

interpretation

A JOURNAL OF POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

May 1985

Volume 13 Number 2

- 143 Ronna Burger Socratic *Eirōneia*
- 151 Peter Emberley Rousseau and the Management of the Passions
- 177 Robert Webking Virtue and Individual Rights in John Adams' *Defence*
- 195 Donald J. Maletz The Meaning of 'Will' in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*
- 213 Vukan Kuic Foreword for
"The Politics of Alain" by Yves R. Simon
- 215 Yves R. Simon "The Politics of Alain"
translated by John M. Dunaway
- 233 Walter Nicgorski Leo Strauss and Liberal Education

Book Reviews

- 251 Maureen Feder-Marcus *Beyond Nihilism: Nietzsche without Masks*
by Ofelia Schutte
- 261 Richard Velkley *Dialogue and Dialectic: Eight Hermeneutical Studies
on Plato* by Hans-Georg Gadamer, translated and
with an Introduction by P. Christopher Smith
- 268 Will Morrisey *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science,
Hermeneutics, and Praxis* by Richard J. Bernstein;
*G. W. F. Hegel: an Introduction to the Science of
Wisdom* by Stanley Rosen
- 277 Larry Arnhart *The Artist as Thinker: from Shakespeare to Joyce*
by George Anastaplo

Short Notices

- 285 J. E. Parsons, Jr. *Eighty Years of Locke Scholarship: a Bibliographical
Guide* by Roland Hall & Roger Woolhouse; *John
Locke's Moral Philosophy* by John Colman
- 287 Will Morrisey *Rhetoric and American Statesmanship* edited by Glen
Thurrow & Jeffrey D. Wallin; *Power, State, and
Freedom: an Interpretation of Spinoza's Political
Philosophy* by Douglas J. Den Uyl; *John Stuart Mill
and the Pursuit of Virtue* by Bernard Semmel; *Essays
in Political Philosophy* by J. E. Parsons, Jr.

interpretation

Volume 13 number 2

Editor-in-Chief Hilail Gildin

Editors Seth G. Benardete • Charles E. Butterworth • Hilail Gildin • Robert Horwitz • Howard B. White (d.1974)

Consulting Editors John Hallowell • Wilhelm Hennis • Erich Hula • Arnaldo Momigliano • Michael Oakeshott • Ellis Sandoz • Leo Strauss (d.1973) • Kenneth W Thompson

Associate Editors Fred Baumann • Patrick Coby • Christopher A. Colmo • Derek Cross • Edward J. Erler • Maureen Feder-Marcus • Joseph E. Goldberg • Pamela K. Jensen • Will Morrisey • Charles Rubin • Leslie Rubin • John A. Wettergreen • Bradford Wilson • Catherine Zuckert • Michael Zuckert

Assistant Editors Marianne C. Grey • Laurette G. Hupman

Design & Production Martyn Hitchcock

Annual subscription rates individual \$13; institutional \$16; student (3-year limit) \$7. *INTERPRETATION* appears three times a year.

Address for correspondence *INTERPRETATION*, Queens College, Flushing, N.Y. 11367, U.S.A.

Authors submitting manuscripts for publication in *INTERPRETATION* are requested to follow the *MLA Style Sheet* and to send clear and readable copies of their work.

Copyright 1985 • Interpretation

phy should be expressed according to hermeneutics as the difference between a nobler attachment to one's own (language, history, or tradition) and a baser one (pleasure and narrow self-interest as exploited by sophistry)?

If this is the case, it may mean that this recent hermeneutics reflects a fundamental change that occurred in Western thought when the Romantic movement substituted the notion of "culture" for the ancient "city," in an attempt to restore something of the noble "love of one's own," that was characteristic of the ancient city, upon the basis of modern, essentially "progressivist," premises. The modern notion of "culture" is alleged to make possible a profound attachment to a particular tradition without the limitations of life in closed societies. It is in this spirit that contemporary hermeneutics regards the immersion in a particular tradition not as an end in itself but as the necessary starting point for openness to all other traditions or horizons. Truth is embodied not in the universal of "abstract reason" but in the particular culture as engaged in conversation with other (potentially all) cultures. This modern solution to the problem of the relation of truth or inquiry to "concrete life" or the necessities of politics sees its enemy as the allegedly "dogmatic rationalism" of the Enlightenment (or the "Sophists"), which discredited all traditional allegiances. Yet it overlooks, perhaps, a basic agreement with its opponents: an underestimation of the harshness of the sacrifices required by dedication to inquiry, on the one hand, or by attachment to the city, on the other hand, and the more or less exclusive nature of these dedications. Contemporary hermeneutics may reveal that modern philosophy remains fecund: here is yet another profound and engaging variety of the faith in the rationality or perfectibility of common opinion or custom, and the belief that the "historical process" is in some sense the manifestation of truth.

Historicity and Reason: Two Studies

Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis. By Richard J. Bernstein. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983. xix + 284 pp.: cloth \$25.00, paper \$9.95.)

G. W. F. Hegel: An Introduction to the Science of Wisdom. By Stanley Rosen. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974. xxi + 302 pp.: paper, \$8.95).

WILL MORRISEY

In his commentary on Xenophon's *Hiero*, Leo Strauss restates his assessment of classical and modern political science. The former takes "its bearings by man's perfection or by how men ought to live, and it culminate[s] in the descrip-

tion of the best political order.” The classics consider that order’s realization unlikely and dependent upon chance. Modern or Machiavellian political science, however, takes its bearings not by how men ought to live but by how they do live. It teaches that chance “could or should be controlled.” Strauss does not write “could *and* should be controlled”; the word “or” suggests that for moderns ‘is’ and ‘ought’ tend to be interchangeable. This tendency culminates in historicism, the doctrine that “the foundations of human thought are laid by specific experiences which are not, as a matter of principle, coeval with human thought as such.” The distinction between practice and theory, then, also blurs.

If “all human thought is historical,” philosophy as described in Plato’s *Republic*—the ascent from the cave where mere opinion rules—may not exist, absent some ‘absolute moment’ wherein truth becomes accessible. For most if not all of history the philosopher differs from other thinkers only ‘in degree.’ Modern philosophy tends to democratize our thoughts about thought and thinkers. Having observed modern tyrannies ‘Right’ and ‘Left,’ Strauss warns of a “perpetual and universal tyranny” based on the “collectivization” of thought. In the *Republic* democracy leads to tyranny; modern tyranny enforces the democratization of thought that historicism depicts as characteristic of all or most thought.

Many contemporary intellectuals recognize the inconveniences of tyranny. Some see that certain kinds of historicism encourage tyranny. This does not cause them to abandon historicism altogether. It rather intensifies efforts to formulate what might be called a humane historicism. Richard J. Bernstein’s project exemplifies this trend. Bernstein would jettison historicism, at least in its more radical forms, while retaining historicity, a sense of reason’s limits or horizons.

Bernstein criticizes the “intellectually imperialistic claims made in the name of [modern scientific] Method.” He describes “the Cartesian foundations of modern philosophy” as involving a “spectator theory of knowledge”: objectivism, defined as “the basic conviction that there is or must be some permanent, ahistorical matrix or framework to which we can ultimately appeal in determining the nature of rationality, knowledge, truth, reality, goodness, or rightness.” At the same time, Bernstein wishes to avoid relativism, “the basic conviction that when we turn to the examination of those concepts that philosophers have taken to be the most fundamental . . . we are forced to recognize that in the final analysis all such concepts must be understood as relative to a specific scheme, theoretical framework, paradigm, form of life, society, or culture,” of which a “non-reducible plurality” exists. Thus Bernstein regards modern philosophy’s pretensions to truth (a word he often encloses in quotation marks) a remnant of premodern illusions. But he denies that the abandonment of truth need bring chaos, conceptual or moral. Reporting that he has “been attracted to, and at the same time skeptical of, Hegel’s concept of *Geist*,” he disbelieves Hegel’s claim to scientific knowledge while endorsing Hegel’s “insight” that “dynamic movements of thinking . . . pervade, inform, and give direction to cultural life.”

Bernstein would retain reason but ‘liberate’ it from expectations of precision and certainty. Reason may then govern but not rule, much less tyrannize.

Bernstein concentrates much of his attention on Thomas Kuhn’s treatment of scientific “paradigms” and on Hans-Georg Gadamer’s treatment of “hermeneutics.” After some adjustments, he finds their doctrines complementary. As regards science, Bernstein insists that scientific disputes involve “validity claims,” not mere likes and dislikes. (For example, Newton and Einstein disagree about nature, not about their own inclinations.) But rational men may nonetheless disagree rationally without arriving at a rational resolution. “[F]or Kuhn, rival paradigm theories are logically *incompatible* (and, therefore, really in conflict with one another); *incommensurable* (and, therefore, they cannot always be measured against each other point-by-point); and *comparable* (capable of being compared with each other in multiple ways without requiring the assumption that there is or must be a common, fixed grid by which we measure progress).” If it is not altogether clear exactly what this leaves, that may be part of the point. Crystalline clarity is more than we are entitled to expect. Bernstein quotes a scholar who cites the *Nicomachean Ethics* I, 3 on this. Bernstein would adapt Aristotelian practical wisdom for use in scientific theorizing—not in scientific research itself, wherein theses must still be tested experimentally, but in the more comprehensive domain now called ‘philosophy of science.’ Bernstein finds an analogue in Gadamer’s attempt to rehabilitate practical wisdom.

Gadamer takes hermeneutics beyond its traditional use as the means of understanding texts. As “beings who understand and interpret” we must “understand understanding itself” if we would understand ourselves; understanding, the combination of interpretation and application, “may properly be said to underlie and pervade all activities” of human beings as such. Interpretation consists of the “dynamic interaction or transaction” between, for example, a work of art and the spectator; neither entirely of the object nor of the subject, interpretation exists ‘in between’ them. Interpretation is an infinite process, not a fixed achievement. This contention suggests that the infinity of the process owes more to the subject than to the object. “[W]hat the ‘things themselves’ say will be different in the light of our changing horizons and the different questions that we learn to ask.” The metaphor, “horizons,” reminds Bernstein of Kuhn’s incompatible, incommensurable, but nonetheless comparable “paradigm theories”; we learn, in both cases, by “fusing” our “horizons” with those of another. “The appeal to truth—a truth that enables us to go beyond our historical horizons through a fusion of horizons—is absolutely essential in order to distinguish philosophic hermeneutics from a historicist form of relativism.” This “truth” resembles Hegel’s version of truth in that it is revealed in the process of experience and emerges in the dialogic encounter with tradition. It differs from Hegel’s version of truth in that it is never final; there is no absolute knowledge/wisdom that completes and overcomes experience—only more experience. If this is historicism—and both

Gadamer and Bernstein deny that it is—it is a historicism made humane by its modesty. But, as Strauss in effect asks Gadamer (see the “Correspondence Concerning *Wahrheit und Methode*,” *The Independent Journal of Philosophy*, Volume II, 1978, p. 7), can such historicism remain modest about itself, or does it posit (or assume) an “absolute moment” of self-consciousness wherein it is discovered? If it does not posit an “absolute moment,” is it really distinguishable from relativism? If it is distinguishable from relativism simply because it acknowledges human fallibility, can it be redeemed from trivality? In short, are our “horizons” natural, historical, or both? If both, what’s the ratio of nature to history?

Bernstein criticizes Gadamer for failing to produce “a form of argumentation that seeks to warrant what is valid in . . . tradition”; practical wisdom needs some solid (if not very precise) content. Further, Gadamer “does not include a detailed understanding of how power as domination . . . operates in the modern world.” “[*P*]hronēsis without *technē* is empty,” particularly *phronēsis* without the techniques of “contemporary social knowledge.” In search of these, Bernstein turns primarily to Jürgen Habermas, secondarily to Hannah Arendt. Habermas calls for “a genuine dialectical synthesis of the ancients and the moderns, not turning one’s back on modernity as many neo-Aristotelians are tempted to do.” (Habermas and Bernstein object to, among other things, neo-Aristotelianism’s usefulness to “bourgeois conservative thought”—thereby failing to fuse their “horizons” with *one* alien form of life.) The “norms” to be followed in making this synthesis “can only be validated by the *participants* in a practical discourse,” discourse “grounded in the very character of our linguistic intersubjectivity” and of purposive action. Bernstein quite understandably wishes that Habermas would firm this up a bit. But Bernstein can only say that the “*telos* immanent in our communicative action that is oriented to mutual understanding” requires both “autonomy” and “solidarity,” a combination that would be a synthesis indeed. Arendt does not offer Bernstein much help in his project because “the criticism of Gadamer that I suggested earlier” also applies to her: “the danger for *praxis* does not come from *technē*, but from *domination*.” Bernstein does not show how *technē* can be separated from domination of some sort.

Moving “beyond objectivism and relativism is not just a theoretical problem but a practical task.” In practice it means developing “dialogical communities”—*egalitarian* political orders animated by “solidarity, public freedom, a willingness to talk and listen, mutual debate, and a commitment to rational persuasion.” Such communities appear prominently in much of contemporary Leftist political thought, as for example in the writings of Benjamin Barber and Alasdair MacIntyre. Consistent with this orientation, Bernstein ends by referring readers to Marx. Just as Bernstein’s historicism, if it can be called that, is a humane historicism, so his Marxism is a dilute Marxism. “We can no longer share Marx’s theoretical certainty, or revolutionary self-confidence.” Bernstein denies

Marx's necessitarian historical dialectic. But he does insist, with Marx, that a theoretical movement, such as the one "beyond objectivism and relativism," can gain "reality and power" only if practice supplements theory.

It is difficult to avoid the suspicion that Bernstein's project does not so much synthesize classical and modern thought as it effects an uneasy compromise, leaving both weaker.¹ To clarify the issues involved, one looks for stronger stuff, even if it has proven more dangerous. For a truly magisterial attempt to synthesize classic and modern, only Hegel will do. Stanley Rosen has written an indispensable guide to Hegel's "science of wisdom."

"[F]irst and foremost a logician," Hegel "accepts the Greek conception of philosophy as the attempt to give a *logos* or discursive account of the whole." But Hegel goes beyond the literal meaning of the word "philosophy," claiming not merely to love wisdom but to possess it. A modern who attempts to possess wisdom concerning the whole faces an obstacle the classics perhaps underestimated: subjectivity. If the intellect "is itself a resident in the spatio-temporal world, it, together with its products, must be historical rather than temporal." Alternatively, a modern may regard intellect as separate from 'this world,' obtaining a dualism in which the subject is deemed 'creative'; Rousseauan imagination eventuates in Heideggerian poetry. Hegel would overcome these antiphilosophic philosophies by "defin[ing] the process by which we acquire wisdom as identical with the historical experience of Western man"—not so much the history of actions as the history of rational thoughts, of philosophy. Hegel intends his "science of wisdom" to be "the *logical* conclusion or culmination of Western philosophy taken as a whole."

Hegel would understand history's significance by 'recapturing' conceptually "the logical pattern of [history's] development," which proceeds not linearly but "dialectically," that is, by a series of contradictions whereby pairs of contradictory elements are "assimilated into a third and higher level of development." This occurs by the grace, so to speak, of the "Absolute Spirit," the source of spiritual *activity* and not a static form or idea. History, "the gradual unfolding of the universal significance of the human spirit," is "fundamentally political." It can be both spiritual and political because Hegel unites theory and practice; the "spiritual" is *in* 'this world.' When fully manifest (as it is, for the first time, in the thought of Hegel), the Absolute Spirit brings history to a stop. The 'end of history' does not mean that no more events occur but that no radically new events occur. "[N]o degree of essential satisfaction [is] still to be obtained in some historical or transcendent future"—Christian, Marxist, or even Bernsteinian. Unlike the latter two thinkers, Hegel is no egalitarian. *His* theory, while united with

1. "Syntheses effect miracles. Kojève's or Hegel's synthesis of classical and Biblical morality effects the miracle of producing an amazingly lax morality out of two moralities both of which made very strict demands on self-restraint" (Leo Strauss: "Restatement on Xenophon's *Hiero*," in *On Tyranny*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963, p. 205).

practice, remains superior to practice. Reality, truth, or being is not contingent. Absolute Spirit or “God” exhibits its essential nature in historical events; it does not derive its essential nature from those events. “God reveals himself *to himself*, and through the medium (or audience) of man. Man understands God by understanding himself.” Still, because Absolute Spirit does exhibit its essential nature *in human history*, Hegel insists that a few if not most human beings can possess wisdom and not merely admire it from afar.

Wisdom is knowledge of a particular kind, knowledge of “the rule by which classes are formed.” This rule is not itself a class (the attempt to find a “class of all classes” leads to infinite regress); the rule expresses the essence of any class. Hegel would overcome the subject/object dichotomy by teaching that “the object is given to us within the knowing-process by the activity of the Absolute, or the process by which *everything is what it is*.” To be and to know are co-extensive. Politically, this means that the state is the image and actuality of reason. “The content of *essential history and logic*” is “the same” (emphasis added) because we are dealing with a logic of activity and not a logic that articulates static forms. Speaking metaphorically, one can say that “God actualizes within the thinking of man.” Speaking less metaphorically, one can say that “the Absolute [Spirit] manifests itself in individual form”; it “individuates.”

Hegelian logic arises as a response to a difficulty in “analytic or scientific thinking.” Such thinking is “*regulated* by the principle of contradiction.” There can be no analytical reflection upon this principle that does not assume the principle. If the *ego cogitans* examines itself, it becomes both subject and object, thereby “violat[ing] the principle of contradiction by the act of asserting it.” This leads non-Hegelians to posit the existence of intellectual intuition. Hegel attempts to avoid this exigency by asserting the essential identity of being and thinking, subject and object. This ‘completes’ or explains traditional logic without annihilating it. Rosen makes the provocative suggestion that Plato understands this, or at least provides the grounds for understanding this, near the beginning of philosophy’s history. “As soon as we analyze the Platonic conception of Being, it transforms itself into the Hegelian conception,” with one major qualification. Platonic Being is not self-conscious, whereas “Hegel’s One . . . is self-conscious Absolute Spirit, or the Parmenidean One brought to life.” (We are therefore entitled to think that Rosen’s two subsequent books, titled *The Limits of Analysis* and *Plato’s Sophist*, follow from his *G. W. F. Hegel*.)

Rosen observes that for Aristotle the principle of contradiction is finally not a principle so much as “a most stable opinion.” Hegel boldly transforms this opinion into dialectic, “the science of the sciences.” This transformation comports with his claim to possess, and not merely love, wisdom. Problem: How to deduce the principle of contradiction *from itself*, thus avoiding infinite regress? Here Hegel introduces the concept of “reflection,” which Rosen calls “the center of the center” of Hegel’s logic. The ego can only think the principle of contradiction if it somehow *is* both what is posited and what is not posited, both P and

non-P. The One (= Absolute Spirit = “God” = The Whole) differentiates itself in a manner analogous to Aristotle’s formless “pure thought thinking itself” by both positing and negating, self-consciously and simultaneously. To say ‘P’ is to simultaneously distinguish P from all non-P and therefore to *think* both P and non-P. Hegelian reflection perceives that the Whole “is itself a ‘sophist,’” which “continuously changes its shape or pretends to be what it is not,” eluding classification by nondialectical, non-Hegelian logicians. In a sense, the Whole *is* self-contradiction, generating or positing the conflicting thoughts and things of this world. There is an order to this, but it is an order of (dialectical) development and not a stable framework. Philosophy is transformed into wisdom “by the process which renders [the ‘principle’ of contradiction] self-reflective.”

The formation process of Absolute Spirit is “always and everywhere the same.” Its consequences are not. Phenomenon-ology, the *logos* of the phenomena, reflects Hegel’s conviction that phenomena have (Hegelian) logic within them. For example, the simple act of eating shows contradiction that results in an object’s assimilation into a higher order: hungry animal + food (destroyed ‘in itself’) = satisfaction. The Hegelian logic within the phenomena finally reveals itself after “a given number of historical stages” in which “the totality of . . . logical categories is revealed.” (Those lacking Hegelian wisdom or “perfect satisfaction” find life tragic, a “slaughterbench” of contradictory persons and thoughts). So while *The Phenomenology of Spirit* in one sense introduces *The Science of Logic*, in another sense it could not be written until after completion of the *Logic*, after the end of history.

Reason is “cunning.” It works through objects, and through our desires for objects. We consume and produce until all objects have been produced and assimilated, “until man has satisfied his desire by producing the objective world as the complete actualization of his own subjectivity” and “thereby identifies himself with God.” “[M]orality and freedom [the making of the self in the activity of producing the world] depend upon the production of *this* world of intersubjectivity, as initiated in the war of each against each” but as eventuating, finally, in peace made possible when I “recognize myself in the other because we are both instances of the self-consciousness of Absolute Spirit.” In political history this has meant replacing the active, noble silence of the Spartan aristocrat, which ends in death, with the moderns’ emphasis on rhetoric and self-preservation. “[I]f the best men die in silence, the state will fall into the hands of the worst men.” The good must become ‘bad’ in order to provide a foundation for political virtue; the high must “learn the ways and the weapons of the low”—another example of reason’s cunning.

Even nihilism is dialectically necessary. The worst must be overcome in order to yield the best. (Here Rosen permits himself one of several jabs at Nietzsche: the will-to-power is merely “Hegel’s Absolute Spirit suffering from a loss of consciousness.”)

Nihilism is intelligible, and therefore it may be overcome. Indeed, it must be overcome; the mind responds inevitably to the intelligible by grasping it. The presence of an obstacle is 'food' for the engine of desire in its pursuit of total satisfaction.

Nihilism takes numerous forms, from the terror of the French Revolution to the esthete's refined hedonism. All find themselves superseded by the revelation of "Hegel's heresy": "*God becomes man in order to become God*," a metaphorical way to express the self-revelation of Absolute Spirit. "For Hegel, to think the truth is to be 'in the truth,' or still more sharply, *to be* the truth." The soul and the concept are finally identical, both aspects of Absolute Spirit. Hegel calls the completion of analysis and synthesis "speculation"—"the thinking of the Whole." The Hegelian sage "*remembers* the totality of his wisdom as he completes it, and so can never step 'beyond' it but must rather begin to think it again." Wisdom/speculation is *circular*. Hegelian logic yields not an infinite regress but an infinite revolution. "Spirit is now complete, and so 'resting in itself,' although it is 'excited.'" Hegel regards this as the solution to "the fundamental problem of the entire philosophic tradition," as presented in Plato's *Sophist*: "How can Being or the Whole be both at rest and in motion?"

Rosen offers several criticisms of Hegel's doctrine; among these, several are noteworthy for our purposes. First, Rosen suspects that recourse to intellectual intuition is not avoidable. Even Hegelian discourse "can occur only after the actual presents itself." Without intellectual intuition, how do we know the actual *has* presented itself? Second, while attempting to explain the formation process Hegel "fail[s] to explain how any *thing* comes to be." Hegel's vulnerability to such 'How' questions perhaps tempted Marx to formulate his materialist neo-Hegelianism.

In addition to these and other theoretical problems, Rosen identifies a practical dilemma. Plato commends a sort of alienation whereby the philosopher transcends 'this world.' Hegel would overcome alienation by rendering practice absolute: that is, spirit and body are reconciled by the grace of the Absolute Spirit, incarnated in the living, self-conscious process of thought thinking itself within the mind of the Hegelian sage, who is satisfied within, not 'above,' concrete political-historical life. But "the very existence of the sage is the most radical evidence of the difference between the few and the many." In modernity this difference, when resented, can lead to "the condemnation to death of philosophy itself." This condemnation is made in the name of the many, said by their putative spokesmen to embody wisdom. There is little satisfaction in that for the sage. Politics remains as problematic for the sage as for the philosopher.

In his exchange with Strauss, Alexandre Kojève insists that the philosopher depends upon the many for a *philosophic* necessity. By himself, the philosopher cannot know if his "first principles" are truly evident and not the result of some

madness. In isolation one can never *know*. Only “social and historical verification” will do, absent the god[s] a philosopher likely rejects. “[T]he ‘success’ of his philosophical pedagogy is the sole ‘objective’ criterion of the truth of the philosopher’s doctrine,” and that pedagogy must not be restricted permanently to an elite. Kojève thus assumes that madness will find the many therapeutic; he further assumes that the many are not mad, and even educable. This egalitarian or ‘Left’ Hegelianism also requires the assumption that contradiction can only be resolved “to the extent” it is “played out on the *historical* terrain of *active social* life where one argues by *acts* of Labor (against Nature) and Struggle (against men).” To Kojève’s Hegel, political givens must be negated in action before a new reality can be philosophically understood. The tyrant “who will realize the universal and homogeneous State” is the precondition of “the coming of the wise man.”

In his reply, Strauss expresses a philosophic skepticism concerning the alleged philosophic necessity of the many and of the universal and homogeneous state. Throughout, he questions the contention that mixing the philosophic with the subphilosophic can yield that which transcends both, wisdom. (One might think that the addition of the subphilosophic would yield something in between: the intellectual. But Hegelians would find this thought lamentably undialectical.) Strauss does not deny that the many can, in a limited way and inadvertently, serve the philosopher. “The philosopher cannot devote his life to his own work if other people do not take care of the needs of his body.” But Strauss denies that the philosopher is much instructed by those who take such care. The universal and final tyrant does claim to take care of the body. He also pretends to take care of the soul, even the philosopher’s soul. But there is no reason to suppose that he can do any such thing.

That such criticisms irreparably damage ‘Left’ Hegelianism may be seen in the very attempts to formulate a modest, humane, ‘Left’ Hegelianism that Bernstein’s project typifies. One must doubt that these efforts can succeed, if only because they exaggerate, sentimentalize, the egalitarianism of ‘Left’ Hegelianism, which in turn exaggerate the egalitarian aspect of Hegelianism itself. But the latter egalitarianism—the attempt to synthesize ‘high’ classicism with ‘low’ modernism—is intended to serve sagacity, which is not egalitarian. If anything, sagacity makes far more immodest claims than philosophy does. Yet so do the ‘low’ moderns themselves: from Machiavelli on, almost every one of them claims to know enough to achieve, or help men achieve, godlike mastery over nature. In this, Hegel clearly sides with the moderns. Can this combination of low means with high pretensions cohere rationally? In modernity the problem of historicity and reason takes the form of this question.