

The Problem of Carl Schmitt's Political Theology

ANNA SCHMIDT

UNIVERSITY OF MUNICH

antischbein@gmail.com

Note: The following is a response to Jianhong Chen's article "What Is Carl Schmitt's Political Theology?" (Interpretation, Volume 33, Issue 2, Spring 2006).

In his story "The Lightning-Rod Man," Herman Melville paints an unsettling portrait of a merchant who hustles from house to house during frightening thunderstorms, trying to sell the latest model of copper lightning rods. Driven by fear for physical safety, calculations of scientific probability, and desire for commercial gain, on his sales trips during lightning he avoids crowds of men, tall men and high buildings, and he never rings "a bell of any sort." His behavior and advice give away his identity: the lightning-rod man is a modern-day devil, trying to destroy the orientation of man towards God and to keep him away from community and Church by deceiving him into thinking that science and commerce will protect him from God's omnipotent will. In the story the narrator wins a ferocious victory over the devil and his devilish instrument of power: "I seized it; I snapped it; I dashed it; I trod it; and dragging the dark lightning-king out of my door, flung his elbowed, copper sceptre after him." Not everyone, though, has the narrator's clear sight and courage: "But spite of my treatment, and spite of my dissuasive talk of him to my neighbours, the Lightning-rod man still dwells in the land; still travels in storm-time, and drives a brave trade with the fears of man" (Melville 1998, 75-83).

Carl Schmitt would have understood immediately whom Melville was portraying, even without the reference to church bells. In 1970, a century after Melville, in his last book *Political Theology II*, Schmitt, in an acerbically satirical essay, characterizes the Promethean position as the

position of the enemy: “Eripuit fulmen caelo, nova fulmina mittit / Eripuit caelum deo, nova spatia struit” (Schmitt 1970, 126; see Meier 1998, 5), “He wrested lightning from heaven and sends out new lightning bolts himself / He wrested heaven from God, and builds new spaces himself.” In doing so, Schmitt sides with Cardinal de Polignac, who in his *Anti-Lucretius sive De Deo et Natura* (1747) takes a stand against philosophers from Epicurus to Spinoza. Polignac’s “Eripuit fulmen Iovi” was an attack on the philosophic hubris of Epicurus. By taking up Polignac, Schmitt takes a stand against Turgot, who had used Polignac’s words of disdain as praise for the Promethean Benjamin Franklin: “he wrested lightning from heaven.” But man’s technological effort to make himself the ruler, the “dark king” of the world, driven by his desire for security, is doomed to fail. Science can neither account for nor control the truly sovereign power. It is no match for the almighty, inscrutable God. What his enemies celebrate as human achievement and greatness, Schmitt considers to be “anti-godly self-deification” forgetful of man’s proper place. It is rebellion against the Creator who demands obedience.

An age that denies the truth of revelation is living a fatal lie: “We live in an age of illusion and deception,” a young Carl Schmitt diagnoses in 1916. Our modern-day state of illusion is the result of a historical development brought about by people falling for the life offered by the Lightning-rod man. But whereas Melville’s portrayal of the devil is openly ridiculous, Schmitt conceives of evil as deceptively seductive. The Antichrist “knows how to imitate Christ and makes himself so similar to him that he tricks all out of their souls” (Schmitt 1916, 65 f.; see Meier 1998, 25). He lures people not by appealing only to their need for *physical* security, but—in the words of Paul in his First Letter to the Thessalonians (5,3)—by promising “*peace and security.*” According to Schmitt, one particular historical *decision* in the quest for political peace and physical comfort has provided the Antichrist with a more dangerously fertile ground than he ever had before: “The strongest and most consequential of all spiritual turns in European history I consider the step undertaken by the seventeenth century from traditional Christian theology to the system of a ‘natural’ science. Until this day this has determined the direction that all ensuing development had to take. [...] Therewith the direction to neutralization and minimalization was taken and the law accepted, according to which European humanity has acted and that has shaped its *concept of truth*” (Schmitt 1963, 88 f., my italics).

Many interpreters, though not all, have taken Schmitt’s formulations of “spiritual turns” in the form of “neutralization” and

“minimalization” of the truth as the matter-of-fact observations of a social scientist, a theorist of secularization free of “value judgments.” A recent one is Jianhong Chen in his article “What Is Carl Schmitt’s Political Theology?” It is the goal of this article to demonstrate why the interpretation of Schmitt as a theorist of secularization is wrong. In order to evaluate Schmitt’s political theory correctly, it has to be understood in light of Schmitt’s own “concept of truth,” which is not one based on “scientific” truth.

Beginning with the abandonment of sixteenth-century theology in favor of seventeenth-century metaphysics, followed by the increasing influence of economics and technology, Schmitt views the history of modernity as driven by a continuing quest for a neutral and safe haven on earth *in denial of the necessity to take a side between good and evil*. In this development, theological concepts have become “uninteresting and private,” God himself is neutralized, reduced to a “parasite of ethics” and becomes, “as Hamann has said against Kant, a concept, and ceases to be a being” (Schmitt 1963, 82, 89). But for Schmitt, a “neutral” position, the liberal attitude of a “value-free” science, is impossible. His entire work can be understood as taking sides against all attempts to “neutralize” the truth, to overlook the distinction of good and evil, right and wrong: “It is the opposites of good and evil, God and Devil, between which there exists as a matter of life and death an Either-Or which knows of no synthesis, of no ‘higher third’” (Schmitt 1934, 24).

Schmitt’s “concept of the enemy” flows directly from his concept of truth and is as incompatible with a neutral position: “The enemy is our *own* question as a figure” (Schmitt 1950b, 90; 1991, 217; see Meier 1998, 46, n. 54; my italics)—a question each and everyone is existentially confronted with and from which one cannot hide. Whoever refuses to hear and to answer this question in the right way, whoever hopes to be able to remain neutral, whoever fails to act and fight a figure like the Lightning-rod man, sides with evil. Schmitt knows only derision for the “liberal metaphysics” or the metaphysics of liberalism that believes it to be “possible to answer the question: Christ or Barrabas? with a motion to adjourn or the instituting of an investigative committee” (Schmitt 1934, 34). By contrast to a revelation that results in a *division* of mankind into believers and nonbelievers, friend and enemy, the liberal discourse of an inclusive mankind suggests the illusionary neutral ground of a common humanity: “whoever says mankind intends to deceive” (Schmitt 1933, 37; see Meier 1998, 22 f.). Schmitt’s motto, taking up Luther’s position on the cardinal Christian virtue, is: “humilitas rather than humanitas” (Schmitt 1991, 274; see Meier 1998, 89). Or, as Schmitt puts it

bluntly, quoting Cardinal Newman: “No medium between Catholicity and atheism” (Schmitt 1934, 23).

In 1916 Schmitt condemns the illusion of humanity in strong terms. Man’s usurpation of God’s position in the process of secularization has resulted in a disastrous “confusion” that has mistakenly turned “right” into mere “might,” “faithfulness” into “calculability,” “truth” into scientific “correctness,” “beauty” into “good taste,” and “Christianity” into a “pacifist organization” (see Meier 1998, 3 ff.). More than 50 years later, in his last book *Political Theology II*, Schmitt writes of this “new, purely worldly-human science” as an “autism,” “nothing other than self-empowerment,” “nothing but self-authorization,” “anti-godly self-deification” directed “polemically against a theological transcendence” (see Meier 1998, 5 f.). Though the “spirit of technicity” may be “evil and devilish,” it is no mere mistake people make without knowing better. They *do* know better. The truth has been *revealed* to them and it is a *sin* to refuse to submit oneself to it. Even if many theologians today are less uncompromising in their condemnation of modern life than theologians used to be, orthodox positions have always denied that the individual is in any way free to decide on and pursue his own good and have instead called for unquestioning obedience to revelation—be it Judaism, Christianity or Islam—as the one thing needful. For who can *know* that enlightenment is not in fact the beginning of the slow but efficient work of evil to gradually rob revealed religion of its legitimacy by making faith a private matter, in order to gradually make it disappear entirely? Both Carl Schmitt’s political theology and fundamentalist political theologies today oppose enlightenment and the “neutral” spheres it has carved out where people try to hide from the decision between good and evil on which their life depends. The “central domain of spiritual existence cannot be a neutral domain” (Schmitt 1963, 94).

In the light of Schmitt’s condemnation of the belief in a value-free, neutral position that “avoids the core of the political idea, the morally demanding decision” (Schmitt 1934, 83; see Meier 1998, 1 ff., 12 ff.), it is ironic that Chen’s article attempts once again to establish Schmitt as an amoral, value-free, objective scientist. Although political theology is now widely discussed as never before, Chen fails to mention what the term describes today—a political theory or action that understands itself as based on faith in revelation. It is also strange that Chen refuses to engage the question whether Schmitt, who has written not just one, but two books titled *Political Theology* and speaks of “*my* political theology” in *Political Theology*

II, may consider himself to be a political theologian, i.e. a political thinker or theorist who bases his theorizing on his faith in revelation. Since Chen claims that “political theology” in Schmitt has nothing to do with faith-based political action, he does not approach the question of how Schmitt understands himself and his own theorizing, and of how his statements against “anti-godly self-deification” are to be understood. In an attempt to defend a purely academic meaning of the term, Chen’s “surface” study of a few of Schmitt’s translated writings leads him to conclude that Schmitt uses the term as a *sociologist*, free of any moral judgment, to *objectively* describe the historical process of “so-called secularization” (Schmitt 1965, 61). Political theology in Schmitt for Chen “means a structural correspondence between theological and juristic concepts, and a structural transformation of traditional theological concepts into modern political concepts” (Chen, 159). Chen even claims that Schmitt “*defines* political theology as *sociology* of the concept of sovereignty” (167, my italics). The question Chen fails to confront is precisely *who* in Schmitt’s thought is sovereign. On the answer to this question depends how Schmitt judges the possibility of the “transformation” of divine sovereignty into human sovereignty, or the “correspondence” between the divine and the merely human, or whether they are, in Schmitt’s view, only “so-called” transformations and “so-called” correspondences. Chen equally fails to ask how the “core of the political idea” as “the morally demanding decision” figures in the life’s work of the thinker who wrote *The Concept of the Political*. For this thinker, as a result of the increasing “incapacity for God” of our age, if “the theological disappears [...] so does the political” (Schmitt 1934, 82; see Meier 1998, 13). For Schmitt, therefore, the modern separation of the spiritual and the worldly, of pure faith and impure politics is merely another hubristic attempt to neutralize the truth (Schmitt 1970, 107), since for him there is nothing more important than to answer “the call of God” at any given moment in history. “We are being tested now by the God who is present” whether we are capable of “the morally demanding decision” (Schmitt 1950a, 114).

Chen’s efforts to present Schmitt as a neutrally observing scientist are not directed against the “attempt to demonize Schmitt by religious means” (Chen, 154). On the contrary, Chen fears that by grounding Schmitt’s political action in his Christian faith, “the political burden on the name of Schmitt is shaken off”—a reference to his Nazi past (160). But particularly in the light of events since 2001, how can Chen think that faith, be it Schmitt’s faith or the faith of a suicide terrorist, is capable of freeing anyone of the responsibility for murderous deeds?

However that may be, Chen's article is expressly directed against Heinrich Meier's interpretation of Schmitt. Meier's books have set the standard not only because they were the first to draw on the entirety of Schmitt's work, but because they were also the first to account for the obscurities, turns and contradictions that abound in Schmitt's writings, to take on the difficulties and incoherencies that previous interpretations had ignored and that an interpretation like Chen's feels justified to ignore yet again. In his two books, *Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss: The Hidden Dialogue* (Meier 1995) and *The Lesson of Carl Schmitt* (Meier 1998), Meier meticulously documents his philosophic interpretation of Schmitt as a political theologian whose life's work is motivated by his faith in revelation. Chen acknowledges Meier's "groundbreaking work" as a "detailed, forceful, and provocative analysis" (Chen, 160)—yet holds, without himself making the effort of going into any detail or refuting any of Meier's textual proofs, that Meier gets it all wrong, "conjuring up" a "deep and real meaning" that is not there by not limiting himself to the "statements on the surface" of Schmitt's texts (Chen, 154). By reminding Meier, editor of the German edition of the writings of Leo Strauss and the author of a book on *Leo Strauss and the Theologico-Political Problem* (Meier 2006), of Strauss's hermeneutic maxim that "the problem inherent in the surface of things, and only in the surface of things, is the heart of things" (Strauss 1958, 13), Chen sets a high standard for himself: he implicitly raises the claim that his interpretation is more in the spirit of Strauss's close reading than Meier's.

Yet Chen's interpretation is based on a highly selective reading of only four of Schmitt's works—*Political Theology*, *Political Theology II* (from which he quotes one single statement), *The Concept of the Political* (the translated second version only), and "Ethic of State and Pluralistic State" (from which he also quotes just once)—as opposed to Meier's analysis of Schmitt's entire oeuvre. Chen justifies his method with the claim that "when we look beyond *Political Theology*, we do not find in Schmitt substantial changes regarding the meaning of political theology" as Chen understands it (Chen, 159). But Schmitt, in his essay "The Completed Reformation" alone, uses the term "political theology" five times (Schmitt 1965). For someone who claims the authority of Strauss to be on his side, Chen understands Strauss's statement as artlessly as he understands Schmitt, forgetting that there is a *problem* inherent in the surface. Strauss never said that only the clearest, most explicit statements constitute the surface—and even less that one sentence in a text makes up the surface of the entire text. To the contrary, Strauss claimed that the most important things might only be hinted at,

might be said in a different thinker's name, in the form of a contradiction or omitted altogether. Every word, clear or obtuse, of the surface has to be taken into account, as well as the entire surface of a thinker's work.

Precisely by following closely the entire surface of Schmitt's texts a reader unwilling to overlook difficulties will discover an abundance of problems: omissions, contradictions, deliberate false quotations of even the titles of his own works, biting polemics, covert hints and traces. Reading Schmitt is detective work: if *Political Theology* were a scientific sociological book, it would be unusual that it does not even, contrary to Chen's claim, define its title-giving concept, but instead leaves it to the reader to understand what Schmitt means by "political theology" from the mere three times he uses the term in his book. The omission of any definition becomes even more curious when one considers that until 1922, when Schmitt first raised its flag, "political theology" was used differently from how it came to be used after Schmitt's book. Contrary to what Chen implies, there had never before existed a positive concept by the name of "Christian political theology" to designate political action or theory based on Christian faith (Chen, 160). How then, and why, did Schmitt, to quote his friend, the theologian Erik Peterson, come to be the one "to introduce the term [political theology] into literature" (Peterson 1994, 81)? How did Schmitt provide the foundation for the veritable career this term has since enjoyed? For an interpretation of Schmitt's thought and intention, a look at the history of the term, the long way it has come down to our usage of it today, is indispensable.

The term political theology goes back to its classical presentation in M. Terentius Varro's "theologia tripertita"—the division of theology into mythical, natural and political corresponding to the gods as introduced by the poets, the philosophers and the statesmen, respectively (Augustinus: *De civitate Dei* VI.12). With this distinction the philosopher Varro raises the question of the truth of these theologies: while political and mythical theology, in contrast to natural theology, serve a necessary purpose in founding and governing a political community, their claims are not true. Augustine, to whom we owe most of what we know regarding Varro's writings, held this against the Roman pontiff (*pontifex*) Scaevola: to publicly purport for political purposes what he did not believe to be true—in the face of the truth of revelation. Ever since Augustine's accusation against the pagan pontiff "political theology" had been used to decry the use of a false theology for political ends. Having been turned into an expression of moral contempt by

Augustine, no believer in revelation would have made use of it to designate his own position.

No believer until Schmitt, that is—in 1922. In 1871, nearly 1500 years after Augustine, the Russian anarchist Michail Bakunin, fighting in the name of Satan against God, uses the term to decry *The Political Theology of Mazzini* in his so titled book (Bakunin 1961). In Bakunin Schmitt recognizes the “real enemy of all traditional concepts of western European civilization,” rebelling openly against all forms of authority and order, human and divine, in order to propel humankind into a “Babylonian unity” of “pure this-worldliness” that denies all transcendence (see Schmitt 1934, 64 f.; Meier 1998, 6 ff.). Using the term political theology as a weapon to attack all claims to divine authority in the name of an ever-rebellious natural anarchy, Bakunin, in Schmitt’s view, by denying the legitimacy of a divine order, denies what solely is *right*. It is from this atheist revolutionary, the enemy, that Schmitt takes the term—and makes it his own by making it affirmative: yes, political theology indeed means faith-based political action, for the God of revelation is the highest sovereign authority. But since Schmitt does not mention the title of Bakunin’s book attacking political theology anywhere in his writings, it takes some detective work in order to trace Schmitt’s title back to its origin. Meier was the first to follow Schmitt’s hints: In the 1922 (first) version of *Political Theology*, Schmitt refers to an essay “written at the same time,” which became *Roman Catholicism and Political Form*. There Schmitt writes of Bakunin’s “fight” against Mazzini: for Bakunin, “the freemason Mazzini’s faith in God was, just as all faith in God, only proof of slavery” (Schmitt 1923, 75; see Meier 1998, 8 f.). Bakunin, fighting Church and State, uses the term as the most scathing indictment of Mazzini, who supports God and State; Schmitt disarms Bakunin by turning Bakunin’s accusation into a positive term to designate Schmitt’s own position—a position that knows it is based on faith and that wants to be based on faith in revelation because it believes in its *truth*. The meaning of the term as we use it today, freed of the accusation of lying and (self-)deception, is the direct result of Schmitt’s redefining appropriation of it in his book of 1922.

But Schmitt does something more complicated than this: while turning political theology into a positive term, he also keeps the meaning of political theology as a term of attack and adjusts it to his own purposes. When speaking of “the political theology of the Restoration time” (Schmitt 1934, 56), of “my political theology” and the distinction of friend and enemy as “the criterion of the political and political theology” (Schmitt

1970, epilogue, 116), he uses the term to designate the grounding of political action in true faith in revelation. But when speaking of other positions that do not agree with his—be they atheistic, humanitarian, liberal, philosophic, or other politico-theological positions that arrive at different doctrines from his own—he considers these positions to be political theologies as well; the last sentence of *Political Theology* turns Bakunin's term of attack against Mazzini back against Bakunin himself: Schmitt there calls his atheistic opponent “the *theologian* of the anti-theological” (my italics). In the same vein, Schmitt writes reverently about Donoso Cortés, who “in his radical spirituality only always sees the *theology of the opponent*” (Schmitt 1950b, 79), because he knows, just like Schmitt, of “the metaphysical core of *all* politics” (Schmitt 1934, 65, my italics), even of the politics that *deny* all metaphysics—because, as Schmitt claims, “metaphysics is something unavoidable” (Schmitt 1922, 23; see Meier 1998, 43). Thus, Schmitt launches invectives against the “religion of technology” and the “pseudo-religion of absolute humanity” (Schmitt 1950b, 108)—against, in other words, the “political theologies” that are politically rebellious by turning man into their God.

Considering himself *and* his opponents, believers and nonbelievers, friends and enemies alike political theologians is not simply a polemical attempt at unmasking the opponent, but a consequence of Schmitt's own position. Since he believes himself to know that there is *no* knowledge of the good outside the truth of faith in revelation, *any* position that is not one of the *right* faith for him is still a position of faith, only of the *wrong* faith, a faith with specific beliefs about “God, freedom, progress, the anthropological ideas of human nature,” about the good and the bad, right and wrong. Whatever position one may take—whether one believes, like Schmitt, in “the unlosable secret of the divine origin of man” (Schmitt 1950b, 78) or in a natural origin of mankind—all positions amount to “an anthropological profession of *faith*” (Schmitt 1963, 58). With actions based on belief rather than on knowledge, the liberal defender of individual freedom, the Marxist revolutionary working towards the world State, and the philosopher living a contemplative life withdrawn from political action are all equally political theologians in the sense that, according to Schmitt, they all make their decisions based on *faith* or belief: there is no escaping from making decisions, and decisions reveal what the decider *believes* he is free or obliged to do or to not do.

Schmitt believes himself to know that there is no escaping political theology, that there is no fundamental *alternative* to challenge

political theology. Any position, no matter how trans-political or anti-theological it claims to be, is as inevitably political, falling on either side of Schmitt's friend-enemy distinction, as Schmitt asserts that it is based on some kind of faith, on a decision that can never defend itself solely on the ground of reason. Every faith of this kind is measured against Schmitt's own faith in the sovereignty of the Christian God. Believing that God's authority cannot be questioned by man without committing the sin of self-deification, that the whole process of "so-called secularization" amounts to sinful rebellion, Schmitt's frame of reference is distinctly moral. Schmitt's world is one of faith against faith, where "spirit fights against spirit," where the spirit of good fights the spirit of evil, the spirit of obedience fights the spirit of disobedience (Schmitt 1963, 95). In Bakunin's *decision* against God, in his *decision* against decision and authority, his *belief* in the goodness of human nature, his own political theology comes to light. But for Schmitt, not only a political activist like Bakunin, but also a political philosopher like Rousseau is subject to the measure of Schmitt's true political theology: Rousseau's attempt to demonstrate that he can know the nature of man by the use of his unaided reason repeats the Fall as rebellion against divine authority and commandment. Schmitt cannot allow for the existence of political philosophy since a position of faith cannot allow for the truth of a position that claims *not* to be based on *faith* but on actual human *knowledge*. If the only relevant source of wisdom is revelation, philosophy is not only impossible, but it is the gravest human hubris and self-delusion. It is a sin for man to deny God as the sovereign source of all good. "How does he know that man is good," Schmitt quotes Donoso Cortés, "if God has not told him?" (Schmitt 1934, 74)

Theologians in his time correctly understood *Political Theology* as the work of a self-described political theologian and saw that Schmitt indeed, as Erik Peterson put it, "introduced the term [political theology] into literature." In 1935, a year after the publication of the second, slightly altered version of *Political Theology*, Peterson responds to Schmitt with a book that denies the possibility of all Christian political theology after the Trinity—a politico-theological rebuttal of Schmitt's political involvement with the Nazis in form of a supposedly "purely theological" treatment of Eusebius (Peterson 1994). Schmitt returns the attack 35 years later with *Political Theology II*, its subtitle—*The Legend of the Disposal of Every Political Theology*—directed against Peterson. Far from presenting a theorem of secularization, Schmitt argues theologically that the very concept of the Trinity allows for a concept of "stasis" understood as upheaval and enmity within the Trinity itself. To be sure: Erik Peterson is not an enemy of Schmitt, for Peterson holds, like

Schmitt, that “the liberal thesis that politics and theology have nothing to do with each other” is itself only a “concrete political attitude” that includes “a certain theological position”—which happens to be “heretical” (Peterson 2004).

Even before Peterson, Alfred de Quervain, a Calvinist theologian, in 1931 publishes *The Theological Presuppositions of Politics: Foundational Lines of a Political Theology* in response to Schmitt, taking up Schmitt's term exactly as Schmitt uses it: “Schmitt sees through the high-handedness of the morality and of the weltanschauung and of the power relations which are consolidated in themselves and assert themselves. Here the *knowledge of God's sovereignty* is not pushed aside. It is the presupposition” (de Quervain 1931, 168; see Meier 1998, 92). With a clear eye for who his friends are, de Quervain understands that Schmitt's *Political Theology*—with its subtitle *Four Chapters on the Doctrine of Sovereignty*—asserts nothing less than the sovereignty of the Christian God. It is a sovereignty that cannot be adequately obeyed by sticking to a “merely human” morality or set of norms: “Theology deals with the full reality of man; it is not the systematic working out of timeless truths. If it falls prey to this intellectualist urge, it turns into a metaphysical system, it becomes unhistorical. Theology and political knowledge [...] are inseparable” (de Quervain 1931, 11). In Schmitt's words: “Christianity is in its core not a morality and not a doctrine [...], but a historical event of infinite, unpossessible, unoccupiable uniqueness” (Schmitt 1950c, 930).

Although Chen affirms that “the theory of sovereignty is the subject matter of Schmitt's political theology” (Chen, 159), he does not understand the intention with which Schmitt makes sovereignty the central issue. For Schmitt, whoever raises the question of sovereignty on its most serious and demanding level cannot avoid asking who the true, the ultimate authority is in the face of the conflicting claims of authority man encounters in the realm of politics. In his words, found on the very surface of *Political Theology II*: “Whoever decides *in concreto* [...] the question what is spiritual and what is worldly and how do we deal with the *res mixtae* that simply, in the Interim between the arrival and the return of the Lord, make up the entire existence on earth of this spiritual-worldly, spiritual-temporal being that is *man?*” (Schmitt 1970, 107). Or, in the words of Leo Strauss in his lecture “Reason and Revelation”: “human guidance or divine guidance. *Tertium non datur*” (first published in Meier 2006, 149).

Whoever thinks about the source of guidance by which to take one's bearings in life must think about what constitutes authority or

sovereignty rightly understood. Precisely because faith in revelation claims it has the right and authoritative answer, one cannot ignore its claims. Political philosophers from Aristotle to Hobbes, from Avicenna to Nietzsche have addressed implicitly or explicitly the *problem* that is presented by the demand for obedience to the highest divine authority (a personal, loving and punishing sovereign authority in history that is not identical with a metaphysical concept, as Chen claims). For Schmitt, the Biblical claim to God's sovereignty is never a question or a problem, but the authoritative *answer* from the very start. To defend the truth of revelation as the decisive event in history, to salvage the moral seriousness guaranteed by the divine demand for obedience that alone seems to protect human life from slipping into a meaningless quest for pleasure and entertainment, to defend the sovereignty of the Christian God in an "age of neutralizations and depoliticizations" (Schmitt 1963, 79), to point to the divinely installed order that since the advent of Christ in history must ground all *legitimate* juridical order—that is Schmitt's intention. It is his intention not because he considers it politically useful, but true. How else can one understand his claim that "the denial of original sin destroys all political order" (Schmitt 1933, 45; see Meier 1998, 81 ff.)? The denial of this fundamental doctrine of faith in revelation—a doctrine unknown, for example, to the political order of the Greeks, in whom Schmitt shows no interest at all—can destroy all political order only if the political order is conceived of as a theological order. In what fashion does Schmitt conceive of the political order as theological and of the theological order as political?

"The real political distinction is the distinction between friend and enemy"—this is how Schmitt opens the little-known third and final version of his most famous work, *The Concept of the Political*. According to Chen, Schmitt's intention is simply to state "a plain truth in politics that there is neither constant enemy nor perpetual friend" (Chen, 153). This plain and simple truth would hardly have gained Schmitt's work the fame it received. If all Schmitt did was state the obvious, why did it take him three versions of *The Concept of the Political* to do so—the first one published in 1927, the second one in 1932, and the third one in 1933—with each version differing significantly from the previous one? Why did Leo Strauss's philosophical criticism of Schmitt's second version in 1932 show, according to Schmitt, a better understanding of Schmitt's intention than any other interpretation, and why did it lead Schmitt to his most radical, most unguarded formulations in the most stringent third version? And why, when *The Concept of the Political* was republished in 1963, did Schmitt choose to reprint the theoretically inferior second version, not giving so much as a hint that there ever had

been a third one? Chen, unbothered by these problems, takes into account only the second version, ignoring both the “surface” constituted by the three versions of *The Concept of the Political* as well as Schmitt's explicit statement that *The Concept of the Political* is not a “plain truth,” but the “encadration of an unfathomable problem” (Schmitt 1963, 13). Why is the distinction between friend and enemy and hence the political such a problem, possibly an unsolvable problem, for Schmitt?

Heinrich Meier's approach in his book *Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss: The Hidden Dialogue* because it traces the changes, clarifications, and radicalizations Schmitt undertakes throughout the course of the three versions gets to the heart of what Schmitt calls the common “criterion of the political and political theology”: the distinction between friend and enemy. The distinction between friend and enemy is itself a *politico-theological* distinction, and the political theologian in Schmitt's self-understanding, as opposed to a sociologist of secularization, thinks of others in terms of friend and enemy. When Schmitt sets out to defend what he calls his *Concept of the Political* for the first time in 1927, liberalism is on the rise, characterized by a parliament that “is a permanent debating club” and a doctrine that replaces the personally responsible political decision with a set of legal norms that claim to be of universal legitimacy: “In the systematics of liberal thought that still definitely prevail today,” Schmitt says, the political is “robbed, with special pathos, of all validity and subordinated to the normative prescriptions and ‘orders’ of morals, law, and economics” (Schmitt 1927, 3 f., 29; see Meier 1995, 21 f.).

Going against what he calls *Political Romanticism* (Schmitt 1919, 1925), yet still far from proclaiming “the political as the total” as he does in the preface of the 1934 re-edition of *Political Theology* in referring to the final third version of *The Concept of the Political*, Schmitt, with seeming modesty, asks liberalism to grant the “domain of the political” merely equal status with the other existing domains of the economic, the aesthetic, the legal and the moral. How to make “the correct distinction of friend and enemy” if the enemy is not the one who is morally bad, economically harmful, aesthetically ugly, or breaking the law is a problem circumvented by the possibility that the enemy may simply be an attacking state. This would suggest that the seriousness of the enemy has its reason in the “real possibility of physical killing” (Schmitt 1963, 33), in the ever-present possibility of war. And it would in part excuse Chen for thinking that Schmitt states nothing but a plain truth: states have to be prepared for deadly enemies. But the political is not constituted by

the threat of physical killing. Schmitt states that the enemy in the case of conflict means the “negation of one’s own way of existence and therefore needs to be fended off or fought in order to preserve one’s own, existential way of life” (Schmitt 1933, 32; see Meier 1998, 53). The seriousness of the enemy does not have its reason in the danger of losing one’s *life*—this would be the bourgeois position Schmitt despises—but in the danger of losing a distinct *way of life* that makes up one’s existential and not merely one’s physical being. Does Schmitt consider the enemy as enemy to the way of life of a particular nation as shaped by its particular tradition and laws, a way of life that any nation has a right to defend? Is Schmitt a theorist of nationalism?

The second version of 1932 makes clearer than the first version that this is not so. As Meier points out, Schmitt is not a nationalist, nor is the distinction between friend and enemy limited to relations between states. In the second version, the political is no longer one *domain* among others, such as the moral and the legal, but a *degree of intensity*: “the sense of denoting the most extreme degree of intensity of a bond or separation, of an association or dissociation”—within the state just as much as between states (Schmitt 1963, 38; see Meier 1998, 29 ff.). Hereby Schmitt shows what he had in mind from the very beginning: the political is the *horizon*, “the authoritative case,” for all other domains that can all become political. In the words of Schmitt: the “point of the political” can be reached from within any domain as the “most intensive and extreme opposition.” In consequence, *everything* is at all times *more or less* political, every (economic) relationship, (juridical) tension or (moral) conflict within the state can transform itself into the “most intensive and extreme opposition.” Severed from its link to an existing political community, the political “springs up” wherever two people join forces in their will to oppose a third, and the more this association is defined by what Schmitt calls the “dire emergency,” the “more political” it is. The political entity is *not* a State or a nation *fixed* by legal convention or by natural development, but *varies* with its effectiveness in distinguishing between friend and enemy in times of emergency. If the political unit is the “authoritative unit, total and sovereign” and man is “wholly and existentially grasped in political participation”—if man’s *soul* is political in its deepest nature—and if the political association in which he “participates” is constituted by the dire emergency, what does Schmitt understand by the dire emergency (Schmitt 1933, 21 f; see Meier 1998, 35 f.)?

Certainly “the reference to the possibility of physical killing” does not determine the dire emergency and make the enemy existentially

real. Fear of violent death, Schmitt holds against Hobbes, is not able to grasp man as man wholly and determine him most deeply. People are willing to die for political goals, for a way of life; people are willing to die for what they think is *right*, or they are capable of forgoing life under circumstances that deny them the way of life that they have understood to be the best one. Fear of death cannot account for why Schmitt conceives of “the political as the total.” In the 1933 version of *The Concept of the Political*, Schmitt makes this clear beyond doubt by distinguishing the *agonal* from the *political*. The agonal position—one of its famous representatives is Ernst Jünger—understands conflict and war as immanent and belonging to nature, as cyclical recurrences of an underlying eternal order. Schmitt ridicules the agonal idea of enmity as one pertaining to animals that lack knowledge of good and evil—the cat is the natural, the agonal enemy of the mouse (Schmitt 1955, 149 f.). Enmity for Schmitt is nothing that has its cause in nature or in natural beings’ will to power. Man is not an animal without a truth to fight for, and the dire emergency cannot be caused by natural agonal conflict. The *political* position perceives of enmity as something that “transcends the natural by far”: enmity is the result of a supernatural event in history resulting from an intentional division of the world into good and evil. The “political task” consists in fighting against enemies perceived of as evil for the establishment of the “true moral order”—a moral order that requires a “morally demanding decision” to be brought into being. The first version describes the political as the “ability to distinguish between friend and enemy” (Schmitt 1927, 10). The third version clarifies the political as the “*task to distinguish correctly between friend and enemy*” (Schmitt 1933, 16; my italics).

If the political as the distinction between friend and enemy is to grasp every human being wholly and totally, then finding the enemy is an existential task that no one is free to escape. For Schmitt, much depends on the correct identification of the enemy—not only to protect oneself and one’s association, but to preserve one’s individual identity that is determined by whom one recognizes as one’s enemy: “Tell me who your enemy is and I will tell you who you are” (Schmitt 1991, 243). Is the understanding of the political motivated ultimately by Schmitt’s desire to know himself? Is the political sphere in which the question of the enemy arises a means to that end?

Schmitt is indeed concerned with the possibility of self-deception. But the radical and systematic questioning of everything one believes is not Schmitt’s way, nor is it his intention in confronting this

danger. On the contrary, Schmitt polemicizes against the activity of solitary contemplation as a way of investigating the question of what is right and what is wrong. For Schmitt it is unquestionable that “self-deception is part of solitude” (Schmitt 1950b, 87; see Meier 1998, 45 f.). Not to gain self-knowledge in the Socratic way by examining the conflicting claims that arise in the sphere of the political, but to avoid self-deception as the greatest moral danger, Schmitt believes he must turn to the sphere of political action. The *question* of the right life, which is at the outset of the quest for self-knowledge, is never posed since Schmitt knows the *answer* from the very beginning: the right life consists in historical, moral *action* and not trans-historical, trans-moral *contemplation*, which in Schmitt’s frame of mind would equal a moral transgression: questioning the truth of the “morally demanding decision.”

The sphere of political action for Schmitt is essentially historical, as he outlines in his article “Three Possibilities of a Christian View of History” (Schmitt 1950c). But history for Schmitt is the realm of Providence, and must be understood as a state in which man is being tested and tried. Since Schmitt claims that every historical truth is true only once—the “structure of the historical” is the concrete “uniqueness of everything historical”—the real enemy may change with any new historical constellation, constantly appearing in a deceptive new guise (*ibid.*, 153). But if the nature of the enemy is deception, the enemy cannot be known. Schmitt attempts to solve this problem by making a virtue out of the absence of necessity by which the enemy can be known: the enemy must *necessarily* be the one who denies the necessity of enmity. This quasi-nature of the enemy that Schmitt construes remains unchangeable throughout all historical changes and deceptions: hence it is not true only once. Schmitt needs to limit the unknowability of the ever-deceptive enemy as a figure of Providence in order to salvage his political theology as a guide for concrete political action. If he wishes to hold on to the highest certainty that surpasses all merely human certainties and securities and gives his life an ultimate meaning—that there is a moral order to the universe, ruled over by an omnipotent God who has divided it into good and evil—Schmitt has to resort to this trick in order to be able to translate his faith into concrete political actions against whom he has identified as the enemy.

Yet how can Schmitt be sure that this attempt to identify the enemy is not an act of self-deception based on a false certainty? If Schmitt is afraid of illusion more than anything else and repulsed by deception more than anything else, yet if the enemy is a master of deception and if everything

depends on the right decision in the face of historical uncertainty, then what prevents Schmitt from deceiving himself in thinking that the enemy is always the one who denies the importance of enmity? “All deception is self-deception. [...] But the enemy is an objective power [...] and the real enemy cannot be deceived” (Schmitt 1950b, 89). The real enemy must have knowledge about Schmitt that Schmitt himself does not have. He has the power of calling Schmitt into question that Schmitt would not have on his own. Whence comes this power of knowledge that the enemy has?

Instead of giving a direct answer, Schmitt answers in the form of an example: the moments when “the enemy is seen with the utmost clarity” make for the “peaks of politics” (Schmitt 1933, 48 f.; see Meier 1998, 58). In order to illustrate what a historical high point of great politics is, Schmitt refers to Oliver Cromwell’s *speech* against papal Spain of September 17, 1656. In this speech, Cromwell gives the reason how he has come to *know the enemy*; he reveals that identifying the enemy has its basis in a metaphysical knowledge. The Spaniard’s “enmity is put into him by God.” He is “the providential enemy.” Whoever considers Spain an accidental enemy does not know God, who has said: “I will put enmity between your seed and her seed.” To these quotations from Cromwell Schmitt adds the explicit reference to Genesis III:15, referring the reader to the biblical account of the Fall and God’s sovereign decision to bring enmity into the world (Schmitt 1963, 67; 1933, 49; see Meier 1989, 57). The providential enemy is my brother because God wills it so. This is why Schmitt knows that he himself is inevitably an enemy to someone else, and why he himself wants to be an enemy to whoever does not believe in revealed providential enmity: “Woe to him who has no *enemy*, for *I* will be his enemy on Judgment Day” (Schmitt 1950b, 90). The enemy’s existence and identity, in Schmitt’s political theology, must be of the highest concern for any believer who takes his bearings by the revealed truth. The peak of enmity is religious war—faith fighting against errant faith—and the paradigm of war is civil war—brother fighting against brother. In light of Schmitt’s revealed knowledge of the providential enemy, his enigmatic assertions can be understood: “Spirit fights against spirit, life against life, and from the power of an integral knowledge rises the order of human things” (Schmitt 1963, 95).

Schmitt’s knowledge of enmity is his belief in revelation. It is the knowledge of divine providence in history, of the “real, ever-present and necessary eschatology” (Schmitt 1950a, 76). It is the belief in history as the “state of test and trial” in which man must attempt to answer the “call

of God”: “Do what you must, it has always been done already and you are only answering” (Schmitt 1950b, 53). The distinction between friend and enemy is not a “plain truth,” as Chen claims, but the “central concept of any great politics” that needs to be understood and adhered to through all the “deceiving and deceptive concealments” that the providential enemy may hide behind. The “great historical and significant distinction between friend and enemy” has to be found “behind the day-to-day politics” (Schmitt 1950a, 78). What conceals itself behind everyday politics is the ever-present possibility of the ultimate historical, the ultimate political event—the *dire emergency* in the strongest sense—in the form of the “fight between atheism and Christianity” (ibid., 75).

Is this the supposed “theoretician of pure politics” speaking? Schmitt’s insistence on enmity instead of peace, on the necessity of the concrete political decision answering the call of God, is the core of his political theology. As such Schmitt must understand his own theoretical activity as an expression of his obedience, his own concrete way of answering the call in an age that is becoming increasingly incapable of hearing it. Schmitt sees his task in keeping alive the knowledge of divinely revealed enmity amid all “Babylonian” hopes to bring humanity together on a common, fully neutralized ground. Because it is out of the question for Schmitt to radically *question* what may be the right way of life, the nature and origin of the political and what may precede and transcend it, he equates his “knowledge” with his “faith,” his “participation,” his “obedience.” But can faith, participation, obedience take the place of self-knowledge, or is any concrete decision Schmitt takes essentially “blind”? What happens when one realizes that one has failed at the task of identifying the enemy correctly—that one has involuntarily even helped the forces of evil, or harmed a friend? What happens when, like Schmitt throughout the course of his life, one has made political decisions that include support for the Catholic Church in the 1920s, for the Nazis in the ’30s, for partisan warfare in the ’60s? How does Schmitt, looking back, judge his own “concrete,” i.e. ever-changing, political decisions?

The most extensive treatment of this problem can be found in Schmitt’s interpretation of Thomas Hobbes, on whom Schmitt wrote several texts crucial for understanding his position as a political theologian. Schmitt’s understanding of Hobbes became more and more favorable over time, and he never regarded Hobbes as an enemy like Spinoza—Schmitt calls the “sive” in *Deus sive natura* the “most audacious insult ever to be inflicted upon God and man” (Schmitt 1991, 28; see Meier 1998, 97)—but always as

a friend for whose “soul he prays” (Schmitt 1950b, 67; see Meier 1998, 100). Influenced by the interpretation of Leo Strauss, Schmitt went from calling Hobbes “by far the greatest and possibly the only truly systematic *political* thinker” in the first version of *The Concept of the Political* to merely “a great and truly systematic thinker” in the final version in 1933—thereby subtly implying that Hobbes did not share Schmitt’s understanding of the political. How then is it possible to exempt Hobbes from Schmitt’s scathing criticism of the “anti-godly self-deification” he sees as inherent in individualism and liberalism? These are the very political doctrines for which Hobbes’s teaching is responsible more than any other thinker’s, as Strauss had demonstrated in his critique of Schmitt, “Notes on *The Concept of the Political*” (see Meier 1995). How can a thinker who teaches violent death as the greatest of all evils in order to turn fear of violent death into an instrument to support the liberal secular State not be an enemy of the thinker of the “morally demanding decision” that overcomes all concerns for self-preservation in order to fight for the right *nomos*? How can the enabler of the bourgeois way of life in a “community of culture and consumption,” the exploiter of man’s need for “peace and security,” be Schmitt’s *friend* for whom he prays?

By showing Schmitt that the political order envisioned by Hobbes would prepare the way for the nonpolitical life of entertainment which Schmitt abhorred, Strauss had indirectly accused Schmitt of not knowing who his enemy was. Schmitt’s book *The Leviathan in the Teaching of State of Thomas Hobbes: Meaning and Failure of a Political Symbol*, written in 1938 (Schmitt 1938; see Meier 1989, 100 ff.), can be read as an answer to Strauss’s 1932 criticism, an interpretation that Schmitt radicalized 27 years later in his last work on Hobbes, “The Completed Reformation” (Schmitt 1965; see Meier 1998, 119 ff.). Schmitt begins his book on the *Leviathan* with Strauss’s interpretation of Hobbes—or with what Schmitt pretends to be Strauss’s interpretation—and has Strauss introduce the distinction between politics and religion that Schmitt himself opposes.

Schmitt says that Strauss wrote in his 1930 *Spinoza’s Critique of Religion* “that Hobbes regards the Jews as the real authors of the seditious, State-destructive distinction between religion and politics,” between “worldly and religious power which was foreign to the pagans according to Hobbes because for them religion was a part of politics” (Schmitt 1938, 21; see Meier 1998, 109 ff.). But then Schmitt silently supplements Strauss’s words by writing: “the Jews *achieved unity* from the religious side. Only the Roman papal church and the power-hungry Presbyterian churches or sects

live off the State-destructive severance of religious and worldly power [...] The battle against the ‘Kingdom of Darkness’ striven for by the Roman papal church, the *restoration of the original unity*, is, as Leo Strauss observes, the real meaning of Hobbes’s political theory. That is right.”

In fact, that is not right. This is not Strauss’s interpretation of Hobbes, and it is a glaring misquotation of Strauss’s words. Strauss does *not* write that Hobbes is writing against the Catholic Church, but that Hobbes thinks that *revelation as such*, be it Jewish or Christian, Protestant or Catholic, “makes politics a part of religion: thus—as we understand Hobbes—it reverses the natural relationship which was realized in paganism.” The distinction all revelation makes between the lower worldly laws and the higher spiritual laws is, so Strauss understands Hobbes, “absurd” and has its origin in “superstition.” As Strauss writes in his 1954 article on Hobbes, the political consequence of revelation, “the dualism of power temporal and power spiritual [...] is incompatible with peace, the demand *par excellence* of reason” (Strauss 1959, 188). In light of the political consequences of revelation, the question that presents itself to Hobbes in the sphere of politics is whether it is *right* that politics become a part of religion. The answer solely depends on the question of the *right way of life*, or, in other words, it solely depends on whether revelation is *true* or not. In the words of Strauss, the alternative is clear: “supremacy of politics or revelation.” In Schmitt’s version, Strauss’s and Hobbes’s philosophically radical either-or, which raises the question of truth and supremacy, has disappeared into an “original unity” that obscures all issues of truth and incompatibility.

Besides Strauss, Schmitt also quotes the German political thinker Helmut Schelsky, who in his essay “The Totality of the State in Hobbes” interpreted Hobbes as fighting “against all political theology in every form”—political theology understood in the sense Schmitt had introduced, as political thought taking its bearings by faith in revelation (Schelsky 1938; see Meier 1998, 111 f.). Although Schmitt quotes Schelsky’s position correctly, he is perfectly silent about the fact that Schelsky’s essay on Hobbes is an explicit attack on none other than Carl Schmitt’s political theology. It becomes obvious what Schmitt is doing; in order not to confront Hobbes’s political theory in his own name, exposing his own position, he uses Strauss and Schelsky to provide the question that guides his *Leviathan* interpretation. If Hobbes was indeed trying to re-establish the “original political unity” of religion and politics (supposedly Strauss’s claim) from the side of politics “against all political theology” (Schelsky’s claim), did he succeed in doing so?

In more explicit words: Did Hobbes succeed in making Christian revelation a merely useful tool in the hands of a worldly authority? If Schmitt can show that Hobbes did *not* succeed in making revelation a mere means to the end of worldly peace and security, then the demonstration of the failure of Hobbes's supposed intention would serve him as proof for the superiority of political theology—and the superiority of revelation over all attempts at “so-called secularization.”

To cut Meier's long demonstration short: Schmitt's verdict on the failure of the Hobbesian sovereign is devastating. This must come as a surprise for anyone who thinks of Schmitt's theory as a sociological theory of secularization. Schmitt, the thinker of decision and sovereignty—derides the decision of the personal sovereign in Hobbes's political theory? Was the emphasis on sovereignty not what made Schmitt praise Hobbes originally as the only truly political thinker, a “juridical thinker,” in 1922, someone who understood that ultimately all political order was grounded not in legal norms but in a personal decision? Why then does the personal sovereign of the *Leviathan* become the object of Schmitt's polemical spite?

After what we know of Schmitt's political theology, the answer is not surprising: It is “the question of faith and miracles” that causes the downfall of the “New God,” the “rupture” in Hobbes's supposed attempt to unite religion and politics from the side of politics (Schmitt 1938, 48, 96; see Meier 1998, 108 f.). Hobbes's sovereign is sovereign only by agreement, by contract, sovereign “only in a juridical, not in a metaphysical sense” (Schmitt 1938, 52). For Schmitt, this is not enough: juridical transcendence needs metaphysical transcendence, and true authority needs metaphysical legitimacy. Hobbes's sovereign is not the *defensor pacis*, the defender of a political order and peace willed by God, but the *creator pacis*, the maker of a merely earthly political order and peace, the hybrid product of human reason and of a contract of “atomized” individuals driven by nothing but their fear for physical safety. The sovereign is not “omnipotent” because he is instituted by God, he is “omnipotent” only on earth: “Its omnipotence though is not at all of divine origin: it is the work of man” (ibid., 50). The central sentence of Schmitt's *Leviathan* book sums up Schmitt's criticism of Hobbes's political conception: “But the idea of the State as a technologically perfected *magnum artificium* created by men, as a machine that has its ‘right’ and its ‘truth’ only in itself, that is, in performance and function, was first grasped and systematically developed as a clear concept by Hobbes” (Schmitt 1938, 70 f.; see Meier 1998, 126). What does someone who attempts to read this sentence as a

neutral observation of a process of “secularization” make of ‘right’ and ‘truth’ versus true right and truth? What right is ‘right’ derived from, what truth precedes the ‘truth,’ what true State does the new machine-like ‘State’ make a farce of? Schmitt criticizes Hobbes’s idea of State as an “artificial product made by men,” a “gigantic mechanism that serves to secure the *this-worldly*, physical existence of the men whom it rules and protects.” But Hobbes is not really aware of whom he is taking on. By using the “notorious, mythical image of the Leviathan” that conjures up all sorts of forces attached to it “from time immemorial,” Hobbes is in fact summoning, supposedly without being aware of it and in a “semi-ironic way,” the “evil enemy as such,” the *real* enemy. The name of the Leviathan, so Schmitt knows, “belongs after all among those mythical names that *cannot be cited without punishment.*” It is the name for “the Devil,” “Satan”—the Antichrist (Schmitt 1938, 9, 79; see Meier 1998, 107; my italics).

But, one may wonder, the Great Animal, the Machine for which Hobbes provided the blueprint has proven hugely successful—where is the punishment that was to follow from its institution? How can Schmitt not acknowledge the success of the modern form of State? The historical success of the “Great Machine” Schmitt distinguishes from what he considers the spectacular conceptual failure of the “Mortal God,” for whom “the question of faith and of miracles became the undoing” (Schmitt 1938, 63, 79 f., 90; see Meier 1998, 108). Just like God, the worldly sovereign demands “unquestioning obedience” from his subjects. But the reason he demands obedience is not that he is the only source of truth or installed by God, but that he is the sole guarantor of “peace and security” on earth. His “truth” is solely his “function.” But what if someone does not want “peace and security” above everything else, at the price of what he believes to be the truth? What if someone wants to bring about the true political order, at the cost of peace and security? Is “peace and security” not the very promise that the Apostle Paul warned of—the promise of the Antichrist?

In this context Schmitt’s initial claim that it is Hobbes’s intention to “re-establish the original unity of politics and religion” unfolds its relevance. For, according to Schmitt, in order to re-establish this unity, the worldly sovereign would need to have full power over people’s thoughts and conscience. He would need to have the power to compel on the deepest level, to prohibit the innermost belief that God’s sovereignty is above all worldly sovereignty. As Schmitt knows, “[n]othing divine can be forced externally”—and the Leviathan is equipped with nothing but force, *potestas*,

not divine *auctoritas* to reach people's innermost faith (Schmitt 1938, 94; see Meier 1998, 113). Schmitt, as becomes more clear here than anywhere else, is not the thinker of decision that interpreters like Karl Löwith have made him to be. Schmitt in fact ridicules "Hobbes, the great decisionist" and his "typically decisionist turn: *Autoritas, non Veritas*. [...] Nothing here is true, everything here is command. A miracle is what the sovereign State power commands should be believed to be a miracle; but also—and ridicule suggests itself at this point particularly—the reverse: miracles cease when the State forbids them" (ibid. 82 f.; see Meier 1998, 112).

By keeping, as he does, "the inward thought, and belief of men" out of the reach of the sovereign, Hobbes allows for a "point of rupture" in the supposedly desired "unity of politics and religion," a rupture that will become the "seed of death" for the Leviathan. It can neither fulfill the deepest desire of man nor protect him against the terror that comes from beyond. But where man is not wholly grasped, where "the political" is not "the total," the command of the artificial sovereign falls short and, so we learn, "the ultimate superiority of the internal over the external, of the invisible over the visible, of the quiet over the loud, of the other world over the secular world" asserts itself (Schmitt 1938, 95; see Meier 1998, 113). Whoever wants to call Schmitt a theoretician of "secularization" must admit that Schmitt wants to demonstrate that this process of "neutralization of the truth" is not only sinful and ultimately useless rebellion against the revealed truth, but that man's self-empowerment as embodied in the Leviathan will, like the Leviathan himself, find its end with the Second Coming of Christ. "The meaning of all history," so Schmitt knows, "is, after all, salvation" (Schmitt 1954, 49).

In 1938, Schmitt demonstrates that the inventor of the Leviathan is not a political thinker in Schmitt's understanding of the political. Why then does "the great decisionist" Hobbes—unlike his brainchild, the Mortal God—not become the target of Schmitt's derision? Why does he allow Hobbes to get away with his political conception that encourages the forgetting of enmity and a bourgeois life of nonpolitical entertainment more than any other thinker before him? Because Schmitt *believes* that Hobbes, unlike Spinoza, did not *intend* to bring about the historical consequences his "Machine with a Soul," once on autopilot, did bring forth. For one thing, Schmitt believes he knows that Hobbes kept the "innermost thought and beliefs" of the subjects out of reach of the worldly sovereign in order to protect Christian faith. Philosophic interpretations have understood the *libertas philosophandi*—"because thought is free" (Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XXXVII)—as

Hobbes's deliberate attempt to protect the activity of contemplation from being persecuted by political, not to mention "ecclesiasticall" authority, but Schmitt, on the contrary, interprets it as Hobbes's "Christian reserve": "I believe that in Hobbes there was genuine piety. But his thought was no longer devout" (Schmitt 1938, 125-26; see Meier 1998, 117). What saves Hobbes in the eyes of Schmitt is one sentence, "*the most important sentence of Thomas Hobbes,*" that, far from being interpreted as Hobbes's attempt at neutralization, is "the sole principle of faith that is essential": "*that Jesus is the Christ*" (Schmitt 1938, 48; 1991, 243; see Meier 1998, 120 f.; see also Schmitt 1955, 153; my italics). A statement that in light of Hobbes's fundamental philosophic critique of *all* miracles (Strauss 1959, 185 ff.) can only coherently be understood as an exoteric assertion in the name of political prudence, a reminder directed at the warring parties that they do agree on the most important thing, an attempt at political neutralization of the conflict between Protestants and Catholics, Schmitt turns into the *culmination* of Hobbes's thought, his personal creed and deepest motivation for his political theorizing: to save Christianity from self-destruction. According to Schmitt, Hobbes *presupposed* the Christian faith and a Christian sovereign, and he really intended to *strengthen* Christianity in the only way he thought to be possible in his time of confessional war. That his "*machina machinarum*" became the vehicle of privatization and "neutralization" of Christian faith rather than its safeguard is a historical development that Hobbes, in Schmitt's opinion, could neither have foreseen nor intended. Hobbes's political theory is nothing but Hobbes's concrete historical response to the most pressing political conflict of the time—and ceases to be of any relevance as soon as this conflict is over.

The price Schmitt pays for his interpretation of Hobbes is to make him utterly incoherent where there is no need for him to be interpreted as incoherent. To achieve his interpretation, Schmitt has to split Hobbes arbitrarily into a pious "*vir probus,*" whose faith that *Jesus is the Christ* keeps him from allowing the sovereign access to the innermost faith of its subjects, and a philosopher, whose irreligious thought comprises a radical critique of the Bible and all miracles—with Incarnation being the greatest of all miracles—and a philosophy of a state of nature that knows neither Creation, nor obedience, nor sin. In Schmitt's interpretation, the torn thinker "Hobbes," who cannot reconcile his religious feelings with his irreligious thought, is turned into a tragic shadow of the political philosopher Hobbes, who, according to Strauss's philosophic interpretation of Hobbes, "[h]olding the view of the Bible which he did [...] was compelled to try his hand at a natural explanation of the Biblical religion" (Strauss 1959, 188).

Schmitt's interpretation of 1938 is not his last take on Hobbes. Towards the end of his life, Schmitt takes his interpretation one step further. He miraculously converts the "Hobbes" torn between non-religious thinker and "*vir probus*" into "Hobbes," the whole-hearted political theologian. The wholly politico-theological Hobbes is achieved by dropping from the picture everything that does not fit into this interpretation of Hobbes. What remains of Hobbes, the political philosopher, is Hobbes, the "*Christian Epimetheus*" "who answered to the political-historical challenge of his age with the daring feat of an 'anticipation of a commandment that is to be obeyed'" (Meier 1998, 124).

With the "Marianic view of history" that understands the task of the believer to be that of a "Christian Epimetheus," Schmitt takes up a term of "a great German poet," Konrad Weiss, and makes it central to his own political theology (Schmitt 1950c, 930). The Christian Epimetheus is diametrically opposed to the hubristic Prometheus who believes in no divine "commandment that is to be obeyed." The Christian Epimetheus has come to know as the "arcanum of ontology" that every historical truth is true only once and that "every human word is an answer" (Schmitt 1955, 148 ff.). The self-understanding of the Christian Epimetheus is that he has to make a decision concerning what he thinks the Lord of history is *calling* on him to do. Since the Christian Epimetheus bases this decision on his faith, it is a blind decision insofar as he cannot *know* Providence but can only humbly *anticipate* what God is asking of him. Any obedient action on the part of the Christian Epimetheus runs the risk of having wholly unintended historical consequences. With the figure of the Christian Epimetheus, Schmitt can explain why Hobbes effectively sped up the process of secularization when he in fact *intended to slow it down*. And the figure of the Christian Epimetheus gives Schmitt a model by which to understand himself. "Of his own case Schmitt said in the summer of 1945 that it can be called 'by a name a great poet coined. It is the bad, unworthy, and yet authentic case of a Christian Epimetheus'" (Meier 1998, 132, referring to Schmitt 1950b, 12). The Christian Epimetheus signifies the culmination and collapse of Schmitt's political theology. Since all action is necessarily blind in the face of God's almighty, inscrutable will, everything and nothing is at stake, and all Schmitt can hope for is God's grace and forgiveness in judging Schmitt's "will to obedience" or his "good intention of faith" (Meier 1998, 128).

In Schmitt's interpretation, Hobbes—"presupposing a Christian state"—dared to "blindly anticipate" the command of God by

intending the Leviathan to function as a “katechon.” The katechon Schmitt himself identifies as lying at the core of his own activity as a political theologian. The “problem of the katechon (Thess. 2,2,6)” has been, as Schmitt writes in a 1974 letter to Blumenberg, for “more than 40 years [...] *the central question of (my) political theology*” (Schmitt and Blumenberg 2007, 120; my italics). Schmitt writes this in response to Blumenberg’s interpretation of *Political Theology II* in the latter’s heavily revised edition of *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age* (Blumenberg 1974). Schmitt “considers himself obligated” to correct Blumenberg’s interpretation of Schmitt’s position because it missed the most important point: like Chen today, Blumenberg interpreted Schmitt’s work as an elaboration of a theory of secularization. But far from a theorem of secularization, the katechon is a mysterious figure mentioned for the first time in Paul’s Second Letter to the Thessalonians. It is a historical figure that *holds up* the coming of the Antichrist by slowing down the forces of evil. If Chen had taken notice of the importance of the katechon for Schmitt in many of his writings, making its first appearance in *Land and Sea* in 1942 (Schmitt 1954), he would have been able to understand that it is as far removed from a sociological theorem of secularization as Hobbes is from being a Christian Epimetheus.

History for Schmitt is the “the Interim between the arrival and the return of the Lord” (Schmitt 1970, 107) and “history itself consists in concrete questions and answers”: “By hearing the question and the call of history and trying to answer it in their actions, human beings dare to enter the great trial of historical impact and are marked by a judgment” (Schmitt 1955, 152). Not being satisfied with human measures of providing political order, Schmitt has to believe in particular providence. Ironically, his desire for a moral order and for a certainty beyond all merely human security make Schmitt, who stakes the meaning of his life on the correct distinction between friend and enemy, on historical action to slow down the forces of providential evil, fair game for “the Antichrist.” All it takes for Hobbes to win over Schmitt is to write one pious sentence in order to get away with the irreligious “rest” of his thought. Does Schmitt’s desire to find a friend in Hobbes cloud his judgment, or is the impossibility of correctly distinguishing friend and enemy of God inherent in Schmitt’s political theology—a theory that mandates a life of historical action and that derides a life of contemplation of human problems, a theory that knows only of history and not of nature, a theory that struggles in vain to deny the existence of all necessity, a theory that forgoes human knowledge for faith in superhuman commandment, a

theory that never asks the questions: “What is virtue? What is God? What is the good?” (Meier 1998, 123)?

With his reading of Hobbes, Schmitt demonstrates what happens when “the most important question” in reading a philosopher is not to try to understand him as he understood himself, but when the only concern becomes the effect of this philosopher’s teaching in and on *history*, his role and “position in the process of so-called secularization” (Schmitt 1965, 61). Schmitt demonstrates the same concern regarding himself and his position in that very process. The Christian Epimetheus or the katechon do not need to be understood by their time in order to have the desired effect on history. On the contrary, in order to be taken seriously in an age that is characterized by an “incapacity for God,” Schmitt will be more effective if he does not give away the core of his theorizing so easily. With his style of writing Schmitt himself avoids what he considers the explanation for Donoso Cortés’s failure to be heard by his own time (Schmitt 1950a, 69).

Heinrich Meier challenges his critics to consider his interpretation of Schmitt’s Hobbes the test case for his entire interpretation of Schmitt as a political theologian—a challenge that Chen silently ignores, not referring once to Schmitt’s understanding of Hobbes. If Meier’s interpretation of Schmitt stands or falls with his reading of Schmitt’s Hobbes, more than that is at stake for Schmitt himself: if Meier’s interpretation is correct, then Schmitt’s political theology fails dramatically in its decisive respect, as it offers no concrete political guidance and no intellectual protection against falling for what he himself considers to be the deceptive game of his enemy (see Meier 1998, 170). How could political action that wants to respond to the call of history ever rule out that anything may serve the mysterious workings of the Lord (see Meier 1998, 155)?

What for political theology is an unsolvable problem, for political philosophy is an invaluable insight into its own necessity. Mistaking Carl Schmitt for a sociologist, Chen fails to see why Schmitt should be of any interest to the political philosopher Leo Strauss in 1932, or, for that matter, to anyone serious about the *question of the right life* to which Schmitt has such an unambiguous answer. In the opening paragraph of his autobiographical Preface to the American translation of *Die Religionskritik Spinozas*, Strauss in 1962 looks back on the late 1920s, calling himself “a young Jew born and raised in Germany who found himself in the grip of the theologico-political predicament” (Strauss 1968, 224). In his 1964 preface for the German edition of *Hobbes’s Political Philosophy* Strauss writes that “the theologico-political

problem has since then remained *the* theme of my studies” (Strauss 2001, 7 f.). Chen claims that with the theologico-political problem Strauss was referring to what he calls the “Jewish problem” presented by Judaism and the Jewish Law. In this vein, he claims that the term “Jerusalem and Athens”—a dualism that, in the words of Strauss, constitutes “the tension of the West”—refers only to Judaism, not Christianity or Islam, and Greek philosophy. But does it not seem highly implausible to state that Renaissance, Enlightenment and all versions of historicism are caused by the tension between *Judaism* and philosophy?

In fact, the term “Jerusalem and Athens” goes back to “the jurist and theologian Tertullian” (Schmitt 1925, 137), whose thought on the nature of law and right centers in the sovereignty of God. Tertullian famously pitted obedience against the good in a sentence translated by his fellow jurist and theologian Schmitt as “we are obliged to something not because it is good but because God commands it” (ibid.). It is an equally famous expression by Tertullian that established the meaning of the term “Jerusalem and Athens”: “Quid ergo Athenis et Hierosolymis? What does the Academy have to do with the Church? What do the heretics have to do with the Christians?” (Tertullian, *De praescriptione haereticorum*, VII, 9–13). In Schmitt’s words, Tertullian “found the classical phrase” for the opposition between “received Christian theology” and “the system of a ‘natural’ scientificity,” an opposition as valid today as it was in the time of Tertullian (Schmitt 1963, 88; see Meier 1998, 95 f.). Both Tertullian, who most famously referred to the opposition of Athens and Jerusalem, and Carl Schmitt understand by “Jerusalem” Christian faith. But for the philosopher Strauss, Jerusalem is the city of revelation and stands for the way of life of obedience, of all faith as faith. Strauss stated many times that the fundamental difference between the way of life of the believer and the way of life of the philosopher is infinitely greater than the differences between the dogmas of the revealed religions on the one hand or the differences between the teachings of the philosophers on the other. This is why Strauss can write that the “conflict between Judaism and Christianity” for Spinoza was “a conflict [...] of no relevance for him as a philosopher” (Strauss 1968, 244).

The problem for the philosopher is not to know which of the revealed religions is the true one—although the investigation of this problem will lead to fundamental insights into the claim that the truth is something that needs to be revealed by God and cannot be discovered by reason. The problem for the philosopher is *which way of life is the right one*: the one that

takes its bearings by the highest revealed authority or the one that takes its bearings by one's own natural capacity for reason? Political philosophy stands for the way of life guided by human reason alone, whereas political theology stands for the way of life of faith. This is how Strauss understands and uses both terms—or, to be more precise, in this way he himself introduces the term “political philosophy” into literature (Meier 2006, xi–xiii). Strauss adopts “political philosophy” to describe his own position as exactly opposed in meaning to “political theology”: “We are compelled to distinguish political philosophy from political theology. By political theology we understand political teachings which are based on divine revelation” (Strauss 1959, 13). Just as Hobbes, “holding the view of the Bible which he did [...] was compelled to try his hand at a natural explanation of the Biblical religion,” so Strauss himself was compelled to do the same, because “being based on belief” is “a calamity for philosophy” (Strauss 1968, 236).

An example of Strauss's claim to provide a philosophic explanation of revelation is his text “Reason and Revelation,” which contains a genealogy of faith in revelation that demonstrates, beginning with the “need of man for law,” the transformation of a mythical law into a revealed law. And, what should come as a surprise to Chen, Strauss equally shows the transformation of the first Biblical revelation into the second Biblical revelation: Strauss, the philosopher born as a Jew, here tries his hand at a natural explanation of Christian Incarnation out of the political problems of Jewish Law (Meier 2006, 165 ff.). In the same vein Strauss had written a decade earlier, in his unfinished text “A Recollection of Lessing” from 1937, that he had “the weakness to prefer to give his attention to a Jew” but did not find any Jew in more recent times “of the freedom of mind of Lessing,” “a philosopher born as a Christian.” Strauss writes that “much changes in detail, but little in the main issue,” when the reader substitutes the term “Judaism” for the term “Christianity” throughout Strauss's text. “The benevolent reader is asked to read in this fashion in the interest of the issue, and hence in his own interest” (Strauss 1997, 607).

The issue of interest is the truth claim of the necessity of revealed wisdom as the greatest challenge presented to political philosophy. Strauss asks the benevolent reader to be benevolent to himself, not to the author Strauss, so the reader may not miss out on what he can learn. Chen not only does not do himself (or his readers) this favor, he even quotes the author who reminds us how to approach the theologico-political problem as his authority for paying no attention to this problem at all. The fundamental

question is not which of the three revelations is the true one or which Christian political theology does most justice to all aspects and contradictions of the Bible, but whether man as man is right or wrong in basing his life on anything but his own reason. Strauss puts the answer this way, in direct opposition to Schmitt: “man cannot abandon the question of the good society, and [...] he cannot free himself from the responsibility for answering it by deferring to *History* or to *any other power different from his own reason*” (Strauss 1959, 27; my italics).

So why, of all political theologians, Carl Schmitt? What is the benefit of reading and studying him? What is his lesson? Is not his interpretation of how a Christian has to understand the right way of life as a life of historical action just one among many possible interpretations of Christian revelation? Why is his theorizing out of obedience, why is his political theology so worthy of interest to anyone who wants to understand the challenge and the problem of political theology? Schmitt does not allow for the interpretation of political theology as a mere means to the end of the best political order, with the political order understood as essentially a human order designed to bring about the welfare and security of human beings. Schmitt does not allow for the philosophic interpretation of the prophets as lawgivers who “honor the gods with their own wisdom” (Rousseau, *Du Contrat Social*, II, 7), he does not allow for the instrumental meaning of political theology as Varro and Scaevola understood it, because he himself believes in the truth of God’s wisdom, which in turn leads him, like few other believers, to think about and elaborate on what that means for his own life in its every aspect.

There seems to be widespread objection today to the idea that the truth of revelation can ultimately only be met by obedience, i.e. that a “fideist” interpretation of revelation is the only one that lives up to the demands of revelation. The more accepted interpretation, of Christian revelation at least, is that the leap of faith is not in opposition to reason. Schmitt believes in the supra-rationality of the Bible, in revelation being neither accessible nor assailable by human reason. His political theology differs from the political theology of the current pope, Benedict XVI, in that Schmitt does not consider a “synthesis” between Greek philosophy and Christian obedience to be possible, but instead sides with Tertullian against all philosophy. Yet he clearly had an interest in understanding himself, he felt a need to justify his actions. His political theory with its concepts of the enemy, the katechon, the Christian Epimetheus show how seriously he took his task of understanding

his activity. Carl Schmitt can remind both the believer as well as the non-believer that any form of harmonization is the result of a lack of understanding of what is at stake.

Chen again misses the point when he blames Meier for “whitewashing” Schmitt of his political sins by interpreting his political choices as deriving from his faith. To consider Meier’s analysis an absolution of Schmitt presupposes moral categories not inherent in Meier’s approach, which is geared at understanding the problem presented by Schmitt’s political theology—both to the philosopher as well as to Schmitt himself. It aims at an understanding that finds its ultimate interest and intention not in moral judgment—and thereby may be all the more powerful. To investigate the insurmountable problems of a political theory that wants to be based on faith in revelation by showing the disastrous calamities that a political theologian of the intellectual caliber and radical consequence of Schmitt *must* encounter is what philosophy must do in order to “know what it is not, what it cannot be, and what it does not want to be” (Meier 1998, 173). Schmitt, against his will and proclaimed intention of being an enemy to whoever does not believe in revelation, in the last resort cannot avoid his fate of being an involuntary helping hand on the path of a philosophic nature’s quest for knowledge of the right way of life.

REFERENCES

- Bakunin, Michail. 1961. *La Théologie Politique de Mazzini et L’Internationale. Oeuvres Complètes I*, Leiden–Paris: Champion.
- Blumenberg, Hans. 1966. *Die Legitimität der Neuzeit*. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp. (*The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*.)
- . 1974. *Säkularisierung und Selbstbehauptung*. Enlarged and revised edition of *Die Legitimität der Neuzeit*, first and second part. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp. (*Secularization and Self-affirmation*.)
- Meier, Heinrich. 1995. *Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss: The Hidden Dialogue*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- . 1998. *The Lesson of Carl Schmitt. Four Chapters on the Distinction between Political Theology and Political Philosophy*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

- . 2006. *Leo Strauss and the Theologico-Political Problem*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Melville, Herman. 1998. The Lightning-Rod Man. In *Billy Budd and Other Stories*. Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Classics.
- Peterson, Erik. 1994. *Der Monotheismus als politisches Problem. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der politischen Theologie im Imperium Romanum. (Monotheism as a Political Problem: A Contribution to the History of Political Theology in the Roman Empire.)* Leipzig, 1935. Reprinted in *Theologische Traktate. Ausgewählte Schriften*, vol. 1, Würzburg: Echter.
- . 2004. *Offenbarung des Johannes und politisch-theologische Texte. Ausgewählte Schriften*, vol. 4. Würzburg: Echter.
- de Quervain, Alfred. 1931. *Die theologischen Voraussetzungen der Politik. Grundlinien einer politischen Theologie*. Berlin: Furche. (*The Theological Presuppositions of Politics. Foundational Lines of a Political Theology.*)
- Schelsky, Helmut. 1938. Die Totalität des Staates bei Hobbes. *Archiv für Rechts- und Sozialphilosophie* 31, no. 2, 176-93. (The Totality of the State in Hobbes.)
- Schmitt, Carl. 1916. *Theodor Däubler's "Nordlicht."* Munich: Georg Müller. (*Theodor Däubler's "Northern Light."*)
- . 1925. *Politische Romantik*. Munich–Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot. (*Political Romanticism*. Revised and expanded second edition; first published in 1919.)
- . 1922. *Politische Theologie*. Munich–Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot. (*Political Theology*.)
- . 1923. *Römischer Katholizismus und Politische Form*. Hellerau: Hegner. (*Roman Catholicism and Political Form*.)
- . 1927. Der Begriff des Politischen. *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik* 58, no. 1, 1-33.
- . 1933. *Der Begriff des Politischen*. Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt.
- . 1934. *Politische Theologie*. Munich–Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot.
- . 1938. *Der Leviathan in der Staatslehre des Thomas Hobbes. Sinn und Fehlschlag eines politischen Symbols*. Hamburg: Hanseatische

- Verlagsanstalt (*The Leviathan in the Teaching of State of Thomas Hobbes: Meaning and Failure of a Political Symbol.*)
- . 1950a. *Donoso Cortés in gesamteuropäischer Interpretation*. Cologne: Greven. (*Donoso Cortés in European Interpretation.*)
- . 1950b. *Ex Captivitate Salus*. Cologne: Greven.
- . 1950c. Drei Möglichkeiten eines christlichen Geschichtsbildes. *Universitas* 5, no. 8 (August), 927–31. (Three Possibilities of a Christian View of History.)
- . 1954. *Land und Meer. Eine weltgeschichtliche Betrachtung*. 2nd ed. Stuttgart: Reclam. (*Land and Sea. A World-historical Consideration.*)
- . 1955. Die geschichtliche Struktur des heutigen Welt-Gegensatzes von Ost und West. In *Freundschaftliche Begegnungen*. Frankfurt a. M.: Klostermann, 135–67. (The Historical Structure of the Contemporary Global Opposition of East and West.)
- . 1963. *Der Begriff des Politischen* (ed. 1932). Berlin: Duncker & Humblot.
- . 1965. Die vollendete Reformation. Bemerkungen und Hinweise zu neuen Leviathan-Interpretationen. *Der Staat*, vol. 4, no. 1, 51–69. (The Completed Reformation. Comments on and References to New Interpretations of the Leviathan.)
- . 1970. *Politische Theologie II. Die Legende von der Erledigung jeder Politischen Theologie*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot. (*Political Theology II: The Legend of the Disposal of Every Political Theology.*)
- . 1991. *Glossarium. Aufzeichnungen der Jahre 1947–1951*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot. (*Glossarium: Notes from the Years 1947–1951.*)
- , and Hans Blumenberg. 2007. *Briefwechsel 1971–1978*. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp. (*Letters 1971–1978.*)
- Strauss, Leo. 1930. *Die Religionskritik Spinozas als Grundlage seiner Bibelwissenschaft*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag. Reprinted in *Gesammelte Schriften* (ed. H. Meier), vol. 1, 1996, new edition 2008. Stuttgart–Weimar: Metzler.

- . 1952. *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes: Its Basis and Its Genesis*. (Translated from the German manuscript by Elsa M. Sinclair.) Reissued with a new preface, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- . 1958. *Thoughts on Machiavelli*. Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press.
- . 1959. *What Is Political Philosophy? And Other Studies*. Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press.
- . 1965. *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*. New York: Schocken.
- . 1968. *Liberalism Ancient and Modern*. New York: Basic Books.
- . 1997. Eine Erinnerung an Lessing. In *Gesammelte Schriften* (ed. H. Meier), vol. 2. Stuttgart–Weimar: Metzler.
- . 2001. *Hobbes' Politische Wissenschaft*. (*The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, German original.) In *Gesammelte Schriften* (ed. H. Meier), vol. 3. Stuttgart–Weimar: Metzler.