

## Why Leo Strauss is Not an Aristotelian: an Exploratory Study

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### Preface

If, as has often been suggested, Leo Strauss's signature idea is "return to the ancients," then he stands not only in fitting company with the other authors considered on this panel, but as one among many who now call for a "return" in thinking. Hannah Arendt defends a view of the political which she sees as Greek if not quite Aristotelian. Voegelin, like Strauss, is disaffected from modern thought and calls for a return, although precisely to what is harder for me to say.

Strauss was one of the first non-Thomists to call for a return; when he began his career the twin forces of progressivism and historicism had made the idea of return seem retrograde if not simply absurd. (CM 10-11) Since Strauss wrote, the idea of return has become more widespread, especially in the form of an Aristotle revival. Thinkers like Elizabeth Anscombe and Alastair MacIntyre rediscovered what has now come to be called "virtue ethics," a form of Aristotelian ethical theory. Thinkers like John Finnis and Joseph Raz rediscovered "practical reason," an idea borrowed from Aristotle and the basis for a "perfectionist" ethic with "flourishing" as its core. It is thus no longer so unfashionable as it was when Strauss was writing to look to classical philosophers for guidance. Yet he still differs in one very important way from most if not all the others who wish to so return: for Strauss, Aristotle is not the central name in his concern with ancient philosophy. Instead, the center of his notion of return is Socrates. Thus those Strauss considers the core Socratics have been more important for him: Plato and Xenophon, especially. As opposed to the many works Strauss devoted to Plato and Xenophon, he has remarkably few writings devoted to Aristotle — only one on a particular Aristotle text. His apparent preference for Plato (and Xenophon) over Aristotle calls for more attention than it has received. An

adequate account of Strauss on Aristotle would , however, require what cannot be undertaken here, a thorough study of the transcriptions of Strauss's seminars on Aristotle, for though he wrote little on the man he taught him often (see Anastaplo in Deutsch and Murley) This essay thus represents at best some preliminary observations on Aristotle in the thinking of Leo Strauss.

## PART I

If, as has often been suggested, Leo Strauss's signature idea is "the return to the ancients," then his book *The City and Man* would seem to have a special place in his large corpus. Most of the writings of his later years did indeed focus on the ancients, but it is only *The City of Man* that focuses on ancient political philosophy at its peak. Thus his book *Socrates and Aristophanes*, published two years after *The City and Man*, presents an interpretation and analysis of a Greek thinker, Aristophanes, who was a poet not a philosopher, and accordingly, the book brings to light one of Strauss's most significant antinomies — philosophy and poetry. His book *Liberalism Ancient and Modern* (1968) contains a series of essays written over the preceding decade or so. Strauss indicates the less fundamental character of that book when he describes his "earlier publications" as containing his attempt "to lay bare the fundamental difference between classical and modern political philosophy." This book, however, is devoted to "adumbrating that difference." (LAM, viii) *Liberalism Ancient and Modern* is part of the same project but deals at a less fundamental level with it. Strauss continued in his later years to produce books on ancient philosophy, including two books on Xenophon (1970, 1972) and two posthumously published books, *The Argument and Action of Plato's Laws* (1978), and *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy* (1983). Strauss is well-known for valuing Xenophon much more highly than most of his contemporaries, and for considering Xenophon a genuine philosopher. Nonetheless, he did not consider Xenophon to stand at the level of the philosophers he treated in *The City and Man*, where Strauss identifies the "men of the highest excellence" as Plato and Aristotle. (CM, 49) As to *The Laws*

of Plato, Strauss also considers this to be a most important dialogue "the only political work proper of Plato" (CM, 29) but he emphasized its "sub-Socratic" level. That is to say, it is below the Socratic *Republic*, which, according to Strauss "brings to light the nature of political things" and is the subject of the central essay in the *The City and Man*. (CM, 138)

*The City and Man*, let us tentatively say, is an especially significant work within Strauss's oeuvre because it presents his most sustained reflections on the "political thought of classical antiquity" and especially on the political thought of the two greatest thinkers who have left us any writings, Plato and Aristotle. The "Preface" to *The City and Man* presents the task of the book in more modest, but not incompatible terms, as a place where he "develops his views on a rather neglected aspect of classical political thought more fully than [he] otherwise might have done" (CM, v) and perforce than he had done theretofore. He had, of course, developed his "views" on classical political thought on numerous earlier occasions, sometimes quite fully, including an "earlier and shorter version" of the chapter on Plato's *Republic* that appears in *The City and Man*.

Strauss identifies the topic of this fuller development as "a rather neglected aspect of classical political thought," "rather neglected," it would seem, not only by him but by others who have written on the classics. But he does not tell us in so many words what that "rather neglected aspect" is. Perhaps it is the theme announced by his title: the city and man, i.e., the relation between the political community and the human beings who are its "matter." (CM, 46) But it seems strange to call that topic "rather neglected," for the relation between the individual and the political community is a frequently explored topic in studies in the history of political thought.

*The City and Man* is certainly not Strauss's first effort at explicating the political thought of classical antiquity. Prior to *The City and Man* he had written on Xenophon, including a brief but

comprehensive study of one Xenophonic dialogue in his book *On Tyranny* (1948). Mostly, however, his writings on classical political philosophy had the character of compendia, quite striking really in the contexts in which they were published. Thus in his very influential *Natural Right and History* Strauss paired a long chapter on "Classic Natural Right" with an even longer chapter on "Modern Natural Right." The chapter on the classics presented a composite doctrine—a construct of a doctrine attributed to the classic Socratics without distinguishing among them. Thus in nearly every footnote of the first twenty five paragraphs of the first chapter, Strauss cites a number of classical thinkers, including Plato, Xenophon, Aristotle, Cicero and Thomas Aquinas. Only in the last seventeen paragraphs of the chapter, i.e., well beyond the half-way mark, does he "distinguish three types of classic natural right teachings, or three different manners in which the classics understood natural right." (NRH, 146) The common elements of the classic position are more prominent, or at least earn more sustained attention, than the areas of difference.

Strauss's treatment of the moderns in *Natural Right and History* is altogether different—he gives us not a composite view of "modern natural right," but a discussion individualized almost from the outset: there is only one paragraph before Strauss turns to a separate discussion of Hobbes and then Locke. The succeeding chapter, on "The Crisis of Modern Natural Right" follows almost the same pattern; it consists of two long "sub-chapters," one on Rousseau, one on Burke.

The pattern present in *Natural Right and History* is even more emphatically visible in one of Strauss's other main statements on the classic as opposed to the modern position: in the famous essay based on a lecture series, "What is Political Philosophy," Strauss devotes one lecture to "The Classical Solution" (in the singular) to "The Problem of Political Philosophy," and another lecture to "The Modern Solutions" (in the plural). As in *Natural Right and History*, Strauss presents a more or less composite account of the classics, but a highly individualized account of the moderns. (Also see "Three Waves of

Modernity in Giddin). In another essay reprinted along with the lecture series just discussed in the collection *What is Political Philosophy?* Strauss again presents a composite statement ("On Classical Political Philosophy").

*The City and Man*, we might conclude, develops more fully than Strauss had hitherto the differences among the political thinkers of classical antiquity, or, perhaps better put, the individual voices or viewpoints of the different thinkers. Yet that too does not seem an "aspect of classical thought" rather neglected, since many scholars have attended with great assiduity to this topic. Perhaps it is not so much the differences among the thinkers *per se*, but some aspect of the differences that Strauss meant to address. That suggestion seems to get us further because Strauss asserts in the "Introduction to *The City and Man* that "Aristotle's *Politics* contains the original form of political science, or that Aristotle is, in some significant sense, the first political scientist (CM 12). That claim, he admits at the outset of the chapter on Aristotle, is open to the objection that not Aristotle, but Socrates, is the "originator of political philosophy or political science" (CM 13). That objection leads Strauss to make a distinction, which comes to view at first as a distinction between political science and political philosophy. Socrates founds political philosophy, but Aristotle founds political science (CM 19-21). This formulation would seem to contradict Strauss's claim in his famous "Epilogue, to the effect that "for Aristotle, political science is identical with political philosophy because science is identical with philosophy" (LAM 205). Aristotle, and Strauss following him, does not mean to say that Aristotle's political science is non-philosophic, but is philosophic in such a way that it at the same time gives birth to political science. Strauss is tolerably clear on what he understands by this claim: "not Socrates or Plato, but Aristotle is truly the founder of political science as one discipline, and by no means the most fundamental or the highest discipline, among a number of disciplines" (CM 21). Aristotle's political science is philosophic, then, but in a different way from Plato's political philosophy. Plato does not see political inquiry as one discipline among others, and he sees political philosophy as far more central or

fundamental than Aristotle does: "in its original [Socratic or Platonic] form political philosophy broadly understood is the core of philosophy or rather the first philosophy, rather than metaphysics, which is "first philosophy" for Aristotle (CM 20).

The emphasis in the Aristotle chapter on that thinker as the "originator" of political science, in contradistinction to Socrates or Plato as "originator" or promulgator of political philosophy, suggests that *this* difference is the particular difference between the two that Strauss means to develop more fully than hitherto done. That indeed is a "rather neglected aspect" of classical philosophy.

The conclusion that Strauss is probing the differences between two different kinds or understandings of political enquiry receives confirmation when we notice the third chapter of the book, on Thucydides' account of the Peloponnesian War. So as not to make it difficult for us, Strauss labels the first section of this chapter "Political Philosophy and Political History," and he labels the tenth and last section "Political History and Political Philosophy." Plato and Aristotle are identified in this context with political philosophy and Thucydides with political history (CM 139, 23?). Thucydides is thus interpreted in the light of his "discipline," political history. The conclusion is inescapable: the organizing principle of *The City and Man* is the investigation of the three disciplines or types of political enquiry practiced by the three thinkers engaged in the book. Chapter I is thus silently subtitled "Political Science," chapter II, "Political Philosophy," and chapter III, "Political History." It is the distinction among these three that has been "rather neglected" and that Strauss will develop more fully.

*The City and Man* is a book about three kinds of political enquiry, but Strauss indicates that two of them are closer to each other than to the third: Plato and Aristotle are practitioners of political philosophy, and as such engage in "the quest for the best regime which is possible, although it never was or will be actual" (CM 139). Thucydides' political history "seems to be an entirely different world," by implication not a quest for the best regime, and most definitely not indifferent to the

actuality of its subject matter. Strauss implicitly emphasizes the degree to which classical thought accepts the diremption between the actual and the rational that Hegel attempted to overcome (see "On Classical Political Philosophy," in Giddin, 71-72).

Chapters I and II, by this reading, which is not at all incompatible with our earlier readings, form a unit of sorts over and against chapter III. Strauss indicates that unity in one of the subtle aspect of the "art of writing" that he practices. Chapter I contains thirty-three paragraphs, chapter II contains seventy-seven, i.e., both multiples of eleven. Chapter III, by contrast, contains eighty-one paragraphs, most obtrusively nine squared. Probably not coincidentally, the Introduction contains eighteen paragraphs, also a multiple of nine, suggesting that the Introduction and Chapter III belong together, as chapters I and II belong together. The odd thing, however, is that when we add together the number of paragraphs in the Introduction and in Chapter III, we have ninety-nine, a multiple of both nine (of course) and, strange to say, eleven. The total number of paragraphs in the book, then, is a multiple of eleven. Eleven is somehow a special number for *The City and Man*, just as Strauss had argued that thirteen was a special number for Machiavelli's two major books (See T.M.).

Although Strauss was often ridiculed for making so much of the numbers of paragraphs or chapters or items in a list, I trust I am not open to this same ridicule in taking note of number patterns in *The City and Man*. It was, after all, an axiom of Strauss's that one writes as one reads. One may debate whether Strauss rightly applied this principle to any of the historical authors he studied, but surely it makes sense to apply it to him, the one writer over whose mode of writing he had control. I take it as too patterned to be coincidental, and thus to be intended. But to what end? That we cannot say at this point. And what gain is there in noting these number patterns? That too is difficult to say at this point, but one conclusion seems fair and justified: eleven and multiples of eleven are significant, and ought to be taken special note of in our reading of *The City and Man*.

## Part II

It may seem odd that Strauss's chief extended discussion of the differences between Plato and Aristotle should occur around the disciplinary topic propounded in *The City and Man*. It may not seem less odd, but it appears more premeditated, if we recall that in the same year that Strauss delivered the lectures that served as the basis for *The City and Man*, he published his "Epilogue" to a book written by some of his students critiquing "the scientific study of politics." A prominent part of his concluding essay was a call for a return to the "old political science" from the new "scientific" political science: "it is best to contrast the new political science directly with the 'original' of the old, that is, with Aristotelian political science" (LAM 205). In this context Strauss outlines five elements of Aristotelian political science. He turns here to Aristotle also in the context of discussing the disciplinary character of political science (see Behnagar, 2). And he takes for granted what is *the* thematic question of the Aristotle chapter: that this is the "original" political science.

Strauss's "Epilogue" is an attempt to encourage his fellow political scientists to withdraw their obeisance or deference to the new science, which takes its bearings from the philosophic doctrines of logical positivism and empiricism. He attempts to wean them away from the new science by both laying out an explicit alternative to it--the aforementioned Aristotelian political science--and by mounting a critique of the presuppositions of the new science. Strauss had on many previous occasions criticized the distinction between facts and values, which is such a large part of the foundation of the new political science. In this context, he passes over this theme quickly by collapsing it into the critique of the empiricist commitments of the new political science. This latter theme comes to sight as more fundamental, both because it will explicate the deeper ground behind the fact-value distinction, and because it will bring to light the chief ground of attraction, "the sympathetic chord" that accounts for the strength of the new political science. That attraction proceeds from the ordinary political scientist's



intuition or understanding that political science must be an empirical discipline. Although as a student (mainly) of old texts, it might seem that Strauss would wish to resist this empirical orientation, but in fact he embraces it whole-heartedly. "This is a demand of common sense; and one that the old political science he commends did in fact meet (LAM 210). Strauss parts ways with the new political science and its philosophic projectors not over the need for an empirical science, but over how that need is understood: the new scientists are empiricists, not merely empirical.

The core differences between empirical inquiry and empiricism, as Strauss presents it, is that empirical inquiry as such, that is, the reliance on experience for knowledge of the political world, retains (willy-nilly) a commitment to the same common sense which underlies the demand for empirical inquiry in the first place. Although more than a few critics have challenged Strauss's notion of "common sense" as hopelessly obscure, he quite precisely tells us that "common-sense understanding is understanding in terms of 'things possessing qualities' (LAM 212). He means by common sense what he sometimes describes as "prescientific" or "primary awareness," a notion he appears to have taken over in the first instance from Edmund Husserl, who was a or the instigator of his deliverance from the neo-Kantianism in which he was originally educated (LAM 213):

Husserl had realized more profoundly than anybody else that the scientific

understanding of the world, far from being the perfection of our natural understanding, is derivative from the latter in such a way as to make us oblivious of the very foundations of the scientific understanding: all philosophic understanding must start from a common understanding of the world, for our understanding of this world as sensibly perceived prior to all theorizing (SPPP 31).

Empiricism is a theory based on recognition of the "naiveté or inadequacy of common sense or pre-scientific awareness. Empiricism is the effort to look more carefully at what is actually given in

experience than "our primary awareness of things as things and people as people" does (LAM 212-213). "What is perceived or "given" is only sense data; the "thing" emerges by virtue of unconscious or conscious construction. The "things" which to common sense present themselves as "givens" are in truth constructs (LAM 213). "Scientific understanding comes into being when the naiveté of the prescientific is fully recognized, and understanding by means of "unconscious construction" is replaced by "understanding by means of conscious construction" (LAM 213).

This science, the new political science included, intends to reject the prescientific understanding, but Strauss, following Husserl, maintains that this is a delusion. One cannot, Strauss insists, "establish empiricism empirically: it is not known through sense data that the only possible objects of perception are sense data" rather than "things" or "patterns" (LAM 212). One can only establish or attempt to establish empiricism "through the same kind of perception through which we perceive things as things rather than sense data or constructs" (LAM 213). Empiricism, then, must begin with the naïve prescientific awareness and by a process of abstraction from that "sense data become known as sense data." This act of abstraction both depends upon and denies the legitimacy of such dependence on common sense. Strauss's very Husserlian conclusion is that "there is no possible human thought which is not in the last analysis dependent on the legitimacy of that naiveté and the awareness or the knowledge going with it" (LAM 213).

Strauss does not, however, mean to accept root and branch the deliverances of common sense. "The old political science was not unaware of the imperfections of political opinion, but it did not believe that the remedy lies in the total rejection of common sense understanding as such" (LAM 213). Strauss's position is thus complex and elusive. It is clearly anti-Cartesian; beginning with universal doubt leads to the problematic stance of empiricism or other epistemologies that fail to take prescientific awareness seriously. Yet the prescientific or common sense is not itself sufficient either. One must

move from it ("ascend," Strauss usually says), but one must do so in a way that remains grounded on the pre-scientific (unavoidable) and in a way that recognizes that grounding. Adequate science or philosophy requires a clear grasp of the pre-scientific. But, as Strauss saw it, the long history of Western philosophy and science has obscured, although not destroyed, the prescientific awareness. "To grasp the natural world as a world that is radically prescientific or prephilosophic, one has to go back behind the first emergence of science or philosophy, for "the world in which we live, our "common sense or "natural world is already transformed by centuries of theoretical apprehension of it. "The world in which we live is already a product of science (NRH 79).

Although they may at first seem to belong to different universes of discourse, the links between Strauss's "Epilogue and *The City and Man* are many and deep ones. It would not be much of an exaggeration to say that the latter is the sequel or completion of the former, the fleshing out of the nature of the Aristotelian political science for which the "Epilogue calls. Perhaps even more importantly, *The City and Man* gives the adumbration of the notion of common sense to which the "Epilogue appeals, as well as an account of how science or philosophy relates to the prescientific.

### Part III

Strauss recommends Aristotle's political science to America's political scientists, precisely because it stands in a more adequate relation to common sense than the newer scientific political science. More than that, Aristotle's *Politics* is "nothing other than the fully conscious form of the common sense understanding of political things. Aristotle gives us both the "fully conscious form of the common sense understanding and at the same time "the original form of political science. It is the conjunction of these two claims that most characterizes Strauss's presentation of Aristotle. Strauss explains that conjunction very straightforwardly: "classical political philosophy is the primary form of political science because the common sense understanding of political things is primary (CM 12).

Yet he also insists that his characterization of Aristotle's political science as containing that particular conjunction is "manifestly provisional" (Ibid). Its provisionality is quite "manifest" by the time we come to the end of the book, for on almost its last page we learn that "the quest for the 'common sense' understanding of political things which led us first to Aristotle's *Politics*, leads us eventually to Thucydides' *War of the Peloponnesians and the Athenians*" (CM 240). That is, Thucydides articulates the "beginning of political understanding" in an unsurpassable, nay, unrivalled manner (Ibid). Thucydides presents us the "common sense" view in a way that even Aristotle does not. But that is not Strauss's first ground for calling his characterization of Aristotle "provisional": the provisional explanation for calling his own characterization "provisional" is that that characterization contains the term "common sense," a term meant to be understood in contradistinction to modern science, "whereas the *Politics* itself does not presuppose 'science'" (CM 12, but cf. 19). But that too is an ambiguous explanation, for it seems to mean something obvious and historical--that Aristotle did not, indeed could not have presupposed modern natural science. But Strauss perhaps has in mind something more general. Aristotle's *Politics* is independent not only of modern natural science but of science however understood, or at least of "theoretical science" as understood by Aristotle (CM 25).

We cannot see why Strauss is not an Aristotelian until we see why Strauss both praises and recommends Aristotle in ways that might lead one to think that he is an Aristotelian. Thematically, the central questions then seem to be two: (1) how does Strauss explain or defend his characterization of Aristotle as the "originator" of political science and at the same time as the "fully conscious form of the common sense understanding of political things?" (2) What is it about the Aristotelian political science that is deficient? The only way to grapple with these substantive issues is to begin with the surface of Strauss's chapter. That surface is its structure: it is divided into five untitled sections, very subtly marked by dashes at the ends of sections.

Strauss transitions to the Aristotle chapter by announcing that he will "first attempt to reach a more adequate understanding of the *Politics* by considering the objections to which [his] contention is exposed.❖ Given the opening of the chapter proper, it is clear that the "contention❖ or aspect of the contention to which he refers is the claim that Aristotle is the originator of political science, for he tells us that "according to the traditional view, it was not Aristotle but Socrates who originated political philosophy or political science❖ (CM 113). The second section of the chapter is also addressed to an "objection❖ to his contention, but this time Strauss identifies the contention and objection as follows: "our provisional contention according to which Aristotle's political science is the fully conscious form of the common sense understanding of political things is open to the objection that the matrix of that science is not common sense simply but the common sense of the Greeks, not to say the common sense of the Greek upper class❖ (CM 30). What might appear to be two contentions are in fact one, as we have already seen in a way. Aristotle originates political science *because* he presents the fully conscious form of the common sense understanding of political things.

The third section of the chapter is devoted to "a few words about Aristotle's alleged anti-democratic prejudice❖ (CM 35). This appears to be an adumbration of the same objection or the extension of the objection addressed in the second section; i.e., the assertion that Aristotle's political science is an expression of "the common sense of the Greek upper class,❖ with their opposition to democracy and valorization of inequality.

The first three sections then treat the "objections❖ which will help us to a "more adequate understanding of the *Politics*.❖ The last two sections of the chapter deal with the Aristotelian political science itself, explaining in turn two, perhaps the two most characteristic more or less explicit claims Aristotle raises. In the fourth section Strauss explains the famous Aristotelian affirmation that "the city is the natural association *par excellence*❖ (CM 41, cf. 16-17). In the fifth section Strauss brings out the

fact that the central theme of the *Politics* is not in fact the city but the *politeia*, the regime. That, in turn, is the basis for the centrality of the question of the best regime for the old political science.

Certainly Strauss's most striking claim is the one upon which we wish to focus our initial attention--the claim that Aristotle is the originator of political science because he gives the fully conscious form of "common sense," the latter part of this contention understood to be provisional. That claim is strikingly developed in the first section of the chapter, the section devoted in effect to the claim that not Aristotle but someone else is the originator of political science. There are two candidates or sets of candidates for the "someone else": as we have seen, the "traditional view" names Socrates; the non-traditional view, presumably the modern scholarly view (see LAM 26-64), identifies the pre-Socratic sophists as the first to turn "to the study of the human things" (CM 14). Strauss devotes a part of his first section to responding to this modern scholarly claim (paras. 2-7), and the remainder of the section replying to the "traditional view" (paras. 8-15).

Strauss emphatically rejects the modern scholarly view that the pre-Socratic sophists originated political science. They proceeded on the basis of the distinction between nature and convention and relegated the human things proper, the just and the noble things, to the realm of convention (CM 14). Accordingly they thought the only significant politically relevant knowledge was knowledge of rhetoric, for convention, being merely a persuasion, is subject to the art of persuasion (CM 17). Strauss insists that even that pre-Socratic, Hippodamus, whom Aristotle seems to identify as the first political scientist, failed to find that science, because he merely attempted to impose some broader theory of nature onto the human world. In other words, "he did not pay attention to the peculiar character of political things: he did not see that the political things are in a class by themselves" (CM 19).

The man who apparently first saw the uniqueness of the political was Socrates, ironically because he applied to the political a general theory about nature as a whole: he asked "what is the

political, just as he asked of everything the "what is" question. Socrates' discovery of "noetic heterogeneity" in the whole made possible his turn to the human things as human things (CM 19). Strauss significantly attributes to Socrates the view that raising the "what is" question represented a "return to sanity, to common sense" (Ibid). Strauss says this because it represented "a turn away from the question that had obsessed Socrates' predecessors, the attempt to discover the first things, or roots which are responsible for the coming into being and perishing of everything that comes into being and perishes (CM 14). The Socratic turn is a turn to "common sense, i.e., to the way the world is experienced, because "the roots of the whole are hidden, [but] the whole manifestly consists of heterogeneous parts" (CM 19). Strauss and Socrates (and Aristotle) would no doubt point to the phenomenon of speech, in which the different beings or parts are named with different yet stable names (cf. CM 17).

The Socratic turn is the necessary but apparently not the sufficient cause for the emergence of political science; despite the fact that Socrates effected a return to "common sense, he did not originate political science. The question of why Aristotle not Socrates founds political science comes to the question, then, of how Socrates returns to common sense, but apparently does not give us "the fully conscious form of the common sense understanding of political things. Twice in his consideration or response to the first objection to his "contention Strauss draws the conclusion that is his contention. In the eighth paragraph of the chapter he affirms on the basis of his account of the Socratic turn that "not Socrates or Plato but Aristotle is truly the founder of political science: as one discipline among a number of disciplines" (CM 21). His point in this place is to show why Socrates and Plato could not found political science rather than, except perhaps by implication, how Aristotle could do so. Socrates and Plato endorsed the Socratic thesis that "human wisdom is knowledge of ignorance" (CM 20). Knowledge of ignorance is not the same as pure ignorance; it is the recognition that "there is no knowledge of the whole but only knowledge of parts, hence only partial knowledge of parts, hence no

unqualified transcending of this sphere of opinion (Ibid, cf. "WIPP (Giddin), 38-39). "Partial knowledge of the parts means not only that knowledge of the whole escapes us, but that the knowledge of the parts is also somehow "elusive. Each part is "open to the whole in the sense that knowledge of it is subject to the uncertainty imposed by the elusiveness of the whole. This odd kind of "openness of each part, including the political part, "obstructs the establishment of political philosophy or political science as an independent discipline (CM 21). Political science, like every sort of knowledge, is not self-contained but implicates sooner or later this whole, which itself cannot be nailed down. And thus neither can it. The implication of this discussion would seem to be that Aristotle achieves, or believes he achieves, that knowledge of the whole that precluded Plato and Socrates from founding political science as a separate discipline.

Strauss again draws the conclusion that is the chief contention of his Aristotle chapter at the end of his eleventh paragraph: Aristotle "could found political science as an independent discipline among a number of disciplines in such a way that political science is the fully conscious form of the 'common sense' understanding of political things (CM 25). Presumably what should occur between the end of the eighth paragraph and the end of the eleventh paragraph is a discussion of how Aristotle surpasses the Socratic understanding of philosophy as knowledge of ignorance. Indeed that *seems* to be what happens, for in drawing his conclusion that Aristotle does "found political science as an independent discipline, Strauss cites as one of the bases for that achievement the Aristotelian view "that theoretical wisdom (knowledge of the whole, i.e., of that by virtue of which 'all things' are a whole) is available (CM 25).

Aristotle completes philosophy in a way that Plato does not, and therefore can articulate the place of the human things in a fixed and determinate way that Socrates and Plato could not. Although we are in a sense prepared for this assertion by Strauss because of what he said about Socrates in



paragraph 8, yet it is striking how little prepared we are for it by the intervening discussion, for, contrary to our expectation, Strauss does not develop in any way whatsoever the Aristotelian claim to complete philosophy. It is, quite literally, a parenthetical comment. Strauss radically underattends to this so central claim. Among other things, he gives us no idea of whether he considers Aristotle's claim to go beyond Socrates and Plato sound or not, and therefore whether he considers Aristotle's political science to be sound or not. Judging from other works by Strauss, in which he endorses the Socratic/Platonic position on philosophy, it would seem that Strauss does not endorse the Aristotelian claim and hence does not endorse the Aristotelian political science (e.g., "WIPP" 5).

Instead of attending to this all-important issue of the status or possibility of knowledge of the whole, Strauss takes up another topic, the status of prudence, in the text intervening between paragraphs eight and eleven. Prudence, the virtue of the legislator or statesman, is knowledge of the ends of human life, and of the means to achieve it, and is available or evident to human beings, "independently of theoretical science" (CM 25).

It would not seem that knowledge of the whole is necessary for the establishment of political science, for its self-contained character, its independence from theoretical science, would imply that whatever might turn out to be the truth with respect to cosmology or the whole, the human sphere is secure and *sui generis*. This is indeed what Strauss assumes in his "Epilogue," where he denies, in effect, that the differences between modern natural science and Aristotelian philosophy of nature renders Aristotelian political science outdated (see esp. LAM 205-207).

It would seem that the crucial premise for the emergence of political science is not the Aristotelian knowledge of the whole but the intelligibility and "closedness" of the sphere of prudence, i.e., "the ends in the light of which prudence guides man" (CM 25). This seems to be both the necessary and the sufficient condition for the emergence and existence of Aristotelian political science.

Accordingly, Strauss says no more about Aristotle's alleged knowledge of the whole in the sequel, but concentrates instead on further elucidation of the claim about prudence.

The further exploration of prudence is introduced by a brief paragraph, which among other things, contrasts Aristotle's position on the relations among nature, art, and law to those of the pre-Socratics and to "another extreme view. ♦ The latter is particularly of interest because it is introduced without any preparation and apparently without any follow-up. And, it almost goes without saying, Strauss does not identify the holders of the "extreme view ♦ of which he speaks. The extremists believe that "nature and law became fused and oppose themselves to the arts which thus appear to defile a sacred order ♦ (CM 25). Judging from comments Strauss makes elsewhere it appears that the source of this view is the Bible, according to which "the *polis* and the arts and knowledge ♦ are "a kind of rebellion against God ♦ ("Progress or Return, ♦ Giddin 288). The question is thus not as much what is Strauss referring to, but why is he injecting from left field so to speak this biblical sentiment in the midst of his very un-biblical account of Aristotle? The answer, I suggest, provides the key to Strauss's chapter on Aristotle, but we are not yet in a position to understand it, other than that it stands, somehow, as a preface to the further explanation of prudence.

That further explanation leads to a reformulation of the original Straussian contention: "Aristotle is the founder of political science because he is the discoverer of moral virtue, ♦ rather than because he is the philosopher who achieves knowledge of the whole (CM 27). There is a profound connection between the previous formulation of Aristotle as promulgator of the thesis of the closed sphere of prudence, and Aristotle as "discoverer of moral virtue. ♦ "Prudence is that kind of knowledge which is inseparable from ♦ moral virtue, ' ♦ because "according to Aristotle it is moral virtue that supplies the sound principles of action, the just and noble ends, as actually desired ♦ (CM 24, 25). What distinguishes moral virtue from virtue simply or from desirable qualities of character in general is that

the deeds to which they point--the "just and noble deeds"---are conceived of or experienced "as choiceworthy for their own sake" (CM 27). That is to say, they are experienced as "absolutes" or as good in themselves, and not as means to some other end, be it some transmoral end of the individual or as "essentially in the service of the city," that is, as necessary means to social goods (CM 27). Because prudence requires the acceptance of the moral virtues as themselves the proper ends of action, prudence is possible only for the moral individual, the kind of person Strauss, following Aristotle, calls the gentleman (CM 24-25). Thus Aristotelian political science takes the internal perspective of the political actor, of the citizen or statesman who faces the political world as a field of action not a field to merely observe in theoretical detachment. In this sense, Strauss's Aristotelian political science reveals its "existential" dimension. "Aristotelian political science" has the character of categorical advice or exhortation (LAM 207).

Moral virtue thus stands as the ground of political science, the highest prudence, and of political science as "the fully conscious form of the common sense understanding of political things," for the common sense understanding is nothing other than "the perspective of the citizen or statesman," which by implication, is the perspective of moral virtue, or of "the just and noble things" as goods or ends in themselves.

Yet Strauss insists that for Aristotle "the highest end of man by nature is theoretical understanding or philosophy and this perfection does not require moral virtue as moral virtue" (CM 26-27). That is to say, moral virtue is either not **the** end or good in itself of human life, or it is not even a good in itself. To Strauss that moral virtue is the end or good in itself would require showing that "the practice of moral virtues is the end of man by nature." This, in turn, would require knowledge of the human soul, which is theoretical knowledge, not knowledge of the human things (CM 13-14), but

"Aristotle does not even attempt to give such an account (CM 26). Instead "he remains within the limits of an unwritten *nomos* which is recognized by well-bred people everywhere (Ibid).

It might appear from the discussion thus far that Leo Strauss is not an Aristotelian because he sees Aristotle to be building his political science on an account of moral virtue that is hopelessly shallow or conventional, that is merely a matter of generalizing from the normal beliefs, grounded in the moral education or prejudices of Greek "gentlemen. This is not his point, however, as is evident from the next two objections that he takes up in this chapter: the objection that Aristotle's political science embodies not the "common sense of the subject but the common sense of the Greeks or of the Greek upper class. The decisive answer to the contention that moral virtue is merely a prejudice of the Greeks is his very important explanation of the relation between the "philosophic way of life and the gentlemanly life and its virtues. Aristotle "shows them [the gentleman readers] as far as possible that the way of life of the perfect gentleman [i.e., the life to which they aspire] points toward the philosophic way of life. Aristotle thus ultimately transcends the point of view of the moral life but retains from it the central idea of morality: that there is a way of life "choiceworthy for its own sake, which is linked to the moral life as usually understood, not so much as means to end but as echo or reflection. The moral life, or the norms and virtues which compose it, derives much of its content indeed from the requisites of the city--the virtues are in large part the habitual practices needed for the survival and thriving of the political community. But, Strauss insists, Aristotle also shows us that "moral virtue is not intelligible as [simply] a means for the only two natural ends which could be thought to be its end (CM 27). It is not merely a means to the philosophic or the social and political life, but it is the embodiment of the truth of the human situation that there is a good in itself beyond the self and the goods of the body, which exerts its call in one form or another on human beings. That is to say, Strauss's Aristotle (and it would seem, Strauss himself) is not a Kantian, but he is not an Aristotelian in the normal

meaning of that term, i.e., as an ethicist who grounds moral virtues in a teleological theory of the human person or soul.

#### Part IV

Strauss connects the value of the moral life to the value of the "philosophic way of life" (CM 28). The latter is in itself an ambiguous phrase in the Straussian lexicon, for it may mean that contemplative life that Aristotle is taken to describe as the attainment of wisdom in the knowledge of God, or it may mean the Socratic life of the quest for wisdom. Usually Strauss speaks of the philosophic life in the Aristotelian context as "contemplation" (CM \_\_\_\_), but in this context toward the end of his reply to the first objection he uses the Socratic formulation instead, and thus draws Aristotle much closer to Socrates and Plato than he had hitherto done. Thus Strauss can conclude this section by speculating that perhaps Socrates was not essentially foreclosed from finding political science, but failed to do so only because he lacked the leisure for any political activity whatever, including founding political science. This is a significant proposition. Not only does it redraw the line of distinction between Socrates and Aristotle in a decisive way, eradicating the theme of the differences between their understandings of the philosophic life, but it also affirms that the founding of political science is itself a political, not a theoretical act. That follows because it is in various ways an intervention into politics-- what Strauss calls the "umpiring" role of the philosopher. The philosopher who founds or promulgates political science intervenes in political life to improve or aid political life so far as he is able (see "Epilogue" and "On Classical Political Philosophy" especially). But most importantly in this context the philosopher engages in a political action by clarifying the meaning of political life for political life, most especially by revealing the ground and rationale (if that is the correct term) for moral virtue, the matrix of political life itself.

Strauss's attempt to clarify the nature of Aristotelian political science at the same time represents an attempt to clarify the nature of common sense, or of the "pre-scientific awareness.❖ Strauss, of course, is not the first thinker in modern times to set himself that agenda: he was preceded by two of the philosophers he identified as among the four greatest of the twentieth century, Husserl and Heidegger ("WIPP❖ 12). Both saw the need to get behind the "tradition.❖ Neither, Strauss believes, succeeded in getting to the "natural awareness,❖ as indicated by the fact that he once cited them as examples of 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophers who reveal in their own work "how❖ thoroughly political philosophy has become discredited,❖ i.e., how non-political they are. But what Strauss brings out in his presentation of the common sense or prescientific understanding is how implicitly political, because explicitly moral, it is (see in general, SPPP, 29-37).

Strauss does not rest content with having uncovered the original form of political science. As he did in the "Epilogue,❖ but in a philosophically deeper way, he attempts to defend the Aristotelian political science against modern objections and alternatives. Thus all but one paragraph of the second section (paras. 16-20) is devoted to arguing for the supremacy of Aristotle's orientation of his science of the human things around the polis (the city) rather than the modern equivalencies, society or culture (CM 31-35). Likewise, the third section (paras. 21-24), devoted to replying to the objection that Aristotelian political science reflects the prejudices of the Greek upper classes, leads him to contrast the Aristotelian view of democracy with the modern view. In part, Strauss means to vindicate Aristotle by arguing that Aristotle's negative judgment about democracy is about a different kind of democracy, and that modern democracy in many ways transcends the democracy Aristotle rejected (CM 35-37). Yet there is a deeper set of issues involved in the Aristotelian critique of democracy, a set of issues that is relevant to a critique of modern democracy as well. That set of issues concerns the question of human equality: Strauss defends the Aristotelian affirmation of inequality over and against the affirmation of

equality by the moderns. That is, the third section contains Strauss's vindication of classical political philosophy over modern political philosophy.

Strauss's consideration of the objection to his claim about Aristotle as founder of political science thus contains his response to Husserl and Heidegger on the nature of the natural or pre-scientific awareness, as well as an explanation of his preference for the ancients over the moderns. No small things. But more than that, it contains his account of how the Aristotelian political science coheres with and supplements the Pre-scientific awareness. It also coheres with, more fully explains, and justifies his commendation of Aristotelian political science in the "Epilogue. Once we note that his Aristotle is very different from the standard Aristotles one sees in the literature, including the writings of such eminent Aristotelians as Thomas Aquinas, it seems eminently plausible to see Strauss an Aristotelian, for his Aristotle is a real Socratic, a Socrates with greater leisure or public spirit than Socrates himself.

#### Part V

Yet Strauss does not present Aristotle as the peak, or as *the* comprehensive philosophy, as the preceding account would suggest. In *The City and Man* Aristotle is a prologue, an introduction to his study of Plato's *Republic*, the book that "brings to light the nature of political things the essential limits, the nature, of the city" (CM 138). The *Republic* thus provides the answer *par excellence* to the "what is" question about the political. Strauss does not claim that much for the *Politics*. It cannot be an accident that, despite his praise for and recommendations of Aristotelian political science, Strauss is generally understood to be some sort of Platonist and not an Aristotelian.

The fourth section of the chapter on Aristotle, the first section not addressed to answering an objection to his contention about Aristotle, takes up Aristotle's famous claim that "the city as city is by

nature. If Strauss has hesitations about Aristotle such that it is Plato and not he who brings out the "nature of the city, it is here in the discussion of the naturalness of the city that these must come out.

Strauss's treatment of this Aristotelian thesis is itself remarkably brief--one paragraph--and is followed by an examination of the poets' objections to, and then "the modern criticism of, Aristotle's "principle. No longer is it Strauss's contention that is under examination, but Aristotle's own. The argument has taken a turn, it seems. The greatest part of this section is devoted to a consideration of the "modern criticism. This comparison of Aristotle and the moderns differs from the previous ones, however. Here the point is not to defend the classical conception from modern criticism, but to show how the modern position can be seen as a development of a central thesis or claim of Aristotle's. That is, Strauss brings out a kind of continuity, or perhaps better, a way in which Aristotle, himself distant from the moderns, prepares the way for the moderns.

Strauss's account of Aristotle on the naturalness of the city takes its point of departure in the thought that the city is natural because men are inclined by nature to it. Strauss does not seem to mean a natural inclination in the direct and obvious sense, such as in the claim that men are inclined by nature toward food (CM 41). Not all human beings live in cities--some live in tribes, for example-- whereas all human beings who survive take nourishment. As Strauss presents it, there is an intermediate variable: "Men are by nature inclined to the city because they are by nature inclined to happiness, to living together in a manner that satisfies the needs of their nature (Ibid). The inclination to happiness is primary over the inclination to the city. Human beings are not only inclined toward but capable of happiness. Nature or the whole is "friendly to man in this way, as witnessed by the fact that Strauss cites from Aristotle, that the animals are made for men. Nature provides--that is the premise underlying Aristotle's affirmation of the naturalness of the city, according to Strauss, who calls this view "optimism in the original sense of the term (Ibid).



Yet if human beings are both inclined and endowed by nature with the capacity for happiness, why do so few achieve it? If the city is part of this endowment, then why do so many cities fall manifestly short of being the best or the good city to which nature aspires? Aristotle's answer is that "the nature of man is enslaved in many ways" (CM 41, 42). But if man's nature is so enslaved can it really be said that nature provides, or that the "optimistic" view is justified?

Strauss subtly suggests that it is *this* conundrum that leads the moderns in the distinctively modern direction, and not the more frequently posited modern rejection of Aristotelian cosmology and teleology. Other classical philosophers had rejected teleology and not gone where Bacon, Descartes, and the others had gone (CM 42). Strauss puts the decisive transition as follows: "If one ponders over the facts which Aristotle summarizes by saying that our nature is enslaved in many ways, one easily arrives at the conclusion that nature is not a kind mother but a harsh stepmother to man, i.e., that the true mother of man is not nature" (Ibid). That thought underlies the core of the modern enterprise: "The consequent resolve to liberate man from that enslavement by his own sustained effort" (Ibid). This is a more fundamental expression by Strauss of the core of modernity than his usual claims about actualizability, or "the rejection of the classical scheme as unrealistic" ("WIPP" 39). Strauss spends most of his remaining space in his fourth section tracing the various manifestations of this effort at liberation within modern thought and practice (paras. 26-29). But he passes over remarkably hastily the pregnant suggestion he has let drop--that the moderns take their point of departure from an Aristotelian thought.

It is neither the rejection of teleology nor the conclusion that nature is a "harsh stepmother to man" that propels modernity. The latter conclusion is not even "peculiar to modern thought" (CM 42). Strauss would appear to have in mind the non-Socratic classical thinkers as the ones who rejected a teleological cosmos and who saw nature as a "harsh stepmother," and yet who did not set out on the

path of modernity (see "Notes on Lucretius," LAM 122, 96, 100, 105, 124). There are, it appears, two ways to be anti-Aristotelian, the Epicurean and the modern. One difference between these two sorts of anti-Aristotelians is that Lucretius, our main source of knowledge of Epicurus, shows "amazing silence about Plato and Aristotle" (LAM 91). This of course can not be said of the pioneers of modern philosophy. According to Strauss, Machiavelli "rewrites, as it were, Aristotle's *Ethics*." ("WIIPP--"). The role of Aristotle as an authority to be wrestled with in Hobbes' philosophic writings is so evident as not to require documentation.

The moderns, those who drew the anti-Aristotelian conclusions and then embarked on the "conquest of nature," differ from those who drew the un-Aristotelian conclusions without embarking on the modern venture precisely because Aristotle was so large a presence for the former but not the latter.

Is there something about Aristotle, the man who founded political science, the man who discovered moral virtue, that leads to modernity in a way that, say, Plato on the one side, and Epicureanism, on the other, do not? The answer, Strauss is subtly suggesting, is yes, but to tease out that answer seems very difficult. Let me attempt a rough stab at it. Aristotle differs from both Plato and the non-Socratics in being "optimistic" in the sense Strauss indicated, but at the same time falling short, as in the Aristotelian conundrum identified above. Aristotle promises happiness as underwritten by nature in a way that the others do not, a promise captured, Strauss suggests, in his claim that the city is natural. Plato clearly is not such an "optimist." Among other things, according to Strauss, he denies that the city is natural (see CM 95, 102, 117). Aristotle makes certain promises, holds out "human excellence" as a "universal end," yet cannot deliver on this promise--it is "very rarely achieved" (CM 44). Beginning from Aristotle (rather than from, say, Plato), modern thinkers are particularly driven to the conclusion about the step-motherly nature, but this conclusion coexists with the promise of

universally available happiness, i.e., the natural character of moral virtue or human excellence. The moderns appear to be those who hold on to the Aristotelian promise but see that Aristotelian reliance on nature which amounts to a reliance on chance, is insufficient (CM 42). Man must instead liberate himself by his own effort, or must conquer chance. In the context, this means a liberation from nature, not a liberation to nature, as even the Epicureans had it.

Strauss's suggestion of a link between Aristotle and the emergence of modernity in *The City and Man* is a novel theme in his writing. It must be a partial theme as well, for it does not take account of competing explanations he supplied for the coming of modernity, for example, the emphasis elsewhere on Machiavelli's antitheological ire ("WIPP," 44). Jerusalem, as well as Aristotle's Athens, had something to do with the coming of modernity, a reminder of which fact Strauss gave in his injection of the biblical alternative into his discussion of Aristotle on prudence and art. Aristotle shares something extremely significant with Jerusalem. In so far as he discovers or affirms moral virtue, "i.e., 'just and noble deeds as choiceworthy for their own sake,'" he takes a stance on human life very close to the Biblical position. In some respects, Strauss indicates, the biblical doctrine is more consistent with Aristotle's presentation of moral virtue than is Aristotle's own doctrine. "Moral judgment seems then to lead up to the postulate that a God concerned with justice has created all men equal as regards their possibility of becoming good or bad. Yet 'matter' might confound this intention of the just God. One must therefore postulate creation *ex nihilo* by an omnipotent God who as such must be omniscient, by the absolute sovereign God of the Bible who will be what he will be, i.e., who will be a gracious to whom He will be gracious" (CM 39). It would seem no accident then, that after a bit of struggle Aristotle was so readily taken up into Christianity as in the magnificent attempt at synthesis by Thomas Aquinas (Ibid).

A certain line of thought in Aristotle, that line of thought that led him to his discovery of moral virtue, that led him to affirm the naturalness of the political, and that allowed him to become the

originator of political science merges easily if not perfectly with biblical views and provides the setting for the harsh reaction that was modernity. Strauss's point seems to be this: Biblical religion alone would not and did not produce modernity; non-Aristotelian Socratism, as in Plato or Xenophon, would not and did not produce modernity. The combination of biblical religion and Aristotle achieved what the classical Socratics and revelation could not produce.

We might tentatively conclude, then, that Strauss was no Aristotelian because, insofar as Strauss considered modernity to be problematic, he saw Aristotle, especially that Aristotle who is the founder of political science, to be largely implicated in its emergence.

## Part VI

But the role of Aristotle in the coming of modernity is not Strauss's last word on Aristotle. The concluding section of the chapter turns to the consideration not of the city (*polis*) but of the regime (*politeia*) as the center of Aristotle's political science. The centrality of the *politeia* is a frequent topic in Strauss's discussions of classical political philosophy. What he does not always do is bring out the deeper significance of the fact that not the city but the regime is the "theme of the *Politics*." The fifth section of the Aristotle chapter is surely brief--four paragraphs spread out over less than five pages. And it would be overstating to say that Strauss explicitly addresses the question I have just raised. Yet that does indeed seem to be the very question he is implicitly addressing.

To think the political in terms of *politeia* or regime turns out to be very different from thinking politics in terms of *polis*, city, or political community. *Politeia* is "divisive." It raises a "political issue," in the sense of an issue that is contested. There are different political regimes, i.e., different forms of rule, which engage in contest for rule within and among political communities (CM 45). Each regime has its own form of virtue: indeed much of the contested character of political life is over the question of which moral way will dominate. A good citizen is an individual who possesses the virtues suitable to or

relative to the regime. A good democrat does not possess the same moral qualities as a good aristocrat or a good courtier in a monarchy. The different kinds of citizens differ according to the different regimes. The different kinds of citizens are dedicated to "radically different ends" (CM 46).

The regime or "political" understanding of politics differs radically from the understanding of politics in terms of the city *per se*. In Aristotle's rendition, the city is "natural"; its naturalness is an indication or a reflex of the natural directedness of all human beings to happiness or human excellence, or virtue, understood as one table of virtues as in the *Ethics*. To speak of politics in terms of the city is to speak of *the* universal directedness to *the* one end of moral virtue. But to speak of politics in terms of regime is to recognize that "though a change of regime the political community becomes dedicated to an end radically different from its earlier end" (CM 47). The understanding of the political in terms of the city, of naturalness, and thereform in terms of moral virtue *per se* is illusory: "what Aristotle said about regimes may "run counter to our notions, but "it does not run counter to our experience" (CM 46). It runs counter to our notions because "our notions are like those of the "patriot, who takes the political community to be the reality and the "regime to be a merely superficial phenomenon. More to the point, our notions, the common sense of the matter, conceive the political community to be a substance with qualities. And the Aristotelian doctrine of regime is truer to experience, i.e., to the reality of political life, than the patriot's view. The patriot's view corresponds to Aristotle's presentation in book I, in terms of the naturalness of the city. The truer view corresponds to Aristotle's presentation in book III in terms of regime. Aristotle is not an Aristotelian in the ordinary sense and he appears not to be an Aristotelian even in Strauss's sense.

Aristotle's own view, Strauss implies, is the view of book III. Book I presents a preliminary or tentative, or even exoteric view of the political. But so far as that is true, so is the Aristotelian account of the moral virtues preliminary or tentative or exoteric. Within a political horizon virtue is in fact more

variable, more relative than the explicit Aristotelian ethical teaching seems to allow (for another and very explicit Straussian account of the problems with Aristotelian moral virtue, see "On Classical Political Philosophy," 72-74). This is, of course, not to say that Aristotle or Strauss is a relativist. True human excellence consists in contemplation or philosophy, a pursuit not relative to regime, indeed, an activity that is "trans-political," or "supra-political" (para. 33). Aristotle's political science, which is "a political inquiry strictly and narrowly conceived," abstracts from this fact about true human excellence and the inability of the city to embody it (Ibid). As opposed to the moderns, who presuppose "a fundamental harmony between philosophy and the people" (para. 22), Aristotle presupposes a disharmony, but in his political works, he suppresses the fact that he subtly asserts: "man transcends the city." But for Aristotle man transcends the city only by what is "highest in man" (CM 49).

It would seem then that the character of the political regime, or rather contest over regime, is a result of the incomplete truth of the claims about moral virtue on which Aristotle rests his political science. If Aristotle's discovery of moral virtue were simply true, the truth of politics would be revealed in book I and not in book III. Or in modern terms, the theme of political science would be the state and not the regime. Aristotle's political science, by virtue of being the "fully conscious form of the common sense understanding of political things," falls short of achieving or presenting the full truth about those political things. That task had been performed in advance, so to speak, by Plato, but it lies ahead for Strauss in the second chapter of *The City and Man*. In that place Strauss will clarify the nature of moral virtue in a way he has dealt with only by implication in his chapter on Aristotle. So far as Aristotle leaves this topic in a kind of haze of practice, Strauss finds Plato more satisfactory philosophically, but he finds Aristotle to be sufficient and sound enough for all practical purposes. He thus shows himself here as elsewhere to be the Anti-Kant for it was Kant who rejected the saying that something may be true in theory but untrue in practice. Strauss finds Aristotelian political science to be untrue in theory but true (enough) in practice.

