeitung*].[25]

Cordial greetings to you and your wife,
Yours
Leo Strauss

14

Berlin-Neutempelhof, 16 November 1931.
Hohenzollernkorso 11.

Dear Mr. Krüger,

I actually wanted to wait to write to you until I had closely read your review. But its publication is taking much longer than I had anticipated in light of Hinneberg's promises: it's supposed to appear in two or three

weeks. I learned of your review's arrival at the DLZ shortly before you wrote me, when Hinneberg called and invited me to come to his place immediately to read the review. I had barely hung up when your letter arrived. Your assurance that you "hadn't quite made me look bad" made me worry that you had given me undeserved consideration; I was all the happier with your review's conclusion. I read the review twice in Hinneberg's office, in haste and excitement—with such great excitement that I cannot even give an account of the details anymore. In any case, I am deeply grateful for your coherent and clear exposition of what I had said only rhapsodically—partly for extrinsic reasons and partly out of lack of ability. I cannot thank you for this without having first thanked you for the effort of reading you have undergone. If the effort paid off even a little, I flatter myself that I have done enough. I couldn't have accomplished more at the time that I wrote the work, given the prejudices in which I was then stuck.

I learned more from Klein about the fate of your treatise on natural theology. I would very much like to look at it. I may perhaps come to Kirchhain and then also to Marburg around the end of December or early January.

The general uncertainty is demoralizing me to the extent that I no longer take my duties with regard to the academy very seriously, and am instead working more on "Hobbes." I have come a considerable way, and can at least see an end to it. I am also writing a foreword (not planned for print) in which I attempt to establish the desideratum of natural right [Desiderat des Naturrechts] and therefore of a critical history of natural right. My main goal is to emphasize that historical consciousness is the sole presupposition of today's skepticism with regard to natural right. If historical consciousness isn't a carriage that one can stop whenever one pleases, then one arrives at a historical destruction of historical consciousness. The latter proves to be historically conditioned and limited to a particular situation; it is nothing other than the attempt, untransparent to itself, [der sich selbst undurchsichtige Versuch] to win *back* [*wieder*zugewinnen] the ancient freedom of philosophizing: the battle against prejudices is the primordial form [Urform] of historical consciousness. You will find a somewhat more precise formulation in the enclosed review. [26]

My sister sends her apologies for not staying in touch. She was unexpectedly offered a substitute position in Frankfurt and therefore went there immediately. She thanks you for your kind offer, and I join her in her gratitude.

With cordial greetings to you and your wife,

Yours,

Leo Strauss

15

[no date]

Dear Mr. Krüger,
I am approaching you today with a very personal request. It looks like I will have to try to get a stipend from the emergency association [Notgemeinschaft] for my work on Plato among the Arabs. I got the form today at the emergency association's office, and saw that one has to fill in "who can provide information about your economic circumstances?" Furthermore, one has to give one's parents' address. This means that the emergency association would inquire with the mayor's association in my hometown about my father's financial status. Since my father is not considered "indigent" by any legal standard, the information would be that I am not eligible for the stipend. Nevertheless, it is clear that I will not be able to receive a penny from my father. How can I avoid the pitfall of answering this question? I take it that you were in a similar situation when you applied for the emergency association stipend, and that as an expert [expertus] you can give me advice. Beyond this, I would welcome any further tips that could help me get the stipend that would enable me to complete my investigations of the above-mentioned topic and of Hobbes. The prospects, of course, are very dim. But I *have* to try anyway.

Best wishes,
Yours,
Leo Strauss

16

Berlin, 12 December 1931.

Dear Mr. Krüger,

Thank you very much for your truly exhaustive advice as concerns the procedure with the emergency association. And please allow me not to suppress the reflection that there are human beings upon whom one can rely—which can't be entirely denied on the grounds of certain passages of scripture that contradict this. Let me add that I have suspended the application to the emergency association for the time being in order to pursue another stipend that is better suited to my purposes: a foreign stipend from the Rockefeller Institute for Political Science. I will take the liberty of naming you among those people able to give some information about me *qua*

scientific researcher. The secretary told me that they particularly want to establish connections with the "younger generation."

I haven't heard anything more about your matter. I only mentioned Kroner's verdict about your book to Hinneberg in passing (I knew about it from Klein & Gadamer). Any resistance that K. could possibly offer against you might perhaps be expected to come from Heimsoeth[27] and N. Hartmann.[28] That is at least how I construe things. But this especially you will know best.

I cannot say whether or not you should write to Hinneberg. I have the impression that he would feel downright *honored* to receive a letter from you; that is how highly he esteems you. In light of this, a healthy Machiavellism might advise one not to write. But you know the world [mundus] and its rules better than I do.

I can fully understand that you do not wish to write to Ebbinghaus in the manner that Hinneberg suggested. But I had to convey Hinneberg's suggestions to you anyway. As concerns Ebbinghaus: Do you know his work on Kant's doctrine of perpetual peace and the question of war guilt (in the same volume as his "Progress in Metaphysics")? I would be very interested to know your judgments on his theses concerning Kant's doctrine of right and the state of nature.

In the meantime, I have again read a bit in *Being and Time*. Whatever you wish to say about the book *sub specie veritatis*, it expresses the essence of modernity in the purest manner, i.e. *the* modern reservation against Greeks, Jews, and Christians. By the way, nothing appears to depict the inner difficulty of the book more clearly than the paragraph about Yorck[29]: the latter's words on the moral intention of all philosophy seem to me to be cited with the intention of "communicating indirectly" what is also decisive for Heidegger. In your reading, one must apparently interpret in favor of the defendant [pro reo] Heidegger's direct statements about philosophy not being able to make any authoritative pronouncement [Machtspruch] and other such things.[30] Because the passages from Yorck are not just cited for fun.

There are several apposite remarks by Thomas Haecker[31] about Tillich's philosophy as *sophistry* in the academic pages of the *Frankfurter Zeitung* of 6 December. I think that you will like them as much as I did.

With cordial greetings to you and your wife,

Yours,

Leo Strauss

17

Berlin, 19 August 1932.

Dear Mr. Krüger,

I am sending you four offprints of my Schmitt-review, with the request that you keep one for yourself and pass one each on to Klein, Frank, and Gadamer. (I am writing Löwith soon myself.)

Thank you very much for sending back Schmitt's[32] "Catholicism," and—especially—for your letter. Your approvals pleased me very much. About your misgivings ("Do I understand your reference to Plato and therewith your own intention correctly when I suppose: what is of concern to you is the 'political' dialectic of the totalities struggling over the character of the 'right' [um das ‚Richtige']? But then how would one avoid the Schmittian neutral affirmation of all that is 'meant seriously'? How can there be a decisive concretization of the search concerning the character of the right [die Suche nach dem Richtigen] without a 'confession of faith' [Glaubensbekenntnis]?"), I would comment: p. 746f. has to be combined with p. 749, first paragraph. That is, I *believe* [glaube] that there is ultimately only *one* opposition, namely between "left" and "right," "freedom" and "authority;" or, to put it in more honest ancient terms, between ἡδύ [pleasure] and ἀγαθόν [good]. In order to *show* this, one would of course have to write a history of politics from Plato to Rousseau. The "confession of faith" that you demand seems to me to lie in the δουναι και δεξασθαι[33] as such, in modern parlance, in "probity" [Redlichkeit]: the struggle between "left" and "right" is the struggle between utopian dizziness/fraud [utopistischem Schwindel] and sobriety. Thus, what it says on p. 746f. is only relevant *ad hominem*. In opposition to agreement at any price, conflict is truer. But only peace, i.e. agreement in the truth, can be the last word. That this agreement of reason is possible—I firmly believe [firmiter credo].

Hopefully, you will know what to make of this expectoration. If not, please ask Klein, scrutinizer of my heart [perscrutatorem cordis mei].

Did you get a chance to look at my Hobbes sketch? What do you think of it?

With cordial greetings to you and your wife,

Yours,

Leo Strauss

18

[Post Office stamp: 21 August 1932; postcard]

Dear Mr. Krüger,

I completely forgot to ask you about a reference that will not take any effort on your part and will spare me much searching. (If, however, you can't answer the question immediately, the matter is of no importance.) Do you know which 18th-century (or 17th-century) authors Kant has in mind in the thesis of the first antinomy ("The world has a beginning in time"—I am concerned only with *time*, *not* with space)? And furthermore, do you know who contested this view (i.e., the first antinomy's thesis) in the centuries *before* Kant? Until now, I have only found anything in Cudworth[34] and Wollaston[35]; only traces, at most, in Clarke[36] and Curtius.[37] In any case, the argumentation is characteristically "unmodern." One finds it mainly in orthodox medieval Jews and Arabs—whom Wollaston references, incidentally. Indeed, perhaps the question is not *entirely* unimportant for an understanding of Kant.

A postcard with book titles is enough. I would be especially grateful if you could reply to me soon, since I would like to finish my commentary on Mendelssohn's *Morgenstunden*—the project for which I need the references—if at all possible, in the near future.

Cordial greetings to your wife, to Klein, and to yourself.

Yours,

Leo Strauss

19

Hotel Racine
23 Rue Racine
Paris (6th arr.), 8 October 1932.
[This letter is in French in the original.]

Dear Mrs. and Mr. Krüger,

I only today received our Klein's card announcing your son's birth, and that Mrs. Krüger is doing well. Please allow me to convey my heartfelt congratulations and allow me to add that in reading Klein's card, I felt a joy that was at once both personal and "supra-personal." Personal, regarding the feelings I have for both of you; "supra-personal" because I can see

the relation between this event and the healthy principles of Krügerian thought, which has as its aim the reestablishment of the natural order of things.

Please excuse me for taking this liberty, which you may consider a form of "poetic license." For after all, isn't it the same thing, in a certain sense, to express oneself in the extraordinary language of poets and in a foreign language? And that I write in French—you wanted me to, Mr. Krüger!

Allow me to express my most heartfelt devotion,

Yours,

Leo Strauss

20

Marburg, 13 November 1932.

Dear Mr. Strauss,

After having once already started writing you a letter that is now outdated, I at least want to thank you for your congratulations and briefly reply to your Hobbes. My wife has recovered slowly but steadily, and my son Lorenz is healthier so far than Krügerian thought will ever be.

Above all, I have to thank you for your manuscript, from which I once again learned a great deal and which I very much hope to see continued soon. Despite some reading in Hobbes in the meantime, I don't have a mature knowledge of the matter. Thus, I can only pronounce an opinion on your opus as such. And with this, you have to forgive me if I place my criticism in the foreground —I'm only doing it because it requires more words. There are a few things that didn't quite convince me, namely (1) the reduction of the anthropological problem to the problem of vanity; (2) the view that Hobbes repeats the Socratic question.

As to 1: In spite of everything, the impression for the naïve reader remains that competition cannot be dispensed with as an independent motive of "injury." The "extreme case" that you eliminate nevertheless retains its importance, and regardless of this it seems that competition and mutual suspicion always form the *ground* upon which vanity can spread. A being from whom these *possibilities* are taken away and who does not need anything also needs no triumph; it would always already *be* "victorious." Please understand: I grasp the distinction between Hobbes and Spinoza and am the last person to deny the significance of "vanity" (Hobbes's linguistic usage is at first jarring here). But I have the impression that your

justified emphasis on the "anthropological" does not entirely do justice to the "natural" in Hobbes (* perhaps it would leave a favorable impression if you relegated the laborious methodological passages to an excursus. The substantial [sachlich] beginning of your introduction would be adequately continued in the presentation of Hobbes' *content*). As much as the naturalistic has to count as a secondary, "scientific" interpretation—this I do not deny—one also has to recognize that it simultaneously contains the problem of man's place in nature (το παν). The extreme case of competition is anthropologically incommensurable, but in the contingency of the availability [Vorhandenseins] of resources there also lies the dependence of human beings—be they vain or humble—on the cosmos. To presuppose a pre-established harmony as normalcy here (as Hume and Smith do) would be a latent belief in providence. In short: I would like to ask whether Hobbes' naturalistic procedure does not contain the awareness [Bewußtsein] of the "facticity" of the embodied human being in his interior naturalness [Innernatürlichkeit]—as wrong as he is to understand this facticity as "objectivity." Like Descartes, he has an awareness [Bewußtsein] of the world as it "is" *prior to* the constitution of the modern spirit [Geist], but he can only express it in the realm of the "human" [im "Menschlichen"] and partially since he looks *backward* from the ground [Boden] of the modern spirit [Geist].

In particular, I would like to ask whether vanity can indeed be called the "essence" of man. I noticed an ambiguity in the terms "nature" and "primacy" [Primärsein], respectively, on page 27. In a certain sense vanity, also and especially according to Hobbes, is something *unnatural*. Doesn't the sociability [Gemeinschaftlichkeit] of man that he presupposes contain a kind of "natural" indication of compatibility? What *you* say would be a kind of Hobbesian Manichaeism.

As to 2: Is Hobbes "foundation of liberalism" really identical to the Socratic intention? After all, Hobbes' question concerning the "right" is not the same as the Socratic question concerning the good. Even if one does not insert some "external," "demanding" moralism into the ancient αγαθον, the kind of obligation and the *ground* [Boden] of the question is a different one. It is a very indirect identity if you find an interest in political *science* on both sides. This is evident in the difference in mathematics then and now (cf. Klein). When Socrates and Hobbes both demand "humility," this strikes me as analogous to when Lucretius and Augustine both speak of worry, fear, flight from oneself, etc. The radical enlightener and theologian meet in the *problem* of "evil," of "corruption," etc. (whereby I avail myself of Socrates as a "philosophical theologian").

Similar questions arise at the conclusion of your critique of Schmitt, which by the way I agree with to the letter. I placed Schmitt before Gogarten in my seminar, and am thus following in your tracks. In a sense, your critical judgment is more instructive than Schmitt himself, who risks all his capital by way of superiority by toying with an absolute decision—more absolute even than a predestining God. (I am really growing tired of this flight to the decision. I may thereby be doing injustice to the "integral knowledge." But this has so far remained in the background. The good thing about this word is after all that it states that, in contrast to the freedom of a "pure" consciousness [Freiheit eines „reinen" Bewußtseins], we cannot choose what we want to use our freedom for or against.

Gogarten, for his part, *also* leaves many questionable things unsettled—not to mention his dilettantism. In this regard, his appropriation of Howald's views on Greek ethics simply annoyed me.

Could you perhaps investigate in Paris whether there is a French translation of the mysterious Donoso Cortes[38]? Apparently, there is no German translation. The Romance linguists here don't even know Spanish. After all, this Catholicism-turned-desperate serves Schmitt as his model—that is how it has seemed for far.

Please let me hear from you! Like your "hero," you're living in exile in Paris. How are you faring there?

With cordial greetings, from me as well as my wife,

Yours,

G. Krüger

I find your polemic against Dilthey's standpoint to be important, but difficult to discuss. You too don't really start from a "natural" basis when you begin from the situation of the falling-away from revelation. It is not clear to me how you understand antiquity to be exemplary here.

I will give your piece to Gadamer.

21

Paris, 17 November 1932.
Dear Mr. Krüger,

Thank you very much for your letter. I am replying immediately because I expect guests from Germany today or tomorrow, and don't know when I'll get around to writing again, and because I would like a reply to my reply *soon*. You can imagine how valuable it is to have you look at my suppositions with your examining eye. I am thus *awaiting* your reply.

To begin with, a question concerning form. You know my work on Spinoza, and you know what I lack: "mit der Aussprach" ["with expression"], as Mrs. Courths-Mahler[39] would say; or, more precisely, the lucidity of the whole, *composition* is not my strength. So please tell me, without regard for my self-love, whether my "Hobbes" risks becoming "like that" again. For that is what I would like to avoid at all costs "pro virili" ["to the best of my ability"].

It is clear from your critique of my "Hobbes-Socrates" thesis that I must have failed drastically in this regard. Yet a while back you agreed with my supposition concerning "the second cave." Thus, we are fundamentally in agreement. I must therefore have expressed myself very poorly, if you do not recognize that orienting my understanding of Hobbes in terms of Socrates is an attempt to take this apercu *seriously*.

You ask whether Hobbes' "foundation of liberalism" is really identical to Socrates' intention? Of course not! But that is precisely the question: how can a reasonable human being, a *philosopher* (!) be liberal or be the founder of liberalism? Or, more pointedly: how can a philosopher, a man of science, teach like a sophist? Once this has become possible—and it has become possible above all on account of Hobbes—then the fundamentally *clear* situation that Plato had created by allocating ἀγαθόν to τέχνη and ἐπιστήμη, ἡδύ to sophistry and barbering professions (to professors, journalists, demagogues, business leaders, poets, etc.) becomes fundamentally unclear, with the upshot being the total lack of orientation in the "currents of contemporary thought," in which "everything" becomes philosophically possible. Thus, we have to ask: how can a philosopher, a man who takes matters *seriously* [ein Mann, dem es *ernst* ist], teach like a sophist? First, then, one has to note that Hobbes is a *philosopher*, not a "practical politician," and also not an historian, a prudent [kluger] *observer*, like Thucydides, but a *questioning* human being, i.e., one who inquires into the "*order of human things.*" Thus it doesn't seem to me to be "a very indirect identity," as you say, when I find an interest in political science in Socrates and in Hobbes. I must admit frankly, I do not understand your criticism. *On this point*, I thought we were in agreement. I can only explain your criticism by assuming that I again expressed myself in a very confused and complicated manner.

The enormous *difference* between the τέχνη πολιτική that is itself absolutely problematic for Socrates and the *philosophia civilis* that is "self-evident" to Hobbes—I don't believe I underestimated that. But how can a difference appear where there is nothing in common? This commonality

is what I called the "approach" ["Ansatz"]: the need/wish [Desiderat] for a τέχνη πολιτικὴ, developed in taking one's bearings from functioning τέχναι. Perhaps this commonality strikes you as too formal; it does not seem so to me, for the reason given in the preceding paragraph. Despite the enormous difference between ancient and modern science—which I precisely wish to *understand*—they are both *science*, and this says something about the "matter," as a glance at pre-scientific possibilities of guidance [Führungs-Möglichkeiten] (be it Homer, Lycurgus, Pericles, or even Moses) teaches.

I don't think I have left any doubt that Hobbes precisely *does not* begin with the Socratic *question*, but with a completely different one that presupposes that the Socratic question has been answered. Admittedly, Hobbes has indeed a different *ground* than Socrates, but this must be analyzed not on the basis of our superior historical knowledge, but on the basis of "the matter itself."

Of course, the difference between you and me lies deeper. You touch upon this in your comment about my Dilthey critique (which, by the way, is *very* unclear at several points, as I well know). It is a matter of "historicity." You see a contradiction in the fact that I believe in a "*natural*" basis *and* view antiquity to be the standard [massgeblich]. I am inclined to assume—until there is evidence to the contrary—that antiquity (more precisely: Socrates-Plato) is the standard [massgeblich] *precisely because* it philosophized *naturally*, i.e. originally inquired into the order that is *natural* for human beings. The fact that this possibility was opened up in Greece and only there—that is a matter of indifference as long as it remains the case that Socrates-Plato's question and answer are the natural question and the natural answer: *in* philosophizing, Socrates is *already* no longer a Greek, but instead a human being. The historical condition for philosophy arising was the decay of νομος in democracy—but this *historical* condition is to begin with as arbitrary as *any condition*. That is precisely what Socrates did: his questioning that arises from a specific historical situation—decay of the πολις, sophistry—becomes *universal* because it is *radical*, and is thus *in principle* just as directed at Lycurgus and Minos as Protagoras and Callicles. It is a *natural* questioning because it is not concerned with Athens or Sparta but with the *human being*. In this sense, philosophy has *always* been and has remained unhistorical. That we *today* cannot get by without history is a fact external to philosophy. It goes together with it being the case that (1) through the absurd intermixing [absurde Verflechtung] of a νομος-tradition with a philosophical tradition, i.e. of

biblical revelation with Greek philosophy, of a tradition of obedience with a "tradition" of questioning (which, as a tradition, is no longer a questioning), and (2) through the struggle against the tradition of revelation, undertaken in a manner of speaking in the dark, we have been maneuvered into the second cave and today no longer even have the *means* to philosophize naturally. After all, we too are natural beings—but we live in an entirely unnatural situation. Since the seventeenth century, the real point [Sinne] of the struggle with tradition was to recover the Greek freedom of philosophizing. It was really a Renaissance movement. In all "foundations" [Grundlegungen], in all psychology and all historicism there is this striving: to find, to find *again*, an original, *natural* basis. But from its inception until Heidegger (*including* the latter), modern philosophy understood itself to be progress and progressive (with some justification, you will say, insofar as it had knowledge to impart that the Greeks did not possess: Christian knowledge. *Thus* the unradicality of modern philosophy: it thinks it can presume that the fundamental questions have already been answered, and can therefore "progress;" this is the neglect [Versäumnis] of the Socratic question that Nietzsche later denounced, and the neglect of ontology that Heidegger uncovered. I don't know if this has made a bit clearer to you how I conceive of "the whole matter" ["das Ganze"]. Tell me a word or two about this as well.

Now, to "vanity." You do not deny, but in fact admit, the central role that vanity plays in Hobbesian philosophy, and also secundum veritatem [according to the truth] But you ask: Can one dispense with competition as an independent motive of the will to injure? Does competition not "announce" the problem of man's *dependence* on the universe? Is not vanity itself grounded in competition, insofar as it is grounded in this dependence?—I admit that. As you can see in my "table of contents", my plan includes the section "The Exposedness of Man [Preisgegebenheit]." I will thus address this question when I have the strength to work. I am also aware that I've made several slips in my current presentation especially with respect to this question ("vanity is the essence of man" is of course nonsense). But: I must *begin* with vanity and I have to *isolate* it as the *target* [*Wogegen*] of the state (in this context, that means "nature": the *prior* of all education *against which* [*wogegen*] education is deployed; one does not combat competition, after all; one only tames it, but that means freeing it from the vanity that is included in it). Otherwise Hobbes' thought cannot be clarified and one is left with the half-measures with which people have thus far been satisfied. Let me keep working. If my hands don't grow weak,

you will someday receive the whole thing, and then it will be clear to you that one cannot well proceed differently. *One does not succeed* if one proceeds *systematically*, i.e., if one begins by establishing that for Hobbes, the human being is a rational animal, etc. One must proceed *phenomenologically* (in the Hegelian sense), present the *history* of humankind and allow the actual presuppositions to appear gradually. Hobbes' philosophy is a philosophy of *Enlightenment*, a *foundation* of Enlightenment. And such a foundation is only possible in the form of "meditations" ["Meditationen"-Form], *not* systematically; one can only speak systematically to those who have *already* been "enlightened." One may compare Hobbes to Plato in this regard as well, since he *begins* with the question of the human essence just as little as Plato begins with the question of the soul. Hobbes begins with the question concerning what must be *combated* in man, i.e. with the question concerning human nature. What this beginning *means*, what kind of presuppositions it contains, must be elicited on the basis of his *answer* to the question. The question of the "nature" of man is the question of the principle of evil in man; vanity is *the* evil, not competition as such, not suspicion as such; the vain one as such *wants* to injure, the suspicious one and the competitive one want to injure on reasonable grounds.

Okay, Mr. Krüger! Be a good fellow [Soyez bon garçon] and write to me *soon*. Forgive my impatience! But you will understand it and hence be so generous as to forgive me, if you consider (1) how much my work means to me and (2) how much your judgment of my work means to me.

As for Donoso Cortes: the regular handbook for French booksellers does not list *any* French translations. But I will continue to look. On Sunday I'm visiting Maritain; maybe he knows something.

I just recently wanted to send you a postcard when I discovered somewhere what Gambetta called the idiots (meaning, in our field, people like Spranger, Maier, Mannheim, also Hönigswald): the assistant veterinarians [*les sous-vétérinaires*]. I find this designation simply magnificent, unsurpassable. A wonderful title, by the way, for a collection of reviews.

Paris: ah well! You may know that I don't *see* much?—I was impressed by André Siegfried,[40] a geographer whose talk I attended, and Massignon,[41] an Arabist with whom I spoke. Both "first rate." Massignon is a human being the likes of which I have not met many: stupendously learned, *very* intelligent [klug], and a burning soul. Farewell! Best wishes to all three of you, and cordial greetings to you and your wife.

Yours,

Leo Strauss

21A

[Fragment of a draft of the letter of 17 November 1932]
2) Does Hobbes repeat the question of Socrates?

Back when I gave you the Ebbinghaus review, you agreed with my thesis about the "second cave." So we are fundamentally in agreement. Did I then express myself so unclearly that you did not realize that my orientation of my interpretation of Hobbes in terms of Socrates is an attempt to take this aperçu seriously? Did I again write just as intricately as in my Spinoza book? Please do let me know about this!

You ask: whether Hobbes' "foundation of liberalism" is really identical to Socrates' intention? Of course not! But that is precisely the question: how can a reasonable human being, a *philosopher* (!) be liberal or be the founder of liberalism? Or, more pointedly: how can a philosopher, a man of science, teach like a sophist? Once this has become possible—and it has become possible above all on account of Hobbes—then the fundamentally *clear* situation that Plato had created by correlating ἀγαθόν with τέχνη and ἐπιστήμη, ἡδύ with sophistry and barbering professions is fundamentally unclear, with the upshot being the complete loss of orientation in which "everything" becomes philosophically possible. Thus we have to ask: how can a philosopher, a man who takes the matter seriously [dem es um die Sache geht], teach like a sophist? First, then, one has to note that Hobbes is a *philosopher*, not a "practical politician," and also not an historian, a prudent [kluger] *observer*, like Thucydides, but a *questioning* human being, i.e., one who inquires into the "*order of human things.*" Thus it does not seem to me to be "a very indirect identity," as you say, when I find in both Socrates and in H an interest in political science. I must admit frankly: I do not understand you on this point. *On this point*, I thought, we were in agreement.

You continue: "This is obvious in the difference in mathematics then and now (cf. Klein)." The *difference* between modern and ancient mathematics plays no role in the initial approach; besides, the difference can only be clarified if one holds onto the *scientific* intention of both "mathematics." (Klein, by the way, doesn't think any differently than I do about the necessity of *direct* confrontation of the foundation of modern philosophy with the foundation of ancient philosophy.)

Furthermore, I don't believe I have left any doubt in my work that Hobbes precisely *does not* begin with the Socratic *question*, but with the completely different one of the "nature" of man. But one can only understand what this *means* if one notes that he assumes the Socratic question of the essence of virtue to have *already been answered*.

To be sure, the "ground" from which Socrates and Hobbes inquire is very different. But what it is important to know first is that Hobbes' ground is not comparable to that of Socrates in terms of originality. Please also don't forget that the comparison of Socrates and Hobbes in sections 2–3 only intends to prove the *possibility* of comparing the concrete statements of Socrates-Plato with the corresponding concrete statements of Hobbes. Of course, I have the strongest doubt whether I have the strength to achieve *that*. But that *someone* must do it, *that* I wanted to say.

22

Paris, 29 November 1932.

Dear Mr. Krüger,

Please be so kind as to forgive me for bothering you again about the "Hobbes" matter, but it is really the last time. I will leave you unscathed in the future.

I had taken the liberty of asking you whether my present work risks becoming as impossible in manner of writing and in composition as my Spinoza work. The question is rather important to me, and as things stand, the only person who can answer it is you. Should I interpret your silence to mean that you are sparing me a bitter truth? I do not take that to be your habit, and besides, you would be doing me a disservice. May I therefore ask you to tell me which parts you take to have turned out especially badly in composition or manner of writing? Since I know my way around my work, very rough indications will suffice, so it would be five minutes work for you, at most. And if you would really like to do me a favor, please reply soon.

With cordial greetings I remain
Ever yours,
Leo Strauss
Please send my greetings to your wife.

23

Marburg, 1 December 1932.
Dear Mr. Strauss,

I am hurrying to reply to your letter that arrived today, and first of all urge you to please not be angry with me and excuse me for having not answered your letter from 17 November. You guess correctly that I did not remain silent in order to "spare you a truth"—which, besides, need not at all be felt as "bitter." I simply *had no time*, and could also not decipher *your handwriting* in many places. You see how external the reasons are. However, it is not as easy for me to reply to your last letter as you think—for that I need more leisure than I have had of late, not only because the material is quite foreign to me. Please then be so kind as to allow me a few more days. I hope to be able to write more extensively next Sunday. This semester it is not just the university that is tugging at me; it's Leibniz, as well as important and time-consuming faculty meetings, which I have to attend as the representative of non-tenured faculty. Besides, you know how difficult I find it to write to anybody—not just to you.

If you are asking specifically about manner of writing and composition, then I can only repeat from memory what I already mentioned, namely that I would find it advantageous in terms of *composition* for the methodological discussions to be at the end (as an appendix), so that the introduction, which begins very excitingly, would immediately be continued in the substantive [inhaltlichen] discussions of the "state of nature" etc. I very much approve of the "manner of writing," narrowly speaking (style, diction). You know how highly I esteem your talent also apparent elsewhere in this regard (e.g. in the Schmitt review).

Apart from these "formal declarations," I hope that you are well again [dass Sie wieder gut sind]. I, for my part, send my heartfelt regards—also from my wife.

Yours,
G. Krüger

24

Marburg, 4 December 1932.
Dear Mr. Strauss,

Now that my wife has deciphered the most difficult passages from your 17 November letter, I can finally reply to them in more detail. To begin with,

once more the question of *form*. I want to add to what I said two days ago: you must however probably leave the first chapter in place. The only thing that I find impeding access to your work is really just the difficult §1. Perhaps you could present it in a shortened form that leaves aside discussion and comparison of texts (as said before, treated separately as an excursus) and only treats it *in terms of the subject matter* (man's place within the world and at the same time the key point of it) in order to briefly explain your starting from the "anthropological." Thus, I am thinking of it having more the character of theses; historically it would suffice to present the double orientation of Hobbesian politics *as a problem*. That is really all I "find fault with."

As concerns the (in itself completely clearly presented) *content*, the best way to continue that discussion is probably to address your letter.

"The second cave." I find this analogy to be a very fitting description of our intellectual condition, if one begins from your equation ancient = natural = correct. For myself, however, I must say that I cannot accept this equation without reservation, and even if I let it stand for the time being I have to ask: 1) are the chains by which we are bound in the "second cave" made of the same metal as those in the first cave? 2) what leader can loosen them and show the way upward? I would answer the first question in the negative, and take the second to be unanswerable because I consider the metal of the "second" chain to be so strong that the entire analogy thereby becomes invalid: If one understands why we are sitting in the second cave, then it is impossible to understand this "prison" as a floor of the *Platonic* prison. Looking back from here it is rather the *Platonic* position that becomes in need of revision. *The problem of "prejudice" is, after all, more radical than that of the δόξα* (to use your words). The concept of "naturalness" and of "being human" must therefore be determined starting from here. The unity of the concepts "science" and "philosophy" is not as directly graspable (by taking antiquity as the standard [in der Messung an der Antike]) as you suppose. I certainly understand your motive of combatting historicism, but in my opinion one cannot shake it off by defiantly ignoring it (and you do not really [im Grunde] do this), but by reducing it to its substantive/factual [sachliche] and historical core: Christ's factual dominination/dominion [Herrschaft] over the spirit of post-ancient humanity. However, this dominion has become indirect in modernity; yet it is you who take it to be factually unbroken by claiming that the "situation" of modern thought is essentially determined by opposition to revealed religion. Now, the denaturing of the Christian "bondage"

of humans in historicism is undoubtedly a special kind of imprisonment: there can be philosophical liberation from this cave. But when you define the second cave as the original *ground* of historicism, then there is no Socrates for this just as there is no Newton for a blade of grass. You proceed consistently by "naïvely" claiming the openness of the "things themselves" to our eyes [Blick]. But your language betrays you: this naïveté for you is a *demand* that is by no means naïve, and your concrete mode of research shows that the demand cannot be carried out. The "naturalness" of thinking that is indeed essential to philosophy cannot, in my view, simply be possessed or aimed at—neither by you nor by anyone else. Our factual unnaturalness makes it such that the naturalness must be a *problem*.

I think that this question contains the source of our differences. What you replied to me in terms of content and method on the theme of "vanity" probably doesn't require discussion. I've said too much and must first await the progress of your book.

Your program in fact contains an engagement with the questions that I have touched upon here. Would you not like to anticipate some of these topics through correspondence? Let me know, please, how you have received my letters; I would like to know if this critique is useful to you.

Cordial greetings,

Yours,

G. Krüger

25A

Paris, 12 December 1932.
[first draft of the letter from 27 December 1932]

Dear Mr. Krüger,

Many thanks for both your letters! Of course I am not "angry" with you. I was only somewhat unsatisfied with your previous letter a) because you had left unanswered the personally so important question about the clarity of my presentation, and b) because in regard to the central argument of my thesis you presented your thesis in such a way that I saw no possibility of engagement with you. With your latest letter you were so kind as to remove completely these difficulties. I am very grateful for this, and am especially grateful to you and your wife for undergoing the effort to decipher my hard-to-read handwriting. I will try to write more clearly today and in the future. Now on to the subject!

"The second cave"—our difference is grounded in the fact that I cannot believe [glauben], that I must therefore look for a possibility of *living* without faith [Glaube]. There are two possibilities of this sort: the ancient, i.e. Socratic-Platonic, and the modern one, i.e. the Enlightenment (implying the possibilities offered by Hobbes and Kant, above all others). One must therefore ask: who is right, the ancients or the newer ones? The *querelle des anciens et des modernes* must be repeated.

Now, I tend to believe in the advantage of the ancients. I only wish to recall *one* point, one that we do not dispute about and that is basically impossible to dispute. It is true of modern philosophy that without Biblical faith [Glaube] one could not and cannot enter into it, and especially not into its "atheism," and with faith one cannot remain in it. It fundamentally lives by grace of a factum [Faktums] that corrodes it. "Modern philosophy" is thus only possible as long as faith in the Bible has not been shaken in its foundations. But since and on account of Nietzsche that has been the case. There is also a Christian heritage in Nietzsche—but Nietzsche himself clearly distinguished between the trans-Christian ideal for the recognition of which he wanted to pave the way and which preserves nothing of Christianity, and the (secularized-) Christian attitude of "probity" [Redlichkeit] that guided him in his critique of Christianity and which as such is only necessary and possible as long as there still is a Christianity to be combated.

Nietzsche was the first and the only one to distinguish between the "secularized" ideal and an "integral," "natural," unpolemical ideal within his own philosophy. That ideal of "probity" *on its own* motivates the historical (-psychological) critique—Nietzsche's actual ideal has no other relation to history than that developed for instance in the 2nd *Untimely Meditation*, i.e. no other relation in the end than the one on the basis of which human beings have always "naïvely" written history.

You will find that Nietzsche's own ideal contains enough "secularized Christianity" to show my position as absurd. I admit this fact, but have my doubts about the conclusion drawn from it against me. I rather believe that Nietzsche never broke away from certain Christian "tendencies of thought" because he, after tearing down the pillars of the European world and revealing the ὕλη of this world, i.e. after opting, "in *one* hatred and breath," [42] in favor of Homer and Pericles against Socrates-Plato *and* in favor of the Israelite-Jewish kings (or for the Caesar) against the prophets (or against Jesus and Paul), in other words after rediscovering the "*natural*" ideal of humanity—the ideal of ἀνδρεία—he did not proceed to an

unbelieving critique of this ideal. Nietzsche went back *behind* philosophy, and at the same time he avowed it. He most fiercely battled "mind" [Geist] and affirmed it most passionately. This vacillating, this fundamental lack of clarity could only be overcome by proceeding to Platonic philosophy. (Nietzsche confronted modern Enlightenment's *denial* [Leugnung] of ἀνδρεία with the position of ἀνδρεία.)

In short: Modern philosophy, taken to its *conclusion*, seems to me to lead to the point at which Socrates *begins*. Modern philosophy thus proves to be a violent "destruction [*Destruktion*] of tradition," but not a "progress." But it has clearly understood itself to be progressive, and that leads to the irredeemable complicatedness and lack of clarity and lack of radicality of which the term "second cave" was supposed to be an indication.

25B

[fragment of a draft of the letter from 27 December 1932]

The problem of the "second cave" is the problem of historicism. The "substantive [sachliche] and historical core" of historicism is, as you correctly state, "Christ's factual domination/dominion [Herrschaft] over humanity post-antiquity." What follows from this for the one who does not *believe*? There are just two possible consequences: a) Heidegger's consequence—although Christianity is "false," it has brought to light facts about human beings that were not adequately known to humanity in antiquity; at least it understood these facts more deeply than antiquity had; it is "*deeper*" than ancient philosophy; therefore the understanding of historicity first made possible by Christianity is a "*more radical*" understanding (as you put it: "The problem of 'prejudice' is, after all, *more radical* than that of the δόξα"). Fundamentally: the philosophy still and first made possible by the collapse of Christianity preserves the "truth" of Christianity; that is why it is deeper and more radical than Greek philosophy.

b) Against this consequence there arises the suspicion that it always just leads to a "secularization," thus to a position one cannot enter into without Christianity and in which one can't remain with Christianity.[43] Thus, one has to ask oneself: Is there not a simply a-Christian philosophy? In other words: Is not ancient philosophy—be it Platonic or Aristotelian—*the* philosophy? Admitting the greater *depth* of Christian and post-Christian philosophy—is depth even the point? Is this aspect (depth) not already a

Christian viewpoint itself in need of expulsion? Is "depth" in fact identical with radicality? Is it not perhaps the case that "depth" is not *actually* radical?

Let me exemplify the matter using Hobbes! Hobbes claims to be deeper than Aristotle (and Plato). What is behind this claim? He does not pose the question concerning the εἶδος (be it the question concerning the essence of αρετη, be it the question concerning human sociability); he presumes it to be already answered, the answer to be "trivial," and, examining himself, asks to what extent he, the human being, can do justice to the (dogmatically presupposed) standard [Maßstab].

25C

Hotel Racine
23 rue Racine, Paris (6th arr.)
Paris, 16 December 1932.
[second draft of the letter from 27 December 1932]

Dear Mr. Krüger,

Thank you for your letter! I am answering it immediately because if I did not, I would not be able to write for a considerable time, as I will be very busy in the time to come. Given the importance and interesting nature of your comments on my Hobbes sketch, however, I cannot wait that long. I am also writing so promptly in the hopes that you will reply (or offer a rejoinder) soon. I kindly ask you to do so. Don't forget that there is no one in all of Paris with whom I could fruitfully discuss these questions! Ad rem then [to the matter]!

I will begin with the remark at the end of your letter about my critique of Dilthey. Is it that difficult to understand? I mean, in analyzing natural right one cannot already *presuppose* its critique, and an analysis of natural right (e.g., Hobbes' understanding of it) only makes sense if it *itself* stands in service of the question concerning natural right. The historical question concerning the preconditions of natural right is, in any case, secondary. I want to be more precise: the original fact is a *given* law, as even psychoanalysis involuntarily confirms; a law that need not be sought in the first place. Somewhere on earth, at some point in time, human beings saw themselves deprived of such a law and therefore *inquired* about a law, i.e. about *the natural* law that would be valid for *human beings* as such. Since then philosophy has been in existence, for the disappearance [Wegfall] of

the given law and the search for *the* law seems to me to mark philosophy. Socratic-Platonic philosophy inquired about order, it even inquired about "the laws." Until proven wrong I would maintain that it is *the* philosophy for this reason, and that all other philosophies can only be understood as leading to it or as originating from it. For every other philosophy presupposes in one way or another that the βιος θεωρητικος is the right βιος—for Socrates-Plato, however, it is precisely this presupposition that is problematic. (That is why Nietzsche's critique of the philosophy of Socrates is without force.) Perhaps Plato's attempt failed—I do not know, but I do not believe so. In that case, there is the possibility that there is a *given* law that stands up to the critique Plato directed against Lycurgus and Minos, and that also fulfills what Plato merely demands or promises. This law is (according to the view of the Arabic and Jewish philosophers of the Middle Ages) the *revealed* law. But—rightly or wrongly—at the outset of modernity *fundamentally* the same situation arises again regarding the revealed law that existed regarding the divine laws of Lycurgus and Minos in the 4th century B.C. And that is why the comparison between Socrates and e.g. Hobbes is *fundamentally* justified.

The *differences* are great, some of them are obvious. But I do not think that a radical analysis of these differences is possible if one does not hold onto the *fundamental* identity and allow the differences to show against this background. You ask: whether Hobbes' "foundation of liberalism" is really identical to the Socratic intention? Of course *not*! Socrates liberal—that would indeed be something! But that is precisely the *question*: how can a reasonable human being, a philosopher (!), be liberal or be a founder of liberalism? Or, more pointedly: how can a philosopher represent sophistic doctrines? (After all, the Platonic dialogues have made clear that this should in principle be impossible.) First, then, one has to note that Hobbes is a *philosopher*, not a "practical politician," and also not an historian, a prudent *observer*, like Thucydides, but a *questioning* human being, i.e., one who inquires into the "*order of human things.*" Thus it does not seem to me to be, as you think, "a very indirect identity if you [sc. I] find an interest in political *science* on both sides" (your emphasis). You continue: "This is obvious in the differences in mathematics then and now (cf. Klein)." The difference between modern and ancient mathematics is not relevant to this initial approach; this difference can also not be understood until it's been established what the formal approaches (if you will) have in common.

(With regard to the question of justifying the *direct* confrontation of Socrates and Hobbes, Klein, by the way, shares my opinion.)

It is becoming more and more clear to me that a fundamental characterization of modern thought is *only* possible through confrontation with ancient thought (not for instance, as I believe, with Christian thought). Yet in order to confront I need a tertium comparationis. I know of none other than this, namely that both ancient as well as modern philosophy wants to be—philosophy. Is that formal?

You say that Socrates and Hobbes meet in the *problem* of humility [Bescheidenheit]. You thus opine that the *answers* are completely different. I admit that, of course. But *why* are the answers different? Because, from the outset, they *inquire* about virtue in a completely different way. But they both *inquire* about virtue, and we for our part must ask which question—the Socratic or the Hobbesian—is more originary [ursprüngliche] and adequate. Yet this comparison is only possible because they are united in the fact that they both inquire. (Incidentally, I believe to have left no doubt in my work that Hobbes precisely does *not* begin with the Socratic question, but with a very different question about the *material* [Material] from which the virtuous person must be fabricated, a question that is only possible if the Socratic question is assumed to be *already answered*. I am now elaborating this further by showing that the greater "depth" of knowledge of human nature to which Hobbes lays claim consists in the fact that he *only* inquires about the material—the Socratic question about the εἶδος or the Aristotelian question about sociability, respectively, simply disappear for him—that he so to speak *bores* himself into his investigation of the material. This ontological materialism is the same as what Klein analyzes as reflectiveness [*Reflektiertheit*]. It has to be demonstrated furthermore how Hobbes tries to make himself independent [unabhängig] of the neglect of the Socratic question by attempting to derive order solely from the material—more precisely, from the "matter *and* artificer."[44])

Back when I was writing the Ebbinghaus review, you agreed with my thesis about the "second cave." In principle, then, we are in agreement. Did I then express myself so unclearly that you do not recognize the fact that my orientation of my understanding of Hobbes by way of Socrates is an attempt to take this aperçu seriously? Did I once again write so intricately, as in my Spinoza book? Please, do tell me!

25D

New address:
7 Square Grangé
22 rue de la Glacière
Paris (13th arr.)
27 December 1932.
[the definitive letter]

Dear Mr. Krüger,

Please forgive me for leaving your letter unanswered for so long. It was certainly not your letter's fault, which on the contrary demanded an immediate reply—and in fact, I have a whole stack of letter drafts—but a series of circumstances the listing of which I don't want to tire you with. I will limit myself to assuring you that I am not "*angry*" with you and never was, that I was merely *unsatisfied* with your previous letter because I did not know from what basis you were opposing me. Now on to our subject, i.e. the "second cave."

The root of our difference is that I cannot *believe*, and that I am therefore searching for a possibility of *living* without faith, whereas you assume that such a possibility does not exist—or exists no longer? Yet since you do not assume this dogmatically, since you must rather want to *show* that the possibility I seek does not exist, you must allow me to execute my attempt so that it will *evidently* fail.

The problem of the "second cave" is the problem of historicism. The "substantive and historical core" of historicism is, *as you correctly state*, "Christ's factual domination/dominion [Herrschaft] over post-classical humanity." What follows for the one who does *not* believe, who thus denies the right, i.e. the divine right, of this domination?

The most proximate [nächstliegende] consequence—Heidegger's, among others—is: Christianity has brought to light facts about human life that were not known or not known sufficiently to classical philosophy; at least it understood these facts more *deeply* than the ancients; therefore the understanding of historicity first made possible by Christianity is a *deeper*, in this sense a *more radical* understanding of human beings—as you put it: "The problem of 'prejudice,' after all, is *more radical* than that of the δόξα."—Fundamentally: the philosophy still possible, and first made possible, after the decay of Christianity preserves the "truth" of Christianity. That is why it is deeper and more radical than classical philosophy.

Perhaps this consequence is correct—in any case, it must be proven to be so. But that is only possible through *direct* confrontation of modern with classical philosophy. This much about the legitimation of my way of proceeding regarding Hobbes—I mean the direct confrontation with Plato—even if my thesis about the "second cave"—which, without any proof, is nothing but an apercu—should be false.

You say: the "ground" [Boden] from which Hobbes and Socrates respectively inquire is different. Admittedly, yes—but this "ground" has to be explained, to be addressed. It is addressed when one confronts the initial question of the modern and of the Greek and analyzes it with a view to its presuppositions. A simple *depiction* of the "ground" or the "situation" would not achieve anything.

I stated that the most proximate consequence of modern unbelief is the assumption: post-Christian philosophy represents a *progress* over against classical philosophy even if Christianity is not "*true*." Against this consequence there arises the suspicion that it always just leads to "secularizations," i.e. to positions that one cannot enter into without Christianity and in which one cannot remain *with* it. Thus, one has to ask oneself: Is there not a simply a-Christian philosophy? Is ancient philosophy—be it Platonic or Aristotelian—not *the* philosophy? Even admitting the greater *depth* of post-Christian philosophy—but is depth the point? Is the viewpoint of depth not itself already a Christian viewpoint that needs to be expelled? Is depth identical with radicality? Is it not perhaps the case that "depth" is not *actually* radical?

Depth has its home in introspection. Introspection presupposes a standard [Maßstab]. The question of the standard is the radical question. I find that the moderns neglected this radical question to the degree [in dem Maße] that they apparently or actually promoted introspection.

It may be that modern reflection or introspection or depth has disclosed [erschlossen] not merely unrelated facts, but instead a whole dimension not disclosed to the Greeks. However, one can then still ask what "dignity" accords to this dimension. Is it really a *more radical* dimension? Do we really know more about the roots of life, about the questionability of life, than the Greeks? Or is it only the case that something has lodged itself in front of *the* radical dimension that was the sole object of Greek philosophy, which forces a reflective propaedeutic on us?

I do not even deny that *we must* philosophize historically, i.e. raise facts to consciousness that the Greeks did not have to raise to consciousness. I do not even deny that for us, "naïvete" is merely a demand, that no human

being today can philosophize "naïvely." But I ask: Is this change a result of us fundamentally knowing more than the Greeks (that the question of "prejudice" is *more radical* than that of the δόξα), or is it fundamentally, i.e., for the knowledge of what the human being as such must know, unproductive, a hateful fatality that forces us into an "unnatural" detour?

Do you remember the first page of Schiller's "Naïve and Sentimental Poetry"? The naïve human being *is* nature—for the sentimental human being, naturalness is just a *demand*. We moderns are necessarily "sentimental." But that means that we must inquire in a "sentimental" manner—i.e. in a remembering, historical fashion—what the Greeks "naïvely" inquired about. More precisely: by "memory" we must bring ourselves into the dimension in which we, understanding the Greeks, can question "naïvely" with them.

The "accomplishment" of modernity is not a more radical dimension, a more radical cure of the human illness, so to speak, or at least a more radical diagnosis, but instead the *modern* remedy for the *modern* illness.

I am aware of the inadequacy of these formulations. I would be happy if I had made clear to you that I assert the impossibility of "naïve" philosophy in our world as much as you do, that I only, however, really, depart from you in that I don't view this impossibility in *any* sense as progress.

Write me and tell me what your objections are.

With cordial greetings to your wife and to you,

Yours,

Leo Strauss.

P.S.: Please be so kind as to give Gadamer my new address, and to tell him that I thank him for his card and that I am in no way upset with him, but instead very happy to hear from him soon about my work.

26

Marburg, 29 December 1932.
Zeppelinstrasse 23.

Dear Mr. Strauss,

Your letter today for once reached me in a more leisurely state; therefore I'm replying right away.

We agree on the historical situation of our thinking. You, too, are convinced about "the impossibility of 'naïve' philosophy in our world," and you understand this impossibility just as I do: as grounded in the

domination/dominion [Herrschaft] of Christ. Yet while you assume that I recognize the legitimacy [Recht] of this factual domination/dominion, you say that you deny it. You consider what can be done under these circumstances, and rightly find fault with that "preservation" of the "truth" of Christianity that is characteristic of modern philosophy—a philosophy of introspection and of "depth." You, on the other hand, are looking for a "decidedly non-Christian philosophy" whose radicality need not consist in "depth." Speaking in positive terms, you state that the question of the standard of introspection is more radical than introspection.

I agree with you on this last point: I, *too*, find that the moderns have buried the problem of the standard with *their* introspection, but at the same time I also think that antiquity, insofar as it posed this problem—and here we both have Socrates and Plato in mind—already pursued it in the direction of the problem of the "law" in revealed religion. Augustine's Platonism—I don't know if this applies to the Platonism of the Jews and Arabs as well—is really Platonic: the legitimate repetition of the Platonic problem within the horizon of revelation. (Aside from Platonic philosophy, antiquity is not—or not primarily—concerned with the question of the standard in the way we both understand it.)

Now it is important to pose this "unmodern" question about the standard again *today*, i.e. within the horizon of "secularization." I do think that this question, as well as the ancient "basis," are in need not merely of being "depicted," but "analyzed." That is precisely what I aim to do when I trace the problem of historicism and of "sentimental" thinking back to its Christian origin. In certain contexts, it may be necessary to confront modern philosophers *directly* with Plato—as I in fact do. But it is clear that one must have—or that one always already *has*—a notion [Vorstellung] of what lies in between. You too, have a notion, namely the one that was established at the outset, I think. Our difference, however, you see in the fact that you "cannot believe." I hope you will not interpret it as flippant or insolent if I respond: that really doesn't matter. Your faith or lack thereof is something purely personal here. (Perhaps I may say that you really are an "unbeliever," but not one who is indifferent.[45]) Thus, I speak just as little of *my* personal belief or unbelief. For us as philosophers it does not matter whether we believe, for it does not matter whether or how we manage to "live." Not 'it concerns you' [*tua res agitur*],[46] but 'I know not whether this is true' [*utrum verum sit*]. Maybe we cannot bear the truth and cannot manage to do the sole true thing [das einzig Wahre]; that does not affect this true thing itself. Thus, to your statement concerning the

"modern situation," I would like to respond: it is philosophically false to begin from the question of one's own life and belief. This question of "introspection" is secondary; as you say, it presupposes the question of the standard. By formulating [ansetzen] your problem one step too late, at the problem of belief or unbelief, you assume the question of the standard to be solved. You orient yourself—even if negatively—with reference to revealed religion. Only on this basis can you understand the historical situation as you do; only on this basis are you as convinced as I am of the *impossibility* of naïve philosophy. This view of things which initially appears to be merely *historical*, on which we agree, in principle contains the recognition that the fact [Factum] of revealed religion is of absolute significance for any question concerning standard, world, etc. You would have to view history far more "formlessly" if you really were to deny this *in principle*, i.e. if you were to view something other than revealed religion—say, the cosmos—as the absolutely meaningful [das absolut Bedeutungsvolle]. Yet I do not know how, in that case, one should understand the fact of history and ourselves. Philosophically, the matter seems to be such that we must repeat the ancient and genuine philosophical questions, but in the insurmountable factual [faktische] situation that philosophizing is no longer as self-evident [selbstverständlich] as it was then. This *new* thing, this newly arisen problem for philosophy, can only be posed within a philosophy of world history, but that means in the analysis of the ground of "reflection" that is *originally* discovered in the face of revelation. Now, one can experience this as a "hateful fatality" or as a glimmer of hope in the night of our perplexity—that is simply a matter of our "worldview" and our personal ability of *doing* anything in this condition. But if one wanted to claim to find the true and *nonarbitrarily* authoritative [das Wahre und unwillkürlich Maßgebende] somewhere else, we would have to understand ourselves worse than we two do [sich schlechter verstehen als wir zwei es tun]. One would have to be "clueless"—as you will admit—in the way that e.g. Löwith is and as most contemporaries are, the stupid and the intelligent. But you know better, and that is why for you the search for an atheistic philosophy is the δεύτερος πλοῦς[47] that is *incapable* of ignoring the old ἀγαθον in its rank.

Dixi. I am glad that my worry about your relationship with me was unfounded. My wife sends her greetings, as do I.

Yours,

G. Krüger.

27

Paris, 7 February 1933.
Dear Mr. Krüger,

Please forgive me for leaving the letter you wrote at the year's end unanswered for so long. I think you will absolve me when you learn the reason. I am about to get *married*, to Ms. Mirjam Petry, whom you and your wife met at Mrs. Her[r]mann's New Year's party 1931/32. I don't have to tell you about Ms. Petry's lot [Schicksal], as I'm sure Klein told you everything back then. In any case—now you know why I didn't write, and you won't misinterpret my silence.—

You accuse me of doing something "philosophically false" by beginning with the fact of my unbelief ("it is philosophically false to begin from the question of one's own life and belief"); and that I formulate [ansetze] my "problem one step too late," that is, not with the problem of truth but with that of my own belief or unbelief.—I would respond: I don't *know* anything, but merely *opine*. First, I want to gain clarity about what I opine (and my δόξα is atheism), what this opinion is about, what makes it problematic, in order to get, by questioning, on the path that might lead me to some knowledge. I do not believe that therein I place too much importance on my "personal opinion"—ultimately, after all, it isn't even my own private opinion but the opinion of the times that one can only overcome if one understands it and sees through it, and that in fact, perhaps, proves to be consistent in one aspect or another. And in so doing I am meeting the demand that one cannot simply ignore one's situation, this demand that you have placed on me.

Furthermore, you write: "Philosophically, the matter seems to be such that we must repeat the ancient and *genuinely philosophical* questions, but in the new insurmountable factual situation."—So we agree that the ancient questions are the *genuinely* philosophical questions. We are arguing about the character of modern questions. And I think that these modern questions, measured by the ancient ones, are not genuinely philosophical, but merely *propaedeutic*, even if the propaedeutic that we need is a hundred times more extensive, complicated, and reflective than the actual παιδευμα. But let me emphasize: this is only an opinion, a supposition (not entirely unfounded, I hope), not real knowledge. Once I understand Plato better than I do now I hope to be able to say more about our point of contention, i.e., to either agree with you or to be able to rigorously ground my opinion.

I am re-reading the *Protagoras*[48] again with a few acquaintances (among them Koyré). I thought I understood this dialogue that I have already read many times; and yet how much—how much of importance—have I overlooked. It's only now become clear to me what the myth of the *Protagoras* means: this "Epimethian" natural philosophy as the basis of the justification of the Athenian democracy—i.e., in a world that arises without plan or order, everything human is in order [in Ordnung] (Socrates can be glad to live among Athenians and not among the wild), whereas in truth it is the case that, in a world produced through planning, the human realm is precisely *not* in order [nicht in Ordnung]. This shows how, in principle, modern naturalism is identical to ancient naturalism. —But the knowledge of human order and factual human disorder is not tied to a prior knowledge of φύσις, as is sufficiently shown by the limitation to the δευτερος πλους in the *Phaedo* and the mythical character of the *Timaeus*, whereas the combated sophistic view naively presupposes a naturalistic cosmology.—

How far along are you, by the way, with your Leibniz introduction? I was just working a little bit on Leibniz again in recent days, as I have to write an introduction to a piece by Mendelssohn—a kind of treatment of Leibniz's *Causa Dei*[49]—for the Mendelssohn edition. §215 of the *Theodicy* is quite "illuminating," where Leibniz's difference with the actual Enlightenment is expressed in the clear formula *beauté* (*ordre*)—*commodité*; also §73: the justification of retributive justice, which reveals the same difference with the actual Enlightenment. By the way, I think there is also a good remark on this point in volume 8 of Dilthey's *Gesammelte Schriften*.—

Gilson is in Paris again. He is lecturing on a) St. Bernhard b) Scotus Eriugena. The lectures are very good, extraordinarily good, very clear and at the same time very rigorous. In the most recent lecture that I attended, [he gave] an exceptional clarification of the concept of love in Bernard, of the going together of the "disinterestedness" of love and the "reward" of love. Accordingly, Kant seems to have taught nothing different with respect to eudaimonism than did the Christian tradition.—

Farewell! Write again soon, and grant me absolution for my long silence!

With cordial greetings to you and your wife,

Yours,

Leo Strauss.

How is the little Krüger doing?

28

Paris, 14 March 1933.

Dear Mr. Krüger,

I am currently reading a book that makes me think of you constantly, and so intensely that it would almost appear an injustice not to recommend it to you emphatically. It's Gilson's *L'esprit de la philosophie médiévale* (Paris: Vrin, 1932), two volumes. (You should get Hinneberg to order it for the purpose of a review. The publisher's address is: J. Vrin, 6 Place de la Sorbonne, Paris, 5th arr.) You will enjoy much about the book. There are astounding parallels between your ideas and those of Gilson. You will also find a vast amount of literature referenced in the notes, especially French works that you might otherwise overlook. I just made note of a work that seems very interesting to me: L. Laberthonnière, *Le réalisme chrétien et l'idéalisme grec* (Paris 1904). [50] Gilson always proceeds by first showing a given problem's development in the Greeks and then asking what has been added to it on account of the Bible.

Let's hear from you soon!
Give my regards to your wife,
Cordially yours,
Leo Strauss.

29

Marburg, 19 April 1933.

Dear Mr. Strauss,

Please forgive me that I haven't written you in such a long time! You have been so very patient, and put me to shame with your kind reference to Gilson. I could have replied briefly, of course, which my wife constantly exhorted me to do. But my letters couldn't overcome Leibnizand current events. I finished Leibniz at Easter. Current events are now beginning to affect the university.

First, I want to make up for the worst neglect and congratulate you on your marriage. Your future will certainly be difficult; it will be comforting to have the Kleins there as well. Solamen miseris. You and Klein as "standing on the Right" are unqualifiable existences [unqualifizierbare Existenzen]: "That which must not be, cannot be."[51] What on earth will you do? I hope to hear something from you tomorrow through the G.s.

I would like to get to know Gilson sometime. I will ask H. about his book. Since world history will soon have put an end to liberalism everywhere, the great and real problems can finally be understood again. But it will be hard going on this ground, and one has to know what one can stand up for. You can imagine that I am becoming more dogmatic under these circumstances; I am thinking of doing so publicly.

In your February letter, you spoke about your question: you say that do not "know" anything, but only "opine." I cannot quite believe this. A philosopher can expand the indecision very far, but it is always just a loosening up of the structure of knowledge in which one factually lives and must live. Of course, this "knowledge" is always inadequately accounted for, and in principle can never be accounted for without some fundamental obscurities. But that does not mean that it is opinion, rather it is belief. What the ancients called δόξα is, after all, just in part a conscious "mere" opining. It is mainly a presumably certain knowledge that has simply not been investigated with a view to its justification, and that is partially justifiable, partially not, partially justifiable with success, and partially refutable. The Greeks called this δόξα without any distinction, since they took fundamentally achievable ἐπιστημη to be their standard. When, due to the historical experience of the world of itself and of its historicity as such, the achievement of epistemic knowledge becomes questionable in principle, then the analysis of the situation of the question [Fragesituation] changes as well.

You seem to me to understand the "propaedeutic" character of the post-ancient problems somewhat too externally [äußerlich] after all. More precisely: your answer has made me aware that I must reflect more myself. To be sure, the "genuine" philosophical questions are the ancient ones, but I must add: that is true of the themes (e.g. that world history is not a genuine [eigentlich] philosophic theme). The way of *treating* each theme back then was *not correct*; it was impossible that it could be. Now, it could be possible. The "not correct" is a privatio boni, i.e. it does not mean that Plato didn't understand anything about true philosophy, but it means indeed that he searched in a confused and incorrect way. You know that I nevertheless take Plato to represent the greatest relative approximation of the true way of research.

You can best learn about my view of Leibniz—as well as I could compose it ad hoc—from the introduction that I had to make brief and popular. I agree with you that there is a contrast between Leibniz and the actual Enlightenment. I first saw this now while I was working on it and have

generally become interested in Leibniz. I find his theory of space especially attractive, of which I don't understand much but it appears to be of the highest importance to me. In some respects he's done a better job than Kant, who is certainly Leibniz's superior in his basic orientation, but not in carrying out the critique of "reason" [des "Verstandes"]. What becomes a problem for Kant in the *Critique of Pure Reason* and, subsequently, in the *Critique of Judgment*, Leibniz treats in a unified way from the beginning. To me that is very essential, for I cannot "accept" the οὐρανος in the ancient sense, although I also reject the self-emancipation [Verselbständigung] of consciousness and its science. Last semester—and it may sound somewhat fantastical—I presented the history of modern philosophy in this spirit, as a failed revolt within "Christian" (i.e. made possible by Christianity) philosophy; liberalism as an armistice in the wars of religion, i.e. in the dogmatically motivated wars of the West.

What will we yet experience?

My wife and I send our most cordial greetings to you and your wife. Please send her our regards.

Yours cordially,

G. Krüger.

I still haven't read your Mendelssohn introduction, but I will do so soon since I am treating the *Critique of Pure Reason*. I am also lecturing on ethics!

30

New address: 4 rue du Parc de Montsouris, Paris (14th arr.)
4 rue du Parc de Montsouris, Paris (14th arr.), 17 July 1933.

Dear Mr. Krüger,

It has been three months since you last wrote to me. You can imagine why I have not written you in so long. The reason is: politics [die Politik]. The gulf that others have torn open in fact now also separates us as well, since we are not pure spirits but terrestrial descendants of terrestrial beings. It is almost like in a war…

There could have been a decent, just, *imperial* solution. The solution that has been opted for stems from hate, and it almost necessarily generates counter-hate. It will require a long, strenuous effort on my part to be able to deal with what has been inflicted on me and my kind.

So much for the reasons for my long silence; expressing these reasons will hopefully mean that this silence will not have been our last exchange [Äußerung]. —

Mrs. Herrmann visited us last week, and she brought us little Thomas. We heard from her a few things about how you and your wife are faring. You know firsthand about Klein's fate and his plans. The fact remains unchanged that we will have to continue to live in almost total isolation. Next spring we want to move to England. I want to go to John Laird in Aberdeen who, according to Gilson, is preparing a book on Hobbes.

Did you receive my Lubienski review[52] from Krautheimer?[53] It is a kind of "advance notice" of my study.

At the moment, I'm working on a treatment about "La critique religieuse de Hobbes" [54] as a dissertation [Diplom-Arbeit] for the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes. On this occasion I am learning things again that I once knew, and this and that that's escaped me until now. By the way, the parts on the critique of religion in the *Leviathan* are a great "aesthetic" delight: compared to the mockery of Hobbes, Bayle's or Voltaire's is downright clumsy. In general, the fact of mockery is in a certain sense, as Scripture itself teaches ("the benches of mockers"[55]), the center of the critique of religion. A comparison of mockery with the Platonic παιδιαζειν [διαπαιζειν] must lead to interesting results. In any case, "laughing" is an essential part of any Enlightenment, be it Platonic or modern.

You wrote a while back about the completion of your Leibniz introduction; can I see it at some point?

Before our correspondence was interrupted, we were having an argument about the sense in which modern philosophy, in contradistinction to Greek philosophy, must be "propaedeutic." Your last remark on this question leads me to think that the genuine difference between us is as follows: You claim that the achievement of epistemic [epistemisches] knowledge has become questionable in light of the historical experience of the world of itself and of its history. I must admit that I cannot make this historicism fit with what I otherwise know of your position. Do you intend to follow Aristotle in relegating the knowledge of moral things to the realm of ενδοξα (which, as such, can be historically variable)? But what becomes, then, of the rationally knowable lex naturalis, which as such is eternal? And how, on the basis of your presupposition, can one explain the harmony between the biblical law and the Platonic νομοι which we have occasionally talked about?

Farewell! Cordial greetings to you and your wife, also from my wife.

Yours,

Leo Strauss

31

4 rue du Parc de Montsouris, Paris (14th arr.)
Paris, 22 July 1933.
[draft not sent to Krüger]

Dear Mr. Krüger,

Rereading the letter you sent in April prompted me to think once more about our difference. Formally, this difference consists in the fact that I am determined [entschlossen] to depart from the Socratic-Platonic approach—and not just from this *approach*—only when I have understood the inadequacy of this manner of questioning, whereas you do not claim to want to forgo this insight but instead claim to possess it.

I had said that I do not *know* anything, but merely *opine*, and you said that you don't quite believe this, since the indecisiveness of my opining, no matter how far it's extended, in the end is nothing but a loosening of the structure of *knowledge* in which one factually lives and must live. In what follows, you place this knowledge itself in quotation marks, by which you seem to say that we in fact live in a world of questionable knowledge, that is, of opinion. After mentioning the almost self-evident qualification that not all pre-philosophical knowledge is truly questionable, but that it is only or especially knowledge concerning the *most important* things that is questionable (and thus opinion), you authorize me by your use of quotation marks to say that I know nothing, but merely opine. —

Now, you consider it more correct to say: "I believe" than "I opine." Since I, be it opine, be it believe, that one should resist the principle/beginnings [*principiis obstare*], I am hesitant to follow you. Your objection forces me to ask on the ground of which presupposition the distinction between believing and opining becomes relevant.

Questioning begins when that "structure of knowledge" in which we live shows itself to be brittle and full of gaps. Our generation, for example, has grown up in the structure of liberal-democratic knowledge, which for its part points to something like "Bolshevism." We have seen: this whole modern world is cracking at all seams. The opponents of *this* modern world, I mean those who act, propose solutions that are no less "modern" and hence in principle have to lead to the same negative result (e.g., cf. Mussolini's Encyclopedia article on the state). We therefore are inclined to try solutions that are in principle unmodern, i.e. concretely: old solutions. Now, due to certain modern "accomplishments," the old solutions that

are within our practical purview are exposed to considerable doubts (cf. your ουρανος objection to the ancient solution and my miracle objection to the Jewish-Christian solution). It is thus highly questionable whether it's possible to "succeed" [ob man damit durchkommt] with those old solutions. In light of these immense difficulties no knowledge is at first possible, only surmising and questioning. In this sense I understand my *option* for the political right as not-knowing (nicht-wissen) but opining. If, however, someone "believes" in "right" [rechte] ideals, he may be more suitable for all possible *actions*—yet it remains the case that he merely opines, and does not know.

On this path we will then not arrive at any legitimate distinction of opinion and belief, and I want to claim in general that ideals are never a matter of belief, but a matter either of knowledge or opinion. To believe is to believe *someone*, and an ideal is not someone. Further: to believe someone that his ideal is the right one is merely to opine that his ideal is the right one. How, then, does "faith" come about?

Assuming we *knew* what was right, *this* knowledge would not suffice to *do* what is right. To use the Augustinian example: in order to obey the commandment of honoring one's parents, I have to know who my parents are. But I *cannot* genuinely know this, only believe it. But I also don't merely opine it—for what I believe in this way is not an object of serious doubt.

32

Marburg, 3 October 1933.

Dear Mr. Strauß,

If it is possible, please forgive me for not yet responding to your July letter. The reasons for this are the same trivial ones that you have always known regarding myself. But in this case I am especially sorry not to have mastered my "vice of procrastination." After all, you were in a more difficult situation and managed to write anyway. That was very important to me, and I am grateful for it. With a view to the things that occupy us, it mustn't be otherwise anyway. It is too bad that we cannot talk about them at length. I had to wrack my brains about it in my ethics course—a difficult task, substantively and pedagogically. One experiences the opacity of the future and the "decision" very differently than one used to. For me, the question always comes down to the place of the church [*locus de ecclesia*]. But there the difficulties are horrendous, too.

I received your review of Lubienski, and find your view expressed with heightened clarity. As to the matter I dare not say *more*. Could I read your dissertation? I hope all of this serves to stabilize your future. Having a family now you need it all the more.

We went to the Bavarian mountains for recreation, housed somewhat primitively, but in beautiful scenery, visiting Lake Starnberg at the end. Later I had a lot of work with the corrections to the Leibniz edition. Hopefully it will soon make its way into your hands—augmented by a prooemium by my protector that doesn't much appeal to me—you will see. Also my Descartes essay must appear soon.

I am reading Thomas for my winter seminar on questions on the boundary of philosophy and theology [Grenzfragen der Philosophie und Theologie]. There is much *more* Augustine in him than I thought until now—everything that distinguishes him from the original Aristotle in the first place.—I intend to do a seminar on the *Phædo* with Gadamer.

Our external condition has somewhat improved recently since in place of my stipend I have received a lectureship for the aforementioned course. It's the same in Gadamer's case. But of course we are now a "growing" family—Lorenz is one year old now,—and how else the university might change we don't know. What's your view on Heidegger, on C. Schmitt? It surprised us greatly here that Gogarten has become a "German Christian."[56]

Many cordial greetings from our house to yours, asking you to forgive me and to write soon.

Yours,
G. Kr.

33

269 rue St. Jacques, Paris (5th arr.), 3 December 1933.

Dear Mr. Krüger,

Now I have again let two months pass before answering your letter. This is all the sadder because now I cannot any longer express my joy about your letter as well as I could have when I first received it. What was a gratifying surprise at the time—namely, that our commercium has remained unchanged—has by now become a gratifying matter of course. And matters of course cannot be received and expressed in as lively a way as surprises.

I didn't have time to write letters, and don't have it now. Metaphorically speaking I have one foot in England already: we are probably moving there the first week of January. I am really just awaiting Gilson's return from Canada in order to ask him for a recommendation or something similar for England. My head spins with a hundred plans none of which will likely come to fruition: England, USA, Palestine. France is totally out of the question—partly because of the fact that I'm considered a "Nazi" here.

Do you know any scholars in England? And if you do, could you send me letters of introduction to take along? And do you think I can turn to Frank for this? I am placing some hope in the author of the history of the problem of knowledge, who, as you probably know, is now in Oxford.[57] Schaeder[58] in Berlin sent me a magnificent letter of recommendation.

My work on Hobbes' critique of religion is still far from finished. I won't submit it as a dissertation [Diplomarbeit] after all. I learned quite a bit in the process, especially concerning filiations and the technique of critique of religion.

In your letter you announced your Leibniz and your Descartes pieces. Have they still not appeared yet?

I found out through Löwith that Klein and Mrs. Hermann are in Marburg. Please send them my cordial greetings. I think that Klein will write again from Prague. Did he give you my Guttmann critique[59]?

With cordial greetings from my wife and from me, to your wife and to you.

Yours,

Leo Strauss.

Do you know V. Brochard's essays on Epicurus[60]? They are quite extraordinary (aside from their "systematic" parts) and, I think, as interesting for you as they are for me.

34

269 rue St. Jacques, 7 December 1933.

Dear Mr. Krüger,

An urgent, highly confidential (obviously not to Klein, in case he is in Marburg as well), and hopefully not too far-reaching request or inquiry!

I just found out that I there is a chance for me to get the chair for Jewish-medieval philosophy in Jerusalem. There is only one "rival"—a certain Rawidowicz[61] who published a huge tome on Feuerbach and the

like, a student of Heinrich Maier's[62] (sic!), a totally incompetent fellow, but one who unfortunately speaks and writes Hebrew exceptionally well, which I unfortunately am totally incapable of—. The Hebrew University of Jerusalem has now decided to follow the recommendation of a panel consisting of three men: an American who doesn't know anything about me, Guttmann (my former boss), and—Buber,[63] I believe I can assume that Buber thinks more "highly" of me than of my "rival." But it is not out of the question that he might have a certain animosity against me, since certain pleasantries [einige Liebenswürdigkeiten] that I on occasion took the liberty to express have certainly been related to him, and he is exceptionally vain. It is for me now "do or die" [in German: nur geht es für mich jetzt um die Wurst; literally "it is all about the sausage"], or, if you like, German beefsteak.[64] Thus, I am asking you if you think there is any way of intervening with Buber that does not indebt me to Buber. I thought of Bultmann, [65] but he unfortunately does not even know me. It's quite sensitive, and all the more so because I am obliged to treat the communications of my Jerusalem benefactors confidentially—if not formally obliged, it's implied that I do so. Everything would depend on your standing with Bultmann and his standing with Buber. Would it make sense for you to show Bultmann my Guttmann review (which Klein has hopefully given you in the meantime), or anything else that would give Bultmann a sense of how I think of "the matter"?

Dear Mr. Krüger! Please do not be upset that I am so readily asking you for a possibly unimaginably big favor. But you know that I am in a situation that isn't exactly easy. So please just write to let me know whether you think what I have in mind is a possibility or not.

My wife and I send our greetings to you and your wife.

Yours,

Leo Strauss.

P.S.: Again, Mr. Krüger, please take this letter in the right way!

35

269 rue St. Jacques, Paris (5th arr.), 29 December 1933.
Dear Mr. Krüger,

I just received the letter I included that is intended for Klein and that is of the *utmost* urgency. Please pass it on to him. Since I don't know his address and since I assume that you know it, I ask you to please send it to him as soon as possible. It really is urgent.

Will I hear from you before my move to England (on 7 January)?

My greetings to you and your family, and a Happy New Year to all of you.

Yours,

Leo Strauss.

P.S.: In my rush I almost forgot to thank you for your outstanding and very exciting Descartes essay. [66] If I haven't written to you about it yet, it's only because it is occupying me so much. The parallels with Hobbes are astounding. You will thus not be able to avoid Hobbes, either. Pardon me this ride on my hobbyhorse. The only remark I wish to make on the subject is that I would not speak of the *theological* presupposition of universal doubt: you correct yourself by ultimately replacing "omnipotence [Allmacht]" with "unfathomable superiority [Übermacht]." To be sure, the problem still returns, but in another way. More from England.—I have sent the 2nd copy to Gilson by mail. He isn't coming back from Canada until 12 January, so I won't see him again.

36

Marburg, August 5, 1934.

Dear Mr. Strauss,

Now you haven't heard from me in so long that you're probably wondering about me. Despite the length of my silence, though, the reasons haven't changed (in terms of Hegel's categories, I would have to say: also this quantum [Quantum] designates no "nodal point" ["Knotenpunkt"] and no qualitative change, since my "measure" [Maß] is very large). I hope you are well. What is happening with Hobbes's literary remains? Your piece on the critique of religion?

This summer, I substituted for Kroner[67] in Frankfurt and don't know yet if I will continue this work. As a makeshift solution with constant traveling back and forth there is much annoyance to this life. The most valuable aspect of it has been making some acquaintances, especially with the philologist Otto. [68]

Now we are about to go to Sylt for three weeks (Tinnum near Westerland, at Mrs. Lindner's), where we will meet with the Gadamers. Gadamer was in Kiel on the same mission as I.

I have not been working much, unfortunately. In the winter, I want to work on the problem of time.—From Sylt, we will head to Berlin and Frankfurt an der Oder to see my parents. We will be back mid-September.

We are happy that Klein has at least now gotten *something*. I think he gains a whole new perspective after all on account of his work. It's just a shame that he lost so much time by waiting in the wrong place.

I am sending you an essay on Kant along with this letter.

With cordial greetings from our house to yours.

Yours,

G. Krüger.

37

26 Primrose Hill Road, London NW 3.
London, 18 August 1934.

Dear Mr. Krüger,

I would like, first off, to thank you kindly for your letter and for sending along your Kant essay. [69] And I would ask you to please continue sending me your pieces. Let me only say this much in terms of the reason for my request: the writings of no other contemporary author—a category in which Klein cannot yet be counted—occupy me as much as yours do.

Your essay has strengthened my impression—and given my ignorance of Kant it cannot be more than an impression—that your interpretation gets much closer to the historical state of affairs than the three other interpretations that you discuss by way of introduction. And since you distinguish clearly between interpretation and critique, one can and need only argue about your critique of Kant and its direction. I "merely" have two concerns. First, I do not understand your striven-for leveling of the difference of faith and knowledge. I certainly understand that you would like to see the difference between faith and knowledge [Wissen] sublated [aufgehoben] into a "hoping knowledge" [*hoffenden Erkennen*] in order to make room for faith. But I believe that in some way or other you will have to account for this old distinction. And as concerns the attempt to make "hoping knowledge" the *fundamental* kind of knowledge (p. 170 sec. 2), I think there exists a weighty counter-instance in the fact that your theology has proceeded from Augustine to Thomas. Kant, by beginning with what can be *known* of life and of a right human life, and only from there reflecting on what is to be *believed*, follows Plato. It is thus, in any case, no entanglement [Befangenheit] in *modern* notions [Vorstellungen] that prevented him from taking the path that you take to be correct.

Secondly, I do not know if one can presuppose the difference between theoretical and practical knowledge as you do, following Kant. As important as this distinction is, it seems to me to be secondary. Practical knowledge is knowledge *of* a bindingness/an obligation [Verbindlichkeit] *on the basis of* a bindingness/an obligation. (I intentionally do not say: of the moral law on the basis of the moral law; for "law" διχῶς λέγεται.[70]) But more original [ursprünglicher] than bindingness/obligation is *what* is binding and only *assumes* the character of bindingness/obligation "for us humans." Platonic philosophy is concerned with the knowledge of this 'What' that does not itself have the character of a law in the proper sense, and Kant takes account of this radical problem by recognizing the "*holy* will" (if only in a sense that is limited from the outset by the theological tradition). The question of the law first comes up in the context of the question of *applying* the measure to human beings. And it is only with respect to human beings that the difference between a knowledge that is commanded and a "merely" true knowledge makes any sense. Now, you will say that the knowledge of the measure can be the basis for philosophy as a res humana only in the form of a *practical* (commanded) knowledge. But I believe that this practical knowledge that originally *motivated* philosophy and brought it onto the right track is not the original *theme* of philosophy. Philosophy that is called upon [aufgerufene] through the law does not inquire about the law, but about the right order of human life and thus about the principle of order. But this question cannot turn into the natural-theological one if one does not want to become embroiled in the difficulties involved in a grounding of knowledge in belief; rather, it must be asked and answered in the manner of Plato's critical philosophy.

I am writing as if we had conversed only yesterday, and am not taking into account the fact that these indications are perhaps comprehensible only to me. I will thus try to repeat the second objection in different terms. Kant's entanglement in modern notions does not only show itself in the fact that he begins with the recognition and limitation of modern science, but even and especially in his anthropological-teleological-moral doctrine, even and precisely if one expresses it in its purest, most perfect form. Your sentence: "The methodological primacy of unbelief can assert itself because Kant views the moral canon of critique as an *imperative* that must first compel human beings to a proper [rechten] use of reason" (186 sec. 2) has a broader significance. Starting with the analysis of the perverse/wrong [verkehrt] or indifferent use of reason, of the perverse/wrong [verkehrt]

or indifferent life (i.e. the primary thematization of anthropology) is that which distinguishes modern morality as such from classical morality. (I readily acknowledge that in this respect Kant nevertheless comes closer to Plato than the other moderns.) It is the beginning from a perverse/wrong [verkehrt] state of nature (Hobbes) or indifferent state of nature (Rousseau), from an original freedom, that is only later restricted. It is identical to the increased interest in the affects [Affekte] that characterizes 17th century morality. Finally, it is identical to the philosophical interest in history that breaks through in the 16th century and that only becomes invisible for two generations because the "rationalistic" philosophy of the 17th century claims to have solved the problem, while it was classical philosophy's leaving it "unsolved" that called forth the early philosophy of history: the problem, namely, of *applying* morality. Modern morality was conceived from the start as an *applicable* morality, and despite the incomparable radicalization that Kantian morality exhibits, I believe it is nonetheless specifically modern in this sense.

Perhaps this view would become clearer if I developed it in a coherent form. I am working on a developmental history of Hobbesian morality, for which I was able to dig up lots of material. I want it to precede my edition of Hobbes' unpublished writings. Let's hope I find a decent translator. I told you that I am morally certain that I have found Hobbes' first work. The manuscript, titled "Essays," is in any case extremely interesting. I also was able to dig up a draft and an early version of parts of *De corpore* and *De homine*. My Hobbes book will thus, of course, be delayed ad calendas Graecas.[71]

Farewell, and please write soon. It should be easier while you are on vacation.

Please send my and my wife's greetings to your wife and the Gadamers.

Yours cordially,

Leo Strauss

38

38 Perne Road, Cambridge, 27 March 1935.
[postcard]

Dear Mr. Krüger,

Due to last year's hustle and bustle I never got around to writing you, and even today I am just writing you to inform you that in the coming days

you will be receiving two copies of a brochure, [72] one of which is for you, the other for Gadamer. It would please me to learn both of your opinions sometime.

Have you completed anything in the meantime? I heard praise from Klein about a piece on Plato by Gadamer, [73] which I unfortunately haven't seen.

To avoid a possible misunderstanding: the term "sophistry" on the first page of my introduction is meant literally (after the Protagoras myth[74]): to submit to what the Athenians say on the basis of an Epimethean physics (the exposedness [Preisgegebenheit] of human beings.)

Farewell!

With cordial greetings from our house to yours, including the Gadamers.

Yours,

L Strauss.

P.S.: Could you get me Prof. E. Frank's[75] address? I would be much obliged.

39

38 Perne Road, Cambridge
12 May 1935.

Dear Mr. Gadamer! Dear Mr. Krüger!

I am so pressed for time that I must take the liberty of writing this letter to you both instead of penning two more or less identical letters to each of you.

I must bother you with a very big request. In the meantime, I have completed my first work on Hobbes and am now looking for a publisher. I can only find an English publisher once the book is printed in Germany, since they don't like to translate from the manuscript here. Not to mention that I seriously doubt that the work admits of being translated! In my situation, everything depends on a work on Hobbes appearing in my name very soon. I am thus asking both of you to kindly help me yourselves or with the help of your friends to get the piece published somewhere in the German-speaking realm. I wouldn't be asking you if I didn't think the piece was worthy of being published. Since most authors would say the same of their writings, I can only dare to venture this judgment assuming that you have a certain trust in my self-criticism. In this sense I say that I consider this work superior to my earlier things.

The work is not identical to the one whose first chapters I showed you ages ago. Inspired by the study of Hobbes' unpublished works and the historical conditions of his appearance, I decided for the time being to just write a kind of developmental history of Hobbes' political science (which according to Hobbes' own use of language includes morality). I am giving it the title *Hobbes' Political Science In Its Genesis.* (To mention it up front: it is not long, at most 10 sheets.) It is divided into eight sections. In the very brief introduction, I first make the claim that the significance of Hobbes' politics is generally underestimated, and then show that this underestimation stems from an overestimation of the significance of mathematics and natural science for this politics, or from an underestimation of the originality of Hobbes' morality, to which Dilthey's proofs of "dependence" have contributed. In order to ascertain Hobbes' significance, one has to bring out the *attitude* [Gesinnung] that is decisive for him and *confront* it with the classical one and the biblical one respectively. The clarification of this attitude is the task of the 2nd section ("The Moral Foundations"), in which I show that Hobbes's guiding attitude is characterized by the fundamental antithesis vanity—fear of violent death. I develop the inner connection between the two sides of this antithesis, always emphasizing that this antithesis is intended morally and that Hobbes shies away and why he shies away from its moral understanding. The section concludes with the statement that this connection is in any case "prior" in terms of subject matter [sachlich früher] to the mathematical natural-scientific politics, and with the question of whether it is not also biographically prior (Hobbes was 40 years old when he encountered Euclid.) In case of the latter—which I show in what follows to be in fact the case—the more pressing question arises whether and how Hobbes' politics is not merely threatened by mathematics and natural science, but also on the other hand promoted by them. This is what motivates the study of Hobbes' politics in light of its development.—3rd section: "Aristotelianism". Hobbes' first period, antedating the knowledge of mathematics or natural science, is legitimately characterized as "humanistic" (as Dilthey does). I show that the philosophic authority for Hobbes at this time was Aristotle, more precisely Aristotle's politics, i.e. the *Ethics*, the *Politics*, and above all the *Rhetoric*. I then trace the influence that Aristotle exerts on the politics of the mature Hobbes, ascertaining through the confrontation of the texts that the central chapters of Hobbes' anthropology are nothing other than a free re-working of the pertinent parts of the *Rhetoric*. (It may interest you in this regard, Mr. Gadamer, that

Hobbes published two English excerpts of the *Rhetoric*—they are reprinted in the large edition of his works—, that there is a Latin excerpt among his unpublished works, that he explicitly exempted the *Rhetoric* from his summary condemnation of Aristotelian philosophy, and that—no one has drawn any conclusions from this.) 4th section: "virtue of the nobility" [Adelstugend]. The Aristotelianism of Hobbes' youth is identified with the modification he underwent in the 16th century in Italy, among others through Castiglione, Niphus, Fr. Piccolomini (among Hobbes' unpublished works, there is an excerpt from the *Nicomachean Ethics* that is based on Piccolomini). It is characteristic of this modification that the heroica virtus becomes of central importance. This is connected with the fact that heroic virtue is to replace Christian sanctitas. For my context the identification of heroica virtus with the virtue of the courtier, of the nobility, is decisive. From this standpoint, Hobbes' analyses of "honour" are recognized as analyses of the virtue of nobility (the analyses of honor thus have two sources: 1) the analysis of the καλά in the *Rhetoric*; 2) the courtly literature [Adelsliteratur] of the 16th and 17th centuries.) Then I show that with the development of Hobbes' doctrine the virtue of the nobility increasingly recedes into the background, although strangely enough, under the influence of Descartes, it takes center stage for a moment in the *Leviathan* (for this part your analyses of Descartes, Mr. Krüger, were very helpful.) The section concludes by indicating the significance that Hobbes' moral Enlightenment of self-consciousness has for Hegel's *Phenomenology* (it was my aim, in general, to show the deep connection between Hobbes and Hegel). Section 5 ("State and Religion"): a continuation of Tönnies' developmental-historical research. Section 6 ("History"): Whereas the elements of Hobbes' doctrine that I have treated up to now have been more or less traditional, the significance of history for Hobbes—first openly in his youth, then more tacitly in later years—is in principle revolutionary. There had been a fundamental shift toward history in political science in the 16th century (Bodin, Patrizzi, lastly and preeminently Bacon), which I interpret by confronting it with the traditional place of history: history gains a central philosophical position because norms are not considered worthy of further discussion—the ancients did this well, as Bacon says—and all interest shifts to *application*. (This genesis of philosophical interest in history is still clearly visible in Hegel's philosophy of history.) Human beings *don't obey* commands [Vorschriften], and that is why one needs the study of history in order to develop the technique of realizing norms. This technique is to replace obedience (thus also the

newfound interest in the passions, etc.). This turn to history is "sublated" only in Hobbes' later turn to "unhistorical," "antihistorical," or "rationalistic" politics. Its explicit opposition to traditional politics consists in its guaranteeing its own unconditional applicability; in other words, it satisfies the wish [Desiderat] that under the presupposition of traditional politics was delegated to history. It is for this reason, and only this reason, that Hobbes' politics is "ahistorical." The purpose of this section is to set forth the essentially historical character of modern politics by way of the doctrine of its founder, its presupposition being the decline of ancient cosmology (and Christian theology). Section 7 ("The New Morality"): I initially show that the basic moral view depicted in section 2 biographically precedes the turn to mathematics and natural science. I then show that this basic view is identical to a specifically bourgeois view (I have Hegel as my guarantor in this). Furthermore, I indicate that the presupposition of this morality is the same decline of cosmology and theology spoken of in the previous section as the presupposition of the historicization of philosophy. Section 8 ("The New Political Science"): The purpose of this final and longest section is to answer the question of what the Euclidian method means for Hobbes' politics. At first, I indicate that, within certain limits, Hobbes' attitude in his analyses of passions etc. should be presented through the style of the *Rhetoric*. This allows one to set up a confrontation between Hobbes' anthropology and the *Rhetoric* (I had only shown the relationship of dependence in section 3), which provides a decisive confirmation of section 2's conclusion. After this, I inquire into Euclid's significance for Hobbes' politics, i.e. into the sense of an "exact" politics. This leads to a fundamental confrontation between Hobbes' politics and Plato's: Plato is concerned with "exactitude" out of an interest in the unconditional [unbedingten] purity of the standard [Maßstab], whereas Hobbes' interest lies in unconditional applicability. In conclusion, by formally referring to the ἔνδοξα via the relation of ancient and modern politics, I show the condition of the possibility of the specifically modern problem of sovereignty. This condition is the belief in the powerlessness [Ohnmacht] of reason, the necessary result of the decline of cosmology and theology, or in other words, the release [Freigabe] of the passions. (Aside from Hobbes, even Rousseau offers me the decisive proofs [Belege] of this.) A remark about the significance of modern natural science for Hobbes' politics, which is to provide a link to a further investigation of Hobbes' critique of religion, forms the conclusion.

I would like to add that the work does not suffer from the same formal deficiencies from which my Spinoza book suffered, which you, Mr. Krüger, so justifiedly pointed out back then, and which I only tried to repair somewhat five years later in the introduction to my piece on Maimuni. I ask you in particular to believe me that the work is better and written more clearly than this letter, which to my regret I had to write directly on the typewriter.

Klein, who is now back in Berlin, has a copy of the first 7 sections. He is already trying to find a publisher. If you could join forces with him in his efforts this might be able to succeed.

I still have a special request for you, Mr. Gadamer. I heard about your work on Plato and the poets, I couldn't get a hold of it. Would you be willing to make it available to me, perhaps lend it to me, or send me the proofs? I would be very much obliged.

Again, I apologize for bothering you with such a huge request.

Many cordial greetings from our house to your houses.

Yours,

Leo Strauss.

40

Marburg, 2 June 1935.
Dear Mr. Strauss,

Once again, I must begin a letter to you with the request that you forgive my late reply and the seeming indifference regarding correspondence that I am unable to shake! The matter is all the worse in this case, as I got your piece on Maimonides that should really have prompted me to give an extensive reply. Unfortunately, I was so pressed for time during the semester that I have thus far only read the introduction. You have really expressed therein with the greatest clarity and decisiveness the secret guiding thoughts [Leitgedanken] of your earlier writings. I like the boldness of the presentation, especially the thesis on the origins of the modern idea of science (p. 23), for one can tell by your language that you have the sufficient background, that these aren't rash claims. In short: I am very happy that you bring to light the actual problem without the false modesty of the "modern" scholar. I agree with almost everything. The only small flaw I can find concerns a certain abruptness in the transition from Epicureanism to the Enlightenment with the "thus" (p. 25, l. 15 from the bottom).

What is the reason for the "essential change"? Would one not here need to say (corresponding to the section on "probity," p. 27) that the Enlightenment has such "bad experiences" of man's condition in nature *because* it has unlearned, on account of the biblical tradition, to find this world [das "Diesseits"] as such as as unproblematic as Epicurus does? The "almost" with which I qualify my agreement refers to p. 20, where you claim that the presuppositions of orthodoxy are merely a matter of faith. Are you here not dogmatically taking as your measure [messen Sie da nicht] the *modern* idea of knowledge [Wissensidee]?

I am particularly interested in this point as I am presently giving a lecture course on "problems of the philosophical knowledge of God" ["Probleme der philosophischen Gotteserkenntnis"] in which I attempt to begin with "knowledge" [Wissen], to primarily reproduce the factual content [sachlichen Gehalt] of the proofs for God's existence. It seems to me that this factual content is not only detachable from ancient cosmology, but indeed *must* be detached from it in order present itself free of "pagan" burdens. The derivation [Herkunft] of time out of eternity I therein take to be decisive. After all, that was the point of contention in the Middle Ages' reception of Aristotle (the "eternity" of the world). However, I am experiencing how overwhelming the difficulties are in this endeavor. Yet I must make a *factual* [*sachlichen*] attempt, although the historical work would lead to more definitive results. In time, something perhaps will come of it.—

As concerns your letter to Gadamer and me, which makes us very excited for your book, I unfortunately have one initial failure to report: the publisher Klostermann from Frankfurt, who happened to be visiting at the time and who in principle would be a candidate, shied away from the matter, even though he seemed tempted by the praise for your work. About a year ago he might have been more inclined toward it. Now Gadamer has written to the "Runde," the best prospect that one can probably find in this moment. If it fails, Frank would also be here, prepared to mediate with a publisher in Holland that prints German books. It will work out somehow. (Frank's address, by the way, is: Marburg, Behringweg 7a. He would certainly be happy about a copy of your "Maimuni.")

I don't have much to report about my "authorship." I am sending you my review of Hartmann's second-to-last book. Unfortunately, due to the low number of offprints (10), I cannot send you my essay on "The Task of Hegel Research," which essentially discusses literature on the topic. The first half of it has appeared in *Theologische Rundschau*, N. F. 7 (1935), issue 2.

We are thinking of going to Jade (Oldenburg) to visit Pastor Spitta after the semester is over. All in all, we are doing well. Our son is already almost 2 ¾ years old. Give us word of how you are faring personally!

Most cordial greetings from our house to yours.

Yours,

G. Krüger.

41

38 Perne Road, Cambridge, England
25 December 1935.
[draft of an unsent letter]

Dear Mr. Krüger,

It's again been six months since we last exchanged letters. I probably don't have to excuse my long silence. You will understand that I am very busy, and that I have to use the times during which my head is clear for sharp thinking to get myself out of the mess I have put myself in.

I must confirm that I received your review of Hartmann and thank you for it. It is obvious that you are completely in the right over against Hartmann: any speculative stance toward history should have become impossible since the 2nd *Untimely Meditation*. [76] On the other hand you will not be surprised to hear that I cannot completely agree with you. I am less convinced than ever that historicity as such is a philosophical problem. I have meanwhile familiarized myself a little with the beginnings of the philosophy of history in the 16th century, where the problem still appears in its ancient nakedness, and that has only strengthened my suspicions that first arose regarding Mannheim's idiocy (*Ideology and Utopia*). On the other hand, I concede far more than before that you are right regarding Kant: he really is the only Platonist among the modern philosophers. (By the way, Swift is a very odd and, for you, I believe, very important man—he opposed the entire modern development with incredible awareness.)

Now I want to tell you a bit about my work, in the hope and with the request that you might soon clarify for me your enigmatic allusions concerning time and creation. I have placed Hobbes on the back burner for now, in order to first gain clarity about the history of Platonism in the Islamic and Jewish middle ages. Farabi is astounding, ὁ ἀρχηγὸς τῆς τοιαύτης φιλοσοφίας.[77] Perhaps, in my initial joy of discovery, I overestimated him a bit. But there is enough that remains astounding about him.

Especially the perspective he opens on ancient—middle and new—Platonism. I am looking through late Neoplatonic commentaries and am surprised at the subtlety of the exegesis. It is an ocean I will have to delve into for a long time, and from which I hope to retrieve quite a bit for the understanding of Plato himself. It seems to me that the principle deficiencies of the traditional interpretation of Plato—also in today's research—can be attributed to a large extent to the Christian tradition, thus making Islam a better point of departure from the start.

42

[Chicago] 21 June 1958.
Dear Mr. Krüger,

I was very glad to hear such good things from you through your book. [78] I immediately read it twice. I am very grateful to you for it. How close we are to one another in our questioning, and even in the general direction in which we seek the answer.

Your discussion of the difference between ancients and moderns was especially instructive and pleasing to me.

Propter abbreviationem sermonis, as it says in the translations of Averroes, I will limit myself to mentioning the claim of yours that I cannot agree with. Your critique of Heidegger (p. 219 especially) does not seem to cohere with what you admit on pp. 250–251: there, you seem to me to admit the necessity of distinguishing between the human being as an embodied-earthly being with his inadequate perspectives, and the human being as the wanderer simply who is on the way to *the* truth. A corresponding distinction would also seem to be necessary due to the essential tension between the ἀρίστη πολιτεία and the factual "natural community"—to say nothing of the fundamental difference between the highest πρᾶξις that is only θεωρία and all other πράξεις. If one takes this thought further, one arrives, among other things, at the opposition between Thomas, whose theologia (in contradistinction to his philosophia) is *also* practical (in the narrower sense) and *therefore* bound to community (ecclesiastical), and "Averroes."

The difference concerning "natural communities" is, I think, decisive. Their "naturalness" is ambiguous, since only ἀριστη πολιτεία is natural in the strict sense (cf. the problem of ἀγαθὸς ἀνὴρ in distinction from ἀγαθὸς πολίτης in *Politics* III). To express the matter in the extreme Platonic

term: the πόλις is the cave. There is a necessary tension between the πόλις and philosophy (hence even the ἀρίστη πολιτεία is in need of the καλὸν ψεῦδος). The problem is veiled but not solved if one replaces the πόλις with the ἔθνος, and thereby risks making the dependency of thought on language absolute. If that is correct, then it follows that the status of sensuality/the senses [Sinnlichkeit] is a different one than that of the natural communities. As concerns sensuality/the senses (Sinnlichkeit), I don't see how they can be separated from earthliness [Irdischkeit].

Since I last saw you, I have written a book on Machiavelli, who is probably the first who explicitly broke with ancient thought. The book is slated to appear in August. I will take the liberty of sending you a copy. Now, I want to begin a series of studies on Socrates, first studying more closely probably Aristophanes' comedy in general and *The Clouds* in particular.

I was especially glad to read, in your book's Preface, the good news about how you are doing.

Cordial greetings from both of us to both of you.

Yours with devotion,

Leo Strauss.

43

[Chicago] 29 January 1962.
[The letter is in English in the original.]

Dear Mr. Krüger:

I have your letter of January 20. Forgive me for my replying to you in English but my handwriting is not easily legible and the lady who takes down my dictation does not have an easy command of German.

I was very happy to learn that you are much better. I hope that your recovery will continue.

I can think only of three men whom your son might profitably visit in Israel. All three are at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem: Professor Solomon Pines[79] (medieval Jewish and Arabic philosophy), Professor Ernst Simon[80] (the author of *Ranke and Hegel*, professor of education), and last but not least Professor G. G. Sholem[81] (Jewish mysticism).

Dr. Oehler[82] has written to me and told me that he is going to visit me in the near future.

I am reasonably well. I plan to write a book on Socrates. Klein has completed a book on Plato, centered around the *Meno*.[83]

With kindest regards to both of you from both of us.

As ever yours,

Leo Strauss

44

[Heidelberg] 28 July 1962.

Dear Mr. Strauss,

It's been a while now since I heard with joy that you submitted a contribution to the *Festschrift* for my 60th birthday. [84] I am very excited to learn what your topic is and thank you kindly for this sign of our bond. Thank you also for the letter that you wrote for me on behalf of my son.

Cordially,

Yours,

G. Krüger

45

[Chicago] 6 August 1962.
[The letter is in English in the original.]

Dear Mr. Krueger:

I was very happy to hear from you. I cannot write to you in German because of the decay of my handwriting and because the lady who takes down this dictation does not have an easy command of German. I was very happy to be able to contribute something to your *Festschrift*. I could not write anything new because it is no longer easy for me to write essays in German. I had an unpublished essay in German, written about twenty-five years ago, which to my surprise seemed to be most appropriate for the occasion, as I remember from some conversations which we had around 1930.

With kindest regard from both of us to both of you.

Sincerely yours,

Leo Strauss

46

[Chicago] 12 September 1962.
[The letter is in English in the original.]

Dear Mr. Krüger:

It was extremely good of you to write to me about my contribution to the *Festschrift*. I thought that it was fitting for the purpose because of your deep interest in Leibniz. I regret that by a grave error of the publisher the error was created that the article had been published before: it was written in 1936 for Volume IIIb of the Jubilee edition of Mendelssohn's works, and the volume could no longer appear because of the situation of the time.

About ten days ago your former student Oehler visited me. I am very happy to have made his acquaintance. We had an amazingly good understanding regarding the philosophical problems, the right procedure in historical studies and regarding human beings. I was glad to see that there still exists a bridge between people like me and young Germans. You surely can be proud of such a student. Let us hope that he will not be buried by Byzantine manuscripts.

With kindest regards from both of us to both of you.

As ever yours,

Leo Strauss

Notes

1. Exclamation points—a conventional alternative at the time for ending salutations—have been changed to commas.
2. Johannes Nikolaus Tetens, 1736–1807, German-Danish philosopher, statistician and scientist.
3. Felix Günther wrote his dissertation in the philosophy department at Leipzig in 1906.
4. Karl Gotthard Lamprecht, 1856–1915, German professor of history and political science at Marburg and Leipzig.
5. Franz Rosenzweig, 1886–1929, influential German-Jewish theologian and philosopher. Rosenzweig studied philosophy and history at the universities of Göttingen, Munich, and Freiburg. In his magnum opus, the *Star of Redemption* (first published 1921), he expounded an influential existentialist philosophy of Judaism. Strauss's book on Spinoza is dedicated to Rosenzweig's memory.

6. Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, Part II: Introduction, 'On the Possibility of Experiencing Miracles.'
7. Strauss's review, under this title, of Karl Mannheim's *Ideologie und Utopie*, originally published in 1929, is reprinted in vol. II of Strauss' *Gesammelte Schriften*. An English translation appears in *Reorientation: Leo Strauss in the 1930's*.
8. Friedrich Gogarten, 1887–1967, a German Lutheran theologian and professor of systematic theology at Jena, and a co-founder, together with Karl Barth, of the "dialectical theology" movement in Germany.
9. Hermann Cohen, 1842–1918, an important German-Jewish philosopher and co-founder of the Marburg school of neo-Kantianism that dominated German academic philosophy from the 1870s to the First World War.
10. Jacob Klein, born in 1899 in Libava, Russia, died 1978 in Annapolis, Maryland. A commentator on Plato and close friend of Strauss, Klein studied under Husserl and Heidegger. After fleeing Germany, he taught at St. John's College, Annapolis, until his death.
11. Paul Johannes Tillich, 1886–1965, a widely influential German American Christian existentialist philosopher and theologian, and a vocal opponent of the Nazis.
12. Julius Ebbinghaus, 1885–1981, a German neo-Kantian philosopher who studied under Husserl and later served as Rector of the University of Marburg under the American occupation.
13. Paul Hinneberg, 1862–1934, a German legal theorist, historian and publisher.
14. Literally, "winning of good will," a rhetorical technique that consists in gaining favor with one's audience by praising them in advance.
15. Theodor W. Adorno, born 1903 Theodor Ludwig Wiesengrund, died 1969. German philosopher, sociologist, composer and co-founder of the Frankfurt school of "critical theory." Of Jewish descent on his father's side, Adorno fled Germany, living first in England and later settling in the US, but returning to Germany in 1949.
16. Karl Mannheim, born Károly Manheim in 1893 in Hungary, died 1947 in London. A sociologist and a leader in the school of thought known as the "sociology of knowledge." He fled Germany in 1933 and lived in London until his death in 1969. His most famous work is *Ideology and Utopia* [Ideologie und Utopie] (1929); tr. Louis Wirth and Edward Shils, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge,* (Harcourt, San Diego: 1955).
17. Max Horkheimer, 1895–1973, German Jewish philosopher, sociologist, and co-founder, along with Adorno, of the Frankfurt School of critical theory.

18. Hans-Georg Gadamer, 1900–2002, German philosopher and author of *Truth and Method* (1960). Gadamer studied under Husserl and Heidegger, whose thought influenced his later work. He is known for developing the concept of "philosophical hermeneutics."
19. Karl Löwith, 1897–1973, German philosopher and intellectual historian. A protestant of Jewish descent, Löwith studied under Husserl and Heidegger, leaving Germany in 1934 for Italy, Japan and finally the US, where he continued to publish.
20. Erich Frank, 1883–1949, a German historian of philosophy and religion. Briefly imprisoned in a concentration camp, he later emigrated to the US and ended his career at the University of Pennsylvania.
21. Wilhelm Dilthey, 1833–1911, a prominent German hermeneutic philosopher, taught philosophy at the University of Berlin. His notion of the "life nexus" influenced Husserl's understanding of the "life-world."
22. Stanislaus von Dunin-Borkowski, 1864–1934, was an Austrian Jesuit priest and historian especially known for his work on Spinoza.
23. Karl Barth, 1886–1968, a Swiss Reformed theologian and co-founder of the "neo-orthodox" movement. A vocal opponent of the Nazis, he is generally regarded as one of the greatest Protestant theologians of the twentieth century.
24. Julius Ebbinghaus, *Philosophie und Geschichte*, Vol. 32, "Über die Fortschritte der Metaphysik" (Tübingen, J.C.B Mohr: 1931).
25. See note 26 below.
26. Review of *"Über die Fortschritte der Metaphysik,"* by Julius Ebbinghaus, *Deutsche Literaturzeitung*, Vol. 52 (December 27, 1931). Reprinted in *Gesammelte Schriften: Band 2*, and (in English) in *Leo Strauss: The Early Writings*, ed. Michael Zank (New York: SUNY Press, 2002).
27. Heinz Heimsoeth, 1886–1975, German historian of philosophy. After studying with Wilhelm Dilthey, Hermann Cohen others, Heimsoeth taught at Königsberg and Cologne. He joined the Nazi party in 1933 and was named faculty dean, retiring in 1954.
28. Nicolai Hartmann, 1882–1950, an early critic of neo-Kantianism and representative of the "critical realism" school.
29. *Being and Time*, II.5.77 [397–404].
30. Martin Heidegger, SZ 312. "Indirect communication" is a term especially associated with Kierkegaard.
31. Theodor Haecker, 1879–1945, German writer, critic, and Kierkegaard scholar. Haecker was a convert to Catholicism and an opponent of the Nazis.
32. Carl Schmitt, 1888–1985, a German jurist and highly influential political theorist. Schmitt's most widely read works include *The Concept of the Political* and *Political Theology*. Schmitt joined the Nazi Party in 1933.

Later falling into disfavor, he resigned his official party position in 1936 but continued to hold his professorship in Berlin. After the war, he was briefly imprisoned by the occupation forces, refused de-nazification, and continued his studies without an official academic appointment until his death.

33. "to give and receive" [reasons]; cf. Plato, *Republic* 531e.
34. Ralph Cudworth, 1617–1688, English philosopher, and a leading figure among the Cambridge Platonists.
35. William Wollaston, 1659–1724, an English Enlightenment philosopher and expositor of theism.
36. Samuel Clarke, 1675–1729, an English philosopher and famous correspondent of Leibniz.
37. Albert Curtz, a.k.a. Albertus Curtius, 1600–1671, a German Jesuit astronomer.
38. Juan Donoso Cortés, marqués de Valdegamas, 1809–1853, Spanish conservative, political theorist and diplomat.
39. Hedwig Courths-Mahler, 1867–1950, a German author of romantic novels.
40. André Siegfried, 1875–1959, a French geographer and political author.
41. Louis Massignon, 1883–1962, a Catholic scholar of Islam and prominent proponent of Catholic-Muslim mutual understanding.
42. Cf. *Genealogy of Morals*, III.3.
43. An allusion to Jacobi's famous quip that without the presupposition of the "thing in itself" he couldn't enter Kant's philosophic system, and that with it he couldn't remain there.
44. cf. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Introduction.
45. Cf. "indifferentism" – the view, traditionally deemed "heretical" by the Catholic Church, that all religions are equally adequate for salvation so long as one acts morally.
46. Cf. Horace, *First Book of Epistles*, 8: 84: "It concerns you when your neighbor's wall is on fire."
47. Lit: "second sailing"; cf. Plato, *Phaedo* 99c–d.
48. Plato, *Protagoras* 320c–323a.
49. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, 1646–1717, major German philosopher and one of the outstanding mathematical and philosophical minds of the 17th century.
50. Lucien Laberthonnière, 1860–1932, French priest and historian of philosophy.
51. A reference to the well-known poem "The Impossible Fact," by Christian Morgenstern (1871–1914).
52. Leo Strauss, "Einige Anmerkungen über die politische Wissenschaft des Hobbes," in GS 3, 243–261; reviewing Zbigniew Lubienski, *Die Grundlagen des ethisch-politischen Systems von Hobbes* (Munich: Reinhardt, 1932).

53. Richard Krautheimer, 1897–1994, German Jewish art historian and Byzantinist. He taught at Marburg until fleeing Germany in 1933 and eventually settling in the US, where he taught at NYU.
54. See Leo Strauss, , *Hobbes' Critique of Religion and Other Writings,* tr. Gabriel Bartlett & Svetozar Minkov (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), pp. 21–118.
55. See *Psalm* 1:1.
56. A German Evangelical movement that allied itself with the Nazis.
57. A reference to Ernst Cassirer, who was resident at Oxford at the time.
58. Hans Heinrich Schaeder, 1896–1957, a German Iranologist who taught at the University of Berlin (from 1931), and later University of Göttingen (1946–1957).
59. Leo Strauss, tr. Fred Baumann, *Philosophy and Law: Essays Toward the Understanding of Maimonides and His Predecessors*, (New York, Jewish Publication Society: 1987) pp. 21–58.
60. Victor Brochard (1848–1907), professor of ancient philosophy at the Sorbonne. Strauss may here be referring to Brochard's *Les Sceptiques Grecs*, second edition (Paris, 1932; originally published Paris: Vrin, 1887). Nietzsche, who praises Brochard in *Ecce Homo* ("Why I am so Clever"), evidently owned a copy of the work.
61. Simon Rawidowicz, 1897–1957, Polish-born, German-educated, American Jewish philosopher and anti-Zionist. He spent the final years of his career in the Department of Near-Eastern and Judaic Studies at Brandeis University.
62. Heinrich Maier, 1867–1933, German neo-Kantian philosopher, who taught at Göttingen until 1911 and subsequently at Heidelberg from 1918.
63. Martin Buber, 1878–1965, an influential Austrian-Israeli philosopher. His most famous book, *I and Thou* (1923) offers an existentialist philosophy of religious experience. He taught at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem from 1938 onward.
64. A meatloaf made without pork.
65. Rudolf Karl Bultmann, 1884–1976, a German Lutheran theologian and professor of New Testament at the University of Marburg, and a prominent liberal existentialist Christian who was influenced by Heidegger.
66. Gerhard Krüger, " Die Herkunft des philosophischen Selbstbewußtseins," in *Logos*, Vol. 22, 1933; republished by Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft (Darmstadt, 1962).
67. Richard Kroner, 1884–1974, German neo-Hegelian philosopher. Kroner ended his career at the Union Theological Seminary in New York.
68. Walter Friedrich Gustav Hermann Otto, 1874–1958, German classical philologist and scholar of Greek religion and mythology.

69. "Der Maßstab der Kantischen Kritik," *Kantstudien*, (Pan-Verlag, Berlin: 1934).
70. "is said in two ways." Cf. Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*, 1217a, 36.
71. Proverbial for "never." Cf. Kant, *Toward Perpetual Peace* [8: 347].
72. Possibly a reference to his "Maimuni's Lehre von der Prophetie und ihre Quellen," *Le Monde Oriental* (Uppsala), 28, 1934 (recte 1935), 99–139.
73. Possibly the essay "Plato und die Dichter" (1934), reprinted in *Platos dialektische Ethik: Phänomenologische Interpretationen zum Philebus*, (Felix Meiner Verlag, Hamburg: 1968) pp. 181–204. Translated in Hans-Georg Gadamer, tr. P. Christopher Smith, *Dialogue and Dialectic: Eight Hermeneutical Studies on Plato*, (New Haven, Yale Press: 1980).
74. See note 47.
75. Erich Frank (1883–1949), a German existentialist philosopher, Frank assumed Heidegger's position at the University of Marburg, remaining there until forced to resign under the Nazis. Frank ended his career at Harvard and the University of Pennsylvania.
76. Friedrich Nietzsche, "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life," in *Untimely Meditations,* tr. R. J. Hollingdale, (Cambridge Press, Cambridge: 1997), pp. 57–124.
77. See Aristotle, Metaphysics 983b; the reference is to Thales.
78. Gerhard Krüger, *Freiheit und Weltverwaltung: Aufsätze zur Philosophie der Geschichte,* (Alber, Freiburg: 1958).
79. Shlomo Pines, 1908–1990, Israeli scholar of Jewish and Islamic medieval philosophy and author of an English translation of Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*. Pines was born in France, and studied philosophy, Semitic languages, and linguistics at the universities of Heidelberg, Geneva and Berlin. In 1940 he emigrated to British Palestine, later serving as professor in the Department of Jewish Thought and the Department of Philosophy at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem from 1952 until his death in 1990.
80. Ernst (Akiva) Simon, 1900–1998, an German-Israeli educator and religious philosopher. After serving in the German army during World War I, Simon became a Zionist and student of Franz Rosenzeig following encounters with anti-semitism. He moved to British Palestine in 1928 and became a lecturer in Theology and Philosophy at the Hebrew University. In 1950 he was appointed professor of the History of Philosophy of Education at Hebrew University. He was a prominent left-wing Zionist, founding the peace organization 'Brit Shalom' in the 1920s along with Martin Buber and cofounding the binationalist *Ihud* party in 1942. In 1967 he was awarded the Israel Prize for Education.
81. Gershom (Gerhard) Scholem, 1897–1982, a German-born Israeli philosopher and scholar of Jewish mysticism. Following the early influence of Martin Buber, he emigrated to British Palestine in 1923, working as a

librarian and lecturer until his appointment in 1933 as the first Professor of Jewish Mysticism at Hebrew University. He is widely regarded as the founder of the modern, academic study of Kabbalah. His most influential work is *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (1941), dedicated to his friend Walter Benjamin. His wide influence extended to Jorge Luis Borges, Umberto Eco, Jacques Derrida, Harold Bloom, and George Steiner.

82. Klaus Oehler, 1928-, German philosopher and professor emeritus at Hamburg University. Oehler studied philosophy, classical philology and evangelical theology, completing his dissertation at Tübingen under Gerhard Krüger. He was appointed ordinary professor at Hamburg in 1968 and was a public opponent of the 1968 student movement. His best known work treated Aristotle, Pragmatism and semiotics.
83. Jacob Klein, *A Commentary on Plato's Meno*, (University of Chicago Press, Chicago: 1965).
84. Einsichten: Gerhard Krüger zum 60. Geburtstag, (Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt: 1962). Strauss's essay was later published in volume 3 of the Jubilee Edition of Mendelssohn's work and in Strauss, GS, pp. 514–27; for an English translation see "Introduction to *God's Cause, or Providence Vindicated*," in *Leo Strauss on Moses Mendelssohn*, ed. Martin D. Yaffe (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), pp. 146–161.

CHAPTER 3

The Light Shed on the Crucial Development of Strauss's Thought by His Correspondence with Gerhard Krüger

Thomas L. Pangle

The rather complex private correspondence between Leo Strauss (1899–1973) and Gerhard Krüger (1902–72) runs from late 1929 through 1935.[1] Readers will presumably be acquainted with Strauss, but a few words are required to introduce Krüger, whose fulfillment of his great promise was severely hindered by the oppression of National Socialism and then, in his early 50s, was cut short by strokes that left him mentally incapacitated.[2]

Like Strauss, Krüger studied at the University of Marburg, a center of Kantian thought that, starting in 1923, experienced the electrifying teaching of Heidegger (whom Strauss encountered when, after completing his dissertation at Hamburg under Cassirer, he went to Freiburg in 1921 to study with Husserl). Krüger completed his "Habilitation" in 1929 with a dissertation that was published in 1931 as *Philosophy and Morality in the Kantian Critique*.[3] This book's unusual stress on Kant's "anthropology," or analysis of lived human experience, indicates the impact of Heidegger.

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At the same time, the book's unusual insistence on the affinities between Kant's doctrine, as one of obedience to higher law, and the thought of St. Augustine indicates Krüger's sharing with Strauss, though from a Christian perspective, deep interest in the resurgence of morally and intellectually demanding theology—a reawakening led by Karl Barth, Franz Rosenzweig, Friedrich Gogarten, and Rudolph Bultmann (the last of whom Krüger was especially close with). Above all, the book testifies to Krüger's growing conviction, shared with Strauss and also Jacob Klein, that classical Greek philosophy (to which Heidegger had given fresh access but which he regarded as historically surpassed) contained decisive wisdom about the human condition that modern philosophy had covered over and lost.

This trajectory is articulated at the conclusion of Krüger's Kant book, the last sentence of which reads: "That the decisive question remains true, even if it does not find an answer, the example of Socrates can teach to whoever asks as did he." Strauss, in the retrospective 1964 Preface to the German edition of his Hobbes book, says: "the final sentence of Krüger's Kant book, which corresponded completely to my view at that time and with which I would still today, with certain reservations, agree, explains why I turned entirely to 'the true politics' and why I did not write about Hobbes as a Hobbesian." In a letter to Krüger of June 1, 1931 (*GS-3* 387), in which Strauss reacts to his receipt and first perusal of Krüger's Kant book, Strauss writes: "I have already flown through the introduction and the conclusion, which give a clear picture of your *direction*: instead of understanding Plato in the light of Kant—as do the neo-Kantians—on the contrary, to put into question Kant and us through Plato."

Krüger's second book, published in 1939, is entitled *Insight and Passion: the Essence of Platonic Thinking*.[4] In 1959, Strauss paid this book the high compliment of referring to it repeatedly in his seminar on Plato's *Symposium* (the transcript of which has been published by the University of Chicago Press in 2001 as *On Plato's Symposium*). Strauss introduced Krüger as "a very philosophic interpreter" (*OPS* 39)—a high compliment, coming from Strauss. But I believe that the subsequent references Strauss makes to Krüger's book in the course of the seminar indicate that Strauss found himself more and more dissatisfied with Krüger's interpretation, and indeed with Krüger's whole approach to interpreting Plato. The core inadequacies of Krüger's approach, in Strauss's eyes, are already visible in the correspondence of the 1930s, in the comments Krüger makes about Plato when he takes issue with Strauss, and in his failure to

respond to Strauss's counter-criticism. In general, Strauss found that Krüger interpreted Plato not sufficiently on Plato's own terms but still too much in the light of the conventional approach, rooted in the tradition of Christian Platonism (see the last sentence of the unsent draft of a letter from Strauss of December 25, 1935, *GS-3* 450); this is perhaps the most important respect in which Krüger remained under the spell of what Strauss called that "powerful prejudice" which denies that it is possible to return to an understanding of Plato exactly as Plato intended himself to be understood.

Let me now focus on the immediate philosophic context of the correspondence. What at that time bound the two together in their distinctive critical posture toward modern rationalism was not merely the shared conviction that the thought underlying the Enlightenment had evidently become a failure, and that hence the entire modern civilization rooted in the Enlightenment had entered a state of protracted crisis—that conviction was shared by many who had experienced the philosophic impact of Heidegger, and his predecessor Nietzsche. What distinguished Strauss and Krüger, even from Strauss's closest intellectual friend and interlocutor Jacob Klein, was the pair's growing confirmation of the suspicion that at the heart of modernity's failure and crisis was the unanswered *theological* question—the undisposed of challenge to rationalism from supra-rational and contra-rational revelation. Again in the Preface to the German edition of his Hobbes book, explaining the development of his thought around 1930, Strauss writes:

> The re-awakening of theology, which for me is marked by the names of Karl Barth and Franz Rosenzweig, appeared to make it necessary to investigate how far the critique of orthodox theology—Jewish and Christian—deserved to be victorious. Since then the theologico-political problem has remained *the* theme of my investigations.... The philosophic interest in theology linked me with Gerhard Krüger; his review[5] of my Spinoza book[6] expressed my intention and my result more clearly than I myself had done.[7]

We learn now, when we read Strauss's long letter to Krüger of January 7, 1930 (*GS-3* 378–81), that the latter's review was so helpful in part because Strauss had—in this letter—explained to Krüger the intention and result of the book, while prefacing this explanation with the disclosure that part of the reason for the book's deplorable obscurity was the fact that Strauss's "boss," and more generally the institute where he worked (The Academy

for the Scientific Study of Judaism), compelled him to remain silent in public about the true presuppositions that were the point of departure for the book.

This revealing letter to Krüger of January 7, 1930, clarifies and extends what can be gathered from published writings concerning the meaning, for Strauss, of the "philosophic interest in theology" that Strauss reports he shared with Krüger. I would put the key points as follows. Krüger assisted and reinforced Strauss's discovery that modern philosophic rationalism had failed in the grand theological-political project that was its most profound aim. Prior to the Enlightenment, all of post-classical Western Civilization was dominated by biblical revelation as supremely normative—by biblical law, in either its Mosaic, or Islamic, or Christian versions. The deepest motivation and meaning of the Enlightenment was the liberation of civilization from that domination; and, more positively, the replacement of supra-rational revealed law, as the supreme civilizational norm, with rational or scientific supreme norms. Strauss and Krüger agreed that this vast cultural revolution had been partly successful—but only partly: modern, Enlightenment rationalism managed to eject revelation from its cultural or civilizational throne, while endowing mankind with unprecedented material, technological power. Modern rationalism failed, however, to discover any adequate moral authority or norms, rooted in reason and science, that could take the place of the previous civilizational guidance by revelation. The consequence has been an ever more obvious spiritual vacuum, apt to be filled by cultural irrationalism of all sorts, and accompanied, in the realm of so-called philosophic rationalism, by desperate or even fanatical recoil from all serious rational thought about foundations. As Strauss put it in his 1951 Preface to the American edition of his Hobbes book, describing the perspective from which that book was written, in the early thirties: "I had seen that the modern mind had lost its self-confidence or its certainty of having made decisive progress beyond pre-modern thought; and I saw that it was turning into nihilism, or what is in practice the same thing, fanatical obscurantism."

This crisis of modern rationalism compels a reopening of the possibility that it is necessary to return to revelation—either simply to traditional orthodoxy; or to what we might today call "post-modern" neo-orthodoxy. And each of these possibilities was powerfully expressed in the 1920s: the first above all by Karl Barth, and the second by the "New Thinking" proclaimed by Franz Rosenzweig (to whose memory Strauss dedicated his Spinoza book). What prevented Strauss and Krüger (or at any rate the side

of Krüger to which Strauss was drawn) from embracing either orthodoxy or neo-orthodoxy is implied in Strauss's characterization of theirs as a shared "philosophic interest" in theology: Strauss and Krüger approached theology not as theologians, but as philosophic men. They saw the revival of orthodox and neo-orthodox theology as a *challenge* which had to be met, and disposed of, if genuine (rationalist) philosophizing, if philosophic science—if philosophy is a way of life—were to be tenable for a serious human being.

In his letter to Krüger of January 7, 1930, Strauss writes that the question animating his Spinoza book was "how was it possible, that the Enlightenment has been *victorious*?" Strauss then proceeds to provide an illuminating, and, so far as I know, otherwise unavailable, summary of the position from which he wrote the book—a summary which affords, in his words, a "share in the insufficiently-clear apparent core of my reflections."

Strauss begins by explaining his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question commonly given by the contemporary new theologians, and expressed by Rosenzweig. They try to respond to the question by asserting that the Enlightenment was victorious *only* "over Scholasticism, but *not* over Revelation," *not* over "the world of the Bible." The "sign of the inadequacy of this answer"—the inadequacy of this attempt to confine the victory of the Enlightenment—Strauss finds in the present status of the Enlightenment's critique of *miracles*:

> the concept of the miraculous is biblical, and, as a consequence of the Enlightenment, this concept has lost its power and its truth. (It is today an embarrassment: just read, please, carefully Rosenzweig's *Star of Redemption* pp. 119ff.[8]; Rosenzweig has recognized, that the problem of miracles is central; and how does he have to '*interpret*' the enlightenment critique of miracles, in order to be able to maintain the miraculous—and what does he have to regard as miraculous!).

Having indicated the gross inadequacy of the answer typified by Rosenzweig, Strauss then asks: "But now what has the Enlightenment achieved in regard to miracles?" Strauss answers: "It has achieved only this. That it itself, that is, that the *already* enlightened human being, is immune to miracles; it has created a position that is unreachable by miracles." But—Strauss counters: "the miraculous is, however, according to its own meaning, only capable of being experienced as a miracle on the foundation of faith—and thereby, the Enlightenment offensive is thus rendered impotent."

"At this point, at the latest," Strauss continues, "it becomes clear that the Enlightenment does not owe its victory to assertions of the scientific refutation of revealed religion." Instead, "its victory is thanks to a certain *will*, that one may, with a grain of salt, characterize as Epicurean." And "*this* will," Strauss declares, "appears to me to be no foundational justification for the Enlightenment, against revealed religion." "The clear indication of this," Strauss submits, "is the fact, that it is evident to anyone who has even only an intellectual grasp of what prayer is, that the understanding, grounded in the Epicurean disposition, of religion, is inadequate" (see also *SCR* 207–8). Now, given this, Strauss continues, it follows that "in order for the social victory of the Enlightenment—a non-binding state of affairs—to become total, there must emerge *another* will against revealed religion." Strauss says that he sees "such a will disclosed in Machiavelli, Bruno, and Spinoza," and "reaching its most extreme representation in Nietzsche, and its completion in—*Being and Time*." "I mean,' Strauss continues, "in the interpretation of the *call* of conscience, and in the answer given there to the question; *who* then is calling?" It is "from Heidegger's *Dasein*-interpretation that for the first time an adequate *atheistic* interpretation of the Bible may be possible." Strauss seems to be concluding when he writes: "religion is then for the first time overcome, when it can be given an adequate atheistic interpretation." But his statement of the thought that constitutes the foundation of his first book in fact concludes with an abrupt new tack: "So: the victory of the Enlightenment, that is, the victory of the 'scientific view of the world'—which I *only* understand to include the loss of the possibility of believing in miracles—is justifiable solely on the ground of a resolute *conviction* [bestimmten *Gesinnung*], not on the ground of this 'worldview' itself."

This complex and ambiguous statement by Strauss of the thought underlying and animating his Spinoza book makes clear the impact of Heidegger's *Being and Time* on him; and at first, or reading only this far in the letter, one gets the impression that Strauss is indicating that he wrote his Spinoza book from a position that was fundamentally Heideggerian, as regards the decisive issue.[9] But: what Strauss says later in this same letter, more specifically about the contents of the Spinoza book, indicates a deep uneasiness with the previously elaborated quasi-Heideggerian position. Strauss writes that in his Spinoza book, "I sought to make clear for myself the various grounds for atheism; *that is the reason for* the apparently typological presentation of the first sections of my

work." In thus clarifying the various grounds of Heidegger's atheistic predecessors, above all Spinoza, Strauss was in effect bringing to clear view the various grounds underlying Heidegger, on which the latter stands. Strauss was clarifying the historical-philosophic grounds that Heidegger is apparently making firm through his atheistic phenomenological analysis of the call of the conscience. But these historical-philosophic grounds Heidegger himself has failed to bring to light. Strauss is in effect going historically deeper than, and thus criticizing, Heidegger. Strauss is clarifying the various versions of, first, the "Epicurean" will to atheism; and then, secondly, the additional and distinct modern Enlightenment will to atheism—the two of which together comprise the "resolute *conviction*" (bestimmten *Gesinnung*) that precedes, culminates in, and is presupposed by, is meant to be vindicated by, Heidegger's phenomenology of the conscience.

This letter to Krüger thus helps us to see that Strauss's Spinoza book is in fact also tacitly intended to be a critical interrogation of Heidegger's unarticulated and insufficiently investigated historical-philosophic grounds for atheism. The Spinoza book brings to sight both the strengths and the troubling shakiness of those grounds.[10] And this letter to Krüger—written a year after the book was completed, as Strauss notes—shows that Strauss is now aware that he did not himself sufficiently appreciate, when he wrote the book, how *very* problematic he was showing, or discovering, the implications to be. For, Strauss goes on to say, coming to the close of this letter: "That this orientation, starting from my presuppositions, can no longer justify itself, I of course concede to you." Strauss had opened the letter by expressing his "heartfelt thanks" to Krüger for the latter's previous letter (this important letter has unfortunately not survived), and its critique of Strauss's whole position in the Spinoza book: "most heartfelt thanks for your letter," that "will substantially contribute to transforming my general uneasiness about my work into concrete doubts, and transformations of my previous questions."

As we learn from the next surviving letter to Krüger, written half a year later (on June 26, 1930; *GS-3* 382–83), Strauss soon stumbled across the source from which he was to discover the path out of the *aporia* in which he found himself. Strauss writes to Krüger with a request to be invited to give a seminar in Krüger's class on Augustine the coming winter, and explaining his request in the following words:

> I had begun my work on a Jewish Scholastic—Gersonides—as a work of 'pure scholarship,' and also because I must deliver some concoction to the people who pay me. But soon I observed that the work was not so boring to carry on, simply because the subject is exciting. It concerns the problem of that moderate (i.e. non-atheistic) enlightenment, about which I have learned so much from your Kant work.

Strauss proceeds to summarize what he has discovered thus far about the distinctive character of the "moderate" or non-atheistic Judeo-Arabic medieval Enlightenment—in contrast to the modern "moderate" Enlightenment, typified by Krüger's reflections on Kant, but also probably by Strauss's own work on Mendelssohn (and also in contrast to the medieval Christian-Scholastic Enlightenment).

To begin with, Strauss formulates what he has found the Judeo-Arabic version *shares* with the eighteenth-century moderate Enlightenment: "prevalence of belief in providence, as belief in the good God over and above the God who calls one to account; and *therefore* belief in the sufficiency of reason." Then Strauss outlines what he has found *distinguishes* the Judeo-Arabic moderate Enlightenment from the eighteenth-century moderate Enlightenment: *first*, the "primacy of theory," as opposed to the "primacy of morality (veneration of Socrates)" in the latter; *second*, and linked to the preceding, in the Judeo-Arabic moderate Enlightenment, "natural right" or natural law plays no role, or at least not anything like the role that it plays in Christian medieval thinking—whereas, in the eighteenth-century moderate Enlightenment, the moral law is developed as a "natural right" that demands a new and specific kind of constitutional law. This leads immediately to the *third* and most important contrast: in the Judeo-Arabic moderate Enlightenment, the place of natural right or natural law is taken by the divinely revealed positive law of Moses, or of Mohammed—which divinely revealed law is, however, re-conceived and re-interpreted as fully intelligible in the light of the principles of Plato's *Republic*. Moses and Mohammed are re-conceived and re-interpreted as "philosopher-lawgivers"; and the scriptural law itself is re-conceived and re-interpreted as the "*sole* sufficient and binding norm, leading life to the happiness that consists in theorizing." Strauss concludes that the Judeo-Arabic Middle Ages "has, through the link to the ancient idea of the concrete *nomos* [law] and *nomothetes* [lawgiver], a much greater possibility than does the natural right-preoccupied 18th century of accepting the concrete order of revelation."

Now in the Spinoza book, Strauss had already given some attention to the Judeo-Arabic critique of religion, and its relation to the modern Enlightenment's critique. He had done so in the first place through his discussion in the opening chapter (*SCR* 46–49 = 13–17) of "Averroism"—"a tradition which has remained active for about five hundred years." But as the preceding words suggest, Strauss had seen and stressed continuity rather than contrast:

> Three tendencies and traditions of very different origin underlie seventeenth-century criticism of religion. They are traditionally designated by the names Epicurean, Averroist and Machiavellian. From an early time they were in such close association that it becomes difficult to characterize the general movement of criticism of religion in the seventeenth century by one name rather than by another.

Strauss had been interested not so much in the authentic philosophizing of Averroes himself or his predecessors as in the western European tradition believed to have grown out of Averroes: "in Christian Europe knowledge of the true Averroes is more and more replaced by the legend of Averroes." Strauss had taken notice of "Averroism" not as a profound critique of, or even engagement with, revelation but as an attempt to conceive of religion as "needed for the guidance of the ignorant many, for the sake of law and order." And the sixth chapter's lengthy discussion of Maimonides had treated the latter as a target of Spinoza's critique of religion. From this perspective, Maimonides came to sight in rather conventional garb, as a kind of Jewish scholastic who made use of philosophy conceived as Aristotelian natural science to defend revealed creationism against rationalist natural science. "According to the inner structure of Maimonides' science," Strauss writes, "the insight into the insufficiency of the human understanding—an insight gained on the basis of Aristotelian science, in principle prior to the introduction of the central theological presupposition—motivates the recourse to revelation; this insight inclines man to the acceptance of revelation" (*SCR* 158 = 141).

In contrast, the letter of June 26, 1930, shows that what has revolutionized Strauss's approach to the medieval Judeo-Arabic "moderate" Enlightenment is the stress he now places on the link to "antiquity" as meaning especially the link to *Plato*, and his *Republic*. In the Spinoza book, Strauss sees only the Aristotelianism of Maimonides; Strauss is unaware of Maimonides's profound debt to *Plato* and above all Plato's

political philosophy—as *the* decisive way of addressing the theological question. In the Spinoza book, Strauss still thinks that "Maimonides' context of thought may be summed up as a nexus of scientific reasoning" (*SCR* 161 = 144). To be sure, Strauss does in the Spinoza book make "ancient" Greek philosophic-critical theology a major theme. But the ancient philosophic-critical theology he has in mind is *Epicurean*, which he takes as the most serious (even the sole serious) ancient critical-theological thought. Similarly, in the earlier letters to Krüger, Strauss equated "ancient" theological criticism with "Epicurean" philosophic theology (see esp. 380: "ancient [Epicurean] critique"). From this new letter of June 26, 1930, however, we see that in the preceding six months it has begun to dawn on Strauss that what is most profound and valuable in the medieval Judeo-Arabic thinkers is the guidance they give back to *Plato*—as above all a *political* philosopher: that is, to a Plato, and to Platonic dialogues, that are *radically different* from what is conventionally understood by *modern* scholarship, shaped by the tradition of Christian or Augustinian Platonism. What Strauss has begun to discover through Maimonides and his Muslim teachers, above all Farabi, is a Plato whose dialogues and political philosophy have to be completely re-interpreted, as *the* philosophic key to meeting the challenge posed by revelation, seen as "the theologico-*political* problem" (see also the draft of Strauss's unsent letter of Dec. 25, 1935, 449–50).

This becomes still more explicit in the next two surviving letters from Strauss to Krüger. The first, dated February 27, 1931 (*GS-3* 383–84), refers to Strauss's delivery on December 21, 1930, of his lecture entitled "Religious Situation of the Present"—in which for the first time Strauss spoke in public of the modern historical-spiritual condition as that of humans dwelling in "a cave, beneath that cave" which is described in the Platonic Socrates's famous image at the beginning of Book Seven of the *Republic*. The second letter, dated May 7, 1931 (*GS-3* 384–85), refers to a public lecture Strauss has just given on Hermann Cohen and Maimonides, which, Strauss reports, is his first public presentation of his thesis that "the Islamic-Jewish Scholastics understood revelation within the framework laid out in Plato's *Republic* and *Laws*." In this letter Strauss speaks of "how much I have profited from your Plato lecture." In other words, Strauss continues to speak as if his own incipient recovery of the genuine Platonic philosophic understanding of and response to revelation is in accord with, and even helped by, the development of Krüger's thinking.

This goes with the strong suggestion of the earlier, first letter mentioning Plato (June 26, 1930, *GS-3* 382–83), where Strauss writes as if he is moving in Krüger's direction—that is, toward a quest for the grounds of what Strauss there calls a "moderate" or "non-atheistic" Enlightenment. BUT: do Strauss and Krüger agree in their understanding of what this "non-atheistic Enlightenment" means? Above all, do they agree on the meaning of the "possibility" Strauss refers to as: "the philosopher's "acceptance of the concrete order of revelation?"[11] To what extent is this *expressed* closeness to Krüger giving voice to Strauss's self-understanding at this time frankly and straightforwardly, OR, to what extent is Strauss writing in a manner designed to try to begin to *entice* his friend to join in pursuing a path of self-discovery, along which Strauss has already proceeded much further—far enough to see that the truths Strauss is beginning to unearth from his study of Plato, guided by the medieval Judeo-Arabic thinkers, will require a radical and wrenching, even agonizing, self-transformation on the part of Krüger: the profundity, and the crux, of which self-transformation, Strauss knows from his own transformation in the intervening months? This much is clear: in the correspondence of the two subsequent years, it becomes more and more evident that, and why, Krüger cannot follow Strauss. Krüger cannot bring himself seriously to entertain the possibility that Plato supplies *the answer* to the theological question; and this is chiefly because Krüger remains tied to the thought that Strauss identifies as the core of historicism.

In a December 27, 1932 letter (*GS-3* 419–22) replying to Krüger's expressed reservations about Strauss's contention that all specifically "modern" thought dwells in a "cave beneath Plato's cave," Strauss writes: "the 'substantial and historical core' of historicism is, *as you correctly say*, 'the factual domination of Christ over the post-classical world.' What follows from that, for him, who does *not* believe, who thus denies the right, that is the divine right, of this domination?" Strauss answers: "the immediate consequence—in Heidegger among others—is: Christianity has brought to light facts of human life, that were unknown or inadequately known to ancient philosophy"; this means, "fundamentally: after the disintegration of Christianity, there remains, and first becomes possible, philosophy that preserves the 'truth' of Christianity; it is as such deeper and more radical than ancient philosophy." Strauss continues: "maybe this consequence is correct—but it must be as such proven. And this is possible only on the basis of a *direct* confrontation of modern with ancient philosophy. So much on the legitimation of my project as regards Hobbes—I mean, the direct confrontation with Plato."

These letters to Krüger allow us to observe the point of departure from which Strauss set out on the journey which took up the rest of his life, confronting Socratic with non-Socratic thought, ancient and modern, and thereby vindicating ever more powerfully Socratic political philosophy—as the decisive response to the most fundamental and all-encompassing question.

In subsequent letters to Krüger, Strauss tries repeatedly to give his friend leading or thought-provoking clues to *precisely* what *sort* of questioning it is that one can find to be the decisive questioning, in the Platonic–Socratic dialogues, if the dialogues are studied correctly—and that means in liberation from all modern scholarship, with its post-Christian and historicist prejudices. Sadly, Krüger seems never to have caught on.

Two of the passages giving such clues seem to me to be especially helpful. In the letter of December 27, 1932, that I quoted previously, Strauss writes:

> Granting the greater *depth* of post-Christian philosophy: but, is depth what counts? Is the perspective of depth not itself a Christian perspective, that for its part requires proof? Is depth identical with radicalism? Is it not perhaps the case, that 'depth' is not *really* radical? Depth is at home in self-examination. Self-examination presupposes a standard. The question as to the standard is the radical question. I find, that the moderns on the whole have neglected this question, while they apparently or really have demanded self-examination.

A year and a half later, on August 18, 1934 (*GS-3* 439–42), responding to his reading of a later Kant essay by Krüger, Strauss returns to this point and elaborates, as regards Kant, in the following most revealing words: "I do not know whether one should proceed on the basis of the distinction between theoretical and practical knowledge as much as do you, following Kant. As important as this difference is, it seems to me to be secondary. Practical knowledge is knowledge *of* an obligation, *on the basis* of an obligation." "But," Strauss continues, "more fundamental than obligation is, *what* is obligatory and what, 'merely for us humans,' *takes on* the character of the obliging. Platonic philosophy is concerned with the character of this what—which does not in itself have the character of a law in the precise sense." For Kant, "the question about the law first emerges in connection

with the *application* of the standard to human beings." More generally, "modern morality is from the beginning conceived as an *applicable* morality, and, I believe, despite the incomparable radicalization it undergoes in the Kantian morality, this (latter) still is in this sense specifically modern." In profound contrast, Plato's critical philosophy, while understanding itself to be "summoned by the law, asks, not so much about the law, but rather about the right ordering of human life—and therefore about the principle of the ordering." Strauss interjects with this poignant remark: "But I am writing as if we just yesterday had a conversation, and am not taking account of the fact that these indications are perhaps comprehensible only for me." By this time, Strauss had left Germany for good.[12]

In 1958, Karl Alber Press published a collection of essays Krüger had written before his brain strokes, entitled *Freedom and World Administration* (*Freiheit und Weltverwaltung*). Krüger sent a copy to Strauss, eliciting a letter of June 21, 1958 (*GS-3* 450–51), in which Strauss expresses his "heart's joy" in hearing again from Krüger through the book, which he says he has read twice. "How near we come in the questions and even in the general direction in which we seek the answers! Your discussions of the division between the Ancients and the Moderns has especially taught and delighted me." But then Strauss proceeds to expatiate on how and where he departs from Krüger:

> You concede, it seems to me, the necessity of distinguishing between the human as physical-earthly being with its inadequate perspectives, and the human as absolute wayfarer, who is on his way to *the* Truth. A corresponding distinction would also be necessary as regards the essential tension between the *ariste politeia* [best regime] and the actual "natural community"—not to mention the fundamental difference between the highest *praxis*, which is only *theoria*, and all other *praxeis*.…
>
> Decisive, I believe, is the difference in regard to the "natural community." Its "naturalness" is doubtful, because in the strict sense only the *ariste politeia* is natural (cf. the problem of the *agathos aner* [good man] in contrast to the *agathos polites* [good citizen] in [Aristotle's] *Politics* III). To take the extreme Platonic expression of this state of things, the *polis* is the cave—there exists a necessary tension between the *polis* and philosophy (for that very reason the *ariste politeia* needs the *kalon pseudos* [noble lie]). The problem becomes hidden, but not solved, when one replaces the *polis* by the *ethnos* [nation].

Notes

1. In *GS-3* 377–454, Heinrich Meier has made these letters available through painstaking editorial work, and in his introduction has brought intelligent learning to bear in framing their context (esp. *GS-3* xxviii–xxx). Unless otherwise noted, all page references will be to this edition; italics in quotations from Strauss and Krüger are in the original.
2. For a fuller account of Krüger's career, see esp. the obituary by Krüger's lifelong friend Hans-Georg Gadamer in *Archives de Philosophie* 47 (1984): 353–63.
3. *Philosophie und Morale in der Kantischen Kritik* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1931; 2nd ed. 1967).
4. *Einsicht und Leidenschaft: Das Wesen des platonischen Denkens* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1939; 2nd ed. 1948; 3rd ed. 1961).
5. In *Deutsche Literaturzeitung* 51 (December 20, 1931): 2407–12. An English translation, by Donald J. Maletz, was published in the *Independent Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 5/6 (1988): 173–75. Quotation is from the latter.
6. *Die Religionskritik Spinozas als Grundlage seiner Bibelwissenschaft: Untersuchingen zu Spinozas Theologisch-politischem Traktat* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1930; repr., Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1981); republished in *GS-1* 1–362; English translation by Elsa Sinclair published as *Spinoza's Critique of Religion* (New York: Schocken, 1965). All references here will be to pages of the latter, abbreviated as *SCR*, sometimes with equation marks in parentheses indicating page numbers of the German original (printed in the margins of *GS-1*).
7. When Strauss agreed to have an English translation of his Spinoza book executed and published, his revision profited from Krüger's critical suggestion, at the close of his review (175), that "the specific divisions provided by the table of contents would very much facilitate the reading if they were still more detailed and indicated in the text by more than dashes."
8. Franz Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung* (Frankfurt am Main: J. Kauffmann Verlag, 1921), 119–42, subtitled "Über die Möglichkeit, das Wunder zu erleben" [On the Possibility, of Experiencing the Miracle]; trans. William W. Hallo (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), 93–111, or Barbara Galli (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 101–21.
9. This is not ruled out by what Strauss says when he goes on to express in very personal terms the *distinctive* way in which he shares in the "will" and the "*conviction*" [*Gesinnung*] that he sees animating modern atheism: "I must justify myself [mich rechtfertigen] before the forum of the Jewish tradition": and "truly, without any philosophy-of-history reflection," but

"simply because I hold it to be not defensible [nicht vertretbar] that I abandon out of thoughtless lightness and indolent comfort a cause, for the sake of which my ancestors took upon themselves everything conceivable." It is this Jewish moral passion, for self-justification before the tribunal of his ancestors, that Strauss indicates he understands to be driving his relentless quest for the truth about the most momentous question.

10. See esp. *SCR* Chap. 5, sec. C, 144–46 (= 126–28), "The Premises and the Limitation of the Critique of Orthodoxy"; also 123, 179; and Chap. 7, sec. A, 193–200 (= 182–90), "Calvin's Position as Immune to [unerreichbar für] Spinoza's Critique" as well as sec. B., 200–4 (= 190–94), "The Illusion of the Critique." See also Krüger's review, 175: "The general discussion about the difference between modern and ancient thought receives here for once an 'existential' sharpness: Strauss shows *in concreto* how much the modern 'disposition of method, of culture' (p. 44; 71) is a *historical antithesis*, that is, an unprovable negative life-decision opposed to that past which believed in revelation."
11. See Strauss's highly paradoxical formulation in *Philosophy and Law*'s first chapter, which Heinrich Meier informs us (*GS-2* xvi n11; trans. as n11 of Chap. 1 in the present volume, above) was originally completed in September 1933: "It is in the *Laws* that Plato undoubtedly stands closest to the world of revealed law, since it is there that, in accordance with a kind of interpretation anticipating the philosophic interpretation of the revealed law among the medieval thinkers, Plato transforms the 'divine laws' of Greek antiquity into truly divine laws, or recognizes them as truly divine laws. In this approximation to the revelation without the guidance of the revelation we grasp at its origin the unbelieving, philosophic foundation of the belief in revelation."—*PLA* 76.
12. Krüger's leading student, Klaus Oehler, reports that in 1951 "Krüger asked me, 'Do you know who Leo Strauss is?'—to which I had to reply at that time that I did not. Then he said to me: 'If Leo Strauss had not been compelled by the German political situation to depart, philosophy in Germany would have taken a different direction.'" Klaus Oehler, *Blicke aus dem Philosophenturm: Eine Rückschau* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2007), 185; see also 179.

CHAPTER 4

The Example of Socrates: The Correspondence Between Leo Strauss and Gerhard Krüger

David Janssens

Daß die entschiedene Frage wahr *bleibt, auch wenn sie* keine *Antwort findet, kann den, der so fragt, das Beispiel des* Sokrates *lehren.*
Gerhard Krüger

The publication of the correspondence with his contemporaries Gerhard Krüger, Jacob Klein and Gerschom Scholem in 2001 offered readers of Leo Strauss a new and in many ways surprising perspective on the genesis of his thought. The epistolary exchanges reveal both the intensity and the scope of his engagement with the "theological-political problem," which he later identified as "*the* theme" of his investigations.[1] This chapter focuses on Strauss's correspondence with Gerhard Krüger. More specifically, it aims to clarify an issue that is at once central to it while remaining partially implicit: Strauss's attempt to recover the Socratic

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question concerning the good and just life as the viable foundation for a human life, after his critical dismissal of the two alternatives that initially presented themselves to him: the modern Enlightenment and revealed religion.[2]

Logon Didounai: The Quest for Self-Justification

Strauss's first letters to Krüger were closely related to the publication of his first book, *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*, in 1930. As he makes clear to his correspondent, his motivation in writing the book was personal as well as scholarly: he sought to justify his own life as a secular, unbelieving adherent of political Zionism *vis-à-vis* the Jewish religious tradition in which he had been brought up:

> To me, only one thing was clear: that I *cannot* believe in God. I put this to myself in the following way: there is an *idea Dei innata, omnibus hominis communis* [innate idea of God, common to all men]; to this idea I can give or refuse my *assensus* [assent]; I believed that I had to refuse it; I had to make clear to myself: Why? I had to justify myself before the tribunal (*Forum*) of the Jewish tradition; and without any philosophical-historical reflection (*geschichtsphilosophische Reflexion*), simply because I would not have considered it defensible to give up, out of frivolousness and convenience, a cause for the sake of which my ancestors took upon themselves everything conceivable (*alles nur Denkbare*). (*GS-3* 380–381)

For Strauss at this stage, the question of why he could not believe boiled down to this: "How was it possible that the Enlightenment was *victorious*?"[3] On the basis of his investigations in *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*, he gives a qualified but momentous answer: the Enlightenment effectively marginalized revealed religion through a defensive strategy of securing immunity to miracles and an offensive strategy of mockery, but this in no way amounted to a definitive refutation. In the end, the Enlightenment could oppose to revealed religion's profession of faith only a neo-Epicurean will to live without illusions that itself proved to be no less based on belief. In a perceptive review of the book, eagerly solicited and greatly appreciated by Strauss, Gerhard Krüger summed up this stalemate and thus "the problem of the Enlightenment" as follows: "Thus one unjustifiable (*unbegründbare*) tendency of the experience of the world is opposed to the other: to this extent, the opponents talk at cross-purposes."[4]

The Enlightenment having been weighed and found wanting, Strauss was faced with two options: either to embrace revealed religion in an unqualified return to Judaism, or to find a different justification for his unbelief. The former remained impossible for him, as he asserts unequivocally to Krüger, a believing Christian: "Our difference lies therein, that I cannot *believe* and that therefore I search for a possibility to *live* without faith […]." (*GS-3* 420) More pointedly, for Strauss this means living *the right way* without faith, which points to an alternative conception of the right way of life. This amounts to exploring "the possibility that natural right [*Naturrecht*] is possible in a world without providence […]." (*GS-3* 394) Since the religious conception of the right way of life remains inaccessible to him, the only alternative is to find his way back to a natural conception unsupported by revelation, or to natural right.

With regard to natural right, two distinct conceptions present themselves: the Hobbesian and the Socratic-Platonic. Both attempt in their respective ways to determine the naturally right way of life in the absence of revelation. Moreover, the Hobbesian position is based on the claim that it can definitively *refute* and *supplant* the Socratic-Platonic position: Hobbes basically reiterates the Socratic-Platonic attempt to find a *technè politikè*, a political science based on natural right. However, he rejects the Socratic-Platonic attempt as "rather a dream than science," while he holds his own political science to be applicable in practice and thus successful.[5] However, in the correspondence with Krüger, Strauss strongly questions this claim: in his view, Hobbes's project is "a repetition that certainly trivializes (*verflacht*) the Socratic problem" (*GS-3* 394), because it "does not start with the Socratic question, but with a wholly different question, which presupposes that the Socratic question has been answered." (*GS-3* 405)

As a result, "Hobbes's foundation, as to originality, cannot be compared with the Socratic." (*GS-3* 409) Hobbes's claim to originality consists of a claim to greater depth, a deeper understanding of nature and human nature in particular, but this concern with depth proves to be a questionable relic of Christian thinking. Like Hobbes, the Enlightenment and modern philosophy as a whole remain heir to Christianity, of which they are secularized versions. Hence, when Strauss asks: "isn't there an absolutely a-Christian philosophy?" (*GS-3* 416), he doesn't think of Hobbes, who fails to adequately address the possibility of natural right in a world without providence, but of ancient philosophy, which is characterized by the search for the *naturally* right way of life as distinguished from the conventionally right way of life prescribed by the *laws*. This search begins with the Socratic question.

Pôs biôteon: Strauss's Recovery of the Socratic Question and Answer

Throughout the correspondence with Krüger, however, Strauss does not discuss in great detail what he understands "the Socratic question" to be. To clarify, we must shift our focus to three lectures that Strauss prepared at the same time in the early 1930s. In two of these, he turns to what he calls the religious and intellectual "situation of the present" (*die Lage der Gegenwart*). The third lecture, titled "Cohen and Maimonides," while ostensibly a comparison of the two great Jewish thinkers, actually deals at length with the same predicament. For this reason, I will deal with all three of them together.[6]

Setting out to discuss the condition of his age, Strauss's treatment in both cases is, to say the least, singular: instead of addressing it in the usual manner, he more or less dismisses the topic without further ado. The question regarding the present situation and how to cope with it, he argues, actually lacks seriousness. Viewed more carefully, it points beyond itself to a deeper-lying and more urgent question, from which it merely derives:

> There can, however, be no doubt as to what *the* question is that is and must be the most important question for us; it is the question, what is the *right* life? How *should* I live? What matters? What is needful? Thus, our modern topic […] boils down to the old, eternal question, *the* primordial question (*die Urfrage*).[7]

The capacity to raise this fundamental question is nothing less than a token of humanity, Strauss emphasizes. If questioning as such is an essential and distinctive characteristic of man, it is so *par excellence* when it turns to man himself, to the purpose and aim of his life. In this respect, the question regarding the right way of life brings to light man's natural aim, when "[…] confronted with the ignorance of what is right (*das Richtige*), escape into the *question* of what is right – escape from the unnaturalness of our situation. The *need* to know and thus the questioning, is the best guarantee that we are still natural beings, humans […]."[8]

On several occasions in the lectures, Strauss suggests that we possess a classic exhibition, not to say an exemplary personification, of this fundamental question. Reverting to the Greek phrase *pôs biôteon*—how should one live?—he leaves us in no doubt that we owe it to none other than Socrates. In a particularly eloquent statement in "Cohen and Maimonides,"

he tries to unfold the Socratic question by means of the three main characteristics of Socrates's particular way of life. The first of these is the absence of any doctrine or teaching: Socrates persistently gives priority to questioning over answering, and where he seems to answer or to teach, it is only to reiterate the question more forcefully and more elaborately. For, as the *Apology* (38a) makes clear, Socrates "[…] *wants* to remain with the question. And that is because questioning *matters*, because a life that is not questioning is not a life worthy of man."[9]

Of course, this sustained profession of ignorance does not exclude that Socrates knows many things, being a keen observer of his fellow human beings. Precisely this knowledge, however, sharpens his awareness of his ignorance regarding the most urgent human issues, the most important of which is the right way of life for man.[10] Prompted by this awareness to try and account for his own life, he approaches others in order to ask them to do the same for theirs. More precisely, he asks them to account for their view regarding the right way of life, as it is reflected in their opinions on topics such as goodness, justice, nobility, virtue, beauty, courage, law, and the gods. Instead of providing answers, however, their elucidations reveal themselves deeply deficient, proving the necessity and legitimacy of returning to the initial question.

However, as Strauss points out, that same necessity justifies a most paradoxical implication. For, from this point of view, as long as no satisfactory answer has been given, the life of questioning *itself* is the right way of life or the just life: "Socrates' question compels [one to take] responsibility; and whoever comprehends it, comprehends that a life which does not consist in [taking] responsibility, which does consist in constant examination, is not worth living for man. Socrates therefore does give an answer to the question about the just life: *questioning about the just life—that alone is the just life*."[11] In other words, when philosophic inquiry turns toward the question of man's primary obligation, that same obligation turns out to be philosophic inquiry itself. Of course, even this "Socratic answer" is not exempt from the priority of the question: the assertion that raising the question regarding the just life is itself the just life, itself cannot avoid being made the object of thorough scrutiny. In this sense political philosophy, perhaps paradoxically, can be understood as *first* philosophy: it is the point where philosophy must begin by reflecting critically on its own possibility.[12]

Thus the fundamental question, as it is understood by Socrates, points to a paradoxical answer. There is, however, a third crucial feature brought to the fore in Strauss's discussion, deserving our special attention. In pur-

suit of the just life, and seeking to account for his own life, Socrates is compelled to raise his question in discussion with others. For whatever the result of this *logon didounai* may be, for it to be valid, it must be the object of agreement and concord between human beings, and as such it must pertain to the community of human beings. The objects of human opinion examined by Socrates, such as the virtues, always relate to the place of man within a community. This means that, in his understanding, the just life necessarily implies plurality: it is fundamentally the just life *together*. To the extent that human life is essentially political, so is the just life sought after by the Socratic query. The ramifications of this insight are presented with surprising clarity and force:

> Thus, the knowledge sought by Socrates is an accord arising from an agreement about the good, which qua human good is the common good. *Socratic questioning about the just life is a questioning together about the just life together for the sake of the just life together*, for the sake of the true state. Socrates' questioning is essentially *political*.[13]

Viewed from the point of view of the Socratic question, the just life necessarily points toward the true state. But if the Socratic question is essentially political, what about the Socratic answer that was brought to light within the same context? If, as this answer indicates, the just life is the quest for knowledge or philosophy, what does this imply with regard to the best way of living together? To the extent that the question itself constitutes an answer, it seems to be justified to suppose that an essential characteristic of the one would devolve unto the other. Although the inflection of his wording—"the true state" (*der wahre Staat*)—is unmistakably Platonic, Strauss, oddly enough, does not immediately dot the i's. That this inflection is nevertheless intended can be established by a few simple observations. The first of these pertains to the context: the account of the Socratic question and answer, in which the passage quoted above occurs, is itself part of a larger section devoted to the difference between Plato and Aristotle. In this light, it is significant that, summing up the said account, Strauss calls it an outline of "the fundamental ideas of *Socratic-Platonic* philosophizing."[14] Finally, throughout the lecture as a whole, the quest for the true state is consistently identified as the main characteristic of Platonic political philosophy.[15] In the Socratic question regarding the just life, Strauss thus discovers the proper point of departure for "an abso-

lutely a-Christian philosophy" capable of conceiving the possibility of natural right in a world without providence. At the same time, he discovers that this very question in fact lay at the heart of the very need to justify his unbelief that motivated his initial investigations.

Exiting the Second Cave

In the correspondence, the possibility of recovering the Socratic question proves to be an important point of contention between Strauss and Krüger. The latter, indeed, subscribes to Strauss's characterization of modern thought as fettered in an artificial "second cave" under Plato's original and natural cave. However, he strongly doubts if we moderns are able to ascend from the former to the latter and recover its "naïve" perspective: "this naivety is a *requirement*, which itself is absolutely not naïve" (*GS-3* 413). Strauss counters by pointing out that this objection itself rests on the unwarranted claims that Christianity saw radically deeper into the human condition than ancient philosophy, and that modern thought, as heir to this radical deepening, constitutes a decisive progress even after Christianity has been disqualified.

The perspective of depth, he goes on to argue, rests on the Christian—and by extension modern—emphasis on introspection and self-assessment. However, this emphasis itself begs the question: "Depth is at home in self-examination (*Selbstprüfung*). Self-examination presupposes a standard (*Maßstab*). *The question as to the standard is the radical question.* I find that the moderns on the whole have neglected this radical question, while they apparently or really demanded self-examination." (*GS-3* 421, emphasis added) In this way, Strauss decisively turns the tables on Krüger: beyond, or rather, *before* the depth of introspection is the seemingly "superficial" but crucial question of the standard that is to be used in self-examination. And this question points us directly to the Socratic question: what is the right life? In this way, Strauss shows there may be a possibility of casting off what Krüger sees as the inevitable "factual domination of Christ over the post-classical world," which underlies the historicist conceit that we cannot return to Plato's cave. Strauss does not deny that Christianity and modernity "may have opened a whole dimension that was inaccessible to the Greeks," but this does not mean that the former are more radical than the latter:

> But then the question remains, what "dignity" should be attributed to this dimension. Is it really a *more radical* dimension? Do we really know more about the roots of life, about the questionableness of life, than the Greeks? Or is it merely the case that something has settled itself before *that* radical dimension that was the sole object of Greek philosophy, which imposes a reflective propaedeutic on us? I do not deny that *we must* philosophize historically, that is, raise awareness of things of which the Greeks did not need to raise awareness. I do not at all deny that for us the 'naivety' is merely a requirement, and that no human being can philosophize 'naïvely' today. But I ask: is this change a consequence of this, that fundamentally we know more than the Greeks […] or is it fundamentally – that is, for the knowledge of what a human being needs to know as such – unproductive, an odious fatality that forces us to an 'unnatural' detour. (*GS-3* 421)

According to Strauss, then, historicism is an obstacle that can and must be removed by means of a "reflective propedeutic." Not historicism itself, but this very requirement is an "odious fatality" that we must bear with patience. The "unnatural detour" it imposes on us will nevertheless allow us to overcome historicism: "through 'remembrance' (*Erinnerung*) we must bring ourselves into the dimension where, understanding the Greeks, we can question 'naively' with them." (*GS-3* 422)

In order to understand how Strauss envisages this "reflective propedeutic," it is worthwhile to turn again to the lectures discussed above. More specifically, we must return to his discovery that his own attempt to find his bearings in the "situation of the present" is in fact an attempt to raise the Socratic question regarding the just life. As Strauss immediately goes on to note in "The Intellectual Situation of the Present," however, our attempts fail: the eternal question is, as it were, automatically diverted into a temporal one. For some reason, we are convinced that the answer can only be found within the present situation. The latter, however, only offers us a pandemonium of conflicting voices and opinions, an anarchy of theoretical systems, but nothing in the way of bearings or guidelines as to how to proceed.

Thus, we are caught in a contradiction: by token of the Socratic origin of our query, we implicitly acknowledge the necessity of breaking out of the present situation. At the same time, however, we posit the impossibility of doing so, by continuing to turn to the present with our question: "[…] while the present is as *compelled to question as any other age, it is less capable of questioning than any age*. We *must* question without being *capable* of questioning."[16]

As Strauss relates the contemporary query regarding the present to the Socratic question, so does he relate the contemporary arguments for the impossibility to that same question. In the lectures, he identifies two general underlying lines of reasoning, both of which will undoubtedly sound familiar to every reader of his later English works. The first of these can be summarized as follows. So far, the Socratic quest for the just life has not found any satisfactory answer, and every attempt to genuinely break out of one's historical situation has failed. Therefore, one must conclude that man will never be able to discover the just life and that every attempt must remain historically situated. According to the same reasoning, however, this conclusion can provide the starting point for a new way of philosophizing. The second reasoning is that even if an answer to the Socratic question could be given, such an answer could never be more than an individual and groundless value-judgment, bound to conflict with other value-judgments.

In his critical response, Strauss identifies both lines of reasoning with prominent thinkers of his time. The deficiencies of the second argument, he states, "[…] would be identical with a radical critique of the life's work (*Lebenswerk*) of Max Weber."[17] (*GS-2* 447) Pointing to the constraints of the lecture, he then limits himself to two remarks that unmistakably foreshadow the critique in the second chapter of *Natural Right and History*: first, Weber's allegedly value-free social science is itself based on certain value-judgments, and second, Weber's own attempt to clarify his own presuppositions cannot simply be reduced to a groundless individual decision. The first argument is tackled in the work of the social scientist Karl Mannheim. The latter, Strauss points out, commits a *non sequitur*: the observation that every attempt at answering the Socratic question has failed does not justify the conclusion that it *must* fail. One could, with equal justification, argue that it compels us to try again.[18] Mannheim's error, Strauss adds, consists in taking the fate of philosophy as the guiding principle of philosophy. As such, it is characteristic of contemporary thought in general: "This is the principal mistake to which today's man keeps succumbing: the attempt to determine the task from the fate."[19]

Because of the recurrent use of the word "fate" (*Schicksal*), it is tempting to read these remarks as an implicit discussion with another important contemporary thinker whom Strauss certainly held to be far more original and profound than Mannheim. Is it not characteristic of Heidegger's historicism that, with utmost consistency, it tries to redefine the task of philosophy starting from its fate, to the extent that first becomes a dispensation of the latter? Space prevents me from going deeper into this matter. Suffice it to say that

if this is indeed the case, then the following warning from a review published in the same year (1931) might also have been aimed at Heidegger: "[…] fascinated by the conditions and vicissitudes (*Schicksale*) of all questions one stops – questioning."[20] In a nutshell, this denotes the condition of being in the second cave, an image made public in the same review, but which Strauss had already developed earlier in one of the lectures.[21]

What is it that makes contemporary man succumb to the error of defining the task of philosophy from its fate, thereby diverting the Socratic question toward the present? On this point, Strauss is unambiguous: "Under the presuppositions of historical consciousness the question concerning the right life *compels us to ask the question regarding the intellectual situation of the present*."[22] It is our historical consciousness or, as Strauss would later call it, the "experience of history" that incites us to the unwarranted verdict that the Socratic question regarding the just life cannot be answered, committing us to the present.[23]

In order to recover our capacity to raise the Socratic question as an open one, as a viable possibility, it is necessary to submit the historical consciousness to a profound critical scrutiny. This requires a sustained inquiry as to both its origins and its contemporary manifestations: while the first line points to the Enlightenment polemic against "prejudice"—religious and philosophic tradition, the second points to Weber and Heidegger, but also and especially to Nietzsche. For with Nietzsche, the modern polemic culminates in the wholesale rejection of the foundations of the traditions. This rejection, however, offers some remarkable opportunities:

> In any case, Nietzsche has enabled us to understand the Socratic question again, to recognize it as *our* question. The Platonic dialogues are no longer *self-evident* for us – no longer self-evidently all right, no longer self-evidently wrong, surpassed, out of date; but we read them as if we were conducting them ourselves if we were capable of that. But we are not capable of doing that, since all the concepts that we *are equipped with* derive from the modern tradition. This is what we have to know – this is why we have to concern ourselves with the intellectual situation of the present. The question betrays the awareness of the fact that the question concerning what is right can*not* be answered *without* being clear about our incapacity to question – but this question is fundamentally misguided if it is supposed to replace the real question.[24]

The final two lines of this passage sum up concisely what is involved in the "reflective propedeutic" that Strauss calls for in the correspondence with Krüger: in order to find our way back to the naïve Socratic question,

we need first to critically revisit "our own concepts," those modern concepts that prevent us from doing so. In the correspondence with Krüger, it becomes apparent that Strauss's trajectory after the publication of *Spinoza's Critique of Religion* is in large part devoted to this endeavor: his engagement with Hobbes on the one hand, and his investigations in medieval Islamic and Jewish thought on the other. Between 1931 and 1935, Strauss wrote vigorously and extensively on Hobbes: he published several articles as well as his acclaimed book on *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes: Its Basis and Its Genesis*. However, he also wrote several other pieces, including an entire manuscript entitled *Hobbes's Critique of Religion* (*Die Religionskritik des Hobbes*), all of which remained unpublished until 2001.[25] Since a full treatment of these writings is impossible within the scope of this chapter, I want to focus on one element they all have in common: in each of them, Hobbes's thought is considered in direct confrontation with Socrates and the Socratic question, and against the background of the issue of natural right. As such, they supplement and clarify various elements that are discussed in more rapid and truncated ways in the correspondence with Krüger. At the same time, they bring to light a surprising and interesting feature of the published book on Hobbes: in this work, the direct confrontation with Socrates remains much more implicit.

Socrates Absconditus: Strauss's Research in Medieval and Modern Natural Right

In two of the introductions, Strauss starts from the observation that, in the current stage of late modernity, natural right has declined. The principal reason for this decline, he notes, is the emergence of the conviction, now predominant, that the quest for natural right has failed throughout history and hence must necessarily fail. In both cases, Strauss retorts that this conclusion is based on a *non sequitur*, and therefore problematic.[26] For this reason, he argues, it is necessary to return to Hobbes, who founded modern natural right by means of a critique of traditional natural right. Hobbes's attempt to overthrow traditional natural right, however, compelled him to return to its foundations, that is, to Socrates, whom he acknowledged to be the founder of traditional political philosophy. More precisely, he was compelled to try and *repeat* the Socratic foundation, in order to be able to criticize it and provide a new and better foundation.[27]

According to Strauss, however, Hobbes was prevented from genuinely repeating the Socratic foundation because he failed to perceive the radically untraditional question underlying traditional natural right: "The question concerning natural right means the right order of human living together; the right order is that order which is determined by reason."[28] For Hobbes, the Socratic question and its permutations—what is justice?, what is virtue?—had been answered by the tradition, more exactly, by the Aristotelian tradition and its definitions of justice and virtue.[29] Hence, "[…] his being caught up in the tradition already determines his outset in this way, that he is unable to repeat the Socratic question."[30] As a result, he was unable to perceive the far-reaching implications of that question, as they become visible in the Socratic answer. In particular, he was unable to see that the Socratic answer in no way suspends the question, but rather compounds it, so that the priority of the philosophical life permanently remains an object of scrutiny. For Hobbes, as opposed to Socrates, the possibility of philosophy, in particular of political philosophy, was self-evident, it was literally "out of the question." He accepted that possibility, as it were, "on trust," and thereby fell short of the original Socratic outset.[31] According to Strauss, this entails that "[…] Socratic-Platonic rationalism is the natural standard by which its modern counterpart is measured."[32] From the point of view of Socratic rationalism, it is implied, Hobbes's modern rationalism is liable to being weighed and found wanting.

Let us now turn to the results of Strauss's research as they were eventually published. In *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes: Its Basis and Its Genesis*, there is no trace of a direct encounter between Hobbes and Socrates: the main antagonists are Plato and Aristotle, who are named as the founders of the tradition of political philosophy, while Socrates has virtually vanished. His absence, however, is not complete: there are a few traces, of which I will only mention the two most notable. First, consider the very first sentence of the introduction: "Hobbes's political philosophy is the first peculiarly modern attempt to give a coherent answer to *the question of man's right life, which is at the same time the question of the right order of society*."[33] Although the origin of the question is obvious, Strauss does not refer to Socrates in the whole of introduction, nor do we find his name mentioned in any of the following seven chapters.

The silence is broken only in the eighth and final chapter, though almost imperceptibly. In this chapter, Strauss's investigation culminates in a direct confrontation of Hobbes and Plato, who is called "the originator of at least the demand for an exact and paradoxical political science."[34]

This confrontation leads to the criticism that Hobbes fundamentally and "disastrously" misunderstood Plato in supposing that the latter's philosophy starts from ideas instead of words.[35] In fact, Strauss remarks, "Plato 'takes refuge' from things in speech about things as the only entrance into the true reasons of things which is open to man."[36] As a result of his neglect of this feature, Hobbes fails to begin his political philosophy with the primordial question as to what is the essence of virtue, or as to what is good and fitting. As the quest for natural right is abandoned, it seems, the right of nature takes its place.

About ten pages later, however, Strauss points out that this taking refuge in words or speech is the fundamental characteristic of "the tradition founded by *Socrates*-Plato," more precisely of "a *Socratic*-Platonic reform of philosophy" based on the insight that the orientation by speech is "the only possible orientation, which is originally at the disposal of men."[37] As far as I could discover, this is the only occasion in the whole book where Strauss refers to Socrates, and even then through discreet use of an adjective.[38] Considering the context of its occurrence—a discussion of the distinctive characteristic of classical political philosophy in what is clearly the most important chapter—this sudden apparition of Socrates in conjunction with the dominant figure of Plato is, to say the least, conspicuous.

Viewed against the horizon of the early lectures and the preliminary work, we thus face the question of how to account for this quasi-disappearance. Why did Strauss downplay the presence of Socrates and the Socratic question, so important in the process of defining his research program, when it came to publishing the first results of that program? That both his research on Maimonides and that on Hobbes were guided by a single motive, is suggested by an interesting remark in a letter of 1935 to Gershom Scholem:

> If I have the time and the strength, in the course of about 10 years I want to write a book on the Moreh [*The Guide of the Perplexed*]. For the time being, I'm publishing an introduction to the Moreh under the title: Hobbes's political science in its development, which is due to appear next year at the Oxford Press.[39]

This remarks shows how Strauss's work on Hobbes is part and parcel of the "reflective propedeutic" he introduced in the correspondence with Krüger: critically understanding "our own concepts" as they come into being in Hobbes's work as a way to find our way back to naïve Socratic-

Platonic thinking, which is preserved in Maimonides's medieval rationalism. But it does not clarify Strauss's reticence. One possible explanation is that it reflects an act of accommodation: given the predominance of the philological-historical approach in the British academic environment in which he conducted his research, ostensible conformity may have proved the only approach with some chance of being taken seriously. Placing Socrates and his question and answer up front in publications, either as a framework or as a guiding idea, might have been a serious obstacle to reception, both by the academic and by the publishing world.[40]

Nothing, however, precluded a combination of the two approaches, that is, to reengage with the Socratic question through the medium of historical-philological research. As we have seen in the correspondence with Krüger, Strauss recognized the "odious fatality" of this "unnatural return" from the artificial second cave to the natural first cave. Perhaps he eventually came to embrace the obstacle as a vehicle in what Heinrich Meier has called "the movement from the history of philosophy to the intention of the philosopher."[41] This may even apply to Strauss's most wide-ranging "historical" work, *Natural Right and History*. At the beginning of the chapter on Hobbes, for example, we find the following: "Thomas Hobbes regarded himself as the founder of political philosophy or political science. He knew, of course, that the great honour which he claimed for himself was awarded, by almost universal consent, to Socrates." To this, Strauss adds: "Present-day scholars are not impressed by Hobbes's claim."[42] The implicit suggestion is that perhaps we might do better to let ourselves be impressed by this claim, so as to take it seriously enough to investigate it more closely and more critically.

Doing so would, in addition, invite us to reconsider the claim raised on behalf of Socrates. For even if Hobbes knew of the latter, he failed to understand its ultimate grounds, those peculiar questions regarding justice, virtue, and the soul and the paradoxical answer they point to. In this respect, perhaps Strauss's unobtrusive but decisive thought on Machiavelli equally applies to Hobbes: "[…] he is silent about the soul because he has forgotten the soul, just as he has forgotten tragedy and Socrates."[43] *Sokratesvergessenheit* (forgetfulness of Socrates): could this be Strauss's principal response to Heidegger's *Seinsvergessenheit* (forgetfulness of Being)? Moreover, could it be Strauss's answer to revelation? In one of the early lectures, he observes: "Now, questioning has priority over answering. God does not *question*, although he does answer. Questioning is more characteristic of the human intellect than is answering. There is no answer

without questioning, although there is questioning without answer."[44] This view is eloquently supplemented in a note written at the same time, referring to the lecture and its discussion of the situation of the present:

> The main presupposition of our questionableness is our history, i.e., the interacting and counteracting of the Greek and the biblical world. The Greek world has a more direct relationship towards questioning than the biblical: its origin is the question, while the biblical world can be interpreted at most as an answer to the Greek question, and hence is in itself order, command, law. Only from the Greeks can we learn what *questioning* means. The question regarding the just life was raised by Socrates.[45]

In spite of their differences, the view that there is questioning without an answer remained the deepest point of agreement between Leo Strauss and Gerhard Krüger. When the original German version of *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes* was published in 1965, Strauss added an autobiographical preface. There, he asserts that he "did not write about Hobbes as a Hobbesian."[46] By way of an explanation, he refers, without explicitly quoting it, to the last sentence of a book by Krüger: "That the decisive question remains true, even if it finds no answer, this he who questions thus can learn from the example of Socrates."[47]

Notes

1. Leo Strauss, *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*, tr. by Elsa M. Sinclair (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), 1; "Preface to *Hobbes' politische Wissenschaft*," in *Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity: Essays and Lectures in Modern Jewish Thought*, ed. by Kenneth Hart Green (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 453. Henceforth referred to as "*JPCM*." For a more detailed account of the context in which Strauss made these statements, see D. Janssens, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Philosophy, Prophecy, and Politics in Leo Strauss's Early Thought* (New York: The State University of New York Press, 2008), Ch. 1.
2. For an excellent and comprehensive discussion of the Strauss – Krüger correspondence and its context, see Thomas L. Pangle, "The Light Shed on the Crucial Development of Strauss's Thought By His Correspondence With Gerhard Krüger" (Chap. 3), in this volume.
3. *GS-3* 379.
4. Gerhard Krüger, "Besprechung von L. Strauss, *Die Religionskritik Spinozas als Grundlage seiner Bibelwissenschaft*," in *Deutsche Literaturzeitung* 51 (1931), 2410.

5. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Ch. XLVI.
6. *GS-2* 377–391, 393–436, 441–464, respectively. In this chapter, I shall refer to the English translations that have since become available.
7. L. Strauss, "Religious Situation of the Present," translated by A. Schmidt and M. D. Yaffe, in M. D. Yaffe and R. S. Ruderman, *Reorientation: Leo Strauss in the 1930s* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 227. Henceforth "RSP."
8. L. Strauss, "The Intellectual Situation of the Present," translated by A. Schmidt and M. D. Yaffe, in M. D. Yaffe and R. S. Ruderman, *Reorientation: Leo Strauss in the 1930s* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 245. Henceforth "ISP."
9. Leo Strauss, "Cohen and Maimonides," tr. by M. D. Yaffe and I. A. Moore, in Leo Strauss, *Leo Strauss on Maimonides: The Complete Writings*, ed. by K. Hart Green (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 199. Henceforth "CaM."
10. Cf. Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1953), 32: "[…] philosophy in its original, Socratic sense: philosophy is knowledge that one does not know; that is to say, it is knowledge of what one does not know, or awareness of the fundamental problems and, therewith, of the fundamental alternatives regarding their solution that are coeval with human thought." Henceforth "*NRH*."
11. CaM 199. This insight finds a striking echo almost 30 years later in *Natural Right and History*, when, elaborating on the "Socratic answer to the question of how man ought to live" mentioned at the beginning, Strauss writes: "By realizing that we are ignorant of the most important things, we realize at the same time that the most important thing for us, or the one thing needful, is quest for knowledge of the most important things or quest for wisdom." (*NRH* 36)
12. Cf. H. Meier, "Why Political Philosophy?" in H. Meier, *Political philosophy and the Challenge of Revealed Religion* (Chicago: The University Press of Chicago, 2017), 1–22.
13. CaM 200.
14. CaM 201.
15. Like the Socratic question, the Socratic answer is essentially political, and this characteristic constitutes a point of particular affinity with Plato: what remains a quasi-tacit premise in the lectures of the 1930s is made almost explicit in *Natural Right and History*. When we return to the passage in the second chapter where the "Socratic answer" is said to argue the priority and necessity of the quest for knowledge, we find Strauss adding the following: "That this conclusion is not barren of political consequences is known to every reader of Plato's *Republic* or of Aristotle's *Politics*." (*NRH* 36)
16. ISP 242.

17. ISP 242.
18. Leo Strauss, "Conspectivism," translated by A. Schmidt and M. D. Yaffe, in M. D. Yaffe and R. S. Ruderman, *Reorientation: Leo Strauss in the 1930s* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 372: "If one understands that thought is conditioned by the situation, it does not follow that one cannot come to see the situation originally, free of the dominant viewpoints. This freedom does not fall into anyone's lap: it must be won by understanding the tradition as such in which we are caught up," and 373: "[…] to make this *fate* (*Schicksal*) of all research into the *principle* of research."
19. Cf. RSP 231: "[…] our *fate* is *not* our *task*."; ISP 250: "We cannot escape the *fate* of historicity – but we need not be concerned about that in our thought."
20. Leo Strauss, "Review of Julius Ebbinghaus, *On the Progress of Metaphysics* (1931)" in Leo Strauss, *The Early Writings (1921–1932)*, tr. and ed. by Michael Zank (New York: State University of New York Press, 2002), 214–216.
21. RSP 235: "But we cannot answer immediately as we are; for we know that we are deeply entangled in a tradition: we are yet much further down than Plato's cave-dwellers. We have to raise ourselves to the *origin* of the tradition, to the level of *natural ignorance*. If we wanted to concern ourselves with the present situation, we would be doing nothing other than the cave-dwellers who described the interior of their cave." A little later, Strauss states that the attempt to recover the question regarding the right life requires "[…] the uncompromising scrutiny of the supposed 'achievements' of history." Strauss used the concept of the "second cave" in many subsequent publications: see, among others, "On Collingwood's Philosophy of History" *Review of Metaphysics* 5, no. 4 (Jun.), pp. 559–86, esp. 577, 585; "On a New Interpretation of Plato's Political Philosophy," *Social Research* 13, no. 3 (Sep.), 326–67, esp. 328; "Correspondence Concerning Modernity" (with Karl Löwith), *Independent Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 4, 1983, 105–19, esp. 107. See also *Philosophy and Law*, 25 n. 2; *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, 155–156; *What is Political Philosophy ?*, 68; "The Crisis of Our Time," in H. J. Spaeth (ed.), *The Predicament of Modern Politics*, Detroit: The University of Detroit Press, 1964, 54.
22. ISP 243.
23. *NRH* 20.
24. ISP 253.
25. Most of these writings are now available in an English translation in Leo Strauss, *Hobbes's Critique of Religion and Related Writings*, translated and edited by G. Bartlett and S. Minkov (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011). Henceforth "*HCR*." An additional source I will use is an

untitled typescript with handwritten additions, beginning with a paragraph entitled "Einleitung" (*Introduction*), which can be found in the *Leo Strauss Papers*, Box 15, Folder 2 (formerly Box 10, Folder 5). Henceforth "Einleitung." This typescript was not included in the English translation, mainly for reasons of space and overlap: see *HCR* 3–4.

26. Cf. *HCR* 148: "From the *factual* failure of the earlier [teachings], nothing follows against the [im]possibility of their undertaking." Cf. "Einleitung," 1 and 5.
27. Cf. *HCR* 29–30; "Einleitung" 34–43; *NRH* 168.
28. *HCR* 145.
29. Leo Strauss, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes: Its Basis and Its Genesis*, tr. by E. M. Sinclair (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1936). Henceforth "*PPH*." See *PPH* 81, on Hobbes's turning from the question of rational precepts to that of their application (and thereby to history): "Because the formulation and the explanation of these precepts had been fully and adequately completed by Aristotle, because the primary philosophic problem had been solved, because its solution had become a matter of course, because of all this a philosopher like Hobbes had the leisure and the opportunity to give thought to the secondary problem of the application of precepts."
30. "Einleitung" 47. When, in *Natural Right and History*, Strauss observes that Socrates "[…] was as much concerned with understanding what justice is […] as with preaching justice," he adds the following caveat: "For if one is concerned with understanding the problem of justice, one must go through the stage in which justice presents itself as identical with citizen-morality, and one must not merely rush through that stage." (*NRH*, 150) Could this be an implicit censure of modern political thinkers like Hobbes, who rashly disparaged citizen morality and its accompanying understanding of justice, and who thereby rushed through the crucial stage?
31. Cf. "Einleitung" 46, 49–50; *HRC* 28–30, 113–114; *PPH* 81, 152; *NRH* 167.
32. Cf. "Einleitung" 43. In the introduction to *Philosophy and Law*, published in 1935, Strauss refers to Hermann Cohen's portrayal of Maimonides as the "classic of rationalism," and classic rationalism is subsequently understood as the natural model and measure of modern rationalism. Leo Strauss, *Philosophy and Law: Contributions to the Understanding of Maimonides and his Predecessors*, tr. by E. Adler. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995, 21–22.
33. *PPH* 1 (emphasis added). Cf. PP. 5.
34. *PPH* 141.
35. *PPH* 145.
36. *PPH* 142.
37. *PPH* 153 (emphasis added).

38. The only other reference is part of a quote from Ernest Barker's *Plato and His Predecessors.* Cf. *PPH* 155. On *PPH* 145, Strauss elaborates on Plato's turn to the *logoi*: "[…] he opposes to 'physiology' not 'ontology' but 'dialectic' […]." One may wonder whether "ontology" includes "fundamental ontology."
39. Letter to Gerschom Scholem, October 2, 1935, in *GS-3* 716.
40. See also Heinrich Meier's considerations in his introduction to *HCR* 8–9.
41. Heinrich Meier, *Leo Strauss and the Theological-Political Problem* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 64.
42. *NRH* 166.
43. Leo Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1958), 294.
44. RSP 227.
45. Handwritten note, in *Leo Strauss Papers*, Box 10, Folder 4. A little further in the same manuscript, the problem is expressed as follows: "As far as the biblical world is concerned, it does not commit us anymore, for we no longer believe in the creator-god. The question regarding the just life thus focuses on the question: how can man live without god?"
46. Strauss, "Preface to Hobbes' politische Wissenschaft," in *JPCM* 454.
47. Gerhard Krüger, *Philosophie und Moral in der kantischen Kritik* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1931), 236.

CHAPTER 5

"Zurück zu Plato!" But, Which Plato?: The Return to Plato by Gerhard Krüger and Leo Strauss

Daniel Tanguay

The correspondence between Gerhard Krüger and Leo Strauss is a document of exceptional value for anyone interested in the genesis of the two philosophers' thought and in the more general history of German philosophy in the inter-war period. The two young philosophers were front-row witnesses to the crisis of German thought which can be traced back to Nietzsche and to the *Lebensphilosophie* of the end of the nineteenth century, but which took on an even more acute and dramatic form as a result of the catastrophe of the First World War and the period of social and political instability which followed. A climate of crisis of this type favored the search for radical solutions to the decline of the ideals of bourgeois society and of western rationalism, which had lost their credibility after the great mechanized slaughter. The difficult beginnings of the Weimar Republic and the German period of hyperinflation from 1921 to 1923 only aggravated the sense of disorientation which especially affected intellectual young people who found themselves plunged into a

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moral and spiritual crisis without perceiving the outlines of any type of future for themselves.

When one takes up the works of Krüger and Strauss, one must never forget that they belong to this generation characterized by extreme thought, which had difficulty in recognizing in academic philosophic teaching a satisfactory response to its distress and its questionings. Both men had been educated in the celebrated Neo-Kantian School of Marburg University, which had been founded by Hermann Cohen nearly a half-century earlier, and both were front-row witnesses to the death pangs of this School. Gadamer mentions in this connection in his memoirs that Gerhard Krüger, while still a young student, had spoken up in Paul Natorp's seminar and developed a critique of "self-reflection," an essential component of Neo-Kantian thought. Gadamer then describes some of the characteristic features of Krüger's philosophic temperament and of his role in the dissolution of this School:

> What struck one about him at this time was not just the sharpness and clarity of his understanding but most of all the great sobriety with which he came to terms with Idealistic philosophy. In this respect he was predetermined to help to its completion the self-dissolution of the Marburg School, which at this time was finding expression in Nicolai Hartmann's departure from neo-Kantian Idealism.[1]

It was also at Marburg that the two friends became acquainted with the teaching of Heidegger, who, in a certain manner, delivered the death blow to Neo-Kantianism in more than one person's mind. We will take note, moreover, of the decisive philosophic influence of Heidegger in the two friends' correspondence. As we will see, their taking up of certain Heidegger's themes or intuitions is nevertheless not at all servile. Krüger and Strauss do not have the souls of disciples and display, despite their relatively young age, a remarkable independence of spirit. Their correspondence allows us to enter into the secret workshop of their thoughts and thus gives us a striking glimpse of the questions which they will not cease to explore during their entire lives.

If this correspondence is a document of exceptional value for grasping the genesis of the philosophic projects of Strauss and Krüger, it is nevertheless important not to disregard its unfinished and sometimes completely experimental character. In addition, it has the defects and positive qualities of the epistolary genre: it presents in a direct and intimate

manner arguments and philosophic positions which are or will be developed in more finished works, but, at the same time, the very condensed character of the writing makes it difficult to grasp certain arguments in all their nuances. Strauss and Krüger often play with the limits of their own thought, and this is why one must not seek in this correspondence for definitive and unambiguous answers to the questions which every attentive reader of their works will inevitably pose. The correspondence sometimes shines a rather harsh light on the innermost convictions of the two authors, but one must not neglect the context of these confessions in order not to make them say what they do not say nor to accord them an excessive weight in the interpretation of the ultimate meaning of their thoughts.

For all of these reasons, it is a delicate matter to interpret this correspondence, all the more delicate because it is incomplete. Unfortunately, certain of Krüger's letters have been lost. Here, one thinks above all of the letters dating from the crucial period from 1928 to the end of 1932 (1–19). The first letter from Krüger to Strauss dates from November 13, 1932 (20), when Strauss had been in Paris for several months to carry out a research study period financed by the Rockefeller Foundation. The most intense period of the correspondence at the philosophic level occurs roughly between November 1932 and July 1933. We note that this period corresponds, in part, with Hitler's arrival to power and the establishment of the Nazi regime in Germany. These political events occupy surprisingly little space in the two friends' correspondence, whereas they had a very direct impact on the young Strauss's life, who suddenly found himself in exile. In any case, these events did not overturn the amicable relationship between Strauss and Krüger. However, the correspondence appears to have stopped for an unknown reason in 1935, to be briefly resumed after the war between 1958 and 1962.

Before taking up the heart of this correspondence, it is worth noting that Strauss and Krüger had the highest esteem for each other and that they were united by a shared philosophical questioning. Among Strauss's friends at this time (Jacob Klein, Karl Löwith, Hans-Georg Gadamer), Krüger was certainly not as close a friend as Klein, but he was without question the friend who had the most sympathy for what Strauss would later, in the preface to the German edition of *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*,[2] call the central theme of his thought: the theologico-political problem.[3] It is thus not a matter of chance that in this same preface, Strauss

mentions the influence which Krüger had on his reflections on this matter: "Philosophic interest in theology linked me with Gerhard Krüger. His review of my Spinoza book expressed my intention and result more clearly than I myself had done."[4] Among Strauss's friends, Krüger was the one who was most interested in the problem of the relationship between philosophy and religion and the most versed in theology. In Germany he followed closely all of the developments of the new dialectical theology, and in Marburg he was very early on linked to the circle of the theologian Rudolf Bultmann. Moreover, he established a friendship with Bultmann which lasted his entire life.

If Krüger was, in some sense, a fellow traveler with the dialectical theology, he did not agree with all of the theses of this School. He had a particular sympathy for natural theology, and he did not have the same apprehensions regarding a more classical philosophic approach to theology as Karl Barth or even as someone like Rudolf Bultmann, for example. He did not oppose reason and faith to one another in such a clear-cut manner as them, and he did not endorse a purely "existential" approach to religious faith. As such, he was a philosopher who theologized or a theologian who philosophized, closer to the tradition, whereas the dialectical theologians wished to return to the authentic spirit of Protestantism and of Christianity, which, in their opinion, rejected natural reason as a path to the truth.[5] He certainly followed them in their rejection of a liberal Protestantism, which was too inclined to accommodate Christianity and modern ideas, but he was not as mistrustful as they about natural reason's capacity to discover God and thus to prepare us for faith. His conversion to Catholicism after the Second World War should therefore not come as a surprise.[6] It formed a part of his search for a possible reconciliation between reason and faith, between philosophy and revelation.

Krüger did not engage in theology as an activity without any relationship to his life. He was a believer and one should note, moreover, that he was the only Christian believer with whom Strauss seriously engaged in discussion. This discussion was made possible, as we have just indicated, by the fact that Krüger judged that natural reason was not in absolute opposition to faith and thus that one could argue in favor of faith on the basis of reason. Furthermore, Krüger thought that he could find in Plato a conception of man, of the world, and of God, which prefigured Christianity. Thus, for Krüger, Platonic philosophy was, as the saying goes, a *praeparatio evangelica*. The truths contained in Platonism would certainly be clarified, developed and enriched by Christian revelation, but Platonism,

without the assistance of revelation, opened the way to the revealed truth. In Krüger's eyes, it was Augustine who authoritatively expounded this synthesis between Platonism and Christian revelation. When Strauss points out to Krüger the existence of Gilson's work on *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy*, and he mentions that "there are astounding parallels between your ideas and Gilson's" (Letter 28), he is at the heart of the truth regarding the fundamental intention of his friend's philosophic project.[7]

The debate between reason and faith is at the core of the correspondence between the two friends and each of them seems, at first glance, to play a well-determined role: Strauss, that of the atheist, and Krüger, that of the believer. Thus, Strauss repeatedly avows his atheism (Letter 3, 7), whereas Krüger, without directly confessing his faith, repeatedly bases his reflections on an adherence to the central dogma of Christianity: the Incarnation of Christ. Moreover, we will see that the question of the Incarnation is of central importance in order to clarify the dispute between the two friends regarding another problem which is linked to their central discussion of the question of reason and faith, namely, the problem of historicism. The two questions are closely interlinked in the correspondence and lead to the heart of the *Auseinandersetzung* of the two friends.

In order to grasp the kernel of the dispute, it is necessary first of all to understand clearly that historicism poses a fundamental problem as much to Krüger's as to Strauss's attempt to respond to what the two men consider to be the impasse in which philosophy finds itself. This impasse is a result, to a large extent, of the triumph of a relativizing historicism which judges that there are no absolute and transcendent truths, but only relative, historical "truths." The only way to get out of this impasse would be to make it again possible—transcending this prevailing opinion of the present time—to attain a truth which would not be linked to a certain time. Thus, it is a matter of restoring life to philosophy's original questioning activity, with the understanding that philosophy distinguishes itself from other human enterprises by its will to attain the truth by means of reason. However, there have always been obstacles to this philosophic quest for this truth. In his natural condition, for all kinds of good and bad reasons, man prefers opinion to truth, the comfort of his ignorance to the effort required in order to free himself from that ignorance. Plato's celebrated allegory of the cave is the classic presentation of the drama of philosophy. It presents an image of the nature of the philosophic quest, and it informs us of the obstacles that the philosopher must overcome in order to exit the cave and attain the light of the truth.

According to Strauss, the obstacles described by Plato in his allegory thus belong to the *natural* condition of man. This last point is essential because it allows us to better understand the curious image of the second cave that Strauss introduces in the course of the correspondence.[8] Strauss mentioned first this idea of the second cave on the occasion of his discussion with Krüger regarding the possibility of a return to the Ancients that would not be a prisoner of historicism (Letter 21, see also 13, 21, 21a, 24, 25a, 25b, 25d). This image of the second cave is of a deceptive simplicity: underneath the natural cave described by Plato in his allegory, over the course of time, a second cave has developed, which represents our present condition. In this second cave dominate opinions and "prejudices" of a nature such that they prevent man from envisioning any possible exit from this cave. In sum, artificial obstacles have been added to the natural obstacles to philosophy in the first cave, as described by Plato, artificial obstacles which condemn man to stagnate in his learned ignorance at the bottom of the cave.

One of the most intense periods of the correspondence centers on the elucidation of the exact nature of this second cave. At first glance, it would indeed seem that this second cave represents historicism and the prejudice which guides it, namely, that there cannot be any truth that is not historically determined. Strauss indirectly alludes to this first interpretation in his first mention of the second cave in the correspondence: "I have now found a fourth person who shares our opinion concerning the present as a second cave: Ebbinghaus. His talk "On Progress in Metaphysics" contains several entirely excellent formulations; I will make note of the talk in DLZ." (Letter 13)

Strauss did in fact write a review of Ebbinghaus's book in the following weeks. In it, one finds reproduced not only the "excellent formulations" to which Strauss had alluded but also the first formulation in a text published by Strauss of the image of the second cave:

> 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; we need history first of all in order to *ascend* to the cave from which Socrates can lead us to light; we need a propaedeutic which the Greeks did not need, namely, learning through reading.[9]

In Strauss's review, or again in Ebbinghaus's text, the second cave is indeed that of historicizing relativism which, in the face of what it perceives as the "anarchy of the systems," has completely lost confidence in man's

ability to arrive at the truth. This is why we need to reread the Ancients, in order to liberate ourselves from the sophisticated form of modern ignorance and its refusal of the truth in order to find again a natural non-knowing that is open to the possibility of truth. It therefore seems clear that the second cave is a result of a development which belongs to modern philosophy. It illustrates the impasse in which the philosophic quest today finds itself. However, as we will see, Krüger and Strauss's discussion of the second cave makes the question of its nature singularly more complex.

The dispute concerning the second cave and the possibility of returning to the first cave—that of nature—begins in Strauss's reply to the first of Krüger's letters, which has been preserved (Letter 20). In this letter, Krüger challenges the idea that Strauss could truly start from what is natural in his analysis of Hobbes. As Krüger argues, Strauss himself begins from a specific historical situation, and, as such, the return will never be able to free itself from this departure point. In other words, the return to the nature of the Ancients is a return that takes place starting from a specific historical situation and it is not possible to ignore that historical situation. However, Krüger does not depict this historical situation as characterized by the domination of historicism, but rather as characterized by "the decline from revelation." In this expression, we see the emergence of Krüger's fundamental objection to the enterprise of a return to the Ancients: such a return cannot ignore revealed religion. This is why Krüger wonders about the exemplary character which Strauss accords to antiquity (Letter 20). Antiquity, without Christianity, cannot be exemplary. The historical appearance of revelation ruins the exemplary character of the Ancients.

Strauss's response to Krüger's objections in his letter of November 17, 1932, is essential. The letter lays out the broad outline of what will be Strauss's fundamental position regarding historicism. This is indeed what is being discussed. As Strauss emphasizes, the profound difference between him and Krüger turns on historicity and the interpretation of its significance (Letter 21). In Strauss's eyes, Socrates and Plato are exemplary inasmuch as they philosophized naturally, that is to say, they philosophized on the basis of the natural human order. Strauss certainly does not deny that philosophy was born in a particular context, namely, that of the "decay of nomos in democracy," but this historical condition is secondary with regard to the natural desire which philosophy sought to satisfy. Socrates did not only seek to respond to a particular historical situation, but he went beyond this situation by engaging in a radical examination of what is human. This quest for the truth belongs to human nature, and to the

extent that philosophic examination concerns what is permanent and universal in man, it is not essentially historical.

Strauss nevertheless concedes that in our present situation, philosophy needs history. He could have said here to Krüger what he stated, as we saw above, in his review of Ebbinghaus's book: given our present situation, history is necessary, but it can nevertheless only play a purely propaedeutic role. Why do we need history when philosophy, in its essence, is not historical? One must examine the two reasons that Strauss evokes because they lead to the heart of his disagreement with Krüger. We need history in the first place because Greek philosophy—a "tradition of questioning"—has been mixed with biblical revelation, that is to say, a "tradition of obedience." This "senseless jointure" of these two traditions has distorted the very essence of philosophic activity. History rightly understood should thus help us to separate what belongs to philosophy and what belongs to biblical revelation. Strauss implies here that any synthesis between Greek philosophy and biblical revelation is, so to speak, "against nature."

The second reason which Strauss evokes in order to justify the necessity of a historical propaedeutic is more difficult to interpret: "[T]hrough the struggle against the revelation-tradition, undertaken in a sort of darkness, we have been pushed into a second cave and no longer even have the *means* for natural philosophy. After all, we too are natural beings – but we live in an entirely unnatural situation." (Letter 21) Thus, according to Strauss, it was philosophy's struggle to emancipate itself from the tutelage of revealed religion that pushed philosophy to imprison us in the second cave. Strauss refers here to the effort of the Renaissance, and then of the modern Enlightenment, to recover, in opposition to revealed religion, "the Greek freedom of philosophizing," or, again, to rediscover "an original, natural basis." This effort seems to have failed inasmuch as, in its fight against religion, philosophy developed tools which were quickly turned against philosophy itself. As Strauss showed in his book on Spinoza, one of these tools was a historical criticism of the Bible, which shook belief in the divine character of biblical revelation. Strauss believes that this same historical criticism led to the relativizing of philosophy itself, from which resulted our imprisonment in this second cave and the necessity of using history against history in order to find the natural ground of the first cave again.

Despite its initial intention to reconquer the freedom to philosophize, modern philosophy was never able, according to Strauss, to free itself from the prejudice according to which modern philosophy represented progress with regard to ancient philosophy. On this precise point, Strauss mentions

that Krüger himself accepts the idea of progress: "'with some justification,' you will say, 'insofar as it had knowledge to impart that the Greeks did not possess: Christian knowledge'" (Letter 21). The disagreement between Strauss and Krüger becomes clearer in the light of this quotation: it is not so much about historicism as about the nature of the link between Greek philosophy and revealed religion, Christianity in particular. Historicism surely plays a role in this discussion, but it is not the fundamental question. One can formulate this fundamental question in the following simplified form: is Christianity an *obstacle* to the return to Greek philosophic questioning for which Strauss wishes, or, quite to the contrary, does it constitute *progress* in comparison with Greek philosophy?

It is Krüger who, in a very direct manner in his letter of December 4, 1932 (Letter 24), will move the discussion about historicism onto the ground of Christianity. In this letter, Krüger distances himself from the possibility brought up by Strauss of liberation from the second cave. The metal that binds the prisoners in the second cave is not of the same nature as that which binds the prisoners in the first cave, and it is so strong that Krüger is doubtful about any possible liberation of the prisoners. This is why he judges that "[i]f one understands why we are sitting in the second cave, then it is impossible to take this 'prison' as a floor of the *Platonic* prison" and that, as a consequence, "[t]he problem of 'prejudice' is even more radical than that of the δόξα (to use your words)." What does Krüger mean to say with these mysterious formulae? In order to understand them, one must recall that one of the elements that most interested Krüger in Strauss's book on Spinoza was precisely the importance of the critique of prejudices in the modern Enlightenment critique of religion.[10] In the spirit of this critique, prejudice was essentially the prejudices of revealed religion that prevented the free working of reason. If the question regarding prejudices is more radical than that regarding opinions, this is because the debate regarding prejudices has to do with a question which was unknown to the ancients, namely, the truth or untruth of a religion which claims to reveal the final truth about human destiny. Additionally, historicism is far from being alien to the spirit of this religion. He who wishes to combat it must know, as Krüger forcefully emphasizes, that its "material [*sachliche*] and historical core" is "Christ's factual dominance over the spirit of post-ancient humanity."

By this strong affirmation, Krüger means simply to say that the coming of Christ marks a break in human history. There will henceforth and forever be a before and an after Jesus Christ. Christ transformed ancient

humanity, and this is why the modern world cannot be understood without Christianity and why we cannot understand the ancient world as it was, that is to say, without Christianity. The modern world's polemic against Christianity shows to what point it has remained dependent in its very spirit on the religion that it has been combating. With Christ, truth has become history; hence, the relatedness of the Christian conception and the historicist conception of truth. While historicism is admittedly a bastardized form of Christianity, it nonetheless retains one truth that belongs to Christianity: that of the historical character of the advent of truth that is manifested by the incarnation of God in His son. Through this event, truth was made flesh in a particular being at a precise moment of human history. The truth proclaimed by Christianity is also, dare we say, "historical," or, at least, a truth which in order to manifest itself must inscribe itself in human history. Christian revelation shares then common ground with historicism.

Christianity is nevertheless essentially distinguished from historicism by the fact that Christianity confesses a truth anchored in a definitive revelation, whereas historicism will be led by the very logic of its own movement to relativize all truth, even the truth of historicism itself. Krüger judges, like Strauss, that it is necessary to liberate oneself from this form of historicism, but he considers that it is neither possible nor desirable to liberate oneself from the bonds created by Christian revelation. Thus, for him, there exists a truth which is historical or revealed in history and which has transformed the natural condition of man. To the extent to which this truth is illustrated by the image of the second cave, there is therefore no reason, according to him, to seek to liberate oneself from the second cave. If one nonetheless wished to liberate oneself, there wouldn't be a new Socrates to help us, and, he implies, Strauss cannot be this new Socrates!

In sum, Krüger judges that the return to the first vision of the things themselves is impossible. The fact of demanding, as Strauss does, such a return to the natural conscience of the Greeks is a sign that such a return is anything but naïve. Not simply because it would presuppose an important historical labor—Strauss would say a "propaedeutic"—in order to return to the primary and authentic ground of the Greek questioning, but, still more radically, because it would presuppose that we are capable of erasing in ourselves the traces which that the domination of Christianity over a period of nearly two thousand years has left in us. Krüger judges such a "purification" of the soul to be impossible for two reasons, each of a different nature. In the first place, Christianity has

transformed our souls in such a profound and irreversible manner that we cannot look at the world in a naïve and "unprejudiced" way; next, even if such a purification were possible, it would not be desirable because it would presuppose the denial of what Krüger believes to be the truth, namely, the revelation of Christ.

Strauss took these critiques of Krüger extremely seriously. In the month of December 1932, he wrote no fewer than three drafts before arriving at the definitive formulation of his response in a letter dating December 27, 1932. This letter and its drafts lead us to the heart of the disagreement between the two friends and cast a particularly vivid light on the genesis of Strauss's thought. It also has a number of substantial surprises in store. In the definitive version of the letter, Strauss concedes to Krüger in a completely surprising manner that the core of historicism is in fact "Christ's factual dominance over post-ancient humanity" (25d). The second cave would therefore be not so much historicism, but rather revealed religion. Strauss asks emphatically what this assertion can signify for someone who does not believe in such a dominance.

It can signify what it signifies for a non-believer like Heidegger: Christianity has revealed features of human nature that were unknown to the Ancients. It has given us a deeper and more radical understanding of man than that which the ancient philosophers had at their disposal. Modern philosophy, which is the illegitimate child of Christianity, has nonetheless preserved that which was profound and radical in this religion, and, by means of this borrowed knowledge, it is superior to ancient philosophy. Strauss emphasizes the paradoxical nature of such a position: "post-Christian philosophy represents a progress over against ancient philosophy even if Christianity is not 'true.'" This paradox is at the origin of the thesis of secularization, which affirms in a contradictory manner that Christianity represented a progress in the understanding of man while denying the truth of Christianity as a religion.

In the drafts of the definitive letter, Strauss identifies, even more clearly, the source of his critique of modern philosophy, which thinks of itself as a secularization of Christianity and thus as superior to ancient philosophy. According to Nietzsche's well-known critique, modern philosophy rests in the final analysis on biblical beliefs that it cannot acknowledge. If biblical beliefs are ruined, it follows that modern philosophy has, in turn, been ruined in its presuppositions. Moreover, a secularized Christian virtue—intellectual probity—makes such a calling into question possible. It is in the name of intellectual probity that

Nietzsche rejects, at the same time, Christianity and modern philosophy. However, probity is not the last word in Nietzsche's thought. Nietzsche sought a natural basis that would not be contaminated by his polemic against Christianity and modern philosophy.

It is essential to note here that Strauss seems to follow Nietzsche up to a certain point, but that he abandons him at the crucial moment. If Nietzsche rediscovered the natural ideal of humanity—the courage of a Homer or a Pericles or again of the Kings of Israel—he "did not proceed to an unbelieving critique of this ideal" (Letter 25a). Strauss here turns the arms of Nietzsche's critique against Nietzsche himself. In Strauss's view, Nietzsche himself falls victim to a form of "secularized Christianity" to the extent that his return to nature was motivated more by a desire to believe than by a pure desire to know. His choice in favor of the ideal of courage is still the choice of a believer who remains a prisoner, despite himself, of the spirit of polemic against the modern Enlightenment, and, through it, against Christianity. Nietzsche was never able to emancipate himself completely from this spirit of polemic, and thus from the characteristically modern ambivalence with regard to Christianity, which he moreover condemned. Nietzsche's break with modernity and with Christianity was thus not radical enough. This is why, according to Strauss, "this fundamental opacity could only be overcome by proceeding to Platonic philosophy."

In the definitive version of the letter, Strauss attacks the modern and Christian claims to represent a progress in the knowledge of man beyond that of ancient philosophy, in other words, to embody a deeper philosophic point of view with respect to man than that which belonged to ancient philosophy. In order to make his return to the natural cave credible, Strauss must indeed offer a critique of this modern claim to profundity. He does it by means of an argument that must have struck Krüger in a sensitive spot. During these years, Krüger did not stop criticizing the subjectivism of the Moderns' thought, which had destroyed the possibility of finding a measure (*Maßstab*) exterior to subjectivity.[11] Now, Strauss emphasizes that profundity in introspection is not a good criterion, because it is indeed too tainted by subjectivity, and that, for this reason, Krüger has not considered the question of the measure at its most radical level.

According to Strauss, in order to repeat the question of the measure in its radicality, it is necessary to open oneself to the possibility that the Greeks, in replying "naïvely" to this question, can once again raise us to

the natural level of philosophic interrogation. This level is, in fact, more radical than the level that belongs to modern philosophy. The return to nature or to "naïveté" cannot certainly be, for us moderns, naïve. Strauss fully acknowledges this by evoking Schiller[12]: we moderns are sentimental, and it is necessary to make a special effort to recover the naïveté which belonged to the Ancients. The return to the things themselves and to the primary questions is, above all, a demand of thought which is very difficult to satisfy given the modern prejudices which blind us. Strauss is not a naïve thinker who believes that the return to the Ancients can take place simply and dogmatically by denying the new elements which history has introduced into human conscience. He fully agrees with Krüger on this point: "I assert the impossibility of 'naïve' philosophy in our world." The agreement, however, leads to a more profound disagreement: "I only depart from you in that I don't view this impossibility in *any* sense as progress." (Letter 25d) In other words, for Strauss, *doxa*, not prejudice, remains the most radical point of departure of the philosophical quest.

Krüger's reply to this letter of Strauss's did not take long (Letter 26). One must read this letter carefully because it delimits, in a still more precise manner, the nature of the agreement and disagreement between the two friends. Krüger, at the outset, returns to the impossibility of a naïve philosophy in our world. One must understand by this that it is impossible for a modern conscience to return to the questioning which belonged to the ancient philosophers. To take up an expression which Strauss will often use subsequently: we cannot understand the ancient philosophers as they understood themselves. It should be noted that the deepest obstacle to such an understanding is not primarily modern philosophy but rather the fact of the Christian revelation and its domination over the spirit and mind of individuals. According to Strauss, such a domination led to a modern philosophy which over-valued introspection and depth. This is why, according to Krüger, Strauss sought a "'decidedly non-Christian philosophy' whose radicality need not consist in 'depth.'" He then clarifies: "you state that the question about the measure of introspection is more radical than introspection itself."

Not surprisingly, Krüger concedes this point to Strauss: modern philosophy has taken a wrong turn by losing itself in interiority and by forgetting the question of *the* measure.[13] This was the position which he defended at that time and which he defended during his entire life. The Ancients, at least Socrates and Plato, for their part, always paid close attention to this question of the measure. They posed the problem of law.

Krüger agrees with Strauss on this point, but he immediately separates himself from him by affirming that this problem of law in the thought of Plato is only a prefiguration of the revealed law. Krüger seems to tell us that Augustine found the solution to the problem of law as Plato posed it. Augustine's Platonism is therefore "the legitimate repetition of the Platonic problem within the horizon of revelation." This sentence summarizes Krüger's philosophic project, which sought to respond to the aporiae of modernity by effectuating a synthesis between Plato and Christian faith by means of Augustine.

There follows a long paragraph of extreme density and difficulty, where Krüger exposes his fundamental disagreement with Strauss by taking up the delicate question of Strauss's atheism. Strauss indeed sensed that Krüger's position rested in the final analysis on Christian faith. On this point, Krüger's thought, as Strauss does not fail to emphasize, comes close to someone like Étienne Gilson, for whom Christian revelation arrived in order to complete the truths which were prefigured in Greek philosophy. Such an approach presupposed a pre-established harmony between Greek philosophy and Christian revelation. This is why it was necessary to liberate oneself from modern distortions of philosophy and Christian faith in order to return to the original synthesis represented for Krüger by Augustinianism influenced by Plato and for Gilson by Thomism influenced by Aristotle.

Strauss, for his part, could not accept such an attempt at a synthesis for a very simple reason: his atheism. And yet he calls it merely his "opinion" which is, as such, presumably open to philosophic questioning and therefore not considered yet by him as knowledge. According to him, this atheism guarantees an approach to ancient philosophy that is more honest because it is free of all of the distortions which any attempted reconciliation between philosophy and Christianity would be sure to introduce. A nonbelieving reading of Plato and of Platonism should thus reveal their true nature. Strauss's atheism thus introduces a profound divide between his approach to the ancients and that of Krüger. And yet, in a disconcerting manner, Krüger minimizes the importance of belief or unbelief in this divide. Belief, in Krüger's view, is only a personal matter which does not affect the judgment which must be made about the fundamental state of things: one's believing or not believing in the Christian truth does not change anything about the fact that Christianity has dominated consciences and continues to dominate them. Strauss, however, much of an unbeliever he affirms himself to be, is forced to acknowledge this fact. This

is a way of reasoning which has to do with the measure, and the atheist cannot do anything else but orient himself, even if only negatively, on the basis of the Christian religion which constituted, and continues to constitute in a distorted fashion, our measure.

If this is truly the case, Strauss or anyone else who wants to return to the manner of questioning of the ancient philosophers cannot neglect the fact of revelation. This is the meaning of the mysterious formulation that brings the exchange to a close: "the search for an atheistic philosophy is the δεύτερος πλοῦς that is simply not capable of ignoring the old ἀγαθον in its rank." Krüger seems to say to Strauss: if you want to return to the Ancients, such a return cannot take place without taking into account the historical fact of Christian revelation. There is however an essential point which Krüger passes over in silence: the fact of being a believer or an unbeliever will dramatically change the way in which one looks at ancient philosophy and at philosophy as such. Very soon after its birth, Christianity, during the course of its development, had to appear before the tribunal of the philosophers, and the philosophers have appeared many times before the tribunal of Christianity. But one's understanding of this confrontation and the judgment which one makes about it are different, depending on the point of view which one chooses in this quarrel—either that of pagan philosophy or that of Christian revelation. From the point of view of the believer, which is that of Krüger, ancient philosophy is only true to the extent that it accords with Christian revelation.

What is the unbelieving point of view that Strauss represents? In his response to Krüger, Strauss attempts to define this position (Letter 27). Very adroitly, he rejects the position of the dogmatic atheist. His atheism is an *opinion*, not knowledge. Like any opinion, it calls for examination. This opinion is nevertheless not just any opinion; it is the opinion of the era. Strauss's "atheism" thus brings him closer to the historical situation of his era than Krüger's Christianity. But, to repeat the point, Strauss considers his own atheism to be an opinion, the opinion of his time, which, in order to be transformed into knowledge, calls for a deeper examination. This is also the case, Strauss tells us, for his opinion that the ancient philosophic questions, in comparison with the modern philosophic questions, are "the genuine philosophical questions" and that, as a consequence, modern philosophy is only a propaedeutic to ancient philosophy. In a typically "Straussian" manner, he then adds, "However, I underscore: this is only my view, a supposition (not entirely unfounded, I hope), no real knowl-

edge. If I ever understand Plato better than I do up until now, I hope to be able to say more about our point of contention, i.e., to either agree with you or argue my view more strongly." Strauss will spend his whole life trying to understand Plato better and then to clarify the reasons for his refusal of revealed religions, and it is unfortunate that historical circumstances forced him to interrupt his dialogue with Krüger on this subject.

This correspondence induces a kind of dizziness because it presents, at the highest philosophic level, as we hope to have shown by taking as our point of departure a few of the letters which constitute it, a discussion between two young philosophers who seek to orient themselves in a time of generalized distress and disorientation. It thus exposes a fundamental difficulty that faces any attempt to seek to return to the Ancients in order to overcome the modern aporia. If we set aside the question of the truth of the severe judgment which Krüger and Strauss make of philosophical modernity and of modernity as such, we can ask whether any proposal to return to the Ancients does not presuppose *a priori* judgment concerning the relationship between ancient philosophy and Christianity, and, even more broadly, of the relationship between ancient philosophy and Judaism and Islam. As we know, ancient philosophy has been handed down to us through these religions, each of which has not failed to transform in its manner the meaning of Greek philosophy. Krüger thought that Christianity and Augustine, in particular, preserved and fulfilled the primary intuition that was found in Plato. Even if Strauss endeavored to show that Judaism and Islam were closer to the truth of ancient philosophy and that it was necessary, in his opinion, to liberate oneself from the Christian way of looking at ancient philosophy if one wished to understand it truly, the revealed religions represented for him the true cave beneath the cave. In other words, the principal obstacle to authentic philosophic liberation is perhaps not modern philosophy or historicism, but the religion of revelation in all its forms. And yet, as this correspondence shows, one can ask whether such a liberation does not presuppose a primary judgment—impossible to fully justify at the end by reason alone—either in favor of revealed religion or in favor of philosophy. Historicism shields us from this more fundamental question in convincing us of the futility of our efforts to reach the truth. This is why it is not the true second cave.

Notes

1. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Philosophical Apprenticeships*, trans. Robert R. Sullivan (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1985), 61–62.
2. Leo Strauss, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes. Its Basis and Its Genesis*, trans. Elsa M. Sinclair (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936). First German edition: *Hobbes' politische Wissenschaft* (Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1965). One can find a critical edition of the German original text from Strauss prepared by Heinrich and Wiebke Meier in *GS-3,* 3–192.
3. The Preface dates from October 1964. For the original German preface, see *GS-3*, 7–10. For the English translation by Donald J. Maletz: "Preface to *Hobbes politische Wissenschaft*," *Interpretation. A Journal of Political Philosophy* 8, no. 1 (January 1979): 1–3.
4. "Preface to *Hobbes politische Wissenschaft*," 2.
5. Strauss mentions Krüger's criticism of his book on Spinoza that is revealing of Krüger's theological sensibility: "We still have to correspond about Calvin. Right now, I don't have the leisure for it. I believe you that, led by Barth and Gogarten, I underestimated the role of natural theology in Calvin. My work, after all, is a *response* of unbelief to the belief of Barth's and Gogarten's observance – at least that is the intent." (12) One can find the same critic expressed by Krüger in December 1931 in his review of Strauss's book on Spinoza: "Strauss has, in my opinion, overstated his overall presentation of the basis in faith: as certain as it is that Calvin measures every teaching about God solely by "pietas," it is however clear in the first part of his *Institutio* that the problem of knowledge of God is common to all men as a "natural" problem." ("Review of Leo Strauss' *Die Religionskritik Spinozas als Grundlage seiner Bibelwissenschaft*," *Independent Journal of Philosophy* 5/6 (1988): 175. English translation by Donald J. Maletz of Gerhard Krüger, "Besprechung von Leo Strauss' *Die Religionskritik Spinozas als Grundlage seiner Bibelwissenschaft*," *Deutsche Literaturzeitung* 51 (December 20, 1931): 2407–12). One can say in a nutshell that the main difference between Strauss and Krüger about revealed religion is the following: whereas Krüger believes in the possibility of natural theology, Strauss refuses it, at least under the form proposed by the various theological traditions.
6. On the meaning of this conversion in Krüger's philosophical journey, see Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Gerhard Krüger (1902–1972)," *Archives de philosophie* 47 (July–September 1984): 359.
7. See, especially, the two first chapters of the work mentioned by Strauss where Gilson defines the nature of a Christian philosophy: *L'esprit de la philosophie médiévale* (Paris: Vrin, 1948), 1–38.

8. For a detailed account of the use and meaning of this image in Strauss's thought: Heinrich Meier, "How Strauss Became Strauss," in *Reorientation: Leo Strauss in the 1930s,* eds. Martin D. Yaffe and Richard S. Ruderman (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 21–22, 30 (note 40) and, by the same author, *Leo Strauss and the Theological-Political Problem* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press), 56–61, 72–73.
9. Leo Strauss, "Review of Julius Ebbinghaus, *On the Progress of Metaphysics* (1931)," in *The Early Writings* (1921–1932), trans. Michael Zank (Albany: SUNY, 2002), 215. German edition: Leo Strauss, "Besprechung von Julius Ebbinghaus, *Über die Fortschritte der Metaphysik*," *Deutsche Literaturzeitung* 52 (December 27, 1931): 2453. Republished in *GS-2*, 439.
10. Gerhard Krüger, "Review of Leo Strauss' *Die Religionskritik Spinozas als Grundlage seiner Bibelwissenschaft*,": 174–75. See also *SCR*, 178–182.
11. One can find a full and an in-depth examination of this problem in an essay of Krüger's first published in 1933 in the journal *Logos* and later republished in a collection of his essays: "Die Herkunft des philosophischen Selbstbewusstseins," in *Freiheit und Verwaltung* (Freiburg/München: Verlag Karl Alber, 1958), 11–69.
12. "On Naive and Sentimental Poetry," in *German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism: Winckelmann, Lessing, Hamann, Herder, Schiller, Goethe*, ed. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1985).
13. On modern philosophy's aporia and the different philosophical attempts to overcome it, see Gerhard Krüger, *Grundfragen der Philosophie. Geschichte-Wahrheit-Wissenchaft* (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1965 [1958]): 131–150.

CHAPTER 6

Moral Finitude and Ontology of Creation: The Kantian Interpretation of Gerhard Krüger

Luc Langlois

Philosophie und Moral in der Kantischen Kritik[1] indisputably ranks among the most important interpretations of Kantianism. However, it is also a singularly disconcerting and bewildering work that offers a totally original view of Kant. According to Gerhard Krüger, Kant was the last defender of natural theology (which, in his time, was threatened by the latent if not overt atheism of the *Aufklärung)* rather than one of the most illustrious representatives of the Enlightenment. From this perspective, moral law and autonomy, which are without doubt the key points of Kant's philosophy, were the essential and transformative experiences of obedience to God rather than the affirmation of a self-referring subjectivity no longer concerned with looking beyond the inherent law of its freedom. Likewise, the world was the primitive given that consecrated man's dependence on his Creator rather than a transcendental construction.

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In the context of the traditional reception of Kant's philosophy, Krüger's theses are so surprising that it is necessary to consider the background of his reflection in order to understand them properly. Krüger's thinking was closely bound with the spiritual depression that occurred following the First World War. This depression contributed, in particular, to the dissolution of neo-Kantianism, the renewal of ontology and the philosophical recognition (following Kierkegaard) of the pre-eminence of concrete existence over constructions of the mind, as well as to the development of a theology refocused on the essence of Christian experience, which had been neglected by the historical-critical approach of liberal theology.

One can easily imagine the sense of bewilderment that overtook a 16-year-old youth, such as Krüger, in 1918, following the moral devastation of the First World War. In that context, Gerhard Krüger's decision to take up philosophical and theological studies should be seen as a form of engagement, as well as an attempt to grapple with the disaster that had recently befallen European civilization. Moreover, Krüger would always view theology and philosophy as being mutually dependent. He saw the metaphysical aim of philosophy to be at its heart a theological question—a concern for the divine, and, therefore, for that which transcends our limited subjective perspectives—a view of philosophy especially highlighted in his 1939 work on Plato.[2] According to Krüger, Christianity gave this philosophic orientation its fundamental ontological meaning, namely, that of the *ens creatum* founded in God's creative goodness. The implication of this school of thought is that the first truth of the human situation and of our being is dependent on the pre-existing, irrecoverable given of Divine creation. The moral meaning of this creation is what Krüger sought, first and foremost, to explore and examine in his book on Kant. By the same token, in his view, only the philosophical horizon afforded by natural theology afforded an elucidation of the essence of Christian existence, which theology strives to interpret.

Krüger studied philosophy under the tutelage of Paul Natorp, Nicolai Hartmann and Martin Heidegger, and his first master in theology was Rudolf Bultmann. From the outset, Krüger sided with the idea that neo-Kantian constructivism, if understood strictly as *Erkenntnistheorie* [theory of cognition] or more broadly as a theory of culture, had become a dead end. The bourgeois, subjectivist worldview, of which neo-Kantianism was the epitome, now lay in ruins. Only a return to ontology, hence to a philosophy that finally recognized the primacy of being over the subjective

perspective of the cognized being, was capable of satisfying the younger generation's new thirst for concreteness and truth. One of the chief protagonists of this return to a philosophy of being in itself was Nicolai Hartmann. His rather unwieldy ontology of "strata of the real," however, was quickly outmatched by the ingenious intuitions of Heidegger, under whose influence Krüger himself soon came—for good reason. Heidegger's young students discovered that if the question of being is of prime importance, that is because this question is formulated, felt and experienced on the basis of the facticity of the being that we are: hence, on the basis of the concrete life of Dasein and its temporal finitude. It was because philosophy had failed to account for this temporal dimension of Dasein—and, essentially, for the whole dimension of being—that it had become mired in the illusion of a self-mastering subjectivity. In this way, it betrayed metaphysics' extreme obliviousness to being in its fascination for the *aie on* [eternally present]. In this way, Krüger believed, Heidegger had the distinction of showing that if ontology is the most concrete, urgent matter of all, it is so because the starting point of ontology is the uncanniness (*Unheimlichkeit*) that is the foundation of every human life and which is at the heart of the question each life raises.

The influence of Heidegger also made itself felt, through the person of Rudolf Bultmann, in Krüger's theological studies. Bultmann was himself persuaded that the existential analysis of Dasein offered a profoundly original avenue for understanding Christian faith.[3] And Krüger remained in continual agreement with Bultmann in his understanding of the meaning of Christian revelation from this existential perspective. Very early on, however, he added an ingredient of his own to this collaboration between philosophy and theology. The opportunity to do so was provided by his interpretation of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, which stood diametrically opposed to the position worked out by Heidegger in his famous *Kantbuch*. According to Krüger's reading, while Heidegger was correct in his view that the *Critique* was a metaphysics of human finitude, and while his hermeneutics of facticity (*Faktizität*) opened up new avenues for ontology, he erred when making temporality the ground of this metaphysics and positing the temporal projection of Dasein as the source of transcendence. Thus, though Krüger acknowledged his debt to Heidegger, he nevertheless expressed their divergence in the clearest terms and thereby heralded the original theme of his own philosophical reflection:

> The following interpretation of Kant stands in a two-fold relationship to the philosophy of Heidegger. In terms of a philosophical interpretation, generally speaking, its decisive thrust derives from Heidegger's phenomenology. Indeed, were it not for the "hermeneutics of Dasein," this interpretation would have not emerged. However, as a gloss of Kant, it diverges from that of Heidegger on the main issue. In Heidegger's view, the gist of the *Critique of Pure Reason* consists in bringing out the "finitude" of man as the essential foundation of ontology and, more generally, metaphysics. The author concurs with Heidegger in the understanding of Kant's central problem thus defined, inasmuch as Heidegger was the first to show that the understanding of the "question of being" (*Seinsfrage*) is a fundamental philosophical problem. I conceive Kant's answer, however… in an entirely different way: the finitude of man – the cornerstone of the critique – is defined by Kant not in terms of "temporality" (*Zeitlichkeit*) but of *moral law as a fact*. In Kant's view, the finitization (*Verendlichung*) of man does not occur, as it does for Heidegger, in the absolute end – namely, death – but in moral obedience to unconditional command.[4]

How, one wonders, did Krüger arrive at this interpretation? And how did the background just now outlined find its emblematic expression in a gloss of the Kantian critique?

The Metaphysical Orientation of the Kantian Critique

Gerhard Krüger was certainly not the first person to have set out an ontologico-metaphysical interpretation of the *Critique*. Others before him had done so—including Heimsoeth, Wundt, Kroner, Hartmann, and others.[5] However, what distinguished him from his predecessors was the central role he ascribed to the Transcendental Doctrine of Method, which became the genuine lens through which he viewed the Critical project as a whole, as well as its historical *situation*.[6] Kant began by observing that the state of anarchy into which speculative metaphysics had fallen was only equaled by man's inner need for metaphysics, and that while the questions of freedom, immortality and God were of limited speculative interest, they also directly joined the practical interest of human reason.[7] Thus, metaphysics could not be "wrenched away from life."[8] The proof of this can be seen in Kant's Doctrine of Method, and, in particular, in the Canon of Pure Reason, which sets out the moral foundation not only for this metaphysical disposition but also for the Critical project as a whole. In this

manner, Kruger asserted, the fundamental intention underlying Kant's philosophy locates him "not at the beginning of 'modern' thought but at the end of the old theistic metaphysics, with the Kantian critique representing the last attempt to save it."[9] What then emerges is the very essence of human conscience, namely (in Augustine's words), *conscientia coram Deo*—conscience *before God*.[10]

Now, the first image of conscience offered by the *Critique of Pure Reason*—witness the Transcendental Deduction of Categories—is not one which can be described in Augustine's words, but, instead, is the eminently modern image of the *spontaneous projection* upon being represented by the knowing subject in the categorical shaping of the objective world. How then did Krüger effect the shift from this form-giving spontaneity of the subject to the fundamental receptivity of man before God, and from the "constructed" world of knowledge to the created world as the unsurpassable horizon of the work of reason? In order to understand this shift, it is necessary to follow the interpretation he offered of the Transcendental Deduction of Kant's first *Critique*, starting with the Doctrine of Method, that is, with the Discipline, Canon and Architectonic of Pure Reason. Once that process has been completed, the true interconnections of the *Critique* as a metaphysics of moral finitude can come fully into view.

If the problem of metaphysics is posed in full—its acuteness upon undergoing the scrutiny afforded by the critique and transcendental *logic* to the extent of bringing to light the root of the crisis—it is largely owing to Kant's Transcendental Deduction, which concludes, *via negationis*, that modern rationalist metaphysics seeks its autarky where it is not to be found, namely, in speculative reason,[11] that is to say, in theoretical cognition. Nevertheless, the Deduction shows that there is only one case in which the conditions of the perfection of cognition are achieved through the use of the pure concepts of the understanding, namely, when categories are applied to pure intuition and, through them, to objects of experience.[12] Krüger himself did not view this constraint as eliminating the possibility of metaphysics—this is in contrast with neo-Kantianism, which saw that impossibility as further confirmation of the exclusive pride of place it accorded to science. Rather, he perceived the Deduction as the first in a series of disclosures regarding a "hijacking" (*détournement*) of meaning perpetrated by dogmatic metaphysics and that consisted of viewing metaphysics as the exclusive and, indeed, chief business of theoretical reason, with the former being based on the latter and having any practical meaning only indirectly.

In Krüger's view, the Deduction's decisive contribution consisted in showing, rather, the limitations of this spontaneous projection upon being when that projection is understood as a possession of the knowing subject. The usurpation of the pure concepts of the understanding is the result of metaphysics' claims to be able to apply categories to "things *in general* and *in themselves*,"[13] whereas according to the conclusion of the Deduction, these concepts presuppose a *sensible givenness* in order to perform their functions of synthesis. Categories are the conditions of a potential experience for human beings only if, being constructed in pure intuition, they can also, on that basis, be related to an empirical intuition. However, this, in turn, assumes the empirical appearance of objects, or, their givenness as appearances *grounded in things in themselves*—in that *Etwas* [something] without which nothing could appear.[14] From that point of view, the possibility of experience is both inner and outer: inner inasmuch as our mind contains the form of experience (pure intuition and pure understanding), and outer inasmuch this form is produced only when there is an *affection*. The implication of this assertion is that experience is only possible for us as the *form of matter*. Yet, the decisive thing for Krüger is the occurrence of the outer affection itself. For it is this occurrence that in the Deduction ultimately places the right of categories on solid legal footing. In effect, categories acquire their meaning and are applied only whenever empirical intuitions occur. (For example: "I cannot exhibit the concept of a cause in general in intuition in any way *except in an example given to me by experience*.")[15]

The spontaneous projection upon being (epitomized, in Kant's view, by Newtonian science) now comes up against its limitation, as it is unable to claim to be the measure [Maßstab] of the world. Obviously, the Deduction teaches us that in the sensible horizon, there is a relationship of purposive interaction between "our" cognition and things; also, in this world, there are things that conform to the spontaneity of pure understanding (and which, for that reason, also lend themselves to the subjective ends of our technical domination—with technical rules being entirely theoretical). However, by recognizing the dependence on the occurrence of affection, that is, on an outer given that cannot be brought under the control of the understanding, the Deduction also teaches us that "there is also something else that is too 'big,' too 'sublime' [to be summed up in the mastery of the knowing subject]: God, the cosmic whole (*Weltganze*) and moral freedom."[16] The spontaneously constructed is, actually, the poorest part of ontology. For as soon as one recognizes the need to examine spontane-

ously—thought being in terms of the being in itself—thus on the basis of the ontological difference between the "appearance" and the "thing in itself"—it becomes clear that there is ultimately nothing whose being is exhausted in its objectivity for *us*. That is what prompted Krüger to say that "the real ontology of Kant is not at all spontaneous but is, instead, receptive: it is *unmodern* (…). It is only for this reason that Kant is able to confront modern ontology critically and fundamentally."[17] "The ontology of appearances or the ontology of human beings in relationship to objects of specifically human cognition (*Erkenntnis*) is necessarily a *derivative ontology of a derivative being*; it presupposes a fundamental ontology of the original being."[18] It is a position, moreover that brought Kant closer to Greek and medieval metaphysics, for whom the given being always took precedence over the cognized being—at least with regard to us as finite beings.

But how ought one to conceive of this "excess of being," which extends beyond the categorical shaping of appearances, and that is "felt" by reason, if only through the *Trieb zur Erweiterung* (drive for expansion), as shown by reason's "dialectical" straying, when the *Critique* had just severely limited the possibility of making it an object of cognition? And then, concerning that "happy accident," thanks to which nature is adequate to our faculty of cognition but about which the *Deduction* offers no explanation: how ought one to understand it and picture it precisely as something more than the product of pure chance? In other words, how ought one to think, at one and the same time, phenomenality and its associated principle of a non-sensible given, *and* the relationship of this principle with our faculty? If it were impossible to grasp, as a complete whole, the precedence of being in itself and the spontaneity of the subject, then we would arrive at essentially nothing more than a banal opposition between science and a form of negative ontology having no meaning for us. Kant clearly perceived that: "Through the possibility of its *a priori* laws of nature, the understanding gives a proof that nature is cognized by us only as an appearance, and hence at the same time an indication of its supersensible substratrum; but it leaves this entirely *undetermined*."[19] A systematically meaningful ontology capable of highlighting the *unity* of modes of being presupposes a determinability of this supersensible substratum. Kant suggested locating this unifying principle in *purposiveness* (*Zweckmäßigkeit*). Teleological thinking can be useful in the manifold aspects of being so as to reveal its meaning within a single framework, but only if critical reflection manages to examine the ground of that thinking.

However, this position presupposes, in turn, setting forth the *method of metaphysics* with complete clarity, something that could not be accomplished by the essentially limitative conclusion of the first *Critique*'s Transcendental Doctrine of Elements. According to Krüger, the crux of this effort was instead developed in the Transcendental Doctrine of Method—paradoxically, the most neglected text in the interpretation of Kant while still constituting the second major division of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Thus, the Doctrine of Method, on Krüger's account, set out the method of the true metaphysics of which the *Critique* "contain[ed] within itself the whole well-tested and verified plan."[20] It would, moreover, bring this endeavor to fruition through the Discipline, Canon and Architectonic of Pure Reason that constitute the major sections of the Doctrine of Method.[21]

Boundaries and Limits

Discipline is "the compulsion through which the constant propensity [of reason] to stray from certain rules is limited and finally eradicated." Since "no critique of reason in empirical use was needed,"[22] a discipline was nevertheless required with regard to the transcendental use of concepts. That said, reigning in the propensity of reason to erroneous thinking would, at first, require a Discipline of Pure Reason, since dogmatic straying was the primary cause of the discredit accruing to metaphysics (and hence was the primary cause of disbelief). Because dogmatic metaphysics believes it is able to reproduce the logico-demonstrative method of mathematics—via definitions, axioms and proofs—it places total emphasis on the autonomy of concepts. "Now all of pure reason in its merely speculative form contains not a single direct synthetic judgment from concepts."[23] Mathematical cognition arises as such through the construction of concepts (in pure intuition), while philosophical cognition is solely discursive, that is, via mere concepts. Thus, because dogmatic rationalism overlooked this essential distinction, it claimed it was able to gain access to a speculative cognition of being in itself.

At that point, there is considerable risk that the empirico-skeptical reaction will overwhelm everything in its path and even disqualify pure reason as a whole. Obviously, skepticism is correct to denounce the speculative vanity of dogmatism, but it is itself a *reverse dogmatism* whenever it decrees that we can have *no access* to things in themselves. The Discipline views this dogmatism of denial as another straying of thought, which it then

counters by resorting to a justification of the properly understood *polemical use* of reason: "Now by the polemical use of pure reason I understand the defense of its propositions against dogmatic denials of them," this defense being "a justification χατ' ἀνθρωπον [*ad hominem*, i.e., according to person], which secures [reason] against all interference and provides it with a title to its possession that need not shrink from any foreign pretensions, even though it cannot be sufficiently proved χατ' ἀληθειαν [according to the truth]."[24] This is indeed a critical passage, for it suggests the possibility of conceiving of *another order of cognition*—one that is different from the theoretical cognition of things in themselves, and thanks to which reason might be able to restore meaning to the nagging questions confronting it. Kant had previously sensed that possibility when he pointed out that the *Critique* is a knowledge of *boundaries* (*Grenzen*) but not of limits (*Schranken*): "Boundaries […] always presuppose a space that is found outside a certain fixed location, and that encloses that location; limits require nothing of the kind, but are mere negations […]." This is because reason that critiques knowledge (*Wissen*) always sees beyond boundaries; it "sees around itself as it were a space for the cognition (*Erkenntnis*) of things in themselves, although it can never have determinate concepts of those things and it is limited to appearances alone."[25] Viewed in this light, *Grenzbestimmung* (delimitation) would be the means by which reason, which determines boundaries, becomes fully conscious (so to speak) of its own ignorance and, at the same time, anticipates another order of cognition which cannot be dispensed with and which, ultimately, will ground the entire critical endeavor of limitation.

However, it remains to be determined in what this other *Erkenntnis* consists and what will stand as its positive criterion (*Maßstab*). The boundary instituted by the *Critique* and that confines knowledge (*Wissen*) exclusively to the field of appearances raises the question of whether things in themselves, which justify limitation, could not at least be cognized *hypothetically*—that is, become the object of transcendental hypotheses required by theoretical reason. Kant, himself, strongly ruled out that possibility, subjecting the use of hypotheses itself to a very stringent discipline.

> Transcendental hypotheses of the speculative use of reason and a freedom to make good the lack of physical grounds of explanation by using all sorts of hyperphysical ones can never be permitted at all, partly because reason is not advanced by them but rather cut off from all progress in their use, and partly because this license must ultimately destroy all fruits of the cultivation of its own proper soil, namely experience.[26]

In fact, there is only one case in which the use of hypotheses would be allowed—namely, in the struggle against skepticism undertaken from a *practical point of view*. At that point, hypotheses would serve as "weapons of war" (but only as mere "leaden weapons": their only worth is that of a private opinion) in support of "the good cause." This is because, in the practical order, reason "has a *possession* the legitimacy of which need not be proved, and the proof of which it could not in fact give."[27] At this point, to defend itself from any empirico-skeptical opponent, reason requires nothing more than transcendental hypotheses having only a *polemical use*; moreover, it can, in turn, be sure that nothing can be demonstrated that runs counter to its moral possession.[28] Thus, the Doctrine of Method, whose aim is to be the true method of metaphysics, shows that human reason is unable to arrive at anything through its pure, speculative use. However, Kant's second major division of the *Critique* does not simply make do with this negative conclusion. As will be shown, it is actually possible to arrive at a metaphysics that is more than just the "private metaphysics" of hypotheses and opinions, and the positive criterion underlying that effort is to be found in the Canon of Pure Reason, the second chapter of the Doctrine of Method.

Belief and Knowledge

"I understand by a canon the sum total of the *a priori* principles of the correct use of certain cognitive faculties in general."[29] The failure of theoretical reason means that no such canon can exist for speculative use. (Indeed, speculative use itself has been shown to be dialectical through and through, and thus stems from the logic of illusion.) At the same time, however, this failure is every bit as glaring as man's need for metaphysics, the true root of which now becomes apparent: it is a *practical* need of reason. Thus, the *only* canon of pure reason is the *canon of its practical use*. Indeed, the sole possession of reason is moral: it is the moral law itself. As Krüger pointed out, how philosophy *cognizes* "is a matter that is decided by freedom,"[30] which means that, *from the outset*, the *Critique* is a practical enterprise founded on that true metaphysics that alone makes it possible to perceive the false, speculative variety. Therein lies one of the salient points of Krüger's interpretation:

> Through the critique of knowledge, this [practical] metaphysics does not only receive a "place" for itself, but is at the same time the basis underlying the *Critique* qua self-critique of reason. It is its own ground that critique justifies as being inviolable, contrary to the straying of reason.[31]

However, since no cognition can, for us, rest on mere concepts or pure thought alone, and since the condition of givenness and receptivity are a *sine qua non* of thought, how is one to cognize this *inviolable ground*? A metaphysics that strives to be practical cannot escape this dilemma since, as metaphysics, it indeed aims to constitute a form of cognition. *Now, Kant perceived a mode of givenness other than sensible givenness*: "This 'more,' however, need not be sought in theoretical sources of cognition; it may also lie in practical ones."[32] *The giving of moral law* would meet this condition, as it combines within itself the *legislative spontaneity* of practical reason and the *receptivity* of finite will. Reason that unconditionally accepts this law is, ultimately, both the addressee and the legislator of this law, to the extent that in its free obedience, it is receptive to and adheres to the law. Thus, for us, the autonomy of the will never designates a sovereign reason, let alone one that is creative, but rather a moral reason that is always aware of itself in the dual mode of *elevation* (the law reveals my dignity of being free) and *humiliation* (this law imposes itself on me, is given to me as a *categorical imperative*)—thus as a correlation of spontaneity and receptivity so that what is manifested in this way and experienced by us in the instance of moral feeling.

In this respect, the moral law is, already, a form of cognition. At the same time, however, it is a response to the sole question of "What ought I do?"—that is, to an exclusively practical question. It is readily understandable that the question of "What am I able to cognize?" – that is, an exclusively theoretical question – is "transcendentally" motivated by the project of practical metaphysics. That being said, there can be no escaping the fact *this same metaphysics must reinvest the theoretical field in some way* if it is to constitute this cognition that is expected of it. Now, it is the third programmatic question of the critical examination that opens up this possibility. To wit, "What may I hope?" is both a practical and theoretical question, and its very formulation foretells the full significance of renewed metaphysics: the latter will always be, for us finite beings, a *metaphysics of hope*.[33] And what the self-critique of reason allows us to hope for is the accomplishment of *the ultimate end of pure reason*, which, as concerns human beings, points to and awakens hope in the fullest synthesis possible of the intelligible moral law and the aim of happiness as the reasonable totality of sensible inclinations.

Obviously, the principle of this well-founded hope is nothing other than the moral law, whose first condition is: "*Do that through which you will become worthy to be happy.*"[34] Nonetheless, reason, which projects its total

object and its complete end, is also well aware that *this condition does not suffice* and that the end sought by finite reason also, in a way, extends beyond it insofar as, assuming a synthesis of the sensible and the supersensible, reason compels considering the world *teleologically*, that is, as a *system of ends (Zwecke)*. Morality tells us that something must happen, but that being said, the sensible world, in which we must take our place, should itself be a horizon of potential effectuation of moral action, too—in short, that there should be no hopeless ontological abyss between the sensible and the intelligible but, instead, *a single system of ends*. Without an *original highest good*, without a wise author of the world, the derived highest good would be absolutely unthinkable; that is why practical metaphysics, which is ushered in by the giving of the law, *necessarily* opens onto *theology*. It first opens onto *moral theology*, since the idea of an efficient cause capable of accomplishing all the effects of moral freedom in a world is shown to be inseparable from reason's structure of hope. It also opens onto a *physical theology*, since the idea of an original highest being leads us to consider the sensible world not only from a mechanistic perspective but also in terms of a system of ends that is compatible with the projection of a potential moral world. Finally, it opens onto a *transcendental theology*, since this Idea is also the principle of the ontological perfection of all things, the intelligible ground of the purposive diversity of being. Which is to say (though understanding the issue will require further effort), the appearance is not the absolute other of the thing in itself but is part and parcel of one and the same ontology whose true name is creation, recognized as a system of ends whose moral meaning can only be perceived by critical reason. As Krüger noted in these dense but enlightening lines: "Reckoning with things in themselves, even when man is unable to cognize them, means for Kant: reckoning with *Creation*"[35]; "Things in themselves are not impenetrable for the critique: the critique gains access to them only if *it*, hoping with its thought, *places itself in the service of morality*."[36]

The Canon of Pure Reason thus allows philosophy to again become what it had ceased to be in speculative metaphysics—namely, a *teleologia rationis humanae*—and, thereupon, to understand itself in accordance with its cosmic concept (*conceptus cosmicus*), which would be fleshed out in the Architectonic.[37] *All the same, according to Krüger, the method of metaphysics, as understood by Kant in the Critique, would encounter an obstacle, an aporia that it would never quite manage to overcome*. Specifically, metaphysical cognition (*Erkenntnis*) is defined as believing (*Glauben*)—a middle term between opinion and knowledge (*Wissen*). Indeed, in the

third section of the *Canon*, believing is presented as "taking something to be true" (*Fürwahrhalten*) in a way that is only subjectively sufficient on account of the moral conviction inherent to it, whereas knowing is a "taking something to be true" that is subjectively *and objectively* sufficient.[38] Most surprisingly, when Kant was prompted to explain what true cognition is, he did not refer to that metaphysical cognition ushered in by morality, which itself has only the consistency of a belief, but instead to knowledge (*Wissen*). It is the latter which, ultimately, constitutes the full measure of *Erkenntnis*. However, there then arises the strange situation in which moral belief, which from the outset grounds and justifies the self-critique of reason's power to cognize ("I had to deny *knowledge* in order to make room for *faith*"[39]), adjudges something that, from a certain point of view, extends beyond itself. According to Krüger, the aporia surrounding self-understanding in the *Critique* stemmed from the fact that though Kant irrevocably rejected dogmatic rationalism and speculative metaphysics, *he continued to conceive of knowledge theoretically*. Because his implicit model remained that of the Newtonian science of nature, he was unable to view practical metaphysics as constituting the fundamental knowledge it was supposed to be, knowledge that, ultimately, could consist only in *factical* and (dare one say) *existential* knowledge that qualified as such by virtue of being immanent to the concrete life of human beings. And yet, Kant did not possess the concept of this knowledge. The implication, according to Krüger, is that "The critique is reduced to the role of an impartial apologetics"; "as nothing more than a matter of belief, it runs the risk of not being taken seriously in terms of cognition."[40]

The Unity of Being

Kant was, to some degree, aware of this difficulty; moreover, he personally grappled with the conflict between science and morality. Taken together, these facts probably had something to do with his need to reformulate the problem of the unity of noumenal and phenomenal being in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. It was to this other effort of Kant's that Krüger then directed his attention. The main issues addressed in Kant's first *Critique* were further developed in the third; this time, however, the starting point was the function of the understanding in general as the *power of judging*, coupled with the question of the application of concepts. The problem remains, in effect, entirely that of understanding how nature in general meets up with (so to speak) the particular and the contingent

since, in the determining judgment, understanding does nothing more than subordinate particular cases to universal forms. Thus, understanding only determines the particular as the exemplar of a rule, but without accounting for the potentially infinite manifold of laws and the *empirical* productions of nature, which cannot be recognized *a priori*. Despite being contingent with respect to our understanding, these empirical laws, "if they are to be called laws (as is also required by the concept of a nature), must be regarded as necessary on a principle of the unity of the manifold, even if that principle is unknown to us."[41] In this context, the *reflective power of judgment* must be considered. It ascends from the particular to the universal, and, so doing, gives itself a specific principle for judging nature. Therefore, this principle can only be as follows: everything that, in the empirical laws of nature, is left undetermined by the universal rules of our understanding must be thought of *as if* an understanding that is not our own had proceeded toward it with purposiveness (*Zweckmäßigkeit*). That is, all that is undetermined by the universal laws of our understanding must be thought of *as if* empirical nature formed a unity *offered* by this understanding to our faculty of cognition, so as to make a *system of experience* possible. Only in this way may one grasp the "happy accident" thanks to which nature accords with and is adequate to our faculty.

Thus, phenomenality, viewed from the reflective perspective of purposiveness, is referred to its supersensible substratum, which had been left "entirely undetermined" by the power of rules embodied by the understanding. Now, "the power of judgment, through its *a priori* principle for judging nature in accordance with possible particular laws for it, provides for its supersensible substratum (in us as well as outside us) *determinability through the intellectual faculty*."[42] In other words, the judging of appearances by the reflective power of judgment makes things in themselves positively understandable for the critique, since purposiveness can only point toward an intelligible ground of natural beings. On this basis, it again becomes possible to think of an ontology that embraces simultaneously phenomenality and its intelligible substratum.

With the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, "spontaneously thought being"—the point of departure for the *Critique of Pure Reason*—comes back into view. This spontaneous projection upon being, in the categorical constitution of nature, was in Krüger's view but *one*, merely formal, dimension of objectivity. The other dimension was the phenomenal appearance originating in the thing in itself, which should be understood as the *givenness of the particular*, of the empirical being, whose existence does not fall

within the scope of the power of rules. The Transcendental Deduction of Categories had previously recognized that: "Particular laws, because they concern empirically determined appearances, *cannot be completely derived* from the categories, although they all stand under them."[43] That being said, the spontaneous projection upon being, avidly pursued by modern science, tends to eliminate the particular (i.e., the initial condition of its explanatory task) to the almost exclusive benefit of the universal functional law. This law views experience as embodying nothing more than repeatable, predictable occurrences. In so doing, science forgets that its own project presupposes the possibility of thinking the empirical being as forming, in a certain way, a unit of the manifold—hence, as forming a nature in the true meaning of the term—whose formal laws can *then* be produced by science. No doubt, the physical-mathematical science of nature and mechanisms represent, for us, the principle of scientific explanation par excellence, but ontologically speaking, they express only the lowest level of being, passing over the inaugural condition of givenness—the fact that prior to being shaped according to the forms of thought, being must first be given. In what Kant would call the *law of the specification of nature*,[44] the reflective power of judgment gives itself the transcendental principle of judging the particular lawfulness of nature, that is, the "lawfulness of the contingent" constituted by purposiveness in that regard.[45] By the same token, this same power delimits the boundary (*Grenzbestimmung*) of cognitive spontaneity, since the law of the specification of nature can only be conceived of from the perspective of a *given world*, one that is thinkable only according to an *understanding other* than ours.

Building on this principle of the judging of empirical nature, the reflective power of judgment would ultimately reach the *same conclusions as those of the Canon of Pure Reason*. If it is granted, first, that nature must, starting from its intelligible substratum, be conceived of as standing under an intentionally acting cause, and, secondly, that nature is only thinkable as creation, then raises the question of knowing, beyond the problem of empirical nature's manifold forms, the end of this system of ends. What is the ultimate end of the world—the "end of the world," so to speak?

In the ontology of creation that Krüger strived to reconstitute, it is only following a *dual reflection* that one may glimpse that end. There is, on the one hand, the reflection that the arrangement of the ends in nature (the problem of external finality) has no meaning unless it culminates in an *ultimate end of nature*—hence, in an end on the basis of which the whole of nature allows itself to be understood and becomes genuinely meaning-

ful. In Kant's view, *this end can be nothing other than the human being himself*, precisely because he is a free being and because, in nature, he alone stands out as constituting a power of ends. It is for that reason that the human being is the "titular lord of nature"[46]; his freedom is what justifies his title of "master and owner" of nature. *That is the definitive conclusion of the Enlightenment*. However, the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* went a step further (a step that the Enlightenment appears to have overlooked): this lordship of the human being is, in a way, dismissed or, at any rate, attenuated in a *second reflection*.

As a moral being, the human being cannot subject everything to his enjoyment and his quest for happiness. His ultimate destination is to freely receive moral law within himself (therein lies the entire meaning of autonomy for Krüger), and it is only in this free decision that he can again grasp the *entire system of ends, beginning with moral hope in the highest good*. The moral law thus reveals itself to be that breach toward the intelligible that requires the human being to again raise the question of God as the very condition of the unity of being, embracing both phenomenality and things in themselves, as well as the sensible and the supersensible. So understood, the moral law re-centers the entire perspective of the human being toward the givenness of creation. The following excerpt sums up the essential points of Krüger's interpretation and is, for that reason, worth quoting at some length:

> Purposiveness is the concept of being that belongs to another ontology of nature. Living beings are endowed with an internal purposiveness because they exist subjectively *a priori*; in the totality of nature, things are mutually endowed with an external purposiveness, under the condition that, constituting the environment of living beings, they are a part of the latter's life (*CPJ*, § 63). When the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, the second part of which is dedicated to teleology, turns to the subject of human beings, its content coincides exactly with anthropology, philosophy of history and the first part of the *Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*, which itself is nothing other than the anthropology of moral life. Beginning with the *soil and the climate* and extending to the *highest goods in the world* as ultimate ends of the existence of a world – i.e., creation itself (*CPJ*, § 84) – there is one and the same cosmology that is empirical and yet in its own particular way *absolute, because the final end of everything is cognized by pure practical reason*. Teleology naturally leads on to physicotheology, of which ethicotheology is the culmination (¶85, conclusion, *CPJ*).[47]

Nevertheless, in Krüger's view, the re-examination of the central problem of the Critical project by the reflective power of judgment did not, ultimately, resolve the problem of *aporia* in the *Critique*, that of a faculty of reason that continued to conflict with its own canon because it remained secretly faithful to the modern concept of knowledge. Obviously, the opposition between belief and knowledge has become less salient here, but it nevertheless crops up again when Kant links the reflective power of judgment to the enigmatic and poorly explicated concept of *heautonomy*. The understanding is "autonomous" in that it spontaneously gives its laws to nature. But the power of judgment "has in itself an *a priori* principle for the possibility of nature, though only in a subjective respect, by means of which it prescribes a law, not to nature (as autonomy), but to itself (as heautonomy) for reflection on nature […]."[48] From that point of view, the power of judgment remains a modality of subjectivity and is perhaps even more subjective than the categorical knowledge of nature by the understanding, which was conscious of its dependence on being in itself. Yet, by the same token, this power remains dependent on the implicit norm of the highest science driving the Enlightenment and falls short of the *concept of another knowledge* (*Wissen*), one that is immanent to life and its moral situation.

Conclusion

This article began by presenting Krüger's interpretation of Kant's *Critique* as an objection to the temporal reduction of being by Heidegger and as a response to the moral disaster of World War I, which prompted Krüger to engage in a renewed reflection on the essence of Christian existence. It is striking to what extent this gloss remains, at heart, faithful to the Catholic interpretation of the accord of reason with revelation based on the *Letter of Paul to the Romans*: "Ever since the creation of the world, his (God's) invisible nature, namely his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made" (Rm 1:20). As is well known, this same passage served to justify the contribution of metaphysics to the understanding of faith by no less an authority than Thomas Aquinas in the beginning of the *Summa Theologica*.[49]

In seeking to explore the *historical Kant*, Krüger chose not to define himself as among those who claimed *to understand Kant better than he understood himself* and who enriched Kant's Critical project by orienting it toward Idealism (Fichte being the first), or toward epistemology or the transcendental forms of culture (Cohen being the first, with regard to

Kant's entire opus, up to and including his philosophy of religion). It remains the case, however, that the rediscovery of the historical Kant, however fascinating and open to debate it may be otherwise, risks remaining a mere historiographical task if it does not end up producing, in philosophical terms, the type of metaphysical knowledge anticipated by Kant in the Transcendental Doctrine of Method. It is true that Krüger's interpretation did not achieve this positive outcome and has, essentially, remained *one interpretation of Kant among others*—a powerful interpretation to be sure, but also one that has its share of difficulties.

When, from the outset, he located Kant entirely within the perspective of the ontology of creation, did Krüger not brush aside the dynamic aspect of Kant's moral philosophy, which casts practical reason in the light not merely of the human capacity for free obedience but also of the *aim of transforming the world*, whose potential repercussions may be seen in both the legal-political and religious thought of this philosopher (cf. in particular, the concept of an invisible church in *Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*)? To Kant's way of thinking, *it is by no means certain that the thing in itself is merely given and that it does not also, and above all, represent a project of freedom*. As such, this project is obviously unachievable by human beings alone, as it calls forth the "complement of grace" which continually constitutes the core of Kant's theological thought but which, all the same, remains the moral project of a freedom that hopes against hope in the meaning of the world. In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant would go so far as to associate the thing in itself with the "perfectly *rightful constitution* among human beings,"[50] a sign that the intelligible, for us, also comes under the heading of a call or an appeal. All the same, there is something a bit improbable in Krüger's portrait of Kant as an anti-modern adversary of the Enlightenment, finding his motive in the timeless fund of Greek ontology and its medieval ramifications.

It nevertheless remains true that among all the metaphysical interpretations of Kant that flourished beginning in the 1920s, Krüger's is the deepest, not only in terms of scope but also in the radicality of its theses. And even if one cannot follow his interpretation to its conclusion, it does have the huge merit of having shown, probably better than all the others, the moral-practical motives underlying the metaphysical anxiety that prompted Kant to write a *Critique of Pure Reason*. Furthermore, even if Krüger's interpretation did not result in original thinking concerning the metaphysical knowledge that it sought out but was ultimately unable to uncover in the Kantian opus, that interpretation remains an indispensable milestone in

the reception of Kant's philosophy, as well as an inestimable contribution to our understanding of the project of transcendental philosophy.

Notes

1. Gerhard Krüger, *Philosophie und Moral in der Kantischen Kritik* (1931), Tübingen (Germany): Mohr Siebeck; 2nd edition 1967. Hereafter referred to as: *Philosophie und Moral*. This study (first published in *Archives de philosophie*, volume 74–1, spring 2011) has the modest goal to set out the main elements of Krüger's interpretation, which, in our time, has become widely and somewhat unjustly forgotten. (I thank the editors for granting me the permission to republish this text.) Krüger's book makes for an arduous and, at times, abstruse construction. Only its main motives can be taken up in this essay, which may entail ignoring other major elements, such as Kant's moral formalism, for example. I will also refer to the article by Krüger entitled "Der Maßstab der kantischen Kritik," *Kantstudien*, XXIX, 1934, pp. 156–187 (hereafter referred to as: *Maßstab*), which contains the better portion of the theses set out in his *Kantbuch*.
2. G. Krüger, *Einsicht und Leidenschaft. Das Wesen des platonischen Denkens*, Frankfurt a. M. (Germany): Klostermann, 1939; 4th edition, 1973.
3. Bultmann belonged to the highly disparate movement of dialectical theology whose aim was to return to the deeper meaning of Old and above all New Testament Revelation, which had become obscured by liberal theology and its unconsciously positivist approach to the text of the Bible. Liberal theology often regarded the Bible as a mere object of historical and hermeneutical investigation and interpreted this work according to a culturalist and anthropocentric perspective. By the same stroke, Christianity tended to become, quite impersonally, a yardstick of civilization. Now, for the believer, the important thing was to return to the deeper meaning of the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ. Karl Barth, the most exemplary representative of the current dialectical theology, would confront the liberal interpretation with the pre-eminence of the inexplicable "eventness" of the revelation of God in Christ. It is so pre-eminent a revelation that it precedes all our subjective desires of cognition, and even all "our" philosophies, and bids us simply to listen to the Word of God since, for Barth, "only God can speak about God." It remains, however, that this Word must be able to be heard by us all-too-human beings. On this point, Bultmann found in the existential ontology of Heidegger a conceptuality capable of bringing the promise of Salvation into contact with the initial distress of human existence.
4. *Philosophie und Moral*, p. 8 (our translation: D.K).

5. The following are a few titles of books and articles of note: *Kant als Metaphysiker*, by Max Wundt (1925); *Diesseits von Idealismus und Realismus*, by Nicolai Hartmann (1924); *Metaphysische Motive in der Ausbildung des kritischen Idealismus* (1924) and *Persönlichkeitsbewusstsein und Ding an sich in der Kantischen Philosophie*, by Heinz Heimsoeth (1924); *Kant als Philosoph des Unbedingten*, by Johannes Volkelt (1924); and *Kant und das Ding an sich*, by Erich Adickes (1924). About Heimsoeth, see the article of Tinca Prunea (2013), "La conception kantienne de la philosophie dans la lecture métaphysique de Heinz Heimsoeth," in *Akten des XI. Internationalen Kant-Kongresses – Band I* [Proceedings of the XI International Kant Congress (Pisa, Italy)]. Berlin: Walter De Gruyter.
6. *Philosophie und Moral*, pp. 175–176.
7. Kant, *CPR*, A798/B826; Eng. trans. P. Guyer, p. 673.
8. *Philosophie und Moral*, p. 12 (our translation).
9. Ibid., p. 227 (our translation).
10. Ibid., pp. 230–231.
11. Ibid., p. 22.
12. *Maßstab*, p. 164.
13. *CPR*, A 238/B298; Eng. trans. P. Guyer, p. 340.
14. *CPR*, B-XXVI–XXVII; Eng. trans. P. Guyer, p. 115.
15. *CPR*, A715/B743; Eng. trans. P. Guyer, p. 631.
16. *Maßstab*, p. 175 (our translation).
17. Ibid., p. 181 (our translation).
18. *Philosophie und Moral*, p. 152 (our translation).
19. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (*CPJ*), Ak. V, 196; Eng. trans. P. Guyer and E. Matthews, p. 82.
20. Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, Ak. IV, 365; Eng. trans. G. Hatfield, p. 116.
21. Here, The History of Pure Reason, the concluding chapter of the Transcendental Doctrine of Method, is of less importance, as "this title stands here only to designate a place that is left open in the system and must be filled in the future" (*CPR*, A 852/B 880; Eng. trans. P. Guyer, p. 702).
22. *CPR*, A710-711/B738-739; Eng. trans. P. Guyer, p. 628, p. 629.
23. *CPR*, A736/B764; Eng. trans. P. Guyer, p. 642.
24. *CPR*, A739/B767; Eng. trans. P. Guyer, p. 644.
25. *Prolegomena*, Ak. IV, 352; Eng. trans. Hatfield, p. 103.
26. *CPR*, A773/B801; Eng. trans. P. Guyer, p. 661.
27. *CPR*, A776-777/B804-805; Eng. trans. P. Guyer, p. 662.
28. *Philosophie und Moral*, p. 192.
29. *CPR*, A796/B824; Eng. trans. P. Guyer, p. 672.

30. *Philosophie und Moral*, p. 192 (our translation).
31. *Maßstab*, p. 168 (our translation).
32. *CPR*, B XXVIII; Eng. trans. P. Guyer, p. 115.
33. In the *Jäsche Logic*, this question of hope calls forth another question: What is man? (Ak. IX, 25: *Lectures on Logic* (1992); Eng. trans. J. Michael Young). That is, who am *I*, this contingent being who lives in this world? It is an eminently destabilizing question for the *ego*, which is no longer the focal point, even if *all* philosophical questions turn out to be *human* questions. The gods do not philosophize, as Plato acknowledged some time ago, and philosophy is a strictly human matter, a quest for wisdom that we do not possess but to which reason aspires. Kant fits squarely with this line of thought.
34. *CPR*, A808-809/B836-837; Eng. trans. P. Guyer, p. 679.
35. *Philosophie und Moral*, p. 161 (our translation).
36. *Maßstab*, p. 170 (our translation).
37. *CPR*, A838-839/B866-867; Eng. trans. P. Guyer, pp. 694–695. N.B.: Guyer translates *Weltbegriff* as "cosmopolitan concept" as opposed to "cosmic concept."
38. *CPR*, A822/B850; Eng. trans. P. Guyer, p. 686.
39. *CPR*, B XXX; Eng. trans. P. Guyer, p. 117.
40. *Philosophie und Moral*, p. 233. It could be argued that this self-knowledge of human beings acting in the world and reflecting on the place they occupy in it will be the business of the *Anthropology,* to which, moreover, Kant dedicated considerable attention. However, for this philosopher, the concept of this truly foundational knowledge would go unelucidated, at least until the *Opus postumum*, precisely because, to the end, Kant remained "in that regard, dogmatically attached to the theoretical science of nature" (*Maßstab*, p. 171; our translation).
41. *CPJ*, Ak. V, 180; Eng. trans. P. Guyer and E. Matthews, p. 67.
42. *CPJ*, Ak. V, 196; Eng. trans. P. Guyer and E. Matthews, p. 82.
43. *CPR*, B 165; Eng. trans. P. Guyer, p. 264.
44. *CPJ*, Ak., V, 185–186; Eng. trans. P. Guyer and E. Matthews, p. 115. See also *CPR*, *Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic*, A642 sq./B670 sq.; Eng. translation P. Guyer, p. 590.
45. *CPJ*, *First introduction*, Ak. XX, 217; Eng. trans. P. Guyer and E. Matthews, p. 20.
46. *CPJ*, § 83, Ak. V, 431; Eng. trans. P. Guyer and E. Matthews, p. 298.
47. *Philosophie und Moral*, p. 42.
48. *CPJ*, Ak, V, 185–186; Eng. trans. P. Guyer and E. Matthews, p. 72.
49. Krüger's Protestant interlocutors never failed to reproach him for an approach they considered as being overly rooted in metaphysics. Their

position no doubt foretold of things to come, for Gerhard Krüger ultimately converted to Catholicism in 1950, following a series of intense discussions with Romano Guardini.

50. *Metaphysics of Morals*, *The Doctrine of Right*, § 62, *Conclusion:* "Every actual deed (fact) is an object in *appearance* (to the senses). On the other hand, what can be presented only by pure reason and must be counted among *ideas*, to which no object given in experience can be adequate – and a perfectly *rightful constitution* among human beings is of this sort – is the thing in itself" (Ak. VI, 371; Eng. translation, M. Gregor, p. 137).

CHAPTER 7

Gerhard Krüger and Leo Strauss: The Kant *Motif*

Susan M. Shell

One of the persistent puzzles of Strauss scholarship is the absence in any of his published works of a thematic treatment of Immanuel Kant.[1] This absence is all the more striking given Kant's importance in shaping the intellectual milieu in which the younger Strauss was educated and against which he, along with many of his early intellectual companions, including Gerhard Krüger, Jacob Klein, Gerschom Scholem, and others, rebelled more or less explicitly. And it gives the two seminars that he dedicated to Kant, in 1958 and 1967, respectively (an additional seminar, given in the early 1950s, was evidently not recorded),[2] special importance for anyone wishing to better grasp Strauss's understanding and appraisal of Kant's thought, including the meaning of that relative public silence.

In understanding this apparent lacuna, it will prove helpful to briefly consider that milieu, along with Strauss's approach to Kant both before and in the aftermath of Strauss's so-called reorientation in the early 1930s. Strauss was born in 1889 in Kirchhain, Germany, and grew up in an observant Jewish family. He attended a local gymnasium and then studied at the University of Marburg, then dominated by a neo-Kantianism for which

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Hermann Cohen (1842–1918) served as the shaping intellectual force. Strauss's dissertation, written under the supervision of Ernst Cassirer, on the "problem of knowledge" in Jacobi was a thinly veiled critique of Cassirer's neo-Kantianism.[3]

The neo-Kantianism that dominated the academic world of Strauss's youth represented a peculiar strand of Kantianism – one that took for granted the validity of modern empirical science as a basic starting point, while at the same time insisting, with Kant, that scientific truth only applied to the realm of "appearances," leaving the way open for moral claims to "practical knowledge" of things in themselves. The gap between theory and practice, or natural science and ethics, in this view, was spanned by the "regulative" idea of a progressive history, culminating, for Cohen, in a democratic-socialist state (or multitude of states) infused with broadly liberal and humanitarian principles.

A major difference between Cohen and Cassirer was the relative eclipse for the latter of a binding moral law, and, with it, the specific importance of a rational ethics, which tended to merge in Cassirer's thought with other sciences of "culture." A further, and perhaps related, difference lay in Cohen's passionate concern for the future of Judaism and the Jews in the context of modernity and in the waning years of Imperial Germany. [*WIPP* 292–6]

One might begin to better understand Strauss's attitude toward Kant by examining Strauss's several extended treatments of Cohen from the period of Strauss's early engagement with political Zionism to the late introduction to Cohen's *Religion of Reason out of the Sources of Judaism* that Strauss chose to include as the final chapter of *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy*, the original version of which appeared in 1973, the year of Strauss's death.

To briefly summarize that evolving treatment: Cohen seems to represent to Strauss the peak of Jewish hopes for successful accommodation—intellectual, political, and social—within a progressive civilization partly grounded in Kantian liberal presuppositions. Initially and throughout, Strauss takes Cohen to task for certain unfounded humanitarian expectations (which in some ways exceed those of Kant himself) while at the same time respectfully acknowledging Cohen's own religiously rooted dissatisfaction with the idealistic and romantic understandings of "transcendence." In the spirit of Kant's ethics, as he understood them, Cohen attempted to reverse, on Kantian premises and by Kantian means, the

"euthanasia" of Judaism[4] that Kant had himself appropriated from Spinoza. If Cohen failed to recognize the political motives behind Spinoza's "amazingly unscrupulous" treatment of Judaism (though not, perhaps, of the Jewish people), and if Cohen thereby also failed to recognize the impossibility of a politically effective moral universalism, he exceeded the putative intellectual accomplishment of his successor, Cassirer, by revealing, perhaps more forcefully than Kant himself, the necessary link between the passionate longing for universal justice and belief in revelation (PAW 140, NRH 163–4; cf. L. Batinsky, "Strauss's Philosophy of Religion," *Stanford* (Online) *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*).

Strauss's youthful Zionist essays make clear his early doubts as to the adequacy of such faith in the possibility of universal justice as a guide to political life or action. The aftermath of World War One, along with the increasingly precarious situation of the Jews in Germany and the related revelation of the illusory and demeaning character of the assimilationist ideal, made political Zionism an attractive option to many. Strauss's own complex attitude toward Zionism, an attitude he would later associate with the name of Nietzsche as he then understood him,[5] saw in Kant the roots of an unmanly liberal idealism and romanticism that refused to face the harsh reality of a world divided among political communities that were always at least potentially mutually hostile. One motive for Strauss's early studies of Spinoza was to free his persona from the German Idealists' and Romantics' image of a "god-intoxicated man," an image that had led contemporary liberal Jews to embrace Spinoza as a Jewish hero and thus "reverse" his original Jewish excommunication. Cohen's own better moral instincts led him to instead decry Spinoza as a traitor to his people. But, Cohen's own Kantian assumptions as to the basically moral foundations of philosophy blinded him to what Maimonides's "Platonism" really meant and thereby prevented Cohen, as Strauss saw it, from raising the fundamental Platonic-Socratic question as to the right way of life.

Strauss's Spinoza book (*Spinoza's Critique of Religion*), which was written during the years 1926–28, developed an early suspicion on Strauss's part that modern liberal thought, and the philosophic assumptions on which it was based, had failed to do justice to the claims of revelation, as recently affirmed by Karl Barth, Rudolf Bultmann, Friedrich Gogarten, and other members of the "neo-Orthodox" school. A related trend—the so-called new thinking, which included both Franz Rosenzweig, who urged a modified return to Jewish orthodoxy, and Martin Heidegger, who was assumed to be an atheist—likewise stressed the "existential" character

of certain fundamental human experiences to which religion traditionally gave expression and of which neither natural science nor the contemporary sciences of "culture" could satisfactorily account.

It is here that Gerhard Krüger enters the scene. Krüger, who was both a follower of Bultmann and Heidegger's respected research assistant, was embarked on his own effort to recover the Socratic-Platonic question, albeit from the standpoint of a pre-modern Christian Platonism. His discerning and incisive review of Strauss's book (one that stated Strauss's views, as Strauss put it, more clearly than he had done) sparked an extended correspondence and intellectual friendship that included the crucial years that spanned Strauss's so-called reorientation (in the late 1920s–early 1330s), and survived the early Hitler years, definitively ending only with Krüger's unfortunate stroke in the early 1950s. Krüger's way back to Plato was via an original and painstaking reading of Kant that especially emphasized his neo-Platonic Christian roots. On Krüger's account, modern science was less the foundation of Kant's critical idealism than an intellectual impediment that prevented him from entering fully into the spirit of hopeful knowledge to which his deeper thinking pointed. Krüger's interpretation of Kant, which impressed Strauss at the time, would continue to inform his reading of Kant, as presented in his later seminars (see, for example [58: 61–67, 139]).[6]

Krüger and Strauss shared a fundamental antipathy toward modern relativistic assumptions that made it impossible to take seriously the question of the best life or of the "one thing needful."[7] At the same time, Krüger's fundamentally Christian response, in Strauss's view, remained within a "historicizing" horizon that he himself meant to get beyond. A poignant letter on the far side of Strauss's intellectual breakthrough of 1929–30 stresses the difference between "natural law," to whose commanding authority Krüger remained wedded, and natural right as Plato understood it. Krüger's failure to follow that hint marked the end of their close intellectual collaboration, though not their friendship, and it reveals, as we shall see, something important about the defects, as Strauss saw them, of Kant's overall approach, even when stripped of its general commitment to the basic premises of modern natural science.

Jules Ebbinghaus, whose lively lectures on Hobbes Strauss later praised for helping to foster his own appreciation for the reading of "old books," was and remained a devoted Kantian, albeit one with a particular interest in Kant's juridical philosophy. Ebbinghaus's appointment as Rector of Marburg University in 1946 testifies to his unwavering, if passive,

opposition to Nazism during the war years (in marked contrast with such figures as Heidegger and Gogarten); and may shed light on the intellectual and moral qualities that led Strauss to include him, along with Krüger, among the few who shared Strauss's newly won conviction that a recovery of the ability to inquire directly about the truth without the self-defeating assumptions of "historical consciousness" would require ascent from what amounted to a "second cave." In any case, Strauss's acquaintance with Ebbinghaus gave Strauss personal access to an intellectually rigorous perspective on Kant's thought that in emphasizing Kant's significant, if seemingly unlikely, debt to Hobbes differed from those of Krüger[8] and the neo-Kantians.[9]

As for that further interest: in his early "On the Argument with European Science," written for the Zionist journal *Das Jude* [1924], Strauss had complained that Kant, by providing a means of peaceful coexistence between science and religious tradition "on parallel planes," had eliminated or obscured their "life-and-death struggle for hegemony on the *single* plane of the 'truth'":

> Religion was saved not by its own defense, but rather by the self-critique of the critique. Kant "needed to deny knowledge in order to make room for faith." In the context of this self-critique, religion was saved at the price of an idealist, romantic interpretation. However, the more the science of religion (now no longer in need of *criticizing* religion) devoted itself to the concrete actuality of religion, the clearer it became that the claim to transcendence, which…was endangered by romanticism and which is the ultimate claim of the specific claim to truth of religion, is also the vital principle of religion. [*LSEW*, 109]

Strauss's early insight into the price of Kant's defense—one that robbed religion of its appeal to a transcendent truth that could compete directly with the claim of natural science—continued to inform both certain reservations with respect to Cohen,[10] and his interest in the work of Krüger, whose own early book on Kant brought to light a transcendent religious dimension that neo-Kantian interpretations tended to ignore. Neo-Calvinists like Barth, on Strauss's view, represented an understandable and, in some ways, healthy reaction to an idealizing and romantic religiosity whose God was little more than a human projection of liberal-humanitarian hopes. Their appeal to the immediate experience of an omnipotent and demanding God, beyond human understanding, exposed

the intellectual self-complacency that underlay the so-called science of religion that accompanied those hopes. At the same time in its emphasis on the "concrete situation of the present" at the expense of the tradition, that appeal remained exposed to Heidegger's "atheistic" interpretation of the "call of conscience," opening the door to a more radical understanding of human historicity. Here, Cohen's rootedness in the Jewish understanding of divine law served as a useful corrective to the Christian natural law tradition to which Protestant neo-orthodoxy remained hostage willy-nilly. And it sheds useful light on Strauss's estimation of the strengths and limits of Kant, Cohen's divergence from whom on just this point Strauss goes out of his way to emphasize.

Strauss treats in greater detail the difference between Christian medieval philosophy on the one hand, and Jewish and Islamic medieval philosophy on the other, in a lecture on "Cohen and Maimonides" delivered in late April, 1931, according to a nearly contemporaneous letter to Gerhard Krüger dated the 7th of May.[11] That he had written to Krüger one year earlier (3 May 1930) with a friendly "plea" to be allowed to give a lecture in the latter's Augustine seminar on "Enlightenment in the Middle Ages" with a specific view to "Jewish and Islamic developments" suggests the intensity of his focus on this theme around this time. As Strauss puts it in his earlier letter in addressing what he calls "the problem of the moderate (i.e., non-atheistic) enlightenment" (about which Strauss here claims that Krüger's Kant work taught Strauss "a great deal"):

> From an external viewpoint, the situation in the Jewish-Arabic Middle Ages is similar to that of the eighteenth century: prevalence of belief in Providence, prevalence of belief in a gracious God over belief in a God who demands accountability, and *accordingly* belief in the sufficiency of reason. Upon closer inspection, however, there are significant differences. In the eighteenth century, there is the primacy of morality (veneration of Socrates), and in the Middle Ages, there is the primacy of theory.

Strauss here traces that difference to the peculiar role that "natural law" plays in Christianity, as distinguished from Judaism and Islam. As Strauss immediately goes on to say:

> In the eighteenth century, the "moral law" is developed as a natural right that demands the supplement of a positive, civil law. Natural law does not play a role in Jewish-Arabic philosophy, at least not the role that it has in the

> course of Christian development. This is connected with the fact that for Jews and Arabs, the positive law is at once both political and "church" law. The positive law of Moses or Mohammed is the *one* binding norm that suffices to lead a life directed toward a (theoretically existing) blessedness. Moses or Mohammed are understood as philosopher-legislators. The presupposition for this is the idea that goes back to the Platonic state. The Jewish-Arabic Middle Ages are thus much more "ancient" than the eighteenth century. By connecting to the ancient ideas of a concrete *nomos* and *nomothetes*, it is also far more capable of accepting the concrete revelatory order than the natural-law focus of the eighteenth century.

Though he does not quite say so, the Jewish and Islamic Middle Ages are also, from this point of view, more "ancient" than the Christian Middle Ages, which introduces a gap between natural and positive law unknown to Plato and of which Kant, along with the entire modern natural right tradition, is a late, if unwitting, inheritor.

This early allusion to Strauss's own breakthrough insight into the possibility of an Enlightenment founded upon different and more adequate premises than that which flourished in the eighteenth century is confirmed in his contemporaneous report to Krüger that in that lecture Strauss had "for the first time" given public voice to his "thesis about Islamic-Jewish scholasticism (that it understands revelation through the framework staked out in Plato's *Republic* and *Laws*)." In a passage toward the end of the text that is particularly relevant for our purposes, Strauss writes by way of summary:

> The idea [Gedanke] of law, of *nomos*, is what unifies Jews and Greeks: the idea of the *concrete*, binding order of life [verbindlichen Ordnung des Lebens], which is covered over for us by the Christian and the natural-right tradition, this idea [is the one] under whose spell [Bann] at least our philosophical thought moves. By the *Christian* tradition: [I mean the one] that starts out with the radical law-*critique* of the Apostle Paul. By the *natural-right* tradition: [I mean the one] that stipulates an *abstract* system of norms which must first be filled [ausgefüllt] and made serviceable by *positive* right. Cohen himself puts us on the road to the recovery of this basic concept of mankind/humanity [Grundbegriffs der Menschheit], by replacing the viewpoint of disposition/intention [Gesinnung][12] with that of action [Handlung], by orienting his ethics fundamentally to jurisprudence, by teaching that there is no self-consciousness [das es kein Selbstbewusstsein gibt] "that is to be achieved without regard for the state and without guidance through the thought of the state," by being a *political philosopher* filled [erfüllt] with political passion. [2: 429; CaM 221]

In what may be his earliest public use of the term "political philosophy,"[13] Strauss points both to the limitations of Kant, and to the resources that allowed Cohen, for all his socialist-humanitarian susceptibilities, to dispel the "Bann" under which modern political thought continues to labor. The term "Bann" signifies both "spell" and "ban," as in "ban of excommunication." And there can be little doubt that Strauss means that religious note to register. Cohen regards his subject from the standpoint of "action" rather than "disposition" or *Gesinnung*, a Kantian term of art that is the direct descendant of the biblical-Augustinian demand for "purity of heart." At the same time, Cohen's own concrete political passion counters the narrowness of his Kantian conception of ethics, reorienting him, despite himself, away from the abstract conception of self-consciousness that informs modern philosophy from its beginning. Self-consciousness for Cohen is unthinkable without a burdened awareness of the concrete laws that accompany a specific way of life—that is, what Strauss will later call a "sense of sacred restraint." In this crucial instance, Cohen, despite his general intellectual commitment to Kantianism, strays beyond Kant's own reliance on a "transcendental dialectic" based wholly in "theoretical consciousness." [*SCR* 37] On the basis of that dialectic, Kant had tried to "limit knowledge in order to make room for faith," thereby rendering religion immune to scientific criticism. He thereby lifted science and religion to "separate planes" in which genuine conflict seems to be impossible in principle. Cohen's grounding of metaphysics "in the context of [his] religion" brings them back into alignment on a single plane of inquiry. His "passion" on behalf of his own people, and the related understanding of the original meaning of divine law, points toward what Strauss had earlier called a metaphysics that is "by origin *more* than pure theory," toward the "extra something" that "throws a bridge between science and religion" and thereby makes the scientific (i.e., genuinely philosophic) criticism of religion again possible. [1: 66, *SCR* 37]

This impression as to the historical importance, as Strauss sees it, of the divergent medieval approaches to the law is confirmed in a subsequent letter to Krüger, in which he gently corrects Krüger's identification of "natural law" with natural right in a genuinely Platonic (and Aristotelian) sense.

At the same time, Strauss's ongoing efforts to recover the possibility of a non-Epicurean theoretical alternative, an alternative that he seems to have associated from an early date with Plato, informed Strauss's first extended treatment of Hobbes, in which the shadow of Kant is not hard

to discern.[14] Like his contemporary Descartes, Hobbes seeks to shield men from the discomfiting possibility of a wholly arbitrary and omnipotent God by beginning with what man can assure himself of with certainty: in Descartes's case, the perceived necessity contained in self-reflective thought, in Hobbes's case, the felt necessity of the world's resistance.[15] Kant's "transcendental dialectic," it would seem, combines these two insights, while at the same time incorporating their joint indifference or blindness to the fact that while *knowledge* of the acts of an omnipotent God (i.e., "miracles") might be thus foreclosed (i.e., by defining "knowledge" in an especially narrow way), the sheer *possibility* of miracles was not. Given Strauss's project at the time, this limitation on Kant's part would have been enough to convince Strauss, even before the breakthrough inspired by his reading of Alfarabi and Maimonides in the late 1920s and early 1930s, that Kant's philosophy, whatever other interest it might hold, was theoretically speaking a dead-end.[16]

In sum: Strauss's early appreciation for Kant's thought was more complex than can be captured by the word "rejection," nor was he as unsympathetic as might appear from his very early dissertation on Jacobi, a particularly influential contemporary critic of Kant.[17] Indeed, it would be only a slight exaggeration to say that Kant, as differently interpreted by Cohen, Krüger, and Ebbinghaus, provided Strauss with the *motif* that led him to undertake serious studies of both Spinoza and Hobbes with a view to uncovering the ultimate roots of modern liberal thought. That Kant's moral appropriation of medieval natural law could make him seem to be a "Christian" at heart while remaining, in most other respects, a "modern" might well have prompted Strauss, himself intent on making the ascent from modernity's "second cave," to seek out other, non-Christian premodern sources, in which "natural law" featured less prominently, if at all—sources that would in turn guide his own reorientation.

But there was to be a "third act" of theoretical engagement with Kant's thought, following upon the "shipwreck" that Strauss refers to in a 1946 letter to Karl Lowith[18] and that culminated in a renewed grappling with the challenge of revelation as posed by Kierkegaard and his neo-orthodox followers.[19] According to this new formulation, the significant alliance was not Alfarabi and Maimonides against Aquinas (on the nature of law) but Judaism and Catholicism against radical Reformation Protestantism (on the nature of faith). [*LSTPP*, 177] Strauss presents that challenge in a paper on "Reason and Revelation" delivered at the Hartford Seminary in 1948, which culminates in a complex and highly condensed dialogue

between the competing claims of philosophy and revelation to represent "the one thing needful."[20] That these claims are, indeed, mutually exclusive as well as jointly comprehensive is the concluding theme of that essay, and it involves setting to rest an argument, that Strauss here links with Kant, that reconciles reason and revelation by denying revelation and philosophy or science a common plane of dispute, an argument that ultimately proves devastating to philosophy itself. For—as Strauss goes on to assert—so long as the philosopher cannot rule out the possibility of revelation, philosophy becomes something "infinitely unimportant" and, hence, indefensible on its own terms.

Without entering into the details of Strauss's argument, which at times verges on the fragmentary, one cannot help noticing the importance of Kant's role both in placing science and revelation onto separate planes in which dispute, and hence refutation, is no longer possible (a key theme of Strauss's work in the late 1920s, as we have seen), and in furthering the modern obfuscation of the primary moral and political phenomena that ultimately gives rise to radical historicism.[21] So long as philosophy confines itself to the argument that the "fact of revelation" cannot be known as such (i.e., that *knowledge* of miracles is impossible, but not miracles themselves), revelation can reply that this tacitly presupposes the identity of "being" with "evidently knowable." "It is *this* fact," as Strauss here puts it, "which gave rise to Kant's Critique of pure reason, to his distinction between the phenomenon and the Thing-in-itself": Kant's "idealism" is an *attack* on the "idealism" of classical philosophy. Were we to leave matters here, the consequence for philosophy would be "a radical revision of fundamental reflections of classical philosophy…along the lines of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason." [*LSTPP* 177][22]

That Strauss does not leave matters here but presses on to assert that (pace Kant) philosophy and revelation *do* make claims about actual things, thus opening revelation to the possibility of refutation, underscores the fundamental weakness of the Kantian strategy: philosophy and revelation cannot be assigned separate spheres or planes, inasmuch as "they make assertions about the *same* subject: about the world and human life." [*LSTPP* 171] Kierkegaard and his followers defended their faith in the only way remaining: namely, to sever itself utterly from any basis in "human knowledge of actual things."

> To *exclude* the possibility of refutation radically, there is only one way: that faith has no basis whatever in human knowledge of actual things. This view of faith is not the Jewish and the Catholic one. It was prepared by the Reformers and reached its climax in Kierkegaard. [*LSTPP* 177]

Strauss's longstanding objection to the Kantian strategy of separate spheres is here sharpened by an encounter with Kant's existentialist legacy. To defend faith more adequately even than Kant (who canceled knowledge in order to make room for faith), Kierkegaard's "knight of faith" no longer grounds his belief in worldly knowledge of any kind, with the sole exception of the fact that some individuals once believed that "God appeared among [them]…, lived and died." [*LSTPP* 178; cf. 156] But even Kierkegaard (and perhaps especially he) falls victim no less than Kant to what Strauss here calls the "*basic* fallacy, of faith," namely "the attribution of *absolute* importance to *morality* (the pure heart)". [177][23] Strauss leaves matters at the suggestion that it is here that the "bridge," as he once called it, linking philosophy and revelation genuinely lies; that is, in a consideration of those primary moral and political phenomena from which classical political philosophy itself first emerged.

A faith that is not put forward merely in levity cannot, in fact, avoid making claims such as the "assertion that the world is *created*" [*LSTPP* 158], whose possibility is open to rational objection. [*LSTPP* 158] "Adherents of revelation may *say* credo quia absurdum; they cannot *mean* it." [*LSTPP*, 177] Christianity's inevitable stake in what the world is "actually" like opens it up to the "giving and receiving of reasons" in which Socratic disputation essentially consists. The distinction between "classical idealism" and "Christian realism" that Strauss once recommended to Krüger's attention[24] is thus more telling than its author knew or than Strauss may himself have realized prior to his erstwhile "shipwreck."[25]

Plato and Kant, Strauss later suggests, represent the two possible ways of conceiving "the natural frame of reference" without which "science" is impossible. In Kant's case, that frame of reference is "relative to man," while in Plato's, it is "identical with the inner order of the whole" of which we are always somehow dimly aware.[26] In accounting for this difference of approach, Strauss—judging by his earlier correspondence with Krüger—joins him in assigning major responsibility to the Bible, and, above all, to Augustinian Christianity, which brought to light the deeper, if in Strauss's eyes, less "radical," dimension of "consciousness," which classical thought did not have in view. But, Strauss denies that this represents a genuine advance in understanding. The ancients may have seen less than we do, but they saw with sharper eyes. [*LSTPP*, 178] As he puts it in a 1932 letter: "something has lodged itself in front of *the* radical dimension that was the sole object of Greek philosophy."[27] The living experience of God's presence that, on Krüger's account, haunts modern thought from its

inception is for Strauss a mistaken interpretation of phenomena rooted in what he calls "the *basic* fallacy of faith," namely, the attribution of "ultimate significance to moral criteria." [*LSTPP*]

At the same time, as Strauss conceded to Krüger in a late letter [34; cf. 41], Kant in "beginning with what can be *known* of life and of a correct human life, and only from there reflecting on what is to be *believed*" comes "closer" than do any of the other moderns "to Plato." Kant's "moral law,"[28] as distinguished from Krüger's "hoping knowledge," opens a path to the natural starting point from which political philosophy, according to Strauss, properly begins.

Notes

1. The sole exception is his early dissertation on Jacobi, which includes an extensive treatment of Kant from the perspective of Jacobi's critique. See Strauss, *Das Erkenntnisproblem in der philosophischen Lehre Fr. H. Jacobis* (1921).
2. Strauss seems to have also offered a course on "Aristotle and Kant" at the New School in 1944, which was attended by Harry Jaffa. http://www.nationalreview.com/article/396209/house-jaffa-john-j-miller.
3. For Strauss's youthful assessment of Cassirer, whom he later described as a "remarkable representative of established academic philosophy," see *RCPR* 28.
4. Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties* [6: 517–18].
5. See his letter to Karl Löwith, 23 June 1935 [*GS-3*: 648].
6. Strauss also mentions Krüger appreciatively, albeit with reservations, in Strauss's 1959 Seminar on Plato's *Symposium*. See Leo Strauss, *On Plato's Symposium* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); and Pangle, Reorientation, 58.
7. See, for example, their shared contempt for the work of Karl Mannheim, Strauss's satirical treatment of whom [in the essay "Conspectivism"] he asked for Krüger's help in publishing.
8. See, in this regard, Strauss's later references to Ebbinghaus at [58: 229, 348–9].
9. On Kant's ongoing openness to interpretations other than a neo-Kantian one, see [58: 56, 229]; on Krüger's own linkage of Kant with Hobbes, see Strauss's letter of 28 June 1931.
10. In "The Intellectual Situation of the Present," Strauss claims to discover in Cohen a more genuine religious motivation than is initially evident, given his apparent reduction of religion to social ethics: when neo-orthodox Protestants complain that the "entire science of religion has been devised without paying heed to religion," they forget, if they thereby have Cohen

in mind, that "the entire context of Cohen's philosophic system rests on religious presuppositions," in marked contrast with an apparent acolyte like Cassirer, for whom, "in a typically idealistic manner," the world of myth "loses its 'compulsory' character" insofar as it is read as the mind's own product. Cohen's polemic against myth differs from that of Cassirer in being guided not by an idealistic celebration of "the autonomous human spirit," but by the non-idealist, and genuinely ethical question "to what end?" "In Cohen," as Strauss goes on to say, "the ethical motive of transcendence contains within it…the power and depth of the religious motive of transcendence." "In the concrete context of human existence, the transcendence of the Ought in relation to Being, demands by its very nature, as Cohen stated again and again, that ethics be further developed into religion." [*LSEW* 110, 114]

11. It is not known how much of the text contained in the rather lengthy extant manuscript was actually delivered. See the editor's note, [*LSMC*, 173].
12. Cf. [58: 76].
13. For the fullest explicit discussion, see "What is Political Philosophy?," 9–55. In "Cohen and Maimonides," Strauss already stresses the necessary ambiguity of the term. For an alternative account, see Rodrigo Chacon, "Reading Strauss from the Start: on the Heideggerian Origins of 'Political Philosophy,'" *European Journal of Political Theory* 9 (3), 2010, 287–307. Chacon, in my view, draws much too sharp a distinction between Strauss's early and later uses of the term. On the continuity of Strauss's usage, see especially his interest at this time in Lessing, and especially the dialogue "Ernst and Falk." See Strauss, "A Remembrance of Lessing" (1937), [2: 607–8]; "Esoteric Teaching" (1939); cf. "Reason and Revelation," *LSTPP*, 178–9.
14. See, for example, his letter to Krüger of 15 October 1931.
15. On Kant's relation to Descartes, see also [58: 276, 283–84]: Kant, as Strauss there puts it, "wants morality to apply equally to God" in order to "secure us against any theological objections to the perfect sovereignty of man," that is, to leave us not "unprotected…against God" by establishing a sphere of uniquely human responsibility in which "no God, however powerful, can have power over man." [58: 239, 276, 284, 292] Strauss's analysis seems to draw partly on Krüger's own early essay on Descartes, which Strauss praises in his letter of 12 May 1935. Cf. Krüger, "Die Herkunft des philosophischen Selbstbewusstseins," *Logos* 22 (1933); an English translation "The Origin of Philosophical Self-Consciousness" was published in *The New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy* (2007), 209–59. Cf. the reservation expressed by Strauss in his 1941 notes on Descartes: "[Against Krüger: K. asserts that the reaction to the Biblical tradition is the only reason of Desc.'s new foundation. But: the doubt of mathematical certainty is required equally by the Deus deceptor

and by the fortuna-casus-possibility. What have these 2 possibilities in common? They both are opposed to Plato-Aristotle; the Aristotelian answer has become problematic; but his and Plato's fundamental insight: only the intelligible can be understood, is recognized. Therefore, Desc. must try to make the foundation of intelligibility independent of the *nous en kosmo*.]" [Leo Strauss Archives, Box 6, file 8]. (I am grateful to Svetovar Minkov for bringing this passage to my attention.)

16. In a final, and perhaps unsent, letter to Krüger (his correspondence with whom would not resume until June 1958), Strauss grants that he is now far more willing to concede Krüger's view that "Kant is really the only Platonist among the modern philosophers." At the same time, Strauss also holds the "Christian tradition" to task for the "main deficiencies of traditional conceptions of Plato – even in today's research"—an allusion, it would seem, to Heidegger as much as Krüger, who continues to be more "convinced" than is Strauss (thanks to his own discovery of a path back to Plato via Alfarabi) that "historicity as such is a philosophic problem." Letter of Dec. 1935 (unsent draft). For a late discussion of Kant's "Platonism," see [67: 137].
17. For a thorough account of Strauss's qualified debt to Jacobi, see David Janssens, "The Problem of the Enlightenment: Strauss, Jacobi, and the Pantheism Controversy," in *Reorientation: Leo Strauss in the 1930s*, ed. Martin Jaffe (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).
18. See Meier, *LSTPP,* 29; cf. *WIPP* 78–94. Accordingly, as he puts it an accompanying note, Strauss "find[s himself] compelled" to change his work plans, which presumably included a previously outlined book to be "tentatively entitled Philosophy and Law: Selected Essays," which was devoted to the subject of esotericism and was to culminate with a chapter on the "Pantheism" controversy. Strauss's subsequent treatments of the history of natural right no longer explicitly link, in the manner of his earlier writings, the Christian understanding of natural law with the emergence of historicism, now presented as the culminating moment of the three "waves" of modernity initiated by Machiavelli.
19. While Strauss mentions both Bultmann and Gogarten, he focuses on the Swiss theologian Emil Brunner, whose *Reason and Revelation* (1946; original German edition 1941), Strauss quotes from at some length (and whose title he both imitates and, in order to "clarify the issue," implicitly corrects [*LSTPP* 141]). On Brunner, see also Strauss's 26 November 1946 letter to Lowith [3: 671]. For a fuller discussion of Strauss's treatment of neo-orthodoxy, see Daniel Tanguay, *Strauss: an Intellectual Biography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 145–66).
20. Cf. *Luke* 10: 41–2.
21. On the importance for Strauss of an understanding of the genealogy of this obfuscation, see his Collingwood essay.

22. There is some question as whether these notes properly belong to the period in which he composed "Reason and Revelation," or, instead, to Strauss's earlier lecture on "Jerusalem and Athens," which was delivered in November 1946, much closer to the date of his "shipwreck" letter to Lowith. (I am grateful to David Bolotin and Peter Hansen for drawing my attention to this issue.)
23. Compare, in this regard, the "radical existentialism" of Heidegger, who, recognizing the impossibility of ethics, was permeated, as Strauss later puts it, by an awareness of the "abyss of freedom" that this "fact" opens up. [*RCPR* 28–9, 34] See also [58: 143]; Strauss here traces Kant's treatment of justice in a way that guarantees its "realizability" partly to the importance for him of morality. At the same time, Strauss also suggests that freedom may count for Kant even more than morality itself, contributing to the peculiar tension in his understanding of the just order as both morally required and in itself a-moral. [58: 182, 193]
24. Cf. *LSTPP*, 176 and letter [28]; the terms are borrowed from Lucien Laberthonnière, *Le réalisme chrétien et l'idéalisme grec* (Paris, 1904).
25. See, in this regard, Strauss's 1941 attribution to Descartes and Plato-Aristotle alike of the insight that only the intelligible can be understood, along with Strauss's related reservation with respect to Krüger's criticism of Descartes, as cited in note 15 above.
26. "This is the meaning of science. It supplies a frame of reference which in principle can be common to all men as men. Now there are two ways of conceiving this natural frame of reference, if I may call it this for the moment. One is the Kantian way, the other the Platonic way. Kant says there is a natural frame of reference which is given by the structure of the human mind. This implies the distinction between the thing in itself and the phenomenon. This whole perception or understanding through this natural frame of reference is relative to man. The Platonic assertion is the opposite. This natural frame of reference is identical with the inner order of the whole. We are by nature dimly aware of the essential structure of the whole." (Leo Strauss, Seminar on Plato's *Republic*, 1957, session 11)
27. Letter to Krüger, 27 December 1932 [25d].
28. Cf. Strauss, *On Tyranny* (written at around the same time as the lecture on "Reason and Revelation"): Man as man is not thinkable "as a being that lacks awareness of sacred restrains" or as a being solely guided by the "desire for recognition" [192].

CHAPTER 8

Natural Right and Historical Consciousness in Strauss and Krüger's Exchange

Alberto Ghibellini

Leo Strauss's correspondence with German philosopher Gerhard Krüger is an invaluable source for those who seek to understand Strauss's complex and debated thought.[1] Dating mostly from the early 1930s—a period in which Strauss went through a decisive "reorientation"—the exchange deals with several important themes and overall has a lively and straightforward style that proves to be extremely useful for the interpreter who wishes to grasp the guiding ideas of each of them.

The correspondence's main concern arguably is historicism and the challenge it poses to any attempt to achieve an atemporal philosophical view. Evidence of this can be found not only in most of the letters Strauss and Krüger exchange, but also in the essays that Strauss, in particular, mentions therein. Among these are such works as "Conspectivism," "Religious Situation of the Present," and "Review of Julius Ebbinghaus, *On the Progress of Metaphysics*,"[2] where Strauss, with remarkable clarity, faces that challenge by attempting to show that the historicist, "synoptic," and relativistic stances that characterize his and Krüger's time—no less than ours—would have to be seen as historically conditioned themselves.

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As he will famously restate in *Natural Right and History*, once we raise the question of the historicity of historicism itself, the latter ceases to be the last word of today's philosophy (if one may still use this term in such a historicist context).[3] Rather, historicism emerges as the expression of a specific age that has lost its ability to philosophize "naturally," an age that, being by definition transient, is destined to be superseded.

Next, and linked to this concern, natural right proves to have a prominent place in that correspondence as well. Natural right surfaces as the practical manifestation of the question of the measure or standard (*Maßstab*), which most of the correspondence revolves around. Strauss himself underscores this connection when, making reference to "Foreword to a Planned Book on Hobbes"[4] in a letter to Krüger from November 16, 1931, he states that in that essay, he attempts "to establish the desideratum of natural right" and that his "main goal is to emphasize that historical consciousness is the sole presupposition of today's skepticism with regard to natural right."[5]

The link of historicism and natural right is also confirmed by a comparison between the end of the "Foreword" and the almost coeval "Religious Situation of the Present," a lecture Strauss delivered in 1930 largely devoted to the problem of historicism. This comparison shows that the question of historicism and the question of natural right are so intertwined in Strauss's view that he even adopts similar wording for both.

The concluding remarks of the "Foreword," worth quoting at length also for what they expressly state about natural right, read as follows:

> The fact of anarchy in the natural right teaching becomes an argument against the possibility of natural right as such … only because the reason for the necessity of failure and therewith for the anarchy is believed to be known. The opponents of natural right admit to us, as it were, that the natural right teachers failed "only" because they proceeded from a wrong starting point; but – they mean – the wrong starting point is precisely the *quest for the* natural right, the one eternal natural right. For there is not the one eternal natural right, but rather every age (or rather every people and every class) has its ideal of right. Just as there is not the one eternal truth but merely a particular truth. Hence, it is reasonable to have a quest at most only for the *particular* ideal of right, valid for men in a *given* situation; in any case, no other ideal of right is to be found. Thus it is even possible to have a historical justification of natural right: the natural right teachers indeed sought *the* right, but they found, or rather formulated, the ideal of right of their age.

> They failed – measured by *their* standard; judged by the historical consciousness, they reached the goal, the only attainable goal. After the historical contingency of all human action and thought is seen clearly, however, it would be dishonest henceforth to postulate a human absolute.[6]

If we now turn to "Religious Situation of the Present," particularly to the prosopopoeia of the Present Strauss resorts to after raising the question of the "right life," we find, among other things, the following remarks (which evidently parallel some of the above): "At one time, later generations did not let themselves be confused by the failure of the earlier ones. Full of delusion, they said to themselves, if they failed – perhaps they approached the issue the wrong way; let's just begin from the beginning; let's begin completely from the beginning. And they began from the beginning, and they also failed. The unhappy ones did not know – what I, the Present, the powerful goddess, know – that they had to fail. They had to fail since they were seeking *the* truth. For there is not *the one eternal* truth, but each age has its truth…;" "To be sure, they [the earlier generations] did seek *the* truth, but they found the truth without time [*ohne Zeit*]; they failed – measured by their standard; measured by *my* standard they reached the goal;" "It is befitting for thinking beings to know what they are doing and what they can reasonably want: therefore, know and be imbued with it once and for all, that you can find only your truth, the truth of the present, and therefore can reasonably seek only it."[7]

Strauss thus approaches the question of natural right as part of the broader question of the possibility of a meaningful philosophical thought, whose goal is an "eternal" and "absolute" truth as opposed to the idea of an ever-changing, and relative, "truth of the present." This is precisely the reason why he initially became involved in the study of Hobbes. In the early 1930s, Hobbes is for Strauss not only the author who, "living in an illiberal world, lays the foundations of liberalism," which Strauss, no less than Carl Schmitt, wanted to overcome. He also is the thinker who, unlike the historicists and legal positivists of Strauss's time, emphasizes the role of "nature" as he starts from a *status naturalis* seen as an original condition of disorder that must be superseded by the intervention of "culture" and the civil state.

In the already quoted "Foreword," Strauss eloquently underscores this key role of Hobbes by saying that "only in view of unrest [*Unruhe*], only *in* unrest, if not indeed in revolts [*Unruhen*] can that understanding of man be gained from which the right created for the satisfaction of man can be understood: only in this way can it be radically understood that as well

as how man needs right; only in this way is *philosophic* understanding of right possible."[8] Unlike legal positivism, which, as Kelsen claims, can thrive "only in relatively peaceful times" and tries to achieve a detached, but for that reason distorted and unrealistic, knowledge, Hobbes starts from the recognition of "the entire dangerousness and endangeredness of man," and thereby carries out "a philosophic founding of right" by defining "natural right as the behavior appropriate to this situation of man."[9]

In a letter to Krüger from October 15, 1931, however, Strauss already shows that this Hobbesian and "polemic" view of natural right does not reflect his real position, which is now epitomized by Plato to the extent that Strauss's philosophical path concerning natural right can be described as a shift between these authors. After stating that he and Krüger "will likely come to agreement on the necessity and possibility of natural right," he goes on to declare that "now that Plato has taught me the untenability of Hobbes's premises [*Ansatz*], Hobbes no longer suffices for me as a guarantor [*Gewährsmann*] of the possibility of natural right in a world without Providence. My guarantor is – Plato. Do you happen to be familiar with the myth of the *Statesman*?"[10]

Now, when Strauss here says "Ansatz," what does he really mean? Is he referring to Hobbes's "approach" in general, to the way this author tackles the philosophical problems, particularly that of natural right? Or, rather, is he referring to Hobbes's starting point, the "departure" of his system, namely, the state of nature? The latter answer does not seem that far-fetched once we carefully consider Strauss's final reference to the myth of the *Statesman*.

As is well known, in that dialogue, Plato has the Visitor from Elea tell a myth about the universe according to which there are two distinct ages or phases of its working: the age of Cronus and that commonly attributed to Zeus.[11] Over the former, the god, along with his demons, superintends the functioning of every section of the whole's life, so that everything is in perfect order. In this age, human beings do not even need any political rule, as they are not dangerous to each other nor are they endangered, living in what is also referred to as a "golden age." During the latter age, by contrast, the universe starts to move on its own toward the opposite direction, gradually deviating from the original cosmic and providential order toward a condition of chaos. However, this is the key point: according to the myth of the *Statesman*, the universe never reaches that condition of complete disorder since the "helmsman" of the universe never leaves completely after releasing the tiller, but keeps observing the whole from his vantage point. Arguably, this means, leaving metaphors aside,

that according to the myth of the *Statesman*, the universe, as well as nature, is never complete chaos, is never fully devoid of rational order, even when it reaches its most unordered stage.

This account clearly is of the utmost importance concerning Hobbes's depiction of the state of nature and his interpretation of natural right. According to Hobbes, the state of nature is a state of disorder, where every human being has a right to everything, but no original obligation whatsoever as far as actions are concerned.[12] For this reason, that state is a state of war, if not actual, at least potential, in which human life is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short," as Hobbes famously puts it in Chap. 13 of the *Leviathan*.

According to Hobbes, thus, order is artificially established, and natural right is an originally unrestrained liberty that, if left unleashed, brings unbearable disorder. Under these circumstances, only a natural right understood as a legitimate subjective claim can be affirmed. A different situation seems instead to be the one implied in the myth of the *Statesman*: if some residual form of "providence" or rational order never leaves the whole and the human beings who are the most excellent part thereof,[13] even when the most disorderly and chaotic stage is reached, one can never claim a right to everything, a completely free condition no matter how unbearable that condition may turn out to be. Some sense of a rational, objective restraint, as distinct from the mere command to seek peace as a means to secure one's right, still persists; freedom is never absolute, since at least a natural and *objective* "standard," if not a real law, remains available for human beings to attempt to discern.[14]

This is why, according to Strauss, Plato (particularly through the myth of the *Statesman*) is his guarantor of the possibility of natural right "in a world without Providence." Even once we rule out God and his providential justice, some standard of order still stands. This, however, also means that the natural right whose possibility one can argue for under those circumstances is not so much everyone's advantage or interest, as the idea of what is good or by nature right for us as human beings, that is a ranking of the human ends or ways of life. The real purpose of human reason is therefore not to merely figure out how one can best assure his or her self-preservation once the legitimacy of the fight for this goal, based on the inescapable and universal passion of fear, has been recognized. Above and beyond this, reason must be exercised to attempt to fathom the "cosmic" order and ascertain what is truly good for us, what is the best life human beings can live qua human beings.

It is in light of this Platonic approach that one can understand the otherwise rather enigmatic beginning of the part of the same letter Strauss devotes to Hobbes and natural right. There Strauss points out that, overall, Hobbes's "'political science' represents a repetition of Socratic *techne politiké*, a repetition, however, that very much flattens [*verflacht*] the Socratic problem." Then he adds: "I believe that it will in this way become possible to determine precisely what is popularly called rationalism."[15] The reason why Hobbes's repetition flattens the Socratic problem, and why his rationalism is only "popularly" so-called, is that instead of asking what virtue is, that is, what the good or best possible life is, Hobbes asks only about the means to achieve an end—self-preservation and, in perspective, commodious living—that in Socratic-Platonic terms (not to say Aristotelian) is too low and vulgar an end to be chosen by full-fledged, flourished, and refined human beings.[16] From Hobbes's perspective, reason remains indeed key (as shown by the series of Laws of Nature he lists), but its role is to discern the right means to the end of self-preservation, namely an instrumental role, and not to be itself the peak, the center of a life devoted to knowledge.[17] It is still "rationalism," in short, but of the lowest degree once it is seen through the Platonic lenses Strauss is trying to recover.[18]

This Platonic arrangement also clearly emerges in another letter Strauss writes to Krüger, on August 19, 1932, regarding his review-essay "Notes on Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*."[19] In a previous letter of his, upon reading the "Notes," Krüger had asked Strauss whether his intention in that essay could be understood as a form of Platonism according to which what justifies the political grouping into friends and enemies is "the 'political' dialectic of the totalities struggling over the character of the 'right.'"[20] If this were the case—Krüger had observed in the same letter—it would be ultimately impossible for Strauss to avoid both Schmitt's decisionism (his "neutral affirmation of all that is 'meant seriously'") and, more generally, a fideistic approach to the question of what is right. As Krüger puts it: "How can there be a decisive concretization of the search concerning the character of the right without a 'confession of faith' [*Glaubensbekenntnis*]?"[21]

In his revealing response, Strauss states that in his view "there is ultimately only *one* opposition, namely between 'left' and 'right,' 'freedom' and 'authority.'" Then, shifting to "more honest ancient terms," he significantly explains that the underpinning of that opposition is the distinction between delight or pleasure and good, that is, in the Greek terms he resorts to, between "ἡδύ and ἀγαθόν."[22] Regarding Krüger's remarks

about the decisionistic or fideistic stance Strauss, in Krüger's view, would have willy-nilly to embrace, Strauss retorts that "the 'confession of faith' you demand seems to me to lie in the δουναι και δεξασθαι [sic; 'to give and receive,' meaning 'reason' (λόγον)] as such, in modern parlance, in probity [*Redlichkeit*],"[23] concluding that "the struggle between 'left' and 'right' is the struggle between utopian dizziness and sobriety."[24]

Thus, once again, as is shown by the quotation from Plato and the Greek terms he chooses, Strauss's ultimate intention is to trace his position back to a form of Platonic rationalism according to which reason, through dialectics, is seen as able to meaningfully raise the questions of what is good and what is right also in an objective, absolute sense. In this perspective, reason with its "authority" opposes the essentially hedonistic attempt to unleash individual freedom in its search for pleasure, a search that, in that respect, characterizes Hobbes's thought no less than ancient hedonism. No matter how absolutist his political system may end up being, Hobbes, in fact, is the author who underlines the distinction between right and law, *jus naturale* and *lex naturalis*, coherently defining the former, which becomes the center of his system, as a "liberty to do, or to forbeare," unlike the latter which "determineth, and bindeth to one of them."[25]

The only dissonant trait in this essentially classical scenario is Strauss's reference to "probity" as an equivalent of the Platonic "to give and receive reason." Only three years later, in the Introduction to *Philosophy and Law*, however, Strauss will emend this apparent inconsistency, pointing out that the "old love of truth" differs from the "new probity" in that it is not dogmatic in ruling out, from the beginning, "transcendent ideals," including the ones that substantiate, at least under the guise of open problems, Platonic rationalism with its idea of the good.[26]

What Strauss argues in his review of Schmitt's *The Concept of the Political*, when he seemingly justifies the struggle among political groups over the right, is therefore "only relevant *ad hominem*," as he puts it in a statement that alone shows how removed his view of the political is from Schmitt's. As he further explains: "In opposition to agreement at any price, conflict is truer. But only peace, i.e. agreement in the truth, can be the last word. That this agreement of reason is possible – I firmly believe [*firmiter credo*]."[27]

Strauss's attempt to remain within pre-modern rationalism could not be voiced more clearly. What should be stressed here, however, is the remark that conflict is truer than agreement at any price. This kind of agreement, in fact, is the one that characterizes the positions Strauss had

stigmatized in "Conspectivism," namely, a constellation of views which, having set aside as meaningless the purpose of reaching an eternal and absolute truth, placidly accepts, and tries synoptically to combine, the various stances of the age. Compared to these views, the philosophical understanding that stems from the perception of the lingering conflict among the different views and their advocates is surely truer. This is, ultimately, Hobbes's role and importance, as we have already emphasized while referring to Strauss's "Preface to a Planned Book on Hobbes." From such a "polemical" approach, which is also shared by Schmitt, however, no stable and objective philosophical position can emerge. Hobbes's and Schmitt's positions remain within a "decisionism" that is not able to substantiate an objective view of what is good or by nature right, if only as an open question.[28] With opposite intention—the one to limit the bearing of political decision, the other to extend it—they share the same skepticism toward the possibility of rationally fathoming the "content" of that decision.[29]

Strauss, on the other hand, "firmly believe[s]" that such an "agreement of reason," an "agreement in *the* truth,"[30] is not only desirable, but also possible. For this reason, no matter how "philosophical" Hobbes's position may be compared to the synoptic stances that seek agreement at any price, a horizon beyond his ultimately "liberal" approach must be searched for. And the only viable path toward this horizon is through the recovery of Platonic political rationalism, which does not *a priori* give up the attempt to discern the human good, the "*summum bonum*,"[31] as distinct from mere delight or pleasure.

Delight or pleasure (ἡδύ), however, turns out to be the ultimate underpinning of Hobbes's system. This clearly comes out in a letter from November 17, 1932 (as well as in its preparatory draft), where Strauss tries to answer a question Krüger had raised in a previous letter of his (from November 13, 1932) regarding the tenability of Strauss's attempt to directly compare Hobbes's approach with the Socratic one. Significantly, Krüger had voiced his perplexity in the following manner: "Is Hobbes's 'foundation of liberalism' really identical to the Socratic intention? After all, Hobbes's question concerning the 'right' is not the same as the Socratic question concerning the good. Even if one does not insert some 'external,' 'demanding' moralism into the ancient αγαθον [sic], the kind of obligation and the *ground* of the question is a different one."[32]

In reply, Strauss begins by emphatically answering Krüger's question in the negative: Hobbes's foundation of liberalism is "of course not" identical to the Socratic intention. He continues: "How can a reasonable human

being, a *philosopher* (!) be liberal or be the founder of liberalism? Or, more pointedly: how can a philosopher, a man of science, teach like a sophist?" And to these revealing questions, he adds: "Once this has become possible – and it has become possible above all on account of Hobbes – then the fundamentally *clear* situation that Plato had created by allocating ἀγαθόν to τέχνη and ἐπιστήμη, ἡδύ to sophistry and barbering professions (to professors, journalists, demagogues, business leaders, poets, etc.) becomes fundamentally unclear, with the upshot being the total lack of orientation in the 'currents of contemporary thought,' in which 'everything' becomes philosophically possible."[33]

Once again, Strauss traces the conspectivist nature of today's "philosophy" back to the abandonment of the Platonic approach—based on the search for the good as the foundation of both art and science—and to the consequent hedonistic turn toward individualism and relativism, which only a "decisionistic" act of the will can temporarily hold in check. For Strauss, Hobbes inaugurates a new "sophistic" approach to political philosophy, according to which it is not natural reason, but the contingent human will and a merely "instrumental" reason that can artificially establish order each time. As Strauss puts it in a later letter to Krüger to explain an analogous utterance which occurs in the Introduction to *Philosophy and Law*, the term "'sophistry' … is meant literally (after the Protagoras myth): to submit to what the Athenians say on the basis of an Epimethean physics (the exposedness of human beings)."[34]

In Strauss's view, thus, philosophy and liberalism are as incompatible as philosophy and sophistry are in Plato's account. Liberalism and sophistry share the same relativistic, ultimately hedonistic background: they start from a conception of reason and nature according to which only human "decision" can set a measure or standard (*Maßstab*) and therewith "create" order. As the myth of the *Protagoras* shows, the basis for this view is a conception of the human being as by nature deprived of adequate skills to live in a complete and orderly manner. Human beings under Epimethean physics as described in the *Protagoras* are "naked, unshod, unbedded, and unarmed," a condition which reminds one of Hobbes's description of human life in the state of nature as "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."[35] In both cases, only the subsequent development of art (*techne*), be it mechanical or political, allows human beings to improve their naturally exposed condition.

Strauss had already underlined the importance of the myth of the *Protagoras*, with its Epimethean physics, in a previous letter to Krüger

(February 7, 1933). There, he first stresses the role of the "'Epimethean' natural philosophy as the basis of the justification of Athenian democracy." Then, he states that the myth of the *Protagoras* "shows how, in principle, modern naturalism is identical to ancient naturalism."[36] However, prompted by a previous observation of Krüger's about the importance of the "second sailing" in Strauss's account,[37] he, this time, explains that "the knowledge of human order and factual human disorder is not tied to a prior knowledge of φύσις, as is sufficiently shown by the limitation to the δευτερος πλους [sic] in the *Phaedo* and the mythical character of the *Timaeus*, whereas the combated sophistic view naively presupposes a naturalistic cosmology."[38]

Krüger had prompted this remark by claiming that compared to thinkers like Karl Löwith, who in his view fails to acknowledge the challenge of revelation, thereby remaining "clueless" in the search for a *Maßstab*, Strauss "know[s] better, and that is why for [him] the search for an atheistic philosophy is the δεύτερος πλοῦς that is *incapable* of ignoring the old ἀγαθόν in its rank."[39] Unlike other atheistic thinkers of his time, as we have emphasized, Strauss attempts to recover a Platonic perspective according to which the question of the good becomes central again. The path through which that perspective can be re-enabled is the "second sailing," in which the mere observation of φύσις in its materiality is replaced by a rational inquiry into what is "good and opportune."[40] In the second sailing, reflection on what is "by nature" as distinct from what is "by convention" is not ruled out: rather, it shifts from the sensory and material plane to the intelligible and rational one, which is absolute and eternal and which only rational discourses (λόγοι) can disclose.[41] Hence, although not a believer, Strauss is not "clueless" because he still trusts reason. To take up again Strauss's explicit words: "Only peace, i.e. agreement in the truth, can be the last word. That this agreement of reason [*Verständigung der Vernunft*] is possible – I firmly believe."[42]

That this Platonic and rationalistic approach constitutes Strauss's real stance is also shown by what he claims, in his exchange with Krüger, about politics. Especially in the period around the fateful date of 1933, comments on the dire concrete political situation become more common even in this detached philosophical debate. The period, one may say, is one of those moments of truth in which real friends, and more or less opportunist turncoats, suddenly take different paths and reveal themselves.[43] At one point, Strauss even expresses relief at the simple fact that Krüger, unlike, for example, Schmitt, still corresponds with him despite his being a Jew.[44]

In a letter from July 17, 1933, which touches upon the recent German events, Strauss sets out by observing that "the gulf that others have torn open in fact now also separates us as well, since we are not pure spirits but terrestrial descendants of terrestrial beings. It is almost like in a war…" Then, with a disappointed mood, he continues: "There could have been a decent, just, *imperial* solution. The solution that has been opted for stems from hate, and it almost necessarily generates counter-hate. It will require a long, strenuous effort on my part to be able to deal with what has been inflicted on me and my kind."[45]

Those who are familiar with Strauss will not fail to notice the similarities, as well as the differences, of this quotation with a letter Strauss had sent not much earlier (on May 19, 1933) to Karl Löwith. That letter has become rather famous (or infamous), as it is usually cited to prove Strauss's proximity to fascism (if not, all the more improperly, to Nazism).[46] As is well known, in that context, Strauss speaks of the "principles of the right," of "fascist, authoritarian, *imperial* principles" as the only ones from which "it is possible, with decency, that is without the laughable and despicable appeal to the *droits imprescriptibles de l'homme* to protest against the shabby abomination [*das meskine Unwesen*]."[47] To these remarks, he adds the quotation from Virgil: "Tu regere imperio … parcere subjectis et debellare superbos," to conclude that "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."[48]

The "fascist, authoritarian, *imperial* principles" have meanwhile given way to a "decent, just, *imperial* solution." The emphasis is always on the "imperial" character of those principles or solution. The "authoritarian" can still be seen as implied in that character. But what about the fascist side of the matter? Is this just an "ad hominem" omission due to the different type of correspondent (the believing Krüger instead of the secular, "clueless" Löwith)? Or is it rather the consequence of a change of mind on Strauss's part?

The latter explication seems to be by far the more probable. In his response to Strauss on May 28, 1933, Löwith had in fact already questioned not only Strauss's leaning toward the principles of the right, but also, more significant for our analysis, Strauss's interpretation of fascism. In Löwith's view, fascism is not so much the heir of Roman thought and therewith, at least indirectly, of the classical approach, as the heir of modern democracy, of which fascism is "definitely an excrescence [*Gewächs*]."[49]

Moreover, Strauss himself, in an unsent draft letter to Krüger from July 22, 1933 (which is only five days after his previous letter to him, where the comparative omission of "fascism" occurs), proves to have meanwhile framed a more sophisticated appraisal of fascism. In that draft letter, starting from the assessment that the modern world, based on a "liberal-democratic" structure, "is cracking at all seams," Strauss points out that "the opponents of *this* modern world, I mean those who act, propose solutions that are no less 'modern' and hence in principle have to lead to the same negative result."[50]

Now, leaving aside the incidental remark that clearly implies that there are more theoretical opponents who are immune from this faulty approach, it is important to underline that as an example of these no less "modern" and "negative" solutions, Strauss singles out nothing less than Benito Mussolini's political views. He refers to "Mussolini's Encyclopedia article on the state," likely meaning the entry "Fascism," which Mussolini, along with the neo-Hegelian philosopher Giovanni Gentile, wrote for the Italian Encyclopedia (Treccani) in 1932.[51] In this entry, especially in the first part by Gentile (but published under Mussolini's name alone), the authoritarian and ordering role of the State is highly praised and emphasized. However, the emphasis is particularly on its creative "will," which establishes order over a natural setting fundamentally seen as fight and disorder.[52] That entry, in other words, does not exceed the "liberal horizon" framed by Hobbes as a consequence of his rejection of the ancient Greek paradigm. In criticizing Mussolini (and Gentile), Strauss is ultimately restating his critical appraisal of Carl Schmitt, published in 1932, which culminates in his astonishing summary of Schmitt's approach as a "liberalism with opposite polarity," since, as we have noted, it limits itself to affirming the authority of the will of the state while liberalism wanted to limit or negate that will. The "will," however, remains the same, as does the empty "decisionism" upon which it rests.

Strauss's solution, on the other hand, aims to be "unmodern," not ultra-modern. As he puts it in the same draft letter (July 22, 1933), faced with the "negative result" which the still modern solutions epitomized by Mussolini's fascism lead to, "we … are inclined to try solutions that are in principle unmodern, i.e. concretely: old solutions."[53] It is significant that the draft begins with Strauss's attempt to describe the difference between him and Krüger in the following terms: "Formally, this difference consists in the fact that I am determined to depart from the Socratic-Platonic approach – and not just from this *approach* – only when I have understood the inadequacy

of this manner of questioning, whereas you do not claim to want to forgo this insight but instead claim to possess it."[54] Not only in political matters, but also more generally in philosophical matters, starting with the question of a rational standard that alone can make it possible meaningfully to reject historicism and relativism, Strauss's beacon is the Socratic-Platonic approach, with its ideas of eternal and absolute knowledge (*episteme*) and good (*agathon*). This is why, for Strauss, even such a philosopher as Nietzsche turns out to represent an ultimately unsatisfactory position. No matter how much Nietzsche is the "*last* enlightener," who destabilizes the pillars of modernity and therewith makes a consideration of the "old solutions" meaningful again,[55] his "vacillating" between the attempt to reaffirm the spirit of philosophy and that of going beyond (or "behind") it "could only be overcome by proceeding to Platonic philosophy."[56]

Unsurprisingly, then, Strauss will later define Nietzsche as the "stepgrandfather of fascism."[57] Like fascism (not to mention Carl Schmitt's individual case), Nietzsche ultimately remains entangled in modernity, with its "philosophy of power" based on the centrality of the human will.[58] Against this kind of philosophy, resulting in a "philosophy of culture" that "forgets nature altogether,"[59] Strauss attempts to re-enable a "natural" philosophizing wherein the investigation of what is by nature good and what is by nature right becomes possible again. But on what basis and with what results?

As the reader of his correspondence with Krüger clearly observes, that basis is a critique of historicism that results in its rejection on grounds of its own historicity. As Strauss himself puts it, "if historical consciousness isn't a carriage that one can stop whenever one pleases, then one arrives at a historical destruction [*Destruktion*] of historical consciousness. The latter proves to be historically conditioned and limited to a particular situation."[60] From this perspective, Strauss's insights regarding the so-called second cave undoubtedly play a central role. Indeed, it is only in light of his attempt to go back to the "first, natural cave"—which is the Platonic one—that he can meaningfully "believe in a '*natural*' basis *and* view antiquity to be the standard," as well as he can "assume – until there is evidence to the contrary – that antiquity (more precisely: Socrates-Plato) is the standard *precisely because* it philosophized *naturally*, i.e. originally inquired into the order that is *natural* for human beings."[61] The same applies to Strauss's emphasis on "learning through reading [*lesendes Lernen*]," by means of which only we can attempt to "bring ourselves into the dimension in which we, understanding the Greeks, can question 'naively' with them."[62]

As for results, Strauss's attempt to re-enable a kind of Platonic "natural" philosophizing is not intended as a way to set up a dogmatic approach. His endeavor to frame a ranking of the human ends, to discern what is by nature good or right for human beings, never translates into a detailed set of requirements, for example, an objective natural law. As he clearly states in a letter to Krüger from August 18, 1934, Plato's main concern, even in practical matters, remains theoretical, namely, the pure knowledge of the "standard [*Maßstab*]" or the "principle of order [*Prinzip der Ordnung*]," as distinct from its practical application to human beings, which "only *assumes* the character of bindingness." As Strauss further explains, "Platonic philosophy is concerned with the knowledge of this 'What' that does not itself have the character of a law in the proper sense," a "What" that he will later refer to as "natural right" (*physei dikaion*) and that appears to be essentially intertwined with the good or *agathon*.[63]

Hence, Strauss ends up affirming, Socratically, that precisely because such a detailed set of requirements is apparently unavailable, the highest human end is its full investigation, and, consequently, the best possible life, at least for those who are capable of it, is the philosophic life.[64] As far as the correspondence with Krüger is concerned, the best proof of this is perhaps one of the last recorded letters the mature Strauss sent his friend in 1958. There, Strauss draws a distinction between "the ἀριστη [sic] πολιτεία and the factual 'natural community' – to say nothing of the fundamental difference between the highest πρᾶξις that is only θεορια [sic] and all other πράξεις."[65] To this emphatic celebration of the theoretic life as the best possible life, he adds that "the difference concerning 'natural communities' is … decisive. Their 'naturalness' is ambiguous, since only ἀριστη [sic] πολιτεία is natural in the strict sense (cf. the problem of ἀγαθὸς ἀνὴρ in distinction from ἀγαθὸς πολίτης in *Politics* III). To express the matter in the extreme Platonic term, the πόλις is the cave. There is a necessary tension between the πόλις and philosophy (hence even the ἀρίστη πολιτεία is in need of the καλὸν ψεῦδος)."[66]

We cannot comment at length on this complex passage, whose language will become typical of the mature Strauss in his books on the Greek classics of the 1960s and early 1970s. What is clear and most relevant for us to note in conclusion, however, is that in this passage Strauss insists on a different meaning of "natural," which becomes perspicuous only after one has raised the question of the good. "Natural in the strict sense" is only the "best regime" because it is only in such a regime that, as Aristotle puts it, the best citizen and the best man can coincide.[67] And the reason for this is that only

in the best regime is the goal (the highest human end) the theoretic or philosophic life simply—a "life of questioning," which Strauss will come to see as essentially at odds with the political life, since this latter, being like a "cave," necessarily remains bound up with religion and noble lies.

Notes

1. I wish to thank Dino Cofrancesco, Daniel Doneson, Martha Rice Martini, and (last but not least) Rory Schacter for their valuable comments and suggestions.
2. Leo Strauss, "Conspectivism," in Martin D. Yaffe and Richard S. Ruderman, eds, *Reorientation: Leo Strauss in the 1930s* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 217–224; "Religious Situation of the Present," in *Reorientation*, 225–235; "Review of Julius Ebbinghaus, *On the Progress of Metaphysics*," in *LSEW*, 214–216.
3. *NRH*, 24–25. Cf. *GS-3*, 396.
4. Leo Strauss, "Foreword to a Planned Book on Hobbes," in *HCR*, 137–149.
5. *GS-3*, 396.
6. Strauss, "Foreword to a Planned Book on Hobbes," 148–149.
7. RSP, 228.
8. Strauss, "Foreword to a Planned Book on Hobbes," 141.
9. Strauss, "Foreword to a Planned Book on Hobbes," 140, 141.
10. *GS-3*, 394.
11. Plato, *Statesman*, 272b 1–3.
12. *PPH*, 23–25; Leo Strauss, *The Origin of Modern Political Thought*, Leo Strauss. Papers, [Box 14, Folder 11], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library, 19–20.
13. Plato, *Statesman*, 271e 6–7.
14. *GS-3*, 440.
15. *GS-3*, 394.
16. Cf. *GS-3*, 407, 409.
17. See *GS-3*, 441, where Strauss significantly, but somewhat enigmatically, states: "Starting with the analysis of the inverted [*verkehrt*] or indifferent use of reason, of the inverted or indifferent life … is that which distinguishes modern morality as such from its classic counterpart. … It is the egress from an inverted state of nature (Hobbes) or indifferent state of nature (Rousseau), from an original freedom, that is only later restricted."
18. *GS-3*, 414.
19. Leo Strauss, "Notes on Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*," in Heinrich Meier, *Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss. The Hidden Dialogue* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 89–119.

20. *GS-3*, 399.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid. Regarding "giving and receiving reason," see Plato, *The Statesman*, 286a 4–5.
24. *GS-3*, 399.
25. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chap. 14 (London: Penguin Books, 1985), 189.
26. *PLA*, 137–138 (note 13), where also Krüger's essay *Philosophie und Moral in der Kantischen Kritik* (Tubingen 1931) is mentioned. On the still open and problematic character of the Socratic-Platonic inquiry into the "right way of life," see, for example, *GS-3*, 417.
27. *GS-3*, 399.
28. Meier, *Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss*, 130.
29. Strauss, "Notes on Carl Schmitt," 117.
30. My emphasis.
31. *PPH*, 16; *NRH*, 249–250.
32. *GS-3*, 402.
33. *GS-3*, 404.
34. *GS-3*, 442. See *PLA*, 21–22, including note 1 on the "irrationalistic" character of modern rationalism.
35. Cf. Plato, *Protagoras*, 321c 5–6, with Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chap. 13, 186.
36. *GS-3*, 426. These two utterances are interspersed with the following, somewhat enigmatic remark: "In a world that arises without plan or order, everything human is in order (Socrates can be glad to live among Athenians and not among the wild), whereas in truth it is the case that, in a world produced through planning, the human realm is precisely *not* in order." By saying so, Strauss seems to be underlining the "revolutionary" effect of natural right on the established political order (which always falls short of it), as he will famously restate in *Natural Right and History* (13–14).
37. *GS-3*, 424.
38. *GS-3*, 426.
39. *GS-3*, 424.
40. Plato, *Phaedo*, 99c 5.
41. Plato, *Phaedo*, 99e 5.
42. *GS-3*, 399.
43. Cf. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Discourse on the Sciences and Arts," in *The First and Second Discourses*, ed. Roger D. Masters (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1964), 38.
44. *GS-3*, 435. Cf. Meier, *Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss*, 129–131.
45. *GS-3*, 430.

46. On this blunder, I refer the reader to my essay "'German Stranger' o 'Guter Europäer'? A proposito di una recente interpretazione della 'filosofia politica' di Leo Strauss," in *Biblioteca della libertà*, XLVIII (2013), settembre-dicembre, n. 208 online, 61–87.
47. *GS-3*, 625. I am following the translation Susan Shell provides in "'To Spare the Vanquished and Crush the Arrogant': Leo Strauss's Lecture on 'German Nihilism,'" in Steven B. Smith, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Leo Strauss* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 171–192 (trans. quoted on pages 185–186).
48. *GS-3*, 625. The full quotation from Virgil's *Aeneid* (VI, 851–3) reads as follows: "Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento (hae tibi erunt artes) pacisque imponere morem, parcere subiectis et debellare superbos" (You, Roman, remember to rule the peoples with power—these will be your skills—and to impose the custom of peace, to spare the subjects and crush the arrogant).
49. *GS-3*, 627.
50. *GS-3*, 433.
51. There is in fact no encyclopedia article "on the state" in Mussolini's opera.
52. *Inter alia*: "Fascism wants man active and committed to action with all his energy … It conceives of life as a fight, holding that it is up to man to conquer that life which is really worthy of him by creating, first of all in himself, the tool (material, moral, intellectual) to build it. … Hence, the high worth of culture in all its forms (art, religion, science) and the utmost importance of education. Hence, the essential worth of labor as well, by which man conquers [*vince*] nature and creates the human world (economic, political, moral, intellectual)," *Scritti e discorsi di Benito Mussolini*, vol. viii (Milano: Ulrico Hoepli, 1934), 69. On the importance of labor in this modern, distinctly Hegelian sense, cf. *NRH*, 250.
53. *GS-3*, 433.
54. *GS-3*, 432.
55. RSP, 234, and *GS-3*, 406, 414–415.
56. *GS-3*, 415.
57. *LAM*, 24. Cf. TWM, 98.
58. *WIPP*, 172.
59. Strauss, "Notes on Carl Schmitt," 98.
60. *GS-3*, 396.
61. *GS-3*, 405. On this, I refer the reader to Alberto Ghibellini, "'Second Cave' and Historical Consciousness in Leo Strauss and Gerhard Krüger's Correspondence," paper presented at the Yale Political Theory Workshop on March 8, 2017.
62. Strauss, "Review of Julius Ebbinghaus," 215; *GS-3*, 422.
63. *GS-3*, 440.

64. In *GS-3*, 417, Strauss even stresses the "problematic" character of that assumption from a Platonic perspective as he understands it: "For every other philosophy presupposes in one way or another that the βιος θεωρητικος is the right βιος [sic] – for Socrates-Plato, however, it is precisely this presupposition that is problematic." See also *NRH*, 163.
65. *GS-3*, 451.
66. Ibid.
67. Aristotle, *Politics*, 1277a 20–23.

CHAPTER 9

History and Modernity in the Strauss-Krüger Correspondence

Richard Velkley

I

In an appreciation written for the sixtieth birthday of his friend and colleague Gerhard Krüger, Hans-Georg Gadamer briefly nods toward the importance of another long-lasting philosophic friendship. "That in the famous quarrel of the ancients and the moderns one can be a child of modernity while also taking a reasoned position on the side of the ancients, was an insight that closely tied Krüger to Leo Strauss, whose early Spinoza book strongly influenced him."[1] Gadamer recounts the principal factors these young philosophers in 1920s Marburg experienced in "coming of age in an atmosphere filled with tension and stamped by strong intellectual models."[2] Orthodox theology was being renewed with the criticisms of liberal theology by Karl Barth, Friedrich Gogarten and Rudolf Bultmann; the Marburg Neo-Kantian school, in its final stage after the departure of Hermann Cohen, was turning from traditional idealist readings of Kant toward more "metaphysical" approaches through such scholars as Nicolai Hartmann and Heinz Heimsoeth; and of central importance

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were the lectures of Martin Heidegger, the former assistant to Edmund Husserl, offering a novel version of phenomenology which "went back to primordial experiences of existence in such a way as to replace experience as worked upon by science with radical philosophical reflection."[3] As Strauss commented in his later years, he (together with Jacob Klein, who was also at Marburg) saw that Heidegger "by uprooting and not simply rejecting the tradition of philosophy…made possible for the first time after many centuries – one hesitates to say how many – to see the roots of the tradition as they really are" and thus opened up "the possibility of a genuine return to classical philosophy."[4]

Whereas both Krüger and Strauss received from Heidegger's *Destruktion* of the philosophic tradition decisive impulses to reconsider the history of philosophy and to question the dominant premises of modern thought, they departed from their teacher by their focus on two issues that Heidegger believed history had surpassed: the possibility of the enduring authority of biblical revelation and the provocative example of Socratic inquiry. These three themes (the deficiencies of modern thought, the problem of revealed truth and the recovery of Socratic questioning) make up the substance of much of their extant correspondence from 1930 on. Strauss revisits this conjunction of concerns in the 1964 preface for the German publication of his study of Hobbes, which contains the often-cited avowal that "the theological-political problem has remained *the* theme of my investigations."[5] Noting that his study of Hobbes began in the context of his study of the origins of modern biblical criticism in the seventeenth century, namely, of Spinoza's *Theological-Political Treatise*,[6] Strauss observes that his thought was moved by the question posed by the new theology of Karl Barth and Franz Rosenzweig, among others: the question of "how far the critique of orthodox theology – Jewish and Christian – deserved to be victorious."[7] Also he asserts that "philosophic interest in theology linked me with Gerhard Krüger; his review of my Spinoza book expressed my intention and result more clearly than I myself had done."[8] After this praise of a contemporary, unusual for Strauss, he refers to the final sentence of Krüger's Kant book which "corresponded completely to my view at the time and with which I would still today, with certain reservations, agree." Krüger's sentence, which concerns Socratic inquiry, should be quoted in its context:

> History in its historicity will be only so far truly "objective" and as such *human* as *our fate* is intelligible. For the conditionedness (*Bedingtheit*) of the human and above all, of history, which is the seat of transcendental erring, must be the occasion for a philosophical, that is, *unconditioned questioning* (*unbedingten Fragens*). The question will be actually unconditioned when it *inquires about the good in knowledge of the historical passion*. Let the *answer* to this question – thus also the Christian answer of Augustine – be left undecided. The example of Socrates teaches one who so questions that the decisive question remains *true*, even if it finds *no answer*.[9]

Later, we can consider what might constitute the "certain reservations," but it is a fact that Strauss's work has many statements on Socratic inquiry as an intransigent search for knowledge of the good admitting no constraints (from law, tradition, piety) and exposing fundamental problems that lack definitive answers. At the same time, such unconditioned questioning is the human access to a certain sphere of transhistorical truths, including insight into the philosophic life as the right way of life, an insight premised on the elusiveness of knowledge as a whole:

> In grasping these [fundamental] problems as problems, the human mind liberates itself from its historical limitations. No more is needed to legitimize philosophy in its original Socratic, sense: philosophy is knowledge that one does not know; that is to say, it is knowledge of what one does not know, or awareness of the fundamental problems and, therewith, of the fundamental alternatives regarding their solution that are coeval with human thought.[10]

Strauss shares with Krüger from this early date the thought that human life attains a certain unconditionedness or infinity through radical questioning. For neither thinker can this attitude congeal into formulae or doctrines.[11]

Krüger's Kant book appeared in 1931, the year after Strauss's Spinoza book and the same year as Krüger's review thereof, which sheds further light on the Strauss-Krüger affinities.[12] The review begins with a declaration of what Krüger prizes about the Spinoza study: As a philosopher, who as such finds nothing to be self-evident, Strauss exposes how problematic the Enlightenment certainty is, at the basis of modern culture, of the obsolescence of revelation resulting from the "exit of man from self-incurred immaturity." The true motives for the overcoming of orthodoxy are, as Strauss shows, not simply rational. The alleged victory rests on a faith in the ability of the new science to offer a comprehensive account of

nature that excludes the miraculous. Although the Enlightenment project is indebted to the Epicurean search for a consoling view of the world that banishes the terrors of the next life and the supernatural, it also has a new element of struggle against "prejudice," a new historical category which replaces opinion and the appearance of ancient philosophy as the hurdle that a philosopher seeks to transcend. The new opponent is revealed religion, a religion of doctrines unlike pagan belief, grounding new orders of law and the state. Faced with the danger of social madness sanctioned by divine authority, the modern critic of religion employs a defensive assault, resting on an unwillingness to consider what moves the opponent. Modern confidence in rational progress is seen as "a negative life-decision opposed to the past which believes in revelation." An unprovable orientation in the world stands against another, and the theoretical insufficiency of the modern attack must be supplemented by mockery. "Critique cannot refute the claim to authority in principle, its skepticism can only *render laughable* certain banal consequences of the claim." According to Krüger's thoughtful summation, in Strauss's questioning of the rationality of Enlightenment, "the general discussion about the difference between modern and ancient thought receives here for once an 'existential' sharpness."

But the existential conflict was as yet without resolution. At the time of writing the Spinoza book, Strauss had not found the way to recover the Socratic rationalism he already admired. The study was based on "the premise, long sanctioned by a powerful prejudice, that a return to premodern philosophy is impossible."[13] In the following years, he underwent a "change of orientation" in which he began "to wonder whether the self-destruction of reason was not the inevitable outcome of modern rationalism as distinguished from pre-modern rationalism, especially Jewish-medieval rationalism and its classical (Aristotelian and Platonic) foundation."[14] The correspondence with Krüger sheds much light on the reflections leading to the new understanding of premodern, that is, Socratic, rationalism. At the heart of the discussion is the problem of the philosopher's relation to his modern starting-point (one might say his existential situation) or, in other terms, the problem of whether and how the philosopher can attain a free relation of distance on his historical fate.[15] Gadamer claims that both Krüger and Strauss are children of modernity who find rational arguments in favor of antiquity. In his view, they remain children of modernity in certain respects, even while their insights point beyond it. Is this a correct description of their self-understandings? Furthermore, were Strauss and Krüger, in the end, truly in accord on this critical subject?

II

Strauss's letters to Krüger of 1930–31 disclose a dialogue of the two thinkers on their leading critical questions about the viability of the Enlightenment. Strauss asks how did the Enlightenment manage to defeat the belief in miracles? The argument of the Spinoza book is restated in compressed fashion: not on the basis of proof, but through a certain will (*einem bestimmten Willen)*, one already indicated in Machiavelli, Bruno and Spinoza, and reaching its completion in Nietzsche and Heidegger's *Being and Time*. The latter's interpretation of the "call of conscience," with its answer as to *who* calls, shows that "for the first time in Heidegger's *Dasein*-interpretation an adequate *atheistic* interpretation of the Bible may be possible."[16] Religion is overcome, and the Enlightenment completed, when religion can be adequately interpreted atheistically. At the same time, Strauss speaks of his own lack of belief—a lack he does not ascribe to the Enlightenment's teaching—but also of his experiencing a need to justify himself before the "tribunal of Jewish tradition."[17] In letters that soon follow, he writes of discovering the differences between the rationalism of the Jewish-Arabic medievals and the eighteenth-century Enlightenment: the latter rests on the primacy of morality (in its version of revering Socrates) and the former on the primacy of theory. The moderns develop moral law as natural right whereas in the Jewish-Arabic philosophy, natural right plays no role, or at least not the role it has in the Christian tradition. Among the Jewish-Arabic thinkers, there is a positive law (given by Moses or Mohammed) that is at once political and religious; its primary function is to provide a binding norm for guiding human life toward happiness (ultimately consisting in the theoretical). The whole conception rests on Plato's *Republic* and thus the Jewish-Arabic Middle Ages are much more "ancient" than the eighteenth century. By stressing the idea of the concrete political law, the medievals were more able than the modern natural right theorists to accept the order of revelation—as practical law, not as theoretical truth.[18]

The subsequent letters show that Strauss is becoming clearer about the account of philosophy in the ancient-medieval sources, with its difference from the modern that bears directly on the relation of philosophy to history.[19] The insight that philosophy can issue in true freedom only when it does not undertake to transform the social world and to overcome religion, as in the modern Enlightenment, gives rise to a project of which Strauss's current study of Hobbes forms a part: "a critical history of natural right…which above all for me concerns bringing into view that the only

presupposition of skepticism about natural right is the historical consciousness."[20] Since this consciousness is powerful ("not a mere taxi that one can bring to a halt"), one needs a historical destruction (*Destruktion*) of this consciousness. One thus acknowledges that one is historically conditioned and limited in a particular situation, and to carry out the critical project, one needs historical, particular means. But, to what end? Not, as it may seem, in order to defend the tradition of natural right against historicist thought, but to make "nothing other than the attempt, obscure to oneself (*der sich selbst undurchsichtige Versuch*), of winning *again* the ancient freedom of philosophizing." That the problem of history lies at the heart of this endeavor in a twofold way is expressed in one sentence: "The struggle against prejudices is the primal form of the historical consciousness." (*Der Kampf gegen die Vorurteile ist die Urform des historischen Bewusstseins.*)[21] The modern form of philosophizing as the universal struggle against religion transforms philosophy in a fashion that has become hidden to modern men, including philosophers. As philosophy since Hobbes (or Machiavelli) understands itself as essentially "practical," it finally views itself as wholly historical. But the effectiveness of this transformation calls for historical studies as the means of overcoming it. Strauss also realizes that the project of a historical overcoming of historicism links him to Heidegger, albeit in a critical fashion, since Heidegger's approach to philosophy and religion is the completion of modernity.[22] Heidegger's "destructive" reinterpretation of the tradition must be carried further so as to include his thinking within the critique.

III

Strauss's letters of 1932, including unmailed sketches for letters, contain remarkable formulations and suggestions portending his future inquiries. Strauss sharpens his contrast between ancient and modern thinking, stating that Plato and Hobbes share a concern with *politike techne*, and to that extent Hobbes is Socratic, but Hobbes fails to raise Socrates's *question*. Whereas Plato begins with the question of the soul or the question about the essence of the human, Hobbes begins with asking what must be *fought* in human nature, which presupposes he has an answer to the ancient question.[23]

This reflection leads to a wider one on the nature of modern philosophy. Strauss claims modern philosophy began as a movement of *Renaissance*, seeking against the tradition to revive the ancient freedom of philosophizing, and in all its "foundations," it was striving to recover the

natural basis of philosophy. Yet, it unfolds as a movement claiming to make progress on the basis of new foundations, which requires the presupposition that the fundamental questions are answered.[24] Thus, Strauss charges the modern tradition with "unradicality"—a charge that covers Heidegger who still has assumptions about philosophical progress since antiquity. Even so, Nietzsche and Heidegger, Strauss claims, have uncovered two crucial areas of neglect (*Versäumnis*) in modern philosophy: the neglect of the Socratic question of how one should live (exposed by Nietzsche) and the neglect of ontology (exposed by Heidegger). Thus, something holds these radical questioners, to whom Strauss and his contemporaries are indebted for primary impulses in their thinking, within the limits of modern progressivism. What is the powerful factor in their education, or in their experience of life, that keeps them in thrall?

It is a factor, Strauss argues, that compels all thinkers today to take up historical inquiries, although this factor is "an external fact for philosophizing" since philosophy is not essentially historical. It has two aspects: (1) The "nonsensical combination of a *nomos*-tradition with a philosophical tradition," of biblical revelation with Greek philosophy, "or a tradition of obeying with a 'tradition' of questioning, which as passed down is no longer questioning"; (2) the struggle against revelation, conducted more or less in obscurity (*im Dunklen*), which has maneuvered modern life into a "second cave" so that we no longer have the means to philosophize naturally. "We are indeed natural beings but live in a wholly unnatural situation."[25] The Enlightenment's attack on revelation did not recover the freedom of philosophizing but deepened the "cave beneath the cave" insofar as it diverted the philosophic mind from its natural calling of free questioning toward polemical efforts aimed at achieving a general social good. The primary concern of the individual for the improvement of the soul, which should not relax in asking "How shall I live?" is replaced by historical projects that assume an answer to a question of the good. But this deflection of philosophy is already achieved in the fusion of revelation with philosophy in the prior religious tradition (Christianity, above all, is intended). That this tradition achieved a certain deepening of philosophy is still assumed by Nietzsche and Heidegger even as they radicalize the Enlightenment attack on revelation. Strauss notes that Krüger would express agreement with them on this point. That modern philosophy has made some progress over antiquity "you will maintain, with a certain justice, insofar as [modern philosophy] has in its stewardship knowledge, which in this form the Greeks did not have, namely, Christian knowl-

edge."[26] Indeed, Strauss voices a deep disagreement with Krüger on the topic of historicity: "You see a contradiction in that I believe in a '*natural*' basis *and* I regard antiquity as paradigmatic. I am inclined to accept – until I see proof to the contrary – that the ancient, or more precisely, Socrates-Plato, is *for this reason* paradigmatic, because it philosophized *naturally*, that is, questioned in an original way according to the order *natural* for the human."[27]

One has to consider whether Krüger does not have a point (apart from his conception of Christianity as constituting progress): If the hallmark of Socratic questioning is to question without presuppositions, and therefore it is to search for an answer to the question "What is nature?" without presupposing a view of the natural, can one try to engage in Socratic questioning and, at the same time, assume that the "cave" of antiquity alone provides the natural basis for philosophy? How can one know what the natural situation is at the start, rather than at the end, of the inquiry? And does not the exclusion of the possibility of natural questioning from the modern world constitute a historicist doctrine of sorts?[28] Krüger states his reservations about the conception of a "second cave" in a letter of December 4, 1932, where he first admits it is a "fitting description of our spiritual condition" but then cannot go along with the "equation ancient = natural = correct," maintaining that the naturalness of which Strauss speaks is unavailable to modern cave-dwellers. Krüger does affirm the possibility of liberation from the historicist "denaturing" of the Christian chains, but these he regards as an inescapable feature of our philosophic situation. Strauss's call for "naiveté" can only be a demand which is as such not naïve. "The 'naturalness' of thinking, which certainly is essential to philosophy, can in my estimation not be had or striven after by you or anyone. Our factual unnaturalness means that [naturalness] must be a problem." In so arguing, Krüger clearly embraces a certain historicization of philosophy based on "the factual domination of Christianity over the spirit of the post-ancient humanity."[29]

That Strauss took Krüger's challenge quite seriously is evident from the facts that he saved the letter and composed three extant sketches of a reply before the definitive letter was written on December 27, 1932. Strauss tactfully observes that their difference reduces to this consideration, that Krüger in reality assumes that one cannot live without belief and that Strauss seeks to live without it. Strauss claims it would be dogmatic for Krüger to assert that this effort must fail before one has visible proof of failure. Strauss con-

nects his friend's position to what Strauss says is Heidegger's view that Christianity brought to light certain facts of human life that ancient philosophy did not know or did not grasp sufficiently, which deeper insights remain elements of post-Christian philosophy. Strauss expresses an openness to this possibility, but states that the truth can be established only by "*direct* confrontation of modern with ancient philosophy," which Strauss has begun through confronting Hobbes with Plato. More precisely, "the starting-points of the moderns and the Greeks must be placed in confrontation and their presuppositions analyzed."[30] Strauss's implication is that greater "depth" can come to light (or not) only through the examination of the writings of the philosophers and not through the presupposition of the influence of the Christian cave on the philosopher.

The final paragraphs of this letter of December 1932 may be the most important in the whole exchange. Strauss writes again, as he does in the review of J. Ebbinghaus, of our need for a "propaedeutic" of historical study to achieve the "radical dimension" ("the questionableness of life," *Fraglichkeit des Lebens*) that is the true object of Greek philosophy and that has become hidden to us. He proceeds to make what seems a concession to Krüger: "I do not at all deny that *we must* philosophize historically, that is, we must bring to consciousness facts that the Greeks did not need to bring to consciousness. I do not at all deny that for us 'naivete' is a demand, that no human today can philosophize 'naively.'" Then, he voices a reservation:

> But I ask: Is this change a consequence of the fact that we know fundamentally more than the Greeks (that the question of "prejudice" is *more radical* than the question of *doxa*) or is it fundamental, that is to say, indispensable, for knowledge of that which the human as such must know, an odious fatality (*eine verhasste Fatalität*) which forces us onto an "unnatural" detour.[31]

And then a fascinating glance at their common German literary-philosophical heritage:

> Do you recall the first page of Schiller's *Naïve and Sentimental Poetry*? The naïve human *is* nature – for the sentimental human naturalness is only a *demand*. We moderns are necessarily "sentimental." That means however: that we must in a "sentimental" manner—thus in recollection, historically—investigate what the Greeks "naively" investigated; more precisely: we must through "recollection" bring ourselves into the dimension in which we, understanding the Greeks, can investigate "naively" with them.[32]

Here Strauss reaches an accord with Krüger that the naturalness of Greek philosophizing is in its original "naïve" form unavailable and can at best be restored only in recollection.

Thus even insofar as we enter into conversation with the Greeks in a seemingly "naïve" way, we are doing so in a recollective, sentimental way. Nature in its original form remains a goal, an ideal, a desideratum. The use of Schiller here brings forward echoes of Rousseau, and as with both of these thinkers, Strauss's formulation raises the problems found in them bearing on the possibility of speaking of nature if it is conceded that nature is unavailable. Strauss is obviously aware of the problems, and it is not insignificant that the carefully composed paragraph recalls the style of Nietzsche, with its use of semicolons, colons and dashes. Strauss raises the sort of difficulty of which Nietzsche is a master expositor, concerning knowledge of such notions as "pure nature" or "nature in itself."

Then, Strauss separates himself from Krüger, while not abandoning crucial common ground—tactful, familiar German ground—by rejecting the view that the modern situation constitutes a superiority over antiquity:

> The "achievement" of modernity is not a more radical dimension, equally not a more radical cure of a human illness or, minimally, a more radical diagnosis, but a modern *medicine* for a *modern* illness. I am aware of the insufficiency of these formulations. I would be happy if I have made clear to you that I maintain the impossibility of "naïve" philosophy in our world just as you do, that I distance myself from you certainly and only in this regard, that in this impossibility I see no progress in *any* sense.[33]

In later letters to Krüger, Strauss continues to press his case for the crucial difference between ancient and modern accounts of philosophy's relation to law and the political realm, and for the superiority of the former account. Related to his critique of modern philosophy as attacking prejudice and thus compromising its theoretical openness, he finds a limitation to Kant's account of practical reason and its primacy (which might be considered friendlier to theologically based moral belief, hence, to prejudice in one sense). Kant makes the issue of knowledge of obligation and the application of law the starting-point rather than the Platonic question of "the right order of human life," which inquires *what* law is. Whereas the question of practical knowledge of obligation might originally motivate philosophy, it is not the true *theme* of philosophy. Strauss offers a

characterization of modern philosophy that covers the early moderns as well as Kant: "Modern morality is conceived from the start as *applicable* morality, and I believe, in spite of the incomparable radicalization that Kantian morality represents, it is in this sense specifically modern."[34] Earlier, Strauss had praised Krüger's approach to Kant: "Instead of understanding Plato in the light of Kant like the Neo-Kantians, you conversely place Kant, and first rightly ourselves as well, in question through Plato."[35]

Now it can be seen, though, that Strauss does not regard Krüger's account of Kantian philosophy as subjecting it to the true radicality of Platonic questioning. And this would be related to Krüger's avowal that the modern standpoint rests on insights (indebted to Christianity) surpassing ancient thought. Put in other terms, Krüger does not follow Strauss's reflection on the radical tension between philosophy and the *polis* in Platonic philosophy, which tension renders questionable the Kantian view of the absolute authority of moral insight.[36]

That Strauss holds firmly to this standpoint of the superiority of Socratic-Platonic questioning does not mean, however, that he abandons his admission of the necessity of a "recollective" understanding of Greek philosophy, which therefore also means that he does not abandon his view that confronting modern with ancient philosophy is inseparable from the task of recovering Socratic-Platonic questioning. Our modern cave, however unnatural and deficient, still modifies and enframes our human starting-points. This admission is consistent with a conception of philosophy in which "there is no unqualified transcending, even by the wisest man as such, of the sphere of opinion," and according to which "because of the elusiveness of the whole, the beginning or the questions retain a greater evidence than the end or the answers; return to the beginning remains a constant necessity."[37]

IV

To gain a better view of Krüger's thinking on modernity and , we turn to his Kant book and to lectures which he delivered from 1942 to 1952, *Fundamental Questions of Philosophy. History. Truth. Science*.[38] The lectures offer a comprehensive account of modern philosophy and so form a suitable entry-point to considering Krüger's general themes. They also permit one to contrast Krüger's style as pedagogue to the better-known instruction of Strauss at the University of Chicago. Like Strauss, and also revealing the common background of study with Heidegger, Krüger

regards the present age as one of deep crisis. "We live in age of total and free historicity. From this comes the current consciousness that all earlier concepts of life have failed, that now in a sense all is possible and that no human being is not untouched by this situation. The power of history has consumed the essence of the human."[39] This recalls Strauss's various pronouncements about the collapse of tradition and the prevalence of historicist and positivist thinking which provides no guidance to human life. Perhaps Krüger writes more dramatically of a universally effective historical consciousness. Humanity lacks "anything firm and enduring on which to hold…Its question 'For what do I live?' thrusts into nothingness."[40] Strauss, at least for pedagogic purposes, assumes his audience has sound, common-sense concerns (a stance that responds, by his own account, to his American situation) which are not nourished by contemporary thought.[41] The history of philosophy is explored by Krüger for the signposts it offers toward binding, authoritative principles. He stresses the human requirement to find binding realities in the awareness of authoritative moral law, the givenness of human community and the concrete presence of the sense-world, all of which has been eviscerated by an excessive stress on freedom in modern thought. Strauss is in a way more daring as a teacher, insofar as he reads earlier authors to awaken a far-reaching sense of perplexity that shakes the student's common-sense certainties.[42] In Strauss's terms, it can be said that Krüger is focused on "application," as he decries the "hopeless fragmentation" that characterizes the age of "total historicity" in which "each person can form his own view of life and the world." This fragmentation provides the opportunity for mass-manipulation by the "total state," which is the great political danger of our age.[43] To combat this, Krüger searches for the enduring nature of the human and the essential human tasks. Krüger traces the origins of this situation to the discovery in early modernity of a new account of reason and thought grounded in the consciousness of the "I," which is the seat of sovereign, spontaneous reflection (*Nachdenken*) unbounded by the givenness of the world as the individual's body or the public realm of community. Ancient philosophy begins with acknowledging the rootedness of thought in corporeal being and in participation in common, public life. It is bounded by insight (*Einsicht*) into a given order of things. Whereas such founding modern philosophers as Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz do not deny the existence of the sensibly given, their thinking is directed toward freedom as the rejection of the traditional moral-religious bond with the world. Early modern philosophers make gestures toward the traditional

ideas but, essentially, they seek to advance a new account of freedom in terms of a law human thinking gives itself (a law of reflection), replacing divine law and the created order known through insight.[44] From the start, modern philosophy aims to undermine the authority of the Christian Church, which goal it pursues through a sweeping attack on all forms of compelling givenness.

The human spurns its limited place in the cosmos and withdrawing into the "subject," it finds a ground from which it can attempt to master the world as the "object" that stands against the "subject." The means for this project is a new account of knowledge in terms of a method of abstract reflection, effecting the construction of an artificial framework of knowledge, deeply indebted to mathematics and replacing natural insight. This freely constructed framework relies on certain conceptions already known to thought as it reflects on itself (the a priori); knowledge does not begin with receptivity to the given character of things. The sensible world is not ignored, but the free, constructive projection of hypothesis is placed beneath the sensible, restating the sensible in terms of quantity, which reformulation is then viewed as the genuine truth of the sensible. The totality of the abstract determinations made in this way is the "system" of genuine knowledge.[45]

In Krüger's reconstruction of the history of modern philosophy, the modern proposal of the absolute ground for free constructive mastery of the given produces a set of dichotomies which the modern tradition struggles to resolve without success. A free, transcendental standpoint is opposed to a bounded, empirical one in the experience of the body, of the political community and of moral obligation. The human status as an "innerworldly" being is contested and made problematic from the perspective of the new scientific accounts. The modern individual asserts an unlimited freedom of thought, making possible a remarkable degree of autonomy and mastery, but the price paid for this is alienation from the body, the isolation of the individual from the community, the questionable basis of the moral "ought."[46] Krüger describes three phases of grappling with these fundamental *aporiae* of modern thought, from Descartes through Kant, from absolute Idealism and Romanticism through nineteenth-century historicism, and finally the philosophy of existence.[47] System follows upon system in the attempt to secure unified foundations, leading to the collapse of all philosophic systems. The mood of intellectual exhaustion at the start of the last century prepares the stage for the philosophy of existence (Heidegger, Jaspers), which calls for resolutely

facing the failure of the modern foundations and for the critical re-examination of the entire tradition.[48] In Krüger's judgment, the modern dichotomies are still evident in existential philosophy (thus Heidegger's distinctions between ontological and ontic, between *Dasein* and the human as a worldly being), although credit must be given to it for its exposure of the modern crisis.

This summary of the lectures risks conveying an impression of the doctrinaire tone, although the thought is careful and subtle. One turns to Krüger's treatment of Kant to find a rich, comprehensive and dialectical reading of this philosopher, which is one of the most interesting of the past century. Only major features can be mentioned here. For Krüger, Kant is the greatest of the modern philosophers because he undertakes the most radical self-criticism in modern philosophy. He sees the limits of modern philosophy and points beyond them, and thus he relates to his world as Plato does to his.[49] He can expose those limits since he recognizes the authority of a moral world-order: in the categorical imperative as a "fact of reason" Kant possesses a principle for limiting the power of sovereign reason. The moral law is an object of insight for reason, establishing a boundary to the theoretical constructions of spontaneous reflection. Kant strives to resolve the modern aporia of obligation versus unlimited freedom through his construal of the moral law as autonomy, reason's giving the law to itself. But in this effort, he discloses his failure to transcend the limits of the Enlightenment. He is held back by his orientation toward Newtonian science as the true model for philosophic explanation, by the authority of the same sovereign rationality he hopes to criticize and restrict.

Kant's deepest intention is to rescue the theologically based metaphysics of antiquity and Christianity from Enlightenment skepticism, and to attain that end, his account of theoretical reason serves as a propaedeutic to "practical metaphysics."[50] In a crucial sense, Kant still inhabits a natural world characterized by respect for the law. This natural standpoint also sustains the conviction that the end of life includes happiness, and thus morality requires the postulation of conditions for approaching the just proportion between happiness and moral worth. Krüger accordingly views the tension in Kant's effort as one between a "content" taken from Christian anthropology (the revealed determination of the human place in creation) and a "form" of its defense that is Newtonian. Whereas the first gives the moral object of philosophy, the second proscribes any grounding of metaphysics on experience, as the latter according to the Newtonian (mathematical-constructive) view of knowledge must exclude the "uncon-

ditioned." Since experience understood in Newtonian terms is the only possible object of theoretical knowledge, the moral metaphysics cannot be based on theoretical knowledge. The old content of moral-religious metaphysics has to be maintained in a non-theoretical form. This gives rise to the typical dualities of Kantian thought: the moral law is an authoritative "fact" held in respect, but it is also the idea of a self-legislative reason; sense-experience is based on the "affection" of the sensitive faculty of a living being, according to a natural sense of things given for cognition, and it is also the mere synthesis of sensation according to modern accounts of subjective construction. The second dualism leads to the problematic place of the "thing in itself."[51]

Without entering into the scholarly merits of Krüger's Kant-interpretation, one can appreciate its philosophic interest and its central relevance to the common concerns of Krüger and Strauss with overcoming the limits of modern thought. Krüger sees Kant as "our oldest contemporary," the modernity of whose thought is qualified and challenged by his own persisting premodern concerns. The effect of his thought on us is to act as a barrier to premodern thinking even as it offers a point of entry to premodern insights. The study of Kant is therefore of prime importance for the task of dismantling the assumptions of the modern cave. But, moreover, through interpreting Kant, we can experience the chief problem that philosophy faces at any time, of finding means to emerge from a "cave" of opinion that obscures access to the true philosophic questions and insights. In Krüger's reading, Kant made such an attempt and failed. Kant's ambiguity is not a mere failure, however, and it exemplifies the ambiguity of all philosophy in the modern period, insofar as its mode of inquiry is necessarily "recollective" and simply "naïve" philosophizing is not a possibility for it.[52]

Notes

1. H.-G. Gadamer, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 10 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1995; henceforth *GW*), 412–17, reprinting of "Geleitwort," in *Einsichten: Gerhard Krüger zum 60. Geburtstag* (Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann, 1962), 7–10. An English translation is found in H.-G. Gadamer, *Philosophical Apprenticeships*, trans. R. Sullivan (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985), 61–67.
2. *GW*, 413.
3. *GW*, 413–14.

4. "An Unspoken Prologue to a Public Lecture at St. John's College in Honor of Jacob Klein" (1959), in L. Strauss, *Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity: Essays and Lectures in Modern Jewish Thought*, ed. K. H. Green (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997, henceforth *JPCM*), 450. Strauss also writes that "nothing affected us as profoundly in the years in which our minds took their lasting directions as the thought of Heidegger." In the same piece, Strauss calls Heidegger a great philosopher: "Heidegger was the first great German philosopher who was a Catholic by origin and training" (ibid., 450). Also of first importance to this generation was Edmund Husserl's teaching, which Strauss experienced first-hand, but in a later retrospective statement Strauss explains "in the most simple terms why in my opinion Heidegger won out over Husserl; he radicalized Husserl's critique of the school of Marburg and turned it against Husserl." *JPCM*, 461. The 1956 lecture "Existentialism" asserts that "the only great thinker in our time is Heidegger" and discusses Heidegger's philosophical advance over Husserl: "It was Heidegger's critique of Husserl's phenomenology which became decisive: precisely because that criticism consisted in a radicalization of Husserl's own question and questioning." *Interpretation: A Journal of Political Philosophy*, vol. 22/3, spring 1995, 304–5. For more discussion of Strauss's complex critical indebtedness to Heidegger, see the author's *Heidegger, Strauss, and the Premises of Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011). Careful study precludes any simple view of Strauss as either derivative from Heidegger or as relating only polemically negatively to the older philosopher.
5. L. Strauss, *Hobbes Politische Wissenschaft in ihrer Genesis*, in *GS-3,* 3–192, was written in 1934–35 and published first in English as *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes: Its Basis and Its Genesis*, trans. E. M. Sinclair, Oxford, 1936. See Appendix II of this volume for a translation of the 1964 preface.
6. L. Strauss, *Die Religionskritik Spinozas als Grundlage seiner Bibelwissenschaft: Untersuchungen zu Spinozas Theologisch-politischen Traktat* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1930).
7. *GS-3*, 7–8.
8. *GS-3*, 8. Note that Strauss speaks of philosophic, not religious or theological, interest.
9. G. Krüger, *Philosophie und Moral in der Kantischen Kritik* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1931; 2nd ed., 1967; henceforth *PMKK*), 236. (*Philosophy and Morality in the Kantian Critique*, English trans.)
10. L. Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953; henceforth *NRH*), 32. See also "Progress or Return?" from the 1950s in *The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism*, ed. T. Pangle

(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989; henceforth *RCPR*), 260: "Philosophy is the quest for knowledge regarding the whole. Because it is essentially a quest, because it is never able to become wisdom (as distinguished from philosophy) philosophy finds that the problems are always more evident than the solutions… The right way of life cannot be established metaphysically except by a completed metaphysics, and therefore the right way of life remains questionable. But the very uncertainty of all solutions, the very ignorance regarding the most important things, makes quest for knowledge the most important thing, and therefore makes a life devoted to it the right way of life."

11. Along these lines, it should be said that Strauss does not conceive philosophy as consisting simply of refutations of challenges to its way of life from piety, the law or the gentleman's conception of the world. Strauss's thought is a never-completed reflection on the duality of the human as political and transpolitical, which duality is understood as the source of permanent problems as well as the condition (and true justification) for philosophy. (See preceding note.)
12. G. Krüger, Review of L. Strauss, *Die Religionskritik Spinozas als Grundlage seiner Bibelwissenschaft*, first published in *Deutsche Literaturzeitung*, 1931 Heft 51, 2407–2412. See Appendix I of this volume for a translation.
13. *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*, trans. E. M. Sinclair (New York: Schocken Books, 1965; henceforth *SCR*), "Preface," 31.
14. Ibid., 31.
15. "Fate" is not too strong a word. Strauss, commenting on the writing of the Spinoza book in Germany 1925–28, states "the author was a young Jew born and raised in Germany who found himself in the grip of the theological-political predicament." *SCR*, 1.
16. Letter of 7.1.1930, *GS-3*, 379–80.
17. Letter of 7.1.1930, *GS-3*, 380–81.
18. Letter of 26.6.1930, *GS-3*, 382–83.
19. In a letter of 7.5.1931, Strauss states that in a lecture just given in Berlin on H. Cohen and Maimonides, he has, for the first time, made public "my thesis about Islamic-Jewish Scholasticism (that it understands revelation within the concealed framework of Plato's *Republic* and *Laws*)." *GS-3*, 385.
20. Letter of 16.11.1931, *GS-3*, 396.
21. Ibid., *GS-3*, 396.
22. Letter of 12.12.1931, *GS-3*, 398: "Whatever you may say against this book [*Being and Time*] sub specie veritatis, it still expresses in the purest way the essence of modernity, that is, the modern resistance to the Greeks, Jews and Christians."
23. Letter of 17.11.1932, *GS-3*, 405–7.

24. Strauss's argument here is closely allied to Husserl's critique of modern philosophy, carried forward by Heidegger and crucial for the historical investigations of the origins of modern mathematics by Jacob Klein. Husserl's most extensive account of the problem of the "sedimentation" of modern concepts can be found in his *Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (begun 1934 and unfinished).
25. Letter of 17.11.1932, *GS-3*, 406. Strauss first used the figure of "second cave" in a review (1931) of J. Ebbinghaus, *Über die Fortschritte der Metaphysik* reprinted in *GS*-2, 437–39. The relevant lines are these: "We find ourselves today in a second, much deeper cave than the happy, ignorant souls with whom Socrates dealt; we need history first of all in order to advance *upward* to the cave from which Socrates can lead us to the light; we need a propaedeutic which the Greeks did not need, precisely that of learning through reading (*des lesenden Lernens*)." *GS-3*, 439.
26. Letter of 17.11.1932, *GS-3*, 406.
27. Ibid., *GS-3*, 405.
28. Strauss suggests there are problems in supposing that ancient Greece is simply the "natural cave." His thinking remained engaged with the challenge to Greek philosophy from biblical wisdom and was not closed to the possibility that philosophy in the West has limitations that can emerge only by comparing it with non-Western thinking. (As he notes, "the Bible is the east within us, within western man.") See "Existentialism," 317–18; also "The Problem of Socrates," in *Interpretation: A Journal of Political Philosophy*, vol. 22/3, spring 1995, 330. In addition, he clearly treats some major modern figures as philosophers (Machiavelli, Rousseau, Nietzsche, et al.), which raises the question of whether "natural" philosophizing at times occurs even in the "second cave." If it does not, one must ask what constitutes less than natural philosophizing—what is it and what makes it possible?
29. Letter of 4.12.1932, *GS-3*, 412–13.
30. Letter of 27.12.1932, *GS-3*, 420.
31. Ibid., *GS-3*, 421.
32. Ibid., *GS-3*, 421–22. See F. Schiller, *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung* (1795).
33. Ibid., *GS-3*, 422. Strauss's thought here recalls Nietzsche's account of Romanticism as sickness and provokes questions about whether his endorsement of nature is more akin to Nietzsche's appeals to nature than those of Rousseau and Schiller. Discreetly hidden in this possibility is Nietzsche's linkage of Christianity to Romanticism and to modernity more generally.
34. Letter of 18.8.1934, *GS-3*, 440–41.
35. Letter of 1.6.1931, *GS-3*, 387.

36. This is treated in Strauss's letter of 6.21.1958, *GS-3*, 450–51. For a discussion of this letter and that of 18.8.1934, see the concluding paragraphs of Thomas Pangle's (Chap. 3) essay in this volume.
37. L. Strauss, *The City and Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 20–21. For an indication of how the return to modern philosophy continues to be central to the return to beginnings in Strauss's thought, note the placing of one of his last essays, "Note on the Plan of Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*" in the center of the volume *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), between "Jerusalem and Athens: Some Preliminary Reflections" and "Notes on Maimonides' *Book of Knowledge*." The essay indeed enacts a return of Strauss to *his personal* beginnings as philosopher. See the opening sentence of the essay, and then consider the theme of the first paragraph.
38. G. Krüger, *Grundfragen der Philosophie. Geschichte. Wahrheit. Wissenschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann, 1958).
39. *Grundfragen,* 5.
40. Ibid., 6.
41. *NRH*, 1–8. Strauss proposes a distinction between "the thought of the American people" and American social science, which has adopted the positivist and historicist modes of analysis.
42. Strauss does so carefully and responsibly. He stresses the importance of preserving the point of view of the citizen and the statesman when thinking about political matters. His field of inquiry is more centrally political than Krüger's, closely examining the moral-political phenomena, not however solely for a theory of politics but to uncover the fundamental problems that engage the philosopher. The process involves a subtle "conversion" of the student's thinking.
43. *Grundfragen*, 8–9.
44. Ibid., 129–30. See also Krüger's groundbreaking study of Descartes, "Die Herkunft des philosophischen Selbstbewusstseins," *Logos,* 1933 (reprint, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1962).
45. Ibid., 131–33. There are recognizable affinities between this account of modern scientific philosophy and the accounts in Husserl, Heidegger, Jacob Klein and Strauss. Heidegger writes similarly of the role of the mathematical in his second book on Kant, *Die Frage nach dem Ding* (lectures of 1935–36, published 1962) and the essay "Die Zeit des Weltbildes" (1938 lecture, published in *Holzwege*, 1950). Jacob Klein's work in the history of mathematics discloses the transformation by Vieta and Descartes of the concept of number from the ancient ontological to the modern symbolic-constructive. Strauss's most extended statement on this subject occurs in his treatment of Hobbes, whose free construction of knowledge takes the form of a methodical (rather than metaphysical) materialism that secures

an "island of intelligibility" within the mysterious universe; the human can comprehend only what it makes (*NRH*, 166–202). Strauss's emphasis is less on the radical freedom of the modern subject and more on the goal of guaranteeing "the actualization of wisdom," in accord with his view of the centrality of "application." Strauss sees the project as involving a limiting of thought to practical ends and, ultimately, the subordination of questioning to history. Krüger's analysis and intent move along another trajectory, as he hopes to uncover a binding of thought to nature in order to correct the unboundedness of modern free construction.

46. *Grundfragen*, 137–40.
47. Ibid., 140–50. This three-phase structure bears comparison with Strauss's "three waves of modernity."
48. Ibid., 209–32.
49. Ibid., 142.
50. Ibid., 143. *PMKK*, 1–14.
51. *PMKK*, 186–191.
52. In Strauss's work the interpretations of Rousseau and Nietzsche have a related significance, since Strauss reads these philosophers as seeking to recover aspects of antiquity even as they develop more "advanced" modern positions.

Appendices

Appendix I: Review of Leo Strauss' *Die Religionskritik Spinozas als Grundlage seiner Bibelwissenschaft*

Gerhard Krüger

1.1 Translated from the German by Donald J. Maletz

In this learned, specialized historical investigation, there is concealed a fundamental philosophic discussion of *the problem of the Enlightenment*. This study is as instructive for the philosopher and the theologian as for the expert on Spinoza and the historian of general intellectual history. [Geistesgeschichte]

If, for the philosopher, there must be nothing which is "self-evident," then that is valid also for the Enlightenment, which forms the intellectual foundation of modern culture. As its name [Aufklärung] indicates, it understood itself essentially as the "exit of man from his self-caused immaturity" (Kant), that is, as a critique of revealed religion. In tracing out this long-forgotten argument, *Strauss* brings to light how very problematic even the argumentative "refutation" of revealed religion remained, how much the *faith* in science contributed to helping science to victory. Strauss proceeds with a remarkable impartiality from the *teachings* of the critics back to their contestable *motives*, which define the specific and historical structure of their claim to truth. By bringing these motives into the open, motives which are still influential today, he is able to recall the historical vitality of this struggle.

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It has been known since Dilthey that, in the formation of the "natural system" in the seventeenth century, the tie to the *Stoa* played an important role. Strauss elaborates on this picture, in portraying the critique of religion in the seventeenth century as a "stage in the overall history of the critique of religion in general" (p. 2; 35); from Democritus through Epicurus, Hobbes, Spinoza, and Hume to Feuerbach and Marx there extends one tradition whose classical representative is *Epicurus* (p. 11f; 45f). "The Epicurean critique of religion is one source, and indeed the most important one, for the seventeenth century critique of religion" (p. 4; 38); the influence of Epicurus "is at least equal to the influence of the Stoa," although it rests much less on a comprehensive "rebirth" of the teaching than on a re-awakening of the old motive (p. 17; 49). While according to the dominant view, it is above all the new sovereignty of man enlightening himself which emerges, Strauss' theme enables him to demonstrate how much this man finds himself originally *on the defensive*: tormented by religion's threats of the beyond and driven back and forth by the anarchy of sects, he demands, above all, a truth which brings *reassurance*, *softening*, and *consolation*. "Interest in the security and in the softening of life may be called the characteristic interest of the Enlightenment in general" (p. 199; 209). This "Epicurean" motive is in itself compatible with different possibilities for satisfaction—Moses Mendelssohn called immortality comforting, while for Marrano da Costa it threatened terrors (p. 28f; 58–9); but in the long run, it is, however, the *mechanical worldview* which most thoroughly satisfies the interest in truth as the "consoling truth" (p. 29; 60). As already in the case of Epicurus and Lucretius (p. 10f; 43f), the issue concerns the "opposition between the scientific view of the world, guided by the principle of continuity and therefore comforting, and the mythic-religious view, which refers back to the arbitrary working of divine powers and is therefore discomforting" (p. 85; 108). An "original inclination of the human heart" (p. 19; 51) ensures that on the one hand regularities are sought out—and, where they are not to be found in the "visible order" with Aristotle, they are *constructed* in an "invisible order" with atomism—while on the other hand a theologian like Calvin discovers the working of an unfathomable will "in every manifest disparity, irregularity, discontinuity" (p. 187; 198). Thus *one* unprovable orientation in the experience of the world stands here against the other; the opponents talk past each other to this degree. But, since it is nevertheless the same world which they experience, there is then also a common ground which becomes the battlefield in the specific dispute concerning

the revealed aspect of religion: it is *miracles* and the text of the *Bible*. Since Strauss can show that biblical criticism inherently presupposes the critique of religion—"distance" in regard to the Bible (see in particular p. 247ff; 251ff)—the issue is concentrated on miracles. Here it is a question of the direct, unambiguous manifestation of a divine, creative power for the "mere experience" of everyone (p. 103ff; 126ff). It is shown—not without a polemic against the "softening" in the whole of modern theology of the original concept of miracles, which applied to physical nature (p. 111, note 166, pp. 177, 204; 131, 190, 212)—that the "metaphysical critique" of miracles in Spinoza (and elsewhere), the proof of their impossibility in principle is not very convincing because in the decisive respect, in the dispute about the *sufficiency of reason*, it does not at all understand the opponent's position (p. 194ff; 204ff), and because it is itself subject to objection on the grounds of the anarchy of metaphysical systems (p. 121; 140). Much more effective and historically decisive was the "positive critique," which was silent about the "possibility" of miracles but contested in the concrete case the *knowability* of the miracle *as such*, while at the same time it undertook to explain the *faith* in miracles. "Human weakness," which viewed itself as incapable of explaining, is here taken not as grounds for faith but for skeptical suspension of judgment (p. 113; 133). And since miracles belong above all to the past, it is easy to explain the *reports* of them on the basis of the "prejudices of a people of ancient times" (p. 114ff; 134ff). Presupposed in this explanation is the "living experience of progress in the knowledge of nature" (p. 115; 134), which can take everything "unexplainable" as something merely not yet explained and which is *historically conscious* at the same time of its fundamental superiority over the "ancient" in the sense of the barbaric. (p. 117; 135) "Positive critique is legitimate only as *defensive* critique" (p. 127; 145). That is, it is "not strictly self-evident." Religion accuses the skeptic of obstinacy and of flight from a radical reflection on his sufficiency; critique cannot refute the claim to authority in principle, its skepticism can only *render laughable* certain banal consequences of this claim. "Reason must become 'spirit' [Geist] in order to be able actively to experience its more than royal freedom, its sovereignty which is incapable of being shaken by anything" (p. 127; 146). It must "laugh" the opponent out of his position (Lessing) (p. 125; 143).

It belongs to the most valuable insights of Strauss, both historically and in principle, that, in his analysis of the Enlightenment, he makes the ambiguous concept of freedom precise as the concept of *freedom from*

prejudice (p. 163ff; 178ff). "'Prejudice' is a historical category. Exactly for this reason, the struggle of the Enlightenment against prejudice is different from the struggle against appearance and opinion with which philosophy began its world-historical journey" (p. 167; 181). "The justification for - and at the same time the questionableness of - the category of 'prejudice' first becomes visible, and only then, when revealed religion is taken into consideration along with it" (p. 164; 179). The fundamental Epicurean orientation receives in modernity a decisive modification through the pre-existing fact of a "dogmatic" religion which intervenes with its *thought* in the *order of law* [Recht] *and state*. The struggle is no longer against the madness which is "fearful" only to the individual but also against the madness which is "dangerous" to the social peace, which is used by priests and kings in order to withhold earthly goods from the people (pp. 18f., 30, 200f, note 276, 215; 50f, 61, 209f, 224). Although for this last formulation, there are already familiar predecessors among the sophists, Strauss rightly finds here something new: the dogma of revealed religion contains quite a different restriction of *thought* within the community than did ancient myth. The Epicurean tradition is now supplemented by the legendary "averoistic" one, which shows the wise man in his *theoria* to be protected from the many by the "invention" of religion, and by the praise of "virtù," which already, in Machiavelli and Bruno, asserts the arguments of Nietzsche (p. 13ff; 48ff). The general discussion about the difference between modern and ancient thought receives here for once an "existential" sharpness: Strauss shows *in concreto* how much the modern "disposition of method, of culture" (p. 44; 71) is a *historical antithesis*, that is, an unprovable negative life-decision opposed to that past which believed in revelation.

The historical analyses within which this fundamental problematic comes to light lead from Epicurus first to some precursors of Spinoza's critique of religion: da Costa, La Peyrère, and Hobbes. The proof of the dependence of da Costa on Servetius and of La Peyrère on the Socinians is new. The exposition of Hobbes (cf. p. 222ff; 229ff) allows one to see that, in relation to Spinoza's still classical concept of happiness, he is the more modern and more radical. In Spinoza's *Theological-Political Treatise* itself, Strauss uncovers a threefold argument: (1) with the *orthodoxy* (Jewish and Christian) which is plainly skeptical in regard to reason; (2) with that scholasticism of *Maimonides* which recognizes reason; and (3) with Calvin in whom the faith basis of orthodoxy first becomes quite radically visible. (In regard to this last point, Strauss has, in my opinion, overstated his overall

presentation of the basis in faith: as certain as it is that Calvin measures every teaching about God solely by "pietas," it is however clear in the first part of his *Institutio* that the *problem* of knowledge of God is common to all men as a "natural problem." But in the context of his comparison, Strauss hits indeed upon the essential thing.) Critique (of "scripture") on the basis of reason is carefully separated from a preliminary stage, "critique on the basis of scripture": by the exhibition of inconsistencies in the literal meaning of the text, the waverer is first of all to be freed for philosophy, and the essential content of the Bible is to be restricted to the moral demands of "piety" common to all of the scriptures. The demonstration that Spinoza could believe that he surpassed Calvin's teaching on predestination with his teaching of the Amor Dei is interesting (p. 190ff; 201ff). It is surely characteristic of the modern thought of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that it did not simply drop the theological problematic of the past but, by moving it to new ground, first introduced its atrophy—often contrary to its own expectations. The interpretation of the critical thought of Spinoza is completed by an investigation of his analysis of religion and its "social function" in the state. The observations of Spinoza on biblical criticism form the conclusion.

Strauss has understood throughout how to discover concrete historical situations behind the subtle inconsistencies of theory: the hope of La Peyrère for a political restoration of Judaism (p. 55ff; 79ff), Spinoza's "prudent" distance from Judaism in contrast to the rootedness of the ideas of Maimonides in membership in the Jewish community (p. 146ff; 157ff), Spinoza's "theoretical" hatred for ideological judgment in politics as distinguished from the really political coolness of Machiavelli (p. 218ff; 227ff), and, finally, the connection between Spinoza's doctrine of the state and the Netherlands' successful struggle for freedom (p. 236ff; 241ff). The presentation rests throughout on an exhaustive knowledge of the sources. An appendix gives materials for the analysis of the sources of da Costa and Spinoza; it reveals a comprehensive erudition.

The content of this inquiry is of unusual interest. But, it is regrettable that the author is at first tiring because of the *form* of his book. His very refined and complicated interpretations conceal the fundamental problem in many scattered places instead of expounding it coherently in its full compass. The work needs a more transparent arrangement of the whole and a more perceptible organization in individual parts. The analysis of religion by Hobbes and Spinoza, along with the accompanying teachings about the state, would certainly be better attached to the first paragraphs

of the introduction, together with the account of the essence of the Enlightenment. The specific divisions provided by the table of contents would very much facilitate the reading if they were still more detailed and indicated in the text by more than dashes. The *style* of the author often suffers from an all too great prudence, while at other places it can again become striking and lively.

Appendix II: Preface to *Hobbes politische Wissenschaft*

Leo Strauss

1.2 Translated by Donald J. Maletz

The present study of Hobbes, which now appears for the first time in the German original, was composed in 1934–35 in England and published in 1936 as an English translation. Ernest Barker wrote a preface for the English edition and I added an introductory note, which may now be replaced by the following comments: The leading thought of my Hobbes book arose from positive and negative stimuli received while I still lived in Germany. The first time I heard about Hobbes in a way that caused me to take notice was in the lectures of Julius Ebbinghaus on the social teaching of the Reformation and the Enlightenment, given in Freiburg im Breisgau in the summer semester of 1922. Ebbinghaus appreciated in an unconventional way the originality of Hobbes; in his lively presentation, Hobbes' teaching became not merely plastic but vital. He was anything but a Hobbesian; if my memory does not deceive me, he already believed at that time that the significant part of Hobbes' teaching had been "sublated in" ["aufgehoben"] the Kantian philosophy. Carl Schmitt, in quite unconscious opposition to Ebbinghaus, asserted in his essay, "The Concept of the Political" ["Der Begriff des Politischen"] (*Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, 1927), that Hobbes is "by far the greatest and perhaps the only truly systematic political thinker." Schmitt's judgment about the greatness and the significance of Hobbes, a judgment which corresponded to my feelings or taste at that time, strengthened, understandably, my interest in Hobbes.

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My study of Hobbes began in the context of an investigation of the origins of biblical criticism in the seventeenth century, namely, of Spinoza's Theological-Political Treatise. The re-awakening of theology, which for me is marked by the names of Karl Barth and Franz Rosenzweig, appeared to make it necessary to investigate how far the critique of orthodox theology Jewish and Christian deserved to be victorious. Since then, the theological-political problem has remained the theme of my investigations. As far as the political, especially, is concerned, the contrast between Hobbes and Spinoza seemed to me at that time to be more important, more illuminating, than their agreement. In any case, I believed that I had learned, through my first study of Hobbes, that the prior accounts and apercus had not done justice to what is decisive in him. When a fate that was in a certain way kind drove me to England and I gained in this way access to sources which cannot be studied elsewhere, I saw the opportunity not to limit my work to an analysis of the teaching of the mature Hobbes but to investigate at the same time how and from what source this teaching had been formed in Hobbes' mind. This double intention gave the present study its character. Philosophic interest in theology linked me with Gerhard Krüger; his review of my Spinoza book expressed my intention and result more clearly than I myself had done.[1] The final sentence of his Kant book,[2] which corresponded completely to my view at that time and with which I would still today, with certain reservations, agree, explains why I directed myself wholly to the "true politics"[3] and why I did not write about Hobbes as a Hobbesian. Insight into the necessity of understanding the dispute of the ancients and the moderns more thoroughly and more exactly than had previously been done, before one decided for the modern or the ultra-modern, linked me with Jacob Klein; his "Die griechische Logistik und die Entstehung der Algebra" (Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte der Mathematik, Astronomie und Physik, Band 3, Heft 1–2),[4] a masterly and exemplary investigation led by this insight, received the distinction of being passed over in near total silence in our everything-but-silent era.

As far as the defects of the present book are concerned, I have tacitly corrected them, so far as they have become known, in *Natural Right and History* (Chap. V, A) and in my critique of Polin's Hobbes Book (What is Political Philosophy?, pp. 170–96). Only in the latter publication (p. 176, note) did I succeed in laying bare the simple leading thought of Hobbes' teaching about man. For obscure reasons, Hobbes himself never did this; his famous clarity is limited to his conclusions, while his presuppositions

are shrouded in obscurity. His obscurity is, of course, not in every respect involuntary. What I stated 13 years ago in the Preface to the American edition of the present book, I will still allow to stand. I said then … [The remaining three paragraphs of this preface are a German translation of the "Preface to the American Edition" of *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952).]

Notes

1. Krüger's review of Strauss' *Die Religionskritik Spinozas als Grundlage seiner Bibelwissenschaft: Untersuchungen zu Spinozas Theologisch-politischen Traktat* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1930) is in the Deutsche Literaturzeitung, 1931, Heft 51 (December 20), p. 2407.
2. The last several paragraphs of Krüger's *Philosophie und Moral in der Kantischen Kritik* (Tubingen: Verlag J.C.B. Mohr, 1931) attempt to state the basis for a "philosophical, that is, unlimited questioning," in the light of the fact that, since Kant, "the *aporias* of the Enlightenment have become greater"; he argues that "Kant's problem is thoroughly contemporary," in that "The unpenetrated opposition of 'dogmatism' and 'skepticism' has become prominent in thought as in life itself with new sharpness, while the living and unifying *tradition*, upon which the Enlightenment fed, has disappeared and been replaced by the *historicism of knowledge*." The concluding sentences of the book may be translated as follows: "The question will only be in reality unlimited, if it *inquires into the good in the knowledge of the historical passion*. Let the *answer* to this question—and thus also the Christian answer of Augustine—be left undecided. That the decisive question remains true, even if it finds no answer, can be taught him who questions thus by the example of Socrates."
3. This term occurs in Kant's "Zum Ewigen Frieden," Anhang, I, end, in: Immanuel Kant, *Kleinere Schriften zur Geschichtsphilosophie Ethik und Politik*, ed. Karl Vorlander (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1964), p. 162. See the translation of "Perpetual Peace" in: Immanuel Kant, *On History*, ed. Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1963), p. 128.
4. Jacob Klein, *Greek Mathematical Thought and the Origin of Algebra*, trans. Eva Brann (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1968).

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[1] Note: Page numbers followed by 'n' refer to notes.

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