

Interpretation

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Two Lectures by Leo Strauss

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The following two lectures are the first of a number of lectures by the late Leo Strauss which *Interpretation* has undertaken to publish. The editors of these lectures for *Interpretation* have been able to obtain copies or transcripts from various sources: none of the lectures was edited by Professor Strauss for the purposes of publication nor even left behind by him among his papers in a state that would have suggested a wish on his part that it be published posthumously. In order to underline this fact, the editors have decided to present the lectures as they have found them, with the bare minimum of editorial changes.

These lectures have all been published once before, at least in part, but in a more heavily edited form intended to make them more accessible to a wider audience (*The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism: An Introduction to the Thought of Leo Strauss*, edited by Thomas L. Pangle [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989]). The University of Chicago Press, which holds the copyright on the materials and which retains the copyright on them in the version now to be published, has generously given its permission for their republication in *Interpretation*, as has Professor Joseph Cropsey, Leo Strauss's literary executor.

A notice will be attached to each lecture indicating the state in which the manuscript or transcription was found; and a list will be appended to some of the lectures calling attention to divergences from the previously published version.

The first of these two lectures, "Existentialism," was delivered by Professor Strauss fourteen years earlier than the second one, "The problem of Socrates." They are, however, related to one another by their common concern to understand and to respond to the thought of Heidegger. Indeed, they are Professor Strauss's most extensive public statements about Heidegger, at least so far as we know, and we have accordingly chosen to present them here together.

Existentialism

LEO STRAUSS

According to Dr. Victor Gourevitch, whose own lecture on Existentialism is referred to by Professor Strauss in the text, this lecture was delivered in February, 1956, at the Hillel Foundation of the University of Chicago. The lecture was available to the editors in a copy of a typescript with additions, corrections, and alterations by Professor Strauss's own hand. The original of this typescript, with Professor Strauss's revisions, can be found in the Strauss archives at the University of Chicago. We have chosen to present the revised version in the text, while indicating in notes what the revisions were. However, where Professor Strauss merely corrected a typographical mistake, or where he added a comma or made other small changes of punctuation, we have presented only the corrected version. We have also taken the liberty of correcting, without comment, a few misspellings in the typescript. We are grateful to Heinrich and Wiebke Meier for their most generous help in deciphering Professor Strauss's handwriting.

*A more heavily edited version of this lecture, based on a typescript that differs, in part, from the one we used, and on a copy that gives no indication of having been seen by Professor Strauss, was previously published, under the title "An Introduction to Heideggerian Existentialism," in *The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism: An Introduction to the Thought of Leo Strauss* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989 [© 1989 by The University of Chicago]), pp. 27–46. We have noted in an epilogue what appear to us to be the most important divergences between the earlier version and the present one.*

This series of lectures—a reminder of the perplexities of modern man—should help the Jewish students in particular towards facing the perplexities of the modern Jew with somewhat greater clarity. Existentialism has reminded many people that thinking is incomplete and defective if the thinking being, the thinking individual, forgets himself as what he is. It is the old Socratic warning. Compare¹ Theodorus in the *Theaetetus*, the purely theoretic, purely objective man who loses himself completely in the contemplation of mathematical objects, who knows nothing about himself and his fellow men, in particular about his own defects. The thinking² man is not a pure mind, a pointer-reading observer, for instance. The³ question what am I, or who am I cannot be answered by science, for this would mean that there are some self-forgetting

Theodoruses who have gotten hold of the limits of the human soul by means of scientific method. For if they have not done so, if their results are necessarily provisional, hypothetical, it is barely possible that what we can find out by examining ourselves and our situation honestly, without the pride and the pretence of scientific knowledge, is more helpful than science.

‘Existentialism is a school of philosophic thought. The name is not like Platonism, Epicureanism, and Thomism. Existentialism is a nameless movement like pragmatism or positivism. This is *deceptive*.⁵ Existentialism owes its overriding significance to a single man: Heidegger. Heidegger alone brought about such a radical change in philosophic thought as is revolutionizing all thought in Germany, in continental Europe, and is beginning to affect even Anglo-Saxony. I am not surprised by this effect. I remember the impression he made on me when I heard him first as a young Ph.D. in 1922. Up to that time I had been particularly impressed, as many of my contemporaries in Germany were, by Max Weber, by Weber’s⁶ intransigent devotion to intellectual honesty, by his passionate devotion to the idea of science, a devotion that was combined with a profound uneasiness regarding the meaning of science. On my way north from Freiburg where Heidegger then taught, I saw in Frankfurt am Main Franz Rosenzweig whose name will always be remembered when informed people speak about Existentialism, and I told him of Heidegger. I said to him: in comparison with Heidegger, Weber appeared to me as an orphan child in regard to precision, and probing, and competence. I had never seen before such seriousness, profundity, and concentration in the interpretation of philosophic texts. I had heard Heidegger’s interpretation of certain sections in Aristotle. Sometime later I heard Werner Jaeger in Berlin interpret the same texts. Charity compels me to limit the comparison to the remark⁷ that there was no comparison. Gradually the breadth of the revolution of thought which Heidegger was preparing dawned upon me and my generation. We saw with our own eyes that there had been no such phenomenon in the world since Hegel. He succeeded in a very short time in dethroning the established schools of philosophy in Germany. There was a famous discussion between Heidegger and Ernst Cassirer in Davos which revealed the lostness and emptiness of this remarkable representative of established academic philosophy to everyone who had eyes. Cassirer had been a pupil of Hermann Cohen, the founder of the neo-Kantian school.⁸ Cohen had elaborated a system of philosophy whose center was ethics. Cassirer had transformed Cohen’s system into a new system of philosophy in which ethics had completely disappeared: it had been silently dropped: he had not *faced* the problem. Heidegger did face the problem. He declared that ethics is impossible and his whole being was permeated by the awareness that this fact opens up an abyss. Prior to Heidegger’s emergence the most outstanding German philosopher—I would say the *only*⁵ German philosopher—was Edmund Husserl. It was Heidegger’s critique of Husserl’s phenomenology which became decisive: precisely because that criticism consisted in a

radicalization of Husserl's own question and questioning. Briefly, as⁸ Husserl once said to me who had been trained in⁹ the Marburg neo-Kantian school, the¹⁰ neo-Kantians were superior to all other German philosophical schools, but they made the mistake of beginning with the roof. He meant: the primary theme of Marburg neo-Kantianism was the analysis of science. But science, Husserl taught, is derivative—from our primary knowledge of the world of things; science is not the perfection of man's understanding of the world, but a specific modification of that pre-scientific understanding. The meaningful genesis of science out of pre-scientific understanding is a *problem*; the primary theme is the philosophical understanding of the pre-scientific world and therefore in the first place the analysis of the sensibly perceived thing. According to Heidegger Husserl *himself*⁵ began with the roof: the merely sensibly perceived thing is itself derivative; there are not first sensibly perceived things and thereafter the same things in a state of being valued or in a state of affecting us. Our primary understanding of the world is not an understanding of things as objects but of what the Greeks indicated¹¹ by *pragmata*, things which we handle and use.¹² The horizon within which Husserl had analyzed the world of pre-scientific understanding was the pure consciousness as the absolute being. Heidegger questioned that orientation by referring to the fact that the inner time belonging to the pure consciousness cannot be understood if one abstracts from the fact that this time is necessarily finite and even constituted by man's mortality. The same effect which Heidegger had in the late twenties and early thirties in Germany, he had very soon in continental Europe as a whole. There is no longer in existence a philosophic position apart from neo-Thomism and Marxism crude or refined. All rational¹³ liberal philosophic positions have lost their significance and power. One may deplore this but I for one cannot bring myself to clinging to philosophic positions which have been shown to be⁸ inadequate. I am¹⁴ afraid that we shall have to make a very great effort in order to find a solid basis for rational liberalism. Only a great thinker could help us in our intellectual plight. But here is the great trouble, the only great thinker in our time is Heidegger.

The only question of importance of course is the question whether Heidegger's teaching is true or not. But the very question is deceptive because it is silent about the question of competence—of who is competent to judge. Perhaps only great thinkers are really competent to judge of¹⁵ the thought of great thinkers. Kant¹⁶ made a distinction between philosophers and those for whom philosophy is identical with the history of philosophy. He made a distinction, in other words, between the thinker and the scholar. I know that I am only a scholar. But I know also that most people that call themselves philosophers are mostly, at best, scholars. The scholar is radically dependent on the work of the great thinkers, of men who faced the problems without being covered¹⁷ by any authority. The scholar is cautious, methodic, not bold. He does not become lost to our sight in, to us inaccessible heights and mists as the great thinkers do. Yet

while the great thinkers are so bold they are also much more cautious than we are; they see pitfalls where we are sure of our ground. We scholars live in a charmed circle, light-living like the Homeric gods, protected against the problems by the great thinkers. The scholar becomes possible through the fact that the great thinkers disagree. Their disagreement creates a possibility for us to reason about their differences—for wondering which of them is more likely to be right. We may think that the possible alternatives are exhausted by the great thinkers of the past. We may try to classify their doctrines and make a kind of herbarium and think that we look over them from a vantage point. But we cannot exclude the possibility that other great thinkers might arise in the future—in 2200 in Burma—the character¹⁸ of whose thought has in no way been provided for by our schemata. For who are we to believe that we have found out the limits of human possibilities?¹⁹ In brief, we are occupied with reasoning about the little we understand of²⁰ what the great thinkers have said.

The scholar faces the fundamental problems through the intermediacy of books. If he is a serious man through the intermediacy of the great books. The great thinker faces the problems directly.

I apply this to my situation in regard to Heidegger. A famous psychologist I saw in Europe, an old man, told me that in his view it is not yet possible to form a judgment about the significance as well as the truth of Heidegger's work. Because this work changed the intellectual orientation so radically²¹ that a long long time is needed in order to understand with even tolerable adequacy and in a most general way²² what this work means. The more I understand what Heidegger is aiming at the more I see how much still escapes me. The most stupid thing I could do would be to close my eyes or to reject his work.

There is a not altogether unrespectable justification for doing so. Heidegger became a Nazi in 1933. This was not due to a mere error of judgment on the part of a man who lived on great heights high above the lowland²³ of politics. Everyone who had read his first great book and did not overlook the wood for the trees could see the kinship in temper and direction between Heidegger's thought and the Nazis. What was the practical, that is to say serious meaning of the contempt for reasonableness and the praise of resoluteness which permeated the work²⁴ except to encourage that extremist movement? When Heidegger was rector of the University of Freiburg in 1933 he delivered an official speech in which he identified himself with the movement which then swept Germany. Heidegger has not yet dared to mention that speech in the otherwise complete list of his writings, which appear from time to time on the book jackets of his recent publications. Yet⁸ in 1953²⁵ he published a book, lectures given in 1935, in which he spoke of the greatness and dignity of the National Socialist movement. In the preface written in 1953²⁵ he said that all mistakes had been corrected. The case of Heidegger reminds to a certain extent of the case of Nietzsche. Nietzsche, naturally, would not have sided with Hitler. Yet there is an undeniable kinship between Nietzsche's thought and fascism. If one rejects

as passionately as Nietzsche did²⁶ the conservative constitutional monarchy as well as democracy with a²⁷ view to a new aristocracy, the passion of the denials will be much more effective than the necessarily more subtle intimations of the character of the new nobility. To²⁸ say nothing of his²⁹ blond beast. Passionate political action against such things is absolutely in order but it is not sufficient. It is not even politically sufficient. Are there no dangers threatening democracy not only from without but from within as well? Is there no problem of democracy, of industrial mass democracy? The official high priests of democracy with their amiable reasonableness were not reasonable enough to prepare us for our situation: the decline of Europe, the danger to the west, to the whole western heritage which is at least as great and even greater than that which threatened Mediterranean civilization around 300 of the Christian era. It is childish to believe that the U.N. organization is an answer even to the political problem. And³⁰ within democracy: it suffices to mention the name of France—³¹ and⁵ the commercials and⁵ logical positivism with their indescribable vulgarity. They have indeed the merit of not sending men into concentration camps and gas chambers, but is the absence of these unspeakable evils sufficient? Nietzsche once described the change which had been effected in the second half of the nineteenth century in continental Europe as follows.³² The reading of the morning prayer had been replaced by the reading of the morning paper: not every day the same thing, the same reminder of men's absolute duty and exalted destiny, but every day something new with no reminder of duty and exalted destiny. Specialization, knowing more and more about less and less, practical impossibility of concentration upon the very few essential things upon which man's wholeness entirely depends—this³³ specialization compensated by sham universality, by the stimulation of all kinds of interests and curiosities without true passion, the danger of universal philistinism and creeping conformism. Or let me look for a moment at the Jewish problem. The nobility of Israel is literally beyond praise, the only bright spot for the contemporary Jew who knows where he comes from. And yet Israel does not afford a solution to the Jewish problem. "The Judaeo-Christian tradition"? This means to blur and to conceal grave differences. Cultural pluralism can only be had it seems at the price of blunting all edges.

It would be wholly unworthy of us as thinking beings not to listen to the critics of democracy even if they are enemies of democracy—provided they are thinking men and especially great thinkers and not blustering fools.

As you may recall from Mr. Gourevitch's lecture, Existentialism appeals to a certain experience (anguish) as the basic experience in the light of which everything must be understood. Having this experience is one thing; regarding it as the basic experience is another thing. Its basic character is not guaranteed by the experience itself. It can only be guaranteed by *argument*.⁵ This argument may be invisible because it is implied in what is generally admitted in our time. What is generally admitted may imply, but only imply a fundamental uneasi-

ness which is vaguely felt but not faced. Given this context, the experience to which Existentialism refers will appear as a revelation, as the revelation, as the authentic interpretation of the fundamental uneasiness. But something more is required which however is equally generally admitted in our time: the vaguely felt uneasiness must be regarded as essential to man, and not only to *present*⁵ day man. Yet this vaguely felt uneasiness is distinctly a present day phenomenon. Let us assume however that this uneasiness embodies what all earlier ages have thought, is the *result* of what earlier ages have thought; in that case the vaguely felt uneasiness is the mature fruit of all earlier human efforts: no return to an older interpretation of that uneasiness is possible. Now this is a second view generally accepted today (apart from the fundamental uneasiness which is vaguely felt but not faced); this second element is the belief in progress.

I have already referred to the well known expression 'we know more and more about less and less.' What does this mean? It means that modern science has not kept the promise which it held out from its beginning up to the end of the nineteenth century: that it would reveal to us the true character of the universe and the truth about man. You have in the *Education of Henry Adams* a memorable document of the change in the character and in the claim of science which made itself felt in the general public towards the end of the last century and which has increased since, in momentum and sweep. You all know the assertion that value-judgments are impermissible to the scientist in general and to the social scientist in particular. This means certainly that while science has increased man's power in ways that former men never dreamt of, it is absolutely incapable to tell men how to *use*⁵ that power. Science cannot tell him whether it is wiser to use that power wisely and beneficently or foolishly and devilishly. From this it follows that science is unable to establish its own meaningfulness or to answer the question whether and in what sense science is good. We are then confronted with an enormous apparatus whose bulk is ever increasing, but⁸ which in itself has no meaning. If a scientist would say as Goethe's Mephisto still said that science and reason is man's highest power, he would be told that he was not talking as a scientist but was³⁴ making a value judgment which from the point of view of science is altogether unwarranted. Someone has spoken of a flight from scientific reason. This flight is not due to any perversity but to science itself. I dimly remember the time when people argued as follows: to deny the possibility of science or rational value judgments means to admit that all values are of equal rank; and this means that respect for all values, universal tolerance, is the dictate of scientific reason. But this time has gone. Today we hear that no conclusion whatever can be drawn from the equality of all values; that science does not legitimate nor indeed forbid that we should draw rational conclusions from scientific findings. The assumption that we should act rationally and therefore turn to science for reliable information—³¹ this assumption is wholly outside of the purview and interest of science proper. The flight from scientific reason is³⁵ the consequence of the flight *of*⁵ science

from⁵ reason—from the notion that man is a rational being who perverts his being if he does not act rationally. It goes without saying that a science which does not allow of value judgments has no longer any possibility of speaking of progress except in the humanly irrelevant sense of scientific progress: the concept of progress has accordingly been replaced by the concept of change. If science or reason cannot answer the question of why science is good, of why sufficiently gifted and otherwise able people fulfill a duty in devoting themselves to science, science says in effect that the choice of science is not rational: one may choose with equal right pleasing and otherwise satisfying myths. Furthermore, science does no longer conceive of itself as the perfection of the human understanding³⁶; it admits that it is based on fundamental hypotheses which will always remain hypotheses. The whole structure of science does not rest on evident necessities. If this is so, the choice of the scientific orientation is as groundless as the choice of any alternative orientation. But what else does this mean except that the reflective scientist discovers as the ground of his science and his choice of science—a⁸ groundless choice—an abyss. For a scientific interpretation of the choice of the scientific orientation, on the one hand, and the choice of alternative orientations, on the other, presupposes already the acceptance of the scientific orientation. The fundamental freedom is the only non-hypothetical phenomenon. Everything else rests on that fundamental freedom. We are already in the midst of Existentialism.

Someone might say that science by itself as well as poor and stupid positivism are of course helpless against the Existentialist onslaught. But do we not have a rational philosophy which takes up the thread where science and positivism drop it, and for which poetic, emotional Existentialism is no match?¹⁹ I have asked myself for a long time where do I find that rational philosophy?¹⁹ If I disregard the neo-Thomists, where do I find today the philosopher who dares to say that he is in possession of the true metaphysics and the true ethics which reveal to us in a rational, universally valid way the nature of being and the character of the good life?¹⁹ Naturally we can sit at the feet of the great philosophers of old, of Plato and of Aristotle. But who can dare to say that Plato's doctrine of ideas as he intimated it, or Aristotle's doctrine of the *nous* that does nothing but think itself and is essentially related to the eternal visible universe, is the true teaching?¹⁹ Are those like myself who are inclined to sit at the feet of the old philosophers not exposed to the danger of a weak-kneed eclecticism which will not withstand a single blow on the part of those who are competent enough to remind them of the singleness of purpose and of inspiration that characterizes every thinker who deserves to be called great?¹⁹ Considering the profound disagreement among the great thinkers of the past, is it possible to appeal to them without blunting all edges? The place of rational philosophy proper is taken more and more by what was called in the country of its origin *Weltanschauungslehre*, theory of comprehensive views. In this stage it is admitted that we cannot refer to the true metaphysical and ethical teaching avail-

able in any of the great thinkers of the past. It is admitted that³⁷ there are n ways of answering the fundamental questions, that there are n types of absolute presuppositions as Collingwood called them, none of which can be said to be rationally superior to any other. This means to abandon the very idea of the truth as a rational philosophy has always understood it. It means just as in the case of the social scientists³⁸ that the choice of any of these presuppositions is groundless; we are thus led³⁹ again to the abyss of freedom. To say nothing of the fact that any such doctrine of comprehensive views presupposes that the fundamental possibilities are available or that fundamental human creativity is at its end. Furthermore there is a radical disproportion between the analyst of comprehensive views who does not face the fundamental questions directly and does not even recognize them in their primary meaning, viz. as pointing to one answer only, and the great thinkers themselves. He is separated from them by a deep gulf which is created by his pretended knowledge of the utopian character of original philosophy itself. How can we possibly believe that⁴⁰ he is in a position to understand the thinkers as they want to be understood and as⁸ they must have been understood if one is to order and tabulate their teachings. We are sufficiently familiar with the history of moral philosophy in particular in order not to be taken in for one moment by the pious hope that while there may be profound disagreements among the rational philosophers in all other respects, that they will happily agree regarding human conduct. There is only one possible way out of the predicament in which the doctrine⁴¹ of comprehensive views finds itself and that is to find the ground of the variety of comprehensive views in the human soul or more generally stated in the human condition. If one takes this⁸ indispensable step one is again already at the threshold of Existentialism.

There is another very common way of solving the so-called value problem. People say that we must adopt values and that it is natural for us to adopt the values of our society. Our⁴² values are our highest principles if the meaning of science itself depends on values. Now it is impossible to overlook the relation of the *principles*⁵ of our society to our *society*⁵, and the dependence of the principles on the society. This means generally stated that the principles, the so-called categorial system or the essences are rooted ultimately in the particular, in something which exists. Existence precedes essence. For what else do people mean when they say, e.g. that the Stoic natural law teaching is rooted in or relative to the decay of the Greek polis and the emergence of the Greek empire?¹⁹

As I said,⁴³ sometimes people try to avoid the difficulty indicated by saying that we have to adopt the values of our society. This is altogether impossible for serious men. We cannot help raising the question as to the value of the values of our society. To accept the values of one's society because they are the values of one's society means simply to shirk one's responsibility, not to face the situation that everyone has to make his own choice, to run away from one's

self. To find the solution to our problem in the acceptance of the values of our society, because they are the values of our society means to make philistinism a duty and to make oneself oblivious to the difference between true individuals and whitened sepulchres.

The uneasiness which today is felt but not faced can be expressed by a single word: relativism. Existentialism admits the truth of relativism but it realizes that relativism so far from being a solution or even a relief, is deadly. Existentialism is the reaction of serious men to their own relativism.

Existentialism begins then with the realization that as the ground of all objective, rational knowledge we discover an abyss. All truth, all meaning is seen in the last analysis to have no support except man's freedom. Objectively there is in the last analysis only meaninglessness, nothingness. This nothingness can be experienced in anguish but this experience cannot find an objective expression: because it cannot be made in detachment. Man freely originates meaning, he originates the horizon, the absolute presupposition, the ideal, the project within which understanding and life are possible. Man is man by virtue of such a horizon-forming project, of an unsupported project, of a thrown project. More precisely man always lives already within such a horizon without being aware of its character; he takes his world as simply given; i.e. he has lost himself; but he can call himself back from his lostness and take the responsibility for what he was in a lost, unauthentic way. Man is essentially a social being: to be a human being means to be with other human beings. To be in an authentic way means to be in an authentic way with⁴⁴ others: to be true to oneself is incompatible with being false to others. Thus there would seem to exist the possibility of an existentialist ethics which would have to be however a strictly formal ethics. However this may be, Heidegger never believed in the possibility of an ethics.

To be a human being means to be in the world. To be authentic means to be authentic in the world; to accept the things within the world as merely factual and one's own being as merely factual; to risk oneself resolutely, despising sham certainties (and all objective certainties are sham). Only if man *is* in this way do the things in the world reveal themselves to him as they are. The concern with objective certainty necessarily narrows the horizon. It leads to the consequence that man erects around himself an artificial setting which conceals from him the abyss of which he must be aware if he wants to be truly human. To live dangerously means to think exposedly.

We are ultimately confronted with mere facticity or contingency. But are we not able and even compelled to raise the question of the causes of ourselves and of the things in the world? Indeed we cannot help raising the questions of the Where⁴⁵ and Whither, or of the Whole. But we do not know and cannot know the Where and Whither and the Whole.⁴⁶ Man cannot understand himself in the light of the whole, in the light of his origin or his end. This irredeemable⁴⁷ ignorance is the basis of his lostness or the core of the human situation. By

making this assertion existentialism restores Kant's notion of the unknowable thing-in-itself and of man's ability to grasp the fact of his freedom at the limits of objective knowledge and as the ground of objective knowledge. But in existentialism there is no moral law and no other world.

It becomes necessary to make as fully explicit as possible the character of human existence; to raise the question what is human existence; and to bring to light the essential structures of human existence. This inquiry is called by Heidegger analytics of *Existenz*. Heidegger conceived of the analytics of *Existenz* from the outset as the fundamental ontology. This means he took up again Plato's and Aristotle's question what is being? What is that by virtue of which any being is said to be?¹⁹ Heidegger agreed with Plato and Aristotle not only as to this, that the question of what is *to be* is the fundamental question; he also agreed with Plato and Aristotle as to this, that the fundamental question must be primarily addressed to that being which *is*⁵ in the most emphatic or the most authoritative way. Yet while according to Plato and Aristotle to be in the highest sense means to be always, Heidegger contends that to be in the highest sense means to exist, that is to say, to be in the manner in which man is: to be in the highest sense is constituted by mortality.

Philosophy thus becomes analytics of existence. Analytics of existence brings to light the essential structures, the unchangeable character of existence. Is then the new Philosophy in spite of the difference of content, objective, rational philosophy, comparable to Kant's transcendental analytics of subjectivity? Does not the new philosophy too take on the character of absolute knowledge, complete knowledge, final knowledge, infinite knowledge? No—the new philosophy is necessarily based on a specific ideal of existence. One cannot analyze existence from a neutral point of view; one must have made a choice which is not subject to examination in order to be open to the phenomenon of existence. Man is a finite being, incapable of absolute knowledge: his very knowledge of his finiteness is finite. We may also say: commitment can only be understood by an understanding which is itself committed, which is a *specific*⁵ commitment. Or: existential philosophy is subjective truth about the subjectivity of truth.⁴⁸ To speak in general terms, rational philosophy has been guided by the distinction between the objective which is true and the subjective which is opinion (or an equivalent of this distinction). On the basis of existentialism what was formerly called objective reveals itself to be as⁴⁹ superficial—problematic; and what was formerly called subjective reveals itself as profound—assertoric, with the understanding that there is no apodicticity.

The great achievement of Heidegger was the coherent exposition of the experience of *Existenz*.⁵ A coherent exposition based on the experience of *Existenz*;⁵ of the essential character of *Existenz*.⁵ Kierkegaard had spoken of existence within the traditional horizon, i.e. within the horizon of the traditional distinction between essence and existence. Heidegger tried to understand existence out of itself.

Yet the analytics of existence was exposed to serious difficulties which eventually induced Heidegger to find a fundamentally new basis, that is to say, to break with existentialism. I shall mention now some of these difficulties. 1—Heidegger demanded from philosophy that it should liberate itself completely from traditional or inherited notions which were mere survivals of former ways of thinking. He mentioned especially concepts that were of Christian theological origin. Yet his understanding of existence was obviously of Christian origin (conscience, guilt, being unto death, anguish). 2)⁵⁰ The fact that the analytics of existence was based on a specific ideal of existence made one wonder whether the analysis was not fundamentally arbitrary. 3—The analytics of existence had culminated in the assertion that there can be no truth and hence no *to be*, if there are no human beings, while there can be beings (for example the sun and the earth), if there are no human beings. This is hard: that there should be beings without that by virtue of which beings are. 4—The highest form of knowledge was said to be finite knowledge of finiteness: yet how can finiteness be seen as finiteness if it is not seen in the light of infinity?¹⁹ Or in other words it was said that we cannot know the whole; but does this not necessarily presuppose awareness of the whole? Professor Hocking stated this difficulty neatly as follows: *désespoir* presupposes *espoir* and *espoir* presupposes love; is then not love rather than despair the fundamental phenomenon? Is therefore not that which man ultimately loves, God, the ultimate ground? These objections which Heidegger made to himself were fundamentally the same objections which Hegel had made to Kant. The relation of Heidegger to his own existentialism is the same as that of Hegel to Kant. The objections mentioned would seem to lead to the consequence that one cannot escape metaphysics, Plato and Aristotle. This consequence is rejected by Heidegger. The return to metaphysics is impossible. But what is needed is some repetition of what metaphysics intended on an entirely different plane. Existence cannot be *the*⁵ clue, the clue to the understanding of that by virtue of which *all*⁵ beings are. Existence must rather be understood in the light of that by virtue of which all beings are. From this point of view the analytics of existence appears still to partake of modern subjectivism.⁵¹

I have compared the relation of Heidegger to existentialism with the relation of Hegel to Kant. Hegel may be said to have been the first philosopher who was aware that his philosophy belongs to his time. Heidegger's criticism of existentialism can therefore be expressed as follows. Existentialism claims to be *the* insight into the essential character of man, the final insight which as such would belong to the final time, to the fullness of time. And yet existentialism denies the possibility of a fullness of time: the historical process is unfinishable; man is and always will be a historical being. In other words existentialism claims to be the understanding of the historicity of man and yet it does not reflect about its own historicity, of its belonging to a specific situation of western man. It becomes therefore necessary to return from Kierkegaard's

existing individual who has nothing but contempt for Hegel's understanding of man in terms of universal history, to that Hegelian understanding. The situation to which existentialism belongs can be seen to be liberal democracy. More precisely a liberal democracy which has become uncertain of itself or of its future. Existentialism belongs to the decline of Europe or of the West.⁵² This insight has grave consequences. Let us look back for a moment to Hegel. Hegel's philosophy knew itself to belong to a specific time. As the completion or perfection of philosophy it belonged to the completion or fullness of time. This meant for Hegel that it belonged to the post-revolutionary state, to Europe united under Napoleon—non-feudal, equality of opportunity, even free enterprise, but a strong government not dependent on the will of the majority yet expressive of the general will which is the reasonable will of each, recognition of the rights of man or of the dignity of every human being, the monarchic head of the state guided by a first rate and highly educated civil service. Society thus constructed was the final society. History had come to its end. Precisely because history had come to its end, the completion of philosophy had become possible. The owl of Minerva commences its flight at the beginning of dusk. The completion of history is the beginning of the decline of Europe, of the west and therewith, since all other cultures have been absorbed into the west, the beginning of the decline of mankind. There is no future for mankind. Almost everyone rebelled against Hegel's conclusion, no one more powerfully than Marx. He pointed out the untenable character of the post-revolutionary settlement and the problem of the working class with all its implications. There arose the vision of a world society which presupposed and established for ever the complete victory of the town over the country, of the Occident⁵³ over the Orient⁵³; which would make possible the full potentialities of each, on the basis of man having become completely collectivized. The man of the world society who is perfectly free and equal is so in the last analysis because all specialization, all division of labor has been abolished; all division of labor has been seen to be due ultimately to private property. The man of the world society goes hunting in the forenoon, paints at noon, philosophizes in the afternoon, works in his garden after the sun has set. He is a perfect jack of all trades. No one questioned the communist vision with greater energy than Nietzsche. He identified the man of the communist world society as the last man, that is to say, as the extreme degradation of man. This did not mean however that Nietzsche accepted the non-communist society of the nineteenth century or its future. As all continental European conservatives he saw in communism only the consistent completion of democratic egalitarianism and of that liberalistic demand for freedom which was not a freedom for, but only a freedom from. But in contradistinction to the European conservatives he saw that conservatism as such is doomed. For all merely defensive positions are doomed. All merely backward looking positions are doomed. The future was with democracy and with nationalism. And both were regarded by Nietzsche as incompatible with what he saw

to be the task of the twentieth century. He saw the twentieth century to be the age of world wars, leading up to planetary rule. If man were to have a future, this rule would have to be exercised by a united Europe. And the enormous tasks of such an iron age could not possibly be discharged, he thought, by weak and unstable governments dependent upon democratic public opinion. The new situation required the emergence of a new aristocracy. It had to be a *new* nobility, a nobility formed by a new ideal. This is the most obvious meaning and for this reason also the most superficial meaning of his notion of the superman: all previous notions of human greatness would not enable man to face the infinitely increased responsibility of the planetary age. The invisible rulers of that possible future would be the *philosophers*⁵ of the future. It is certainly not an overstatement to say that no one has ever spoken so greatly and so nobly of what a philosopher is as Nietzsche. This is not to deny that the philosophers of the future as Nietzsche described them remind much more than Nietzsche himself seems to have thought, of *Plato's*⁵ philosophers. For while Plato had seen the features in question *as*⁵ clearly as Nietzsche and perhaps more clearly than Nietzsche, he had intimated rather than stated his deepest insights. But there is one decisive difference between Nietzsche's philosophy of the future and Plato's philosophy. Nietzsche's philosopher⁵⁴ of the future is an heir to the Bible. He is an heir to that deepening of the soul which has been effected by the biblical belief in a God that is holy. The philosopher of the future as distinguished from the classical philosophers will be concerned with the holy. His philosophizing will be intrinsically religious. This does not mean that he believes in God, the biblical God. He is an atheist, but an atheist who is waiting for a god who has not yet shown himself. He has broken with the biblical faith also and especially because the biblical God as the creator of the world is outside the world: compared with the biblical God as the highest good the world is necessarily less than perfect. In other words the biblical faith necessarily leads according to Nietzsche to other-worldliness or asceticism. The condition of the highest human excellence is that man remains or becomes fully loyal to the earth; that there is nothing outside the world which could be of any concern to us—be it god or ideas or atoms of which we could be certain by knowledge or by faith. Every concern for such a ground of the world as is outside of the world, i.e. of the world in which man lives, alienates man from his world. Such concern is rooted in the desire to escape from the terrifying and perplexing character of reality, to cut down reality to what a man can bear—it is rooted in a desire for comfort.

The First World War shook Europe to its foundations. Men lost their sense of direction. The faith in progress decayed. The only people who kept that faith in its original vigor were the communists. But precisely communism showed to the non-communists the delusion of progress. Spengler's *Decline of the West* seemed to be much more credible. But one had to be inhuman to leave it at Spengler's prognosis. Is there no hope for Europe and therewith for mankind?

It was in the spirit of such hope that Heidegger perversely welcomed 1933. He became disappointed and withdrew. What did the failure of the Nazis teach him? Nietzsche's hope for⁵⁵ a united Europe ruling the planet, for⁵⁵ a Europe not only united but revitalized by this new, transcendent responsibility of planetary rule had proved to be a delusion. A world society controlled either by Washington or Moscow appeared to be approaching. For Heidegger it did not make a difference whether Washington or Moscow would be the center: "America and Soviet Russia are metaphysically the same." What is decisive for him is that this world society is to him more than a nightmare. He calls it the "night of the world." It means indeed, as Marx had predicted, the victory of an evermore urbanized, evermore completely technological, west over the whole planet—complete levelling and uniformity regardless whether it is brought about by iron compulsion or by soapy advertisement of the output of mass production. It means unity of the human race on the lowest level, complete emptiness of life, self-perpetuating routine without rhyme and reason; no leisure, no concentration, no elevation, no withdrawal, but work and recreation; no individuals and no peoples, but "lonely crowds."

How can there be hope? Fundamentally because there is something in man which cannot be satisfied by this world society: the desire for the genuine, for the noble, for the great. This desire has expressed itself in man's ideals, but all previous ideals have proved to be related to societies which were not world societies. The old ideals will not enable man to *overcome*⁵ the power, to *master*⁵ the power of technology. We may also say: a world society can be human only if there is a world culture, a culture genuinely uniting all men. But there never has been a high culture without a religious basis: the world society can be human only if all men are genuinely united by a world religion. But all existing religions are steadily undermined as far as their effective power is concerned, by the progress towards a technological world society. There forms itself an open or concealed world alliance of the existing religions which are united only by their common enemy (atheistic communism). Their union requires that they conceal from themselves and from the world the fact⁵⁶ that they are *incompatible*⁵ with each other—that each regards the others as indeed noble, but *untrue*.⁵ This is not very promising. On the other hand,⁵⁷ man cannot make or fabricate a world religion. He can only prepare it by becoming receptive to it. And he becomes receptive to it if he thinks deeply enough about himself and his situation.

Man's humanity is threatened with extinction by technology. Technology is the fruit of rationalism and rationalism is the fruit of Greek philosophy. Greek philosophy is the condition of the possibility of technology and therefore at the same time of the *impasse*⁵ created by technology. There is no hope beyond technological mass society if there are no essential limitations to Greek philosophy, the root of technology, to say nothing of modern philosophy. Greek philosophy was the attempt to understand the whole. It presupposed therefore that

the whole is intelligible, or that the grounds of the whole are essentially intelligible: at the disposal of man as man—that they are *always*⁵ and therefore in principle always *accessible to man*.⁵ This view is the condition of the possibility of human mastery of the whole. But that mastery leads, if its ultimate consequences are drawn, to the ultimate degradation of man. Only by becoming⁵⁸ aware of what is beyond human mastery can we have hope. Transcending the limits of rationalism requires the discovery of the limits of rationalism. Rationalism is based on a specific understanding of what being means, viz. that to be means primarily to be present, to be ready at hand and therefore that to be in the highest sense means to be always present, to be always. This basis of rationalism proves to be a dogmatic assumption. Rationalism itself rests on non-rational, unevident assumptions: in spite of its seemingly overwhelming power, rationalism is hollow: rationalism itself rests on something which it cannot master. A more adequate understanding of being is intimated by the assertion that to be means to be elusive or to be a mystery. This is the eastern understanding of being. Hence there is no will to mastery in the east. We can hope beyond technological world society, for a *genuine*⁵ world society only if we become capable of learning from the east, especially from China. But China succumbs to western rationalism. There is needed a *meeting*⁵ of the west and of the east. The west has to make its own contribution to the overcoming of technology. The west has first to recover within itself that which would make *possible* a meeting of west and east. The west has to recover within itself its own deepest roots which antedate its rationalism, which, in a way, antedate the separation of west and east. No genuine meeting of west and east is possible on the level of present day thought—i.e. in the form of the meeting of the most vocal, most glib, most superficial representatives of the most superficial period of both west and east. The meeting of west and east can only be a meeting of the deepest roots of both.

Heidegger is the only man who has an inkling of the dimensions of the problem of a world society.

The western thinker can prepare that meeting by descending⁵⁹ to the deepest roots of the west. Within the west the limitations of rationalism were always seen by the biblical tradition. (Here lies the justification for the biblical elements in Heidegger's earlier thought.) But this must be rightly understood. Biblical thought is one form of Eastern⁶⁰ thought. By taking the Bible as absolute, one blocks the access to other forms of eastern thought. Yet the Bible is the east within us, within⁶¹ western man. Not the Bible as Bible but the Bible as eastern can help us in overcoming Greek rationalism.

The deepest root of the west is a specific understanding of being, a specific experience of being. The specifically western experience of being led to the consequence that the ground of grounds was forgotten and the primary experience of being was used only for the investigation of the beings. The east has experienced being in a way which prevented the investigation of beings and

therewith the concern with the mastery of beings. But the western experience of being makes possible in principle, coherent speech about being. By opening ourselves to the problem of being and to the problematic character of the western understanding of being, we may gain access to the deepest root of the east. The ground of grounds which is indicated by the word being will be the ground not only of religion but even of any possible gods. From here one can begin to understand the possibility of a world religion.

The meeting of east and west depends on an understanding of being. More precisely it depends on an understanding of that by virtue of which beings are—esse, être, to be, as distinguished from entia, étants, beings. Esse as Heidegger understands it may be described crudely and superficially and even misleadingly, but not altogether misleadingly, by saying that it is a synthesis of Platonic ideas and the biblical God: it is as impersonal as the Platonic ideas and as elusive as the biblical God.

NOTES

1. "compare" has been changed by hand by the insertion of the capital letter. The period at the end of the previous word "warning" is the editors' correction of a comma that seems to have been left uncorrected in the typescript.
2. "thinking" added by hand to replace "theoretical" which has been crossed out.
3. In the typescript the previous sentence ends after the word "observer," and the new one begins with the words "For instance, the. " The punctuation and capitalization have been changed by hand.
4. Continuation of the old paragraph in the typescript, but with a marginal indication by hand for a new one.
5. Underlining added by hand.
6. "Weber's" added by hand to replace "his" which has been crossed out.
7. "to limit the comparison to the remark" added by hand to replace "to say" which has been crossed out.
8. Word added (in the margin or between the lines) by hand.
9. "in" added by hand to replace "the" which has been crossed out.
10. The word "that" before "the" has been crossed out.
11. "indicated" added by hand to replace "meant" which has been crossed out.
12. The comma after "*pragmata*" and the words "things which we handle and use" have been added by hand.
13. The word "rationalistic" has been changed to "rational" by hand by crossing out the letters "istic."
14. The word "I'm" has been replaced by "I am" by hand, by crossing out " 'm " and adding "am" above the line.
15. "of" added by hand to replace "about" which has been crossed out.
16. "Kant" added by hand to replace "Heidegger" which has been crossed out.
17. In another typescript, but not one that gives any clear indication of having been seen by Professor Strauss, this word has been changed by an unknown hand to "cowered." This other typescript, which has been circulating among Professor Strauss's students for some years, is the one from which Thomas Pangle worked in editing this lecture for *The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism*.
18. "character" added by hand to replace "possibility" which has been crossed out.
19. The question mark has been added by the editors to correct a period in the typescript.

20. "of" added by hand to replace "about" which has been crossed out.
21. The word order here has been changed by hand. The original typed phrase is "so radically the intellectual orientation."
22. "and in a most general way" added by hand.
23. The typescript has the words "low land" which have been joined into a single word by hand.
24. "which permeated the work" added by hand.
25. "1953" added by the editors to correct "1952" in the typescript.
26. The words "as Nietzsche does" have been replaced by "as passionately as Nietzsche did" by hand, by adding "passionately as" after "as" and by crossing out "does" and adding "did" above the line.
27. "a" added by hand to replace "the" which has been crossed out.
28. "to" has been changed by hand by the insertion of the capital letter. The period at the end of the previous word "nobility" is the editors' correction of a comma that seems to have been left uncorrected in the typescript.
29. "his" added by hand to replace "the" which has been crossed out.
30. "and" has been changed by hand by the insertion of the capital letter. The period after the previous word "problem" is a correction by hand of the original comma.
31. The dash has been inserted by hand.
32. The words "as follows" have been added by hand.
33. "this" added by hand to replace "the" which has been crossed out.
34. "was" added by hand to replace "is" which has been crossed out.
35. The word "is" has been added by hand, though not, it seems, by Professor Strauss's hand.
36. The typescript referred to in note 17 apparently has the word "mind," confirmed as such by an unknown hand, instead of "understanding."
37. The words "we cannot refer to the true metaphysical and ethical teaching available in any of the great thinkers of the past. It is admitted that" have been added by hand, though not by Professor Strauss's hand.
38. The typescript referred to in note 17 has the word "sciences" instead of "scientists."
39. The semicolon after "groundless" and the words "we are thus led" have been added by hand to replace "and leads us" which has been crossed out.
40. The word "him" before "that" has been crossed out.
41. "doctrine" is the reading of the typescript referred to in note 17. It is included by the editors as a correction for the word "doctrines," which appears in the primary typescript.
42. The word "Yet" before "our" has been crossed out and the capital letter in "Our" has been inserted by hand.
43. "As I said," added by hand. A capital letter at the beginning of "sometimes" has been removed by the editors.
44. "with" added by hand to replace "to" which has been crossed out.
45. The other typescript referred to in note 17 has the word "Whence" instead of "Where."
46. The other typescript referred to in note 17 has the word "whence," in brackets, instead of the phrase "Where and Whither and the Whole."
47. The other typescript referred to in note 17 has the word "irremediable" instead of "irredeemable." The editors suspect that this is the correct reading.
48. The words "about subjective truth" have been replaced by "about the subjectivity of truth" by hand, by adding "the" after "about," by crossing out the final "e" in "subjective" and adding the letters "ity" above the line, and by adding "of" between "subjectivity" and "truth."
49. This word is enclosed in parentheses inserted by hand.
50. "2)" added by hand to replace "Secondly," which has been crossed out.
51. Quotation marks have been added, by an unknown hand, around the words "modern subjectivism."
52. The words "or of the West" have been added by hand.
53. The words "Occident" and "Orient" have been inserted by hand above the typed words "west" and "east," which have not, however, been crossed out.

54. "philosophy" has been changed by hand to "philosopher" by crossing out the final "y" and adding "er" above the line.

55. "for" added by hand to replace "of" which has been crossed out. These changes are apparently not by Professor Strauss's hand.

56. The words "the fact" have been added by hand.

57. The words "This is not very promising. On the other hand," have been added by hand. A capital letter at the beginning of "man" has been removed by the editors.

58. The word "man" before "becoming" has been crossed out.

59. "dissenting" has been replaced by "descending" by hand, by crossing out the letters "is-sent" and adding "escend" above the line.

60. The capital letter at the beginning of "Eastern" has been inserted by hand.

61. The word "within" before "western" has been added by hand, but not, it seems, by Professor Strauss's hand.

EPILOGUE

There are a considerable number of divergences, most of which are apparently minor, between this text and the version published in *The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism: An Introduction to the Thought of Leo Strauss*. Those divergences which appear to be most significant, apart from the fact that the paragraph breaks are different, are the following (page references are to the earlier version):

The title is different, and the first sentence is missing in the earlier version.

p. 29, line 32: Instead of "Heidegger" the present version reads "Kant".

p. 30: Between the first and the second paragraphs on this page, the present version inserts a short paragraph.

p. 30, line 5 of the second paragraph reads differently in the present version.

p. 31, line 22: Between "era" and "Nietzsche" the present version inserts three sentences.

p. 38, line 25: After "that" the present version inserts a new completion of this sentence and then another full sentence. After this insertion, the word "the," capitalized, begins a new sentence.

p. 39, line 7 from bottom: The present version has a sentence worded so differently as to change the meaning considerably.

p. 43: The one-sentence paragraph beginning with the words "Heidegger is the only man . . ." is in the present version placed just before the paragraph beginning at the bottom of the page.

p. 44, line 24: The remainder of this paragraph, beginning with the words "The ground of all being," as well as the entire subsequent paragraph, is taken from a different lecture, "The problem of Socrates," which Professor Strauss delivered many years later. Cf. page xxix of the Introduction.

The problem of Socrates

LEO STRAUSS

"The problem of Socrates" was delivered as a lecture on April 17, 1970, on the Annapolis campus of St. John's College. Professor Strauss's daughter, Professor Jenny Clay, of the Department of Classics at the University of Virginia, has generously made available to the editors a copy of the manuscript. Also, a tape recording of the lecture in the St. John's College library in Annapolis was available to the editors, as were copies of an anonymous transcription of that tape. Unfortunately, the tape is broken off after about forty-five minutes, with nearly half of the manuscript still unread, and the transcription also ends where the tape does. Still, the transcription, as corrected by the editors on the basis of the tape itself, offers a version of the first part of the lecture which differs from the manuscript in a number of places and which sometimes appears to be superior to it. Thus, we have chosen to give the recorded version almost equal weight with the manuscript as a basis for our published text. When the lecture as delivered merely contains a word or words that are not in the manuscript, we have included these in brackets. In the other cases where the two authorities differ and where we have preferred the version in the lecture as delivered, we have again included it in brackets, but in these cases we have also included the manuscript version in a note. In the case of those discrepancies where we have preferred the manuscript version, we have included it in the text without brackets, and we have included the oral version in a note. All italics and paragraphs are based on the manuscript. A note indicates where the tape is broken off, and after this point we are of course compelled to rely on the manuscript alone. We have preserved Professor Strauss's punctuation to the extent that we thought possible without sacrificing clarity. In those few cases where we have made a change on our own (apart from adding or subtracting a comma), we have so indicated in a note. We have been compelled to substitute transliterations for Professor Strauss's Greek words and phrases, all of which appear in the original Greek in the manuscript. Finally, we are grateful to Dr. Heinrich Meier for his generous help in deciphering Professor Strauss's handwriting.

A small portion of this lecture has been published previously, incorporated within a different lecture and in a somewhat modified form, in The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism: An Introduction to the Thought of Leo Strauss

(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989 [© 1989 by The University of Chicago]), pp. 44–46.

[I was told that the local paper has announced that I lecture tonight on “The problems of Socrates.” This was an engaging printing error; for there is more than one problem of Socrates, in the first place, the problem with which Socrates was concerned. But one could say, the problem with which Socrates was concerned may be of no concern to us, that it may not be relevant. Therefore—after all there are so many things which concern us so much more obviously and urgently than the problem with which Socrates was concerned. But we receive an answer why we should be concerned with Socrates’ problem by listening to the man from whom I took the title of this lecture, and which, as far as I remember, was coined by him.]¹ “The problem of Socrates” is the first, immediately revealing title of a section in Nietzsche’s *Dawn of Idols*, one of his last publications. Socrates and Plato, we hear, were *décadents*. More precisely, Socrates was a *décadent* who belonged to the lowest stratum of the common people, to the riff-raff. [I quote:] “Everything is exaggerated, buffo, caricature in him, everything is at the same time concealed, rich in afterthoughts, subterranean.” The enigma of Socrates is the idiotic equation of reason, virtue and happiness—an equation opposed to all instincts of the earlier Greeks, of [the] Greek health and nobility. The key is supplied by Socrates’ discovery of dialectics, i.e. the quest for reasons. The earlier and² high-class Greeks disdained to seek for, and to present, the reasons of their conduct. To abide by authority, by the command either of the gods or of themselves, was for them simply a matter of good manners. Only those people have recourse to dialectics who have no other means for getting listened to and respected. It is a kind of *revenge* which the low-born take of the high-born. “The dialectician leaves it to his adversary to prove that he is not an idiot. He enrages and at the same time makes helpless.” Socrates *fascinated* because he discovered in dialectics a new form of *agōn*, [of contest]; he thus won over the noble youth of Athens and among them above all Plato. In an age when the instincts had lost their ancient surety, and [were disintegrating]³, one needed a non-instinctual tyrant; this tyrant was⁴ reason. Yet the cure belongs as much to *décadence* as the illness.

When speaking of the earlier Greeks, Nietzsche thinks also of the philosophers, the pre-Socratic philosophers⁵, especially Heraclitus. This does not mean that he agreed with Heraclitus. One reason why he did not was that he, like all philosophers, lacked the [so-called] “historical sense.” Nietzsche’s cure for all Platonism and hence Socratism was at all times Thucydides who had the courage to face reality without illusion and to seek reason *in reality*, and not in ideas. In Thucydides the sophistic culture, i.e. the realistic culture, comes to its full⁶ expression.

The section on the problem of Socrates in the *Dawn of Idols* is only a relic of Nietzsche’s first publication, *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music*,

which he disowned to some extent later on, one reason being that he had understood [in that early work] Greek tragedy in the light or the darkness of Wagnerian music, and he had come to see that Wagner was a *décadent* [of the first order]. In spite of this and other defects Nietzsche's first work delineates his future life work with amazing clarity. [I will therefore say something about that.]

Nietzsche paints Socrates as "the single turning point and vortex of so-called world-history." [Nietzsche's]⁸ concern was not merely theoretical; he was concerned with the future of Germany or the future of Europe—a human future that must surpass the highest that [has ever been achieved]⁹ before. The peak of man hitherto is that manner of life that found its expression in Greek tragedy, especially in Aeschylean tragedy. The "tragic" understanding of the world was rejected and destroyed by Socrates, who therefore is "the most questionable phenomenon of antiquity," a man of more than human size: a demigod. Socrates [in brief] is the first theoretical man, the incarnation of the spirit of science, radically un-artistic and a-music. "In the person of Socrates the belief in the comprehensibility of nature and in the universal healing power of knowledge has first come to light." He is the prototype of the rationalist and therefore of the optimist, for optimism is not merely the belief that the world is the best possible world, but also the belief that the world can be made into the best of all imaginable worlds, or that the evils which belong to the best possible world can be rendered harmless by knowledge: thinking can not only fully *understand* being but can even *correct* it; *life* can be *guided* by science; the living gods of myth can be replaced by a *deus ex machina*, i.e. the forces of nature as known and used in the service of "higher egoism".¹⁰ Rationalism is optimism, since it is the belief that reason's power is unlimited and essentially beneficent or that science can solve all riddles and loosen all chains. Rationalism is optimism, since the belief in causes depends on the belief in ends or since rationalism presupposes the belief in the initial or final supremacy of the good. The full and ultimate consequences of the change effected or represented by Socrates appear only in the contemporary West: in the belief in universal enlightenment and therewith in the earthly happiness of all within a universal society, in utilitarianism, liberalism, democracy, pacifism, and socialism. Both these consequences and the insight into the essential limitations of science have shaken "Socratic culture" to its foundation: "the time of Socratic man has gone." There is then hope for a future beyond the peak of pre-Socratic culture, for a *philosophy* of the future that is no longer merely theoretical [as all philosophy hitherto was], but knowingly based on acts of the will¹¹ or on decision.

Nietzsche's attack on *Socrates* is an attack on *reason*: reason, the celebrated liberator from all prejudices, proves itself to be based on a prejudice, and the most *dangerous* of all prejudices: the prejudice stemming from *décadence*. In other words, reason, which waxes so easily and so highly indignant about the demanded sacrifice of the intellect, rests *itself* on the sacrifice of the intel-

lect.¹²—This criticism was made by a man who stood at the opposite pole of all obscurantism and fundamentalism.

One would therefore misunderstand the utterances of Nietzsche on Socrates which I quoted or to which I referred if one did not keep in mind the fact that Socrates exerted a life-long fascination on Nietzsche. The most beautiful document of this fascination is the penultimate aphorism of *Beyond Good and Evil*, perhaps the most beautiful passage in Nietzsche's [whole] work. I do not dare attempt to translate it. Nietzsche does not *mention* Socrates there, but [Socrates]¹³ *is* there. Nietzsche says there¹⁴ that the gods too philosophize, thus obviously contradicting Plato's *Symposium*¹⁵ according to which the gods do *not* philosophize, do not *strive* for wisdom, but *are* wise. In other words, [the] gods, as Nietzsche understands them, are not entia perfectissima [most perfect beings]. I add only a few¹⁶ points. The serious opposition of Nietzsche to Socrates can also be expressed as follows: Nietzsche replaces *erōs* by the will to power—a striving which has a goal beyond striving by a striving which has no such goal. In other words, philosophy as it was hitherto is likened to the moon—and philosophy of the future is like the sun; the former is contemplative and [sends]¹⁷ only borrowed light, is dependent on creative acts outside of it, preceding it; the latter is creative because it is animated by conscious will to power. Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* is "a book for all and none" [as it says on the title page]; Socrates calls on *some*.—I add one more point of no small importance. In the Preface to *Beyond Good and Evil*, when taking issue with Plato and therewith with Socrates, Nietzsche says as it were in passing: "Christianity is Platonism for the people."

The profoundest interpreter and at the same time the profoundest *critic* of Nietzsche is Heidegger. He is Nietzsche's profoundest interpreter [precisely] *because* he is his profoundest critic. The direction which his criticism takes may be indicated as follows. In his¹⁸ *Zarathustra* Nietzsche had spoken of the spirit of revenge as animating all earlier philosophy; the spirit of revenge is however in the last analysis concerned with revenge on *time*, and therewith it is¹⁹ the attempt to *escape* from time to eternity, to an eternal being. Yet Nietzsche also taught *eternal* return. For Heidegger there is no longer eternity in any sense or even sempiternity in any relevant sense. Despite of this or rather because of this²⁰, he preserved Nietzsche's²¹ condemnation or critique of Plato as the originator of what came to be modern science and therewith modern technology. But through Heidegger's radical transformation of Nietzsche, Socrates almost completely disappeared. I remember only one statement of Heidegger's on Socrates: he calls him the *purest* of [all]²² Western thinkers, while making it clear that "purest" is something very different from "greatest." Is he insufficiently aware of the Odysseus in Socrates? [Perhaps.]²³ But he surely sees the connection between Socrates' singular purity and the fact that he did not write.

To come back to Heidegger's tacit denial of eternity, that denial implies that there is no way in which thought can transcend time, can transcend History; all

thought belongs to, depends on, something more fundamental which thought cannot master; all thought *belongs* radically to an epoch, a culture, a folk. This view is of course not peculiar to Heidegger; it emerged in the 19th century and today has become for many people a truism.²⁴ But Heidegger has thought it through more radically than anyone else. Let us call this view “historicism” and define it as follows: historicism is a view according to which all thought is based on absolute presuppositions which vary from epoch to epoch, from culture to culture, which are not questioned and cannot be questioned in the situation to which they belong and which they constitute. This view is not refuted by the “objectivity” of science, by the fact that science transcends, or breaks down, all cultural barriers; for the science which does this is *modern Western science*, the child or stepchild of *Greek science*. Greek science was rendered possible by the Greek *language*, a *particular* language; the Greek language [suggested]²⁵ those insights, divinations or prejudices which make science possible. To give [a simple]²⁶ example, science means knowledge of all beings (*panta ta onta*), a thought [inexpressible in original Hebrew or Arabic;]²⁷ ²⁸the medieval Jewish and Arabic philosophers had to invent an artificial term to make possible the entrance of Greek science, i.e. of science. The Greeks, and therewith in particular Socrates and Plato, lacked the awareness of history, the historical consciousness. This is the most popular and least venomous expression of why in particular Socrates and Plato have become altogether questionable for both Nietzsche and Heidegger, and so many of our contemporaries. This is the most simple explanation of why Socrates has become a problem, why there *is* a problem of Socrates.

²⁹This does not mean that the anti-Socratic position which I have tried to delineate is unproblematic.³⁰ It would be unproblematic, if we could take for granted the [so-called] historical consciousness, if the object of the historical consciousness, History [with a capital H], had simply been *discovered*. But perhaps History is a problematic *interpretation* of phenomena which could be interpreted differently, which *were* interpreted differently in former times and especially by Socrates and his descendants. [I will illustrate the fact starting from a simple example. Xenophon, a pupil of Socrates, wrote a history called *Hellenica*, Greek history. This work begins abruptly with the expression “Thereafter.” Thus Xenophon cannot indicate what the intention of this work is.]³¹ From the beginning of another work of his (the *Symposium*) we infer³² that the *Hellenica* is devoted to the serious actions of gentlemen; hence the actions of those notorious non-gentlemen, the tyrants, do not strictly speaking belong [to history, and are appropriately treated by Xenophon in excursuses.]³³ More important[ly]: the *Hellenica*³⁴ also *ends*, as far as possible,³⁵ with Thereafter—what we call History is for Xenophon a sequence of Thereafters, in each of which *tarachē* [confusion] rules. Socrates is also a gentleman, but a gentleman of a different kind; his gentlemanship consists in [raising and answering the question ‘What is’ regarding the various human things. But these ‘What is’es

are unchangeable,]³⁶ and in no way in a state of confusion. As a consequence, the³⁷ *Hellenica* is only *political* history. The primacy of political history is still recognized: a “historian” still means a *political* historian, [unless we add an adjective, like economic, art, and so on]³⁸. Still, modern history is, or is based upon, *philosophy* of history. Philosophy of history begins with Vico—[but Vico’s]³⁹ new science [as he called it] is a doctrine of natural right, i.e. a *political* doctrine. However this may be, modern history [in the form in which we know it] deals with *all* human activities and thoughts, with the whole of [what is called] “culture.” There is no “culture” in [Greek]⁴⁰ thought but [there are for instance arts, including the art of moneymaking and the imitative arts]⁴¹ and [opinions,] *doxai*, especially about the highest (the gods); these [opinions]⁴² are therefore the highest in what *we* would call “a culture”. These [opinions]⁴² differ from nation to nation and they may undergo changes *within* nations. Their objects⁴³ have the cognitive status of *nomizomena*, of things owing their being to being *held*,⁴⁴ frozen results of abortive reasonings which are *declared* to be sacred. They are [to borrow from a Platonic simile] the ceilings of caves. What we call History would be the succession or simultaneity of caves. The [caves, the] ceilings are *nomōi* [by convention] which is understood in contradistinction to *phusei* [by nature]. In the modern centuries there emerged a new kind of *natural right* [doctrine]⁴⁵ which is based on the devaluation of nature; Hobbes’ state of nature is the best known example. Nature is here only a negative standard: that from which one should move *away*. On the basis of this, the law of reason or the moral law [as it was called] ceased to be *natural* law: nature is in *no* way a standard. This is the necessary, although not sufficient, condition of the historical consciousness. The historical consciousness itself may be characterized from [this earlier]⁴⁶ point of view as follows: History, the object of the historical consciousness, is a sequence of *nomoi*, *phusis* being understood as one *nomos* among many—*nomos* has absorbed *phusis*. Heidegger tries to understand *phusis* as related, not to *phuein* (to grow) but to *phaos-phōs* (light)—“to grow” is for him above all man’s being rooted in a human past, in a tradition, and creatively transforming that tradition.⁴⁷ cf. also Nietzsche’s *Jenseits* aphorism 188.⁴⁸

Let me restate the issue in somewhat different terms as follows. The human species consists *phusei* of *ethnē*. This is due partly directly to *phusis*⁴⁹ (different races, the size and structure of the surface of the earth) and partly to *nomos* (customs and languages). Every philosopher *belongs* essentially to this or that *ethnos* but as [a] philosopher he must transcend it—. The prospect of a miraculous abolition or overcoming of the essential particularism for all men was held out in somewhat different ways by Judaism, Christianity and Islam. A *non*-miraculous overcoming was visualized in modern times by means of the conquest of nature and the universal recognition of a purely⁵⁰ *rational nomos* [law], so that only the difference of languages remains [which even Stalin recognized as important]. In reaction to this levelling, which seemed to deprive human life

of its depth, philosophers⁵¹ began to *prefer* the particular (the local and temporal) to *any* universal instead of merely *accepting* the particular. To illustrate this by what is probably⁵² the best-known example: they replaced the rights of man by the rights of Englishmen.

According to historicism every man belongs essentially and completely to a historical world, [and he]⁵³ cannot understand another historical world exactly as it [understood or understands]⁵⁴ itself—[he necessarily understands]⁵⁵ it *differently* than it [understands]⁵⁶ itself. Understanding it *better* than it understood itself is of course altogether impossible [and only believed in by very simplistic anthropologists]. *Yet* Heidegger characterizes [all earlier philosophers] all earlier philosophic thought by “oblivion of Sein,” of the ground of grounds: [which means] in the decisive respect he claims to understand [the earlier philosophers]⁵⁷ *better* than they understood themselves.

This difficulty is not peculiar to Heidegger. It is essential to all forms of historicism. For historicism must assert that it is an insight surpassing all earlier insights, since it claims to bring to light the true character of all earlier insights: it puts them in their place, if one may put it so crudely. At the same time [historicism]⁵⁸ asserts that insights are [functions of times or periods]⁵⁹; it suggests therefore implicitly that the absolute insight—the historicist insight—belongs to the absolute time, the absolute moment [in history]; but it must avoid even the semblance of raising such a claim for our time, or for *any* time; for this would be tantamount to putting an end to History, i.e. to significant time (cf. Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche).⁶⁰ In other words: the historical process is not rational; each epoch has *its* absolute presuppositions; [in the formula of Ranke] (all epochs are equally immediate to God); but historicism has brought to light this very fact, i.e. the *truly* absolute presupposition.

The historicist insight remains true for all times, for if that insight were forgotten at some future time, this would merely mean a relapse into an oblivion in which man has always lived in the past. Historicism is an eternal verity.

[That of course is impossible.]⁶¹ According to Heidegger there are no eternal verities: eternal verities would presuppose the eternity or sempiternity of the human race (*Sein und Zeit* 227–230; *Einführung in die Metaphysik* 64)⁶⁰. Heidegger *knows* that [the human race]⁶² is *not* eternal or sempiternal. Is not this *knowledge*, the knowledge that the human race had an *origin*,⁶³ a *cosmological* insight, if not *the* basis,⁶⁴ at least basic, for Heidegger?

⁶⁵The ground of all beings, and especially of man, is [said to be] Sein. “Sein” would be translated in the case of every writer other than Heidegger by “being”; but for Heidegger everything depends on the radical difference between being understood as verbal noun and being understood as participle, and in English the verbal noun is undistinguishable from the participle. I shall therefore use the German terms after having translated them once into Greek, Latin and French: Sein is *einai*, esse, être; Seiendes is *on*, ens, étant. Sein is not Seiendes; but in every understanding of Seiendes we tacitly presuppose that

we understand Sein. One is tempted to say in Platonic language that Seiendes is only by participating in Sein but in that Platonic understanding Sein would be a Seiendes.

What does Heidegger mean by Sein? One can *begin* [at least I can begin] to understand it in the following manner. Sein cannot be explained by Seiendes. For instance, causality cannot be explained causally → Sein takes the place of the categories [surely in the Kantian sense]. This change is necessary because the categories, the systems of categories, the absolute presuppositions change from epoch to epoch; this change is not progress or rational—the change of the categories cannot be explained by, or on the basis of, one particular system of categories; yet we could not speak of change if there [were] not something lasting *in* the change; that lasting which is responsible for [the] most fundamental change [fundamental thought] is Sein: Sein [as he puts it] “gives” or “sends” in different epochs a different understanding of Sein and therewith of “everything.”

This is misleading insofar as it suggests that Sein is *inferred*, only inferred. But of Sein we know through *experience* of Sein; that experience presupposes [however] a *leap*; that leap was not made by the earlier philosophers and *therefore* their thought is characterized by oblivion of Sein. They thought only of and about Seiendes. Yet they could not have thought of and about Seiendes except on the basis of some awareness of Sein. But they paid no attention to it—this failure was due, not to any negligence of theirs, but to Sein itself.

The key to Sein is one particular manner of Sein, the Sein of *man*. Man is project: everyone is what (or rather who) he is by virtue of the exercise of his freedom, his choice of a determinate ideal of existence, his project (or his failure to do so). But man is finite: the range of his fundamental choices is limited by his situation which he has *not* chosen: man is a project which is *thrown* somewhere (geworfener Entwurf)⁶⁰. The leap through which Sein is experienced is primarily the awareness-acceptance of being thrown, of finiteness, the abandonment of every thought of a railing, a support. (Existence must be understood in contradistinction to insistence.)⁶⁶ Earlier philosophy and especially Greek philosophy was oblivious of Sein precisely because it was not based on *that* experience. Greek philosophy was guided by an idea of Sein according to which Sein means to be “at hand,” to be present, and therefore Sein in the highest sense to be *always* present, to *be always*. Accordingly they and their successors understood the soul as substance, as a thing—and not as the self which, if truly a self, if authentic [and not mere drifting or shallow], [is based on the awareness-acceptance of the]⁶⁷ project as thrown. No human life that is not⁶⁸ mere drifting or shallow is possible without a project, without an ideal of existence and dedication to it. “Ideal of existence” [this] takes the place of “respectable opinion of the good life”; but opinion points to knowledge, whereas “ideal of existence” implies that in this respect there is no knowledge [possible] but only—what is much higher than knowledge, i.e. knowledge of what is—project, decision.

The ground of all beings, and especially of man, is Sein—this ground of grounds is coeval with man and therefore also not eternal or sempiternal.⁶⁹ But if this is so, Sein cannot be the *complete* ground of man: the *emergence* of man, in contradistinction to the *essence* of man, [would require]⁷⁰ a ground different from Sein. [In other words] Sein is not the ground of the *That*. But is not the *That*, and precisely the *That*, Sein? If we try to understand anything radically, we come up against facticity, irreducible facticity. If we try to understand the *That* of man, the fact that the human race *is*, by tracing it to its causes, to its conditions, we shall find that the whole effort is directed by a specific understanding of Sein—by⁷¹ an understanding which is given or sent by Sein.⁷² The condition[s] of man [in this view are]⁷³ comparable to Kant's Thing-in-itself, of which one cannot say anything and in particular not whether it contains anything [sempiternal].⁷⁴ Heidegger also replies as follows⁷⁵: one cannot speak of anything being prior to man in *time*; for time is or happens only while man is; authentic or primary time is and arises only in man; cosmic time, the time measurable by chronometers, is secondary or derivative and can therefore not be appealed to, or made use of, in fundamental philosophic considerations. This argument reminds of the medieval argument according to which the temporal finiteness of the world is compatible with God's eternity and unchangeability because, time being dependent on motion, there cannot have been time when there was no motion. But yet it [seems that it] is meaningful and even indispensable to speak of "prior to the creation of the world" and in the case of Heidegger of "prior to the emergence of man."

It seems thus that one cannot avoid the question as to what is responsible for the emergence of man and of Sein, or of what brings them out of nothing. For: *ex nihilo nihil fit* [out of nothing nothing comes into being]. This is apparently questioned by Heidegger: [he says] *ex nihilo omne ens qua ens fit* [out of nothing every being as being comes out]. This could remind one of the Biblical doctrine of creation [out of nothing]. But Heidegger has no place for⁷⁶ the Creator-God. [This would suggest, things come into being out of nothing and through nothing, *ex nihilo et a nihilo*].⁷⁷ This is [of course] not literally asserted nor literally denied by Heidegger. But *must* it not be considered in its literal meaning?

Kant found "nowhere even an attempt of a proof" of *ex nihilo nihil fit*.⁷⁸ His own proof establishes this principle as necessary—but only for rendering possible any possible experience (in contradistinction to [what he called] the Thing-in-itself)—he gives a *transcendental* legitimation [of *ex nihilo nihil fit*. The transcendental deduction in its turn points to the]⁷⁹ primacy of practical reason. [In the same spirit]⁷⁹ Heidegger⁸⁰: "die Freiheit ist der Ursprung des Satzes vom Grunde."

Accordingly Heidegger does speak of the origin of man—he says that it is a mystery—what is the status of the reasoning leading to this sensible result? It follows directly from these 2 premises: 1) Sein cannot be explained by *Seiendes*—cf. causality cannot be explained causally—2) man is *the* being

constituted by Sein—indissolubly linked with it → man participates in the inexplicability of Sein. The difficulty re: the origin of man which was encountered within biology (See Portmann) was only an illustration, not a proof.

Heidegger seems to have succeeded in getting rid of *phusis* without having left open a back door to a Thing-in-itself and without being in need of a philosophy of nature (Hegel).⁸¹ One could say that he succeeded in this at the price of the unintelligibility of Sein. Lukács, the most intelligent of the Western Marxists, using the sledgehammer which Lenin had used against empirio-criticism, spoke of mystification.⁸² Lukács only harmed himself by not learning from Heidegger. He prevented himself from seeing that Heidegger's understanding of the contemporary world is more comprehensive and more profound than Marx's (Gestell—Ware, Ding)⁸³ or that Marx raised a claim surpassing by far the claim of him who claimed to have sold the Brooklyn bridge. In all important respects Heidegger does not make things obscurer than they are.

Heidegger tries to deepen the understanding of what thinking is by reflecting on the German word for thinking. To this procedure he makes the objection that a German word obviously belongs to a particular language, and thinking is something universal; hence one cannot bring to light what thinking is by reflecting on one word of a particular language. He draws the conclusion that there remains here a problem. Which means that historicism even in its Heideggerian form contains for him a problem. For him a solution cannot lie in a return to the supra-temporal or eternal but only in something historical: in a meeting of the most different ways of understanding life and the world, a meeting of East and West—not of course of the opinion pollsters or opinion leaders on both sides but of those who, most deeply rooted in their past, reach out beyond an apparently unbridgeable gulf.⁸⁴ If this is reasonable, our first task would be the one in which we are already engaged—the task of understanding the Great Western Books.—

I began by saying that Socrates has become a problem—that the worth, the validity, of what he stood for has become a problem. But the question of the *worth* of what Socrates stood for, presupposes that we know already *what* it was for which he stood.—⁸⁵ This second, or primary, question leads to the problem of Socrates in another sense of the expression, to the *historical* problem. *This* problem of Socrates stems indeed from the fact that Socrates did not write and that we depend therefore for our knowledge of him, i.e. of his thought, on mediators who were at the same time transformers. These mediators are Aristophanes, Plato, Xenophon, and Aristotle. Aristotle did not know Socrates except through reports oral or written. In fact, what he says about Socrates is a restatement of what *Xenophon* said. Aristophanes, Xenophon and Plato knew Socrates himself. Of these 3 men the only one who showed by deed that he was willing to be a historian, was Xenophon. This establishes a prima facie case in favor of Xenophon. As for Plato, I remember having heard it said that “we know today” that some of his dialogues are early and hence more

Socratic than the later ones. But for Plato it was a matter of complete indifference which implications or presuppositions of the Socratic question “what is virtue” were known to Socrates and which were not: so much was he dedicated to Socrates’ question; so much did he forget himself. It is much wiser to say of the Platonic Socrates, with Nietzsche, jocularly and even frivolously, *prosthe Platōn, opithen te Platōn, messē te Chimaira*. At any rate, the Platonic Socrates is less *eusunoptos* than is the Xenophontic Socrates. I shall limit myself therefore to the Xenophontic Socrates. But this is not feasible if we do not remind ourselves of the Socrates of Aristophanes’ *Clouds*.

⁸⁶That Socrates was manifestly guilty of the two stock charges made against the philosophers at the time: 1) that they did not believe in the gods, especially the gods of the city, and 2) that they made the weaker argument the stronger, that they made the *Adikos Logos* triumph over the *Dikaios Logos*. For he engaged in 2 activities: 1) in *phusiologia*, the study of the compulsions by which especially heavenly phenomena come about, and 2) in *rhētorikē*. The connection between the 2 pursuits is not immediately clear, for the Aristophanean Socrates was altogether unpolitical and rhetoric seems to be in the service of politics. Yet: *phusiologia* liberates from all prejudices, in particular the belief in the gods of the city; and this liberation is frowned upon by the city; the philosopher-physiologist needs therefore rhetoric in order to defend himself, his unpopular activity, before the law courts; his defense is the highest achievement of his skill to make the *Adikos Logos* triumph over the *Dikaios Logos*. Needless to say, he can use that skill also for other, in a sense lower purposes, like defrauding debtors. The Aristophanean Socrates is a man of the utmost continence and endurance. This fact alone shows that the *Adikos Logos* who appears on the stage is not *Socrates’ Adikos Logos*, at least not in its pure, ultimate form. *This Adikos Logos* is to the effect that the true community is the community of the knowers, and not the *polis*, or that the knowers have obligations only toward one another: the ignoramus have as little rights as madmen. The knower is much closer to another knower than he is to his family. The family is constituted by paternal authority and the prohibition against incest—by the *prohibition* against killing one’s father and marrying one’s mother. The prohibition against incest, the obligation of exogamy, calls for the expansion of the family into the *polis*, an expansion which is necessary in the first place because the family is not able to defend itself. But the 2 prohibitions would lack the necessary force if there were no gods. Socrates questions all this: *oud’ esti Zeus*. He thus subverts the *polis*, and yet he could not lead his life *without* the *polis*. In the words of the *Dikaios Logos*, the *polis* feeds him.—Xenophon does not reply to Aristophanes directly. But the 2 main points made by Aristophanes became in a somewhat modified form the 2 points of Socrates’ indictment formed⁸⁷ by Meletos, Anytos and Lykon. By refuting the indictment, Xenophon refutes then, if tacitly, Aristophanes too.

re *asebeia*—no *phusiologia* but only study of *tānthrōpina*—yet Socrates did

study nature in *his* manner → proof of the existence and providence of the gods (≠ the gods of the city)

re *diaphthora*—Socrates the perfect gentleman (on the *basis* of his *egkra-teia*)—he even *taught kaloka' gathia* to the extent to which it *can* be taught—he did not separate wisdom and moderation from one⁸⁸ another—accordingly he was law-abiding, he even identified justice with law-abidingness—he was then a political man—the *xenikos bios* not viable—he even *taught ta politika*—in this context, he criticized the established *politeia* (election by lot)—but this was a gentlemanly view to take. Yet we are reminded of Socrates' alleged ability *ton hēttō logon kreittō poiein* by the fact that he could handle everyone in speeches in any way he liked—therefore he attracted such questionable gentlemen as Kritias and Alcibiades—but it would be very unfair to make Socrates responsible for *their* misdeeds.

Xenophon's Socrates does not always take the high road of *kalokàgathia*—but in doing so he became, not a dangerous subversion, but rather a philistine.⁸⁶E.g. his treatment of friendship—friends are *chrēmata nē Di'*—utilitarian, economical treatment—reducing the kingly art to the economic art. Ultimately: *kalon = agathon = chrēsimon*

⁸⁶Yet: *kalokàgathia* has more than one sense. What did Socrates understand by *kalokàgathia*? Knowledge of the *ti esti* of *tànthrōpina*—such knowledge is not possessed by the gentlemen in the common sense of the term. Xenophon dispels any possible confusion on this point by presenting to us one explicit *confrontation* of Socrates with a *kalos kàgathos* (*Oeconomicus* 11—nothing of this kind in Plato). This makes us wonder as to *the full extent of the difference between Socrates and the kaloi kàgathoi*—in a chapter of the *Memorabilia* devoted to gentlemanship (II 6.35) Xenophon's Socrates tells us what the *aretē andros* is: surpassing friends in helping them and enemies in harming them—but in speaking of Socrates' virtue Xenophon does not mention at all harming people → *andreia* does not occur in Xenophon's 2 lists of Socrates' virtues. Xenophon speaks of Socrates' exemplary conduct in campaigns but he subsumes this under Socrates' *justice* and he does not give a single example of Socrates' military prowess. Burnet, who had a very low view of Xenophon's understanding, believed that people like Xenophon and *Meno* were attracted to Socrates by his military reputation while all we know of that reputation we know through *Plato*. Socrates was then a gentleman in the sense that he *always* considered the What is? of human things. Yet Xenophon gives us very few examples of such discussions; there are many more Socratic conversations which *exhort* to virtue or *dehort* from vice without raising any 'What is' question than conversations dealing with *ti esti*.⁸⁹ *Xenophon points to the core of Socrates' life or thought but does not present it sufficiently or at all.*

The Xenophontic Socrates characterizes those who worry about the nature of all things as mad: some of them hold that being is only one, others that there are⁹⁰ infinitely many beings; some of them hold that all things are always in

motion, others that nothing is ever in motion; some of them hold that everything comes into being and perishes, others that nothing ever comes into being and perishes. He thus delineates the sane or sober view of the nature of all things; according to that wiser view there are many but not infinitely many beings, these beings (\neq other things) never change, never come into being and perish. As Xenophon says in an entirely different context Socrates never ceased considering what each of the beings is: the many eternal beings are the 'What is'es, the tribes (\neq the infinitely many perishable individuals). Socrates did then worry about the nature of all things and to that extent he too was mad; but *his* madness was sobriety—*sobria ebrietas*—There is only one occasion on which Xenophon calls Socrates "blessed": when he speaks of how Socrates acquired his friends or rather his *good* friends—he acquired them by studying with them the writings of the wise men of old and by selecting together with them the good things they found in them—but Xenophon does not give a single example of this blissful activity.—Xenophon introduces a Socratic conversation with Glaukon as follows: Socrates was well disposed to Glaukon for the sake of Charmides the son of Glaukon and for the sake of Plato. Accordingly the next chapter reports a conversation of Socrates with Charmides. We are thus induced to suspect that the next chapter will report a conversation of Socrates with *Plato*. Instead the next chapter reports a conversation of Socrates with an Ersatz for Plato, the philosopher Aristippos: the peak—the conversation with Plato—is pointed to but missing—and not because there were no such conversations.—That Book of the *Memorabilia* which comes closest to presenting the Socratic teaching as such, is introduced by the remark that Socrates did not approach all men in the same manner: he approached those who had good natures in one way and those who lacked good natures in another way; but the chief interlocutor in that Book, the chief addressee of *the* Socratic teaching presented by Xenophon, is manifestly a youth who lacked a good nature.—A last example: Socrates used 2 kinds of dialectics—one in which he led back the whole argument to its *hypothesis* and made clear that *hypothesis*; in this way the truth became manifest. In the other kind Socrates took his way through the things most generally agreed upon, through the opinions accepted by human beings; in this way he achieved, not indeed knowledge, or truth, but agreement or concord. In the second kind of speech *Odysseus* excelled; and, as the accuser of Socrates said, Socrates frequently cited the verses from the *Iliad* in which *Odysseus* is presented as speaking differently to men of worth and to worthless people.—Only by following these intimations, by linking them with one another, by thinking them through and by always remembering them—even when reading how Socrates gave good advice to a poor fellow who was near despair because 14 female relatives had taken refuge in his house and were about to starve him and themselves to death—only by always remembering Xenophon's intimations, I say, can one come to see the *true* Socrates as Xenophon saw him. For Xenophon presents Socrates also and primarily as innocent

and even helpful to the meanest capacities. He conceals the difference between Socratic and ordinary *kalokàgathia* as much as possible, i.e. as much as is compatible with intimating their conflict.

⁸⁶Nothing is more characteristic of gentlemen than respect for the law—for the right kind of law; or, if you wish, the wrong kind is not law at all. It is therefore necessary to raise the question *ti esti nomos*; but this question is never raised by Xenophon's Socrates; it is raised only by Alcibiades, a youth of extreme audacity and even *hubris* who by raising that question discomfited no less a man than the great Perikles. Socrates' failure to raise that question showed how good a citizen he was. For laws depend on the regime, but a good citizen is a man who obeys the law independently of all changes of regimes. But, according to a more profound view, "good citizen" is relative to the regime: a good citizen under a democracy will be a bad citizen under an oligarchy. Given this complication, it is prudent *not* to raise the question 'what is law.' But, alas, Alcibiades who did raise that question was a companion of Socrates at the time he raised it, and the way in which he handled it reveals his Socratic training. Xenophon almost openly admits that Socrates subverted paternal authority. As for incest, Xenophon's Socrates asserts that incest is forbidden by divine law, for incest between parents and children is automatically punished by the defective character of the offspring, good offspring coming only from parents who are both in their prime. The Socratic argument is silent on incest between brother and sister. Above all, the punishment for incest between parents and children does not differ from the "punishment" that is visited on an oldish husband who marries a young wife. On this point the Xenophontic Socrates comes very close to the Socrates of the *Clouds*.

⁸⁶The Socrates of the *Clouds* teaches the omnipotence of rhetoric, but this teaching is refuted by the action of the play. The Xenophontic Socrates could handle everyone as he liked in speeches—this means that he could not handle everyone as he liked in *deeds*. The greatest example is Xanthippe, to say nothing of his accusers. But the Xenophontic Socrates (\neq the Socrates of the *Clouds*) is *aware* of the essential limitation of speech. Xenophon indicates this also as follows. His comrade-in-arms Proxenos was able to rule gentlemen but not the others who regarded him as naive; he was unable to instil the general run of soldiers with fear; he was unable to inflict punishment; he was a pupil of Gorgias. Xenophon, however, the pupil of Socrates, was able to rule both gentlemen and non-gentlemen; he was good at doing as well as at speaking.

⁸⁶From Aristotle we learn that the sophists identified or almost identified the political art with rhetoric. Socrates, we infer, was opposed to the sophists also and especially because he was aware of the essential limitations of rhetoric. In this important respect, incidentally, Machiavelli had nothing in common with the sophists but agreed with Socrates; he continued, modified, corrupted the Socratic tradition; he was linked to that tradition through Xenophon to whom he refers more frequently than to Plato, Aristotle and Cicero taken together.

This is an additional reason why one should pay greater attention to Xenophon than one ordinarily does.

This lecture consists of 2 heterogenous parts—they are held together apparently only by the title “The problem of Socrates,” which is necessarily ambiguous: the problem of Socrates is philosophic and it is historical. The *distinction* between philosophic and historical cannot be avoided, but distinction is not total *separation*: one cannot study the philosophic problem without having made up one’s mind on the historical problem and one cannot study the historical problem without having made up one’s mind implicitly on the philosophic problem.

NOTES

1. The manuscript contains the following sentences instead of these bracketed ones: “Why should we be interested in it? Why should it be relevant to us? There are so many things that concern us so much more obviously and urgently than the problem of Socrates. We receive an answer by listening to the man from whom I took the title of my lecture and who, as far as I remember, coined the expression ‘the problem of Socrates.’”

2. Word omitted in the lecture as delivered.

3. “disintegrated” is written instead of “were disintegrating” in the manuscript.

4. “is” replaces “was” in the lecture as delivered.

5. “pre-Socratics” replaces “pre-Socratic philosophers” in the lecture as delivered.

6. The word in the text was originally “fullest”; “est” has been crossed out.

7. A notation above the line directs us to insert here the following words, which are written at the bottom of the page in the manuscript: “anti-Hegel, Schopenhauer.” (The word which we have interpreted as “anti-” is difficult to read, and perhaps we are in error about it.) These words are not present in the lecture as delivered.

8. “His” is written instead of “Nietzsche’s” in the manuscript.

9. “man has ever achieved” is written instead of “has ever been achieved” in the manuscript.

10. A notation above the line directs us to insert here the following phrase, which is written at the bottom of the page in the manuscript: “i.e. collective egoism of the human race (utilitarianism)” This phrase is not present in the lecture as delivered.

11. The words “on acts, on the will,” replace “on acts of the will” in the lecture as delivered.

12. A notation above the line directs us to insert here the following sentence, which is written at the bottom of the page in the manuscript. “Science cannot answer the question ‘why science’: it rests on an *irrational* foundation.” This sentence is not present in the lecture as delivered.

13. “he” is written instead of “Socrates” in the manuscript.

14. The word “there,” which has been added above the line, is omitted in the lecture as delivered.

15. “*Banquet*” replaces “*Symposium*” in the lecture as delivered.

16. The words “a few” added above the line to replace “one” which has been crossed out. In keeping with this addition, the word “points” has been made plural by the addition of the final “s”. Also, the manuscript contains here the following sentence, which has been crossed out (see, however, the end of the paragraph): “In the Preface to *Beyond Good and Evil*, when taking issue with Plato and therewith with Socrates, Nietzsche says as it were in passing ‘Christianity is Platonism for the people.’”

17. “spends” is [inadvertently] written instead of “sends” in the manuscript.

18. “the” replaces “his” in the lecture as delivered.

19. “it is” added above the line.

20. “it” replaces “this” in the lecture as delivered.

21. "Nietzsche's" added above the line to replace "the" which has been crossed out. In the lecture as delivered, however, the reading is again "the."

22. "the" is written instead of "all" in the manuscript.

23. "Probably." is written instead of "Perhaps." in the manuscript.

24. "a truism for many people" replaces "for many people a truism" in the lecture as delivered.

25. "supplied" is written instead of "suggested" in the manuscript.

26. "an" is written instead of "a simple" in the manuscript.

27. "inaccessible e.g. to original Hebrew or Arabic thought:" is written instead of "inexpressible in original Hebrew or Arabic:" in the manuscript. Also, the word "original" in the manuscript is added only above the line.

28. The remainder of this paragraph is omitted in the lecture as delivered. The tape contains here a pause of about fifteen seconds during which the only sound is that of shuffling pages.

29. At the end of the preceding paragraph, the manuscript has the marginal notation "turn to sheet 8" (in Professor Strauss's own hand). Accordingly, the editors have chosen to omit, for the time being, a large portion of the lecture and to continue instead from the beginning of sheet 8. At the end of sheet 10 of the manuscript, there is another marginal notation, "Continue 4b." That notation points back to the present one, on sheet 4b, and thus also to the omitted portion of the text. This omitted portion, which we will return to as directed by that later notation, continues to what appears to be the end of the lecture. Our editorial procedure is further justified by the fact that the lecture as delivered in Annapolis continues here in the manner that we are presenting it (i.e. from sheet 8 of the manuscript). Since the tape breaks off before the occurrence of the second marginal notation, however, we cannot be certain how much, if any, of the omitted section was included in Professor Strauss's oral presentation. (A subsequent note will indicate where the tape breaks off.)

30. This sentence is omitted from the lecture as delivered and replaced by the two following sentences: "We have to pay more attention to this question of historicism, that is to say of history in the first place. The anti-Socratic position, which I have tried to delineate, is not unproblematic."

31. The sentence "Xenophon's *Hellenica* begins abruptly with 'Thereafter'—thus Xenophon cannot indicate what the intention of his work is." is written instead of these four bracketed sentences in the manuscript.

32. The words "(the *Symposium*)" are omitted in the lecture as delivered, and the words "we infer" are also omitted and replaced by "one can infer."

33. The words "in it." are written instead of "to history," in the manuscript. Also, instead of the words "and are appropriately treated by Xenophon in excursuses." the manuscript contains the words "belong in excursuses" above the line.

34. "this work" replaces "the *Hellenica*" in the lecture as delivered.

35. The phrase "as far as possible" is omitted in the lecture as delivered. Instead, the next occurrence of the word "Thereafter" is followed by the phrase "within the limits of the possible."

36. "considering the 'What is' of the human things, these 'What is'es being unchangeable," is written instead of these bracketed words in the manuscript.

37. "Xenophon's" replaces "the" in the lecture as delivered.

38. "(≠ economic historian, art historian . . .)" is written instead of these bracketed words in the manuscript.

39. "yet his" is written instead of "but Vico's" in the manuscript.

40. "classical" is written instead of "Greek" in the manuscript.

41. "*technai* (including *chrēmastikē* and *mimētikē*)" is written instead of these bracketed words in the manuscript.

42. "*doxai*" is written instead of "opinions" in the manuscript.

43. The words "Their objects" added above the line to replace "They" which has been crossed out. In the lecture as delivered, however, the word "They" is the one used.

44. "of things owing their being to being *held*" added at the bottom of the page in the manuscript. A notation above the line directs us to insert this phrase here, and it is included here in the lecture as delivered.

45. "teaching" is written instead of "doctrine" in the manuscript.

46. "the classical" is written instead of "this earlier" in the manuscript.

47. A notation above the line directs us to insert here the following words, which are written at the bottom of the page in the manuscript: "das Gewachsene ≠ das Gemachte." These words are not present in the lecture as delivered.

48. These last few lines, beginning with the words "Heidegger tries," are omitted from the lecture as delivered.

49. "nature" replaces "*phusis*" in the lecture as delivered.

50. "purely" added above the line.

51. "philosophers" added above the line to replace "men" which has been crossed out.

52. "what is probably" omitted from the lecture as delivered.

53. "→ we" is written instead of "and he" in the manuscript.

54. "understands or understood" is written instead of "understood or understands" in the manuscript.

55. "we necessarily understand" is written instead of "he necessarily understands" in the manuscript.

56. "understood" is written instead of "understands" in the manuscript.

57. "them" is written instead of "the earlier philosophers" in the manuscript.

58. "it" is written instead of "historicism" in the manuscript.

59. "f(times or periods)" is written instead of "functions of times or periods" in the manuscript.

60. This entire parenthesis is omitted from the lecture as delivered.

61. This sentence begins with the word "Yet" in the manuscript.

62. "it" is written instead of "the human race" in the manuscript.

63. "the knowledge that the human race had an *origin*" added at the bottom of the page in the manuscript. A notation above the line directs us to insert this phrase here, and it is included here in the lecture as delivered.

64. "is this not the basis" replaces "if not *the* basis" in the lecture as delivered.

65. Professor Strauss indicates by a marginal notation that the following section of the text, which includes over four paragraphs, written on two separate sheets, belongs here. This section also occurs here in the lecture as delivered. It replaces the following sentences, which have been crossed out. "*The ground of all beings, and especially of man, is Sein—this ground of grounds is coeval with man and therefore also not eternal or sempiternal. But if this is so, Sein cannot be the complete ground of man: the emergence of man (≠ the essence of man) requires a ground different from Sein. Sein is not the ground of the That. To this one can reply as follows: the That of man or its condition is necessarily interpreted in the light of a specific understanding of Sein—of understanding which is given or sent by Sein.*" A subsequent note will indicate the end of this interpolated section.

66. This entire parenthesis is omitted from the lecture as delivered. Also, Professor Strauss is probably using the word "insistence" here in its older, and Latinate, sense of "standing or resting upon."

67. "is resoluteness, i.e. the awareness-acceptance of a" is written instead of these bracketed words in the manuscript.

68. "not" is inadvertently omitted from the lecture as delivered.

69. "sempiternal or eternal" replaces "eternal or sempiternal" in the lecture as delivered.

70. "requires" is written instead of "would require" in the manuscript.

71. "by" added by the editors to replace "of" in the manuscript and in the lecture as delivered.

72. This is the end of the interpolated section which was mentioned in note 65.

73. "is" is written instead of "in this view are" in the manuscript.

74. "*aidion*" is written instead of "sempiternal" in the manuscript.

75. "mentions this reply" replaces "also replies as follows" in the lecture as delivered.

76. "has no place for" added above the line to replace "denies" which has been crossed out.

77. The symbol "→" followed by "ex nihilo et ab nihilo omne ens fit." is written instead of this sentence in the manuscript. Also, the words "qua ens" are written, but then crossed out, after the words "omne ens."

78. A notation above the line directs us to insert here the following words, which are written at the bottom of the page in the manuscript: "Grundsatz der Beharrlichkeit der Substanz." These words are not present in the lecture as delivered.

79. The symbol “→” is written instead of these bracketed words in the manuscript.

80. Here is where the tape of the lecture as delivered in Annapolis breaks off (cf. note 29). Accordingly, we have only Professor Strauss’s manuscript of the remainder of the lecture.

81. Beneath the line here there are added two distinct groups of words in the manuscript. The first, which begins under the word “Thing-in-itself”, consists of two lines, one underneath the other. The top line is “(Kant)—nature ‘an sich’ unknowable.” The bottom line appears to be “but for Heidegger and Nietzsche: no Beyond or Without.” (This line, and especially the word which we have interpreted as “for,” is difficult to read, and perhaps we are in error about it.) The second group of words, which is found underneath the words “philosophy of nature (Hegel)” is “nature as mind in its *Anderssein*.”

82. A notation above the line directs us to insert here the following two sentences, which are written at the bottom of the page in the manuscript. “Heidegger has something to do with *mysticism* if mysticism is the discovery of the life of the deity in the depths of the human heart. But the mystery which Heidegger claims to have discovered is meant to be deeper, and less based on questionable presuppositions, than the mysteries of God.”

83. The word “,Ding” (with the preceding comma) is written underneath the word “Ware” in the manuscript.

84. A notation above the line directs us to insert here the following sentence, which is written at the bottom of the page in the manuscript. “In this way, and only in this way, Heidegger upholds the universalist—the trans-national or trans-cultural—intention of philosophy.”

85. Here, at the end of Professor Strauss’s manuscript, occurs the marginal notation “*Continue 4b*,” to which we referred in note 29, and which directs us back to the portion of the lecture that we have omitted so far. At the beginning of this portion of the lecture, a new paragraph begins with the following sentence, which has been crossed out: “However this may be, can one answer the question of the *worth* of what Socrates stood for, nay, can one properly formulate it, if one does not know in the first place *what* it is for which he stood.” As the reader will notice, this sentence is nearly the same as the one that immediately precedes the marginal notation, “*Continue 4b*.” Accordingly, in turning now to this omitted section, we have chosen not to begin a new paragraph.

86. No indentation in the manuscript, although the previous line appears to be the end of a paragraph.

87. It is possible that Professor Strauss wrote the word “framed” here instead of “formed.”

88. “one” added by the editors.

89. The words “than conversations dealing with *ti esti*” are added beneath the line in the manuscript.

90. “are” added by the editors.