

[◀Back](#)**19 page(s) will be printed.**

Record: 1

- Title:** Morality, Nature, and Esotericism in Leo Strauss's Persecution and the Art of Writing.
- Authors:** Kochin, Michael S.
- Source:** Review of Politics; Spring2002, Vol. 64 Issue 2, p261, 23p
- Document Type:** Article
- Subject Terms:** *CRITICISM
*WRITING
- Reviews & Products:** PERSECUTION & the Art of Writing (Book)
- People:** STRAUSS, Leo
- Abstract:** Strauss's historical investigation of the use of exoteric writing in Farabi, Maimonides, Halevi, and Spinoza, is in fact his history of the philosophers' exoteric accommodations to the permanent difference in human natures, the difference between the many who require a categorical moral teaching and the few who are capable of ordering their own lives in the face of the hypothetical status of all moral commands. The men of the Enlightenment aspired to render the moral law superfluous for all by constructing a machinery of government powerful enough to compel all to live justly Strauss critiques this aspiration by leading his reader to face the permanency of the difference between the few and the many. Strauss uses historical scholarship to force the reader to rethink the possibility of contemplation of the eternal or permanent, the possibility that the Enlightenment's historicist epigones have sought to foreclose. [ABSTRACT FROM AUTHOR]
- Copyright of Review of Politics is the property of Cambridge University Press / UK and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use. This abstract may be abridged. No warranty is given about the accuracy of the copy. Users should refer to the original published version of the material for the full abstract. (Copyright applies to all Abstracts)*
- Full Text Word Count:** 9568
- ISSN:** 0034-6705
- Accession Number:** 6738010
- Database:** Academic Search Premier
- Notes:**

Morality, Nature, and Esotericism in Leo Strauss's Persecution and the Art of Writing
Strauss's historical investigation of the use of exoteric writing in Farabi, Maimonides, Halevi, and Spinoza, is in fact his history of the philosophers' exoteric accommodations to the permanent difference in human natures, the difference between the many who require a categorical moral teaching and the few who are capable of ordering their own lives in the face of the hypothetical status of all moral commands. The men of the Enlightenment aspired to render the moral law

superfluous for all by constructing a machinery of government powerful enough to compel all to live justly Strauss critiques this aspiration by leading his reader to face the permanency of the difference between the few and the many. Strauss uses historical scholarship to force the reader to rethink the possibility of contemplation of the eternal or permanent, the possibility that the Enlightenment's historicist epigones have sought to foreclose.

Leo Strauss's great discovery in the history of ideas, is, of course, the rediscovery of the notion of exoteric writing. The rediscovery of exoteric writing is the theme of "Persecution and the Art of Writing," the article that Strauss published in *Social Research* for 1941. This discovery is the principal idea, one can say, of Strauss's book of the same title, which he published in 1952.

In exoteric writing, the philosopher's hidden or esoteric teaching is expounded through the careful arrangement and selection in his presentation of the opinions that comport with convention. The conventional opinions contradict one another, it is true, but truth can be brought out in the examination of conventional opinions because these opinions are contradictory. I speak of "exoteric writing" in preference to "esoteric writing," in deference to Strauss's claim that, since all writings are inherently available to be read by all readers, a philosopher who chooses to write "could expound only such opinions as are suitable for the nonphilosophic majority: all of his writings would have to be, strictly speaking, exoteric." ([n1](#))

Exoteric writing is a written imitation, as far as that is possible, of the oral Socratic method. Strauss describes that method, the notorious Socratic elenchus, in his *Hobbes* book of 1936:

What men, in particular the Athenians, and in particular their spokesmen the Sophists, say, is contradictory. The contradictions make necessary an investigation into which of the conflicting assertions is true. Whatever the result of the investigation, one of the conflicting endoxa must be given up, the opposite endoxon must be maintained. Thus the latter endoxon becomes truly paradoxical; but by making unanimity and understanding of each with himself and with others possible, it proves itself true. ([n2](#))

What Socrates does by conducting an oral examination of those who hold to conventional opinions, Plato and the whole philosophic tradition do by expounding the conventional opinions in writing so as to lay bare their contradictions to the properly prepared reader. The esoteric teaching is written between the lines, in that the lines themselves present to the reader, or at least to the careless reader, only what can safely be known to any reader. It is only the rare reader who can infer the reasons that the author has chosen to re-present what appears platitudinous.

Strauss presents the rediscovery of exoteric writing sometimes as if it were merely an achievement of scholarship, a vital preliminary to recovering the authorial intention behind pre-Enlightenment texts. Yet this rediscovery is more than that--Strauss understands it as an achievement of scholarship vital to the restoration of philosophy in his time. As Strauss writes in the final chapter of *Persecution and the Art of Writing*:

The way in which the introduction to philosophy must proceed, necessarily changes with the change of the artificial or accidental obstacles to philosophy. The artificial obstacles may be so strong at a given time that a most elaborate "artificial" introduction has to be completed before the "natural" introduction can begin. It is conceivable that a particular pseudo-philosophy may emerge whose power cannot be broken but by the most intensive reading of old books. As long as that pseudo-philosophy rules, elaborate historical studies may be needed which would have been superfluous and therefore more harmful in more fortunate times (PAW, p.155).

For Strauss in the position he had reached by 1939--his final position--the recovery of philosophy means the recovery of philosophy in its classical sense in the wake of Heidegger.([n3](#))

To understand *Persecution and the Art of Writing* is thus to understand, in the first place, how a book none of whose chapters are explicitly devoted to Greek philosophy, and that never mentions Heidegger, aids us in recovering classical philosophy. Second, it is to understand why such a book is framed largely as a contribution to the history of the encounter between Judaism and philosophy. Third, how such a book responds to the two seemingly fundamental transformations that the Jewish Question had undergone since Strauss had published his two previous books on the history of that encounter, *Die Religionskritik Spinozas* in 1930 and *Philosophie und Gesetz* in 1935--and really since the publication of the title essay "Persecution" in 1941. These two transformations are, of course, the Holocaust and the birth of a Jewish state.

Persecution and the Art of Writing has a plan, notwithstanding its composite origin in articles that Strauss published from 1941 to 1948. As Strauss says of Spinoza "No author who deserves the name will incorporate into a book parts of an earlier writing which do not make sense in the new book" (PAW, p. 165). A peculiar sort of evidence for the plan of the book that we have is the 1946 outline for a book that Strauss never published, "Plan of a Book Tentatively Entitled *Philosophy and the Law: Historical Essays*."([n4](#)) In this outline four of the five essays from our book are represented in sections 7 to 10 of a twelve section outline. Only the Spinoza chapter, first published in 1948, is not represented. The abandoned plan was for a book explicitly devoted to the history of Jewish philosophy and its contemporary importance. The book Strauss eventually published had both a narrower and, in a way, a broader focus, despite being much shorter. Its focus was narrower in that it was only the device of exoteric writing that is the actual book's scholarly center of attention, in place of the entire history of Jewish Philosophy from Halevi and Maimonides to the present. The actual book had a wider focus inasmuch as it takes its bearings not from the "spiritual-intellectual situation of the modern Jew," as did the abandoned plan,([n5](#)) but from the historical-intellectual situation of the modern potential philosopher.

The book Strauss actually published, then, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, contains five chapters with five different scholarly subjects: An introductory first chapter, with some general remarks on what Strauss calls, in jest, "the sociology of philosophy," together with a short account of Farabi's understanding of Plato. Second, "Persecution and the Art of Writing," a methodological or metascholarly essay. Third, "The Literary Character of the Guide of the Perplexed," Strauss's last accessible or first inaccessible study of Maimonides.([n6](#)) Fourth, "The Law of Reason in the Kuzari," an examination of Judah Halevi's great work of apologetics. Fifth, and finally, "How to Study Spinoza's Theological-Political Treatise."([n7](#))

Persecution and the Art of Writing is held together not by historical connections between the authors it discusses, but by what I might call the "ideal plan." Here are what I understand to be the principal ideas of these five chapters:

1. "Introduction": The recovery of metaphysics from metaphysical dogmatism.
2. "Persecution and the Art of Writing": Nature, that is, human nature--the natural differences among human beings that make exoteric writing necessary.
3. "The Literary Character of the Guide of the Perplexed": The true science of the law--the science of the necessity of law given the natural differences among human beings.
4. "The Law of Reason in the Kuzari": The natural differences among human beings as expressed in their variegated understandings of the status of moral

obligations. 5. "How to Study Spinoza's Theological-Political Treatise": The modern project to re-ground morality through a new science of politics--and its historicist self-undermining.

Some of these principal ideas are manifest to even the most casual reader of the chapter concerned, others less so. The least manifest, I think, are the first two, the recovery of metaphysics in the "Introduction," and the claim that one reveals nature by expounding the necessity for exoteric writing. These ideas are interwoven by Strauss and each of them appears in more than one, and some in all, of the chapters. It is the relation among them that constitutes the unity of the book entitled *Persecution and the Art of Writing*.

First, then, let us discuss Farabi's Plato and the recovery of philosophy from the destruction of Western metaphysics, or the "Introduction." Strauss tells us on page 16 of the "Introduction" that the way of Plato, according to Farabi, comprehends "the way of Socrates and the way of Thrasymachus," and also comprehends "the science and art of Socrates and the science and art of Timaeus" (see table, p. 266). ([n8](#))

If one equates the way of Socrates with the science and the art of Socrates, one must conclude that the science and the art of Timaeus was understood by Farabi's Plato to be the product of the way of Thrasymachus. That is to say, the science of the essence of the divine and of the natural things--the ground of the complete philosophic system--is the result of the application of the way of Thrasymachus. What, then, is the way of Thrasymachus of Chalcedon? For this it is most enlightening to look not at the *Republic* or the *Cleitophon* but at the only other mention of Thrasymachus in the Platonic corpus. Socrates says in the *Phaedrus*:

The strength of the Chalcedonian holds sway over speeches drawn out on old age and poverty, and the man at the same time was fearfully clever both at stirring up the many to anger, and at soothing them, once they had been stirred up, 'with enchantments,' as he said (*Phaedrus* 267cd).

The way of Thrasymachus is the rhetorical art suitable for speaking to the many so as to anger and soothe them. What angers most men is perceived injustice, and in particular the injustice of their sufferings as poor or aged. Thrasymachus's art is an art of speaking to the many, which as we learn from Aristophanes is stereotypically poor and aged.([n9](#)) What soothes them, when they have perceived injustice, is the comeuppance of injustice, punishment. The way of Thrasymachus is not just rhetoric, but moralizing rhetoric, employed so as to "form the character of the youth and instruct the multitude," as Farabi says.([n10](#))

By following Farabi in equating the moralizing rhetoric of a Thrasymachus with the metaphysical teaching of a Timaeus, Strauss hints that metaphysical systems are produced in response to a political problem. As we shall see in Strauss's next chapter, "Persecution and the Art of Writing," this problem is the problem of the philosophers in their relation to the many. These systems transform moralizing rhetoric into theodicying rhetoric by describing a cosmos in which the soul is eternal and subject to reward or punishment after death according to its deeds and merits in this life.

The philosophers solve their political problem by presenting as their public teaching an account of the justice of the whole which satisfies the moral longings of the many to see justice done on earth. The Timaeus is, after all, about the rule of justice in the cosmos (*Timaeus* 30b, 41c, 42b ff.) After Plato, this teaching is performed by presenting accounts, privately to the young and publicly to the many, that posit the immortality of the soul so as to vindicate the prospect of future rewards and punishments held by the law. Philosophical rule is rule via a "metaphysical" or one

might say, naturalized "supernatural" teaching. Through this teaching the philosopher rules "over the puppies of his race," the potential philosophers.(n11) Strauss learned the fundamental importance for politics of such a connection between metaphysics and morality from Plato's *Laws* and its Arabic interpretation as a work concerning prophecy.(n12)

Strauss follows the Arab and Jewish medievals in seeing the cosmological doctrines of the philosophers as the most important emanations of their teachings on being, substance, and the soul. Strauss therefore describes the philosophers' accounts of the cosmos as the capstone of their metaphysical inquiries.(n13) The philosophers' systems yield accounts of the divine beings, the souls of men, and all that is between and connects the gods and the stars above and the moral law within, whether that be separable forms or separated intellects. Strauss wants us to recognize with Farabi that these ancient metaphysical systems are the product of the ancient understanding of the political problem. One could also say that ancient metaphysical systems are grounded in the proper understanding of the different natural capacities of human beings to orient themselves within the order of the whole. Strauss will argue that these natural differences among human beings constitute nature as it comes to sight not first simply, but first for us, nature as it comes to sight in human nature.

It is time to turn to an examination of nature, that is, human nature, as it comes to sight in the second chapter, "Persecution and the Art of Writing." First, a philological observation: the Greek word for nature, *phusis*, as applied to human beings, has as its ordinary meaning not the single nature found in each and every human being but the variegated nature of human beings as a species of differing types. We tend to think of human nature as a single and unvarying substrate in all human beings, but *phusis* in Greek usually denotes what is peculiar or distinctive of each human type, not what is general or typical of all human beings as such.(n14) The persistence of these varied types, as Strauss learned from the medieval philosophers, is the form in which an unchanging nature becomes manifest. In Strauss's later formulation, this variability is "nature in its practically most important respect: the natural differences among men."(n15)

The natural distinction of human types that is of the greatest interest for philosophers, Strauss claims, is the distinction between the philosophic few and the necessarily nonphilosophic majority. As Strauss tells us, earlier writers "believed that the gap between 'the wise' and 'the vulgar' was a basic fact of human nature which could not be influenced by any progress of popular education: philosophy, or science, was essentially a privilege of the few" (PAW, p. 34). Strauss characterizes this distinction using "the Socratic dictum that virtue is knowledge" (PAW, p. 25). The distinction between the many and the few is the distinction between those who think that there is a moral standard separate from questions of knowledge and ignorance, and those for whom virtue is knowledge, vice is but ignorance.(n16) For this latter group, the conventional understanding of moral virtue is itself the product of ignorance.(n17) Yet this group, the philosophers, admit that the conventional claim that moral virtue is good in itself, although false, is widely maintained because its maintenance is a necessary condition for the perpetuation of society.

The permanence of the distinction between the many and the few is denied by the modern Enlightenment. This denial is central to the Enlightenment political program of liberating thought and expression from political and religious restrictions imposed in deference to the opinions of the many (PAW, pp. 33-34). As D'Alembert complains in the *Encyclopédie* article on Geneva that drew Rousseau's rebuttal:

How many countries there are in which philosophy has made no less progress, but in which reason does not dare to raise its voice to strike down what it condemns in silence, in which too many pusillanimous writers, who are called prudent, respect prejudices which they could combat with as much propriety as sincerity.(n18)

The Enlightenment writers did not deny that this practice had existed and even indulged in it themselves, but only in order to change society so as to render it unnecessary. D'Alembert here is merely the heir of Spinoza, of whom Strauss writes:

There is all the difference in the world between an author who considers himself merely a link in the chain of a venerable tradition, and for this very reason uses allusive and elliptical language...and an author who denies all value to tradition and therefore uses various stylistic means, especially allusive and elliptical language, in order to eradicate the traditional view from the minds of his best readers (PAW, p. 188).

What Spinoza sought to do for the best readers the party of Enlightenment sought to do for all readers. The progress of society was thought to guarantee that the community of readers would eventually be coeval with the community of all men and women, when, as Strauss puts it, "the kingdom of darkness" would be transformed into "the republic of universal light" (PAW, p. 33). The result for historical scholarship of the success of D'Alembert and his fellow partisans of Enlightenment, Strauss claims, is that the very fact of the past practice of exoteric writing has been forgotten by the historically conscious heirs of the Enlightenment.(n19)

The erasure of the distinction between the many and the few has ambivalent results for morality. The Enlightenment comprehends within it both the Kantian defense of the moral law, and the universal promulgation of the doctrine that "there is no sin but ignorance." This line that Marlowe gives to Machiavelli, Strauss calls "almost a definition of the philosopher."(n20) The difference between the ancients and the moderns lies in the question of their willingness to profess it, the question of exoteric teaching. The knowledge that would dispel ignorance, according to this second, dominant, aspect of Enlightenment, is not knowledge of how to rank one's duties but knowledge of how to fulfill the most pressing duty and actualize the most salient right, the duty and right to preserve oneself. Such knowledge is both simpler and more evident than the complex and doubtful doctrines of the summum bonum promulgated by premodern philosophers, and thus could conceivably be universally proclaimed.(n21)

Among both friends and critics, one understanding of the Enlightenment is that its goal is to establish a just social order that makes individual moral action unnecessary, by creating institutions wherein self-interested individuals were constrained to act so as to serve the interest of others. Social justice, realized through just institutions, is to replace the virtues. Thus the partisans of Enlightenment hoped to eliminate our dependence on mutable human passions such as charity and benevolence. This program was shared both by the fathers of the American constitution and by visionaries who structured the modern welfare state: these frameworks train politicians or social workers, respectively, to do good in order to do well. As Lessing's character Falk says about the Freemasons properly understood, who are the partisans of Enlightenment and universal rationality wherever and whenever they have existed, "The true deeds of the Freemasons have as their goal, rendering what in general are customarily termed good deeds, superfluous."(n22) Or, to put it in the language of contemporary critical theory, "The engineers of the correct social order can disregard the categories of ethical social intercourse and confine themselves to the construction of conditions under which human beings, just like objects within nature, will necessarily behave in a calculable manner."(n23) In *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, the exponent of this second program is Spinoza.(n24)

Strauss's critique of the Enlightenment is primarily a critique of Enlightenment political science conducted as a rehabilitation of the political science or the understanding of law presented by the great medieval rationalists Farabi and Maimonides. It is the true science of the law, Strauss shows in the fourth chapter of

Persecution and the Art of Writing, which determines and constitutes "The Literary Character of the Guide for the Perplexed." Strauss writes at the beginning of this essay that "There is practically complete agreement among the students of Maimonides that the Guide is not devoted to political science" (PAW, p. 44). Of course, we should wonder whether the qualifiers at the beginning of this sentence imply that according to Strauss the Guide is devoted to political science, at least in the sense that the principal unconventional opinions which it teaches between the lines belong to the branch of philosophy which is called political science.

Strauss had already argued, in *Philosophie und Gesetz*, that the fundamental Jewish experience is not a religious experience, not a vision, an experience of faith, or of mystical union in a higher being, but the experience of being commanded to obey a divine law. To carry out the law, the law must be understood. The "science of the law" in the sense familiar to both Jews and Muslims is the science of studying the relevant texts and traditions and applying the principles therein to present situations. Yet the Jewish law, according to Maimonides, commands not only actions but beliefs. The mode of study by which the believer learns to understand what he is commanded to believe is "the true science of the law" as opposed to the "legalistic science" of compiling and applying legal precedents.

The true science of the law, as Strauss expounds it in "The Literary Character of the Guide for the Perplexed," is the teaching of the identification between the "account of creation" (ma'aseh bereishit) and natural science on the one hand, and the identification of the "account of the chariot" (ma'aseh mercavah) with divine science or metaphysics on the other hand. Yet we have already learned from the "Introduction" to *Persecution and the Art of Writing* that the divine science of the philosophers is itself exoteric. The true science of the law is the science of the necessity of law. As Strauss writes in his 1936 essay on the political science of Maimonides and Farabi: "Not the mystery of [the Torah's] origin, the search for which leads either to theosophy or 'Epicureanism,' but its end, the comprehension of which guarantees obedience to the Torah, is accessible to human reason."(n25)

Maimonides expounds the science of the necessity of the law in the Guide by demonstrating that law is necessary for both the many and the few. For the many the law offers rewards and punishments to sustain moral conduct. A divine economy of reward and punishment implies a God who wills that the just be rewarded and the wicked be punished. The law thus proclaims that God acts according to His will and not merely according to necessity by teaching that the apparently necessary and unchanging order of nature is itself the product of divine will, that is, by teaching that the world is created and not eternal.(n26) Because the doctrine of creation is a necessary opinion according to the law, the question of the creation of the world is the decisive question that separates the philosophers from the believers (PAW, p. 43).

For the few the law teaches the possibility of creation rather than eternity. Since the fundamental question of the eternity of the world cannot be answered demonstratively, metaphysical inquiry cannot produce a necessarily valid metaphysical system. This failure of metaphysical inquiry to reach its intended goal is not a doctrine but an experience, which is why the experience can only be provided in a book the proper reading of which is itself an experience. Yet this experience is available only to a few special natures (PAW, p. 94). The Torah is the institutionalization of the experience of metaphysical perplexity: On Maimonides' understanding, the Torah is the antidote to the descent of the philosophers into the dogmatic affirmation of eternity, that is, the dogmatic denial of a God whose will stands above necessity.(n27) This is a far deeper need than the need for a law to prohibit vulgar pleasures and restrain the lower human faculties. Such a necessity reflects only the unabolishable vulgar opinion that some senses are more vulgar than others. Not to say that the philosopher will be unrestrained in the vulgar sense, but rather that the source of his restraint is not his revulsion at the some of the

pleasures of the senses, but rather the complete absorption of his energies in his consuming lust for knowledge.(n28) To teach the many and the few separately the Torah, and Maimonides its commentator and defender, employ the device of exoteric writing.

In the fourth chapter, "The Law of Reason in the Kuzari," Strauss elaborates his account of the science of the necessity of the law by presenting Halevi's defense of morality against the conclusions of that science. Here it is not the details of the defense, but the critique of morality to which Halevi responds, that is Strauss's primary focus.(n29) From the philosophical point of view the question of morality can be seen as the question of natural law. Does the true science of the law, or the natural necessity for law, issue in a natural law, a law whose particular enactments are valid by nature? The philosophers' answer is no. According to the philosophers, there are no particular instituted laws justified in all their details by nature, but there are rational laws, that is to say, there are laws that answer to the necessary needs of all human communities. These laws include laws that regulate beliefs in God, reward and punishment, and so forth. Yet it is a fact about the human world, explained by the true science of the law, that there is a plurality of such laws, each necessary and appropriate to its own community. Each community must promulgate laws that purport to be valid in all circumstances in which they can be applied, but there are in fact no prohibitions that are categorically justified:

Above all, the philosophers would deny that the rules which are called obligatory by the societies, are in fact obligatory strictly speaking: society has to present to its members certain rules as obligatory in order to supply these rules with that degree of dignity and sanctity which will induce the members of the society to obey them as much as possible (PAW, p. 140 n. 141).

As Halevi's Philosopher explains, there are also the modes by which the philosophers govern themselves, yet the imperatives that are issued in these modes are hypothetical rather than categorical (PAW, p. 139, citing Kuzari, 4.19).

Halevi's philosopher acknowledges that the need for the promulgation of categorically imperative laws is a permanent feature of all human communities. Lest the publication of the philosophers' critique of morality undermine the authority of the community, the philosopher's governance must remain a private and esoteric activity in regard to the potentially philosophic few--and a highly indirect practice of governing the governors in regard to the many. Spinoza is the first philosopher to argue that the freedom of the mind to think can be publicly recognized and legitimated as the freedom to philosophize. In "How to Study Spinoza's Theological-Political Treatise," the fifth chapter of *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, Strauss elucidates and critiques Spinoza's new political teaching by dissecting the new science of reading that teaching requires.

A presumption of Spinoza's new science of reading is that books have no authority over reason, so even the books where this science has been presented have no particular authority. There is thus a serious question why we should read old modern books, such as Spinoza's books themselves: one can say that, insofar as the modern project is successful, we do not and cannot.(n30) Yet to take Spinoza seriously it is not sufficient to think that what he says might be true, but we must also consider that this truth is somehow available only in Spinoza or other old books (PAW, p.154). This would only be possible, Strauss claims, if we have retreated from Enlightenment to error.

What does Spinoza know that we have forgotten, then? Strauss contends that philosophy has transformed itself into a history of human thought. Philosophy, in its true and original meaning, is the quest for the true and final account of the whole, yet we, unlike Spinoza, think that any account of the whole must be historically conditioned. As Strauss writes in his 1952 essay on Collingwood, it is this historicism

that "sanctions the loss, or the oblivion, of the natural horizon of human thought by denying the permanence of the fundamental problems."(n31) Strauss himself believes with Farabi that the familiar, metaphysical accounts of the whole, which are the philosophers' responses to these fundamental problems, are themselves historically conditioned: they are the product of a philosopher responding to the peculiar situation of his time, a situation that reflects both the permanent and the changing aspects of the human condition. Political philosophy is the study of the political accommodations of the philosophers to their historical circumstances. For this reason Strauss presents his own teaching in the guise of a history of human thought or a sociology of knowledge (PAW, pp. 7-8).

Spinoza himself recognizes the need for such an accommodation, which he calls "theology." Only theology can teach that it is obedience, not knowledge, that saves. (n32) That is to say only theology can justify morality--and one needs a holy Scripture to interpret in order to provide a politically binding moral teaching, and a teaching about Providence to shore up that moral teaching. No doubt such a doctrine is politically necessary, since all multitudes everywhere resemble the Israelites upon their Exodus from Egypt, who can be led to right conduct only if it is taught to them in the guise of a law with threats and punishments. As Spinoza writes:

The reason for living well--or true life and the worship and love of God--was for [the Israelites] more slavery than true freedom and the grace and gift of God. For [Moses] bade them to love God and keep His law that they might bear past goods received from God (freedom from Egyptian slavery, etc.) and terrified them with threats besides if they were to be transgressors of those injunctions; and, on the contrary, if they were to observe them, he promised them many good things. Accordingly, he taught them in the same mode in which parents usually teach children who lack all reason. Therefore it is certain that [the Israelites] were ignorant of virtue and true blessedness.(n33) Strauss restates his account of Spinoza in "On a Forgotten Kind of Writing," where he writes that Spinoza "argued exoterically on the assumption that, through the Bible, God has revealed to men, not indeed knowledge of things spiritual or natural, but the right principles of action, and that these principles demand toleration."(n34)

The philosopher, for his part, knows that only knowledge saves, that the true yardstick of human action is not furnished by the moral law or the moral laws but the practical, hypothetical, imperatives that one who would live well ought to legislate for himself in this world of cares. The trouble for us post-Spinozists is that there can come a time when the lies necessary to vindicate the moral life exoterically are no longer possible. Strauss describes this difficulty thus:

The assumptions to which Spinoza appeals in the most visible part of the argument of the Treatise, are these: the good life simply is the practice of justice and charity, which is impossible without the belief in Divine justice; and the Bible insists on the practice of justice and charity combined with the belief in Divine justice as the necessary and sufficient condition of salvation. At the moment these assumptions cease to be publicly defensible, the exoteric teaching of the Treatise would lose its *raison d'etre* (PAW, p. 193).

Spinoza's exoteric teaching would then be unhelpful, but a substitute justification of morality would be unneeded only if the project for a world order that is Christlike in its accomplishments and Machiavellian in its methods has been successful. The failure (so far) of such a project, which could be said to be the failure of the Enlightenment project simply, constitutes the inner or political critique of modernity. (n35)

Among our contemporaries the moral law takes the place of the ceremonial law as a human practice freed from human nature. Their defense of the moral law does not rest on an account of the whole or of man's place in nature; rather, it is insulated

from the threat of an account of the whole.(n36) These arguments are descendants of Kant's rejection of naturalism and the natural law. The recovery of philosophy in our time, the return to the quest for the knowledge of the whole, is a product of the rejection of these relativistic defenses of the moral law. This rejection was promulgated philosophically by Heidegger, and politically by the Nazis, the most important regime to spurn the modern project of overcoming the moral law by institutionalizing it politically.(n37)

Strauss's own response to the crisis of modern moral thinking was not to recommence the search for an objective defense of the moral law but to urge us to adopt the perspective of the ancient and medieval philosophers. From that perspective we would understand why the moral law was not valid as a set of universal, categorical imperatives. We would also understand how to deduce the political necessity for the promulgation of a moral law from the permanent facts of human nature. To that end Strauss expounds the history of the philosophers' exoteric accommodations to the permanent difference in human nature, the difference between the many who require a categorical moral teaching and the few who are capable of ordering their own lives in the face of the true hypothetical status of all moral commands.

Strauss argues repeatedly that the lower is best understood in the light of the higher. Hence, now that we have expounded Strauss's view of the politics of philosophy it is possible to turn to the Jewish Question as it appears in *Persecution and the Art of Writing*. On page 188 of the Spinoza essay Strauss writes:

On the principle expressed by Spinoza himself, he would have had to be extremely "cautious, hesitant, and reserved ... among his own people" if he had lived in an age when the separation from the Jewish community was impossible for a self-respecting man of Jewish origin, who was not honestly convinced of the truth of another religion.

This is, of course, a hypothetical defense of remaining Jewish: it implies that there are circumstances in which self-respect would not forbid a "man of Jewish origin" from feigning adherence to another religion, much less, as in Spinoza's actual case, separating himself from the Jewish community. The deeper question is the question of the status of this self-respect, which would seem to be the principal motive for one who cannot be orthodox to remain a Jew.(n38) Does not a philosopher respect the truth, which is no man's, rather than himself? Or, as Strauss puts it in *On Tyranny*, if a good man "has to choose between a fatherland which is corrupt and a foreign city which is well ordered, he may be justified in preferring that foreign city to his fatherland."(n39)

Consider in this light the famous passage on martyrdom from Spinoza's letter to Albert Burgh (letter 76):

[The Pharisees] with no less confidence than the devotees of Rome bring forward their myriad witnesses, who as pertinaciously as the Roman witnesses repeat what they have heard, as though it were their own experience... But their chief boast is, that they count a far greater number of martyrs than any other nation, a number which is daily increased by those who suffer with singular constancy of soul for the faith they profess; nor is this a lie. I myself know among others a certain Judah, called the faithful, who in the midst of the flames, when he was already believed to be dead, began the hymn "To You, O God, I offer up my soul," and chanting this, perished.(n40)

As various commentators on this passage have said, Spinoza's pride in what we might call his Jewish identity comes through clearly. Martyrdom is the moral, the respectable, the self-respecting response to persecution. It is not, however, the philosopher's response. The philosopher's response is caution, concealment, exoteric

writing.

Strauss drew attention to the peculiarly modern demand for atheistic probity, according to which one's atheistic beliefs must be publicly proclaimed. He contrasts it with the willingness of the ancients to dissemble their relation to received opinions on the divine. Strauss's turn to the ancients is in part a demand that this probity be sacrificed as one of "the sacrifices which we must make so that our minds can be free." We must give up the honor that requires that we self-proclaimed "free-thinkers" emulate the martyrs by bearing witness for atheism even as they bore witness for theism, in order that we can set our minds free of the faith that animated them.(n41)

Spinoza's point, in the original letter to Burgh, is that the testimony of martyrs is found on all sides and so cannot be taken seriously.(n42) Ultimately, then, martyrdom, for all its nobility, is pointless. Yet all revealed religion stands or falls with the testimonies of tradition. In the case of Christianity, the principal testimonies are those of the Witnesses, the martyrs, especially Christ. Spinoza's letter is intended to persuade Burgh to recant his conversion to Catholicism and return to the Protestantism of his family. In presenting this radically un- or unconventional defense of submission to one's inherited conventions, Spinoza affirms convention for the moment while sowing the seeds of its final destruction.

Is the self-respect that prevents a philosopher of Jewish origin from renouncing those origins and becoming merely a son or daughter of philosophy ultimately an unphilosophic, moralistic, thought or habit? Worse, is it a habit unsuited to the fragile conventions of the modern states within which we live and the peaceable world community these modern states aspire to constitute?(n43) I must conclude here without answering these questions, which are the most pressing questions that the study of Strauss opens up for contemporary Jews.(n44)

[\(n1.\)](#) Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1952; Reprinted Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 35 (henceforth PAW); see also pp. 111 n. 45, 187; Steve Lenzner, "A Literary Exercise in Self-Knowledge: Strauss's Interpretation of Maimonides" (Department of Government, Harvard University, typescript).

[\(n2.\)](#) Leo Strauss, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes: Its Basis and Its Genesis*, trans. Elsa M. Sinclair (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984; originally published Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 143.

[\(n3.\)](#) See "A Giving of Accounts" in Leo Strauss, *Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity: Essays and Lectures in Modern Jewish Thought*, ed. Kenneth Hart Green (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997), p. 462; "Preface to the English Translation" in *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*, trans. E. M. Sinclair (New York: Schocken, 1965), p. 31. Strauss first presents his defense of the old rationalism of classical political philosophy through the mediation of the medieval Jewish and Islamic philosophers in *Philosophie und Gesetz*. He then publishes a critique of Hobbes in the light of the old rationalism in *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*. Finally, in "The Spirit of Sparta or the Taste of Xenophon" (*Social Research* 6 [1939]:502536), Strauss gives his first unmediated account of the classical teaching. From this point, it is the direct teaching of the ancients that comes to dominate Strauss's work, though he continued to publish on medieval and modern writers until the end of his life.

[\(n4.\)](#) Available as Appendix 1 of *Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity*, pp. 467-70.

[\(n5.\)](#) *Ibid.*, p. 467.

(n6.) "Literary Character" is a very difficult essay when compared with Strauss's earlier, more straightforward, writings on Maimonides such as *Philosophie und Gesetz*, but is a marvel of clarity compared with Strauss's later notorious introduction to Pines's translation of the Guide, "How to Begin to Study The Guide of the Perplexed."

(n7.) One of the books discussed in *Persecution and the Art of Writing* is itself a work divided into five parts, namely, Judah Halevi's *Kuzari*. There is an old legend that the philosopher, whose only personal appearance is in the first part of the *Kuzari*, is Abu Nasr Alfarabi, whose only thematic appearance is in the first part of Strauss's book.

(n8.) Cf. Strauss, "How Farabi read Plato's Laws," in *What Is Political Philosophy?* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1959), pp. 153-54.

(n9.) See Aristophanes, *Knights and Wasps*; Barry Strauss, *Fathers and Sons in Athens: Ideology and Society in the Era of the Peloponnesian War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Josiah Ober, "The Debate over Civic Education in Democratic Athens," lecture at Tel Aviv University, 31 May 2000.

(n10.) Farabi, *The Philosophy of Plato*, sec. 36, in *Alfarabi's Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, trans. Muhsin Mahdi, rev. ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969); see also Lawrence Lampert's discussion of Strauss's *Thrasymachus* in *Leo Strauss and Nietzsche* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 146-59.

(n11.) PAW, p. 36. The political crystallization of this teaching is a religious law, yet, as Strauss explains, the philosopher is not a lawgiver, since the law represents a practical, unphilosophic compromise of the rule of wisdom, the only truly legitimate form of rule. The law itself is thus a fossil artifact of philosophic rule.

(n12.) See Joshua Parens, *Metaphysics as Rhetoric: Alfarabi's Summary of Plato's 'Laws'* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995).

(n13.) Strauss follows Farabi and the Farabian tradition (including most notably Maimonides) in equating what we might think of as the cosmology offered by Timaeus, which Farabi even calls the "science of the essence of every being," with metaphysics as first philosophy in Aristotle's sense. This produces a highly controversial account of the relation between metaphysics understood in the medieval sense as "divine science," on the one hand, and ancient metaphysics as evidenced in Aristotle's writing called by that name, or in Plato's doctrine of ideas, on the other hand. In the case of Plato, Strauss draws the connection between the Republic's teaching regarding the ideas and its teaching regarding divine causality in *The City and Man* (pp. 120-21); see Lampert, *Leo Strauss and Nietzsche*, p. 48 n. 15. For defenses of Strauss's account of the fundamental identity between the philosopher's ontology and their theology see Parens, *Metaphysics as Rhetoric*; David Bolotin, *An Approach to Aristotle's Physics with Particular Attention to the Role of His Manner of Writing* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998), esp. pp. 5-7. The strengths and weaknesses of Strauss's account are clarified by comparison with Martin Heidegger's discussion of the vicissitudes of the term "metaphysics" in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995), secs. 11-14, pp. 37-55.

(n14.) See Plato *Laws* 766a; Arthur W. H. Adkins, *From the Many to the One: A Study of Personality and Views of Human Nature in the Context of Ancient Greek Society, Values, and Beliefs* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), pp. 82-3, 158, 171 n. 1; John J. Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 64-70. Quintilian makes heavy use of the natural differences among human beings in describing the modification of the rhetorical education to suit each natural type

(*Institutio Oratoria* 2. viii).

(n15.) Leo Strauss, *Socrates and Aristophanes* (New York: Basic Books, 1966; reprinted Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 49. See also Strauss's discussion of the superiority of Lucretius to his master Epicurus in terms of "a deep understanding of the feelings which obstruct the acceptance of the true doctrine by most men--an understanding which the master did not necessarily possess" ("Notes on Lucretius," in *Liberalism Ancient and Modern* [New York: Basic Books 1968; reprinted University of Chicago Press, 1995], p. 92). In Falaquera's "Epistle of the Debate," the wise man persuades the jurist to take up the study of nature, that is, philosophy, by pointing to the natural difference between the many who are satisfied with mouthing dogmas and the few who wish to understand the legally prescribed beliefs; Shem Tob ibn Falaquera, *The Epistle of the Debate*, in Steven Harvey, *Falaquera's Epistle of the Debate: An Introduction to Jewish Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press for the Center for Jewish Studies, 1987), pp. 63-65.

The differences among human types recognized by the ancients are quite distinct from the individuality valorized by the moderns. As Strauss writes, "the quarrel between the ancients and the moderns concerns eventually, and perhaps even from the beginning, the status of 'individuality'" (*Natural Right and History*, p. 323; cf. Leo Strauss, "Perspectives on the Good Society," in *Liberalism, Ancient and Modern*, p. 261). In "Note on the Plan of Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*," in *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), Strauss moves from an indication of Nietzsche's "ipsissimosity" to an elucidation of "the nature of the individual"--that is, the natural type within "the order of the rank of the natures" to which the individual belongs. Strauss acknowledges that in *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche "'platonizes' as regards the 'form' more than anywhere else (ibid, p. 175). The question is whether the platonized or typological Nietzsche of *Beyond Good and Evil* represents the whole of Nietzsche's teaching in the face of the modern, or rather, Christian and post-Christian, reevaluation of the value of individuality. Lampert's Leo Strauss and Nietzsche unfortunately fails to come to terms with this question. One wonders if Lampert can characterize Strauss as an insufficiently prudent Nietzschean because Lampert's Nietzsche is the Platonizing philosopher of the origin of human species (plural, of course) rather than "Mr. Nietzsche" in all his particularized perplexities.

(n16.) Spinoza, for his part, affirms the essential presupposition of the Socratic paradox at *Theological-Political Treatise*, trans. Martin Yaffe (University of North Texas, Department of Philosophy and Religion Studies, typescript): "For it is a universal law of human nature that no one neglects what he judges to be good, unless in the hope of a greater good, or from the fear of a greater harm. Nor would he prefer some evil, unless to avoid a greater one, or in the hope of a greater good: That is, everyone chooses which of two goods he judges to be the greater, and which of two evils seems to be the lesser" (chapter 16). On the account of choice, the only source of error is the chooser's misestimation of the relative good and evil in each alternative. Compare Plato *Protagoras* 351b-358d; Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Meditation 4, cited by Hiram Caton, "Analytic History of Philosophy: The Case of Descartes," *The Philosophical Forum* 12, no. 4 (1981): 274.

(n17.) See Strauss, "A Giving of Accounts," pp. 464-65.

(n18.) In Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Politics and the Arts: Letter to M. D'Alembert on the Theatre*, trans. Allan Bloom (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968), Appendix, p. 146. Rousseau, it should be noted, defends the concealing of subversive opinions in the "Letter to D'Alembert" (p. 11); Rousseau's opposition to the Enlightenment aspiration to bring science to the many is expounded by Strauss in "On the Intention of Rousseau," *Social Research* 14 (1947): 455-87, esp. 484 ff.

(n19.) PAW, p. 58; Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of

Chicago Press, 1953), pp. 198-99 n. 43.

(n20.) The Jew of Malta, prologue, line 15; Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, p. 177.

(n21.) *Natural Right and History*, pp. 182-83.

(n22.) Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Ernst and Falk: Conversations for the Freemasons, first conversation in fin., trans. William L. Zwiebel in *Nathan the Wise, Minna von Barnheim, and Other Plays and Writings*, ed. Peter Demetz (New York: Continuum, 1991), p. 283; Strauss, "Exoteric Teaching," in *The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism: An Introduction to the Thought of Leo Strauss*, ed. Thomas Pangle (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 64-65. Compare also Kant, *Perpetual Peace*, 366; Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, pp. 193-94; Strauss, "The Three Waves of Modernity," in *An Introduction to Political Philosophy: Ten Essays by Leo Strauss*, ed. Hilail Gildin (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1989), p. 87. For a contemporary vision of a just society whose justice consists in its rendering personal acts of justice and charity superfluous, see Thomas Nagel, *Equality and Partiality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

(n23.) Jürgen Habermas, *Theory and Practice*, trans. John Viertel (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), p. 43; cited by Shadia B. Drury, *The Political Ideas of Leo Strauss* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), p. 138.

(n24.) See in addition to the *Tractatus Politicus*, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, preface, and chapter 16.

(n25.) "Some Remarks on the Political Science of Maimonides and Farabi", trans. Robert Bartlett, *Interpretation* 18 (1990): 3-30, p. 16. From the point of view of the philosophers, that law cannot itself be regarded as a product of science. As Strauss has already put it in discussing Farabi, the philosopher is a king but he is not, qua philosopher, a legislator. The product of the "art and science of Timaeus" is a seemingly dogmatic metaphysical teaching addressed not to the many but to the few who are dissatisfied with the beliefs of the many. This teaching keeps these few politically docile while they learn its failings, thereby ascending from dogmatism to skepticism in its original sense. See my "Weeds: Cultivating the Imagination in Medieval-Arabic Political Philosophy," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 60 (1999): 399-416.

(n26.) Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*, 2.25; cf. *Kuzari* 1.67.

(n27.) Spinoza's *Critique of Religion*, pp. 157-58.

(n28.) See PAW, p. 76; "A Giving of Accounts," p. 465; and *On Tyranny*, expanded edition, ed. Victor Gourevitch and Michael S. Roth (New York: The Free Press, 1991; original edition 1948), p. 113, n. 23.

(n29.) Halevi's (or Halevi's scholar's) defense of morality itself is primarily a defense against the ascetics, the heretics and the idolaters, not against the philosophers (see inter alia *Kuzari*, 2.45-50, 2.60, 3.1-9, 3.11; and cf. PAW, pp. 12226). What these sects have in common with the philosophers is that all seek to derive man's duties toward the divine by reasoning, instead of accepting the laws of the Torah on the basis of tradition (*Kuzari*, 1.97-99, 2.26, 2.60, 3.22-23, 3.36-38, 3.49-50, 3.65, 4.1, 4.11, 4.14-17, 5.1-2, 5.14 infin., 5.16, 5.21 infin.). The ascetics also share with the Epicureans, supposedly the most anti-religious of the philosophers, the view that man's only relation to God is that of fear (see *Kuzari* 2.45-50, 5.25; Strauss, *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*, chap. 1). Yet Halevi's critique shares with the philosophers the claim that the ceremonial laws are secondary to the rational and

civil laws that bear directly on the survival of the community (2. 48). In place of the ascetic drive to conquer the passions, which is doomed to fail, Halevi's scholar calls for a politique governance of the passions (3.1-5). This turn from asceticism to politics has manifest Messianic implications.

(n30.) Strauss here anticipates Thomas Kuhn's emphasis on the replacement of the study of "scientific classics" by the study of textbooks as among the characteristic aspects of contemporary science; Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

(n31.) Leo Strauss, "On Collingwood's Philosophy of History," *Review of Metaphysics* 5 (1952): 586.

(n32.) *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, chap. 15; PAW, pp. 172, 184; also Spinoza's *Critique of Religion*, pp. 115-16; "Maimonides' Statement on Political Science" in *What Is Political Philosophy?*, pp. 166-67. Cf. "How Farabi read Plato's Laws", p. 145: Strauss writes that according to Farabi, "Plato had discussed the question as to whether a man who knows nothing except the laws and does nothing except what the laws demand is virtuous or not, and as regards this question 'there is still grave disagreement among men.'"

(n33.) *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, chap. 2; translation altered slightly from Martin Yaffe.

(n34.) "On a Forgotten Kind of Writing" in *What Is Political Philosophy?*, p. 227. The emphasis is mine.

(n35.) One could also say that the success, so far, of such a project constitutes the inner or political vindication of modernity. Bruno Latour points the way beyond the inevitable Janus-faced character of pronouncements on modernity in his philosophy of scientific practice; see *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers through Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987); and more explicitly *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

(n36.) See John Rawls, "Justice as Fairness, Political Not Metaphysical," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 14 (1985): 223-52; now in *Collected Papers*, ed. Samuel Freeman (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

(n37.) Strauss gave his own assessment of what one could call "the inner greatness of National Socialism", that is to say, the revulsion it embodied against the low and bestial but universal project of the Enlightened modern state, in a lecture on "German Nihilism," given 26 February 1941. This lecture was recently edited and published by David Janssens and Daniel Tanguay in *Interpretation* 28 (1999): 353-78.

(n38.) Strauss takes his stand on a point of honor in replying to a questioner at a lecture in Chicago in 1962 (*Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity*, p. 329): "Questioner: The rifle of the lecture, 'Why Do We Remain Jews?'--am I correct that your answer is that we have no choice? Strauss: As honorable men, surely not."

(n39.) *On Tyranny*, exp. ed., p. 98.

(n40.) I have modified R. H. M. Elwes's translation of this letter (*Works of Spinoza*, 2:417-18 [London: George Bell and Sons, 1883; reprint New York: Dover, 1951]) by reference to the Latin texts in *Opera Spinoza*, ed. Carl Gebhardt (Heidelberg: Carl Winters Universitaetsbuchhandlung, 1926), 4: 321-22.

(n41.) See "Preface to the American Edition" in 1952 and subsequent editions of *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, p. xvi; "Preface" in *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*, p. 30. For an expression of moral outrage at the philosophers' mode see Annabel Patterson's anti-Straussian treatment of exoteric writing, *Reading between the Lines* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), p. 8. One should add that for Strauss the convulsive assertion of atheistic probity belongs only to the "polemical approach" that Nietzsche adopts and not to the teaching itself--this probity is therefore at no time, including ours, a fundamental characteristic of the greatest thinkers; Letter to Karl Löwith, 23 June 1935, in Karl Löwith and Leo Strauss, "Correspondence," *Independent Journal of Philosophy* 5/6 (1988): 183. (n42.) *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*, pp. 139-40.

(n43.) Lawrence Lampert's certainty with regard to the second question (Leo Strauss and Nietzsche, p. 173) is untempered by reflection on the fate of those wretched peoples who lack a fatherland. What Hannah Arendt wrote more than fifty years ago has only been confirmed by all subsequent experience: "The restoration of human rights, as the recent example of the State of Israel proves, has been achieved so far only through the restoration or the establishment of national rights" (*The Origins of Totalitarianism* [New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973], p. 299). The securing of national rights is no guarantee of human rights, especially when accompanied by the denial of national rights to those foreign to the nation in question, but it remains a practically necessary precondition of the securing of human rights. Note also that this "pragmatic sanction" of nationalism does not extend to a defense of remaining Jewish in any modern state, nor even in the state of Israel.

(n44.) An earlier version of this paper was presented at a conference on "Haifa and Athens: The Leo Strauss Centenary" at Haifa University, 23 December 1999, and appeared in Hebrew in *Iyyun: The Jerusalem Philosophical Quarterly* 50, no. 4 (2001). I would like to thank Ehud Luz, Cliff Bates, Steve Lenzner, Daniel Doneson, Eva Schorr, and members of the audience in Haifa, as well as Walter Nicgorski, and the anonymous readers for *The Review of Politics*, for their comments and suggestions.

Plato's Ways, as per Farabi (See PAW 16; Farabi, Philosophy of Plato, sections 35-36)

1. The way of Plato = "The way of Socrates and the way of Thrasymachus."
2. The way of Plato = "The science and art of Socrates and the science and art of Timaeus."

Therefore

3. "The way of Socrates and the way of Thrasymachus" = "The science and art of Socrates and the science and art of Timaeus."

Now assume

4. "The way of Socrates" = "The science and the art of Socrates."

Then by subtraction

5. "The science and the art of = "The way of Thrasymachus." Timaeus"

But since:

6. "The science and the art of Timaeus" = "The science of the essence of the divine and of the natural things."

Then

7. "The science of the essence of the = "The way of Thrasymachus." divine and of the natural things"

But (by Plato, Phaedrus 267cd)

8. The way of Thrasymachus of Chalcedon = "The strength of the Chalcedonian holds sway over speeches drawn out on old age and poverty, and the man at the same time was fearfully clever both at stirring up the many to anger, and at soothing them, once they had been stirred up, 'with enchantments,' as he said."

Thus we conclude:

9. "The science of the essence of the divine and of the natural things" = The rhetorical art suitable for speaking to the many so as to anger and soothe them

~~~~~

By Michael S. Kochin

---

Copyright of Review of Politics is the property of Cambridge University Press / UK and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.

---

[Back](#)