Leo Strauss and His Contemporaries

Faith and Political Philosophy: The Strauss-Voegelin Correspondence, edited by Barry Cooper and Peter Emberly (State College, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993). Cited in the text as *FPP.*

On Tyranny: Revised and Expanded Edition Including the Strauss-Kojeve Correspondence, edited by Victor Gourevitch and Michael S. Roth (New York: The Free Press, 1991). Cited in the text as OT.

Hermeneutics as Politics, by Stanley Rosen (New York: Oxford University Press, *1987).* Cited in the text as *HP.*

Leo Strauss's stature as both scholar and thinker (if not philosopher) has been steadily growing. If not yet ranked with Husserl and Heidegger, he is consistently put on a level just below them. Accordingly, there has recently been an explosion of sorts in Strauss scholarship. Though thus far there has only been one (very poor) book about Strauss in English,[1] there has been a proliferation of other types of scholarship-including edited collections, both in English and French, devoted to his thought, one (reportedly outstanding) book in German on the early Strauss, special editions of journals that focus on his accomplishments, and numerous other essays that have appeared in various formats.[2] I propose here to begin to explore the question of whether Strauss's stature, when compared with that of his contemporaries, merits such attention, and the related question of his political and theoretical intention. I will examine two recent volumes that republish his works and include correspondence with renowned contemporaries Eric Voegelin and

M. Alexandre Kojēve. I will also consider one essay by a student of both Strauss and Kojēve, Stanley Rosen,' that attempts to evaluate philosophically Strauss's and Kojēve's places.

I

I will start with *Faith and Political Philosophy,* edited by Barry Cooper and Peter Emberly. This volume consists of three sections. The first is the complete Strauss-Voegelin correspondence. In the second, we find four essays, two by Strauss ("Jerusalem and Athens: Some Preliminary Reflections" and "On the Mutual Influence of Theology and Philosophy"), and two by Voegelin ("The Gospel and Culture" and "Immortality: Experience and Symbol"). Finally, there are eight scholarly articles whose authors range from Strauss's student Thomas Pangle to Voegelin's student Ellis Sandoz. There is also a lengthy introduction by the editors. I will concentrate here on the material that was authored by Strauss and Voegelin.

Initially, it is useful to ask what the value of such correspondence might be. Strauss, in *Persecution and the Art of Writing,* seemed to grant little weight to correspondence, and in his works, he rarely cited it. In *Persecution,* Strauss wrote apropos of Spinoza:

> Since his teaching is primarily addressed to posterity, the interpreter has always to be mindful of the difference in specific weight of the books of the mature Spinoza and his letters. The letters are primarily addressed, not to posterity, but to particular contemporaries. Whereas the works of his maturity may be presumed to be addressed primarily to the best type of readers, the large majority of his letters are obviously addressed to rather mediocre men.[4]

One must always be mindful of this stumbling block in reading Strauss's letters. Yet before we despair of learning anything from them, we should note some peculiarities of Strauss's statement-at least as it regards him. To begin, Voegelin and Kojēve are not "rather mediocre men." Further, while Spinoza could not have reasonably expected his letters to survive (and hence, presumably, could feel free to dissimulate) Strauss (at least the mature Strauss) could and no

doubt did expect his letters to survive. And since Strauss was concerned with posterity, we may provisionally assume that his letters were written with at least one eye pointed towards the future. That said, there is, as Ernest Fortin has written in an essay on the Strauss-Voegelin correspondence (unfortunately not included in this volume), "not much" (Fortin suspects) that one can learn from the letters that one cannot "learn from other sources about Strauss's or Voegelin's thought." [5]

Therefore, although the letters are obviously not the place to concentrate on the substance of the two men's thought-this will be my focus when I examine their essays-there are remarks in them that shed light on the two men's characters. In my opinion, the most interesting of these is Strauss's statement (which appears to be merely a passing comment), "I begin *lentissime to* write a small book on Machiavelli. I can't help loving him-in spite of his errors" (p. 99). [6]

We should, I believe, pay special attention to Strauss's declaration of love for Machiavelli. Socrates excepted, could one imagine Strauss making such a claim about any other philosopher? Strauss's "love" for Machiavelli-the thinker whom Strauss began discussing by referring to his justly-deserved reputation as a "teacher of evil"-stands in marked contrast to Voegelin. One could never imagine Voegelin making such a comment. In fact, one particular remark by Voegelin reveals most characteristically the difference between himself and Strauss. In a letter Voegelin edited before sending to Strauss (thus omitting the following passage), he declares, "When it comes to Locke, my heart runs over. He is for me one of the most repugnant, dirty, morally corrupt appearances in the history of humanity" (p. 97). One cannot imagine Strauss describing any thinker of high rank in such terms-not even Heidegger, whose politics, it goes without saying, Strauss deplored far more than Voegelin could have deplored Locke. Instead, in his correspondence Strauss seems to become most "upset" not about moral, but about intellectual, failings. Voegelin had a deep, passionate concern for morality-not to say a powerful streak of moral indignation-that is missing, or, at least, less frequently visible in Strauss. Ultimately this

is related to, or indeed accounts for, a crucial difference between the two men: Voegelin is a believer; Strauss, apparently, is not. As Strauss wrote in his essay on Halevi's *Kuzari* in *Persecution and the Art of Writing:* "One has not to be naturally pious, he has merely to have a passionate interest in genuine morality in order to long with all his heart for revelation: moral man as such is the potential believer."[7]

A second significant feature of the letters is the characteristic diction employed in them. No doubt one of the reasons Voegelin has attracted the type of following he has is his command of a technical philosophic vocabulary. Similarly, one of the reasons that Strauss has attracted his own following is the almost complete lack of such a vocabulary in his published writings. Yet in the letters, to a far greater extent than in his writings, Strauss employs such a vocabulary. To some extent at least, he plays on Voegelin's turf. In my opinion, Voegelin's use of such a vocabulary not only makes him much less accessible, but it also makes him far less helpful as a teacher. To employ certain types of technical philosophical language-i.e., phrases such as "nonexistent reality," "existential order," "Plato's exploration of the field of existential tension"-is from Strauss's point of view imprecise and even misleading.[8] Such language is removed from the primary issues, from how they first, "naturally," come to sight. Such language ignores what is, in a sense, first for us; it fails to give the surface its due. Voegelin could, of course, reply that what is first for us "here and now" is precisely the "existence" of this technical language-and it is from this that we must ascend. However true that maybe, Strauss surely would respond, and in fact did respond in the correspondence, whatever the need to employ such language in contemporary "philosophical" debate, it is illegitimate to introduce it when trying to understand thinkers of the past who are not as "sophisticated" as we are today. (See the letter of March 14, 1950.)

Strauss and Voegelin's differences in regard to diction, as well as many other differences, can be seen quite clearly in the first two essays included in the volume, Strauss's "Jerusalem and Athens: Some Preliminary Reflections," and Voegelin's "The Gospel and Culture." Whereas Strauss begins his essay with a critique of the concept of "culture" as derivative, and hence, misleading to the

highest degree in discussing Jerusalem (the Torah) and Athens (political philosophy), Voegelin-as the title of his essay indicates-embraces the term. Strauss writes, "The concept of culture is an outgrowth of nineteenth century Western culture; its application to `cultures' of other ages and climates is an act stemming from the spiritual imperialism of that particular culture. There is then a glaring contradiction between the claimed objectivity of the science of cultures and the radical subjectivity of that science." Accordingly, he dismisses culture and its sister, history, when he attempts to understand the Bible and the classics. To put it in Strauss's own language, one cannot attempt to begin to understand either the Bible or the classics unless one understands them on their own terms, as they understood themselves. As this was such a difficult task, one may say that for virtually all practical purposes Strauss never got beyond it. On the other hand, Voegelin, to exaggerate for the purposes of clarity, continually analyzes both the Bible and the classics in nothing but terms of culture and history.

Yet, more important than the problem of language-which at its worst can only distort the meaning of the phenomena-is precisely the question of Strauss's and Voegelin's understandings of the phenomena. Not surprisingly, differences in each thinker's respec - tive judgments of and tentative answers to some of the most impor - tant philosophical questions are made clear in these essays. Whereas Strauss sees a radical opposition between faith and philosophy or revelation and reason, Voegelin sees an essential historical harmony between the two-especially between Platonism and Christianity. First Strauss: "According to the Bible, the beginning of wisdom is fear of the Lord; according to the Greek philosophers, the beginning of wisdom is wonder. We are thus compelled from the very beginning to make a choice, to take a stand" *(FPP,* 114); "when we attempt to return to the roots of Western civilization, we observe soon that Western civilization has two roots which are in conflict with each other, the Biblical and the Greek philosophic, and this is to begin with a very disconcerting observation" *(FPP,* 219); "I would venture to say that as long as there will be a Western civilization there will be theologians who will suspect the philosophers and philosophers who

will be annoyed or feel annoyed by the theologians" *(FPP, 233).* In short, as he wrote in *Natural Right and History:*

> The dilemma [between faith and reason] cannot be evaded by any harmonization or synthesis for both philosophy and the Bible proclaim something as the one thing needful, as the only thing that ultimately counts, and the one thing needful proclaimed by the Bible is the opposite of that proclaimed by philosophy: a life of obedient love versus a love of free insight. In every attempt at harmonization, in every synthesis however impressive, one of the two opposed elements is sacrificed, more or less subtly but in any event surely, to the other: philosophy, which means to be the queen, must be made the handmaid of revelation or vice versa.

Voegelin attempts just such a synthesis. His vehicle is history. His contention is that Plato is best understood as an anticipation of the truth revealed in the Bible. That is to say, Plato should be understood not for his own sake-and on his own terms-but for what he heralds. While Strauss stresses the profound difference between Plato and the Bible, Voegelin seeks to draw, one might even say "pull," the two together despite their differences (see, i.e., pp. 151-55).

Voegelin's synthesis of Platonism and the Gospels leads him to declare that the "understanding of these complexities by which the gospel movement differs from the movement of classic philosophy . . . cannot be advanced by using such topical dichotomies as philosophy and religion, metaphysics and theology, reason and revelation, natural reason and supernaturalism, rationalism and irrationalism, and so forth" (p. 157). Instead, Voegelin finds it more useful "to start at the point where the Gospel agrees with classic philosophy in symbolizing existence as a field of pulls and counterpulls." He declares:

> The symbols developed in the movement [of pull and counterpull] . . . do not refer to objects in external reality, but to the phases of the movement as it becomes articulate in its

> self-illuminating process. There is no In-Between other than the *metaxy* experienced in a man's tension toward the divine ground of being; there is no question of life and death other than the question aroused by pull and counterpull; there is no Saving Tale other than the tale of the divine pull to be followed by man; and there is no cognitive articulation of existence other than the noetic consciousness in which the movement becomes luminous to itself.

For Voegelin there is a realm known as "nonexistent reality"-i.e., God, the transcendent and the divine-that is wholly and completely separate from "external reality." Morever, there "is no In-Between of existence as a self-contained object but only existence experienced as a part of a reality which extends beyondthe In-Between."

Terminological problems aside, Voegelin's position is a difficult one. His strict separation between "external reality" and "nonexistent reality" makes it difficult for him to understand the Platonic doctrine by which the ideas are separate from, yet connected to, the material world. For Voegelin, there is no mediating principle by which man can, by his own unaided powers, understand God or the good; hence, he must have recourse to a synthesis of revelation and history. Voegelin is thus presented with a difficulty when he tries to understand Plato. To repeat, according to Plato one may say that the ideas are separate from yet connected to the material world; their connection consists in our being able, or even compelled, to perceive these eternal and self-sufficient forms; that perceiving-again, according to Plato-is primarily the work of human reason. Voegelin denies the sufficiency of human reason; hence, he is forced to resort to history to understand Plato's anticipation of Christianity. In this sense, Voegelin is forced by his "philosophy of history" to understand Plato better than Plato understood himself.

II

To turn from Voegelin to Kojēve is a bit like dining on shad roe after a steady diet of steak and potatoes. Kojēve's sophisticated Parisian amorality provides quite a contrast to Voegelin's stout moralism.

Though it goes against his popular reputation and seems (but only seems) to contradict his passionate desire for justice, it is not hard to see which man Strauss was more in sympathy with temperamentally. Strauss takes obvious pleasure in exposing Kojēve's amorality in his "Restatement on Xenophon's *Hiero,"* and in his correspondence speaks of his attraction for "every [sort of] ingenious malice" *(OT,* 277)-something one could never imagine Voegelin thinking, let alone writing.

The new edition of *On Tyranny,* edited by Victor Gourevitch and Michael S. Roth, is divided into three parts. The first section consists of a revised translation (by Seth Bernadete) of *Hiero* that brings it into line with Strauss's own English rendering of the Greek in the original monograph of *On Tyranny.* The second section is comprised of Kojēve's response to Strauss, "Tyranny and Wisdom" (in an improved translation), and Strauss's "Restatement on Xenophon's *Hiero"* (with an important final paragraph that was omitted from the previous English edition). The third section consists of the Strauss-Kojēve correspondence. Since I began earlier with the Strauss-Voegelin correspondence, it is appropriate that I begin here with the Strauss-Kojēve correspondence. Though there is more of theoretical interest in this correspondence than in the Strauss-Voegelin correspondence-in the sense that there are detailed statements that elaborate some positions more explicitly than do their published writings (see, e.g., Strauss's statement on the problem of the ideas in his letter of May 28,1957)-I believe that these letters are also most interesting for what they tell us about the two men's characters and development. They are even more interesting in this regard than the Strauss-Voegelin exchanges because of the two men's friendship and the much greater volume of the correspondence.

Strauss and Kojēve began their correspondence in the early 30s and it continued strongly until the late 50s, tapering off in the years preceding Kojēve's death in 1968. Since the chief focus of this essay is Strauss, I propose to examine what we can learn about the two men by concentrating primarily on Strauss. To begin, we see in the early Strauss a lack of the self-consciousness-or what we called earlier the "eye toward posterity"-that is always present in his later letters.

In all of his correspondence after 1940, Strauss never mentions things such as bread, wine, or cigarettes. He certainly would not have praised English sausages later in life as he did early in his correspondence with Kojēve: "The hams taste too good as to consist of pork, and therefore they are allowed by the M[osaic] laws according to atheistic interpretation" *(OT,* 222).

What perhaps comes out most clearly in the letters is Strauss's great ambition or-if,"as a philosopher, he is free from [ambition]" *(OT,* 203)-his thorough understanding of the steps necessary to be the sort of philosophic legislator he aspired to be. The late Allan Bloom has written eloquently of Strauss:

> For those who admire gain or want to influence the world's events, his career is a disappointment . . . . He neither spoke to the taste of the age nor tried to create a new taste. His retreat from the stage of literary glory cannot be attributed either to scholarly dryness, to a lack of understanding of poetry, or to an incapacity to write beautifully and powerfully. His passion and his literary gifts are undeniable . . . . His lack of popularity was an act of will rather than a decree of fate.°

One may consider Bloom's statement a noble lie, or perhaps, a partial truth. Its incompleteness is betrayed by the vigor with which Strauss encouraged Kojēve to debate him publicly (see OT, pp. 239-61). It is not accidental that at the time Strauss desired this public debate Kojēve was already an influential Parisian intellectual while Strauss was a relatively unknown scholar who had yet to publish any of the works for which he was to become most famous. More fully than is often recognized, Strauss desired reputation and influence among those who might be able to make a mark. He was, of course, aware that because of "the envious nature of men,"[10] the most talented men of his own generation would be the ones most difficult to cultivate. He therefore hoped-or planned-for success with a later generation-students-in his attempt to revive classical political philosophy.

To some extent, the character of the Strauss-Kojēve correspondence changed after the publication of *On Tyranny"* An unchari-

table critic might attribute this to Strauss no longer having the need for Kojēve in order to make his name known in Europe. Such an explanation would be wrong. It is better to ascribe the change to Kojēve rather than to Strauss. [12] In the earlier letters, the two men had a genuine philosophic exchange over real problems, Strauss powerfully making the case for classical thought and Kojēve intransigently making the case for modern thought. In praise of Kojēve's *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel,* Strauss wrote, "No one has made the case for modern thought in our time as brilliantly as you" *(OT, 236).* Yet, in his later letters to Strauss (especially the letters in 1957), Kojēve-to some extent, at least-seems to have become so embroiled in "scholarship" that he has lost sight of the philosophical issues. Hence, we see long letters from him announcing his discoveries of philosophers Julian, "Sallustius," and Damascius, and on the proper sequences of the Platonic dialogues. The charge that is sometimes made unjustly against Strauss-that he lost sight of the problems in the texts because of the problems in the texts-seems to be true of Kojēve in his later life. Perhaps having attained "wisdom" he no longer felt the need to philosophize and could rest content with scholarship. It is significant that the correspondence tapered off after Strauss seemed less than willing to engage Kojēve in such *ascholarly* debate over Plato via correspondence.

Let us now turn briefly to *On Tyranny*. *On Tyranny is* in some ways an odd book. It offers Strauss's most political title; indeed, it is the only title that designates a discrete political phenomenon, and its Introduction apparently promises at least the starting points by which we could understand the regimes of Hitler and Stalin. It is, at first reading, an astonishing interpretation of what initially seems to a modern reader a less than profound dialogue between a wise poet, Simonides, and a soon-to-be disillusioned tyrant.

On second impression, however, one is struck by how little Strauss's interpretation of the dialogue has to teach us about its ostensible subject - tyranny. Is it not difficult to explain Hitler and, especially, Stalin by saying that they, like Hiero, wished to be loved? Moreover, one wonders whether any human being-even one such as Strauss-could have arrived at such a brilliant interpretation if he

had at his disposal only Xenophon's short dialogue. [13] Such reflections lead one to reconsider what Strauss's purpose is in the book. For this, we must return to his Introduction.

Carefully read, the Introduction in fact does not state that it will explain Hitler and Stalin. To exaggerate for the purpose of clarity, it merely expresses surprise "that the renewed general interest in authentic interpretation of the phenomenon of tyranny did not lead to renewed interest, general or scholarly, in the only writing of the classical period which is explicitly devoted to the discussion of tyranny and its implications, and to nothing else, and which has never been subjected to comprehensive analysis: Xenophon's *Hiero."*

Strauss argues:

> One cannot understand modern tyranny in its specific character before one has understood the elementary and in a sense natural form of tyranny which is premodern tyranny. This basic stratum of modern tyranny remains, for all practical purposes, unintelligible to us if we do not have recourse to the political science of the classics.

Yet Strauss never, at least explicitly, tells us what this "basic stratum" is. Indeed, given that on the same page he raises a number of salient differences between ancient and modern tyranny-the central one being that modern tyrannies have at their disposal "ideologies"-and that he almost immediately brings up Machiavelli and his responsibility for the founding of modernity, one is left perplexed about what that basic stratum could be. If one cites Aristotle's classic definition of tyranny, rule by one man in his own interest, one becomes especially perplexed: there seems to be an almost unbridgeable gap between rule by one man in his own interest and rule on the basis of ideology. Perhaps that basic stratum is something else, something present in modern political science that could make the horrendous modern tyrannies possible and from which we could only liberate ourselves from by returning to the classics.

Indeed, if we look again at the Introduction, we read that it is not only the barbaric tyranny of Hitler and Stalin that threatens us, but a much gentler version:

> Confronted by the appalling alternative that man, or human thought, must be collectivized either by one stroke and without mercy or else by slow and gentle processes, we are forced to wonder how we could escape from this dilemma. We reconsider therefore the elementary and unobtrusive conditions of human freedom.

Perhaps the book is ultimately directed at the second type of tyranny. In their own introduction, the editors note:

> "Tyranny is a danger coeval with political life" (22), and reflection on political life suggests that "society will always try to tyrannize thought" (27). Reflection on tyranny thus leads to reflection on the relation between thought or philosophy and society. Strauss therefore gradually shifts the focus of his inquiry from tyranny proper to the relation between philosophy and society (p.XI).

If this is the case, as I believe it largely to be, why is the book not entitled "Philosophy and Politics"? And in what salient ways would one distinguish it from, *say, Persecution and the Art of Writing,* all of whose essays concern themselves with the problem of the relation between philosophy and politics and whose title essay explicitly considers how a gifted writer in a totalitarian country might proceed?[14] Whatever the answer to these questions, it is clear that Strauss's interpretation quickly seems to shift the focus from tyranny to what he titles in one of his chapters "The Two Ways of Life"- that is, to comparison of the respective merits of the theoretical life and the political life as well as the problematic relation that exists between these two ways of life, including that between philosophers and tyrants.

Kojēve deals with the second question in his response to Strauss. He argues as follows: Strauss is wrong to reject tyranny as an inferior type of regime and to encourage philosophers to offer "utopian" advice to tyrants. Such advice is politically irrelevant because it fails to offer the tyrant the decisive first step that is necessary for transforming himself from a "tyrant" into a "ruler." But it is not

simply that Kojēve criticizes the philosophers for their unrealistic political advice; he argues that, as philosophers, they are not competent to offer political advice. To be a philosopher-that is, truly and genuinely a philosopher-one must devote all of one's time to philosophizing.

> On the one hand the philosopher's supreme goal is the quest for wisdom or Truth, and this quest, which a philosopher by definition never completes, is supposed to take all of his time. On the other hand, truth to tell, it also takes time, and even a great deal of time, to govern a State, however small it maybe. Truth to tell, governing a State takes all of a man's time *(OT,* 163).

And:

> [I]n order to give such advice, one has to keep up with current business on a daily basis, and hence to devote *all of one's time* to it. Yet that is precisely what the philosopher does not want to do. `In his capacity as philosopher he even *cannot* do so . . . to devote *all of one's time* to government is to cease to be a philosopher and hence to lose any advantage one might have over the tyrant and his "uninitiated advisors" *(OT,* 165).

This would not be such a problem for the philosopher if it were not for the trouble of "subjective certainty." That is, the philosopher could cloister himself and philosophize to his heart's desire if it were not for the problem that the truth arrived at by such cloistered philosophizing can be indistinguishable from the "truth" of the madman. The philosopher, then, must seek the company of others, particularly those who are competent to recognize him. The philosopher must enter the marketplace. Yet entering the marketplace and engaging in discussion brings its own problems; philosophers who enter the marketplace have been and are continuously occupied with-and seem to be satisfied with-problems. "Yet one cannot help being somewhat disappointed by the fact that this `discussion' of the problem at hand, after having gone for more than two thousand years, has not resulted in some kind *ofsolution"* (p. 167). Thus Kojēve

turns to Hegel's "`objective' method [of] historical verification" in order to "reach `indisputable' solutions" (p. 167):

> [O]ne can assert that if the "solution" to a problem has, in fact been historically or socially "valid" throughout the entire period that has elapsed since then, short of (historical) *proof* to the contrary, one has the *right* to regard it as philosophically "valid," in spite of the philosophers' ongoing "discussion" of the problem. In so regarding it, one may assume that, at the opportune moment, History itself will take care to put an end to the endlessly ongoing "philosophical discussion" of a problem it has virtually "resolved" (p. 168).

Once the philosopher has entered the marketplace, it is impossible for him to avoid political action. According to Kojeve's argument, however, the philosopher *as philosopher* cannot act politically. He must thus compromise and delegate the responsibility for politics to the "intellectuals." Because the philosopher must view politics with a certain "concrete" goal in mind (eventually the universal and homogenous state), he naturally prefers to act-or have his intellectuals act-in a setting in which he can accomplish his goals most quickly. According to Kojeve, then, the philosopher has a certain affinity for tyranny because it allows him to carry out his political goals without stultifying forms and formalities. Working through his intermediaries, the intellectuals, the philosopher is able in history to bring to fruition the reasonable state: Hegel's intellectual intermediary, Marx, is the classic example of an intellectual who has successfully accomplished his task. "The tyrant who here initiates the real political movement toward homogeneity consciously followed the teaching of the intellectual who deliberately transformed the idea of the philosopher so that it might cease to be a -utopian' ideal" *(OT, 173).*

> When I compare the reflections prompted by Xenophon's *Dialogue* and by Strauss's interpretation with the lessons that emerge from history, I have the impression that the relations between the philosopher and the tyrant have always been

> "reasonable" in the course of historical evolution: on the one hand the philosophers' "reasonable" advice has always been actualized by tyrants sooner or later; on the other hand, philosophers and tyrants, have always behaved toward each other "in accordance with reason *(OT,* 175).

Kojēve's argument is somewhat vitiated by the difficulty he would have in explaining his own political and philosophic activity. To begin, why is it necessary for a philosopher to spend all of his time philosophizing or for a political adviser to engage only in political activism? Are the lives of Cicero, the Emperor Julian (see *OT,* p. 269) or Kojēve himself hopelessly inconsistent? Moreover, one might also ask how, on his own grounds, Kojēve would defend his philosophizing. According to Kojēve, history is animated by the master-slave dialectic-a dialectic that culminates in the *desire* for universal human recognition. That recognition is political, and the universal tyrant desires it from all people; yet recognition is only worth while when it is given by competent individuals; hence, the universal tyrant must actively work to make as many people as possible competent in order for him to achieve "satisfaction." But if desire for recognition is *the* distinguishing trait of human beings as such, how does one explain the philosopher's passionate desire to understand? [16] Perhaps one might try to explain this by stating that the quest for wisdom is just another form-perhaps a higher form-of the desire for universal recognition. But certainly this could not explain Kojēve himself, who is "famous" for avoiding recognition.

Let us now turn briefly to Strauss's response to Kojēve (and Voegelin), his "Restatement on Xenophon's *Hiero."* Especially in light of the correspondence (OT, 254), that title is worthy of consideration. In the correspondence, Strauss writes:

> I have called it [the response] Restatement, because I regard the problem as entirely open-"Afterword" would create the impression of an apparent finality-and, *above all,* because I would *very much* like you to answer. You must clarify the difficulties in which the reader of your *Introduction* gets

> entangled. If my attack succeeds in getting you to clarify what is unclear, I will be very satisfied (p. 254).

Once our attention is drawn to Strauss's use of the term "Restatement"-a term that indicates that the contents should be, more or less, the same as the original-we are amazed by the contrast between the original and the restatement. Whereas the original monograph is perhaps Strauss's driest rhetorical performance before his late works, the "Restatement" is one of his most powerful such performances.

Strauss's "Restatement" responds explicitly to the only two "criticisms of my study from which one could learn anything"-those of Voegelin and Kojēve-authors "[who] have, so to speak nothing in common." Strauss's respective judgments on Voegelin and Kojēve can perhaps be discerned most clearly from his restatement. Voegelin, according to Strauss, is one of the "leading contemporary historians of political thought" *(OT,* 178). Kojēve is a philosopher *(OT,* 186). Yet while Strauss goes out of his way to treat Kojēve with respect-even while being critical-he is somewhat less generous with Voegelin-at times one might even say he seems to be unjust." Perhaps Strauss, by his respective treatments, wanted to drive home the radical difference that exists between a philosopher and a scholar-even one as outstanding as Voegelin.

There is no need to rehearse Strauss's criticisms and responses to Voegelin and Kojēve; they speak for themselves. The central point is that when read carefully, Strauss's aspiration to be a kind of philosophic legislator is revealed more clearly in the "Restatement" than in any of his other writings. For it is here that, in discussion with Kojēve, he indicates his thoughts on the questions of recognition, "subjective certainty," and contemporary philosophic legislation.

III

The question of Strauss's intentions and aspirations is also central in the title essay of Stanley Rosen's *Hermeneutics as Politics.* I will concentrate exclusively on Rosen's consideration of Strauss. Reasonably enough, Rosen with a discussion of Strauss's art of writing: "In

order to understand Strauss himself, we need to start from his own practice of exotericism" (p. 115). And Rosen's discussion raises a most important, if obvious, question: Strauss's public rediscovery of-and stress on-esotericism is presented primarily as part of his return to the thought and practice of his classical and medieval models; yet a moment's reflection shows that Strauss's return is not altogether faithful for none of his models treated the problem of esotericism theoretically, as Strauss obviously did. Why did he so treat it? Does, as Rosen seems to argue, this public display of a practice the classics kept hidden indicate a radical division between Strauss and his ostensible models?

Unfortunately, Rosen's discussion of this important subject is confusing. Consider some of his pronouncements:

> Whereas both [Kojēve and Strauss] practiced esotericism, they did so in the "modern" rather than the "ancient" manner, with sufficient clues to enable us to determine these views with satisfactory textual documentation *(HP,* 16).

> By devoting virtually his entire professional career to an expose of the political rhetoric of the philosophers, or the distinction between their esoteric and exoteric teachings, Strauss tacitly but unmistakenly [sic] identified himself as a modern *(HP,* 112).

> . . . Strauss attempts to practice "early" esotericism in the language of the post-Enlightenment *(HP,* 116).

> He is practicing something like Xenophontic or Maimonidean esotericism in the language of the post-Enlightenment scholar, at least until the last period of his published works, in which the style of Al Farabi comes to the fore *(HP, 117).*

At times, Rosen's summaries even lapse into unintentional parody:

> Strauss's exoteric speech maybe described in a preliminary way

> as a compromise between the rhetoric of Xenophon and that of Nietzsche. In the writings of his mature period there is a touch of Dostoevski in the style of Jane Austen. Strauss's last several books are much more inaccessible, closer to the late Henry James than to Jane Austen *(HP,* 133).[18]

It is difficult to determine what Rosen believes Strauss's practice, intentional or unintentional, to be. Is Strauss consciously practicing "modern" or "ancient" esotericism? If he is practicing in the "modern" manner why does he need "Xenophontic or Maimonidean esotericism"?"

At the risk of arbitrarily attributing to Rosen an opinion he does not hold, I will cautiously attempt to summarize his considered view as follows: Strauss wanted, and attempted, to practice "ancient" esotericism, yet he failed.[20] He failed primarily because of the "hermeneutic" situation he faced. It was apparently impossible for him to successfully "reconcile the rhetoric of Plato, Cicero, Al Farabi and Maimonides to the exigencies of the postmodern era" *(HP,* 137). To use Strauss's own words, Rosen holds that Strauss's was "an impossible position, a halfway house" *(NRH, 62).*

> [F]rom the correct observation that there is always and of necessity a tension or indeed conflict between philosophy and the city, Strauss drew the false inference that it is always necessary for philosophers to accommodate the city in the style of Plato, Cicero, Al Farabi and Maimonides. This inference is contradicted by Strauss's own procedure *(HP,* 133).

That is, Strauss would have been too discreet to be a "modern" and too open to be an "ancient."

Rosen, unfortunately, does not elaborate on this last possibility; instead, he simply offers his opinion that "Strauss's `revelation' of esoteric teaching with respect to the early or pre-Enlightenment philosophers, was itself exoteric" and that "in a real sense, it makes no difference whether Strauss did not know the original teaching or whether we cannot discern it" *(HP,* 116). Regardless of whether Strauss wrote in the manner of "early" or "late" esotericism, Rosen

is confident that he can get to the heart of Strauss's thought. Presumably referring to Strauss's claim that "the problem inherent in the surface of things, and only in the surface of things, is the heart of things" *(HP, 87-88),* Rosen writes that "the depths are contained in the surface. If the truths flash *up,* they must come to the surface" *(HP,* 117). In fact, Rosen ultimately discounts the possibility that aspects of Strauss's esotericism were very difficult to access-and hence not simply "ancient" or "modern"-when he disputes the claim

> that Strauss's private views cannot be inferred from his publications. But if he in fact had a still more secret teaching that is indiscernible to mere mortals, this is irrelevant to us. Complete silence is completely invisible. Strauss, like Kojēve, said either too much *or* not enough. I must rest my case on the evidence.

It is indeed likely that Strauss's private views can be discerned from his published writings; however, unlike Rosen, one should not be so confident that one is easily able to discover them. Nor is it unthinkable that Rosen himself lacks the requisite qualities for understanding Strauss adequately. It does not follow that just because Rosen cannot determine Strauss's views "mere mortals" cannot do so.

Rosen, in my opinion, properly views Strauss's exotericism as part of what he calls "the Straussian enterprise" *(HP,* 107). Unfortunately, however, the helpfulness of this insight is vitiated by a peculiar overstatement.[21]

> The question of the exact nature of Strauss's political rhetoric takes us to the heart of his own deepest intentions. It alone allows us to approach, if not to determine, the inner content of his political philosophy *(HP,* 116).

In support of this assertion, Rosen cites a passage in which Strauss states:

> In its highest form, communication is living together. The study of the literary question is *an important part* of the study of

> society . . . . The literary question properly understood is the question of the relation between society and philosophy *(HP,* 116, my emphasis. See also Strauss's *The City and Man,* p. *52).*

Disregarding the question of whether Strauss's political rhetoric can be said to have a "nature," it is difficult to see how Strauss's *political* rhetoric could do more than start to point the way to the "inner content" of Strauss's political philosophy; we should not imagine that solely from a consideration of his rhetoric we could determine Strauss's understanding of the problems of, e.g., democracy, the virtues, and natural right. Those problems, and Strauss's understanding of them, can only be understood through a full consideration of his arguments and an examination of the phenomena in question.

Rosen's overstatement is due to a far too narrow understanding of what Strauss means by "political philosophy." Rosen only gives one definition of what this term means for Strauss. Citing a passage from "Restatement on Xenophon's *Hiero,"* Rosen argues that the "text make[s] entirely evident that political philosophy is the public appearance of philosophy, or, differently stated, that genuine philosophy cannot in the nature of things make a public appearance but must always present itself in an accommodated form" *(HP,* 109). Though the text in question may be said to make that case, the passage itself is incomplete. Even if Rosen's grasp of that passage is perfect, he would have to concede that it only addresses one of the two definitions of political philosophy that Strauss offered. Strauss did say that from a certain "point of view the adjective `political' in the expression `political philosophy' designates not so much a subject matter as a manner of treatment; from this point of view, I say, `political philosophy' means primarily not the philosophic treatment of politics, but the political, or popular treatment of philosophy, or the political introduction of philosophy-the attempt to lead the qualified citizens, or rather their qualified sons, from the political life to the philosophic life."

But he also said:

> Of philosophy thus understood [as the attempt to replace opinions about the whole by knowledge of the whole], political philosophy is a branch. Political philosophy will then be the attempt to replace opinion about the nature of political things by knowledge of the nature of political things.

"Political philosophy" is not simply "politic" philosophy. Instead, a complete understanding of Strauss's political rhetoric could fully reveal the "deepest intentions" only of his political enterprise-which, as such, would reflect more or less perfectly his understanding of "the relation between society and philosophy." And needless to say, however important that enterprise may be, it does not encompass Strauss's philosophic investigations proper.

What, then, does Rosen take to be Strauss's ultimate political ambition? As in most of his essay, Rosen addresses this question primarily through assertion supported by a minimum of textual evidence. Rosen writes: "Within his powers, [Strauss] wished to create a world fit for the habitation of philosophers and nonphilosophers" (*HP,* 125). The important questions, of course, are what does that world look like and how does he intend to bring it about? Rosen deals with the latter question first:

> As a resident of the twentieth century, he had necessarily to adapt his rhetoric to his own time. This required an ingenious mixture of frankness as well as of devices suited to prepare (in Kojēve's expression) "a pleiade" of disciples who could carry out the practical work . . . His lack of technical genius was not a decisive defect with respect to the "purificatory" or exoteric component of his teaching. This lack could be compensated for by a judicious employment of political daring, of which the primary example was his publication of the harsh truths of esotericism. This satisfied the taste of the modern consciousness for novelty and also provided a basis on which to produce infantry troops consisting of those who would believe themselves to be gods merely by their proximity to the revelation of an unrevealed and justifying doctrine. Unfortunately, it

> also allowed the truth "to flash up" and thus to reveal the thoroughly modern presuppositions of Strauss's antiquarian rhetoric *(HP,* 125).

In short, Strauss's thematic treatment of esotericism was primarily, if not exclusively, a means by which to make a name for himself and to attract "disciples" who would do his political bidding.

According to Rosen, Strauss's "political enterprise" must be understood in light of his "advocacy of the paradigm of rule of gentlemen" *(HP,* 135). Strauss, in promoting arguments for "long-since rejected, not to say intrinsically absurd, doctrines like natural right and the philosophical significance of the rural gentleman," was displaying "philosophical, not merely political, conservatism" *(HP,* 122, 135) .[22] He was trying to find a way to deny -or to forfend -the undeniably "dangerous consequences of the necessary occasional statements that indicate the true nature of philosophy" *(HP,* 137). Strauss's philosophic competence made him aware of the fact that "in order to save philosophy, one must remind the potential philosopher of its fearless and divinely mad nature." Yet Strauss also wanted to avoid "`maddening' the general populace, and in particular the "intellectuals" *(HP,* 137). To meet both these needs, the "solution adopted by Strauss, in the light of the specific circumstances of mid-twentieth century America, was to effect a rapprochement with the `conservatives,' who would be *`habituated'* to virtue by a special race of academic administrators, themselves acting under the impression that they are wise men" *(HP,* 137, my emphasis). That is, Strauss was trying to breed and raise his own class of "gentlemen" who would protect the interests of both philosophers and non-philosophers.

Rosen has nothing but contempt for this bizarre scheme: "Are we seriously to believe that the way out of the postmodern crisis is by rehabilitating an American version of the eighteenth- or nineteenth-century English gentleman?" *(HP,* 137) Strauss's major defect was that he simply failed to understand properly his own time. He did not see, for example, that the "disbelief and ridicule that his views on esotericism engendered . . . could . . . be taken as a consequence of the invalidity of the `early' or strong esotericist thesis" and that this

disbelief "shows both that there is no need for [esotericism] and that historical accuracy requires that we become familiar with the phenomenon" *(HP,* 114).[24] Rosen indicates that all philosophy worthy of the name has by necessity a revolutionary effect and that Strauss did not appreciate this fact. He writes that "it should never be forgotten that the publication by Plato of his dialogues . . . was a revolutionary act of extreme fearlessness" *(HP,* 138) and that

> one cannot understand one's own time unless one engages in the fearless thinking recommended by Strauss. But fearless thinking has fearless [sic] consequences, and never more so than in times of extreme decadence. The late twentieth century A.D. is neither the fifth century B.C. nor the twelfth century A. D. It is not historicism to acknowledge this fact and take one's bearings by it; rather to fail to understand this is to fall victim to historicism (p.138).

In short, Strauss did not recognize sufficiently the extent to which one has to write for one's own time.

Rosen's discussion of Strauss's politics raises a number of questions; yet, however worthwhile it is to consider these issues one by one it is easier to begin to counter Rosen's view by offering an alternative general way to interpret Strauss's intentions. Briefly, as I have indicated, I believe that it is reasonable to argue Strauss had an enterprise on the scale of the one he attributed to Machiavelli. That enterprise was to revive classical political philosophy. More, it was to revive it in such a way as to ensure that it would not once again be "blurred or destroyed."[25] To do this I believe Strauss wanted, to an important extent, to tie the fate of philosophy to that of liberal democracy.[26] Hence, we find his seemingly unclassical appreciation for the virtues of that type of regime. As for Strauss's public stress on esotericism, I believe it was, at the least, a necessary accommodation to his own time to make genuine Platonic philosophy possible. Strauss wrote of Rousseau in *Natural Right and History:* "Only an esoteric theoretical science can become good. This is not to deny that in times of corruption, the restriction on the popularization of science can and must be relaxed." In short, the question of esotericism

is not necessarily-as Rosen would have it-a theoretical dividing block but to a large extent a practical question.

Rosen's criticism of Strauss is not limited simply to his rhetoric and his political venture; instead, that criticism is part and parcel of a larger philosophic critique. That critique consists of many elements. I will limit myself to the two most important. One of these charges is that Strauss lacked the technical genius to be a philosopher, a charge related to his claim that "if Strauss understood as little as he claimed to understand of the Platonic dialogues, then he was not a philosopher as he himself defined the term. And such, incidentally, was his own view, although this is evidently unknown to his less competent disciples." In a footnote Rosen even goes so far as to dismiss what is perhaps Strauss's most impressive "technical discussion,"[27] his discussion of the question of the meaning of Plato's "idea" of the good in *City and Man.* There Strauss writes:

> The doctrine of ideas which Socrates expounds to his interlocutors is very hard to understand; to begin with, it is utterly incredible, not to say that it appears to be fantastic . . . . No one has ever succeeded in giving a satisfactory or clear account of *this* doctrine of ideas.[28]

Rosen adds that "nothing Strauss says makes the doctrine easier to be understood or less fantastic." In fact, a fair reading will show that if Strauss does not give "a satisfactory or clear account" of that doctrine, he does go quite far in showing us how to think about the problem of the good.

Finally, let us deal with what Rosen considers the most damning of his charges-that Strauss's entire philosophic venture is not a reasonable one, that it is an *"act of will* and hence a moral matter" *(HP,* 111). For this reason it is Rosen's "thesis that Strauss is himself almost a Nietzschean, but not quite: he comes closer to Kant in the roots of his thought" *(HP,* 125). Though Rosen claims there are a number of passages in Strauss's writings in which it becomes clear that philosophy is an act of will, he cites only two. It is worthwhile to examine those two passages closely. First is the aforementioned final paragraph of Strauss's original French restatement. There he writes:

> Philosophy, in the strict, classical sense of the term, is the quest for the eternal order, or for the eternal cause or causes of all things. I assume, then, that there is an eternal and immutable order within which history takes place, and which remains entirely unaffected by history. In other words, I assume then that any "realm of freedom" is but a province that depends on the "realm of necessity." In Kojēve's terms, this presupposes that "Being is essentially immutable in itself and eternally identical with itself." This hypothesis is not self-evident; Kojēve rejects it in favor of the idea that "being creates itself in the course of history," or that the highest Being is society and history, or that eternity is nothing but the totality of historical time, that is to say finite *(OT,* 212).

"This passage, and others like it in the Straussian canon [Rosen cites only one more, quoted below], place him in a compromised position from which he is unable to extricate himself' *(HP,* 111). However, one must carefully distinguish (as Rosen does not) this passage, which deals with competing philosophical positions, with the one below that deals with the vexed problem of the relation between reason and revelation. To Rosen's contention that the above passage proves that classical philosophy is simply an act of will, Strauss would respond that since the philosophic problems are more evident than the philosophic solutions, it is only natural that the possible solutions would rest on hypotheses; Strauss would only insist that the hypotheses are not, as Rosen would have it, essentially arbitrary; instead, he would say that the hypotheses rest-as ultimately do all philosophical opinions-on an understanding or awareness of the fundamental phenomena (see *OT,* 195-6).

The case is much different with the second passage Rosen cites, from *Natural Right and History. To* quote at length:

> If we take a bird's eye view, of the secular struggle between philosophy and theology, *we can hardly avoid the impression* that neither of the two antagonists has ever succeeded in refuting the other. All arguments in favor of revelation *seem* to

> be valid only if belief in revelation is presupposed; and all arguments against revelation *seem* to be valid only if unbelief is presupposed. *This sate of things would appear to be, but natural.* Revelation is always so uncertain to unassisted reason that it can never compel the assent of unassisted reason, and man is so built that he can find his satisfaction, his bliss, in free investigation, in articulating the riddle of being. But on the other hand, he yearns so much for a solution of that riddle and human knowledge is always so limited that the need for divine illumination cannot be denied and the *possibility of revelation cannot be refuted.* Now it is that state of things that *seems to decide* irrevocably against philosophy and in favor of revelation. Philosophy has to grant that revelation is possible. But to grant that revelation is possible means to grant that philosophy is not the one thing needful, that perhaps philosophy is something infinitely unimportant. To grant that revelation is possible means to grant that the philosophic life is not necessarily, not evidently, *the* right life. Philosophy, the life devoted to the quest for evident knowledge available to man as man, *would* itself rest on an unevident, arbitrary or blind decision. This *would* merely confirm the thesis of faith that there is no possibility of consistency, of a consistent and thoroughly sincere life, without belief in revelation. The mere fact that philosophy and revelation cannot refute each other *would* constitute the refutation of philosophy by revelation. [29]

If this were to prove to be Strauss's final position it would be damning evidence indeed, especially in light of his following statement in the Introduction to *Natural Right and History:*

> According to our social science, we can be or become wise in all matters of secondary importance, but we have to be resigned to utter ignorance in the most important respect: we cannot have any knowledge regarding the ultimate principles of our choices, i.e., regarding their soundness or unsoundness; our ultimate principles have no other support than our arbitrary and hence

> blind preferences. We are then in the position of beings who are sane and sober when engaged in trivial business and who gamble like madmen when confronted with serious issues-retail sanity and wholesale madness.'

If Rosen were right then Strauss's position would ultimately be no less "mad" than the social science he so powerfully challenged.

Prior to making the positive case for Strauss, one should note some of the weaknesses in Rosen's case. To begin, since Rosen does not quote but only cites the passage under consideration, he does not note the many qualifications that are here emphasized. Nor does he take account of the fact that Strauss says that he is taking a "bird's-eye view" of the problem; Strauss employs that phrase to describe only one other position in *Natural Right and History*[31] -*and* that position turned out to be a faulty one. This is especially peculiar in light of the fact that Rosen cites a passage from Richard Kennington's excellent essay on *Natural Right and History* in which Kennington notes Strauss's peculiar use of that phrase.[32] Finally, for someone who puts as much stress on the "surface and Strauss's appreciation for the surface as does Rosen, it is odd that Rosen does not note that in the very next paragraph Strauss returns from these "awful depths" to "the surface." Strauss explicitly departs from the surface only on rare occasions, and I am unaware of one instance where such a departure led him to a view that he ultimately regarded as true.[33]

So much for the negative case. How then might have Strauss resolved this dilemma? The first possibility is, of course, that Rosen is right: Strauss didn't solve it. As far as I know, Strauss raises only two other possible solutions to this dilemma. The first-expressed almost exclusively by what Allan Bloom has called the pre-Straussian Strauss (primarily in his early work *Philosophy and Law)-is* that one does not need to view the two teachings as contradictory, but as complementary. That is, as Maimonides ostensibly does, he raises the possibility that properly understood the teachings of reason and revelation are exactly the same. Or stated somewhat differently, Strauss raises the possibility that the Bible, rightly understood, is a book of reason. Yet since Strauss spoke in his later works so strongly

against this view, this is not a promising avenue to explore.

The other possibility is that when philosophy is understood as a way of life as opposed to a set of beliefs or convictions it is capable of rational validation-and such validation was at least as important to Strauss as it was to any other previous philosopher. (One might even say that for Strauss that the question of the right way of life-was *the* question.) Strauss states this position most explicitly in his lectures "On the Mutual Influence of Philosophy and Theology." There he writes:

> The philosopher who refuses to assent to revelation because it is not evident therewith rejects revelation. But this rejection is unwarranted if revelation is not disproved. Which means to say that the philosopher when confronted with revelation, seems to be compelled to contradict the very idea of philosophy by rejecting without sufficient grounds. How can we ever understand that? The philosophic reply can be stated as follows: the question of utmost urgency, the question which does not permit suspense, is the question of how one should live. Now this question is settled for Socrates by the fact that he is a philosopher. As a philosopher, he knows that we are ignorant of the most important things. The ignorance, the evident fact of this ignorance, evidently proves that the quest for the knowledge of the most important things is the most important thing for us. Philosophy is then evidently the right way of life. This is in addition, according to him, confirmed by the fact that he finds his happiness in acquiring the highest possible degree of clarity he can acquire. He sees no necessity whatever to assent to something which is not evident to him. And if he is told that his disobedience to revelation might be fatal, he raises the question, what does fatal mean? In the extreme case, it would be eternal damnation. Now the philosophers of the past were absolutely certain that an all-wise God would not punish with eternal damnation or with anything else such human beings as are seeking truth or clarity. *We must consider later on whether this reply is quite sufficient.* At any rate, philosophy is meant,

> and that is the decisive point, not as a set of propositions, a teaching, or even a system, but as a way of life, a life animated by a peculiar passion, the philosophic desire or eros, not as an instrument or a department of human self-realization *(FPP,* 224-25).

Strauss never explicitly returns to this reply, but it is the understanding of philosophy in this passage that governs his thought and action with regard to the problems that I have discussed in this essay: his overarching practical intention, the purpose behind his uncovering of esotericism, the kind of "recognition" he desired from students and followers, and his grasp of the problem of reason and revelation.

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NOTES

1. Shadia B. Drury, *The Political Ideas of Leo Strauss* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988). Drury is so intent on proving that Strauss is an irreligious and immoral monster that she will go to any lengths, no matter how destructive of the canons of scholarship. It is my (conservative) estimate that about eighty percent of her quotations of Strauss are, in one way or another, misleading; they either ignore qualifications such as "perhaps," "may be said," etc. or attribute - without any convincing reasons for doing so - views to Strauss that Strauss attributes to others. I will give a few examples. First, the Preface: "What is unusual about [Strauss's] works is that their author insists that all great political philosophers conceal their true thoughts or leave them unsaid" (p. ix, my emphasis). According to Strauss, Hegel was "the outstanding philosopher of the nineteenth century" *(What is Political Philosophy* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959], 58. Cited within the text as *WIPP).* Is it Drury's argument that, according to Strauss, Hegel wrote esoterically? If so, where is her evidence? Or is it Drury's argument that, according to Strauss, Nietzsche was not a great political philosopher? In Chapter One:

Straussians "occupy high positions in almost all the universities in North America" (p. 1). This is, unfortunately, an absurd claim. In Chapter Three: "The conflict between philosophy and society has its origin in the fact that philosophy cannot rationally justify the two things on which society rests." In fact, the opposite is true-it is only philosophy that ultimately can *rationally* justify morality and religion.

2. These works include, though are not limited to, a recent volume edited by Alan Udoff entitled *Leo Strauss's Thought: Toward a Critical Engagement,* a recent issue (Winter 1991) of *The Review of Politics* dedicated solely to Strauss (and of which an expanded edition will soon be published in book form), Heinrich Meier's *Carl Schmitt, Leo Strauss and "Der begriff des Politischen": Zu einem Dialog unter Abwesenden* (see the review of this book by Susan Shell in the just-cited issue of *The Review of Politics)* and a special issue of the *Revue de metaphysique et de morale* devoted to Strauss. Many of the best considerations of Strauss's work have appeared in this journal-including relatively recent essays by Seth Benardete, Mark Blitz, Christopher Bruell, and Larry Peterman.

3. Though Rosen studied with both men he cannot be considered either a Straussian or Kojeveian.

4. Persecution and the Art of Writing (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 160. Cited within the text as PAW.

5. Fortin, "Men of Letters: The Little-Known Correspondence between Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin," *Crisis* (March 1991), *36.* Cited as *Fortin.*

6. That short book took up almost five full years of Strauss's time, and is by far his longest work.

7. PAW, 140. This is not, of course, to assert that Strauss did not admit the possibility of revelation; it is only that in his capacity as a philosopher it was impossible for him to believe. See, i.e., *PAW,* 104-*5.*

8. See, i.e., the central chapter of *NRH* where Strauss explains classical natural right almost wholly without recourse to language that could not be found in everyday conversation.

9. Bloom, *Giants & Dwarfs: Essays 1960-1990* (New York:

Simon and Schuster, 1990), 250-1.

10. Thoughts on Machiavelli (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958) Cited in the text as *TOM.*

11. Professor Steven B. Smith has aptly described a shift over the correspondence whereby Strauss went from being the junior to the senior partner.

12. Of course, one should not forget the health problems that periodically appear in their letters from the *50s* on-such difficulties no doubt can account for at least part of the above-mentioned change.

13. Strauss indicates this implicitly in a number of ways; most prominent among these are his extensive citations of other classical texts in his notes.

14. PAW, 5.

15. See Victor Gourevitch's early study of Strauss, "Philosophy and Politics," I-II, *The Review of Metaphysics,* 1968, *32: 58-84, 281-328.* This is, as far as I know, the first published attempt to read Strauss as he read others.

16. It is no accident that Kojēve's most famous work, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel,* literally begins with the question of what it is that distinguishes man from all other living beings. His answer is "desire"-or a certain type of desire. Only human beings are capable of having desires that are detached from mere physical nature; this desire, not reason or speech, is the fundamental human phenomenon. One might even say that it is this fact-more than any account of history-that makes Kojēve a "modern." To put it another way, one may say that, for Kojēve, the only thing outside of the material world that truly "is" is this distinctively human desire. Strauss's most explicit and passionate statement on philosophic *eros* occurs in his response to Kojēve.

17. Strauss, for example, powerfully criticizes Voegelin for his doctrine of Caesarism, yet Voegelin never mentions Caesar and Caesarism, whereas Kojēve does *(OT, 169).*

18. I would refer those who (erroneously) believe that Strauss's abilities diminished in his later years to Mark Blitz's essay "Strauss's *Laws"* in the 1991 issue of this journal.

19. Are Xenophontic and Maimonidean esotericism the same thing?

20. Rosen almost always refers to the classical philosophers as "ancients"; this stands in contrast to Strauss, who normally refers to them as "classics" (i.e., in the chapter entitled "Classic Natural Right" in *Natural Right and History,* Strauss-if I am not mistaken-avoids the very term "ancient"). This is not merely a semantic quibble: to call them ancients is to define them by their time. Thus, Rosen is able to assert that "only moderns participate in a quarrel with antiquity" (p. 87). Yet, if they are "classic"-i.e., "of the highest rank or importance" (OED)-then their understanding of things is, in principle, accessible at all times.

21. This overstatement is no doubt the result of Rosen's understanding that, for Strauss, "political philosophy in the genuine sense is philosophical propaganda" (p. 110).

22. Strauss, as far as I know, nowhere asserts even exoterically the "philosophical significance of the rural gentlemen," nor does Rosen provide an example of where he does so. Strauss's statements invariably indicate not the "philosophical significance" of the gentleman for the classics but his practical significance. According to Strauss, the classics thought the "practically best regime" *(NRH,* 142-3) was a certain form of the rule of gentleman. Nor does Strauss say, as Rosen has it, that "the *life* of the perfect gentleman points toward the philosophic way of life" (p. 136); what he says is "that *the way of life* of the perfect gentleman points toward the philosophic life" *(CM,* 28, emphasis added)-this presumably means, as Rosen no doubt would agree, that when the moral virtues that the perfect gentleman practices as a matter of course are thought through they point to the philosophic life. Similarly, Strauss does not say that the best regime is "the object of the wish or prayer of all good men or of gentlemen . . . as that object is interpreted by gentlemen" (p. 135); Rosen has substituted "by gentlemen" for "by philosophers" *(NRH,* 139).

24. Rosen writes as if there are only narrow, social reasons for esotericism-such as avoiding persecution and keeping the truth out of the hands of those unfit for it by nature (or out of those hands in which it would be politically dangerous). As we will see below, while

such reasons by themselves would be sufficient conditions for the existence of esotericism they are by no means necessary justifications for its practice.

25. See *PAW,* 12, 18 and *TOM,* 174-5.

26. If I am not mistaken, Rosen, in his discussion of Strauss, avoids completely the term "liberal democracy."

27. According to Rosen, a technical discussion is one that raises a "what is" question in regard to an important philosophical question.

28. CM, 119 (my emphasis).

29. NRH, 75 (except for "the," all the emphases are mine).

30. Ibid., 4.

31. NRH, 22.

32. Kennington, "Strauss's *Natural Right and History," in Leo Strauss's Thought,* 227-252.

33. See i.e., *CM,* 54-55; *LAM,* 216.