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## LEO STRAUSS'S RECOVERY OF THE POLITICAL: $\underline{\text{THE CITY AND MAN}}$ AS A REPLY TO CARL SCHMITT'S $\underline{\text{THE CONCEPT OF THE POLITICAL}}$

by

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#### **ABSTRACT**

This dissertation demonstrates that Leo Strauss, in The City and Man, continues his response to Carl Schmitt's arguments concerning the affirmation of the political, as outlined by Strauss in his 1932 article on Schmitt's The Concept of the Political. In affirming the political, Strauss spoke of the "theologico-political problem", or the question regarding who, or what, should rule society. Strauss outlines six criteria in his 1932 "Comments", which he argues can be found in Schmitt's The Concept of the Political, as essential for the recovery of the political. In raising the question of the political, both Schmitt and Strauss return to the fundamental question regarding how one should live. In so doing, Strauss rejects Schmitt's reliance on conflicting faiths and returns to the Socratic description of the best regime (politeia), understood as the best way of life, that is devoted to contemplation, peace and justice. In his argument in The City and Man, Strauss satisfies the six criteria outlined in his "Comments": (1) the acceptance of moral evil within human nature; (2) the problem of opposition among groups; (3) the possibility of a non-neutral, transprivate obligation; (4) the need for a content that determines the distinction between friend and enemy; (5) a content that leads to a quarrel over the question of "what is Right?" and (6) that the political must address "the order of human things from a pure and whole knowledge". This thesis demonstrates that Strauss's 1964 book, The City and Man, indirectly addresses Schmitt's general criteria, using an interpretation of Thucydides's, Aristotle's and Plato's best regime – which is linked to the pursuit of wisdom, or the philosophic life – to provide a transpolitical standard that opposes Schmitt's insistence on "concrete" experience, that relies on historical destiny, and faith, as the guide to political life.

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#### **CHAPTER ONE**

#### Introduction

#### 1. The Objectives of the Study

Man, continues his 1932 response to Carl Schmitt's The Concept of the Political regarding the recovery of the political. It demonstrates that Strauss discusses six criteria in his 1932 "Comments", which Schmitt outlines as essential for the successful recovery of the political. This thesis shows that those criteria are present, but not developed, in Schmitt's The Concept of the Political and that Strauss fully responds to them in his arguments in The City and Man, which was published in 1964. Furthermore, the thesis shows that the structure and content of, The City and Man, convey his answer to Schmitt's The Concept of the Political, especially regarding the best regime as described by Strauss's interpretation of Aristotle, Plato and Thucydides.

Both Strauss and Schmitt define the political as "the order of the human things" that refers to the ordering principle, which determines fundamentally different ways of life. According to Strauss, this ordering of the human things is equivalent to the regime (*politeia*), or to the question regarding the best way of life. For Strauss, there are only two alternatives that represent the best way of life. These are the life dedicated to perfecting one's reason, i.e. the philosophic life, and the life dedicated to biblical faith,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Strauss, Leo, "Notes on Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*", in Meier, Heinrich, <u>Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss – The Hidden Dialogue</u>, Lomax, Harvey J., trans., University of Chicago Press, U.S.A., 1995, pp. 91, 115, 118 & 119. Strauss is quoting Schmitt.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 118. Strauss implies that the question of "what is right" is akin to the best political order.

which means the life devoted to obeying the commandments of the Bible.<sup>3</sup> This thesis demonstrates that Schmitt is a Christian political theologian and that his recovery of the political meant a return to faith, while Strauss, as a political philosopher, preferred Socratic philosophy as the foundation of his recovery of the political. These two fundamental alternatives can be reduced to "faith", represented by Jerusalem, and "reason", represented by Athens. Strauss sometimes used the expression "the theologico-political problem" to indicate the problem regarding who or what should rule a community. The ultimate theologico-political problem, for Strauss, is whether biblical faith (Jerusalem) or reason (Athens) should be the highest authority for human beings. It is not the objective of this thesis to demonstrate the superiority of Athens over Jerusalem, but to show that Strauss gives his mature response, regarding the meaning of the political, to Schmitt in The City and Man. The structure and content of that book provide evidence that Strauss is responding to Schmitt's concept of the political. However, it is important to recognize the dispute, as it motivates Strauss's answer to Schmitt, particularly since Strauss thought that Socratic political philosophy offered a better guide to practical political life. This is crucial, since Schmitt, having failed to comprehend the nature of tyranny, supported the Nazi regime, because he did not possess knowledge of the best regime. Strauss saw Schmitt's active support of the Nazis as evidence of the failure of Schmitt's recovery of the political.

In outlining, and knowing, Aristotle's, Plato's and Thucydides's best regimes, as a way of life of the wise, Strauss attempts to provide an alternative universal order to Schmitt's reliance on historical necessity and faith, as the foundation of the political. In

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Strauss, Leo, "Progress or Return? The Contemporary Crisis in Western Civilization", p. 116 & "Jerusalem and Athens", in Strauss, Leo, <u>Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity</u>, Green, Kenneth Hart, editor, The State University of New York Press, Albany, U.S.A., 1997, pp. 396 & 403.

his 1963 lecture on Plato's <u>Symposium</u>, Strauss had stated clearly his interpretation of the political. He states:

"The political in the political is the phenomenon which the Greeks called *politeia* (the title of Plato's *Republic* in the original). The word means, loosely explained, something like constitution. The politeia designates the character of the government, the powers of the government. Secondly, however, and this is the more important meaning, politeia designates a way of life. The way of life of a society is decisively determined by its hierarchy – its stratification, as it is now called. The most massive form of this stratification is expressed by this question: Which type of men predominate in broad daylight and with a view to compel power and obedience and respect? Which habits are fostered and admired by the society as a whole as it expresses itself in its actions as a society? Which moral taste is operating through the political order? We see immediately, on the basis of our present day experiences, that there is a variety of such regimes. The conflict among them is only a conflict in the minds of men. Thus the question arises of what is the best regime". 4

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Strauss, Leo, On Plato's Symposium, Benardete, Seth, editor, University of Chicago Press, U.S.A., 2001, pp. 8 & 9.

As Strauss relates, the most important characteristic of the *politeia* is that it signifies a way of life. Strauss had already stressed the importance of the regime in <u>Natural Right and History</u>, confirming his definition of the regime as the *politeia*, or "the way of life of a society, rather than its constitution", being "the source of all laws". In the same book he argues that, for Plato and Aristotle, the regime (*politeia*) includes "certain habits or attitudes as most respectable" to those who rule. Although Schmitt does not use the word, *politeia*, both thinkers were ultimately concerned with the most authoritative opinions that a society respects. According to Strauss, the conflict among the different ways of life raised the question regarding the question, who or what should rule society?<sup>5</sup>

This thesis demonstrates that The City and Man is a theologico-political treatise that attempts to answer the question regarding who or what should rule society, taking into consideration the six criteria found in Schmitt's The Concept of the Political. In arguing that The City and Man is a theologico-political treatise, that has a subtle structure, this thesis shows that Strauss addresses the question, "how is one to live?" especially relating to the meaning theology has in political life. For Strauss and Schmitt, ruling presupposes an answer to the question regarding the best way of life that is based on the highest authority – the divine. In The City and Man Strauss follows Socrates and defines the divine as nature, whereas Schmitt ultimately defines the divine as the Christian God. This explains why Strauss and Schmitt make a connection between theology, defined as what is said about the divine, and the question regarding the political rule. What links Strauss to Schmitt is the issue of the divine and its influence on politics, since the divine is the highest authority for human beings, or the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>Natural Right and History</u>, University of Chicago Press, 7th Impression, with Leo Strauss's new "Preface", U.S.A., 1971, pp. 136 & 137.

regime.<sup>6</sup> In attempting to understand the divine, both Schmitt and Strauss begin with the most authoritative opinions of society in the quest for knowledge of "the order of human things".<sup>7</sup>

This thesis shows how Strauss answers Schmitt's attempt to restore the political as one based on conflicting faiths, which are part of human destiny, defined as historical necessity. In challenging Schmitt's reliance on faith as the foundation of the political, Strauss calls for a return to nature and classic natural right, or natural justice, blaming Schmitt for remaining within the horizon of liberalism in accepting much of Hobbes's political theory. Strauss argues that Schmitt believes that it is impossible to transcend the "systematics of liberal thought", because no other system has replaced liberalism.<sup>8</sup> According to Strauss, Schmitt also relies on historical fate, implying that he accepts historicism where thinkers cannot transcend the "concrete situation" of their particular age, or moment in time. By destiny, or historical fate, Schmitt means that history, as a series of historical events, provides the mysterious revelation of God's divine providence that cannot be fully understood by any human being. In contrast, Strauss argues that the best regime is timeless, because it is "natural", and hence universal, rather than being based on a unique historical situation. In response to Schmitt, Strauss defines "nature" as what comes to light through the examination of authoritative opinions that can be accessed at all times and in all places. He defines these opinions as the pre-theoretical description of things available to common sense, which are always fundamentally political in the moral sense. The most authoritative opinions include "the divine law", or the ancestral customs, found in all societies. Hence, Strauss and Schmitt

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Strauss, Leo, The City and Man, Midway Reprint, U.S.A., 1977, p. 241.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Strauss, Leo, "Notes on Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*", in Meier, Heinrich, <u>Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss – The Hidden Dialogue</u>, Lomax, Harvey J., trans., op. cit., pp. 91 & 119.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp. 93, 117 & 119.

share a similar interest in "the divine law", but unlike Schmitt, Strauss follows Socrates in questioning the authoritative opinions of the city. According to Strauss, the problem of deciding what is the best way of life is solved by Socrates asking the question in terms of what is the highest good for human beings. This then leads to a discussion of existing regimes, or ways of life, and finally to the question of the best regime that Socrates argues replaces the endless conflicting opinions, or beliefs, that all claim to be true. The best regime turns out to be the equivalent of the best way of life, or the philosophic life. More importantly, for Strauss, because the best regime is just, and can be demonstrated (rationally) to be the best way of life, he suggests that it offers a better guide to political life than Schmitt's reliance on potentially conflicting faiths. 9

In partial agreement with Schmitt, Strauss begins his response to Schmitt by taking seriously morality, which represents the authoritative opinions held by society. It is these revered opinions that form the basis of Strauss's investigation into what constitutes the best regime, or what it means to live the best way of life. This is why Strauss concludes The City and Man by raising the question regarding god, because it is the fundamental belief of the pre-philosophic city and underpins the most authoritative opinions. The gods are the authorities that the superstitious city takes most seriously. The authority of god is also the theme of Schmitt's concept of the political that comes to light as political theology. Thus, in partial agreement with Schmitt, Strauss concludes The City and Man:

"For what is 'first for us' is not the philosophic understanding of the city but that understanding which is

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., pp. 25, 31, 44, 48 & 49.

inherent in the city as such, in the pre-philosophic city, according to which the city sees itself as subject and subservient to the divine in the ordinary understanding of the divine or looks up to it. Only by beginning at this point will we be open to the full impact of the allimportant question which is coeval with philosophy although the philosophers do not frequently pronounce it – the question *auid sit deus*". 10

In turning to the authoritative opinions of society about the gods, Strauss indicates that he raises the issue of rule, because the gods, or the divine authorities, rule human beings by demanding obedience. This link between the gods and their ruling of society is another way to express the "theologico-political problem", or who or what should rule According to Strauss, whatever, or whoever, rules has to be the community. authoritative and provide for stable, moderate government. Thus, Strauss is not concerned with the question whether biblical revelation refutes philosophy, but whether political philosophy provides a better guide to political life than Schmitt's concept of the political, which is based on historical necessity that includes divine providence.

This thesis demonstrates that, for Strauss, the best regime, that is according to nature and can exist in all places and at all times, provides a rational model for political life, even though the best regime may never be adopted by the most civilized society. 11 Given that only the philosophers can fully comprehend the best regime, but refuse to partake in political life, and given that few people recognize the philosophers, Strauss

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 241.
<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pp. 17, 25 & 49.

does not think the best regime will ever be implemented by modern societies. This simply means, for Strauss, that "the best regime" only exists in speech and is not likely to come into being. 12 In The City and Man, Strauss openly states, "... the best regime is not possible", but this does not imply that it cannot be used to judge various existing regimes. 13 According to Strauss, the best regime exists in the souls of the best human beings and is better described as a way of life that involves the search for the truth behind all things. As an unending quest that focuses on the highest questions relating to justice, wisdom and other virtues, Strauss understands the best regime as one that comes to light as a life of discussion and a search for wisdom, and hence, emphasizes moderation as opposed to political action. However, Strauss argues that the best regime has been lost in the historical discussion that occurred from Machiavelli to the present day, which emphasized the "opposition between goodness and virtue". By this paradox Strauss means that virtue was no longer associated with perfection through understanding the best regime, but with the unlimited human desires that stressed the "insoluble conflict between the good of the individual and the common good". Thus, virtue became associated with the self-preservation of both the individual and society. 14 In his "Introduction" to The City and Man, Strauss tells the reader how this came about. 15

Both Strauss and Schmitt thought that Western Civilization in the twentieth century was in decline, because the political, defined as the quest for the best life, had become submerged in concepts such as "economics" and "culture". In essence, the political had disappeared as a theme of social science. Strauss states that he had "seen that the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Ibid., pp. 49, 124, 125 & 127.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 131. 14 Ibid., p. 88. 15 Ibid., p. 7.

modern mind had lost its self-confidence or its certainty of having made decisive progress beyond pre-modern thought". Strauss goes on to say, "I saw that it was turning into nihilism or what is in practice the same thing, fanatical obscurantism". 16 In the "Introduction" of The City and Man, Strauss refers to this problem as "the crisis of the West", where the West has "become uncertain of its purpose". One major reason Strauss gives for this, in The City and Man, is that political philosophy has become "ideology". By this, Strauss means that political philosophy is no longer the recognized leader of the social sciences, but "has been replaced by the history of political philosophy". Strauss calls this "an absurdity", as it replaces "a doctrine which claims to be true by a survey of more or less brilliant errors". This means, for Strauss, that readers of philosophic works no longer attempt to read those works, particularly those written by political philosophers, as their authors intended them to be read. Strauss's complaint is that readers already think they know beforehand that those works are not true, in contradiction to the views of the authors. 17 Thus, Strauss argues that the crisis of Western Civilization has something to do with "culture" or, more specifically, with the rejection of "high culture", described as "the highest possibilities" of human thought. In his "Introduction" in The City and Man, Strauss traces the development of culture, described as "the comprehensive culture" that was synonymous with Western Civilization, to culture in the plural, meaning the acceptance of many cultures that were traditionally seen as barbaric. Strauss attacks what he sees as cultural relativism that no longer recognizes "the culture of the mind". Furthermore, he argues that "the fundamental riddles" confronting human beings have not been solved, believing that Platonic political philosophy, in asking the fundamental question, "what is something?", offers an alternative way of clarifying those riddles. Given that the crisis is linked to

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Strauss, Leo, "Preface to the American Edition" - in Strauss, Leo, <u>The Political Philosophy of Hobbes – Its Basis and Its Genesis</u>, Sinclair, Elsa M., trans., University of Chicago Press, U.S.A., 1973, p. xv.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Strauss, Leo, The City and Man, op. cit., pp. 2, 3 & 8.

cultural relativism, Strauss addresses the development of "culture" in one of the key divisions in his chapter on Aristotle in <u>The City and Man</u>. This thesis demonstrates that the issue of "culture" is a common thread between Strauss's "Comments" and his final response to Schmitt in <u>The City and Man</u>. <sup>18</sup>

#### 2. Strauss's and Schmitt's Art of Writing

In the 1930s, Strauss had turned to the writings of Thomas Hobbes, because, "Hobbes's political philosophy is the first peculiarly modern attempt to give a coherent and exhaustive answer to the question of man's right life, which is at the same time the question of the right order of society". <sup>19</sup> It was while pursuing his interest in Hobbes that he became interested in Schmitt's ideas on Hobbes. In his 1965 "Preface" to the German translation of his 1936 Hobbes book, Strauss reminds readers that Schmitt had stated in The Concept of the Political:

"... that Hobbes is 'by far the greatest and perhaps the only truly systematic political thinker'. Schmitt's judgment about the greatness and the significance of Hobbes, a judgment which corresponded to my feelings or taste at that time, strengthened, understandably, my interest in Hobbes".<sup>20</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Ibid., pp. 1 - 3. Strauss's emphasis.

Strauss, Leo, <u>The Political Philosophy of Hobbes – Its Basis and Its Genesis</u>, Sinclair, Elsa M., trans., op. cit., p. 1.

Strauss, Leo, "Preface to Hobbes Politische Wissenschaft" in Strauss, Leo, <u>Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity</u>, Green, Kenneth Hart, editor, op. cit., p. 453.

It was through Hobbes, and his reading of mediaeval political philosophy, that Strauss deepened his understanding of Hobbes's teachers, Aristotle, Plato and Thucydides. In reading the political works of those authors as the authors understood themselves, Strauss concluded that they used a peculiar form of writing that was designed to say one thing to some readers and another thing to others. Strauss called this the art of esoteric writing. Esoteric writing simple means the art of writing between the lines, or using various techniques to hide one's true thought on an issue. In his book, Persecution and the Art of Writing, Strauss argues that esotericism "is based on the assumption that there is a rigid division of mankind into an inspired or intelligent minority and an uninspired or foolish majority". 21 Strauss outlines some of the techniques used to attract those inspired readers. They include: contradictions, the use of structured chapters, omissions of something crucial to an argument, intentional sophisms and ironical statements, the importance of passages found in the centre of chapters, or books, "blunders" that are intentional, but would "shame an intelligent school boy", and a hidden structure of a book.<sup>22</sup> According to Strauss, those books that contained such techniques were written to attract "young men who might become philosophers". Strauss thought that the art of reading and writing was linked to the art of thinking, or the philosophic life. Thus, the art of writing, for Strauss, was connected to the question of the political, or the best way of life for the wise. This thesis demonstrates that Strauss uses some of those techniques of writing to disguise the fact that he is responding to Carl Schmitt throughout much of The City and Man.<sup>23</sup>

Some commentators on Strauss's works have demonstrated that he does not reveal everything he knows to the general public and that he is a prudent writer. Larry

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>Persecution and the Art of Writing</u>, The Free Press, Glencoe, Illinois, U.S.A., 1952, p. 59. <sup>22</sup> Ibid., pp. 25, 30, 36, 74 & 75. <sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

Peterman demonstrates that Strauss's book, Thoughts on Machiavelli, is very carefully written, noticing the author's careful arrangement of his chapters and crucial omissions of details from Machiavelli's books that require explanation, or what he lists as Strauss's "numerological patterns, garbled quotations, pregnant silences, [and] deliberate self-contradictions". Peterman's explanation for Strauss's literary style is that it serves "an educational purpose". Peterman argues that Strauss's literary style is the connection between the political and the "purely theoretical", meaning that Strauss recognizes the importance of orthodoxy and the unsettling tendency of philosophic (theoretical) investigation. This thesis demonstrates that The City and Man is a carefully written book, which is structured as a reply to Schmitt. Strauss divides some of the sections, in chapter one, using an obscure method that has been overlooked by some scholars, while he uses a book title and favourite Schmittean words to highlight that he is responding to Schmitt's arguments. In dividing his book into seventeen sections, Strauss has the reader reflect on the use of that number and how its use might contribute to the theme of his reply to Schmitt's concept of the political.<sup>24</sup>

Strauss knew that the number seventeen represented "nature" for the mediaeval philosopher, Maimonides, suggesting that Strauss's purpose in providing seventeen divisions in The City and Man was to highlight "nature" as his fundamental alternative to Schmitt's concept of the political as destiny.<sup>25</sup> Strauss had warned readers of philosophic writings that they must look to the individual texts for instruction on how the book must be read. 26 It is no accident that Strauss dedicates a whole section to the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Peterman, Larry, "Approaching Leo Strauss: Some Comments on *Thoughts on Machiavelli*", <u>The</u> Political Science Reviewer, vol. 16, Fall 1986, pp. 322 & 324.

Strauss, Leo, Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy, University of Chicago Press, U.S.A., 1983, p.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Strauss, Leo, "How to Begin to Study *The Guide of the Perplexed*", in Maimonides, Moses, <u>The Guide</u> of the Perplexed, Vol. 1, Pines, Shlomo, trans., University of Chicago Press, U.S.A., 1974, p. xxx.

art of writing and reading in <u>The City and Man</u>, allocating thirteen paragraphs in his sixth division, "On Plato's <u>Republic</u>", to the issue of how to read a Platonic dialogue. Strauss also devotes much of the longest chapter – the third chapter of <u>The City and Man</u> – to the question of how to read Thucydides's history. Strauss's art of writing, which he uses in his "Comments", and in <u>The City and Man</u>, is central to discovering his response to Schmitt.<sup>27</sup>

Seth Benardete provides the only guide to Strauss's technique of writing in <u>The City</u> and <u>Man</u>, arguing that Strauss has carefully written and structured the book. He warns of Strauss's irony that is always "incompatible with science", but "at home in political philosophy". <sup>28</sup> This is significant because Strauss dedicates the beginning of his second chapter, "On Plato's <u>Republic</u>", to a discussion regarding the use of irony in works that are dedicated to one or two readers. <sup>29</sup> Benardete also provides one hint for readers of Strauss's <u>The City and Man</u> in the form of a quotation from Strauss's <u>Thoughts on Machiavelli</u>, calling it a "golden sentence". It reads, "The problem inherent in the surface of things, and only in the surface of things, is the heart of things (*Thoughts on Machiavelli*, p. 13)". Benardete's point is that Strauss's hidden messages can be found in the surface meaning of the words that appear in the text. <sup>30</sup>

It was the German scholar, Heinrich Meier, who first explored Strauss's hidden dialogue with Schmitt. He argues that Schmitt responded to Strauss's criticism, after Strauss had read Schmitt's 1927 edition of <u>The Concept of the Political</u>, by making numerous changes to subsequent editions. Meier lists a number of changes, ranging

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> See Appendix 1 for a complete summary of Strauss's 17 divisions of his book.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Benardete, Seth, "Leo Strauss' *The City and Man*", <u>The American Political Science Reviewer</u>, vol. 8, Fall 1978, pp. 2 & 5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., pp. 51 – 53.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Benardete, Seth, "Leo Strauss' *The City and Man*", op. cit., p. 1.

from a restatement on Hobbes to deleting inverted commas around key words. These changes did not include any footnotes referring to Strauss. Schmitt continued to make changes after Strauss's "Comments" appeared in 1932, culminating in the third edition of The Concept of the Political, published in 1933.<sup>31</sup> Having joined the Nazi Party in 1933, Schmitt could not afford to recognize Strauss's improvements to his concept of the political, given that Strauss was a Jew. In recognizing Meier's work on the hidden dialogue between Strauss and Schmitt, this thesis builds upon that scholarship by continuing the investigation into Strauss's response to Schmitt's definition of the political, that eventually takes the form of Strauss's 1964 "theologico-political treatise",

The City and Man.

Meier also demonstrates that Schmitt knew how to read Strauss and took note of Strauss's suggestions from the "Comments". 32 There is also evidence that Schmitt knew how to write and read extremely carefully, providing evidence that Strauss suspected that Schmitt would read, and understand the purpose of, The City and Man. Ernst Hüsmert and Piet Tommissen suggest that Schmitt was an accomplished satirical writer, who wrote poems under the pseudonym of "Erich Strauss", or sometimes, "Erich Strauß". Schmitt borrowed the Christian name, "Erich", from his former Bonn University colleague, Erich Kaufmann, and used Leo Strauss's surname. In writing such poems, it could be interpreted that Schmitt hoped that Strauss would respond to his overtures of friendship, and forgive him for his 1933 mistake. Nevertheless, there is no

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Meier, Heinrich, <u>Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss – The Hidden Dialogue</u>, Lomax, Harvey J., trans., op. cit., pp. 17 & 18.

32 Ibid., pp. 61 & 62 (footnote 64).

evidence that Strauss read the poems, and even if he had read them, there is no evidence that he responded to them. <sup>33</sup>

#### 3. The Six Criteria Discovered

In demonstrating that Strauss responds to Carl Schmitt in The City and Man, this thesis investigates three works: Schmitt's The Concept of the Political, Strauss's "Comments" on Schmitt's The Concept of the Political and The City and Man. All three are linked to Strauss's understanding of the theologico-political problem and Strauss's transcendence of the political through his interpretation of the best regime. Strauss agrees with some of Schmitt's arguments on the political in The Concept of the Political, but more importantly, he outlines six criteria that he sees in Schmitt's book that must be satisfied for the successful recovery of the political. In demonstrating that there is evidence that Strauss is referring to Schmitt in The City and Man, it is necessary to identify a connection between that book and Strauss's "Comments" on Schmitt's work, The Concept of the Political. In the "Comments", Strauss outlines the criteria as: 1) one must affirm the political in recognizing the "dangerousness of man" as the "ultimate presupposition of the position of the political". This means that human beings must be demonstrated as being "evil", in terms of "moral baseness", and therefore in need of government (rule);<sup>34</sup> 2) The political requires "a concrete opposition", i.e. it

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Tommissen, Piet, "Über die satirischen Texte Carl Schmitts", Beismann, Volker & Klein, Markus Josef, editors, Politische Lageanalyse - Festschrift für Hans-Joachim Arndt zum 70. Geburstag am 15. Januar 1993, San Casciano Verlag, Germany, 1993, pp. 339 – 380. See Kiesel, Helmuth, editor, Ernst Jünger - Carl Schmitt Briefe 1930-1983, Klett-Cotta Stuttgart, Germany, 1999, pp. 708 – 715. See also Hüsmert, Ernst, Carl Schmitt Jugendbriefe – Briefschaften an seine Schwester Auguste 1905 bis 1913, Akademier Verlag, Berlin, Germany, 2000, pp. 369 – 374.

Schmitt, Carl, <u>The Concept of the Political</u>, Schwab, George, trans., University of Chicago Press, U.S.A., 1996, pp. 58 – 61, 64 & 65. Although I keep my summary of Strauss's criteria, I footnote where the same criteria appear in Schmitt's book. See also Strauss's "Comments", pp. 105 – 107, 108 – 111.

presupposes the "dire emergency" ("Ernstfall"), or "the potential for war"; 35 3) The political, when expressed as "decision", must have "the character of transprivate obligation", meaning a public obligation, which is "removed from all arbitrary, private discretion". It cannot be neutral; 36 4) It follows that this decision has a content that is decisive and not neutral in determining who is a friend and who is an enemy;<sup>37</sup> 5) The political presupposes the existence of "the quarrel over the right faith", or the battle concerning "what is right" and 6) The political must articulate "the order of human things from a pure and whole knowledge". 39 For convenience these six criteria can be listed as: (i) Evil, (ii) Ernstfall, (iii) Decision, (iv) Content, (v) Right and (vi) Order. Since Strauss's works are often cryptic, it is necessary to interpret his summary of the six criteria for the affirmation of the political.

#### (i) Evil

In turning to the first criterion, the necessity of moral evil, Strauss argues that the Socratics: Plato, Aristotle and Xenophon were very aware of the dangerousness of human beings (the natural acquisitiveness of human beings) that Machiavelli, Hobbes and Locke took as the foundation of their respective political doctrines. 40 In agreement with Schmitt, Strauss accepts the overall goodness of the presence of evil in the world, both in natural catastrophes and in human, moral weakness. 41 However, he challenges

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> Ibid., pp. 26, 27, 33 & 35. Cf. "Comments" pp. 96, 97 & 116. Strauss's emphasis.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Ibid., pp. 28, 29, 67 & 68. Cf. "Comments" pp. 116 - 118. Strauss's emphasis.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> Ibid., pp. 65, 67 & 68. Cf. "Comments" pp. 99 & 113.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> Ibid., pp. 65, 67 & 68. Cf. "Comments" pp. 114 & 118.
<sup>39</sup> Ibid., pp. 1, 37 & 67. Cf. "Comments" pp. 91, 115 & 119. Strauss's emphasis.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., pp. 17, 23 & 88.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> In Strauss, Leo, <u>Thoughts on Machiavelli</u>, University of Chicago Press, Phoenix Edition, U.S.A., 1978, p. 299, Strauss states, "the opinion that there occur periodic cataclysms in fact took care of any apprehension regarding an excessive development of technology or regarding the danger that man's inventions might become his masters and destroyers. Viewed in this light, the natural cataclysms appear as a manifestation of the beneficence of nature".

Schmitt's requirement that the exception must be based on Original Sin, or what Schmitt saw as the universal presence of evil. In accepting the Platonic idea of human evil, but in remaining silent regarding the necessity of Original Sin, Strauss argues that the best regime is possible for individual human beings, who perfect their reason and become good individuals, whether as philosophers or noble and good people ("hoi kaloikagathoi - hoi aristoi").

In contrast to Schmitt's emphasis on the exception as evil, Strauss's definition of the political emphasizes both good and bad, especially the goodness of the political philosopher, as well as the idea of the good that is the goal of the best regime and the goodness of friendship that exists among noble and good people ("hoi kaloikagathoi hoi aristoi"). In opposing Schmitt, Strauss argues that in Plato's opinion, "the cessation of evil" requires the rule of philosophers as kings rather than the hope of the divine intervention of a god or gods. However, Strauss is adamant that philosophers will never rule their societies, thus admitting that evil will be a constant factor in political life. 42 In The City and Man, Strauss does not take up a discussion concerning the possibility of miracles, preferring to rely on Plato's conclusion that chance and nature play important roles in determining outcomes. He does so because nature and chance provide a better guide to political life than either biblical faith, or the belief in miracles.<sup>43</sup>

In drawing attention to Schmitt's concept of the political, Strauss is grateful for Schmitt's recovery of Hobbes's "state of nature". For Strauss, it was Schmitt who provided a window into the Greek understanding of nature through Hobbes's "state of nature", or what Strauss calls, "the secret, humble beginning, to undamaged, noncorrupt

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., pp. 122 - 124. <sup>43</sup> Ibid., pp. 117, 122 – 129.

nature" that distinguishes between good and bad. Strauss had praised Schmitt for recovering the importance of "the state of nature" for the study of politics. Strauss uses "the state of nature", as a means to return to the Greek idea of nature that provides a timeless, universal standard. In this way, Strauss uses nature, defined as "a *pure and whole* knowledge", as his alternative to Schmitt's concept of the political that highlights the potential conflict among friends and enemies, based on warring faiths. Strauss argues that he challenges Schmitt's interpretation of an historical providence, defined as destiny, by providing an alternative universalism that includes the distinction between good and evil. In this way, the thesis demonstrates the importance, and significance, of Schmitt's affirmation of the political as Hobbes's "state of nature" and how "the state of nature" is connected to the evil nature of human beings. 44

#### (ii) Ernstfall

In the second criterion, Strauss attempts to satisfy Schmitt's extreme situation, where potential war and opposition call for a response that Schmitt calls the "dire emergency" or "Ernstfall". Schmitt argues that groups, or nations, are always in the extreme situation, or Ernstfall. In replying to Schmitt, Strauss asserts that Schmitt remains "trapped in the liberal system", because he does not argue that there is only one true end worth fighting for. In following liberalism, Schmitt denies that nature points to only one end, or perfection, for all human beings. In dismissing ends as the result of mere belief, Schmitt makes potential fighting an end in itself, causing Strauss to conclude that Schmitt's criterion only stresses fighting as such, and not what is being fought for. In contrast, in The City and Man, Strauss presents reasons why the Spartans went to war

<sup>44</sup> Strauss, Leo, "Notes on Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*", in Meier, Heinrich, <u>Carl Schmitt</u> and Leo Strauss – The Hidden Dialogue, Lomax, Harvey J., trans., op. cit., pp. 99, 115 & 119.

with the Athenians, while he has Socrates's warrior class, in Plato's Republic, fight for the best regime against potential invaders. According to Strauss, by following the liberalism that he criticizes, Schmitt falls into contradiction and confusion that is best seen in Strauss's example highlighting the absurdity of Schmitt's concept of the political as mere fighting. In defending the political as orientated to a potential fight, Strauss demonstrates that Schmitt remains neutral on the issue of what is being fought over, arguing that Schmitt would then admire dangerousness for its own sake. Strauss's example, to refute Schmitt's apparent neutrality, is the Roman general, Luscinus Fabricius, who, when informed by a Greek philosopher that pleasure was the greatest good, replied, "If only Pyrrhus and the Samnites shared this philosopher's opinion as long as we are at war with them!". Strauss's point is that people do not fight for their own dangerousness, but for the sake of being rescued from danger and that peace is consequently superior to war. Strauss's solution to the requirement of the Ernstfall is to propose the best regime, where the philosopher, or the wise ruling under good laws, can recognize, and deal with, threats to the highest ends of the best society. 45

#### (iii) Decision

Criterion three means that the political must have a content that is expressed as a decision. The decision needs to include "a transprivate obligation", which means that the obligation must be a public one. The decision must not be neutral and it must be made in the context of the *Ernstfall*, or dire emergency, that leads to potential war. Both Strauss and Schmitt suggest that a decision needs to be based on a commitment that transcends the personal views, or the tastes, of an individual, unless it is founded on

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 107.

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an authority, such as divine right or natural right that claims to be universal and true. In making a decision for a return to nature and the best regime that is not neutral, Strauss takes a position that creates "a concrete opposition" to Schmitt's decision to rely on faith in God as the foundation of the political.

#### (iv) Content

In criterion four, Strauss and Schmitt define "content" as what the ruling class of a society looks up to, be it the divine right of kings, equality and freedom or nature. Both thinkers argue that the most important decisions are founded on a content that is decisive and not neutral for a group, city or nation. However, in turning to the regime, or what a community looks up to, such as honour, nature, the gods or God, Strauss subtly provides Schmitt with an order of things that can lead to the question regarding the best regime, founded on nature and knowledge. In recovering the theoretical perfect regime, or best regime, that is according to nature, Strauss implies that one can then judge the content of any regime, particularly those that aim at tyranny.

Harry Neumann is helpful in explaining Schmitt's doctrine of nations battling over life and death issues, which arise from radically different ways of life. Schmitt would have admired the war of content that took place in the battle of Verdun, in World War One, where the French and German armies were decidedly not neutral in determining the enemy and the friend concept. Winston Churchill noted the stupidity and waste of lives in this battle, but few realized that it was the decisive battle of World War One. In Schmittean terms, the battle represented two nations facing off in a desperate war that was between the French way of life and the German way of life, or The French

Republic opposed to the Prussian Monarchy. According to Neumann, all the battles after Verdun, including those fought during World War Two, lacked the horrific intensity at Verdun. Neumann's Schmittean explanation is that France and Germany never recovered from the loss of troops at Verdun, explaining why each side refused to use tactics, or strategy, to avoid such carnage. It was noticed by some, such as Churchill, that the Germans could have used Verdun troops in the East to defeat Russia first, but the battle between the French way of life and the German way of life remained more important than considered strategy. 46

Although Schmitt might admire the moral dedication and seriousness that were demonstrated at Verdun, Strauss goes further in The City and Man, arguing that one can use a hierarchy of ends to judge such political action. According to Strauss, the best way of life ("the best regime" based on nature) provides a standard, and content, to judge such political actions that represent battles of faith. Strauss, with his emphasis on nature and the best regime, would agree that the battle of Verdun was a senseless waste and that both sides could have employed their troops more intelligently. Even as an ex-German, and an ex-Prussian, Strauss, in arguing for a rational standard of human rights (natural justice), would agree with Churchill that the worse regime was the Kaiser's, for making militarism the content for the decisionism that was a cause of World War One. <sup>47</sup>

#### (v) Right

In criterion five, Strauss rejects the modern expression "ideology" in the battle over what constitutes the right faith. For both Strauss and Schmitt, ideology does not address

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> Neumann, Harry, <u>Liberalism</u>, Carolina Academic Press, U.S.A., 1991, pp. 291 – 295.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> Strauss, Leo, "German Nihilism", <u>Interpretation: A Journal of Political Philosophy</u>, vol. 26, no. 3, Spring 1999, especially pp. 362 & 363.

the issue of the battle over the right faith, or the right way of life. Strauss addresses ideology in his "Introduction" of The City and Man. According to Strauss, the word is convenient for social scientists, but it is a word associated with a particular view that all value systems are relative, except ideology itself. Ideology, for Strauss, is not relative as it is the absolute standard that remains constant. Strauss argues that its use may be limiting in truly understanding faiths, or contents, that claim to be the truth, since ideology already denies that any faith, or content, is the truth, except the implied true faith in the final truth of ideology. Strauss's objection to ideology is that it inhibits a serious search for truth, since those familiar with its meaning already know that all faiths are wrong, or not true. Strauss uses it because it is a familiar term, but for Schmitt, it is an expression of our very forgetting of the political - as he defines it. Schmitt argues that ideology is "neutral" to any decision taken by a group because it denies the decisive content of faith – i.e. its perceived truth. According to Schmitt and Strauss, it would be false to understand Britain and the United States fighting for an ideology in World War Two, especially since ideology holds that no way of life is superior to any other. However, in transcending Schmitt's historicism, Strauss argues that what constitutes the battle over what is right must be universal and apply to all places and to all times. Strauss's answer to the necessity of including "Right" takes the form of natural right, or natural justice, that is articulated in the best regime, and hence, in the best way of life. The right way of life turns out to be contemplation, or philosophizing. In returning to this standard of right, as seen through the eyes of the political philosopher, or noble and good rulers ("hoi kaloikagathoi - hoi aristoi"), Strauss argues that one can recognize, and minimize, the evils that befall modern states, especially the evil of militarism.

#### (vi) Order

The key words in criterion six are "pure and whole knowledge" in articulating "the order of human things". Strauss's immediate response to this criterion is that Schmitt cannot find the answer by turning to historicism, described as "concrete political existence", or what Strauss calls "the situation of the age". 48 Instead, Strauss calls for a return to original nature, demonstrating that Plato recognized that nature had provided two necessary parts to the soul, the idea of good and bad.<sup>49</sup> In short, Strauss's affirmation of morality is based on nature that allows for natural goodness, as opposed to Schmitt's concept of the political that begins with the universal evil of all human beings, caused by Original Sin. Thus, the key to Strauss's "order" is that it is natural and includes the criterion of the "dangerousness of man" in terms of "moral baseness", without having to fall back on biblical sin. However, in rejecting Original Sin, but in accepting the possibility of natural evil, Strauss agrees with Schmitt that human nature does not change; hence, the propensity of human beings to disagree and fight among one another. This explains Strauss's heavy emphasis on Thucydides's history of Greek warfare in The City and Man. Yet, Schmitt denies nature and the possibility of human beings becoming good and self sufficient through their own efforts, because of his Christian belief in Original Sin. The knowledge and order of the political, for Schmitt, is the battle of faiths, or in Schmitt's own case, his acceptance of historical providence and biblical revelation. In contrast, Strauss argues throughout his book, The City and Man, that Socrates spoke of good and evil, contrary to the other natural philosophers,

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> Strauss, Leo, "Notes on Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*", in Meier, Heinrich, <u>Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss - The Hidden Dialogue</u>, Lomax, Harvey J., trans., op. cit., p. 119.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> Plato, <u>The Laws</u>, Pangle, Thomas L., trans., Basic Books, U.S.A., 1980, p. 295, Book 10, 896e7. Plato's Athenian Stranger tells Kleinias and Megillus that the soul is found in all things in motion and is represented by two things, the "good" and "another capable of doing the opposite", i.e. the bad.

who saw no cosmological support for the political described as good and evil. Strauss argues that Socrates agreed with the early philosophers that there was no cosmological support; however, in his new approach to philosophy, Strauss argues that Socrates examined the most authoritative opinions (pieties) and discovered that there was something in the soul, or in human nature, that was universal (divine). According to Socrates, the nature of human beings was characterized by a possession of universal reason that pointed to a concern with the good and with justice. This initially led to Socrates recognizing the conflicting answers to the best way of life, and hence to the question, which one is the best and represents the most reasonable order? Since all claimed to be true, they raised the question of truth and the question regarding the best order. Strauss argues that the claim of many regimes to be the right regime raises the question of the good and the best regime. According to Socrates, the best regime has to be discovered by the use of reason, thus satisfying Schmitt's criterion that it must be connected to knowledge, or rather a quest to know the whole. In this way, the philosophic life, for Strauss, then becomes the order of the human things, defined as discussion, or dialectics. Although Strauss stresses Socratic scepticism regarding the possession of "the truth", he implies that his interpretation of Socratic political philosophy does not rule out the possibility that his interpretation of classical political science can recognize dysfunctional "faiths", such as Nazism, Stalinism and other forms of modern tyranny.

#### 4. Strauss's Silence on Schmitt

Strauss rarely publicly responded to contemporary thinkers, the most notable exceptions being: Alexandre Kojève, Martian Heidegger and Carl Schmitt. Strauss only openly,

and publicly, responded to Schmitt in detail before he joined the Nazi Party in 1933. The fact that Schmitt was addressed in 1932 suggests that Strauss had good reason for publicly outlining Schmitt's arguments regarding the political in the "Comments". Until Schmitt's entry into the Nazi Party in 1933, Schmitt and Strauss were on friendly terms. Schmitt even helped Strauss secure a scholarship to leave Germany. Both shared a deep interest in the political writings of Thomas Hobbes and political theology. However, after 1933, there is no evidence that Strauss communicated with Schmitt and only rarely does Strauss refer to him by name in his later writings. One can easily speculate why Strauss – a Jew - refused to forgive Schmitt for his pro-Nazi writings and Nazi collaboration, because he must have felt bitterly betrayed. Furthermore, most of Strauss's Jewish family, and relatives, were murdered by the Nazi regime and Strauss himself was very lucky to have escaped their fate. It was Schmitt's recommendation of Strauss for a Rockefeller scholarship that contributed to preserving Strauss's life. When safely in the United States, in 1941, Strauss gave a seminar where he referred to writers, such as "Carl Schmitt", who had unintentionally, or intentionally, undermined liberal democracy through their criticism of it and consequently had helped pave the way to German militarism and the rise of Hitler.<sup>50</sup>

Although Strauss recognized the challenge of political theology, there are only five occasions where he mentions Schmitt by name after 1933. The first was in a footnote in Strauss's 1935 book, Philosophy and Law, indicating the "Comments" on Schmitt's The Concept of the Political that focuses on the importance of the political. <sup>51</sup> The second appears in his chapter, "The New Morality", in The Political Philosophy of Hobbes,

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> Strauss, Leo, "German Nihilism", op. cit., pp. 362, 372 & 373. The first third of the seminar is addressed to Schmitt, given Strauss's use of Schmittean terms such as "Ernstfall".

Strauss, Leo, Philosophy and Law - Contributions to the Understanding of Maimonides and His Predecessors, Adler, Eve, trans., State University of New York Press, U.S.A., 1995, p. 42.

published in 1936. Using a footnote, Strauss calls attention to the "Comments" as an explanation regarding the reasons why the bourgeois have forgotten the terrors associated with Hobbes's state of nature.<sup>52</sup> The third took the form of an oral admonishment that Strauss did not publish. Strauss argued in a graduate seminar, given in the United States on February 26th 1941, that, during the Weimar Republic, young students needed good teachers, who articulated their students' youthful "aspirations" by using "positive" "language", and not just "destructive" speeches. In condemning Schmitt, Strauss states that the young "found such teachers in that group of professors and writers who knowingly or ignorantly paved the way for Hitler (Spengler, Moeller van den Bruck, Carl Schmitt, Alfred Bäumler, Ernst Jünger, [and] Heidegger)". 53 Strauss's fourth mention of Schmitt is found in Strauss's new "Preface" to his 1965 German publication, Hobbes Politisch Wissenschaft (The Political Philosophy of Hobbes).<sup>54</sup> This took place one year after the publication of <u>The City and Man.</u> Strauss's last mention of Schmitt appears again in 1965, in Strauss's English translation of his Spinoza book, where he included his original 1932 "Comments" on Schmitt's The Concept of the Political after the appendix.

When Strauss did mention Schmitt's name, it was mainly to distance himself from Schmitt. In the new "Preface" of the German translation of his Hobbes book, Strauss argues that it was Julius Ebbinghaus's discussion of Hobbes, in his 1922 lecture on "the Reformation and the Enlightenment", that "caused" him "to take notice" of Hobbes. 55

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>The Political Philosophy of Hobbes – Its Basis and Its Genesis</u>, Sinclair, Elsa M., trans., op. cit., p. 122.

<sup>53</sup> Strauss, Leo, "German Nihilism", op. cit., p. 362.

Strauss, Leo, <u>Hobbes Politische Wissenschaft</u>, Luchterhand, Hermann, Verlag, Neuwied am Rhein und Berlin, Germany, 1965. The "Preface" is found in Strauss, Leo, <u>Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity</u>, Green, Kenneth Hart, editor, op. cit., pp. 453 – 455.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup> Ebbinghaus was a German lecturer at Freiburg, who introduced Strauss to the works of Thomas Hobbes in the summer of 1922.

Strauss's purpose in mentioning Schmitt is to clarify the origins of his interest in Hobbes. It was Ebbinghaus, and not Schmitt, who had shown Strauss Hobbes's "originality" and "unconventional way" and how Hobbes's teaching had become "vital". We learn that Strauss's "study of Hobbes" began with his investigations into the supposed success of Spinoza's seventeenth century "biblical criticism". Strauss states his relationship with Schmitt regarding their shared interest in Hobbes:

"Carl Schmitt, in quite unconscious opposition to Ebbinghaus, asserted in his essay, 'The Concept of the Political' ('Der Begriff des Politischen' *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, 1927) that Hobbes is 'by far the greatest and perhaps the only truly systematic political thinker'. Schmitt's judgment about the greatness and the significance of Hobbes, a judgment which corresponded to my feelings or taste at that time, strengthened, understandably, my interest in Hobbes". <sup>56</sup>

However, Strauss draws attention to his fundamental difference with Schmitt. Strauss was not a Hobbesian, whereas, Strauss makes it clear from Schmitt's use of the superlative that he thought Schmitt was a Hobbesian, although he indicates in his "Comments" that Schmitt did not fully understand Hobbes. It also establishes that their association "at that time" was based on their shared "interest" in Hobbes's "greatness" and Hobbes's "significance". Still, Strauss admits that Schmitt's judgement confirmed his earlier opinion concerning Hobbes's work, demonstrating Strauss's respect for

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity</u>, Green, Kenneth Hart, editor, op. cit., p. 453.

Schmitt's intellectual discernment regarding the significance of Hobbes at the time. Whereas Schmitt remained a Hobbesian of sorts, Strauss's "fate" led him to England and gave him access to the sources of Hobbes's political writings, in particular Plato's, Aristotle's and Thucydides's political works, which became the foundation of The City and Man. 57

In the same "Preface", Strauss announces his philosophic interest in theology that turned him to "true politics", again confirming his 1934 footnote about the "theologicopolitical" theme of his later investigations. By "true politics", Strauss means returning to what is first for us, or the authoritative opinions that form the moralities of societies and their claims of being the best way of life. This explains why he says that he "did not write about Hobbes as a Hobbesian". Strauss gives two reasons for this, one stated, the other obscure: the first is that Hobbes's "famous clarity is limited to his conclusion, while his presuppositions are shrouded in obscurity" and secondly, Strauss indicates that one should read Kant's original quotation (see below) that Strauss uses in speaking of "true politics". In drawing attention to Hobbes's obscure premises, Strauss implies that Schmitt's works are those where the "presuppositions are shrouded in obscurity". 58 Strauss confirms this observation in his "Comments" on Schmitt's book, The Concept of the Political by exposing Schmitt's hidden premises and judgements. However, Strauss's reference to Kant's statement regarding "true politics" is puzzling, given that Strauss is not a Kantian.

The expression, "true politics", comes from Kant's Perpetual Peace, which states:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> Ibid., pp. 453 & 454. <sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 454.

"Thus true politics can never take a step without rendering homage to morality. Though politics by itself is a difficult art, its union with morality is no art at all, for this union cuts the knot which politics could not untie when they were in conflict. The rights of men must be held sacred, however much sacrifice it may cost the ruling power". <sup>59</sup>

In reading Kant, Strauss's point is that morality and politics should be inseparable, but more importantly, Strauss implies that morality must include natural right, or justice, if it is to be the true morality. However, unlike Kant, Strauss understands "true politics" to be truly just (moral) because it is based on nature that can be located at all times and in all places. Nature replaces the "sacred". 60 This is why he returns to the best regime, in The City and Man, that is not only the best way of life, but also the most just way of life. This contrasts with Schmitt's political theology that does not recognize natural right as essential for the recovery of the political. Strauss implies from Kant that avoiding the moral, or justice, leads to political instability and disaster. Furthermore, in linking morality to "true politics", Strauss indicates how "true politics", or what he calls the political, is discovered. Morality, or the sacred opinion of society, is where Strauss begins his investigation of the best way of life, described as the best regime that is according to nature. Strauss argues that the political philosopher must begin with the most sacred opinions of society in order to discover the best regime. Hence, for Strauss, "true politics" is linked to the best regime that includes the most moral way of life – the philosophic life. Thus, Strauss demonstrates to the reader the importance of political philosophy that is linked to morality and right. The implication, for Strauss, is that, had

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> Kant, Immanuel, <u>On History</u>, Beck, Lewis White, editor, Beck, Lewis White & Anchor, Robert E., trans., Bobbs-Merrill, U.S.A., 1963, p. 128.

<sup>60</sup> Strauss, Leo, The City and Man, op. cit., pp. 5 & 7.

Schmitt accepted this connection between politics and right, particularly Strauss's interpretation of natural right that is synonymous with the best regime, he would never have joined the Nazi regime in 1933 and supported a regime that abused "the rights of men".

Apart from these exceptions, further evidence that Strauss did not mention Schmitt's name, while presenting his arguments, is found in Strauss's semi-autobiographical "Preface" to his Spinoza book, written in 1962. Strauss begins the paragraph that contains a quotation from Schmitt arguing, "It is safer to try to understand the low in the light of the high than the high in the light of the low". By this, Strauss means that the "latter one necessarily distorts the high, whereas in doing the former one does not deprive the low of the freedom to reveal itself fully as what it is". Strauss then explains that the Weimar Republic was inspired by classical German thought, not all of which supported liberal democracy. Strauss argues that Hegel's Philosophy of Right provided Germany with a constitutional monarchy, based on "the rights of man". It is within the context of mentioning Hegel and that "the government is in the hands of highly educated civil servants appointed by an hereditary king" that Strauss states, "It has been said, not without reason, that Hegel's rule over Germany came to an end only on the day Hitler came to power". The author of that statement is Carl Schmitt, but Strauss chose not to mention his name. 61 In refusing to use Schmitt's name, Strauss directs our attention to his argument, and not to his historical role as a former Nazi, and Catholic Christian, thus avoiding any prejudice that might accompany the argument. Strauss does this by adding the conjunction, "But", after Schmitt's statement, arguing that Rousseau was responsible for Hegel's philosophy. Hence, Strauss criticizes Schmitt's

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>61</sup> The statement is found in Schmitt, Carl, <u>Staat, Bewegung Volk: Die Dreigliederung der Politischen Einheit</u>, Hanseatische, Derlagsanstalt, Hamburg, Germany, 1935, pp. 31 & 32.

statement by presenting his interpretation of the philosophical and political forces that were the cause of the failure of Weimar. Strauss argues that it was Rousseau who "prepared" classical German philosophy, particularly German romanticism, which was "that extreme reaction to the French Revolution". In answering why Hitler came to power, Strauss goes back to the Holy Roman Empire and the "humiliation" that Germany felt when it was deprived of that Empire in 1806. It was the German longing for a return of the middle ages that "pointed towards a third Reich", according to Strauss, noting that Catholic Christianity "was the bond of society" of the Mediaeval Reich. Strauss then reminds readers, "The action most characteristic of the middle ages is the Crusades", which ended "in the murder of whole Jewish communities". He also says that the Weimar Republic gave political rights to the Jews for the first time.<sup>62</sup> Here, Strauss warns Schmitt that a return to the political, defined as conflicting faiths, has a devastating effect on minority groups that also base their legitimacy on revelation. Given Schmitt's desire to see faith become the bond of German society, it appears that Strauss is still responding to Schmitt's political theology outlined in The Concept of the Political. 63

As early as 1935, Strauss had connected the political with religion. In indicating the relationship religion and the political had with culture, Strauss mentions Schmitt, even though Strauss knew that Schmitt was a member of the Nazi Party. However, Strauss relegates Schmitt's name to a footnote at the beginning of chapter one in his 1935 book, <a href="Philosophy and Law">Philosophy and Law</a>, showing how he will eventually address the issue of the political. In the body of the text, Strauss argues that religion is "one crux of philosophy of

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>62</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>Spinoza's Critique of Religion</u>, Sinclair, E. M., trans., Schocken Books Inc., New York, U.S.A., 1965, p. 2. Strauss also points out that the German longing for the Middle Ages was linked to "the Holy Roman Empire ruled by a German" – p. 2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>63</sup> Schmitt, Carl, <u>The Concept of the Political</u>, Schwab, George, trans., op. cit., pp. 29, 65, 67 & 68. These issues will be demonstrated in chapter three.

culture", <sup>64</sup> but Strauss chose to keep the other "crux" ("the political") in his second footnote, rather than in the body of the text. He states:

"The other crux of philosophy of culture is the fact of the political (cf. my "Anmerkungen zu Carl Schmitt, Der Begriff des Politischen", . . .) If 'religion' and 'politics' are *the* facts that transcend 'culture', or, to speak more precisely, the *original* facts, then the radical critique of the concept of 'culture' is possible only in the form of a 'theologico-political treatise', - which of course, if it is not to lead back again to the foundation of 'culture', must take exactly the opposite direction from the theologico-political treatises of the seventeenth century, especially those of Hobbes and Spinoza. The first condition for this would be, of course, that these seventeenth-century works no longer be understood, as they almost always have been up to now, within the horizon of philosophy of culture". 65

In agreement with Schmitt, Strauss argues that religion and politics have been replaced by the unity of culture that has obscured the tension between them. Strauss suggests that his first task was to understand the "theologico-political treatises" of Spinoza and Hobbes, not from the viewpoint of "culture", but as political works. In <a href="Philosophy and Law">Philosophy and Law</a>, Strauss already shows his answer to the political question regarding the best way

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>Philosophy and Law - Contributions to the Understanding of Maimonides and His Predecessors</u>, Adler, Eve, trans., op. cit., p. 42.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>65</sup> Ibid., footnote "2", p. 138. Strauss's emphasis. Notice that Strauss mentions Schmitt's name as the author of <u>The Concept of the Political</u> following the first sentence of the quotation, only because Schmitt's name appears in the title of Strauss's "Comments" ("Anmerkungen").

of life. He argues that Aristotle and Plato agree that "the specific perfection of man consists in pure contemplation and understanding", the very thing he fully demonstrates in The City and Man. 66

## 5. The Significance of the Thesis

While many commentators on Schmitt and Strauss have written about their differences and similarities regarding the political, no one has demonstrated that Strauss's book, The City and Man, is a reply to Schmitt's concept of the political. This is because scholars have overlooked the six criteria that Strauss outlines for the successful recovery of the political, as well as underestimating Strauss's art of writing. In discovering Strauss's art of writing and in examining the structure of The City and Man, this thesis demonstrates that Strauss's book is a considered reply to Schmitt.

Furthermore, few commentators have discovered the partial agreement that both thinkers have on the friend and the enemy concept in Strauss's The City and Man. <sup>67</sup> No one has discovered that Schmitt takes his definition of the political, i.e. the friend and enemy problem, from Book One of Plato's Republic and that Strauss partly agrees that Schmitt's definition of the division between friend and enemy is characteristic of political life. In The Concept of the Political, Schmitt reduces the political to the conflict between friend and enemy, borrowing from Polemarchus's definition of justice. Socrates refutes three definitions of justice in the Republic: giving back what is owed (Cephalus's definition), helping friends and harming enemies (Polemarchus's definition) and justice as the advantage of the stronger (Thrasymachus's definition).

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 132.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup> Shadia B. Drury is one writer who does see the connection. See Drury, Shadia B., <u>Leo Strauss and the American Right</u>, St. Martin's Press, N.Y., U.S.A., 1997, pp. 87 – 96.

Although Strauss admits, in The City and Man, that the Socratic best city will have external enemies, he notes that Socrates refutes Polemarchus's (practical) definition of justice as helping friends and harming enemies. In transcending Schmitt's friend and enemy concept, and in finally defining justice, Strauss makes it clear that Socrates argues that the philosopher harms no one. Yet, it must be remembered that Strauss's presentation of Plato's best regime transcends the world of politics that we experience. It is found only in speech, and only in the speeches of a few people, like Plato, Thucydides and Aristotle, who understood it. However, in the context of existing cities, Strauss clearly argues that the political problem cannot be solved in any final way for those cities, without a transcendence of the political through philosophy. As Strauss points out, cities cannot philosophize, or become philosopher cities. There is no transcendence for the cities or nations. In terms of Schmitt's emphasis on groups, the only group that is able to transcend politics is a group of philosophers. Thus, on the political level, as found in the first Book of Plato's Republic, Strauss agrees with Schmitt that the division between friend and enemy is natural. This is why Strauss indicates that only Polemarchus's definition, of helping friends and harming enemies, is included in Socrates's perfect city that is described as the city ruled by philosopherkings. Furthermore, according to Strauss, evil is a part of human nature, and consequently cities, or nations, are bound to clash over boundaries or other interests. Thus, Strauss's partial agreement, and fundamental disagreement, with Schmitt, motivates Strauss to continue his response to Schmitt's concept of the political.<sup>68</sup>

The reason many commentators fail to see Strauss's response to Schmitt is because Strauss is rarely read in the same manner that he outlines in his suggestions on how to

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>68</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., pp. 11 & 12, 70 – 73.

read significant books on political theory. The fact that Strauss dedicates an entire sixth division of <u>The City and Man</u> to the art of reading and writing, as well as concentrating on how Thucydides wrote his history, suggests that <u>The City and Man</u> requires a careful reading. In this book, that takes the form of a "theologico-political treatise", Strauss outlines the importance of "the literary question" as:

"One must postpone one's concern with the most serious questions (the philosophic questions) in order to become engrossed in the study of a merely literary question. Still, there is a connection between the literary question and the philosophic question. The literary question, the question presentation, is concerned with kind communication. Communication may be a means for living together; in its highest form, communication is living together. The study of the literary question is therefore an important part of the study of society . . . The literary question properly understood is the question of the relation between society and philosophy". 69

The expression, "the relation between society and philosophy", is similar to the title of The City and Man. According to Strauss, the city is the home of stability through the belief in the gods, or cherished opinions, whereas, "philosophy is subversive" and is "transpolitical, transreligious and transmoral, but the city is and ought to be moral and religious". In choosing his title carefully, Strauss indicates that the literary question is

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 52. Strauss's emphasis.

connected to the political and theological problem. Strauss's caution in writing is through his realization that very few people are able to live the philosophic life – a life that includes questioning the revered opinions of the community.<sup>70</sup>

In <u>The City and Man</u>, Strauss outlines his definition of "good writing". He states:

"But 'good writing' is only the genus of which the Platonic dialogue is a species. The model for the good writing is the good conversation . . . If the good writing must imitate the good conversation, it would seem that it must be addressed primarily to one or more men known to the author". 71

Since Strauss knows exactly what constitutes "good writing", and given that he carefully structures his book, he can address The City and Man to Schmitt as well as to the general reader. Therefore, Strauss indicates that reading his books requires the same concentration that Socrates taught in the *Phaedrus*, where Strauss recalls the art of "good writing" as that which complies with "logographic necessity", or what he defines as recognizing that "every part of the written speech must be necessary for the whole". This means that every detail in some philosophic books has been chosen carefully. Strauss argues that good writers do this in order "to talk to some readers and to be silent to others". This is another reason why he specifically addresses Schmitt's arguments, while refusing to mention him by name in The City and Man. 72

<sup>70</sup> Strauss, Leo, "A Giving of Accounts: Jacob Klein and Leo Strauss", in Strauss, Leo, <u>Jewish Philosophy</u> and the Crisis of Modernity, Green, Kenneth Hart, editor, op. cit., p. 463.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>71</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., p. 54. <sup>72</sup> Ibid., pp. 53, 54 & 60.

### 6. The Structure of the Thesis

The thesis comprises nine chapters and includes an Appendix that outlines Strauss's structure of <u>The City and Man</u>. As an introduction, **Chapter One** outlines the objectives of the thesis in relation to the structure, and art of writing, that Strauss uses in <u>The City and Man</u>, as well as outlining the six criteria that must be satisfied, if the political is to be successfully recovered.

Chapter Two investigates the relevant literature concerning Strauss's relationship with Schmitt under the headings: "The Political as Propaganda", "The Political as History", "The Political as Religion" and "The Political as Knowledge". These categories were chosen because they illuminate the various theoretical perspectives that commentators have used in linking Strauss and Schmitt. Although all commentators do add useful insights on how to read Strauss, most have missed Strauss's post 1933 response to Schmitt's concept of the political. Nearly all of them have overlooked the importance of the structure and Strauss's art of writing, in The City and Man, which provide crucial evidence that Strauss is addressing Schmitt's arguments concerning the political.

Chapter Three outlines Schmitt's arguments relating to the recovery of the political found in The Concept of the Political. These arguments can be divided into six criteria that are essential for the recovery of the political. This chapter attempts to elucidate Schmitt's reliance on Plato and Hobbes for his definition of the political as the conflict between friend and enemy and his rediscovery of "one's own form of existence" that is similar to the regime, or way of life. In drawing attention to political theologians, and

Original Sin, together with his discussion of Oliver Cromwell's divine faith, Schmitt outlines the essence of the political defined as the potential conflict over differing faiths. This also includes an argument supporting the case that Schmitt accepted Original Sin as the foundation of his return to political theology, which understands human beings as morally evil, rather than merely dangerous like amoral animals. The chapter also demonstrates Schmitt's preference for historical providence, referred to as "destiny". In turning to history, Schmitt believes that any natural transcendence of the political is impossible as changing events determine the content of the political. This means, for Schmitt, that in the final analysis, nothing can escape the political, defined as the potential for conflict.

Chapter Four outlines Strauss's interpretation of Schmitt's recovery of the political under the same six criteria that Schmitt outlines in his book, The Concept of the Political. This chapter demonstrates that Strauss understood Schmitt's political theology as the basis of the political, but chose to rely on Plato's political philosophy as a guide to political action. It demonstrates that Strauss knew, in 1932, that his answer to Schmitt must take the form of a "theologico-political treatise" that recognized the centrality of the question who, or what, should rule. Strauss shows, in his "Comments", that the key to Schmitt's complaint against non-political liberalism pointed in the direction of the founder of liberalism, Thomas Hobbes, and the importance of Hobbes's doctrine of "the state of nature".

**Chapter Five** examines Strauss's "Introduction" where he defends political philosophy as a reasonable alternative to ideology and the history of political philosophy. It shows how Strauss also outlines the problems associated with a return to political philosophy,

particularly in having to address the concept of culture, as defined in the plural. In recognizing the structure of the first chapter on Aristotle in The City and Man, this chapter demonstrates that Strauss raises the issue of culture as religion, or conflicting faiths, and is able to continue his response to Schmitt in presenting Aristotle's discussion of regimes within the context of political philosophy. Chapter five outlines Strauss's structure of The City and Man, which includes seventeen divisions that use sub-titles and a full stop and a dash to indicate those divisions. Discovering Strauss's divisions aids in understanding the themes that Strauss introduces, such as the theme of the city and culture in the second division. It also points out how the sixth division, dedicated to the art of good writing, actually occurs in the first chapter on Aristotle, and near a subtle reference to Schmitt's book, <u>Legality and Legitimacy</u>. In explaining the structure of The City and Man, this chapter also highlights Strauss's method of writing that demonstrates his indirect manner of addressing Schmitt's failure to recognize tyranny. It also shows how Strauss begins to address the six criteria for the affirmation of the political through the investigation of culture and the recovery of its equivalent – the city or *polis*. It illustrates the comprehensive nature of the polis and its connection to the regime, or *politeia*, as well as the limitations of Strauss's use of the *polis* as a solution to the political.

Chapter Six describes Strauss's response to Schmitt's call for the affirmation of the political by arguing that nature and human nature provide a reasonable, and universal, basis for understanding political life. In particular, chapter six shows that "nature" is the basic foundation of criterion six that addresses "the order of human things". Strauss's discovery of "order" requires a return to a whole and pure knowledge that also calls for a distinction between "the divine law", as the ancestral laws traceable to the

gods and "the divine law", based on the philosophic laws of nature. This chapter examines the difference between the two forms of divine law within the context of Strauss's analysis of Thucydides's history. For Strauss's understanding of Plato, Aristotle and Thucydides, "nature" guarantees the possibility of philosophy. Strauss's return to classical political philosophy is dependent on the reasonableness of his demonstration that "nature" is neither a romantic myth nor a noble lie. This chapter also discusses Strauss's unique interpretation of the Socratic ideas, that come to light through asking "what is?" questions. According to Strauss, Socrates posing the question, "what is something?", eventually led to a coherent account of the things being investigated. It further demonstrates that Strauss's response to Schmitt's rejection of culture finally leads to Strauss's discovery of Socrates's second sailing that took seriously the authoritative conventions, or nomos, of the city. Socrates used these opinions as the beginning of a rational discussion regarding various topics, but in the end he transcended those opinions. Unlike Schmitt, who accepts faith, or conflicting faiths, as final authorities that underpin the political, Strauss looks for the most coherent opinion that can be discovered from the most authoritative opinions regarding the political.

In recovering nature, especially human nature, according to Strauss, classical political philosophy discovers the universal behaviour of human beings that do not change from place to place or in different times. In this way, Strauss endeavours to overcome Schmitt's reliance on historical necessity in the form of historical providence. Strauss uses Thucydides's reflections on war to respond to Schmitt's reliance on historical providence. In partial agreement with Schmitt on group pieties, Strauss argues that Thucydides is closer to the initial religious experiences that citizens have about the

gods, but Strauss provides a foil to Schmitt's understanding of the political as conflicting pieties, or faiths, by giving an alternative that relies on the concept of nature.

Chapter Seven demonstrates the climax of Strauss's comprehensive response to Schmitt's criteria, beginning with the recovery of nature through the presentation of the best regime and concluding that the best regime only exists in speech. In responding to the six criteria for the affirmation of the political, this chapter demonstrates Strauss's interpretation of the Socratic best regime and why Strauss agrees with Socrates concerning the necessity of war and its effect on the best regime. It discovers Strauss's three Platonic definitions of justice, the central one being Polemarchus's definition of helping friends and harming enemies. It shows, that in opposition to Schmitt, Strauss stresses Socrates's definition of justice, which states that the philosopher harms no one, while at the same time helps his, or her, friends.

Chapter Eight shows Strauss's discovery of the best regime in Thucydides's The Peloponnesian War that meets Schmitt's definition of the political regarding the potential for war among groups. Even in turning to "the greatest motion" – war – where necessity dominates political life, Strauss associates the best way of life with peace and with the wisdom of Thucydides. In continuing his argument that the best regime is found in speech, Strauss demonstrates that Thucydides's best regime resides within the speeches of wise speakers, such as Hermocrates and Diodotus, or even in the unwise speech of Athenagoras. Strauss further shows that the best regime partly resides in Thucydides's own comments on the virtues of Athena and Sparta and Thucydides's preference for an Alcibiades-led polity. Strauss also argues in his analysis of Thucydides's history, that Thucydides includes the recognition of natural right (justice).

More importantly, this chapter demonstrates that Strauss makes it clear that "Rest, not motion, peace, not war, is good" and that the pinnacle of civilization is wisdom. This chapter shows how Strauss argues that Thucydides's wisdom, which "grasps the limits of all human things" and "the nature of all human things", provides a better guide for political action than Schmitt's doctrine of the division between friend and enemy based on conflicting faiths.<sup>73</sup>

Chapter Nine addresses the conclusions that can be drawn from the thesis as a whole. It includes a short summary of the investigation, drawing together all the evidence presented and the implications of Strauss's response to Schmitt within the context of Strauss's theologico-political enterprise. It points out the implication of Strauss's recovery of the best regime, arguing that Strauss provides practical guidance to actual political life in discerning bad regimes. The theoretical implications are also addressed, particularly relating to the reason why many commentators on Strauss and Schmitt have failed to examine Strauss's "Comments" and The City and Man. The conclusion also addresses the limitations of the thesis, especially relating to the problem of demonstrating Strauss's subtle response in addressing Schmitt's concept of the political. Finally, the conclusion suggests that further research into Strauss's other books may reveal a continued response, by Strauss, to Schmitt's political theology. 74

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>73</sup> Ibid., pp. 156, 157 & 160. In his lecture, "German Nihilism", Strauss equates civilization with "*learning*" and "the conscious culture of reason". Thus, "science and morals" are "*the* pillars of civilisation" – see Strauss, Leo, "German Nihilism", op. cit., p. 366. Strauss's emphasis.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>Socrates and Aristophanes</u>, Midway Reprint, U.S.A., 1980, 1<sup>st</sup> published in 1966 by the University of Chicago Press.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

# LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

The literature regarding Strauss's writings, especially The City and Man and Schmitt's The Concept of the Political, can be divided into four categories: 1) "The Political as Propaganda"; 2) "The Political as History"; 3) "The Political as Religion" and 4) "The Political as Knowledge". The category of Propaganda includes the use of noble lies, as well as misleading arguments that present something unacceptable under the guise of what is politically acceptable. The History category includes the historical circumstances that have influenced, and determined, the actions and writings of those living in specific places and times. The Religious category includes theology, as well as belief grounded on a divine being, or the faith in a transcendent god, or biblical revelation. Finally, the Knowledge category refers to the philosophic search for human knowledge and divine knowledge. The list is stated in an ascending hierarchy of themes that reflect Schmitt's six criteria that were articulated by Strauss in his "Comments".

Although this review of the literature does not attempt to refute, or disprove, the scholarly claims and arguments made by various commentators, it does endeavour to demonstrate that many commentators on Strauss have concentrated on the most obvious themes in his writings, but have not been aware of the importance of Strauss's confrontation with Schmitt's concept of the political. Part of the problem is that Strauss does not address Schmitt by name in <a href="The City and Man">The City and Man</a>, while many of Strauss's arguments, or references to Schmitt's concepts, are subtly presented. In addition, Strauss's book contains explanations concerning how great writers wrote their books to

educate young thinkers, or to keep controversial arguments hidden from ideologues, but few commentators are aware that he uses the same writing technique in <u>The City and Man.</u> Even Heinrich Meier, who first discovered a hidden dialogue between Schmitt and Strauss, has overlooked the continuation of Strauss's mature answer to Schmitt's concept of the political in <u>The City and Man.</u> However, Meier does note that, in a 1965 essay, Schmitt used a footnote to a book that does mention Strauss's name on the cited page. Meier also suggests that Strauss made a hidden reply to Schmitt's 1938 book on Hobbes's <u>Leviathan</u> in an essay, published in 1954, called, "On the Basis of Hobbes's Political Philosophy".

# 1. The Political as Propaganda

A number of commentators have noticed Strauss's careful manner of writing. Laurence Lampert's criticism of Leo Strauss's legacy is that it is "compromised by his lack of boldness on behalf of philosophy at a decisive moment in history". Lampert suggests that Strauss's "intellectual uncleanliness", and his style of "obfuscation", aided "irrational" readers, because he "prepared as he thought best for the coming night, the eventual collapse of philosophical inquiry in the modern world". Lampert places more emphasis on Strauss's "rhetoric", or public pronouncements, or what Lampert calls "a public Platonism", <sup>76</sup> which gave "heart to a school of patriots in a land that took itself to be founded on what is almost literally an updated version of the lie of noble origins, even while it was committed to the pursuit of comfortable self-preservation in the best

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>75</sup> Meier, Heinrich, <u>Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss: The Hidden Dialogue</u>, Lomax, Harvey J., trans., op. cit., p. 62. According to Meier, Strauss used Hobbes as a mask to give "a natural explanation of the Biblical religion", and hence, refute Schmitt's belief that "Jesus is the Christ" – see Strauss, Leo, "On the Basis of Hobbes's Political philosophy" in <u>What is Political Philosophy? And Other Studies</u>, University of Chicago Press, U.S.A., 1988, pp. 188 & 189.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>76</sup> Lampert, Laurence, <u>Leo Strauss and Nietzsche</u>, University of Chicago Press, U.S.A., 1996, p. 184.

modern way". Here, he refers to Strauss's influence over American conservatives, who believe that the American regime was founded on biblical revelation and classical political philosophy. 77

Lampert claims to see through Strauss's religious propaganda and finds that Strauss indicts Christianity as a threat to philosophy as it "trapped philosophy within a dogmatism that left no room for doubt about the immutable character of its fundamental beliefs and that subjected philosophy to a higher authority". 78 Instead of investigating Strauss's connection with Carl Schmitt, Lampert highlights the Nietzschean side to Strauss's understanding of the political, arguing that Strauss introduces new gods into the world in the same manner that "Platonic Socrates" had introduced them. He implies that Strauss does so in the role of a "revolutionary theologian", not just in using Socratic "reasoning about the gods", but also in borrowing the Socratic invention of "rational gods". 79 For Lampert, the key to understanding Strauss's works lies with Strauss's emphasis on Thrasymachus's art of rhetoric in Plato's Republic. 80 Lampert argues that Strauss learned the central importance of the art of propaganda from Thrasymachus's ability to manipulate the ordinary citizens through their passions relating to anger and shame.81

Lampert concludes that Socrates is able to win over Thrasymachus by demonstrating his superior rhetoric that cleverly refutes Thrasymachus's arguments. The special relationship between Socrates and Thrasymachus leads Lampert to argue that Socrates spends the greater part of the Republic educating Thrasymachus. Lampert also stresses

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 132. <sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 162.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 147.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 150. Lampert is quoting Strauss from The City and Man, op. cit., p. 83.

how Strauss draws attention to Socrates becoming friends with him in Book Ten, in the context of a discussion on poetry. For Strauss, according to Lampert, poetry is also a euphemism for religion, meaning that Platonic propaganda supports the immortality of the soul and the existence of just gods for political purposes.<sup>82</sup> For Lampert, Strauss argues that Socrates and Thrasymachus were never enemies in the first place, because they were not believers in the justice of the city, and in thus recognizing each other, they decided to compromise. Socrates promises not to practise philosophy in public and not to corrupt the young, while in return, Lampert argues, Thrasymachus will persuade the city that the private pursuit of philosophy "is not vicious". 83 Strauss demonstrates that Thrasymachus replaces the poets and becomes the conspicuous ruler of the city "by making his art ministerial to philosophy". Lampert argues that Strauss claims that the "key" evidence supporting that role is Socrates's declaration of friendship with Thrasymachus. Socrates was able to enlist his skill in making a case for the philosophic life that protected it and even made it an official activity within the city. 84 As Lampert points out, Strauss argues that Thrasymachus's alliance was transferred from the many superstitious people, or the "common people" (hoi polloi), to the "men of excellence". 85

Although Lampert misses the importance of Schmitt's political theology for Strauss, he is useful in drawing attention to Strauss's art of writing. A prime example of Strauss's political propaganda, according to Lampert, was his famous argument that takes sides with religion over philosophy as the best life. Lampert sees this as evidence of Strauss's "large 'Keep Out' sign" that a reader finds when trying to enter the life of philosophy. Nevertheless, Lampert sees a little sign "in quite small print" that says, "unless", you

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., pp. 156 & 157.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 153.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 151.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 149. Lampert quotes Strauss's <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., pp. 81 & 82.

want "comfortless conclusions of philosophy and the deep pleasures of the philosopher". 86 Lampert argues that Strauss's interpretation of the Republic shows that the poets were allowed to return to Socrates's perfect city (the city in speech) in Book Ten. This new political, or philosophic, enlightenment was to represent a new poetic piety, having not only the goal of the good and civic mindedness at the forefront, but also subordinating pre-Socratic poetry to philosophy. 87 In short, for Lampert, the most important political lesson that Strauss had learned was that, "Platonic political philosophy is the permanent solution to philosophy's political problem, a permanent solution characterized by its capacity for change, its ability to adapt its defenses to the world in which it finds itself". 88 This means, according to Lampert, that the political was the propaganda that protected Strauss's "Epicurean and Platonist" pursuit of the pleasures associated with learning for learning's sake. For Lampert, Strauss needed his "walled garden", because his task involved the dangerous activity of introducing new divinities. He concludes that Strauss only "whispered the results" of his discovery of the "idiocies of revealed religion", complaining that few readers are ever able to transcend Strauss's propaganda.<sup>89</sup>

Although Lampert is helpful in highlighting Strauss's use of Thrasymachus in Strauss's understanding of the Republic, he fails to address the central importance of the best regime, natural right, and nature, that is fundamental in Strauss's The City and Man. In concentrating on Strauss's Nietzschean side, Lampert misses the historical importance of Strauss's confrontation with Schmitt in the 1930s to say nothing of Strauss's defence of nature, natural right, the best regime and the ancestral customs of society, that is

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 142.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>87</sup> Ibid., p. 161.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 163.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>89</sup> Ibid., p. 184.

evident throughout <u>The City and Man.</u> Lampert also misses the fundamental issue of the theologico-political problem. Nevertheless, Lampert's discovery of Strauss's manner of writing lends evidence to this thesis that Strauss's <u>The City and Man</u> is an esoteric book that provides an alternative perspective to revealed religion. The reason Lampert fails to discover Strauss's relationship with Schmitt, is that Lampert's aim is to confirm that the mature Strauss was a Nietzschean, a claim that Strauss denied in a private letter to Karl Löwith. <sup>90</sup>

Some commentators, such as Stanley Rosen, recognize the importance of Strauss's open friendship with the philosopher, Alexandre Kojève. However, Rosen does not allude to Strauss's earlier relationship with Schmitt and there is no footnote to Schmitt, or to Strauss's "Comments" on Schmitt's book, The Concept of the Political. According to Rosen, Strauss and his Hegelian friend, Kojève, were both atheists, "who wish to be gods". Rosen's fundamental premise that explains the rest of his analysis is to be found in the following statement, "My thesis is that Strauss is himself a Nietzschean, but not quite". By calling Strauss a Nietzschean of sorts, Rosen argues that Strauss's project was ultimately based on an act of the will, indicating that it originated in Strauss's will to power. Rosen further argues that political philosophy is simply "in the genuine sense" only "philosophical propaganda", because it is based on "an act of the will", implying that the conflict between philosophy and religion is "ultimately moral". By "moral", Rosen means that the conflict is political, each claiming to be the authority guiding those who rule. By this understanding, Rosen summarizes Strauss's

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>90</sup> Löwith, Karl & Strauss, Leo, "Correspondence - Karl Iöwith and Leo Strauss", <u>Independent Journal of Philosophy</u>, vols. 5 & 6, 1988, p. 183.

<sup>91</sup> Rosen, Stanley, <u>Hermeneutics as Politics</u>, Oxford University Press, N.Y., U.S.A., 1989, p. 17. This statement is found in the central third chapter (of five) of Rosen's book.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>92</sup> Ibid., p. 125. <sup>93</sup> Ibid., p. 110.

goal as one that contributes to "a world that is safe for philosophy" and that "the task of his worshippers (disciples) is to fill in the details". <sup>94</sup> Thus, it appears that Strauss's political philosophy, according to Rosen, is political rhetoric aimed at preserving the quest to find the truth regarding the best way of life. Rosen's evidence is merely to quote a statement from Strauss's book On Tyranny. The crucial part of Strauss's statement that Rosen states is:

"In what then does political philosophy consist? In convincing the city that the philosophers are not atheists, that they do not profane all that the city regards as sacred, that they respect that which the city respects, that they are not subversive, and finally that they are not irresponsible adventurers but good citizens, and even the best of the citizens. That is the defense of philosophy which was always and everywhere necessary, regardless of the political regime . . .". 95

Rosen agrees that as far as Strauss's writings are concerned, one could only refute religion if it were possible to become wise, or "genuinely divine", but, according to Rosen, Strauss did not think that was possible. The implication is that biblical revelation is Strauss's only serious alternative to classical metaphysics. <sup>96</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>94</sup> Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 109. Strauss's quotation is found in Strauss, Leo, "Tyrannie et Sagesse" in <u>De la tyrannie</u>, Gallimard, 1954, Paris, p. 323.

Rosen calls Strauss's political teachings on "classical (or Straussian) political philosophy propaganda". 97 In addressing Strauss's claim that he thought that philosophy was always "coeval" with the question, "quid sit deus?" ("what is a god?"), Rosen interprets this to mean that Strauss denied that the "archetypical citizen (the philosopher) of Athens is also a resident of Jerusalem". By choosing political philosophy, Rosen argues that Strauss followed Jehudah Halevi in the latter's blunt statement on the choice between Athens and Jerusalem. Rosen reports Halevi's comment as, "According to the Bible, the beginning of wisdom is fear of the Lord; according to the Greek philosophers, the beginning of wisdom is wonder. We are compelled at the very beginning to make a choice, to take a stand". Strauss's choice, according to Rosen, was with philosophy and wonder. This may be so in The City and Man, but Rosen fails to mention that Strauss always left open the possibility that biblical revelation was true.<sup>98</sup>

In presenting his duality, Rosen argues that Strauss denied that one could be both a follower of Athens (reason or philosophy), and a follower of Jerusalem (Faith), arguing, "No competent student of Leo Strauss was ever in doubt as to his teacher's choice", meaning that Strauss chose Athens. Rosen once asked Strauss whether Descartes was "a believer" and Strauss replied "with passion" that "philosophers are paid not to believe". On another occasion Strauss retorted, "Believe! Believe! As Lessing said, 'how I wonder what that word means!' ". 99 Rosen concludes that he is certain that, "Strauss tacitly identified himself with Socrates". 100 However, Susan Orr, in "Strauss, Reason, and Revelation: Unraveling the Essential Question" sees more in common

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>97</sup> Ibid., p. 111.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>98</sup> Ibid., p. 112. See Strauss, Leo, <u>Natural Right and History</u> op. cit., p. 75.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>99</sup> Ibid., p. 112. <sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 118.

between Strauss's alternatives, Jerusalem and Athens, in both reflecting the desire to possess wisdom and justice. Orr also argues that Strauss reminds readers that "to understand ourselves and to illuminate our trackless way into the future, we must understand Jerusalem and Athens" and that Strauss leaves it open as to which city we choose for guidance. She argues that Strauss's piety included his investigating only the human things, and not the divine things, that relate to divine revelation. What Rosen and others forget is that Strauss's project was to recover, not only Socratic political philosophy, but also Jerusalem. 103

In opposing Rosen's thesis, Werner J. Dannhauser argues that Strauss "opposed and even denounced dogmatic atheism" in his essay entitled, "An Epilogue". Dannhauser points out the overlapping rationality in Strauss's defence of Jerusalem and the fact that Athens is "not rigidly rational" and "Jerusalem is not rigidly irrational". Although he thinks that Strauss "chose Athens over Jerusalem", Dannhauser argues that Strauss did not intend that the tension between Athens and Jerusalem be abolished, admitting that Jerusalem is "an enemy over whom there is no final and conclusive victory". In answering why Strauss wrote esoterically, in an age that no longer required esotericism, about his choice of Athens, Dannhauser argues that Strauss preferred the "reticence of Maimonides" to "the boldness of Spinoza", because he was "a good Jew", knowing "the

Orr, Susan, "Strauss, Reason, and Revelation: Unraveling the Essential Question", in Novak, David, editor, <u>Leo Strauss and Judaism: Jerusalem and Athens Critically Revisited</u>, Rowman & Littlefield, U.S.A., 1996, p. 30.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

Dannhauser, Werner J., "Athens and Jerusalem or Jerusalem and Athens?", in Novak, David, editor, Leo Strauss and Judaism: Jerusalem and Athens Critically Revisited, op. cit., pp. 163 & 166. In mentioning the rationality of Jerusalem, he points to "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Palms 111:10)" and Strauss's favourite biblical passage that ends "surely this grand nation is a wise and understanding people (Deuteronomy 4:5-6)".

dignity and worth of love of one's own". According to Dannhauser, the only way to truth is through love of one's own and this is why he was so loyal to "things Jewish". 105

Thus, according to Dannhauser's understanding, Rosen's and Lampert's observations of Strauss's general approach miss the mark. Nevertheless, their books represent an enlightened opinion of Strauss's works. Rosen describes Strauss's act of introducing secret and dangerous truths of past thinkers, as fully justified, leaning heavily on Maimonides's claim, that exposing the secrets of the Bible was necessary for "saving the law". Rosen means that Strauss had discovered a way to preserve philosophy through the art of careful writing, while protecting the religious beliefs of others. Rosen points out that Strauss's secret teachings remain on the surface, or exoteric level. He implies that Strauss's impression of "great frankness" is misleading, because philosophy is a form of madness and can only be made manifest "in fun", which leads the reader to see a "connection between wisdom and laughter". 107

Rosen argues that Strauss's political "doctrines like natural right and the philosophical significance of the rural gentleman" are merely "exhortations" and "intrinsically absurd". <sup>108</sup> Rosen argues that Strauss's exoteric, or surface arguments, appealing to political conservatives ("rural gentlemen") were inconsistent, because he aligns philosophy with people who did "not look up to philosophy", thus making Strauss's political agenda impossible to implement. Furthermore, Rosen claims that Strauss knew of this weakness, but made it a crucial part of his attempt to preserve philosophy, or what he calls the "fearless and divinely mad nature". Rosen argues that Strauss knew

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>105</sup> Ibid., pp. 168 & 169.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>106</sup> Rosen, Stanley, <u>Hermeneutics as Politics</u>, op. cit., p. 115.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>107</sup> Ibid., p. 117.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>108</sup> Ibid., p. 122. The above discussion takes place in the centre of Rosen's book, headed with the title, "Hermeneutics as Politics", which is also the title of his book.

that the morality of classical hoi kaloikagathoi - hoi aristoi (noble and good people) had little in common with "contemporary populism that passes for conservatism", but he does see Strauss's political propaganda as aimed at cultivating a "special race of academic administrators", who think themselves wise in educating "conservatives" in America, hence taking the spotlight off philosophy. 109 Once again, Rosen's scepticism is not warranted, as Strauss argues, in The City and Man, that noble and good people ("hoi kaloikagathoi - hoi aristoi") need only be decent, or "enlightened statesmen, like Pericles who was affected by Anaxagoras". According to Strauss's interpretation of Aristotle, "the only serious alternative to the philosophic life" is "the political life", or the life dedicated to the noble. 110

Harry Neumann sees Rosen's scepticism of Strauss's political teaching as "interpreting Strauss' ignorance (of the good) as so total that it justifies anything or nothing". He goes on to argue, "This ignorance makes any decision to do anything (including philosophy) a matter of arbitrary nihilist will". In rejecting Rosen's scepticism, Neumann emphasizes Strauss's dogmatism. Neumann thinks that many followers of Strauss, including Allan Bloom, Thomas Pangle and Stanley Rosen do not understand how "illiberal" Plato and Strauss really were. 111 Neumann defends both Schmitt and Strauss, claiming that they had much in common with "pious Dorians", because of their "abhorrence of liberalism's atheism or nihilism, its tyrannic unconcern with traditionally accepted standards of legitimacy, [and] its refusal to justify its science before the bar of that legitimacy". Neumann, who knew the importance of Schmitt's relationship with Strauss, defends Schmitt's and Strauss's piety and belief in the divine.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>109</sup> Ibid., pp. 136 & 137. On p. 138, Rosen concludes that, "fearless thinking has fearless consequences, and never more so than in times of extreme decadence".

Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., pp. 28 & 29. Neumann, Harry, <u>Liberalism</u>, op. cit., p. 90.

He argues that they had much in common. Neumann is both useful and insightful in raising the issue of the similarities found in the views of Schmitt and Strauss. These will be discussed in the third category, "The Political as Religion". 112

The only comment on Strauss's obscure writing style in The City and Man is found in Seth Benardete's article, "Leo Strauss' The City and Man". In contrast to other commentators, Benardete thinks that "simplicity" is the key ingredient in reading Strauss's book. He argues that Strauss's book is 'more like Thucydides' history than either Aristotle's Politics or Plato's Republic", because Strauss, like Thucydides, was interested in the question, "quid sit deus" (i.e. what is a god?), which is "the question of philosophy". Hence, Benardete argues that "the action of The City and Man" is the recovery of this question. Although Benardete does not mention Schmitt, he refers to Strauss's final words of The City and Man, "quid sit deus", suggesting that it comes from Strauss's book on Spinoza and that it was "paraphrased" from Calvin. According to Benardete, Strauss did not fully appreciate the connection between philosophy and the question "what is a god?" when he published his Spinoza book in 1930. Thus, Benardete confirms Strauss's new orientation towards the question of the divine, providing crucial evidence why Strauss would choose to respond to Schmitt in 1964. 113

Benardete points out that Strauss's uncharacteristic method of beginning with Aristotle and finishing with Thucydides, in <u>The City and Man</u>, contrasts with his previous book, <u>Natural Right and History</u>, that begins with the ancients and ends with the modern thinker, Edmund Burke. In addition, Benardete argues that the central theme of <u>The</u>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>112</sup> Ibid., p. 93.

Benardete, Seth, "Leo Strauss' *The City and Man*", op. cit., p. 1. In Strauss's Spinoza book, the expression appears as "quid sit Deus" in the context of "the true God". Strauss argues that Calvin thought that such a question led to "chill speculations" that were "not salutary for man" – see Strauss, Leo, Spinoza's Critique of Religion, Sinclair, E. M., trans., op. cit., pp. 193 & 194.

City and Man is the need for a 'common sense understanding of the city', which turns out to be the "most metaphysical of questions". This is because the common sense opinions of ordinary citizens are linked to the divine. 114 By this, Benardete also means that Strauss's argument on the "surface" of his written work is the "very heart" of his meaning. Furthermore, for Benardete, Strauss points out that ideology obliterates the difference between the political and the non-political supports for political life, while irony is "incompatible with science". 115 He further argues that the problem of justice, or natural right, for Strauss, was the problem of the common good. According to Benardete's understanding of Strauss, it was through the discovery of nature, that "knowledge" became the common good. As such, it defined the essential limits of the city, since the city lacked knowledge. Consequently, it led to the necessity for noble lies when applied to ruling the city. In short, the common good, for Strauss, turns out to be the search for knowledge. 116

Commenting on the title, The City and Man, Benardete suggests that 'and' is both a disjunction and a conjunction, implying that Strauss is both separating and pairing things throughout the text, as Socrates did in his speeches. According to Benardete, the very word reminds the reader of Socratic dialectics. 117 Finally, Benardete highlights "an orgy of bloody persecution of guilty and innocent alike" in Athens, after the mutilation of the Hermes statues before the invasion of Sicily, that is recorded by Thucydides. Benardete argues that, "the meaning of that persecution, according to Strauss", is "the subterranean thread", which runs through Thucydides's History. He thus implies that

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>114</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., p. 5.
116 Ibid., pp. 10 & 11.
117 Ibid., p. 20.

Strauss's manner of writing is concerned with piety connected to the gods of the city and the dangers in undermining those pieties and gods. 118

In summarizing the literature under the category of propaganda, it is evident that commentators see Strauss as a careful and thoughtful writer, if not a complex one, who chose Athens (political philosophy) over Jerusalem (faith), although he had great respect for his Jewish heritage. The issue of Strauss's choice of Athens over Jerusalem is also relevant to Strauss's concern with political theology as an alternative to political philosophy that is evident in <a href="The City and Man">The City and Man</a>. By reading <a href="The City and Man">The City and Man</a>, in the manner Benardete suggests, i.e. in observing the surface of the text, one can perceive Benardete's discovery of Strauss's plan that divides his book into seventeen sections, although Benardete overlooks the sixth division that is located in chapter one. However, most of the commentators have not connected Strauss's earlier 1932 "Comments" to <a href="The City and Man">The City and Man</a>, because they have not recognized the historical link between 1932 and 1964, seen in the six criteria, that form the basis for the successful recovery of the political.

# 2. The Political as History

A number of commentators base their interpretation of Schmitt's and Strauss's works on the historical circumstances that influenced, or determined, Schmitt's and Strauss's ideas. This section examines the literature that stresses the importance of understanding the role of history in the formation of Strauss's and Schmitt's concept of the political. Some, such as George Schwab, argue that Schmitt's political goal was purely practical —

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>118</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

to "secure peace and stability" in the Weimar Republic. <sup>119</sup> He understands that Schmitt's key to the political, the conflict between friend and enemy (*Feind* and *Freund*), was Schmitt's attempt to insert "politics into jurisprudence" in Germany, because of its disappearance through the works of positivists, such as Hans Kelsen. Schwab argues that Schmitt's understanding of the political recognized that not every "antagonism, rivalry or antipathy" leads to, or encompasses, enmity, but that politics, historically speaking, was a recorded fact, seen in the Greek, Roman and Christian language. <sup>120</sup>

Shadia B. Drury's central thesis is that Strauss proposed to "re-theologize the political" through a radicalization of Schmitt's concept on conflict and war, based on his friend and enemy theory. <sup>122</sup> She argues that this enterprise was dependent on the premise that German history influenced Strauss's "political thought". <sup>123</sup> She states in her "Preface":

"Haunted by his experience of Nazi Germany, Strauss rejects American liberalism as a dangerous, if not disastrous state of affairs in which the likes of Hitler could emerge victorious. This experience is related to the major themes of his political thought – the preoccupation with

Schwab, George, <u>The Challenge of the Exception: An Introduction to the Political Ideas of Carl Schmitt Between 1921 and 1936</u>, Greenwood Press, U.S.A., 1989, p. 55.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 51.

Drury, Shadia B., <u>Leo Strauss and the American Right</u>, op. cit., p. 93.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>122</sup> Ibid., p. 91.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>123</sup> Ibid., p. xii.

nihilism, the emphasis on religion, and the role of intellectuals in politics". 124

Drury recognizes an unbroken historical thread in Strauss's radical view of Schmitt's concept of the political, which extends from Strauss's inability "to liberate himself from the conception of the political by which his people were so tragically victimized", to his later years in the United States. However, Drury narrows Strauss's response to Schmitt in purely historical terms, failing to see how other categories might aid in the discovery of Strauss's response to Schmitt in 1964. Although Strauss and Schmitt identify liberalism with Weimar, they also thought that Western liberalism, defined as separation of state and religion, had not solved the problem of prejudice, and potential war, regarding groups within society. 125

In contrast, Robert Howse argues that Strauss specifically addresses Schmitt in Natural Right and History in 1953, but fails to perceive the continued response in 1964. He recognizes Strauss's arguments in, Natural Right and History, from the "Comments" and observes that "Strauss fails to cite Schmitt by name". Howse argues that the book was dedicated to Schmitt's "decisionist thought". <sup>126</sup> In turning to the historical circumstances, Howse blames the McCarthy persecution in the early 1950s for Strauss's refusal to mention Schmitt by name. He points out that the "McCarthyite terror" had reached its "height" in 1954 - a year after the publication of Natural Right and History and that Strauss had warned that, "men like Senator Joseph McCarthy" were one of the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>124</sup> Ibid., p. xii.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>125</sup> Ibid., p. 91.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>126</sup> Howse, Robert, "From Legitimacy to Dictatorship and Back Again: Leo Strauss's Critique of the Anti-Liberalism of Carl Schmitt", in <u>Law as Politics: Carl Schmitt's Critique of Liberalism</u> Dyzenhaus, David, editor, Duke University Press, U.S.A., 1998, p. 73.

principal dangers to freedom and American democracy. <sup>127</sup> Howse argues that Strauss's objection was with Heidegger's "right-wing nihilism" and "anti-political vocabulary" and its affect on American conservatives. He mentions Karl Löwith's observation that Schmitt's decisionism and content were derived from existentialism, particularly from "Being" ("Dasein") itself. <sup>128</sup> Howse's referral to Löwith is correct, as Löwith states in his autobiography that Schmitt's "decisionism" "corresponds to Heidegger's existentialist philosophy, in which the 'capacity-for-Being-a-whole' of individual authentic existence is transposed to the 'totality' of the authentic state, which is itself always particular". <sup>129</sup>

John P. McCormick suggests that "nuances possibly initiated by changing historical contexts" shaped Schmitt's and Strauss's writings. His thesis is that both thinkers were engaged in a "new reconstructed-Hobbesian bargain suggested by the aestheticization of violence" that in turn "mandates that subjects give obedience to the state with no qualifications whatsoever". McCormick argues that Heinrich Meier's claim, that Schmitt's friend and enemy concept was based on the fact that Schmitt was a life long (Catholic) political theologian, is contradicted by historical evidence. McCormick points to the historical fact that the Roman Catholic Church excommunicated Schmitt in 1926, because of his second marriage, a fact, he claims, Meier did not even acknowledge. McCormick also cites other historical evidence of Schmitt's "denunciations of the Church both before and during his affiliation with

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>127</sup> Ibid., p. 74. The waming about McCarthy is in Strauss, Leo, "On a Forgotten Kind of Writing", in Strauss, Leo, <u>What is Political Philosophy? And Other Studies</u>, op. cit., p. 223.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>128</sup> Ibid., p. 89. See Löwith, Karl, "The Occasional Decisionism of Carl Schmitt", in Wolin, R., editor, Martin Heidegger and European Nihilism, Columbia University Press, N.Y., U.S.A., 1995, pp. 137 – 169. <sup>129</sup> Löwith, Karl, My Life in Germany Before and After 1933 - A Report, King, Elizabeth, trans., University of Illinois Press, U.S.A., 1994, p. 32.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>130</sup> McCormick, John P., review, "Political Theory and Political Theology - The Second Wave of Carl Schmitt in English", Political Theory, vol. 26, no. 6, December 1998, p. 836.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., p. 839.

National Socialism". Thus, he rejects Meier's thesis that the foundation of Schmitt's concept of the political relies on the premise that Schmitt was a political theologian in 1927 when The Concept of the Political was published. 132

In agreement with Drury, McCormick argues that Strauss's "Comments", and Schmitt's arguments regarding the political, were shaped by historical forces at work within Germany at the time, giving rise to the claim that both thinkers were engaged in "the aestheticization of violence". In short, he argues that the political instability in Weimar Germany contributed to their political doctrines that were not based on norms, or morals, but on "the secular aestheticization of politics", because their "writings of the dwindling days of the Weimar Republic decisively outweighs and subverts any normative inclinations that they may have harbored". 133

However, in consistently following his own logic of historical determinism, McCormick argues that Strauss changed his mind, or became "more fully disenchanted with Hobbes", after he had emigrated to the United States and published his book on (universal) natural right, in 1953, called Natural Right and History. McCormick argues that "Strauss amends Schmitt's project" by turning to the classical Christian and Judaic traditions, without any reflection on their validity. Furthermore, McCormick argues that Strauss turns to classical virtues through "his own formative inclinations in light of ensuing historical events". 134 According to McCormick, Strauss's disenchantment was over Hobbes's premise that all authority derives from "the fear of death". 135 His implication is that, in becoming a citizen in the stable and free liberal democracy of the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>132</sup> Ibid., p. 836.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., p. 837. 134 Ibid., pp. 839 & 845. 135 Ibid., pp. 839.

United States, Strauss decided to moderate Schmitt's concept of the political and its "aestheticization of violence" to fit into the American ethos. Nevertheless, McCormick sees Strauss's American experience of the political as essentially nihilistic. He argues that Strauss tried hiding the "amoral truths of the political", particularly "the ultimate amorality of political action", using the rhetoric of the good and right as "impenetrable ruminations", having learned from Schmitt about the need for relying on myths, particularly "the more sublime myth-making of the likes of Plato as a resource". He contends that Strauss had learned from Schmitt, and the Weimar years, not to publicize dangerous truths that could be misused, and hence, provide a recipe for disaster in a liberal democratic regime. <sup>136</sup>

The most critical commentaries on Strauss's relationship with Schmitt come from John P. McCormick and Shadia Drury, who recognize the special relationship and experience that Schmitt and Strauss shared from the Weimar period and how this is linked to Strauss's later work. However, both McCormick and Drury do not see Strauss's ongoing response to Schmitt's concept of the political in The City and Man. Part of the problem is that many critics, while recognizing this special relationship, see Strauss's and Schmitt's works only in terms of their historical context and circumstances. In accepting the historicist position, they suggest that historical factors forced Strauss and Schmitt to write as they did. The reason they overlook the key arguments in The City and Man is that both McCormick and Drury are overly concerned with fitting Strauss into an historical setting. In addition, Drury also draws attention to Strauss the Jew. She understands Strauss's arguments regarding the political as the result of the Jewish

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>136</sup> Ibid., p. 845.

suffering at the hands of the Nazis, 137 whereas McCormick sees Strauss changing his opinion concerning the political after he had left Weimar Germany and settled in the United States. <sup>138</sup> As representative of mainstream critical literature, this approach does not take into account that The City and Man is fully consistent with Strauss's aims during his "Weimar" period. These commentators have failed to discover Strauss's six criteria for the affirmation of the political, as interpreted from Schmitt's book, The Concept of the Political, and published as "Comments" in 1932. In failing to perceive Strauss's understanding of the political, they do not appreciate the significance of Strauss's interpretation of Aristotle and Plato's best regime, Strauss's concern with natural justice and the link between philosophy and the divine law, or ancestral customs. These themes are particularly evident in the context of Strauss's satisfying of the six criteria for the recovery of the political that are found in The City and Man.

The reason why some scholars have over-emphasized historical factors is that very few have applied Strauss's own reading technique to his books. Heinrich Meier established that there was a dialogue between Strauss and Schmitt during the Weimar years, but only Robert Howse and Meier have discovered Strauss's response to Schmitt in Strauss's later writings. Howse argues that Strauss responds to Schmitt's concept of the political in Natural Right and History, although Howse also notes that Strauss does not mention Schmitt's name. Nevertheless, Howse falls back on historical circumstance arguing that Strauss was prompted to respond to Schmitt's decisionism through the "McCarthyite terror" that took place in the United States in the 1950s. Howse argues that Strauss saw leaders, such as Senator Joseph McCarthy, as a threat to "intellectual

Drury, Shadia B., <u>Leo Strauss and the American Right</u>, op. cit., p. 91.
 McCormick, John P., review, "Political Theory and Political Theology - The Second Wave of Carl Schmitt in English", op. cit., p. 839.

freedom", because they used Schmittean means to identify the internal enemy, i.e. those "unAmerican" people branded as "outsiders within". 139

In reply to the criticism that Strauss ignored history altogether in reading the classic text, Lampert argues that it is "absurd" that anyone could think that Strauss relied on original Greek texts that an auditor had written after listening to the speeches of Lampert argues that Strauss overcame this absurdity by Socrates or Aristotle. recognizing the historical tradition "within Western philosophy", having learned from "Montaigne, Bacon, Descartes, and Lessing" to confirm the reliability of the texts that he studied, particularly those on Plato and Aristotle. 140 Strauss was able to perceive an historical thread that confirmed the authenticity of the classical writings. He did so by reading St. Augustine's works and the mediaeval, Platonic works of Jewish (Maimonides) and Islamic (Alfarabi and Averroes) scholars. Nasser Behnegar emphasizes Strauss's statement from The City and Man that stresses the need for history, "Far from being merely one of the innumerable themes of social science, history of political philosophy, and not logic, proves to be the pursuit concerned with the presuppositions of social science". 141

In addition to McCormick and Drury, Paul Gottfried argues that the importance of history, for Schmitt and Strauss, goes further than the Weimar Republic. Gottfried links Schmitt's concept of the political to Hobbes's notion of human nature being

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>139</sup> Howse, Robert, "From Legitimacy to Dictatorship and Back Again: Leo Strauss's Critique of the Anti-Liberalism of Carl Schmitt", op. cit., pp. 73, 74 & 75. Strauss's comment on the Senator appeared in an article, "On a Forgotten Kind of Writing", published in 1954, one year after the publication of <u>Natural Right and History</u>.

Lampert, Laurence, <u>Leo Strauss and Nietzsche</u>, op. cit., p. 132, footnote 4.

Behnegar, Nasser, "Leo Strauss's Confrontation with Max Weber: A Search for a Genuine Social Science", <u>The Review of Politics</u>, vol. 59, Winter 1997, p. 124. Strauss's quote is in his "Introduction", p. 10. In footnote 71, Behnegar states, "Political life seems to have been the original matrix of both history and divine revelation".

"contentious", or "man's natural bellicosity". Having observed this historical fact, Schmitt then requires an active sovereign, who responds to democratic situations similar to that faced by Germany in the 1930s. Gottfried argues that Schmitt's book, The Concept of the Political, addressed the issue of the "unchanging foundation of all political relationships", i.e. the foundation of Schmitt's "legal concept of the challenge of the exception and his neo-Hobbesian definition of sovereignty". The key to Schmitt's idea of the political, according to Gottfried, is not represented by a category, such as religion or economics, but by "the intensity" of human "association or dissociation". 142 Gottfried interprets this definition of the political as one of fate, where those who try to escape it are overtaken by the political; yet, he agrees with Strauss's observation that there was a "Hobbesian dimension in Schmitt's critique of liberalism". Following the historical Hobbes, this simply meant that Schmitt had defended the concept that human beings were evil by nature. 143 Nevertheless, Gottfried argues that Schmitt did not welcome politics as the activity of war, but in following Hobbes, exploded the idea that war can be made redundant. 144

While Gottfried does not address Strauss's response to Schmitt in The City and Man his argument, that Schmitt aims at something trans-historical in the "unchanging foundation of all political relationships", does raise an important issue in understanding Strauss's trans-historical solution. This issue is whether the best regime, or the regime ruled by philosopher-kings, is Strauss's trans-historical answer to the definition of the political and whether it is still relevant as an answer to Schmitt's reliance on destiny, or historical providence. Still, Gottfried voices reservations concerning our freedom from

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>142</sup> Gottfried, Paul Edward, Carl Schmitt – Politics and Theory, Greenwood, Press, U.S.A., 1990, pp. 62 & 63. Gottfried's emphasis. The last two Gottfried quotes are from Schmitt's The Concept of the Political. 143 Ibid., p. 65. Gottfried argues that "present-day Straussian critic Heinrich Meier", sees "the

providential faith in history shaping his [Schmitt's] thoughts" – p. 85. <sup>144</sup> Ibid., pp. 79 & 80.

our specific fate as the political that ties us to local loyalties and faiths. Gottfried's dilemma in understanding fate, and the universalism of the political, is further addressed by Harry Neumann.

Neumann, in his article, "Political Theology? An Interpretation of Genesis (3:5,22)", argues that Schmitt's concept of the political, grounded in history, is based on the premise that Schmitt is a political theologian. According to Neumann, this grounding undermines Schmitt's claim to have recovered the universality of the political, since Schmitt's theology, and hence the political, is based on individuality (personal faith) that does not lend itself to universality. Furthermore, it follows that Schmitt's "individual (religious) experience" of "racial catholicism", which Neumann sees as the centre of Schmitt's understanding of the political, is founded on Schmitt's acceptance of "the Incarnation", that is "a particular experience, not a universal law or principle". According to Neumann, Schmitt states that his whole faith is based on "a historical event". Neumann implies that Schmitt's "appeal to individual (religious) experience" lends itself to the individual experiences that characterize historicism. 145 However, Neumann does not fully explain Schmitt's historicism that is connected to his "radical catholicism", but relegates the discussion to a footnote by Strauss, directing the reader to Strauss's Natural Right and History. 146

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>145</sup> Neumann, Harry, "Political Theology? An Interpretation of Genesis (3:5, 22)", <u>Interpretation: A</u>

Journal of Political Philosophy, vol. 23, no. 1, Fall 1995, pp. 81 & 86, footnote 12.

146 Ibid., p. 87, footnote 19. Neumann refers to footnote three in Strauss's, Natural Right and History, op. cit., p. 10. Here, Strauss refers to "Karl Bergbohm's strict argument against the possibility of natural right" expressed as "the undeniable truth that nothing eternal and absolute exists except the One Whom man cannot comprehend, but only divine in a spirit of faith". Strauss interprets this to mean that the standards which we "pass judgment on the historical, positive law . . . are themselves the progeny of their time and are always historical and relative". Hence, apparently, Neumann thinks Schmitt presents a similar view of the divine that implies the aforesaid historicism.

In addition, Neumann directs the reader to another footnote to Schmitt's Glossarium. The Glossarium translation of the footnote reads, "For me, Christianity is primarily not a doctrine, nor a moral, nor even (pardon) a religion; it is a historical event", which provides further evidence of Schmitt's historicism. In the same footnote, Neumann argues that Schmitt agreed with Hegel in rejecting the Jewish Law tradition. The result of Schmitt's reliance on history, according to Neumann, was that Schmitt, in rejecting "universal law or principle" for "a particular experience", finally accepted an amoral However, an amoral god cannot be the foundation of the political that is synonymous with the moral. Therefore, in Neumann's opinion, Schmitt's final understanding of the political is just "human experience with pointless desire for a nonexistent happiness, its 'natural' fulfillment". Such an interpretation, according to Neumann, cannot supply "the nonarbitrary, eternal moral standards, implied in all serious political conflict". The result, according to Neumann, was that Schmitt, in rejecting "universal law or principle" for "a particular experience", concluded by accepting "a god beyond good and evil". Neumann also points to a contradiction in Schmitt's argument, calling Schmitt's crucified "incarnated god" an "accurate image of this pointlessness", as Christ offers no political guidance to His people on earth. 147

Neumann's demonstration of Schmitt's historicism proves useful, but his thesis does not sufficiently draw out Schmitt's initial definition of the political as that of the distinction between friend and enemy that has its source in Plato's Republic, i.e. in Polemarchus's definition of helping friends and harming enemies. As with some other commentators, he fails to perceive the historical continuity of Schmitt's arguments regarding the political that connects Strauss's Weimar period with his American experience. Like all

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>147</sup> Ibid., p. 86 (footnote 12).

the other commentators, he completely overlooks Strauss's later response to Schmitt in The City and Man. However, Neumann's discussion does show how important history, and historicism, were to Schmitt, especially with regards to Schmitt's theoretical foundation that underpins his political theology.

Catherine Zuckert provides a comprehensive historical account of Strauss's affirmation of the political, but unlike some commentators on Schmitt and Strauss, she argues that both thinkers had turned to the political through a decision "based on choice, not necessity". 148 She denies that the understanding of the political of both thinkers was determined by historical circumstances and influences. Zuckert argues that Strauss taught that political thinkers of the past were free to reject the dominant teachings of their times. On this premise, Zuckert sketches the historical development in Strauss's writings, beginning with his early agreement with Friedrich Nietzsche's assessment of the failure of the modern enlightenment to move beyond "comfortable selfpreservation", which finally contributed to the total loss of "all nobility" that was connected to "ancient life". Zuckert argues that Strauss saw the "crisis of our times" as the culmination of Nietzsche's denial that "human beings can know what is right or wrong", or that the crisis was a moral one. 149

Zuckert argues that Strauss had discovered that the founders of the modern enlightenment, Machiavelli and Hobbes, had instituted new moral and political orders for human beings that had done away with "any suprahuman goals or standards by which their (human) efforts could be judged". <sup>150</sup> She argues that Strauss had learned from Hobbes's political philosophy that the "new morality" of Hobbes's teaching was

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>148</sup> Zuckert, Catherine H., <u>Postmodern Platos</u>, University of Chicago Press, U.S.A., 1996, p. 118.
 <sup>149</sup> Ibid., p. 107 & 197.
 <sup>150</sup> Ibid., p. 107.

based on ancient political thought, specifically, Thucydides's and Aristotle's understanding of the human passions, in an attempt to make morality more effective. In Hobbes's attempt to establish "a just political order", she argues that Strauss saw that classical aristocratic emphasis on honour, including the connection between honour and war, or injustice, had led Hobbes to abandon honour and substitute it with fear of violent death as the basis of the best political order. 151 According to Zuckert, Strauss argues, that the political problem of groups of human beings going to war is caused by the human attachment to "their own bodily existence" and the love of their own specific families. Disagreements arise as to what constitutes the best way of life, or "the best way of doing things", and this leads to factionalism and fighting. 152 She argues that Strauss confirmed his suspicions that this problem was inherent in liberal democracy in his review of Schmitt's The Concept of the Political in 1932 and that Strauss's response to Schmitt was the beginning of Strauss's understanding of the political. In turning to the question of Schmitt's and Strauss's agreement on the importance of the political, she thinks that both Strauss and Schmitt had seen the problem of liberal democracy as being a "moral and political" one, rather than a philosophical, or a scientific crisis. Zuckert argues that this is what Strauss learned from reading Schmitt's The Concept of the Political.

According to Zuckert, Schmitt and Strauss understood that, if the political is threatened, the "seriousness of life is threatened", meaning that the moral life is threatened. 153 In addition, she suggests that both thinkers had noted modern liberalism's failure to rid the world of conflict through toleration and peace, since both agreed that "war is unavoidable" and that individuals form groups, or factions, in order to fight effectively

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>151</sup> Ibid., p. 108. <sup>152</sup> Ibid., p. 199. <sup>153</sup> Ibid., p. 107.

those who threaten them and their specific ways of life.<sup>154</sup> Strauss's solution to the problem of war, according to Zuckert, was to emphasize the "rule of law". For Schmitt, the fundamental political problem was the emphasis on humanitarianism and its fundamental goal in achieving world peace at all costs by abolishing war and conflict altogether. In addition, she argues that both thinkers rebelled at the humanitarian goal to eliminate all inequality and do away with the concept of rulers and ruled. She points out that Schmitt thought that the idealistic goals of liberal democracy directly led to the war to end all wars - World War One. 155 In direct contrast to Schmitt's diagnosis, she further argues that Strauss also learned about "Platonic politics" from his historical studies, through reading the Jewish thinker, Maimonides. According to Strauss, Maimonides, in following Plato, realized that the philosophic life (the life dedicated to the pursuit of truth) was impossible for the vast majority of people, thus informing Strauss that the law must become all-powerful in guiding the majority. Hence, for Strauss, the law joins "the interests of the few with the interests of the many", thus providing a link between the unreflective people and the few philosophers, rather than "establish a certain order or rank". Finally, she argues, Strauss's understanding of the political, defined as "Platonic politics", was "a better solution to the contemporary crisis than either Nietzsche's attempt to synthesize master and slave morality or Schmitt's embrace of the one pole in opposition to the other". 156

In regard to the historical relevance of Schmitt's and Strauss's understanding of the political, Zuckert, in contrast to Drury and McCormick, argues that Strauss did call for a return to the political philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, but did so with great caution. She argues that Strauss thought that the task was both "tentative and experimental" and

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., p. 199.
155 Ibid., pp. 107 & 108.
156 Ibid., pp. 110 & 111.

she makes it clear that Strauss did not think that, "classical political philosophy will supply us with recipes for today's use". 157 She argues that, Strauss's relevance for political science resides in his insight into the political problem, or the limits of politics. Thus, she points out, Strauss emphasizes the gulf between the city and philosophy, or between the many who are not wise and the wise few. Zuckert sees Strauss's arguments regarding the political as historically relevant, given that she claims that "the Western intellectual tradition" has become "a political issue", since many classical political philosophers are now being charged with racism, sexism and elitism, implying that they are exclusionary in their political and theoretic arguments. Thus, she concludes that the mere fact that the political has historically surfaced again, in the form of criticism about the justice and goodness of the classical understanding of the political, is useful in raising the fundamental question regarding the nature of the political and the nature of both the good and the just. 158

Although Zuckert is helpful in providing a general, historical sketch that focuses on Strauss's discovery of the significance of Schmitt's understanding of the political and Strauss's later discoveries in Hobbes, Machiavelli, the mediaeval philosophers and finally Plato and Aristotle, she fails to discover the decisive response that Strauss addresses to Schmitt in The City and Man In fairness to Zuckert, she is more concerned with sketching out a general summary of the works of Strauss within a book devoted to four other Western philosophers, than in examining the historical importance of Schmitt's arguments supporting his concept of the political. Her goal was not an intensive analysis of one of Strauss's books, but rather an introduction to Strauss's project in reviving political philosophy. Zuckert, like all other commentators, fails to

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., p. 198.
158 Ibid., p. 200.

examine <u>The City and Man</u> as a book that addresses Strauss's life-long activity – the theologico-political problem. However, Harry V. Jaffa, a student of Strauss, does attempt to explain what Strauss means by the theologico-political problem.

Although Jaffa fails to mention Schmitt, or Strauss's <u>Comments</u> on Schmitt's <u>The Concept of the Political</u>, he does attempt an historical sketch of Strauss's understanding of the political, or the politico-theological problem. He defines it as Strauss's attempt to restore:

". . . the authority of the moral order common to philosophy and the Bible, and restoring with it the conviction that human life could be well lived only by devotion to the 'high'. Recognition of what was truly the 'high', moreover, would engender modesty and humility, and therewith moderation." <sup>159</sup>

Jaffa reminds readers that Strauss's life-long intellectual occupation was focused upon the theologico-political problem. According to Strauss, "revelation" specifically refers to the singular God who is completely "separate from the universe He created" and hence, all efforts to rationally explain "the first cause" (God) fail. This moderates reason's claim to know final causes and promotes a quest for knowledge that refuses to abandon reason and revelation for the autonomous "human will as the sole authority". <sup>160</sup> Jaffa explains Strauss's presentation of the theologico-political problem as specifically,

Jaffa, Harry V., "Leo Strauss, the Bible and Political Philosophy", in Deutsch, Kenneth L. & Nicgorski, Walter, editors, <u>Leo Strauss: Political Philosopher and Jewish Thinker</u>, Rowman & Littlefield, U.S.A. 1994, p. 208

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U.S.A., 1994, p. 208. 160 Ibid., pp. 206 & 208.

the "Jewish problem", where "the Jewish problem is the most manifest symbol of the human problem insofar as it is a social or political problem". Jaffa implies that any perceived human solution is a contradiction as no nationalism, or culture, appears in Jaffa continues, "From the moment of the establishment of Jewish orthodoxy. Christianity, the political problem became the theological-political problem", suggesting that the establishment of Christianity was not consistent with reason and revelation expressed as the divine law. According to Jaffa's understanding of the theologicopolitical problem, "Judaism was (and remains) essentially Law, whereas Christianity is essentially Faith", the latter leading to "The separation of – and tension between – the divine law and the human law". He argues that "Christianity, and the idea of the City of God, brought into being a cosmopolitan world", which later led to our "candid [secular] world". <sup>161</sup> In explaining how the modern secular world developed, Jaffa argues that under the Holy Roman Empire, the old distinction "between fellow citizens and aliens (or barbarians)" was substituted by, "the distinction between the faithful and infidels or heretics", since under Christianity everyone could become citizens "of the City of God". He argues that the *polis*, that Plato and Aristotle described, lost its independence with the all-conquering Roman Empire. 162 Thus, with the success of one city - the city of Rome - it was inevitable, according to Jaffa, that all the pagan gods be replaced by one God, especially when it was expected that, "every ancient city could see the triumph of Rome as a triumph of the Roman gods". The exception, he argues, was Israel, because the Jewish people "by reason of their monotheism could not accept any victory or defeat in this world as final". Later, he argues, the biblical Law of the Jews was replaced by a separation between Caesar's rule and "rendering unto Caesar only the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" that was a prelude to the theologico-

Jaffa, Harry V., "Crisis of the Strauss Divided: The Legacy Reconsidered", <u>Social Research</u>, vol. 54, no. 3, Autumn 1987, pp. 591 - 593.
 Ibid., pp. 590 & 592.

political problem. He argues that the universal teaching of Christianity was not able to provide the necessary "friendship" and "political loyalties" that bound communities together in the traditional cities, thus causing the separation of the divine law and human law. According to Jaffa's interpretation of Strauss, the political problem then became the theologico-political problem, which has remained "the centre of his life and work". Jaffa argues that for Strauss, "The separation of – and tension between - the divine law and the human law constituted an absolutely novel problem". 163 Thus, Christianity, based on "Faith" and a "Trinity", that is not essentially a monotheism, only complicated the original Jewish religion with its main emphasis on "Law". In addition, he argues that the new idea of having "one living God for all mankind would dominate the political consciousness within which Western man would seek political salvation". 164 Jaffa argues that "the establishment of Christianity was inconsistent with both reason and revelation" and led to "theological despotism" when the "religious establishment" tried by "practical means", or by political methods, to solve "the theoretical questions on the nature of faith and its relation to reason". According to Jaffa, modern ideology attempted the same solution that transformed itself into "wisdom" leading to "Hitler and Stalin" – i.e. "ideological despotism", as both the Nazis and Communists tried to "resolve the mystery of human life by political means". By this, he argues, Strauss means that the human problem becomes "the Jewish problem". The chief characteristic of the issue is that the problem cannot be resolved on the level of freedom from contradictions. He argues that Strauss's understanding of the theologico-political problem, means "Political moderation is rooted in the refusal to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>163</sup> Ibid., p. 592. <sup>164</sup> Ibid., p. 591.

resolve the mystery of life by political means", <sup>165</sup> and that Strauss's stance on the blessedness of the American regime is as follows:

"Our respect for the rights of others constitutes an essential element of our duty to God, our primary duty, and the duty antecedent to our rights. Only by seeing that our respect for others is required by our duty to God can there be government which combines majority rule with minority rights". <sup>166</sup>

Jaffa's explanation of Strauss's historical understanding of the political could be plausible, if one assumes that by "revelation" Strauss means biblical revelation. In <u>The City and Man</u>, Strauss never uses the word "revelation". In his "Preface" to the English translation of his Spinoza book, Strauss speaks of the "victory of any orthodoxy", meaning the victory of any religion, when referring to "the self-destruction of rational philosophy". Strauss points out that "Jewish orthodoxy" was undermined because it was based on a claim to "a superior rationality (Deut., 4:6)" with regards to other religions. Here, Moses advises the chosen people to keep God's commandments, since they are "your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding

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Jaffa, Harry V., "Leo Strauss, the Bible and Political Philosophy", in Deutsch, Kenneth L. & Nicgorski, Walter, editors, <u>Leo Strauss: Political Philosopher and Jewish Thinker</u>, op. cit., p. 209. The problem of the "fundamental conflict within the human conflict" between revelation and reason could not be resolved, unless there was a recourse to "tyrannical compulsion" and the subsequent potential for "bestiality" by those who would imitate God. Nevertheless, Jaffa points out that both Jerusalem (revelation) and Athens (reason) share the same "morality" or natural right of equality seen in the words of the Declaration - "the laws of nature and of Nature's God" – Jaffa, Harry V., "Crisis of the Strauss Divided: The Legacy Reconsidered", op. cit., p. 594.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>166</sup> Jaffa, Harry V., "Crisis of the Strauss Divided: The Legacy Reconsidered", op. cit., p. 596.

<sup>167</sup> Strauss, Leo, Spinoza's Critique of Religion, Sinclair, E. M., trans., op. cit., pp. 30 & 31.

people". <sup>168</sup> In criticizing modernity's reliance on human will and not on rationality, Strauss concludes that "the will to power was said to be a fact", but he suspected that "the self-destruction of reason" might be "the inevitable outcome of modern rationalism as distinguished from pre-modern rationalism, especially Jewish-medieval rationalism and its classical (Aristotelian and Platonic) foundation", leading Strauss to conclude that it "would be unwise to say farewell to reason". By a return to "reason", Strauss implies that a recovery of (rational) Orthodox Judaism is also possible. <sup>169</sup> Jaffa's comments on the theologico-political problem are helpful in establishing how Christianity became the core of the political problem for Strauss, adding evidence that Strauss saw political theology as the most serious opponent of political philosophy. However, unlike Drury and McCormick, Jaffa does not mention Strauss's relationship with Schmitt and Strauss's response to his arguments. Jaffa joins Drury and McCormick in failing to perceive the continuation of Strauss's indirect response to Schmitt's arguments as late as 1964, when Strauss's lectures on Plato, Aristotle and Thucydides were finally published in The City and Man

The literature on the historical background of Schmitt and Strauss's political writings is useful in understanding how history is important to both thinkers. Neumann is helpful in pointing out Schmitt's reliance on historicism that complements his political theology. Zuckert sketches a history of Strauss's development as a thinker that demonstrates his interest in revelation as discovered in mediaeval Jewish and Arab philosophers. As a consequence, one can conclude that Strauss's respect for political theology increased because of his historical studies into mediaeval philosophy that

The Holy Bible, King James Version, Collins Publishers, New York, U.S.A., Deut. 4:6, p. 166. The Bible's emphasis.

Strauss, Leo, Spinoza's Critique of Religion, Sinclair, E. M., trans., op. cit., pp. 30 & 31.

focused on the divine law. Strauss's choice of the historian, Thucydides, in <u>The City</u> and <u>Man</u>, continues his interest in the divine law (ancestral piety) that is essential in understanding the pre-philosophic cities. Drury and McCormick are helpful in pointing out the historical circumstances that possibly influenced both Schmitt and Strauss, contrary to Strauss's own argument that a thinker can be understood without having to know the historical context in which that thinker lived. Finally, the literature on history does provide historical evidence that, from the very beginning of their relationship, Strauss and Schmitt had a common interest in the connection between theology and the political.

# 3. The Political as Religion

Among the commentators, who have focused attention on Strauss's interest in religion throughout The City and Man, is Allan Bloom. He argues that the central thesis in The City and Man is Strauss's final defence of the political that focuses on the execution of Socrates for impiety. By this, Bloom suggests that Strauss learned that the art of esoteric writing was essential for philosophic books, given the dangers resulting from philosophic inquiry. These dangers, caused by a philosopher's activity, included the possible destruction of a society's orthodox beliefs in the gods of the city, as well as the following indignation that could result in the persecution of the offending philosopher. Furthermore, Bloom argues that Strauss knew that esotericism was necessary because "there is only a tiny number of men who can potentially philosophize and hence understand the teachings of philosophy". The also argues that Strauss's

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>170</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., pp. 50 – 62, 141 – 145.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>171</sup> Bloom, Allan, Giants and Dwarfs, Simon & Schuster, N.Y., U.S.A., 1990, p. 245.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>172</sup> Ibid., p. 252. Bloom argues that Strauss believed "that philosophy might disappear utterly from the world, although he thought nature supported it".

book was an examination of what philosophy was in its original form and what the city was, before it was "reinterpreted for the sake of philosophy". Bloom argues, "Strauss found that the harmony of reason and revelation was Maimonides and Farabi's public teaching, while the private teaching was that there is a radical and irreducible tension between them". In other words, Strauss's final understanding of the political presented in The City and Man, according to Bloom, was "the quarrel between the divine city and the natural one, the most notable incident of which was the execution of Socrates". Hence, in contrast to Jaffa and his students, Bloom argues that "Leo Strauss was a philosopher" and that "The problem for the philosophers is primarily religion", rather than a particular religion. Unlike Jaffa, Bloom does not distinguish between biblical religion and all other religions and he also fails to mention, or draw attention to, what might be learned from Schmitt's The Concept of the Political. 175

Father Ernest L. Fortin reminds readers in his article, "The Regime of Separatism: Theoretical Considerations on the Separation of Church and State", that Strauss's two interests in life were "God and politics". In recognizing Strauss's legacy in restoring political philosophy to a respected position within the academy, Fortin defines Strauss's two interests:

"By 'God' he meant the realm of speculative wisdom, once thought to be the preserve of the gifted and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>173</sup> Ibid., pp. 244 - 250. On p. 236, Bloom suggests that the theologico-political problem for Strauss was its manifestation in "the most terrible persecutions" of the Jews and the fact that the "most profound philosophic figure [Heidegger] of this century was a Nazi". He argues that Strauss only clarifies what was not solved, or "had become obscure".

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>174</sup> Ibid., p. 239.
 <sup>175</sup> Bloom, Allan, <u>The Closing of the American Mind</u>, Simon & Schuster, N.Y., U.S.A., 1987, p. 276.
 Bloom states, "Ancient political philosophy was almost entirely in the service of philosophy, of making the world safer for philosophy" – p. 276.

inquisitive few who are tortured in their flesh by the distinction between truth and untruth and take greater delight in exploring the mysteries of the universe or the human soul than in performing such notable deeds as might win the acclaim of their fellow human beings. By 'politics' he meant the realm of practical wisdom, which finds its most perfect expression in what the Greeks called the *polis*, the self-sufficient human association and the one most favorable to the exercise of the noble virtues that characterize life at its human, as distinguished from its divine, best". <sup>176</sup>

Although Fortin does not raise the issue of the best regime, he sees how the political is connected to Strauss's recovery of the *polis* where citizens can live decent lives as close to the divine as humanly possible. Fortin argues that these two "fundamental alternatives" – God (philosophy) and politics - were Strauss's teaching regarding "generous souls" wishing to aim at "the highest goals", while also understanding that the two alternatives of "human excellence" were in "latent and at times open tension" with regards to the pursuit of their "different directions" and "different ends". He admits that Strauss is "more pious in speech than Aristotle had been" through speaking of "God" rather than "the theoretical life as the alternative to the life of gentlemanly statesmanship". Fortin notes that Strauss knew the dangers of philosophy and the respect that philosophers must exercise in dealing with the city, in order not to "disrupt its life", while even improving the city's way of life. Although Fortin fails to mention

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>176</sup> Fortin, Ernest L., Collected Essays, Vol. 3, <u>Human Rights, Virtue, and the Common Good: Untimely Meditations on Religion and Politics</u>, Benestad, Brian J., editor, Rowman & Littlefield, U.S.A., 1996, p. 1

Carl Schmitt, he does note the "apolitical character" of Christianity in comparison to the other mainstream religions. He notices Fustel de Coulanges's observation of the political changes that radical Christianity brought about in elevating the private over the public, but Fortin does not examine Strauss's <u>The City and Man</u> and the importance of "the holy city" for Strauss's understanding of Thucydides.<sup>177</sup>

In addressing Schmitt's unorthodox Christianity, Neumann agrees with Heinrich Meier in labelling Schmitt a political theologian because of Schmitt's "radical Catholicism", which was essentially "apolitical"; yet, he criticizes Meier for not drawing attention to the connection that "Platonic Judaism" has with the goodness of law. Neumann's description of Strauss's political philosophy as "Platonic Judaism" is based on his reading of Strauss's "Preface to Spinoza's Critique of Religion". Neumann draws attention to Strauss's claim that "Official Judaism was legalistic and hence rationalistic". According to Strauss, official Judaism was the ordinary priestly Judaism that contrasts with the inspired revelation of various prophets of Judaism. Strauss argues that official Judaism was supported by "philosophical rationalism", which was represented by Plato's idea "of a God as an artificer who makes the universe by looking up to the unchangeable lifeless ideas". According to Strauss, in Liberalism Ancient and Modern, "official Judaism asserted that God has created the world and governs it sub ratione boni" ("by reason of the good"), because God is an "artificer who makes the universe by looking up to the unchangeable, lifeless ideas". Strauss then accuses Spinoza of rebelling against the legalistic God of official Judaism, preferring the Christian interpretation "of the God who will be what He will be", or the mysterious

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>177</sup> Ibid., pp. 2 & 3.

God that is "the absolutely free and sovereign God of the *Bible*". Strauss calls this God one that is "simply beyond good and evil". <sup>178</sup>

Using Strauss as his authority, Neumann sees Schmitt's God as the same as Spinoza's, arguing that the "ultimate authority" in Schmitt's political theology is "divine will, not inherent goodness". In contrast to God represented as a mysterious "divine will", the Platonic God of official Judaism was a static God of "inherent goodness". Thus, Neumann argues that Schmitt's God is "dictatorial" whose "will is law". In Neumann's opinion, Schmitt's Christianity is an extremist piety that takes the form of "a tyrannic theology" that Neumann labels "Spinozist-Christian Judaism", which opposes Strauss's "official Platonic Judaism". 179 According to Neumann, Schmitt's interpretation of the Christian God asserts that "individualism is primary", since the omnipotent God "is not bound by law". Furthermore, Schmitt's God stresses punishment for evil, rather than the Platonic Judaic teaching regarding law as "a positive good, ultimately the greatest good". This comes from Schmitt's acceptance of Spinoza's view on God, Neumann argues. Neumann believes that Schmitt's religion comes very close to nihilism as Schmitt's "real enemy compels the always terrifying confrontation with one's nothingness, a shocking awakening for the sinful". The only thing that saves Schmitt from nihilism, or what Neumann defines as atheism, is Schmitt's faith in the "unique historical event" of the "Incarnation" – i.e. the embodiment of God in Christ as an experience rather than a universal law. Neumann sees Strauss's "experiences of law

Neumann, Harry, "Political Philosophy or Self-Knowledge? Comments on Schmitt and Meier", <a href="Interpretation: A Journal of Political Philosophy">Interpretation: A Journal of Political Philosophy</a>, vol. 24, no. 1, Fall 1996, pp. 117 & 118. See Strauss, Leo, <a href="Liberalism Ancient and Modern">Liberalism Ancient and Modern</a>, Basic Books Inc., New York, U.S.A., 1968, p. 242.

179 Ibid., p. 118.

essentially as a positive good, ultimately the greatest good", in contrast to Schmitt's stress on the terror of individual nihilism. <sup>180</sup>

In pointing to the importance of Schmitt's and Strauss's reliance on religion, Neumann argues that "All mankind's serious political fights are over what constitutes man's true God, his natural perfection or happiness". This explains Strauss's preference for Plato's natural right that points to "a natural good or perfection towards which his life naturally tends" that challenges Schmitt's God that calls for a "piety of desperation". According to Neumann, these views, which appear in a religious context of a battle over the highest good (god), represent "mankind's two main alternatives with respect to self-knowledge and, therefore, with respect to serious thought about anything". By "self-knowledge", Neumann means Schmitt's need "for omnipotent saviors", or what Neumann calls Schmitt's "Spinozist-Christian Judaism", that contrasts with Strauss's emphasis on the divine law, or "Platonic Judaism".

In his book, <u>Liberalism</u>, Neumann argues that Strauss "prudently" did not explicitly state that Schmitt's unorthodox Christianity, based on Original Sin, was his major defect in not fully understanding the political. According to Neumann, Strauss blames Schmitt for relying on orthodox Christian dogmas, such as the "corruption of man's nature through original sin", that prevented "Schmitt's theology from being really political". However, Neumann does not explain why Schmitt's acceptance of "original"

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>180</sup> Ibid., pp. 119 - 120. Neumann's analysis is based on Strauss's <u>Liberalism Ancient and Modern</u>, op. cit., pp. 242 & 243.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>181</sup> Ibid., p. 122.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>182</sup> Ibid., p. 121.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>183</sup> Ibid., p. 130. Neumann agrees with Meier that Schmitt's concept of the enemy is "the external representation of one's internal questionableness, he who casts one's very being into doubt", p. 120.

sin" leads to his theology not "being really political". Nevertheless, Neumann considers Schmitt to be "a political theologian", rather than a "Nietzschean or Heideggerian historicist", or a Nazi, nihilist, atheist, or legal positivist. In arguing that Schmitt is a religious moralist, Neumann sees him as "potentially philosophic, as in a way, all pious or political men are", unlike those "pseudo" liberals, who lack self-knowledge in honestly facing their nihilism.

Neumann also argues that one can learn from Schmitt's general approach to his political understanding, since the fundamental key to Schmitt's understanding of the political lies in his statement, "citing Donoso Cortez", that "Without theology, no morality, and without morality no politics". <sup>187</sup> In emphasizing Schmitt's Christian faith, Neumann points out that Schmitt often quoted <u>I Thessalonians</u> (5:3) against those who would moralize and politicize "universal peace and security", because "when they shall say peace and security, then sudden destruction shall come upon them . . . and they shall not escape". <sup>188</sup> For Neumann, Schmitt defines the political as unavoidable, because "All men are pious and, therefore, political, whether they realize it or not" and that the law, army and police are evidence of "the belligerent determination to legitimate one's gods" and force others to obey, since "The practice of politics has not changed since Cain, the founder of the first city, and Romulus, the founder of Rome". <sup>189</sup> Neumann argues that

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>184</sup> Neumann, Harry, <u>Liberalism</u>, op. cit., p. 93. Neumann seems to believe that the Platonic idea of the good and the natural perfection of the philosopher disappear, if all human beings are deemed evil through "original sin".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>185</sup> Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>186</sup> Ibid., p. 95.

Neumann, Harry, "Political Theology? An Interpretation of Genesis (3:5, 22)", op. cit., p. 78.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>188</sup> Neumann, Harry, <u>Liberalism</u>, op. cit., p. 263.

Neumann, Harry, "Eternal and Temporal Enemies: Carl Schmitt's Political Theology", Political Communication, vol. 9, 1992, p. 280. On p. 283, he claims Schmitt thinks "agnosticism (skepticism about whether God exists) is impossible" even in terms of "intellectual honesty". He continues, "Men either are atheist or political-theological (defenders of some cherished morality, even of the dishonest effort to make atheism politically respectable, to have an atheist god)". For Schmitt, "atheism is the worst crime".

Schmitt's attempt to establish a "Christian political theology" failed, because "A humble, crucified god provides no support for the elitism inseparable from politics". Neumann further argues that it was Schmitt's "Jew-hatred" that prevented him from recovering the Jewish/Platonic political theology that establishes faith in the law and a respect for the role of eros in providing for natural happiness. Schmitt's belief in Christ, and the fate of Christ in the hands of the Jews, had much to do with his dislike of the Jewish religion, Neumann concludes. 190

Neumann also notes that Schmitt "called Strauss the only philosopher among his critics", because of Strauss's preference for mediaeval Jewish philosophy that took seriously the piety of Orthodox Judaism. 191 Therefore, Neumann argues that Strauss was closer to Schmitt than to his Hegelian friend, Alexandre Kojève, since Schmitt was "potentially philosophic, as in a way, all pious or political men are". According to Neumann, all Schmitt needed to do to become philosophic was "seriously" to "question" his "politics or piety". Neumann argues that it was Strauss's intention to warn Schmitt of the "pseudo-liberal obfuscation of liberalism's nihilism", or the "abyss", brought about by "Spinozist-Christian Judaism", which teaches that there is nothing higher than universal experience, that is both unique and individual. <sup>192</sup>

Susan Shell, in her article on Strauss and Schmitt called "Taking Evil Seriously: Schmitt's Concept of the Political and Strauss's True Politics", argues that Strauss and Schmitt agreed on posing the political as a solution to the moral weakness of liberalism, but that the "fundamental criticism of Schmitt grows out of the latter's failure to reflect

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>190</sup> Neumann, Harry, "Political Theology? An Interpretation of Genesis (3:5, 22)", op. cit., pp. 81 & 87

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>191</sup> Neumann, Harry, <u>Liberalism</u>, op. cit., pp. 94 & 95. Neumann's authority is Meier, H., <u>Carl Schmitt.</u> Leo Strauss und Der Begriff Politischen, Stuttgart, 1988, p. 16.

192 Ibid., p. 95. Neumann thinks that Schmitt "knew what Strauss was about", see p. 94.

adequately on the distinction between human evil and guiltless or animal dangerousness". 193 The key to Schmitt's failure, according to Shell, is that he did not recognize the fact that humans are evil, meaning that they are morally depraved, although he did realize that humans needed to arrange organized protection from others, or in short, that they needed to be ruled. Yet, she also argues that Schmitt spoke of his definition of evil with "sympathy", because he argued that human evil was "dangerousness" and this needed to be encouraged to overcome the lack of seriousness in modern life. 194 According to Shell, Strauss rejects Schmitt's Nietzschean call for a tightrope walker willing to make danger the theme of life. Nevertheless, Shell points out that Strauss thought that Schmitt and he ("we") had "stumbled on by chance", the "necessary connection between politics and theology". Although Strauss fails to mention Schmitt in the last paragraph of the first chapter of his 1935 book, Philosophy and Law, Shell suggests that Strauss includes Schmitt in referring to the plural "we". She also reminds readers that Strauss thought that what could be learned from Schmitt was distinct from following Schmitt's opinion on Hobbes. 195

Shell explains that both Schmitt and Strauss converged on Hobbes as the thinker, who had established the foundations of the political ("the state of nature") that underpinned the concept of culture. According to Shell, "the state of nature", defined as the war among individual human beings, was a polemical notion that was negated by Hobbes, whereas Schmitt affirmed the state of nature, defining it "unpolemically", as a war among groups, which were "divided into friend and foe". Furthermore, Shell sees

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>193</sup> Shell, Susan, "Taking Evil Seriously: Schmitt's Concept of the Political and Strauss's True Politics", in Deutsch, Kenneth L. & Nicgorski, Walter, editors, Leo Strauss: Political Philosopher and Jewish Thinker, op. cit., pp. 185 & 186.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., pp. 188 & 189. Shell's emphasis.
195 Ibid., p. 186. Strauss did not agree with Schmitt's claim that Hobbes "believed in the divinity of Christ".

Schmitt resisting "evaluating the political, because he holds all such evaluations to be mere normativities, or fictions in contradistinction to the political, which deals with life and death – hence with the real". Thus, it appears that Schmitt's concept of morality was "subjective", according to Shell, primarily because the dangerousness of humans (i.e. the political) takes the place of judgement and "is man's inescapable destiny", meaning that the "political simply is". She further indicates that Schmitt contradicted himself in asserting that the political "is not simply inescapable", since "Schmitt promotes the political", admitting that it is threatened by a world of entertainment. <sup>196</sup> In addition, she argues that, unlike Strauss, Schmitt did not take his bearings on the political from how "ordinary citizens understand it", and consequently, the statement that humans need "dangerous foes" is rendered absurd, as dangerousness is a "defect" and not a virtue. Furthermore, Shell argues that Schmitt takes his bearing from the "exception or the extreme" rather than from Strauss's "typical case" that is "the essence of virtue". 197 Shell implies that she agrees with Strauss's argument in his "Comments" that the last thing anyone wants is dangerous enemies. Given that Schmitt did not return to a pre-Hobbesian understanding of evil, and that Schmitt treats "humanitarian-pacifist morality to be morality", Shell argues, in agreement with Strauss, that Schmitt remained trapped in "the liberal individualistic opinion that relegates the moral to the private realm of mere normativities". 198

Shell explains why Schmitt viewed the political as the "exception or the extreme", by returning to Strauss's 1935 book, <u>Philosophy and Law</u>. Here, Shell relates how Strauss argues that "ancient and medieval philosophy" always understood the "extreme on the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>196</sup> Ibid., p. 188.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>197</sup> Ibid., pp. 188 – 191.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>198</sup> Ibid., pp. 189 & 190. On p. 192, Shell argues that the key to Strauss's "Comments" is the call to a "recognition of the primacy of duty to political life, and hence an understanding of the significance of Law in its original sense".

basis of the typical", but "modern philosophy... understands the typical on the basis of the extreme". 199 By the modern "extreme", Strauss meant "the right of necessity" that became the right of self-preservation, whereas the traditional "extreme" was located in Socratic philosophy that emphasized human perfection. 200 Shell quotes Strauss in explaining mediaeval philosophy's Platonic goal, "Alfarabi is not concerned with the state in general but with the state directed to the proper perfection of man, with the 'excellent state', the ideal state". <sup>201</sup> According to Shell's reading of Strauss, the net result of the modern approach was the ability to ignore the original question of virtue and whether it could be taught, because it was seen as a "trivial" question. In ignoring whether virtue could be taught, Strauss argues, modernity then accepted the "extreme ('theological') virtue of love" that became "the 'natural' ('philosophical') virtue". <sup>202</sup> According to Strauss, this was part of the radical, modern project that was based on Socrates's ("the founder of the philosophic tradition") criticism of "the natural ideal of courage". Strauss had pointed out that in the "extreme" life of the philosopher, the virtue of courage was still included, whereas modern philosophy excluded courage altogether. 203 Shell implies that Schmitt sides with the extreme case, i.e. the "natural necessity" of self-preservation that leads to potential war, because he loses sight of the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>199</sup> Ibid., pp. 188 & 189 (footnote 25).

Strauss, Leo, <u>Philosophy and Law - Contributions to the Understanding of Maimonides and His Predecessors</u>, Adler, Eve, trans., op. cit., p. 136. Shell does not spell out everything, but requires the reader to check with Strauss's works.

reader to check with Strauss's works.

Shell, Susan, "Taking Evil Seriously: Schmitt's *Concept of the Political* and Strauss's *True Politics*', in Deutsch, Kenneth L. & Nicgorski, Walter, editors, Leo Strauss: Political Philosopher and Jewish Thinker, op. cit., p. 185. See Strauss, Leo Philosophy and Law - Contributions to the Understanding of Maimonides and His Predecessors, op. cit., p. 125. Here, Strauss also says, "the only context in which prophecy proper can be understood radically is that of politics. Here 'politics' and 'political' are to be understood in the Platonic sense". Strauss then equates the political with the best regime.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>202</sup> Ibid., pp. 188 & 189 (footnote 25). In footnote 24, Shell mentions a private letter that Strauss wrote in 1932 to Schmitt where Schmitt, according to Strauss, lost sight of the political. Schmitt believed that groupings were the natural tendency of human beings, hence, only demonstrating that it was the "condition of the state, not the state's constituent principle". The loss of this "hierarchy" allowed him to be attacked for "losing sight of the political in the decisive sense".

Strauss, Leo, <u>Philosophy and Law - Contributions to the Understanding of Maimonides and His Predecessors</u>, Adler, Eve, trans., op. cit., p. 136. Again, Shell does not spell this out.

political through his agreement with Hobbes in severing "the connection between reason and the claim to rule". 204

Shell observes that "Strauss's final (public) word on Schmitt" was in Strauss's new preface to the German edition of his Hobbes book. In that preface, Shell argues, Strauss indicates that it was "philosophic interest in theology" that linked him not with Carl Schmitt, but with Kant's "true politics". She notes that Strauss states that it "explains" his direction even at the time of writing the preface. In contrast to Strauss's praise of Kant, Schmitt, as late as 1927, still called Hobbes "by far the greatest and perhaps the only truly systematic thinker". At that time, she points out, Strauss became more interested in Hobbes, without turning into an Hobbesian liberal. The reasons why Strauss did not embrace Hobbes's theory on natural right, were his devotion to a "philosophic interest in theology" and his investigation into "the preliberal moral horizon within which Hobbes founded liberalism". Yet, in opting for Kant's "true politics", she argues, Strauss "was no Kantian". By this, Shell means that Strauss took "the moral law" very seriously. The connection between Strauss and Schmitt, she argues, focused on the status of "the moral" that must take seriously moral evil. Shell believes that Schmitt accepted the liberal view that the moral is "merely private and hence not genuinely binding". She concludes that Strauss thought that one must recognize "the primacy of duty for political life, and hence an understanding of the significance of Law in its original premodern sense". Schmitt, she points out, adopted "the neo-Kantian view of law as an abstract universal norm", just as he accepted the liberal morality of his time that emphasized "private and hence nonbinding ideals". 205

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>204</sup> Shell, Susan, "Taking Evil Seriously: Schmitt's Concept of the Political and Strauss's True Politics", in Deutsch, Kenneth L. & Nicgorski, Walter, editors, Leo Strauss: Political Philosopher and Jewish Thinker, op. cit., pp. 189 & 193.

205 Ibid., pp. 190 - 193.

The literature on religion confirms the importance, for Strauss, of political theology as a fundamental alternative to political philosophy. Bloom sees that the key problem for philosophers is religion. From Bloom's observations, one could expect that Strauss would address religion in one of his mature works. Although the commentators fail to see Strauss's continued response to Schmitt in The City and Man, all realize that Strauss took seriously the challenge of religion to philosophy. Neumann is particularly helpful in observing that Strauss's response to Schmitt represents "mankind's two main alternatives with respect to self-knowledge", namely political philosophy and political theology, while Shell points out Schmitt's and Strauss's 1930s discovery of the connection between politics and theology. Finally, most commentators note the threat that philosophy poses to society and the necessity for philosophers to write prudently, in order to protect the traditional beliefs of the community. Neumann demonstrates that Strauss was cautious in openly criticizing Schmitt's Christianity, even though Strauss knew it was the basis of Schmitt's foundation of the political. This helps explain why Strauss was so reticent to mention Schmitt, and Schmitt's unorthodox Christianity, in The City and Man. The literature also provides evidence supporting this thesis that Strauss did write a theologico-political treatise that deals with the issue of whether religion, or political philosophy (reason), is the best answer to the question, "who, or what should rule?". For both Schmitt and Strauss, the question of rule points to the importance of knowledge as the highest authority in the order of the human things, as spelt out in the sixth criteria that requires 'pure and whole knowledge'. It is now

necessary to examine the literature that explores Strauss's and Schmitt's discussion of the political as knowledge.<sup>206</sup>

## 4. The Political as Knowledge

Since both Strauss and Schmitt argue that the political is "the order of the human things" that is based on "a *pure and whole* knowledge" it is important to examine the literature that elucidates what both thinkers mean by "knowledge". From the literature it appears that knowledge, especially self-knowledge, is a key concept for both Schmitt and Strauss. Strauss's return to classical rationalism represents his preference for Socratic political philosophy that is characterized by a return to nature, and the best regime, that can be outlined using human reason found within the soul. Schmitt also places emphasis on divine knowledge, which for commentators such as Meier, implies knowing the enemy from within one's soul. Schmitt presents the political as something that can be explained, and hence understood, although ultimate knowledge resides with a mysterious God that remains intertwined with history.

Nasser Behnegar argues that Strauss's return to political philosophy was a return to "classical rationalism" that seemed to be "the true standard of rationalism". <sup>208</sup> In explaining the issue of classical rationality, Behnegar points to Strauss's concern with common sense, particularly with the knowledge of "the fully conscious form of the common sense understanding of political things". He argues that Strauss meant by

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>206</sup> Neumann, Harry, "Political Philosophy or Self-Knowledge? Comments on Schmitt and Meier", op. cit., p. 130. Shell, Susan, "Taking Evil Seriously: Schmitt's *Concept of the Political* and Strauss's *True Politics*", op. cit., p. 186.

<sup>207</sup> Strauss, Leo, "Notes on Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*", in Meier, Heinrich, <u>Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss</u> – <u>The Hidden Dialogue</u>, Lomax, Harvey J., trans., op. cit., p. 119.

Behnegar, Nasser, "The Intellectual Legacy of Leo Strauss (1899 – 1973)", <u>Annual Review of Political Science</u>, vol. 1, 1998, p. 97.

common sense, not looking at "political life through the medium of a tradition of political philosophy", but seeing the political as "directly connected to political life". Thus, for Strauss, this excludes any need for a scheme, theory or method, since ordinary citizens never see their own actions as part of philosophic speculation. It was this simplistic reflection of the political phenomena, which appears in "assemblies and councils", that Strauss strived to reflect, thus excluding the sophisticated concepts, such as, "the state of nature" and "the civil state". According to Behnegar, the "awareness of concrete experiences that precedes all scientific understanding" is exactly "what existentialism seeks", but fails to achieve, because existentialism begins with abstract notions and then tries to move to the concrete, or existential foundations.<sup>209</sup> The "commonsense moral opinions" are a way to "knowledge", according to Strauss, because these opinions contradict one another and hence, "point beyond themselves toward the consistent account of the matter at hand". 210 Furthermore, he argues that Strauss taught that political life could not be subject to philosophy as politics required "practical skill that provides guidance" and not an abstract description of how politics work. Nevertheless, he thinks that Strauss thought that the "only serious alternative to the philosophic life" for serious people, was "the political life", because "the home of opinion" was "politics". According to Behnegar, the correct definition of political philosophy is not "the philosophic treatment of politics, but the political, or popular, treatment of philosophy". He argues:

> "The decisive importance of classical political philosophy for Strauss consisted in its ability to show that moral-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>209</sup> Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>210</sup> Ibid., p. 107. Behnegar thinks the modern emphasis on "institutions" misses the mark, as "institutions depend on the human beings who inhabit them". On p. 108, he thinks that the question should focus on the characters of those who wish to rule, therefore addressing the fundamental question, "Who should rule?" at the same time being guided by the idea of the good.

political life understood in its own terms necessarily points to the philosophic life as the best human life and that it does this without first assuming that the universe is intelligible". <sup>211</sup>

He presents Strauss arguing that classical rationalism begins with examining the political questions raised in normal political life, such as "What is the best regime?", "What is a good human being?", and "Who should rule?". <sup>212</sup> In other words, Behnegar thinks that Strauss's final answer concerning the political demonstrates a knowledge of what is highest in human beings, through giving readers an insight into their "higher and lower desires". Unfortunately, Behnegar does not list what those desires are and how they form a part of a hierarchy of ends. <sup>213</sup>

Behnegar argues that Strauss thought Machiavelli substituted the Socratic understanding of "the best regime" and "the most fundamental political controversy: What type of human being should rule?" for the less problematic concept of "legitimate government" that developed duties from natural right based on commonly recognized terrors, such as the fear of "violent death". He argues that Strauss saw that modern thinkers, including Hobbes and Locke, had failed to "meet the challenge of biblical morality" and had, in a way, no longer remained philosophers. Furthermore, he points out that Strauss concludes that they "accepted on trust the view that political philosophy or political science is possible or necessary". In summarizing Strauss's legacy, Behnegar

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>211</sup> Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>212</sup> Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>213</sup> Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>214</sup> Ibid., p. 112.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>215</sup> Ibid., p. 114. See Strauss, Leo, <u>Natural Right and History</u>, op. cit., p. 167, from Strauss's division on Hobbes.

stresses that Strauss's emphasis on knowing meant "Understanding", rather than the possession of solutions to fundamental problems. In quoting Strauss's ultimate observation, he concludes that "we must say that Strauss's legacy is his contribution to "the recovery of the permanent problems". 216

Meier is the most prolific commentator on Schmitt's and Strauss's description of the political. In his book, The Lesson of Carl Schmitt, he directly addresses Schmitt's definition of the political, in a chapter called, "Politics, or What is Truth?". Meier points out that from the three definitions that Schmitt gives, the central definition of the political concerns "knowledge", which is the foundation of the distinction between friend and enemy.<sup>217</sup> Meier argues that the specific knowledge, to which Schmitt referred, was "man's knowledge of himself, of the insight into what he is and what he ought to be". He further argues that to reach the fundamental premise behind Schmitt's The Concept of the Political means grasping the book as "a piece of his political theology", implying that the self-knowledge he requires is whether one is either a political philosopher or a political theologian. Furthermore, Meier reminds readers that Schmitt's definition of the political is not an "exhaustive definition", or a "summary", but merely a "simple criterion of the political". He concludes that Schmitt believed that the political was "essentially self-knowledge", 218 because the foundation of the political is the question "what is right" that presupposes knowledge of the right way of life, or whether political philosophy is superior to political theology. <sup>219</sup> He explains that many commentators have failed to see how Schmitt viewed the political as "total" and not just

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>216</sup> Ibid., p. 115. See Strauss, Leo, <u>Thoughts on Machiavelli</u>, University of Chicago Press, Phoenix Edition, U.S.A., 1978, pp. 14 (where Strauss writes of "permanent problems"), 174, 243, 295 & 296.

217 Meier, Heinrich, The Lesson of Carl Schmitt – Four Chapters on the Distinction between Political

Theology and Political Philosophy, Brainard, Marcus, trans., University of Chicago Press, U.S.A., 1998, p. 26. My emphasis. <sup>218</sup> Ibid., p. 27. <sup>219</sup> Ibid., pp. 40 & 41.

a "domain". Meier suggests that readers need to gain knowledge of how, and why, Schmitt changed the content of his book over the years. Meier alerts readers that Schmitt published his book three times: in 1927, 1932 and in 1933, with crucial changes that were the result of Strauss's criticisms. Furthermore, Meier claims, "From the start to finish what concerns Schmitt is not the independence of the political but rather its authoritativeness", which transcends all other cultures, ideas and ends through the "material power" of the "dire emergency" (Ernstfall), where people risk physical death. 220 Meier argues that Schmitt's 1927 concentration on foreign power was related to war among peoples and not nations. Nevertheless, in the 1932 edition, Schmitt took up the issue of civil war, or "organized political units", including religious groups, "classes and other human groups" alongside Schmitt's discussion of external war. 221 Such groups of people could become political in willingly opposing "one enemy". For Schmitt, there is a distinct possibility that "everything is political" in his definition, because Schmitt claimed that the political was "existential" and based on the universal fear of death, as well as the fact that politics is "destiny". The key, according to Meier's understanding of Schmitt, is to realize that the political is not synonymous with the State, nation, or the community, but with the "association and disassociation" posed by the dire emergency (Ernstfall), which is the "extreme battle". 222 According to Meier, there were four added sentences to the 1933 edition (two are in italics) and it appears that the key word, for Schmitt, was "wholly", particularly in "grasping man wholly", indicating, for Meier, that all political associations were included in the act of dire emergency (Ernstfall), or "violent death". 223

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>220</sup> Ibid., pp. 30 & 31.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>221</sup> Ibid., p. 33. Meier's emphasis. <sup>222</sup> Ibid., pp. 34 & 35. <sup>223</sup> Ibid., p. 36. Meier's emphasis.

In an earlier book, Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss - The Hidden Dialogue, Meier endeavours to demonstrate that Strauss was Schmitt's superior, giving open and hidden corrections to the older student, which were noted and taken up by Schmitt, but not acknowledged or footnoted.<sup>224</sup> Following Strauss's opinion of Schmitt, Meier argues that Schmitt did not transcend liberalism and that Strauss's interest in Schmitt's Concept of the Political was "to complete the critique of liberalism" and to make more powerful Schmitt's arguments. 225 Meier's evidence of Strauss's superiority in instructing Schmitt focuses on Schmitt's discussion of the questionable nature of culture, which had been divided into a number of independent areas. Schmitt had originally intended his idea of the political to be "independent", but "not in the sense of having its own new domain", implying a criticism of the reigning doctrine of culture that stressed "relatively independent domains". According to Meier, in Schmitt's 1933 edition, the expression, "relatively independent domains" disappeared and was replaced by the word, "independent", in italics for emphasis. Meier explains that this small change forced the political opposition of friend and enemy into "far deeper opposition" than the "oppositions between good and evil, beautiful and ugly etc". <sup>226</sup> According to Meier, Schmitt's changes signify that the political was not just another liberal expression of a relative and independent domain, but that it was the "authoritative" part ("unit"), which was "total and sovereign". 227 Typical of Meier's evidence is his attention to Schmitt changing (five times) the appearance of the word, "autonomous", including inverted commas in his 1933 edition, thus indicating for Meier, Schmitt's

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>224</sup> Meier, Heinrich, <u>Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss – The Hidden Dialogue</u>, Lomax, Harvey J., trans., op. cit., pp. 7, 8, 37, 58 & 61.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>225</sup> Ibid., p. 11. The question of not footnoting Strauss's ideas makes sense, as Strauss was a Jew while Schmitt became a Nazi in 1933, unbeknown to Strauss.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>226</sup> Ibid., pp. 12 & 13.
<sup>227</sup> Ibid., p. 16. Strauss uses the word, "fundamental". Meier's emphasis.

distancing himself from accepting the premises of modern liberalism, just as Strauss suggested.<sup>228</sup>

According to Meier, Schmitt argues that politics could now reach its peak, if the enemy were able to negate "one's own being, of one's own destiny". For Meier, Schmitt's example of "a peak of *great politics*" was Schmitt's mention of Cromwell in his war with Catholic Spain, since this special enemy was a "providential enemy". This fateful enemy had the effect of dissolving all other classifications and Meier argues that Schmitt saw that Cromwell's religious claim was more powerful than Lenin's war against the middle classes, or any other secular war for that matter. <sup>229</sup> In <u>The Lesson of Carl Schmitt</u>, Meier concludes that, for Schmitt, politics reaches "its absolute form" "only when it reaches the intensity of the battle of faith", and this means having reached "the peak of great politics", where "faith fights errant faith". <sup>230</sup>

According to Meier, Strauss also reminded Schmitt of the concept of human nature, or more specifically about the state of nature, that Hobbes had in mind. Meier also argues that Strauss moved beyond Schmitt's problem of the "dire emergency", which defines the political, by showing that Hobbes was the founder of liberalism and "the author of the ideal of civilization" and the very genesis of the modern problem of the "depoliticized and neutralized" world state. Meier argues that Strauss forced Schmitt to return to the founder of liberalism – Hobbes - in order to get to the very heart of the problem of the political, further pointing out that this message can be found in Strauss's only footnote in his essay on Schmitt's book, The Concept of the Political. Meier also

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>228</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>229</sup> Ibid., pp. 28 & 29. Meier's emphasis.

Meier, Heinrich, The Lesson of Carl Schmitt – Four Chapters on the Distinction between Political Theology and Political Philosophy, Brainard, Marcus, op. cit., trans., p. 60. Meier's emphasis.

argues that Schmitt acted on Strauss's suggestion, because in the first edition of Schmitt's book on the political, Schmitt spoke of Hobbes as, "by far the greatest and perhaps the sole truly systematic political thinker". However, in the 1933 edition, Schmitt wrote that Hobbes was only, "a great and truly systematic political thinker". Apparently, for Meier, Schmitt made other numerous crucial changes in his later editions, following Strauss's critique.<sup>231</sup>

At the centre of his book, Meier argues that Strauss's fundamental view on the issue of Schmitt's understanding of the political was that Schmitt condemns a universal world state dedicated to an easy life of modern comforts; however, Meier argues that Schmitt's answer to what constitutes the right life, required a return to political theology. Meier stresses that Strauss thought that "Schmitt's last word was not the affirmation of the political in the sense of affirmation of fighting as such, but the order of the human things", and hence, that Schmitt, who accepts "metaphysical opposition" was not a "follower of Nietzsche". 232 According to Meier, Strauss crystallized Schmitt's political teaching that the question "put to man" was the choice of whether to "obey God or Satan" and that this was the "ultimate foundation in the inevitability of this question". In short, Meier demonstrates that Strauss used Schmitt to show that there was a huge "gulf" between political philosophy and political theology, a division that could not be obliterated, transcended or synthesized. <sup>233</sup> Later, Meier argues that Schmitt was less polemical and thus, more open in clarifying his link to political theology in his work, Glossarium. Here, Schmitt argues that political theology was based on "revelation", which means "obedience to the highest authority, understanding

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>231</sup> Meier, Heinrich, <u>Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss – The Hidden Dialogue</u>, Lomax, Harvey J., trans., op. cit., pp. 34 & 35.
<sup>232</sup> Ibid., pp. 64 & 65.
<sup>233</sup> Ibid., pp. 42 & 43.

itself consequently as an historical action in the state of probation and judgement". 234 Again, Meier confirms Schmitt's historicism that underlies his concept of the political. In returning to nature, Strauss provides an alternative view of the order of the human things that can be grasped by reason, and hence, knowledge. In addition, Meier argues that political philosophy and political theology could not refute each other and that the political must always consist of the choice between the two ways of life, a necessary choice, if we were to remain serious human beings.<sup>235</sup> What was crucial for Schmitt, following Meier's analysis, was that the political, in the final analysis, had "its deepest foundation in original sin", but Meier, in demonstrating Strauss's preference for political philosophy, argues that Strauss never used, or raised, the issue of "original sin" in their dialogue. 236

Meier relies on evidence from Schmitt's book, Political Theology, to support his argument that Schmitt chose theology as the foundation of his concept of the political. However, in The Concept of the Political, Meier focuses on Schmitt's argument concerning theologians and politicians being "disturbing" to a peaceful world. Meier interprets this to mean, "Theologians and politicians will never be *superfluous*", because it would mean accepting a greater "faith" in the possibility of the elimination of "the ultimate distinction and division of men, the distinction between the redeemed and the unredeemed, the chosen and the unchosen". Accordingly, "politics needs theology not to realize a goal but to provide a foundation for its own necessity". In this way, Meier

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>234</sup> Meier, Heinrich, "The Philosopher as Enemy: On Carl Schmitt's *Glossarium*," <u>Graduate Faculty</u> Philosophy Journal, vol. 17, nos. 1 & 2, 1994, p. 329. Meier's emphasis. This work comprises his notes from 1947 – 51 and Meier claims that, "it contains the entire Schmitt", p. 328.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>235</sup> Meier, Heinrich, <u>Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss – The Hidden Dialogue</u>, Lomax, Harvey J., trans., op. cit., pp. 41 - 43.
<sup>236</sup> Ibid., p. 53.

sees Schmitt's concentration on "faith" as "the impregnable bastion of the political". <sup>237</sup> Meier also argues that Schmitt's knowledge of evil was not that of Hobbes's "innocent evil", as seen in the innocent (amoral) behaviour of animals, but the more blameworthy biblical evil ("original sin"), based on free will. This is Schmitt's final meaning of immorality. 238 Lastly, this leads to Meier's claim that, whereas Schmitt was concerned with the "enemy and enmity", particularly in defining self identity, Strauss was more concerned with his friends and that his friends necessarily exposed his true identity. Meier means that friends are useful in undertaking the study of philosophy and form an essential part of, what Plato calls, the good life that is dedicated to learning and knowing. The implication is that Strauss's emphasis was on the good, much more than on the bad. 239

In summary, Meier argues that Strauss's "Comments" on Schmitt's political work drew Schmitt out of his polemical reticence, allowing his hidden theological foundations to come to light. Meier explains that Schmitt concealed his theological foundations because he opposed his enemy – liberalism - knowing that the enemy would turn his writings about "metaphysical truth" into endless "discussion". As a consequence, Schmitt, in highlighting the metaphysical truth of liberalism, thus escaped the prospect of having "faith" become the subject of an "eternal competition of opinions". Most importantly, Meier argues that Schmitt's "salvation" from the "relativism of private matters", was grounded in "revelation" and in "Providence" and that was what constitutes his emphasis on "pure and whole knowledge". Hence, any questions about

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>237</sup> Ibid., pp. 53 – 55. Meier's emphasis.
 <sup>238</sup> Ibid., p. 56. Meier's emphasis.
 <sup>239</sup> Ibid., p. 87.

natural human qualities and the human need to join "exclusive groups", was not Schmitt's final understanding of the political. 240

In contrast to Meier, Robert Howse argues that "Schmitt's last word is not theology, or any transcendent basis for human seriousness – his last word is the eternal relation of protection and obedience, the unrestrained rule of the strong over the weak". 241 Howse argues that Schmitt "adds to Machiavellianism a secularised Christian dimension" in the form of "the demand of probity of intellectual and moral (not just physical) courage". 242 He interprets Schmitt's decisionism as affirming a person's will to power, as the basis of the political, while "nothingness" formed the morality underlying all decisions. He further argues that Schmitt's friend and enemy distinction was grounded on the concrete and the existential, thus denying natural justice, or what is recognized as natural right ("legitimacy"). <sup>243</sup> In contrast to Meier, Howse argues that Schmitt relied on Machiavelli and that in 1932, "Strauss took at face value Schmitt's declared debt to Hobbes", because Strauss had not realized that Machiavelli, not Hobbes, was "the deepest source of modernity". Howse believes that, unlike Hobbes's recognition of the exception and his attempt to produce a society that was "secure against the exception", Schmitt and Machiavelli "admired and embraced the exception". He argues that Schmitt differed from Machiavelli's "lion and fox" type of ruthless and amoral domination and that Schmitt preferred "the resolve and honesty of overt and selfconfident dictatorship, not domination as such", thus favouring a domination that combines the character of Caesar and Martin Luther. In agreement with Meier, Howse thinks that Schmitt denied any possibility of re-establishing natural right. Howse

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>240</sup> Ibid., pp. 68 & 69.

Howse, Robert, "From Legitimacy to Dictatorship and Back Again: Leo Strauss's Critique of the Anti-Liberalism of Carl Schmitt", op. cit., p. 59.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>242</sup> Ibid., p. 71. <sup>243</sup> Ibid., p. 66. See also p. 81.

suggests that Strauss's chapter on classic natural right in Natural Right and History is where "Strauss had occasion to revisit many of Schmitt's arguments in light of classical principles, albeit without naming him". In contrast to Strauss's "Comments" that emphasized Schmitt's concern with morality, Howse implies that Schmitt rejected natural right because he understood human beings as being "beyond good and evil". 244 Thus, Howse concludes that, in 1932, Strauss did not "recognize the position underlying Schmitt's amoralism" that came from Machiavelli, because Strauss had not understood Machiavelli as the founder of modern political philosophy. In lacking this insight, Howse believes that Strauss only saw Schmitt as merely an inconsistent Hobbesian. Nevertheless, Howse does not explain why Strauss chose to publish his "Comments" in 1965, in his "Preface" to the English translation of his Spinoza book, without any revisions whatsoever. 245

Howse argues that Strauss's engagement with Schmitt that called for an "horizon beyond liberalism" is knowledge of "classic natural right" and not Drury's and Holmes's claim that Strauss presented a virulent anti-liberal solution. He argues that the guide to politics, for the classics, was "human perfection or excellence", giving rise to "closed societies", hence qualifying Schmitt's concept of the division into friends and enemies. 246 Howse argues that Strauss articulates "the best regime" that is "consistent" with decisionism, not discussion", where the wise should rule. However, Howse reminds readers that the wise, according to Strauss, do not want to rule and that the unwise, appealing to natural right ("wisdom") and "the lowest desires of the many", will "persuade the multitude of his right" and hence, obtain power. He further points out

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>244</sup> Ibid., pp. 59 & 65. Howse has a point as Schmitt called his home, "San Casciano", after Machiavelli's farm and domain of exile.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>245</sup> Ibid., pp. 70 & 71.
<sup>246</sup> Ibid., p. 82.

that Strauss had argued that the wise prefer discussing fundamental problems rather than making Schmittean decisions. He interprets Strauss's political solution as knowledge, to encompass a "democratic constitutionalism" based on "Persuasion" that incorporates general rules formulated by philosophy. <sup>247</sup> In a final statement on Strauss's counter to Machiavelli's decisionism, Howse argues that classic natural right affirms a hierarchy of ends opening up "a bench-mark and an unclosable space for discussion" of whatever decision needs to be made. It does so, according to Howse, with knowledge "in light of the hierarchy of ends" that conform to "the strict requirements of justice". <sup>248</sup>

The literature discussed in this division of "The Political as Knowledge" has shown how knowledge is fundamental in understanding Schmitt and Strauss regarding the question of the political. Behnegar points to Strauss's emphasis on knowledge that comes to light as a common sense approach to understanding the political, particularly in examining the opinions, or the moralities, or various societies. He also connects the best regime with the question, "who, or what, should rule?" suggesting that the standard is the philosopher, who is dedicated to knowledge of the highest questions. More importantly, Behnegar, Howse and Meier all agree that Strauss opposes Schmitt's concept of knowledge, be it theological or historical, because Strauss remains a philosopher who believes that questioning and discussing are more dominant than decision making. Finally Meier is useful in revealing Schmitt and Strauss's shared interest in learning, which led to their "hidden" dialogue in the 1930s that highlighted the difference between political philosophy and political theology. The fact that their earlier responses were mostly "hidden" helps explain why Strauss fails to mention Schmitt in <u>The City and Man.</u> Furthermore, in highlighting the responses, Meier firmly

 <sup>247</sup> Ibid., pp. 76 - 78.
 248 Ibid., p. 82. Howse's emphasis.

establishes that, for Strauss, the only alternative to political philosophy is political theology. Although Meier fails to see Strauss's continued response to Schmitt in <u>The City and Man</u>, he does see the fundamental opposition between the two ways of life. For Strauss, the problem involved in the political rule of political theology as opposed to political philosophy is the reason why he must address Schmitt's political theology again in 1964. Only when Strauss has a more mature knowledge of classical political philosophy does he once again address Schmitt and the challenge of political theology.

### Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the relevant scholarship relating to Strauss's connection to Schmitt under the categories of propaganda, history, religion and knowledge, to simplify the emphasis of the various commentators. While much of the literature in this review demonstrates a particular theme, or premise, used to build an argument concerning Strauss's and Schmitt's definition and use of the political, most of the literature fails to combine all four themes and hence misses Strauss's response to Schmitt in The City and Man. However, nearly all of the literature found in all categories demonstrates, that for Strauss, religion was, and is, the greatest challenge to political philosophy. As a substantial amount of the literature shows, this challenge was particularly evident in Strauss's early relationship with Schmitt. The purpose of the literature review is not to refute the current scholarship – scholarship that is helpful, rather than a hindrance – but to demonstrate the gap in the current scholarship that has failed to discover Strauss's 1964 response to Schmitt.

#### **CHAPTER THREE**

## SCHMITT'S THE CONCEPT OF THE POLITICAL

#### Introduction

Chapter three outlines Schmitt's six criteria that form the basis of his affirmation of the political as found in his <u>The Concept of the Political</u>. They include: 1) the recognition of **evil** in human beings; 2) the presence of "dire emergency" *Ernstfall*), or the potential for war; 3) that a **decision** regarding the *Ernstfall* must be transprivate, meaning that it must be a public decision and cannot be neutral; 4) that the decision must have a **content** that is decisive and not neutral in determining who is a friend and who is an enemy; 5) the presence of the question concerning the **right** way of life and 6) evidence of the regimes, or "the **order** of human things from a *pure and whole* knowledge". <sup>249</sup>

### 1. Evil

In demonstrating that human beings are evil, Schmitt argues that the political is universal and that human beings clash over what they understand constitutes the best way of life. He points out that the political enemy is viewed as "the other, the stranger" and that only "the actual participants can correctly recognize, understand, and judge the concrete situation and settle the extreme case of conflict". Schmitt argues that the discovery of a "concrete" definition of the political requires "discovering and defining

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>249</sup> Meier, Heinrich, <u>Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss – The Hidden Dialogue</u>, Lomax, Harvey J., trans., op. cit., p. 7, footnote 5. The text chosen to examine was Schmitt's second edition of <u>The Concept of the Political</u>, published in 1932 and republished in 1963, because it is the text that sets out Schmitt's arguments concerning the political that Strauss addresses, both in his "Comments" and in <u>The City and Man</u>. As Meier notes, Schmitt re-published his 1932 edition of <u>The Concept of the Political</u> in 1963 (a year before Strauss published <u>The City and Man</u>), but "silently changed the division of paragraphs and of footnotes, the orthography, and the punctuation".

the specifically political categories", stating that the political has "its own criteria". <sup>250</sup> He concludes that the independent category, or "autonomy", that defines the political as revealed in the "specific political distinction to which political actions and motives can be reduced", is equivalent to the relationship between friends and enemies. Schmitt immediately blurs the autonomy of the political as "friend and enemy", by arguing that it is like the "relatively independent criteria of other antitheses". The crucial first example he gives of other antitheses that are "relatively independent" is the one relating to "good and evil in the moral sphere". In saying that some categories are only "relatively independent", Schmitt leaves open the possibility that some are dependent, implying that they are dependent on the political. Schmitt's caution belies the fact that he intends to make the political the universal category over the economic, the moral and the aesthetic. In singling out the moral category, rather than the aesthetic or economic categories, Schmitt suggests that the political and the moral are connected. Furthermore, prior to giving his friend and enemy definition, Schmitt states, "Let us assume that in the realm of morality the final distinctions are between good and evil", again indicating his central interest in the issue of evil and its link to morality. <sup>251</sup>

Schmitt soon qualifies his first definition of the political – the conflict between friend and enemy - by arguing that it is only "a criterion" and is not meant to be "exhaustive". 252 He argues that "the friend and enemy concepts" are not metaphoric, abstract, or symbolic and not "normative", because they are found in "the concrete situation" where "actual participants can correctly recognize, and judge, the concrete situation and settle the extreme case of conflict". By a "concrete situation", Schmitt

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>250</sup> Schmitt, Carl, <u>The Concept of the Political</u>, Schwab, George, trans., op. cit., pp. 25 - 27. Schmitt speaks of "the concrete situation" and "existential sense" – see pp. 27, 30, 33, 37, 45, 49, 51 & 63. <sup>251</sup> Ibid., p. 26. <sup>252</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

means the activity of human beings in an historical context. According to Schmitt, only "actual participants can correctly recognize, understand, and judge the extreme case of conflict". Only under those conditions can one comprehend whether an "adversary intends to negate his opponent's way of life" and force one "to preserve one's form of existence". In speaking of individuals, Schmitt refers specifically to the "nations", or a "collectivity of people", that "continue to group themselves according to the friend and enemy antithesis". In the final paragraph of chapter two, Schmitt mentions "evil" as the emotional response to this threat, while suggesting that evil intensifies the political, the political being the "most intense of the distinctions and categorizations". A few sentences later, in discussing the "autonomy" of other categories, Schmitt again mentions evil, this time referring to "the morally evil". For a second time, Schmitt links morality with evil, but Schmitt does not repeat key words, such as "ugly" or "the morally good", which he used in referring to other categories in the last paragraph, implying that his repetition of "evil" is a subtle way of highlighting its fundamental connection with the political.<sup>253</sup>

Schmitt's definition of the political is restricted to the extreme situation, where the dangerous threat of conflict, or war, remains coeval with groups, or nations. What distinguishes a friend from an enemy, according to Schmitt, is the existence of different faiths (forms of existence) in absolute values that produce a "conflict of loyalties". <sup>254</sup> In short, he argues that the dangerousness of human beings is evident with the "real possibility of physical killing" and in the "negation of the enemy", that arises over the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>253</sup> Ibid., pp. 26, 27 & 28. In partly following Heidegger, Schmitt had earlier made the argument in "The Age of Neutralizations and Depoliticizations (1929)" that, "All essential concepts are not normative but existential", see Schmitt, Carl, "The Age of Neutralizations and Depoliticizations (1929)", Telos, no. 96, Summer 1993, p. 134. <sup>254</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

conflict of ways of life. 255 There also seems to be a connection between Schmitt's definition of the political as the extreme case, or potential war among groups, and the notion that all human beings are evil. However, he initially argues that an enemy need not be "morally evil" or "aesthetically ugly", but only needs to be "the other, the stranger" in "a specially intense way". In determining the enemy as a threat to one's "form", or way of life, the reader is reminded of the Greek idea of the regime (politeia)<sup>256</sup>. This will be crucial to Strauss's refutation of Schmitt's concept of the political as seen in the central chapter of The City and Man, entitled, "On Plato's Republic", or the best regime, that emphasizes the best life as one dedicated to contemplation, peace and friendship.

Schmitt admits that it is "remarkable" that, "all genuine political theories presuppose man to be evil, i.e., by no means an unproblematic but a dangerous and dynamic being". Schmitt's list of "genuine political" theorists only includes modern thinkers, such as Machiavelli, Hobbes, Cortés and Hegel and not Plato and Aristotle. 257 Schmitt calls the enemy, "the other, the stranger" to stress the "alien" "form of existence" that threatens to "negate his opponents way of life". For Schmitt, the conflicting ways of life, which lead to potential war, provide evidence of the evil nature of human beings. 258 Having already suggested a link between the political and the moral, through using the moral category as his prime example of other categories, Schmitt then seems to connect

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>255</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>256</sup> Ibid., p. 27. See Schmitt, Carl, <u>Der Begriff des Politischen</u>, Text von 1932 mit einem Vorwort und drei Corollarien, Duncker & Humblot, Berlin, Germany, 1987, p. 29. In footnote 5, Schmitt refers to the regime: "Bei Platon, *Politeia* Buch V, Cap. XVI, 470". My emphasis.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>257</sup> Schmitt, Carl, <u>The Concept of the Political</u>, Schwab, George, trans., op. cit., p. 61. My emphasis. Schmitt excludes Plato and Aristotle, indicating that he thinks that they do not consider "man to be evil". either in the innocent (animal), amoral sense, or in the biblical sense that accepts Original Sin. <sup>258</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

human evil with the biblical doctrine of Original Sin. In the seventh chapter, he first mentions "theologian", in stating:

"A theologian ceases to be a theologian when he no longer considers man to be sinful or in need of redemption and no longer distinguishes between the chosen and the nonchosen. The moralist presupposes a freedom of choice between good and evil". <sup>259</sup>

Once again, Schmitt demonstrates the connection between morality (the "moralist") and the political, since he now uses it in the context of theology that implies Original Sin. Schmitt's reference to a "theologian" appears third in his list of four examples: "educator", "jurist", "theologian" and "moralist" and is situated prior to his mention of "moralist". He again seems to imply that there is a connection between morality and theology. He goes on to argue, "The fundamental theological dogma of the evilness of the world and man leads, just as does the distinction of friend and enemy", to a lack of "optimism of a universal conception of man". Here, Schmitt seems to separate himself from "theological dogmas of sin", especially the concept of "original sin" supported by Donoso Cortés. In denying "original sin", Schmitt appears to deny the connection that morality has with theology, or what can be conveniently called "moral theology", in spite of his original discussion that implied a connection between morality and theology. In fact, in footnote thirty-three, and in the context of his mention of

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>259</sup> Ibid., p. 64. Schmitt's 33<sup>rd</sup> footnote follows the word "evil" that refers to "moral theology" and how free will weakens "the doctrine of the radical evilness of man".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>260</sup> Ibid., p. 64. <sup>261</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

theology, "original sin", and Cortés, Schmitt uses the words, "moral theology". 262 Furthermore, Schmitt had previously discussed the link that the "political" had with the "moral". Thus, if a careful reader substitutes "political" for "moral", the result would be "political theology", the very profession of the thinker, Cortés, whom Schmitt turns to in the context of mentioning "the fundamental theological dogma of the evilness of the world". Although Schmitt seems to avoid wanting to be identified with political theology in writing for a liberal audience, he allows readers to make a connection from the moral to the political and then to the theological and Original Sin through his arguments and examples. 263 Schmitt, in an earlier book, Political Theology, describes Donoso Cortés as the "Catholic philosopher of the state, one who was intensely conscious of the metaphysical kernel of all politics". This also describes Schmitt, because by "metaphysical", he means the realm of the divine, or what is held to be divine by groups or nations. In prescribing dictatorship as the solution of the 1848 revolution in Europe, Cortés, as a political theologian, opposed the end of European monarchy by emphasizing "the absolute sinfulness and depravity of human nature", or Original Sin, and hence, the need for dictatorial rule. Cortés's definition of Original Sin excluded the possibility of natural goodness within the human soul. In this way, he opposed the atheistic movements that were beginning to dominate Europe in the nineteenth century. He condemned the bourgeois liberals of his time as "the discussing class", because they avoided making decisions. Schmitt points out that Cortés only saw liberals in terms of their theology, which meant, for Cortés, their worship of "freedom of speech". Cortés s solution to the political problem is very similar to Schmitt's. Both assumed "the extreme case", both were extremely critical of modern liberalism and both emphasized "the decisive bloody battle" over conflicting faiths. Cortés and Schmitt

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>262</sup> Ibid., p. 64. <sup>263</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

also point to Original Sin as the foundation of the political.<sup>264</sup> In his 1932 "Comments" on Schmitt's The Concept of the Political, Strauss singles out Schmitt's book, "Political Theology", and mentions Cortés in the context of referring to that book, indicating that he considers that Schmitt and Cortés are political theologians, who assume Original Sin as fundamental in understanding the political. <sup>265</sup>

In the context of the only mention of "original sin", in The Concept of the Political, Schmitt states, "The methodical connection of theological and political presuppositions is clear", but at the same time draws attention to Machiavelli's and Hobbes's "pessimism". Schmitt denies that "an anthropological optimism" is possible in the field of the political, because of "the real possibility of enmity", although he always distances himself from the theologians. 266 Schmitt's authorities seem to be Machiavelli and Hobbes, who avoid the "theological interference" that turns the concept of the political into "moral theology". However, in his footnote thirty-two, in the same context, Schmitt draws attention to another political theologian, Friedrich Julius Stahl. Stahl was a German jurist and contemporary of Cortés, having joined Cortés in an attack on the rising influence of Hegelianism in the 1840s. Stahl, in his role as a political theologian, saw that Hegelianism was the enemy of the tradition that supported Christianity. In drawing attention to Stahl's political theology, Schmitt states, ". . . whereas Stahl, in accordance with theology, puts at the top of his thought the sinfulness of man", again suggesting that his own definition of evil is the theological one relating to Original Sin, especially since Schmitt mentions "original sin" in the context of referring to Cortés and Stahl. Cortés and Stahl were both political theologians who

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>264</sup> Schmitt, Carl, Political Theology - Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty, Schwab, George, trans., op. cit., pp. 51, 57, 59 & 63.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>265</sup> Strauss, Leo, "Notes on Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*", in Meier, Heinrich, <u>Carl Schmitt</u> and Leo Strauss – The Hidden Dialogue, Lomax, Harvey J., trans., op. cit., p. 117.

266 Schmitt, Carl, The Concept of the Political, Schwab, George, trans., op. cit., pp. 64 & 65.

understood the political from the fundamental premise of Original Sin. Nevertheless, Schmitt turns to Hobbes by recognizing the argument that "the truth, the good, and the just bring about the worst enmities, finally the war of all against all". He concludes, "For Hobbes, truly a powerful and systematic political thinker, the pessimistic conception of man is the elementary presupposition of a specific system of political thought". Whether Schmitt agrees with Hobbes's non-biblical definition of evil as innocent evil, or amoral evil, as seen in the behaviour of animals, has to be balanced with Schmitt's judgement that Hobbes is a Christian who "belonged to a Christian people" where "Jesus is Christ". <sup>268</sup>

In examining the section where Schmitt raises the issue of good and evil in the context of the necessity of theologians, Schmitt argues that "moralists presuppose a freedom of choice between good and evil", but in an immediate footnote Schmitt suggests that when theology becomes "moral theology", the "freedom-of-choice aspect prevails and weakens the doctrine of the radical evilness of man". Schmitt implies that only biblical theology, posing as morality, avoids the problem of "moral theology", thus firmly establishing "the radical evilness of man". This interpretation is supported by Schmitt's next sentence, which appears after the citation of footnote thirty-three. Schmitt states very clearly, that "in the final analysis", the political is "determined by the real possibility of enmity" and that "political conceptions and ideas cannot very well start with an anthropological optimism". In the very next paragraph he turns to the political theologians, Cortés and Stahl and "The fundamental theological dogma of the evilness of the world and man". Therefore, from the above evidence it is possible to

it was mainly Friedrich Julius Stahl who opposed the political tendencies in Prussia after 1840.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>267</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>268</sup> Schmitt, Carl, The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes: Meaning and Failure of a Political Symbol, Schwab, George & Hilfstein, Erna, trans., Greenwood Press, U.S.A., 1996, p. 83. <sup>269</sup> Schmitt, Carl, The Concept of the Political, Schwab, George, trans., op. cit., p. 64. Schmitt argues that

conclude that the first criterion of the political, for Schmitt, requires that all human beings must be considered evil. Whether he means that human beings are evil in the biblical sense, Schmitt does not explicitly say, but he clearly argues that human beings are evil in the dangerous sense and require rule.<sup>270</sup>

### 2. Ernstfall

For Schmitt, the political comes to light through asking the fundamental question, who "decides the extreme case and determines the decisive friend-and-enemy grouping?". Schmitt argues that Otto von Bismarck's successful decision in declaring wars on behalf of the German Reich "in the extreme case" foreclosed any opposition from the Church, or labour unions, because that would have placed them as enemies. Furthermore, Schmitt saw that the last thing that these groups wanted was a civil war, confirming his argument that, in this case, it was the state, defined as the "political entity", which was the "decisive entity" of the political, "regardless of the sources from which it derives its last psychic motives". Schmitt argues that either "It exists or it does not exist", but the essential characteristic of the "political entity" is the jus belli, or what Schmitt calls "the real possibility of deciding in a concrete situation upon the enemy and the ability to fight him with the power emanating from the entity". Schmitt is also adamant that there is "only one political entity – one political community" and it is created by the "ever present possibility of a friend-and-enemy grouping". This fundamental division, or grouping, is the result of the clash of different ways of life, or what Schmitt calls the fight for "its existence, independence and freedom". According to Schmitt, in the case of the state, it then can demand that its members be ready to die for the state and kill its

<sup>270</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

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enemies, although "the normal state consists above all in assuring total peace within the state and its territory". <sup>271</sup> Schmitt also argues that as long as there is a political entity, which has "power over the physical life of men", it can "declare an enemy" and even launch into civil war. Schmitt implies that civil wars are the result of the division of groups into friends and enemies, which represent alternative views on what constitutes the best way of life, or what is right. Schmitt does not go into any details in examining whether civil war, like the American Civil War, best characterizes the political, but he maintains that, in a constitutional state, civil war dissolves the state "as an organized political entity" and that "the battle" is determined "by the power of weapons". He concludes that civil wars determine "the future fate of this entity" (the state). 272

Schmitt understands the *Ernstfall* as the potential for "combat", which is separate from the questions of war (war being "the existential negation of the enemy"), weapons and technology. Schmitt denies that the political "favors war", revolution, militarism, imperialism or pacifism. 273 War is the possibility that accompanies the political, defined as ways of life, each of which claim to be the best way of life. He argues, "That the extreme case appears to be an exception does not negate its decisive character but confirms it all the more". <sup>274</sup> In The Concept of the Political, Schmitt's evidence points to politicians who are at war throughout their whole lives, but he is certain that war is "neither the aim nor the purpose nor even the very content of politics". It is merely a "present possibility" seen in the groupings of nations, or political entities, according to friend and enemy groupings, which often change. In turning to Carl von Clausewitz, Schmitt argues that the "military battle itself is not the 'continuation of politics by other

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>271</sup> Ibid., pp. 42 - 45.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>272</sup> Ibid., p. 47. <sup>273</sup> Ibid., p. 33. <sup>274</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

means' as the famous term of Clausewitz is generally incorrectly cited". Schmitt points out that, in Clausewitz's book, On War, Clausewitz argues that "the political decision" regarding who is the enemy has already been made, prior to the battle. Schmitt agrees with Clausewitz's claim that war is "a mere instrument of politics", but argues that Clausewitz sees war as the only instrument, because it is based on the ultimate reason of "the friend-and-enemy grouping". Thus, in interpreting On War, Schmitt presents Clausewitz agreeing that politics remains "the brain" and the "logic" of "war", defined as the "friend-and-enemy concept". 275

Furthermore, Schmitt argues that as long as "the extreme case appears to be an exception", i.e. the exception defined as "the real war", the political is not negated. For Schmitt, "the real war" also presupposes "the decision", regarding the identity of an enemy who threatens one's way of life. Without providing any evidence, Schmitt claims that "wars today have decreased in number and frequency", although they have increased in "ferocity". Schmitt's observation seems to focus on "real" wars among the European nations in the 1900s that highlight his friend and enemy grouping. In accepting that wars still occur, he argues that, given the infrequency of wars, those that do occur demonstrate "the exceptional case". In calling these wars exceptional, he argues that they provide "decisive meaning" in exposing the political, "which exposes the core of the matter". His point is that exceptional wars demonstrate the "political grouping of friend and enemy", and hence, the conflict over ways of life. In the same context, Schmitt argues that in "a completely pacified globe", the world would be without politics, since the friend and enemy distinction would disappear, but he does not further discuss such a possibility. He only contends that a peaceful world state might be

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>275</sup> Ibid., p. 34. See footnote 14.

interesting with regards to "competitions and intrigues of every kind", but would not entail human beings killing other human beings. <sup>276</sup>

In refuting the claim that wars are caused by morality, religion and other "antitheses", Schmitt argues that those domains just "intensify" the political friend and enemy groupings. 277 In the same context, and in his final paragraph of chapter three, on the pacifist attempt to extinguish war, Schmitt uses the term, "Krieg" (war), fifteen times, turning pacifism on its head, arguing that the war to abolish all wars is the logic behind pacifism at its most political. Schmitt believes that if pacifists were extremely hostile to war, thinking that a final war "of humanity" would end all future wars, then the "political energy" would be sufficient to group people "according to friend and enemy". He stresses that when the will of pacifists to abolish war is sufficiently strong, "it has become a political motive", even if it means that war is only viewed as an "extreme possibility". According to Schmitt, the political motive affirms "war and even the reason for war". This last quotation contains the central (eighth) mention of war; however, Schwab's translation of the German "den Sinn" as "reason" misses its literal meaning – i.e. instinct, sense or disposition. Schmitt comes close to arguing that the potential for war is part of human nature, or at least that war and evil are part of the human problem.<sup>279</sup> In emphasizing the pacifist hostility that could lead to "a war on war", under the guise that it is "the absolute last war of humanity", Schmitt argues that it still confirms his friend and enemy division. Furthermore, it would be an "inhuman" and an "intense" war, he argues, where the enemy is degraded into "moral and other categories and is forced to make of him a monster" that must be "utterly destroyed". In

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>276</sup> Ibid., p. 35. <sup>277</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>278</sup> Schmitt, Carl, <u>Der Begriff des Politischen</u>, Text von 1932 mit einem Vorwort und drei Corollarien, op. cit., pp. 36 & 37.

279 Ibid., p. 37.

identifying the enemy as a "monster", Schmitt argues that the country identified as monstrous, is not merely compelled to retreat into its "borders only", but has to be totally eliminated. Schmitt's point is that the *Ernstfall* is connected to the "possibility" of war and that war is still a possibility even in peaceful times. If this were not so, he stresses, then his definition of the political, as the "antithesis" of friend and enemy, is not true. 280

In chapter five, in addressing the dire emergency (*Ernstfall*), Schmitt returns to the state as the political community that has "power" of life and death over other humans. In the centre of the chapter, <sup>281</sup> Schmitt comments that the political comes into focus with the "readiness of combatants to die" and that concrete opposition is beyond a "normative meaning", residing only in the "existential threat to one's life". By "existential", Schmitt means "in a real combat situation" that can be clearly observed in political life, implying that the "threat" is a fact of life. He then produces the clearest expression of his definition of the political, prefacing it as "Concretely speaking", that the physical killing of human beings is motivated by the dire emergency, caused by "an existential threat to one's own way of life". The political is not invoked if the threat is only against one's life, unless the threat of death accompanies a threat to one's "form" or way of life. As mentioned before, by using the word "concrete", Schmitt means that the threat occurs in the world of our everyday, historical experiences. Thus, Schmitt implies, only when one's regime (politeia) is threatened with negation, within history that acts as "destiny", can a people "repel" the enemies and "fight them physically". Thus, Schmitt seems even to sanction suicide bombing by groups, such as the Japanese during World War Two. Schmitt might argue that the Japanese saw the Americans as a threat to their

Schmitt, Carl, <u>The Concept of the Political</u>, Schwab, George, trans., op. cit., p. 36.
 Schmitt, Carl, <u>Der Begriff des Politischen</u>, Text von 1932 mit einem Vorwort und drei Corollarien, op. cit., p. 49.

way of life, which was symbolized by the Emperor and his link to the divine. A similar argument could be made concerning Muslim terrorists, even justifying the event of September the eleventh, 2001 in New York. Muslim extremists see America as a threat to their religious way of life, although the modern, Western educated terrorists may be more motivated by nihilism than religious zeal in their determination to preserve their pre-Western religious life.<sup>282</sup>

Schmitt accuses people who advance the cause of humanity as a justification for war, as those who want "to cheat", since "Humanity is not a political concept" and that "Humanity as such cannot wage war because it has no enemy, at least on this planet". He points out those who cheat know that humanity is not a political grouping, or a society, or even a way of life, but an expression just like justice. Schmitt presents humanity as a "universal concept", similar to natural justice, or "a system of relations between individuals" that denies the possibility of friend and enemy grouping and hence, the possibility of war. He argues that dishonest nations use the concept of humanity as a weapon to justify their wars, in the form of humanity driven wars, which pronounce against those outlaws of humanity. According to Schmitt, these wars lead to "the most extreme inhumanity", because they deny that the enemy is a human being. For Schmitt, the concept of friend and enemy presupposes that the participants are human beings. Schmitt argues that wars are declared in the name of humanity, abusing the term in the same way as other terms, such as, "peace, justice, progress, and civilization" are misused "in order to claim these as one's own and to deny the same to Schmitt refers to the "eighteenth-century humanitarian concept of the enemy". humanity" as "a polemical denial of the then existing aristocratic-feudal system and the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>282</sup> Schmitt, Carl, <u>The Concept of the Political</u>, Schwab, George, trans., op. cit., pp. 48 & 49. My emphasis. Schmitt sees the political as historical destiny - see p. 78.

privileges accompanying it". 283 Significantly, in his first mention of "natural law" ("naturrechtlichen")<sup>284</sup> in his book, Schmitt clearly identifies "natural law" with humanity in the same category as other universal doctrines, such as the "liberalindividualistic" doctrine, branding them unpolemical. By unpolemical, Schmitt means that natural law is not connected to a unique historical ("concrete") situation, such as the feudal system, but aspires to be "universal" and to apply in all historical situations. As an historicist, Schmitt denies natural law's universal claim. However, he also indicates that natural law is "a system of relations among individuals" that precludes any grouping of friend and enemy and that it can only exist if the potential for war is terminated.<sup>285</sup> In further relying on his acceptance of historicism, Schmitt argues that "State and politics cannot be exterminated" because of historical "destiny". 286

### 3. Decision

Schmitt's definition of the political only includes friends and enemies who have formed groups of people as a "collectivity", and hence the enemy is only ever a "public enemy". 287 For Schmitt, the most significant group is the nation and he argues that it is usually the nation that decides who will be an enemy and who will be a friend. 288 In this way, Schmitt's decisionism has the character of public obligation that transcends individual, private opinion, but the group obligation is determined by the concrete historical situation of the age. Schmitt denies the public authority of natural right, or universal justice, that transcends all concrete historical situations. In chapter five,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>283</sup> Ibid., pp. 54 & 55.

<sup>284</sup> Schmitt, Carl, <u>Der Begriff des Politischen</u>, Text von 1932 mit einem Vorwort und drei Corollarien, op. cit., p. 56. The correct German translation is "natural right", not "natural law".

Schmitt, Carl, <u>The Concept of the Political</u>, Schwab, George, trans., op. cit., p. 55.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>286</sup> Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>287</sup> Ibid., p. 28.
<sup>288</sup> Ibid., pp. 28 & 29.

Schmitt discusses the justice of war for the first time. He argues that, it is "generally recognized" since the time of Grotius, that justice has nothing to do with the concept of war, as all "ideals or norms of justice" cannot be the "justification of war", since they are "blendings of some sort of abstractions or norms". For Schmitt, the only "justification of war" is when a group, or nation, is called upon to fight against a "real enemy", not "for ideals or norms of justice". A "real enemy" is one who threatens one's way of life, according to Schmitt. In refuting the most popular non-political category (economics) that points to a decision to fight, he argues that the economic motivation to die in battle for the future good of trade and industry is "sinister and crazy", similar to the "fraud" of having human beings kill one another so that war would disappear. 289

Although aware of Hobbes's natural right teaching, but ignoring his idea of the potential war among individuals in the state of nature, Schmitt defines the political, i.e. the enemy, in terms of "public enemy" and a "collectivity of men, particularly a whole nation". Schmitt's authority is Plato's Republic. In his ninth footnote, in chapter three, Schmitt refers to Plato's Republic, Book Five, where Plato speaks of a public enemy and not a private enemy. In supporting his argument, Schmitt asserts that Plato distinguished the "public enemy" ("polemios") from the "private one" ("ekhthros"). For Schmitt's interpretation of Plato, only in "Real war" ("polemos"), where the enemy is the "Barbarian", can there be "those who are by nature enemies". <sup>290</sup> If one consults The Republic, Socrates is describing the guardians of the perfect, communist society, who must be told lies about their natural (collective) foreign enemy, ("polemios"). Socrates also says that when the Greeks fight Greeks "we'll say they are by nature friends", implying that what unites the Greeks is their common belief in the gods. However,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>289</sup> Ibid., pp. 48 & 49. <sup>290</sup> Ibid., pp. 29 & 30.

Schmitt does not remind readers that the gods of Plato's perfect city are not the Olympic gods, but are the Platonic ideas, and he does not allude to the fact that "the philosophers rule as kings". <sup>291</sup> In opposition to Schmitt's pessimistic doctrine, we learn that Socrates tells Glaucon that the guardians will correct other Greeks "in a kindly manner", not through "slavery or destruction". <sup>292</sup> This contrasts with Schmitt's addition of civil wars to his concept of the political, defined as the potential for war. Furthermore, Schmitt is silent on Glaucon's doubt that Socrates's perfect "regime" can "come into being", or is "ever possible", and he ignores the fact that Glaucon was to become a victim in a civil war that aimed at restoring Athens to its former greatness. Thus, for Strauss, Schmitt does not understand Hobbes and he does not understand the intention of Plato's Republic to demonstrate the ultimate limitation of the friend and enemy concept. Schmitt's friend and enemy concept is guided by a new awareness of the importance of history, and hence, his references to destiny, or fate, and not to the best regime, or the best way of life, which transcends the political, is Schmitt's final answer regarding the foundation of the friend and enemy concept.

In the same ninth footnote, Schmitt refers to a civil disturbance, or rebellion, as "stasis", as distinct from war (polemos), arguing that Plato means, "a people cannot wage war against itself". Schmitt clearly refers to "stasis" as the faction that leads to civil war in the ninth footnote, arguing that "conflicts among the Hellenes are for him discords (stasis)". Schmitt's emphasis on discord is drawn out by the context – a context that distinguishes between the Greek word for public enemy (polemios) and the private

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>291</sup> Plato, <u>The Republic of Plato</u>, Bloom, Allan, trans., Basic Books, U.S.A., 1968, pp. 151 (471c,d,e) & 153 (473d).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>292</sup> Ibid., p. 151 (471a).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>293</sup> Ibid., p. 151 (471c 4 & 5). Strauss, in his 1941 article on "German Nihilism", accuses Schmitt of encouraging the demise of liberal democracy in Germany. Perhaps Strauss had in mind Schmitt's misunderstanding of Plato's <u>Republic</u>, particularly Socrates's example in discouraging political idealism by presenting the best way of life as the philosophic life, where the philosopher harms no one.

enemy (*ekhthros*). In the immediate context of his citation from Plato, Schmitt argues that the biblical teaching, "love your enemies (Matt. 5:44; Luke 6:27)" only mentions the Greek for private enemy, thus justifying the morality of the Crusades, particularly Christians killing Muslims. For Schmitt, the Christian Bible only insists on loving private enemies, leaving open the possibility of fighting, and killing, public enemies. While this may be linguistically correct, Schmitt fails to discuss Church doctrine and how Christians perceive the meaning of that commandment. Instead, Schmitt attempts to make the decision in the extreme case, one that does not require personal hatred. In the "most intensive and extreme antagonism", he argues, it is not recessary that "the public enemy" be personally hated. <sup>294</sup>

#### 4. Content

The disappearance of God, or the divine, does not occur in a secular state, according to Schmitt, as he argues that the "juridic formulas of the omnipotence of the state are, in fact, only superficial secularizations of theological formulas of the omnipotence of God". In a note to this sentence, Schwab reminds readers of Schmitt's claim in 1922, that all the major ideas dealing with the modern theory of state were theological and secular by nature. The revealing claim in Schmitt's Political Theology, that occurs in the third chapter, entitled, "Political Theology", begins, "All significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts". He further argues that this was partly due to "their historical development", giving the example that "the

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>294</sup> Schmitt, Carl, <u>The Concept of the Political</u>, Schwab, George, trans., op. cit., pp. 28 & 29. He argues that this interpretation of private enemies led to the Christian defence of Europe against "the Saracens or Turks" and that Christians "need not" "hate personally" their enemies. Schwab points to Schmitt's "*Politische Theologie II: Legende von der Erledigung jeder Politischen Theologie* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1970), pp. 117 - 118".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>295</sup> Ibid., p. 42. See the footnote \* for Schwab's comment.

omnipotent God became the omnipotent lawgiver". Here, Schmitt draws attention to the divine foundation of the political, described as the state and its omnipotent laws. In attempting to recover political theology, Schmitt tries to demonstrate the link between the modern state and the authority of theology, particularly in the state's demand for unconditional obedience.<sup>296</sup>

Schmitt had some personal experience of modern warfare and the issue of unconditional obedience. The Concept of the Political was dedicated to his fallen comrade in arms, "my friend, August Schaetz of Munich", who died in the "assault on Moncelul" in  $1917.^{297}$ Although Schmitt's definition of the political does not cover individual friends, Schmitt implies that Schaetz and he were part of a political group – the state of Germany – having performed their duty in return for the protection of the state against As Schmitt states in the context of citing Thomas Hobbes's external enemies. Leviathan, "No form of order, no reasonable legitimacy or legality can exist without protection and obedience". He then tells readers that the ultimate justification for such loyalty is based on "human nature", but more significantly, it is based on "divine right". Here, Schmitt links the modern state with God. Given Schmitt's belief that Hobbes was a Christian, it is possible that Schmitt's ultimate "content" of the political is biblical revelation itself, because he believes that the answer to the question, "what is right?" is linked to the divine, or to the Christian God, described as the omnipotent God. <sup>298</sup>

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>296</sup> Schmitt, Carl, <u>Political Theology - Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty</u>, Schwab, George, trans., op. cit., p. 36.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>297</sup> Schmitt, Carl, The Concept of the Political Schwab, George, trans., op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>298</sup> Ibid., p. 52. Schmitt's mention of "omnipotent laws" indicates an attack on Judaism that emphasizes God's laws. Schmitt seems to prefer a Christian God, who transcends the laws, demanding that obedience implies only faith in God. This explains Schmitt's reliance on faith, as the foundation of the battle between friends and enemies.

The problem in grasping Schmitt's "content" regarding the political is that he does not want his concept of the political reduced to a dogmatic statement, even though he requires that a definition be spelt out in "a simple and elementary statement". He stipulates that his definition of the political is an "appropriate point of departure", but the direction seems to be to religion, suggesting that the content is one based on the faith in the superiority of one's way of life.<sup>299</sup> In Schmitt's own case, the content seems to be based ultimately on Christian faith, but it is also related to historical situations that produce a conflict among faiths. This is evident in Schmitt's argument that, "all political concepts, images and terms have a polemical meaning". By "polemical", Schmitt means that all political concepts are dependent on particular conflicts that are "bound to a concrete situation"; otherwise, they are "empty and ghostlike abstractions". Schmitt includes the following concepts as polemical: "state, republic, society, class as well as sovereignty, constitutional state, absolutism, dictatorship, economic planning, neutral or total state". He argues that these expressions are "incomprehensible" unless people are "affected, combated, refuted, or negated" by such concepts, indicating his reliance on historicism, as those concepts only become real in "a concrete situation". 300

Schmitt points out that the content of "the political concept of battle in liberal thought becomes competition in the domain of economics and discussion in the intellectual realm". <sup>301</sup> Even with liberalism's invention of society and other autonomous domains, Schmitt argues, the content of the state and the political will not be "exterminated" by mere "definitions and constructions". He even argues that economic "antagonisms can become political", demonstrating that the political can spring from any "domain". He concludes that "economics has become political and thereby the destiny". As one who

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>299</sup> Ibid., p. 19. <sup>300</sup> Ibid., pp. 30 & 31. <sup>301</sup> Ibid., p. 71.

sees faith as the foundation of the political, and the role of historical necessity as an essential part of the content of the political, Schmitt argues that we cannot escape from "the logic of the political" seen in "newly emerging friend-and-enemy groupings" that seem "non-political and apparently even antipolitical". 302

# 5. Right

Schmitt's central argument that illuminates his definition of the political, as "the quarrel over the right faith", is located in his discussion of Oliver Cromwell's battle with Catholic Spain. It is found in Schmitt's note to verify historical evidence that "concrete human groupings" fight other such groupings "in the name of justice, humanity, order, or peace". The Cromwell example is to provide further evidence that Schmitt's concept of the political is grounded on the premise that groups are potentially at war with one another because they have different faiths, resulting in differences over what they consider the right way of life. These he considers "high points", seen in "moments" where the group clearly recognizes "the enemy". According to Schmitt, the person who "surpassed" all others in terms of identifying the enemy was Oliver Cromwell, when he spoke against "papist Spain" in 1656. Schmitt claims that Cromwell states that the "first lesson of nature" is "Being and Preservation". In Schmitt's argument, the "being" Cromwell had in mind was England's "National Being". Cromwell saw the enemies of England trying to negate it, or "so make it not to be", meaning to destroy England's way of life. Schmitt is very careful to draw attention to Cromwell's repetition of "Being", while stressing the role that God plays in Cromwell's speeches. Schmitt recalls that Cromwell warns England that the Spaniards are the enemy because "his [the Spanish]

<sup>302</sup> Ibid., pp. 78 & 79.

enmity is put into him by God". In addition, Schmitt points out that Cromwell argued that the Spanish enemy was not an "accidental" enemy, but both a "natural" and a "providential enemy". He further argues that Cromwell's "providential" authority relating to an enemy was the biblical authority concerning God's curse against the garden serpent for its part in corrupting Eve: "I will put enmity between your seed and her seed (Gen. III: 15)". Here, Schmitt clearly wants his readers to remember Original Sin through Adam and Eve's desire to be gods, possessing the knowledge of good and evil, and the role of the divine (God) as the authority for determining what is right. Cromwell's authority, concerning what is right, is a nation's faith in a biblical God. Hence, Schmitt demonstrates that groups, or nations, clash as enemies through their various beliefs in what constitutes the right way of Ife. They do so because they are also tied to destiny through the doctrine of Original Sin that implies the inescapable problem of evil. 303

Regarding the potential battle of faiths, Schmitt is more lucid in his book, Political Theology, where he grounds his concept of the political on a group's claim to the right faith. As explained previously, Schmitt points to the Spanish thinker, Donoso Cortés, who called for a dictatorship to arrest the anarchy developing out of the "proletarian revolution of 1848". 304 According to Schmitt, Cortés polemically radicalised the teaching of Original Sin to mean, "the absolute sinfulness and depravity of human nature"305 in an attempt to form a dictatorship to solve the indecision of the middle

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>303</sup> Schmitt, Carl, <u>The Concept of the Political</u>, Schwab, George, trans., op. cit., pp. 67 & 68. Schmitt is clearly discussing the right faith, because he dismisses "the fanatical hatred of Napoleon felt by the German barons Stein and Kleist" and Lenin's "annihilating sentences against burgeois and western capitalism" as the best examples of the political ("enmity").

<sup>304</sup> Schmitt, Carl, Political Theology - Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty, Schwab, George, trans., op. cit., p. 56.

305 Ibid., p. 57.

classes in their avoidance of making a decision based on faith. <sup>306</sup> In a revealing line, Schmitt states, "Donoso Cortés in his radical intellectuality saw only the theology of the foe", and then discusses Cortés's definition of the bourgeoisie as a group whose "religion resides in freedom of speech and of the press". In reducing a group's goal to that of religion reminds readers of Schmitt's view in recognizing the conflict of groups as one based on conflicting faiths that make claims of being the right faith. From the Cromwell example, and Schmitt's discussion of Cortés and Stahl in both books, Political Theology and The Concept of the Political, Schmitt leaves himself open to be labelled a political theologian. <sup>307</sup> With the publication in 1991 of Schmitt's Glossarium, J. Harvey Lomax argues that it "became virtually impossible intelligently to resist" Meier's thesis that Schmitt is a political theologian. In the Glossarium, Schmitt reveals his Christian faith, and thus, his identity as a political theologian:

"To be sure, I have not changed. My freedom regarding ideas is unlimited because I remain in contact with my . . . center, which is not an 'idea' but a historical event: the incarnation of the Son of God. For me Christianity is not primarily a doctrine or a morals or even (forgive me) a religion; it is a historical event". 308

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>306</sup> Ibid., p. 59. In contrast to Cortés's definition of Original Sin, Schmitt points out the Council of Trent's dogma on Original Sin as one described as, "distortion, opacity, or injury", leaving "open the possibility of the natural good".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>307</sup> Ibid., p. 62. See Schmitt, Carl, <u>The Concept of the Political</u>, pp. 61, 65, 70 & 106 for Cortés and pp. 63, 64 (footnote 32), 65 & 70 for Stahl.

Lomax, Harvey J., "Carl Schmitt, Heinrich Meier, and the End of Philosophy", <u>Interpretation: A Journal of Political Philosophy</u>, vol. 28, no. 1, Fall 2000, p. 52. See Schmitt, Carl, <u>Glossarium – Aufzeichnungen der Jahre 1947 – 1951</u>, von Medem, Eberhard Freiherr, editor, Duncker and Humblot, Berlin, Germany, 1991, p. 283.

This explains Strauss's partial agreement with Schmitt's concept of the political that focuses on faiths, or what Strauss identifies as authoritative opinions that remain the religious views of a society.

As already mentioned, Schmitt does argue that there are political theories, which claim that the world is not a good place and that priests, theologians and politicians are necessary. If they are necessary, then according to Schmitt, there exists the necessity for human beings to rule others. In discussing the foundations of "various domains of human thought" Schmitt centres on theologians. The reason behind the theologians' negative view of the world – meaning the need for rule and hence, politics – is that Donoso Cortés, Friedrich Julius Stahl and others believe in the doctrine of Original Sin. Hence, the presence of biblical evil demands that an elite must rule. Although Schmitt distances himself from their belief in Original Sin, he summarizes his own view of the political as:

"The fundamental theological dogma of the evilness of the world and man leads, just as does the distinction of friend and enemy, to a categorization of men and makes impossible the undifferentiated optimism of a universal conception of man. In a good world among good people, only peace, security, and harmony prevail. Priests and theologians are here just as superfluous as politicians and statesmen". 309

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>309</sup> Schmitt, Carl, <u>The Concept of the Political</u>, Schwab, George, trans., op. cit., p. 65.

Here, Schmitt implies Original Sin is essential to his understanding of the political, although, in bowing to his liberal readers, he argues that he does not want his definition to remain attached to Original Sin for practical reasons, because "theological inferences" end up being confused as "moral theology", the very thing liberals would avoid, especially if they accept positivism that avoids judgements regarding morals or values. In the same context, Schmitt drops the topic of theology, and theologians, and mentions Machiavelli, Hobbes and Fichte, calling the centrally located Hobbes, "truly a powerful and systematic political thinker". Schmitt seems to accept Hobbes's doctrine concerning the "pessimistic conception of man", or what Schmitt identifies as "the distinction of friend and enemy", that "is the elementary presupposition of a specific system of political thought". Schmitt does not spell out what kind of human weakness Hobbes had in mind, although it seems to agree with Schmitt's concept of the political. 310 However, Schmitt's observation of Hobbes's pessimism leads the reader back to Schmitt's most open theological confession (the claim of "divine right") in the context of mentioning Hobbes's Leviathan where he concludes:

> "No form of order, no reasonable legitimacy or legality can exist without protection and obedience . . . human nature as well as divine right demands its inviolable observation". (Schmitt)<sup>311</sup>

As explained previously, for Schmitt, Hobbes's greatness was in his recognition that each group claims to possess "the truth, the good and the just", or what constitutes "right". However, from the above quotation, Schmitt maintains "right" must be linked

<sup>310</sup> Ibid., p. 65.311 Ibid., p. 52. My emphasis.

with the divine to constitute a faith ("its inviolable observation"). Ironically, the net result of such "divine" claims by various groups leads to far worse enmity, finally leading to the war against everyone and hence, the necessity of a state that provides protection against attacks, particularly protection against foreign countries, in return for total obedience. However, the state is still based on "divine right", or faith, rather than on nature, or reason, as Schmitt's discussion of the political reveals. Later, he praises Hobbes for seeing "more clearly than anyone else" that "the sovereignty of the law means only the sovereignty of men who draw up and administer this law". The "rule of a higher order", according to Schmitt's understanding of Hobbes, means that there is an "order" where "certain men of this higher order rule over men of the lower order". It is these select people who determine the rightness of the "content", or "the high points of politics", and make the decision that determines "how and by whom it should be applied". Cromwell's religious stance against Catholic Spain is Schmitt's prime example. Thus, Schmitt clearly argues that, in affirming the political, one must always recognize the quarrel over the correct faith that raises the question, "what is right?". 313

### 6. Order

Although Schmitt does not openly admit his own unorthodox Catholic faith, as "the order of human things" in <u>The Concept of the Political</u>, he indicates his agreement with Hobbes's Christianity in <u>The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes</u>, where Schmitt reaffirms Hobbes's commitment to "the proposition that 'Jesus is Christ', a commitment that led both, the enlightened and believers, to regard him as a hypocrite

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>312</sup> Ibid., p. 52. Schmitt's inclusion of "human nature", in the quotation, points to the dangerousness (evil) of human beings.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>313</sup> Ibid., p. 67. This discussion takes place in Schmitt's refutation of "so called natural law, or the law of reason". Strauss will recover natural right in <u>The City and Man</u>.

and a liar". 314 If Schmitt does not locate his own faith in the historical understanding of Catholicism, then it is understandable why he speaks of the political in such a bellicose manner. Whatever his own personal views, Schmitt addresses "the order of the human things", as essential for the affirmation of the political. This means that he raises the question of what a society looks up to, as well as the question, what is right? Schmitt summarises the meaning of the order of human things as follows:

> "Only the actual participants can correctly recognize, understand, and judge the concrete situation and settle the extreme case of conflict. Each participant is in a position to judge whether the adversary intends to negate his opponent's way of life and therefore must be repulsed or fought in order to preserve one's own form of existence". 315

The "order" is directly related to the "form", or regime, which describes a way of life, that comes to light from an historical "moment". What distinguishes Schmitt's emphasis on the regimes, or order, is Schmitt's focus on the foundation of the political as the conflict of faiths among groups, or peoples, within historical contexts.<sup>316</sup>

Schmitt's interpretation of Plato's Republic, in support of his concept of the political, invites further investigation regarding "the order of the human things". Schmitt's definition of potential conflict between friend and enemy reminds a reader of Socrates's

<sup>314</sup> Schmitt, Carl, The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes: Meaning and Failure of a Political Symbol, Schwab, George & Hilfstein, Erna, trans., op. cit., p. 83. Schmitt says Hobbes "belonged to a Christian people", implying that he shared the group's faith.

<sup>315</sup> Schmitt, Carl, <u>The Concept of the Political</u>, Schwab, George, trans., op. cit., p. 27. My emphasis. 316 Ibid., p. 38.

conversation about the best regime within the context of a definition of justice, proposed by the non-Athenian Polemarchus, in Book One of Plato's Republic. In raising the issue of the political in Plato's most famous political work, Schmitt fails to mention that the context was justice, which is reaffirmed in its subtitle – "On the Just". Polemarchus, through Socrates's guidance, introduced a second definition of justice, that one should do good to one's friends and harm to one's enemies - a definition similar to Schmitt's. 317 Polemarchus's father, Cephalus, had proposed that justice was giving back what one takes from another. Socrates refuted this and Cephalus promptly left the conversation to his son, Polemarchus. Although Polemarchus's, and Schmitt's, concept of the political was refuted by Socrates, it was the only definition taken up in Socrates's construction of the best city, indicating that Socrates thought that it was public-spirited and practical in facing enemy cities that stood opposed to the best city. Given that few people can be philosophers, Socrates knew that the other cities would not pursue virtue as their chief goal, leaving open the possibility of war and conflict. This explains why Strauss addresses Schmitt, because Schmitt is partially right in presenting the problem of war between groups divided by enmity and friendship. Schmitt's definition appears more persuasive when Strauss argues that only the philosopher lives the truly just life and that the philosophers never rule.<sup>318</sup> Although Schmitt does not mention specific names from Plato's Republic, the Polemarchus argument is the very polemical argument that Schmitt uses to restore the concept of the political, but without relying on Plato's doctrine of the best regime, or the harmless nature of the philosopher. In Schmitt's The Concept of the Political, "destiny", or his historicism connected to divine providence, replaces the role of Plato's best regime in highlighting the status of the political. In accepting history, Schmitt argues that the political is inescapable. This explains why

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>317</sup> Plato, <u>The Republic of Plato</u>, Bloom, Allan, trans., op. cit., p. 8 (332d). <sup>318</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., pp. 73, 124, 125 & 127.

Schmitt fails to note Socrates's refutation of Polemarchus's definition, or the fact that the perfect city in Plato's Republic cannot exist on earth. As already mentioned, Plato solves the political problem that relates to the potential clash among friends and enemies through transcending the political, by posing the philosophic life as the best regime, and the best way of life, that exists at all times and in all places. Significantly, Schmitt does not include an argument in support of human nature or nature, as readers see in Strauss's presentation of Plato in The City and Man, since Schmitt's concept of the political is discovered on historically based faith, not nature or reason. However, in case his readers mistake his seeming bellicosity, Schmitt argues that his definition does not support militarism, pacifism or imperialism and he denies any claim that his definition idealizes victorious wars or "successful revolution". By remaining on the level of the "concrete", or the historical, Schmitt believes he has overcome the problem of judging what is ultimately right.<sup>319</sup> For Schmitt, "the order of human things from a pure and whole knowledge" means to locate the political in the divine that makes its appearance in history. This purity of knowledge, for Schmitt, is grounded in his belief in a mysterious, historical providence.<sup>320</sup>

Unlike Strauss, Schmitt does not return to "nature" in its political form of natural right and the best regime, as the answer to criterion five, "what is right?". Schmitt rarely mentions natural law, identifying it with "the law of reason", and arguing that it is essentially liberal in character and universal. Schmitt rejects the natural law doctrine, only recognizing its misuse by those who argue that "humanity" (a non-political term) is based on "natural law". He reduces "natural law" to "a system of relations among

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<sup>319</sup> Schmitt, Carl, The Concept of the Political, Schwab, George, trans., op. cit., pp. 32 & 33.

Strauss, Leo, "Notes on Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*", in Meier, Heinrich, <u>Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss – The Hidden Dialogue</u>, Lomax, Harvey J., trans., op. cit., pp. 91 & 119. Strauss's emphasis. On p. 119, Strauss adds Schmitt's words, "from a *pure and whole* knowledge".

individuals" and not groups, therefore excluding it from his definition of the political as the potential conflict between groups. Schmitt identifies the weakness of modern natural law and scholastic natural law theory, because they claim universality and brook no exceptions that are necessary for decisions in active, "concrete" political life. In contrast to natural law, as an appeal to a higher law, Schmitt claims he follows Hobbes in arguing that "the sovereignty of the law" only belongs to human beings who make and administer the law. The flexibility and "higher order" only comes about when "certain men" of a "higher order" rule over "men of a lower order". In posing natural right that can be applied in all places and times through the wisdom of philosophers, Strauss answers Schmitt's reason for the dismissal of natural law, and hence, "the law of reason". Nevertheless, in his continued acceptance of historicism, Schmitt remains consistent in rejecting natural law, and natural right, that comes to light in Aristotle and Plato's best regime. Despite his Catholicism, Schmitt rejected Thomistic natural law, dismissing natural law as part of the problem, and not part of the solution, to the affirmation of the political. 321

### Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how Schmitt argues that six criteria need to be present for the successful affirmation of the political. Schmitt seems to propose a concept of evil that takes Original Sin as the foundation of the dangerous nature of human beings. Although Schmitt uses Polemarchus's friend and enemy definition, he also turns to Hobbes's state of nature as the concrete situation of human beings, although he defines those in the potential state of war as part of groups, or nations, rather than individuals.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>321</sup> Schmitt, Carl, <u>The Concept of the Political</u>, Schwab, George, trans., op. cit., pp. 55, 66 & 67.

Ultimately, Schmitt's decisionism is connected to the order of the human things, defined as the "form" of one's existence, because the regime points to various ways of life claiming to be right. For Schmitt, the knowledge and purity of the claim is founded on the group's faith, especially its faith in the content of a divine authority that transcends personal preferences. In addressing Schmitt's arguments in <a href="The Concept of the Political">The Concept of the Political</a>, the reader can learn how Strauss sees Schmitt as a worthy opponent, who knew the importance of regimes being defined as ways of life, but refused to be guided by the best regime and natural right. In recognizing Schmitt's unorthodox biblical faith as the core of his concept of the political that requires rule, the reader then can begin to see the fundamental battle between Schmitt's concept of the political and Strauss's Socratic reply to Schmitt in <a href="The City and Man">The City and Man</a> that also raises the issue of rule. Strauss's comprehensive answer to Schmitt takes the form of a similar dualism to Schmitt's concept of friend and enemy, by drawing attention to the potential political conflict between the philosopher and his, or her, society, and hence the title of the book, <a href="The City and Man">The City and Man</a>.

### **CHAPTER FOUR**

## LEO STRAUSS'S "COMMENTS"

#### Introduction

Chapter four will demonstrate how Strauss explains Schmitt's six criteria, as found in The Concept of the Political. Strauss recognizes that Schmitt's affirmation of the political is linked to the classical idea of the regimes. Strauss argues that there are two answers to Schmitt's political – a movement towards faith or a return to the origins of Hobbes's understanding of nature. This chapter will demonstrate that Strauss outlines six criteria, which he finds in Schmitt's The Concept of the Political, including 1) the necessity of moral evil; 2) the existence of the Ernstfall; 3) the requirement of decision; 4) the meaning of content; 5) the claim of Right; and 6) "the order of things from a pure and whole knowledge".

## 1. Evil

In the final, paragraph of his 1932 "Comments", Strauss declares what a reader can learn from Schmitt's <u>The Concept of the Political</u>, namely, a "radical critique of liberalism" that gains "a horizon beyond liberalism". Agreeing with Schmitt, Strauss states:

"What is needed rather is to replace 'the astonishingly consistent systematics of liberal *thought*', which is

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>322</sup> The regime is identified with a class of citizens that rule society.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>323</sup> Strauss, Leo, "Notes on Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*", in Meier, Heinrich, <u>Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss – The Hidden Dialogue</u>, Lomax, Harvey J., trans., op. cit., p. 119. This is Schmitt's 1932 edition of The Concept of the Political.

manifest within the inconsistency of liberal politics, by 'another system' (70), namely, a system that does not negate the political but brings it into recognition". 324

In examining Schmitt's The Concept of the Political, Strauss not only points to Plato and "nature" as a way to transcend modern liberalism, but he also outlines Schmitt's six criteria for the successful recovery of the political. The first, and most important, is the acceptance of "the view of human evil as moral baseness". 325 In the final sentence of paragraph twenty-seven Strauss concludes, "The affirmation of the political is ultimately nothing other than the affirmation of the moral". 326 The moral is also connected to the order of things and hence, Strauss agrees with Schmitt that a quest to affirm the political must address "the order of the human things", although Strauss adds Schmitt's words "a pure and whole knowledge" to the latter. 327 Strauss's addition of Schmitt's words "a pure and whole knowledge", partly in italics, indicates that Strauss's final response must have the characteristics of knowledge rather than of faith. In keeping with human knowledge, Strauss examines Schmitt's concept of the political, emphasizing Schmitt's argument that the political is "real", and "necessary, because it is given in human nature". 328 By this, Strauss recognizes that the link between "human nature" and the political must begin with the "ultimate controversy", whether human beings are "by nature good or evil". In raising Schmitt's discussion of evil, Strauss adds the idea of the good as well. 329

<sup>324</sup> Ibid., p. 93. Strauss's emphasis.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>325</sup> Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>326</sup> Ibid., p. 113.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>327</sup> Ibid., p. 91. Strauss's emphasis. In the last paragraph, p. 119, Strauss says, "by expecting to gain the order of human things from a pure and whole knowledge".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>328</sup> Ibid., p. 105. <sup>329</sup> Ibid., p. 105.

Strauss draws attention to Schmitt's "polemic against liberalism", in which Schmitt seems to blame liberalism as the cause of the negation of the political. However, Strauss warns readers that it is a red herring. Strauss argues that Schmitt's true purpose is recognizing the political, meaning to recognize what is the best way of life, or what Strauss calls, the question of "what is right" that ignites "the life-and-death quarrel: the political". 330 For Schmitt, the political, which comes to light through human activity, is connected to human beings in the state of potential war over conflicting faiths.<sup>331</sup> In raising the question, "what is right?" in the context of mentioning Plato, Strauss uses "faith" three times, the first being "the quarrel over the right faith", indicating Schmitt's understanding of the political as faith-based battles. 332 However, Strauss forces Schmitt into the category of the political philosopher, by making Schmitt's concept of the political a matter for discussion. According to Strauss, Schmitt wanted to avoid discussion by going beyond abstractions that are evaluative, such as, "all ideals" and "all normative prescriptions", which Schmitt considers "fictions". In questioning Schmitt's claim that the political is historical "destiny" and cannot be avoided, Strauss challenges Schmitt to go back to nature, or more specifically to the original "state of nature", as an introduction to the philosophic life that transcends the political, defined as the potential war among human beings. 333

As mentioned previously, Strauss begins paragraph nineteen in agreement with Schmitt stating, "The ultimate controversy is whether man is by nature good or evil". In using the word, "nature", Strauss already points to "nature", rather than to biblical faith, as his

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>330</sup> Ibid., pp. 114 & 115.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>331</sup> Ibid., p. 103. Strauss's emphasis.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>332</sup> Ibid., p. 114. Strauss again refers to "faith" in the context of speaking of "the battle of decision between the 'spirit of technicity', the mass faith . . . and the opposite spirit and faith, which, as it seems, still has no name". Here, Strauss confirms the importance of Schmitt's battle of the faiths. <sup>333</sup> Ibid., p. 103. Strauss's emphasis.

response to Schmitt's call for "content" within the political. In the same paragraph, Strauss identifies Schmitt's liberal definition of good and evil to mean that human beings are "dangerous", but not in "a specifically moral or ethical sense". Here, Strauss admits that Schmitt's definition is not his "last word" on the dangerous nature of human beings, suggesting that Schmitt means that evil exists in a more fundamental sense.<sup>334</sup> Strauss's recognition of Schmitt's true meaning of evil is evident in the penultimate paragraph, where Strauss accuses Schmitt of "entanglements" in his polemics against liberalism, which admit that all political expressions are polemical. Strauss knows that Schmitt originally contradicts himself regarding the issue of human evil, because Schmitt admits that no one can escape the systematics of liberal thought. 335 In addition, Schmitt implies that evil is only found in (individual) "concrete political existence", which means that Schmitt accepted an historicist position that locates evil in varying, individual historical contexts, implying that evil is not a universal concept that can transcend those individual, historical contexts. Strauss's purpose in writing his "Comments" is to force Schmitt to acknowledge the trans-historical concept of Original Sin that provides a more consistent view of the political, focusing on biblical revelation as the best way of life. Furthermore, in forcing Schmitt to accept Original Sin, Strauss makes Schmitt's argument, concerning the need for humans to be ruled, much stronger. 336

In demonstrating that Schmitt defines evil as biblical evil, which is "the ultimate presupposition of the position of the political", Strauss has to show that Schmitt contradicts himself. In paragraph twenty-one, Strauss points out that, for Schmitt, the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>334</sup> Ibid., p. 105. My emphasis. In drawing attention to "contradiction" and entanglements, Strauss indirectly points to Schmitt's contradictions and entanglements, as Strauss believes that Schmitt does not see any escape from the logic of liberalism.

335 Ibid., pp. 93 & 119.

336 Ibid., pp. 105 & 118. In both the 18<sup>th</sup> & 34<sup>th</sup> paragraph, Strauss uses the word "entangled" twice.

"necessity of the political" that "is as certain as man's dangerousness", is only a "supposition", or an "anthropological confession of faith". 337 Given that Strauss emphasizes Schmitt's words, "supposition" and "faith", while speaking of "destiny", he raises the problem of Schmitt's interpretation of faith as the foundation of the political. Strauss argues that Schmitt bases his entire argument on a belief that can easily be refuted by an opposing belief that does not presuppose "man's dangerousness" and hence, undermines Schmitt's case in affirming the political. In a similar manner, most of Strauss's "Comments" attempt to make Schmitt's position clearer and more powerful, since Strauss raises the question why Schmitt affirmed the political in the first place. In answering this question, Strauss argues that he exposes Schmitt's own hidden moral stance that is ultimately based on biblical revelation. 338

In supporting his argument that Schmitt believes recognizing moral evil is necessary for the affirmation of the political, Strauss points out that Schmitt's investigation into the human condition is of a higher rank than an investigation into the modern state. Schmitt's grouping of states into friends and enemies implies, for Strauss, "only the condition of state" and not its "constitutive principle". In his 1932 letter to Schmitt, Strauss argues that an investigation into the "constitutive principle" of the state cannot be made in terms of the political "as destiny", where humans separate into factions because of "human nature", as this represents only the "condition of the state". Strauss argues that "the order", or the "constitutive principle", and hence the political, is related to the Greek *polis* and not to the modern state, "as the etymology (political-*polis*) already proves". Without giving Schmitt the complete answer, Strauss wants him to admit that the political, as the regime (politeia), or the way of life, is the "constitutive"

<sup>337</sup> Ibid., p. 106. Strauss's emphasis.338 Ibid., p. 118.

principle" of the state. 339 As will be demonstrated in chapter five of this thesis, Strauss investigates the "constitutive principle" of the political in The City and Man, by recovering the Greek city (polis) and its politeia (regime) that is the key to the "etymology" of "the political-polis". This turning to the classical definition of the regimes links Strauss's "Comments" to his recovery of Aristotle and Plato's best regime, as well as to Thucydides's best regime, in The City and Man. 340

Strauss, in his "Comments", counters Schmitt's hidden preference for Original Sin by citing Plato; however, Strauss's choice of dialogues concentrates on the theme of the "good", as well as the bad, leaving open the prospect of some good human beings. Strauss refers to two dialogues, but not to Plato's Republic as Schmitt had done, regarding private and public enemies. Strauss intends to bypass Schmitt's polemics regarding friend and enemy and focus on the fundamental cause of conflict – i.e. on the issue concerning "the good" and "the just". Strauss chose not to quote the two references to Plato, but in reading what Plato says, it is possible to see that Strauss links the notion of evil, and hence conflict, to the question of justice and goodness:

# Euthyphro: 7C – D.

Socrates: Then what would we differ about and what decision would we be unable to reach, that we would be enemies and angry at each other? Perhaps you have nothing ready to hand, but consider while I speak whether it is these things: the *just* and the *unjust*, and noble and the shameful, and *good and the bad*. Isn't it because we differ

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>339</sup> Ibid., p. 125. See the second letter dated September 4<sup>th</sup> 1932.
 <sup>340</sup> Ibid., p. 125. From Strauss's personal letter to Schmitt, dated September 4<sup>th</sup> 1932.

about these things and can't come to a sufficient decision

about them that we become enemies to each other,

whenever we do, both I and you and all other human

beings?

Euthyphro: Yes, this is the difference, Socrates, about

these things.

<u>Socrates</u>: What about the gods, Euthyphro? If they do

differ at all, wouldn't they differ because of these same

things?

Euthyphro: Most necessarily. 341

In the Phaedrus 263A, Strauss points to the lack of agreement that people have over the

same issue.

Socrates: When one says the name of iron or silver, do we

not all have the same thing in mind?

Phaedrus: Yes, very much so.

Socrates: What then of just or good? Are not different

people carried in different directions, and do we not part

ways with each other and even with ourselves?

Phaedrus: Yes, absolutely. 342

In stressing the idea of "the good" that is linked to justice (a political virtue), Strauss

demonstrates his disagreement with Schmitt's definition of the political that only

<sup>341</sup> Plato and Aristophanes, Four Texts on Socrates: Plato's Euthyphro, Apology, and Crito and Aristophanes' Clouds, West, Thomas G. & West, Grace Starry, trans., Cornell University Press, U.S.A., 1984, p. 49. My emphasis.

Plato, Plato Gorgias and Phaedrus, Nichols, James H., trans., Cornell University Press, U.S.A., 1998, pp. 196 & 197. My emphasis.

concentrates on moral evil. As noted previously, the most striking difference between Schmitt and Strauss, on the topic of good and evil, is that Strauss fails to cite Plato's Republic in his "Comments", given that Schmitt adapts his friend and enemy concept from Polemarchus's view of justice in Book One, namely, helping friends and harming enemies. One could argue that in 1932, Strauss did not have the mastery of the Republic that he demonstrates in 1964 in writing The City and Man. Whatever Strauss's limitations, he does suggest Plato as an alternative view concerning the definition of the political as the potential for war among groups or nations, although Strauss also seems to include the potential for conflict among individuals as well. The key point Strauss makes, in referring to Plato's dialogues, is that evil can be seen as the result of a conflict over what constitutes our perception of the good, and unlike Schmitt, who ignores justice, Strauss suggests that the claims to justice lead people into conflict.

Nevertheless, one of Strauss's immediate purposes in his "Comments" is to clarify, and strengthen, Schmitt's premise of the political, that human beings are not only dangerous, but also morally evil, and hence, in need of government (rule). In raising the issue of rule, Strauss prepares the groundwork for a discussion on regimes and the logical question that arises from the competing claims of the regimes – what is the best regime? For there to be rule, or government, Strauss argues that Schmitt must accept the view that human beings are evil in terms of "moral baseness", in order to affirm "the core of the political idea". <sup>343</sup> He argues that only by a "return to the view of human evil as moral baseness", that is "the core of the political idea", can Schmitt become consistent in his demand for "the *morally* demanding decision (*Politische Theologie*)". This is one of only two citations in the "Comments" that Strauss cites from Schmitt's

<sup>343</sup> Strauss, Leo, "Notes on Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*", in Meier, Heinrich, <u>Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss – The Hidden Dialogue</u>, Lomax, Harvey J., trans., op. cit., p. 110.

Political Theology. Here, Strauss intends readers to make a connection between political theology and moral decisionism, particularly through highlighting the moral by using italics and mentioning Schmitt's book on political theology, thus implying that the only way Schmitt can be consistent in his presentation of the political is to admit he is a political theologian who accepts Original Sin. Thus, Strauss seems to suggest to readers, that Schmitt's true understanding of the political, as a Christian political theologian, is one that accepts evil defined as Original Sin. In doing so, Strauss shows readers of the "Comments" that Schmitt's fundamental position is not that of a modern liberal, or a Hobbesian, because a modern liberal and a Hobbesian believe that evil is merely amoral, "innocent" (animal) evil that cannot be condemned. In mentioning Plato, in contrast to biblical revelation (Schmitt's political theology), Strauss indicates that his position is radically different from Schmitt's and goes to the heart of the problem regarding the question of the right way of life – either biblical faith or Greek rationalism (Jerusalem or Athens). 344

Strauss was already aware of this debate between philosophy (Athens) and faith (Jerusalem) between 1925 and 1928, when writing his book on Spinoza's <u>Theologico–Political Treatise</u>. This is clearly demonstrated in Strauss's "Preface" to the 1965 German translation of his book on Hobbes. In the "Preface", Strauss wrote that he had recognized "the reawakening of theology" in his Spinoza studies and "Since then the theological-political problem has remained *the* theme of my investigations". It is important to note that "the theme" was Strauss's life-long pre-occupation of his

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>344</sup> Ibid., p. 110. Strauss's emphasis. Strauss mentions the two Platonic dialogues towards the end of the "Comments", i.e. after mentioning Schmitt's book, <u>Political Theology</u> that highlights "the core of the political idea" as "the *morally* demanding decision", thus appearing as an alternative to Schmitt's position.

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345 Strauss, Leo, "Preface to *Hobbes Politische Wissenschaft*", in Strauss, Leo, <u>Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity</u>, Green, Kenneth Hart, editor, op. cit., p. 453. Strauss's emphasis. Strauss had discovered Hobbes during his investigations of Spinoza.

"investigations" that began in the mid 1920s. Strauss states that his first articulation of the theme was in his 1932 "Comments", and that he chose to re-publish it "at the end of this volume", i.e. in Strauss's 1965 English translation of his book on Spinoza that appeared one year after the publication of <u>The City and Man.</u> Strauss wrote, in the first paragraph of his 1965 "Preface", that his new approach to his historical studies was in response to the "theologico-political predicament", meaning who, or what, should rule society. 346

The "theologico-political problem", for Strauss, is coeval with the problem of what, or who, should rule human beings – either biblical wisdom or Socratic wisdom. In his Spinoza "Preface", Strauss openly admits that his response to Schmitt's <u>The Concept of the Political</u>, in the form of the "Comments", was his first public expression of a "change in orientation", which led him to become "ever more attentive to the manner in which heterodox thinkers of earlier ages wrote their books", implying that he recognized the significance of the conflict between philosophy and society. <sup>347</sup> Whatever Strauss means by the theologico-political problem, he intended readers to see a connection between his original "Comments" article on Schmitt's <u>The Concept of the Political</u> and his books published in the 1960s. As mentioned previously, Strauss republished the "Comments" in English in his 1965 Spinoza book one year after the publication of <u>The City and Man</u>, and two years after Schmitt republished <u>The Concept of the Political</u>, with various changes that Meier suggests came from Strauss's 1932

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>346</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>Spinoza's Critique of Religion</u>, Sinclair, E. M., trans., op. cit., p. 1. The "Comments" – Strauss's own translation of the title, appears on pp. 331 – 351. Schmitt also re-published his book, <u>The Concept of the Political</u> in 1963.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>347</sup> Ibid., p. 31. The "Comments" article is placed after the "Appendix" and is the last thing to appear. Schmitt republished his <u>The Concept of the Political</u> in 1963, one year before Strauss published <u>The City and Man</u>, indicating the ongoing responses between Schmitt and Strauss.

"Comments". 348 Strauss's "Preface" to his English translation of his Spinoza book was written in 1962 (the same year Strauss began writing The City and Man) and was published in 1965.

In returning to the "Comments", Strauss argues that Hobbes knew that "the natural evil of man" must be "persistently fought" against. Strauss, in agreement with Schmitt, argues that modern liberalism has overlooked this primary root of the political - "the evil nature of man" - through the acceptance of modern "natural-scientific neutrality" (value-free social science), and through the acceptance of the premise that human beings were originally good. For Strauss, this latter premise of "original goodness" came from a belief in "God's creation and providence". Given these developments, Strauss argues that the final outcome was a belief in the "improvement of nature" that Strauss suggests is "unjustified by man's experience of himself". Strauss further argues that "a supposed deeper insight into history" (historicism), that is equivalent to an insight "into the essence of man", has aided in our forgetting Hobbes's "the state of nature". Strauss means that as times change, so do our conceptions of human nature and the state of nature. However, for Hobbes, the "state of nature" exists always, and remains the potential for war among evil individuals. Nevertheless, the root cause of the disappearance of "the state of nature" Strauss blames on Hobbes's "negation of the state of nature", where a return to the idea of nature is understood as being impossible. He concludes that the hope of "an improvement of nature" led to our ignorance of Hobbes's "unliberal nature of man. 349 In 1932, Strauss did not specifically identify the response to the problem of the recovery of nature, but he does hint in the "Comments"

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>348</sup> Meier, Heinrich, <u>Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss - The Hidden Dialogue</u>, Lomax, Harvey J., trans., op. cit., p. 7.

Strauss, Leo, "Notes on Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*", in Meier, Heinrich, <u>Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss - The Hidden Dialogue</u>, Loma x, Harvey J., trans., op. cit., p. 101.

that "the opposite spirit and faith" to "an antireligious, this worldly activism", or the "spirit of technicity", cannot be identified as it "still has no name". Unfortunately, Strauss does not spell out what he means by this statement, although the context suggests that the nameless "faith" is Schmitt's groping for an affirmation of the political that is founded on biblical revelation. 350

Strauss argues that, initially, Schmitt followed "Hobbes, Spinoza, [and] Pufendorff" in describing human beings as "evil", meaning that they are only passionate "beasts", since they are not responsible for their "drives (hunger, cupidity, fear, [and] jealousy)". In short, Strauss concludes that the modern expression of evil means 'human inferiority' or "animal power", which is the amoral behaviour typical of animals. In Hobbes's case, Strauss argues that his selection of "innocent" evil, that was "not meant in the moral sense", was the logical result of his denial of biblical "sin", in order to give human beings freedom "without obligations". Once again, Strauss suggests that there is a connection between "moral evil" and biblical "sin", or what Strauss fails to cite as Original Sin. However, instead of openly calling Schmitt a political theologian, who accepts Original Sin, Strauss turns to Schmitt's favourite thinker, Hobbes, in order to show Schmitt the limitations of Hobbes's doctrine on evil. 351 Strauss argues that Hobbes's definition of innocent evil implies that some "goodness" can result from "innocent" evil. Without citing a reference to Hobbes, Strauss argues that Hobbes believes that the "beast" (a human being) can be educated, because a "beast can become astute through injury". If the "beast" is innocent, as Hobbes concedes, then Strauss maintains there can be no limit on its education, since all limits just become "mere

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>350</sup> Ibid., p. 118. <sup>351</sup> Ibid., pp. 109 & 110.

supposition", or what Strauss usually calls "faith". The consequence of Hobbes's theory, for Strauss, is that it forms the basis for a faith in progress, the very thing Schmitt denies in The Concept of the Political. This belief in progress is referred to on four occasions, in the "Introduction" of The City and Man, the last stating that "an unchangeable human nature might set absolute limits to progress". Thus, Strauss's purpose in the "Comments" is to use Hobbes to force Schmitt to accept the supposition that moral evil is connected to Original Sin. 354

In mentioning evil twenty-three times in one paragraph of his "Comments", Strauss indicates his intensity in elucidating Schmitt's position as a political theologian. Strauss wants him to draw the conclusion that evil, as "understood morally", is his true premise. Strauss's intention becomes clearer when a reader realizes that Strauss makes his rare reference to Schmitt's book, "Politische Theologie" (Political Theology), that speaks of "the morally demanding decision" as "the core of the political idea". Only if he accepts moral evil, Strauss then concludes, can Schmitt "remain in harmony with himself". 355 In indicating what that decision is based upon, Strauss cites his second, and final, reference to "Politische Theologie" that occurs in the context of "Donoso Cortés", suggesting that Schmitt's position falls into the category of political theology, rather than political philosophy, because Schmitt accepts the doctrine of Original Sin as the foundation of the political. Cortés is central to understanding Schmitt's book, Political Theology, and Schmitt discusses him throughout that book. Furthermore, Schmitt's mention of Cortés in The Concept of the Political, i.e. in the context of the only mention of "original sin", seems to be overlooked by Strauss. Strauss chose not to mention

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<sup>352</sup> Ibid., p. 110. Strauss's emphasis.

Schmitt, Carl, <u>The Concept of the Political</u>, Schwab, George, trans., op. cit., pp. 65, 78 & 79.

<sup>354</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>355</sup> Strauss, Leo, "Notes on Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*", in Meier, Heinrich, <u>Carl Schmitt</u> and <u>Leo Strauss</u> – The Hidden Dialogue, Lomax, Harvey J., trans., op. cit., p. 110.

"original sin" in his "Comments". This is not unusual for Strauss. One of Strauss's techniques of writing is to fail to mention an obvious point, thus forcing the reader to deduce from the context what Strauss sees as important. In reminding readers of Schmitt's affinity with Original Sin, Strauss purposely decides not to mention "original sin" in the same context where he cites his only mention of "Donoso Cortés", and in the same context of his rare mention of political theology. Given Schmitt's attention to the role of Cortés, as a political theologian and one who despised liberals, as seen in Schmitt's Political Theology, and given Strauss's crucial mention of Schmitt's Political Theology in the "Comments", it appears that Strauss wants readers of the "Comments" to conclude that Schmitt is a political theologian who accepts Original Sin. 356

In explaining Schmitt's use of polemical arguments, Strauss suggests that Schmitt's arguments were rhetorical in the sense of being controversial and designed to confront the reader, rather then presenting logical deductions, or rational arguments. Strauss argues that Schmitt's use of polemical arguments is the result of his belief that he cannot escape the "horizon of liberalism". Furthermore, he implies that Schmitt's polemics are designed "to clear the field for the battle of decision" between political theology and political philosophy. 357 Strauss also knows that the word comes from the Greek, "polemos" meaning war, and so provides an appropriate term to use in the context of Schmitt's concept of the political. Thus, in paragraph thirty-four, Strauss affirms Schmitt's statement that, "all political concepts, ideas and words have a polemical meaning". However, Strauss shows that Schmitt "violates" this statement by not taking Hobbes's "state of nature" as polemical, as Hobbes intended. In this manner, Strauss demonstrates that Schmitt does not have a grasp of Hobbes's doctrine regarding

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>356</sup> Ibid., pp. 109, 110 & 117. <sup>357</sup> Ibid., pp. 118 & 119.

"the state of nature". The state of nature is through his literal acceptance of Hobbes's polemical definition of evil, according to Strauss, that Schmitt becomes entangled in the logic of Hobbes's liberalism. In demonstrating Schmitt's complete admission of defeat at the hands of his liberal enemies, Strauss reminds readers of Schmitt's claim that "the astonishingly consistent . . . systematics of liberal thought has still not been replaced in Europe today by any other system". However, Strauss argues that the whole of his "Comments", or "what can be learned from Schmitt" is the "urgent task" of "gaining a horizon beyond liberalism". Strauss does this by forcing Schmitt to accept a pre-Hobbesian concept of evil – Original Sin – as the beginning of that transcendence of liberalism, especially given that Strauss believes that Hobbes was "the founder of liberalism".

Strauss's private comment to his Christian friend, the theologian Eric Voegelin, is further evidence that Strauss wants Schmitt to take moral evil seriously. It is this fundamental premise that sets the political theologians (Schmitt and Voegelin) and the political philosopher (Strauss) apart, although all begin with morality. Strauss, in a rare, private admission to Voegelin, reveals his fundamental understanding behind some of his work. Strauss states that his premise is "very simple: *philosophari necesse est*" ("it is necessary to philosophize"). Strauss continues, "philosophy is radically independent of faith" and that "the root of *our* disagreement lies presumably in the second thesis". <sup>362</sup> Thus, in his "Comments", Strauss confirms that the quarrel that "has no name" is the quarrel among political theologians and political philosophers regarding the question,

<sup>358</sup> Ibid., p. 118. Strauss's emphasis.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>359</sup> Ibid., p. 117.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>360</sup> Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>361</sup> Ibid., p. 100.

Strauss, Leo & Voegelin, Eric, <u>Faith and Political Philosophy: The Correspondence Between Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin, 1934 – 1964</u>, Emberley, Peter, & Cooper, Barry, editors, Penn. State University Press, U.S.A., 1993, p. 72. Strauss's emphasis.

what is more authoritative for political life – faith, or the best regime? Political theologians, such as Schmitt, begin with "faith", whereas, philosophers (literally, lovers of wisdom), commence with questions and wonder. In short, Strauss demonstrates how to clarify Schmitt's position, so that he can remain consistent in his own faith that successfully affirms a concept of the political defined as destiny that also includes moral evil. By focusing on Schmitt's concept of the political, Strauss also provides readers with an indication of what is required to find an alternative understanding of the political that does not presuppose the premise of faith, and hence, Original Sin. According to Strauss, Schmitt's legacy is that he points to an understanding of Hobbes's "state of nature" that allows one to raise the question, "what is the political?" in the context of an investigation into nature and the nature of things that can satisfy the sixth criterion, defined as an "order of human things based on *pure and whole* knowledge". <sup>363</sup>

# 2. Ernstfall

In countering Schmitt, Strauss argues that Hobbes did not intend the word, "dangerousness", to be anything but polemical. As part of Hobbes's "state of nature", or war against all individuals, it was used to scare readers into accepting the benefits of peace that civilization offered. According to Strauss, Schmitt affirms "man's dangerousness" and thus the political, by making "dangerousness" the true foundation of the political. Unlike Hobbes, Schmitt makes "dangerousness" the basis of the political, not peace and civilization. In avoiding a return to Original Sin, and in trying to avoid value-free social science, Schmitt argues that this "dangerousness" has "no normative meaning", having only a "concrete", or historical meaning. This becomes the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>363</sup> Strauss, Leo, "Notes on Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*", in Meier, Heinrich, <u>Carl Schmitt</u> and <u>Leo Strauss</u> - The Hidden Dialogue, Lomax, Harvey J., trans., op. cit., pp. 118 & 119.

historical necessity that forms the basis of Schmitt's understanding of providence and destiny that denies any escape from the political. Strauss discerns in Schmitt's argument that a concrete opposition forms "in time of danger", i.e. during a "dire emergency" (Ernstfall) where "a totality of men" fight. 364 Previously, Strauss had argued that what makes the political "fundamental" and "authoritative" for Schmitt, is "the real possibility of *physical killing*", meaning that "war is the dire emergency" (*Ernstfall*). However, Strauss knows that Schmitt is a polemical writer and that these polemical statements are intended to raise the question, "what is right?" i.e. what is the right way of life? This is confirmed in paragraph twenty-four, where Strauss asks Schmitt whether the clash of "a fighting totality of men" affirms the "dangerousness of its enemies?". However, Strauss demonstrates the absurdity of Schmitt's argument by simply asking, whether human beings 'wish for dangerous enemies?". In answering Schmitt that human beings do not desire to have dangerous enemies, Strauss reminds him of C. Fabricius's reply to a claim that a Greek philosopher had recently discovered that "pleasure is the greatest good". At the time, the Romans were at war with Pyrrhus and the Samnites. Upon hearing the latest discovery, the Roman general replied, "If only Pyrrhus and the Samnites shared this philosopher's opinion as long as we are at war with them!". Thus, Strauss argues that no nation wants to have dangerous enemies for its own sake, because common sense demonstrates that all nations threatened with danger demand their "own dangerousness" not for the sake of "dangerousness", but "for the sake of being rescued from danger". In making dangerousness a neutral "content", Strauss accuses Schmitt of admiring "evil" for its own sake, while acting in the same manner as the neutral liberals he condemns. 366 Strauss's point is to force Schmitt to recognize that his polemic style of writing leads to entanglements that Schmitt cannot

 <sup>364</sup> Ibid., p. 107.
 365 Ibid., p. 97. Strauss's emphasis.
 366 Ibid., pp. 107 & 111. Strauss's emphasis.

Furthermore, Strauss also attempts to expose Schmitt's true intention in returning to Hobbes's argument concerning evil, and that means also understanding pre-Hobbesian evil by defining evil in a biblical sense, or in a Platonic sense. Thus, in accepting moral evil, Strauss and Schmitt could then account for the extreme situation (Ernstfall) or the potential for war, and hence, the need for rule. 367

#### 3. Decision

In his claim to "affirm" the political, Strauss argues that Schmitt is silently passing a moral judgement in direct contradiction to his claim that the political is not "normative". Strauss establishes that Schmitt is not neutral in his book on the political. As Strauss points out, "the political is removed from all arbitrary, private discretion; it has the character of a transprivate obligation". 368 Subsequently, Schmitt's moral condemnation of an apolitical world hinges on his argument that human life would be reduced to "entertainment", meaning that it would be bad for human beings. A world dominated by entertainment would be a world without "seriousness", Schmitt argues. It is here that Strauss reveals Schmitt's hidden value-judgement, which indicates Schmitt's moral disapproval of such a superficial "neutral" world. Strauss draws the reader's attention to Schmitt's comment on the possible apolitical, or neutral, world, by emphasizing a key word in Schmitt's comment that such a world would be "perhaps very interesting". By qualifying the interesting nature of an apolitical world, by saying 'perhaps', Strauss argues that Schmitt was questioning whether a "human being worthy of the name"

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>367</sup> Ibid., p. 107. According to Strauss, the expression, "state of nature" was "at home with Christian theology" as it was the opposite of "the state of grace". See Strauss, Leo, Natural Right and History, op. cit., p. 184. 368 Ibid., p. 116. Strauss's emphasis.

would be truly interested in such a world. 369 Strauss draws attention to Schmitt's hidden judgement, or his concealed "nausea" at the thought of an apolitical world state. According to Strauss, Schmitt's hidden moral condemnation of such a world is truly an "affirmation of the political", which is "nothing other than the affirmation of the moral". 370 Strauss, in following Schmitt, had already established that the moral is the "affirmation of the political" and the "political is the affirmation of the state of nature", which denies any neutrality, since all human beings are in potential war with one another. However, Strauss's purpose in forcing Schmitt to reconsider the state of nature is not just to recover it, but also to show that it forces the reader back to "a pure and whole knowledge", which points to "the order of the human things", i.e. either to an order that is according to nature, or to an order that is found on Original Sin. <sup>371</sup>

The problem of the political for Schmitt, according to Strauss, is how to reconcile the affirmation of the moral with liberal morality, defined by Schmitt as 'humanitarian morality". Strauss argues that Schmitt "remains trapped in the view that he is attacking" in accepting "his opponents' view of morality", as "humanitarian-pacifist morals to be morals". 372 Strauss concludes his essay referring to the "necessary result" of Schmitt's "entanglement", as one of "no accidental failure but the necessary result of the principle that all concepts of the spiritual sphere . . . are to be understood only in terms of concrete political existence". Thus, Schmitt's fundamental error is his acceptance of historicism ("concrete political existence") that underscores his concept

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>369</sup> Ibid., p. 112. Strauss's emphasis. In his book, <u>Persecution and the Art of Writing</u>, op. cit., p. 78, Strauss states that words, such as "perhaps" "seemingly" and "almost", are words used by some authors to indicate an esoteric meaning.

<sup>370</sup> Strauss, Leo, "Notes on Carl Schmitt, The Concept of the Political", in Meier, Heinrich, Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss - The Hidden Dialogue, Lomax, Harvey J., trans., op. cit., pp. 112 & 113. Strauss's emphasis.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>371</sup> Ibid., p. 115. <sup>372</sup> Ibid., pp. 115 & 116. Strauss's emphasis.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>373</sup> Ibid., p. 118.

of the political as conflicting faiths. In his final analysis, Strauss calls Schmitt's liberal position, one "with the opposite polarity". By this statement, Strauss argues that Schmitt was tolerant, just like the liberals, but in contrast to liberalism, his affirmation of the political led to "serious convictions". 374

Nevertheless, Strauss indicates a way out for Schmitt. In addressing the third criteria of a non-neutral decision, Strauss examines Schmitt's discussion of culture, arguing that "sovereign" ancient culture is "always the *culture of nature*" and that nature "obeys the order that nature gives itself". Regardless of whether nature means nurturing or fighting, he argues, culture still remains "the culture of nature" and that we now accept culture to mean "the culture of human nature", because it is the "presupposition of culture". Strauss further argues that the investigation into culture reveals that the foundation of "culture" is that all humans are by nature social. According to Strauss, this 'status naturalis' has been forgotten, and completely covered over, in modern times. Strauss's reason is that the "status civilis", or what is now called civilization, has contributed to our forgetting the original state of nature that lurks behind Hobbes's political theory. Furthermore, Strauss argues that Hobbes's teaching about the "status civilis", was intended by Hobbes to be the opposite to "the state of nature", or "status naturalis". Strauss also indicates that, for Hobbes, "the state of nature" was the "status belli", which meant that, "the nature of war, consisteth not in actual fighting; but in the known disposition thereto" that was the polemically intended state of war among all individuals. The key to understanding Hobbes's "state of nature", for Strauss, was in recognizing that its introduction was "polemical", meaning that Hobbes was using it to persuade his readers that peace within society was the only alternative to it. Strauss

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>374</sup> Ibid., p. 117. Strauss's emphasis.

argues that Schmitt denies that peace is the goal for civilization, because he changes Hobbes's doctrine of "the state of nature". 375

Nevertheless, although Schmitt changed some of Hobbes's arguments regarding the "state of nature", Strauss believes that Schmitt should be credited with having rediscovered "the state of nature" in the twentieth century. He argues that Schmitt's concept of the political is the "status naturalis", because it is the "genuinely political status", particularly since Schmitt argued that the political was not discovered in actual fighting, but in "a behavior that is determined by this real *possibility*". Strauss defends Schmitt's restoration of the political as "a status of man", but only as the "natural, the fundamental and extreme, status of man". For Strauss, Schmitt identified the political as "a status of man", which means "the status as the natural". In other words, the "status of man" cannot remain neutral, but depends on "the status" of nature, as the direction for any investigation of criterion six, regarding "the order of the human things", allowing Strauss to recover Socratic natural right, the best regime that is according to nature. In this way, Strauss is able to begin to answer the question, what is right? (criterion five) and provide a decisionism that is not neutral (criterion three). The key is that Schmitt's arguments led to nature as something transprivate and not neutral; however, Schmitt fails to complete that connection, in Strauss's view. Thus, the significance of Strauss's stress on a nature that is not neutral is twofold: it raises the question of human nature in terms of good and evil - criterion one - and therefore raises the question in criterion two regarding "a concrete opposition" – either biblical faith or a return to Socratic political philosophy. Furthermore, nature provides for a "transprivate obligation" (criterion three) and the beginnings of a content that is not neutral, or

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>375</sup> Ibid., pp. 97 & 98. Strauss's emphasis. Strauss's reference is to "<u>Leviathan xiii</u>". Schmitt's "situation of the age" is his historical use of the polemical.

arbitrary, in determining who is a friend and who is an enemy (criterion four). Nature becomes a standard for Strauss's solution to right, as seen in his recovery of Socratic natural right and the best regime.<sup>376</sup>

#### 4. Content

In returning to Schmitt's polemic against liberalism, Strauss uses the term, "polemic" to indicate that Schmitt is masking his speech by using acceptable arguments, which suggest a deeper issue. Strauss exposes Schmitt's polemical statement that people group together because they form friend and enemy distinctions, by demonstrating Schmitt's non-polemical intention underlying that statement. He argues that the "seriousness" of Schmitt's statement is that potential conflict among groups, and nations, results over the question of what constitutes the best way of life, or what each group, or each nation, perceives as right or just. More importantly, Strauss spells out that the political has something to do with the quarrel "over the just and the good". For Strauss, what is just and good is that which is according to nature.<sup>377</sup> This is what Strauss means by "content" in his fourth criterion for the affirmation of the political.<sup>378</sup>

Harry Neumann's discussion of the battle at Verdun in World War One exposes the meaning behind Schmitt's concept of "content". According to Neumann, Schmitt's concept of the political, as the division between friend and enemy over conflicting ways of life, comes to light when nations, or groups, have reached their peaks spiritually. Neumann does not rule out civil wars, such as the American Civil War, as examples of nations fighting among themselves over what constitutes the best way of life. In

376 Ibid., pp. 98 & 99. Strauss's emphasis.
 377 Ibid., pp. 114 & 115. My emphasis.
 378 Ibid., pp. 116 & 117.

following Schmitt, Neumann argues that the particular ferocity and fanaticism of the battle of Verdun reflected the content of the issue at stake, i.e. "the French Republic" versus "the Prussian monarchy". In describing those pieties, he calls the former, "one officially dedicated to the universal rights of man", and the latter, a need for an "aristocratic duty to Prussia's throne and Reich". 379 What also distinguished the battle at Verdun, according to Neumann, was its Prussian flavour, arguing that "the French at Verdun subordinated humanitarian, global considerations to the demands of Duty! Honor! Country!". 380 Had not the German and French commanders been relieved, they would have "bled their armies white rather than yield an inch". He concludes that the battle, which accounted for the death of nearly one million soldiers, did not have to be fought. 381

Neumann argues that Churchill noted that the Germans ignored sound strategy in not turning to the East and defeating the Russians first and, at the very least, demanding a peace that included gains in the East. However, Neumann argues that sensible strategy was over-ruled by the Prussian desire to "humble their greatest foe". He points out that the French were also extremely determined to avenge their humiliating defeat by Prussia in 1870. 382 Neumann argues that the French army "never recovered from Verdun and from the disastrous Nivelle-Mangin offensive (1917) inspired by Verdun". 383 Furthermore, the consequence of the clash between the Prussian way of life and the French way of life was the disappearance of Prussia "in the contemporary world". 384 For Strauss, both regimes claim to represent the good and just way of life, but in

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>379</sup> Neumann, Harry, <u>Liberalism</u>, op. cit., p. 293.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>380</sup> Ibid., p. 294.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>381</sup> Ibid., p. 291.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>382</sup> Ibid., pp. 291 & 292.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>383</sup> Ibid., p. 292. <sup>384</sup> Ibid., p. 295.

adopting the best regime, Strauss criticizes regimes, such as Prussia's, because they focused only on militarism and not the good life that is concerned with peace, natural justice and philosophy. <sup>385</sup> However, for Strauss, Schmitt's preoccupation with war does not imply that Schmitt is a warmonger, or war lover, because Schmitt stresses that "no legitimacy or legality" can "justify men's killing one another for its own sake". They do so, according to Schmitt, because they remain in "the state of nature" as described by Hobbes, meaning that the potential for war is caused through their support of different faiths. <sup>386</sup>

The content of Hobbes's "state of nature" is central in understanding Schmitt's concept of the political. In Natural Right and History, Strauss points out that, prior to Hobbes, "the term 'state of nature' was at home in Christian theology rather than in political theology". Part of it was divided into "the state of fallen nature", but, according to Strauss, Hobbes dropped it to avoid having to accept Original Sin. Strauss argues in his "Comments" that Hobbes did not want to "recognize any primary obligation of man", that comes from biblical sin, because he wanted to present a human being as free "by nature", so that "the fundamental political fact was natural right as the justified claim of the individual". Not duty to God, but the right of self-preservation becomes the essence of the political for Strauss's understanding of Hobbes. However, it is not always clear that Schmitt intended his presentation of "the state of nature" to mean a return to Christian theology. In his "Comments", Strauss points out that Schmitt does

Strauss attacks German and Prussian militarism in 1941 in his lecture in New York. Strauss suggests that "desire to learn" and "reason" are inseparable from civilization – see Strauss, Leo, "German Nihilism", op. cit., pp. 361 – 373.

<sup>386</sup> Strauss, Leo, "Notes on Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*", in Meier, Heinrich, <u>Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss - The Hidden Dialogue</u>, Lomax, Harvey J., trans., op. cit., p. 103.

Strauss, Leo, Natural Right and History, op. cit., p. 184.

Strauss, Leo, "Notes on Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*", in Meier, Heinrich, <u>Carl Schmitt</u> and <u>Leo Strauss</u> - The <u>Hidden Dialogue</u>, Lomax, Harvey J., trans., op. cit., pp. 109 & 110.

not understand Hobbes's arguments regarding "the state of nature". There are four significant content changes that determine Schmitt's friend and enemy definition. Instead of having Hobbes's individuals in a state of potential war with one another, as Hobbes presents in his "the state of nature", Schmitt replaces the individuals with groups ("totalities") and nations. Strauss also notes that Schmitt takes seriously the possibility of "the state of nature", whereas Hobbes had presented it "as in itself impossible". According to Strauss, Hobbes had only "polemically" proposed "the state of nature" to get everyone to civilization and peace, as quickly as possible. Strauss calls this movement, the "negation" of "the state of nature". Strauss implies that Hobbes used "the state of nature", as equivalent to the fear of violent death and a means to avoid civil war. This was the motivation for developing the modern state and peaceful civilization. In addition, Hobbes did not divide his individuals into friends and enemies, because everyone was subjected to potential enmity. In short, Strauss demonstrates that Schmitt's concept of the political is flawed, especially because "totalities", or groups, often form alliances, while other "totalities" remain neutral. Thus, Strauss makes clear that in Hobbes's "state of nature", which was the basis of the political, no one remained neutral and friendship was impossible. In contradiction to Hobbes (Schmitt's preferred thinker) Schmitt argues that, "all political behavior is oriented toward friend and enemy". Furthermore, in contrast to Hobbes, Strauss highlights Schmitt's demand that the various "totalities" must be ready to die for their nations, or groups, whereas Hobbes argued that the state was formed to guarantee the preservation of life for each individual. Since self-preservation was the original right in the state of nature, and that "the state of nature" does not disappear, individuals only owe "conditional obedience" to the state, according to Hobbes. 389 Schmitt had indicated in his Concept of the

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>389</sup> Ibid., pp. 99, 100, 102 & 103. Strauss's emphasis.

Political that obedience was to be total in return for protection. <sup>390</sup> Once again, Strauss demonstrates the absurdity of Schmitt's arguments that seek to affirm the political that are supposed to follow Hobbes's arguments, raising the possibility that Schmitt is merely using Hobbes to return to the doctrine of Original Sin. However, in recognizing that the "state of nature" is never totally negated, Strauss also reminds readers that Hobbes had argued that nations still remain in "the state of nature" in their dealings with one another. In this regard, Schmitt's concept of enmity among nations is correct, particularly if the reader accepts that Schmitt accepts universal evil that comes from accepting Original Sin. Yet, according to Strauss, Schmitt overlooks Hobbes's polemics against "individuals", not groups. 391 Thus, Strauss shows that Schmitt changes Hobbes's political teaching regarding natural right, or the justice in a citizen deserting his, or her, post when threatened with death. As Strauss observes, Hobbes had taught that "death is the greatest evil" and that the right of every individual was to preserve his, or her, life at whatever cost. 392 The purpose behind Schmitt's changes, according to Strauss, was Schmitt's intention to make the foundation of the political, i.e. the "state of nature" not a polemical abstraction, but something that was "possible", in contrast to Hobbes's intention that it was "in itself impossible" and was meant only polemically. Thus, Strauss shows the inconsistency, and absurdity, in Schmitt's attempt to ground his concept of the political on Hobbes's political philosophy, unless Schmitt wanted to ground it on Original Sin. 393 Schmitt must have been aware of his misuse of Hobbes, as he had warned his readers in The Concept of the Political that he was

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>390</sup> Schmitt, Carl, <u>The Concept of the Political</u>, Schwab, George, trans., op. cit., p. 52. Schmitt states, "No form of order, no reasonable legitimacy or legality can exist without protection and obedience".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>391</sup> Strauss, Leo, "Notes on Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*", in Meier, Heinrich, <u>Carl Schmitt</u> and Leo Strauss - The Hidden Dialogue, Lomax, Harvey J., trans., op. cit., p. 99. Strauss's emphasis. In Natural Right and History, op. cit., pp. 197 & 198, Strauss declares that Hobbes has undermined any "moral basis of national defence". The only solution to the problem is "the outlawry of war or the establishment of a world state". In overcoming the fear of God, Strauss argues that Hobbes called for an "a-religious or atheistic society" as the solution to the political problem.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>392</sup> Ibid., p. 100. <sup>393</sup> Ibid., p. 104.

familiar with polemics.<sup>394</sup> Furthermore, in rejecting Hobbes's polemical argument concerning "the state of nature", Schmitt turns to "the whole history of humanity up to the present" to demonstrate "the *unpolemical* description of the political", as found in "the state of nature". What Strauss makes clear is that Schmitt's rejection of natural law, and natural right, causes him to misrepresent Hobbes, whose foundation of the political was a universal natural right – the right to self-preservation. In short, Schmitt has no place for trans-neutral nature, the best regime, and natural rights, but only the individual concrete situations that dominate history.<sup>395</sup>

# 5. Right

Strauss argues that Schmitt admits that his understanding of the nature of a human being "is destiny", or what appears as historical necessity. Strauss suggests that Schmitt's faith in "destiny", or historical providence, means that human beings cannot escape the political, because the political is related to Schmitt's acceptance of historicism. Thus, it is Schmitt's faith in historical "destiny" that causes him to deny the possibility of transcending liberalism and to become "entangled" in contradiction. Schmitt's acceptance of historicism is why he dismisses nature, natural law, natural right and the best regime as answers to the question, "what is right?". As universal concepts they contradict Schmitt's belief that right can only be specific to concrete situations of the age. This is why Schmitt questions the concept of humanity and any universal rights that are connected to it.

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<sup>394</sup> Schmitt, Carl, The Concept of the Political Schwab, George, trans., op. cit., pp. 31 & 32.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>395</sup> Strauss, Leo, "Notes on Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*", in Meier, Heinrich, <u>Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss - The Hidden Dialogue</u>, Lomax, Harvey J., trans., op. cit., pp. 103 & 104. Strauss's emphasis.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>396</sup> Ibid., p. 104. Strauss's emphasis. This word appears in Strauss's central 18<sup>th</sup> paragraph, indicating its esoteric importance.

As already noted, Schmitt argues that the expression, "humanity", is not a political term. Strauss's "Comments" provides an interpretation of Hobbes that explains the origin of humanity, particularly the modern natural right to self-preservation. He argues that Hobbes was the founder of the modern expression "humanity". For Strauss, it means the "subject or object of planning" based on Hobbes's single humanity of "partnership in consumption and production", called "civilization". The principles of "planning" that Strauss believes Hobbes outlines are: defending against external enemies, preserving internal peace within the state, and encouraging the just acquisition of material goods by individuals through "work and frugality", rather than through "victorious wars". The acquisition of material goods is further encouraged by "mechanics and mathematics" with the purpose of society being the enjoyment of "innocuous freedom". In summing up Hobbes's natural right (humanity), as the "securing of life", i.e. as a claim predating and overriding the state, Strauss argues that Hobbes is "the founder of liberalism" - the very thing Schmitt misunderstands.<sup>397</sup> This discussion of modern humanity, as a response to Schmitt's arguments regarding humanity, becomes significant in Strauss's The City and Man, where he outlines Aristotle's and Plato's humanity that comes to light as the natural justice of the philosopher. Strauss also outlines Thucydides's arguments for humanity as the peak of Greekness, but in contrast to Hobbes, Strauss sees Thucydides's humanity as the equivalent to wisdom, or contemplation of the truth. <sup>398</sup> In reply to Schmitt's dismissal of humanity as a political concept, Strauss argues that he has found an answer to Schmitt's failure to find a standard for humanity (natural right) that is both universal and able to adapt to the extreme case of war, without being relative to individual concrete historical situations. Strauss's articulation

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>397</sup> Ibid., p. 100.
<sup>398</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., pp. 230 & 231.

of that standard, and answer to the question, "what is right?" is found in his outline of the best regime in <u>The City and Man</u>. The crucial point is that Strauss continues his response to Schmitt's arguments in The City and Man. <sup>399</sup>

Strauss argues that Schmitt's concept of friend and enemy groupings "owes its legitimation to the seriousness of the question of what is right". Schmitt argues that if someone "relinquished asking the question what is right?", described as "the life-anddeath quarrel: the political", then that person "relinquishes being a man". Thus, in quoting Plato's Euthyphro and Phaedrus, Strauss indicates what he understands by the underlying meaning of Schmitt's definition of the right faith, as well as indicating the Platonic direction he will take, i.e. the question of "the good" and natural justice. By turning to Platonic dialogues, Strauss also implies that the question must become one of discussion and search rather than one of faith. 400 In providing an alternative to Schmitt's concept of the political, Strauss seems to suggest, ironically, that the new "spirit and faith" that replaces the "antireligious, this-worldly activism" in "the battle for decision between the spirit of technicity" and a new spirituality that "has no name", is a return to Socratic philosophy – an opposite spirit to "faith" altogether. Strauss seems to announce that a return to the classical idea of the regimes, and natural justice that is based on nature, provides a better guidance for the political life, particularly in judging what is right regarding the activities of nations or states. Strauss also may be indicating that political theology and political philosophy are "Ultimately, two completely opposed answers to the question of what is right" because they "confront

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>399</sup> Ibid., pp. 30 – 44 & 145 – 154. On p. 44, footnote 66, Strauss cites Hobbes three times in the context of his alternative answer - "the best regime" - to Schmitt's demand for "pure and whole knowledge" of "the order of human things". According to Strauss, Hobbes changed "natural laws proper" to "rational laws", that became known as "ideals", which could be "figured out". This was the result of the loss of the "distinction between nature and convention".

<sup>400</sup> Strauss, Leo, "Notes on Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*", in Meier, Heinrich, <u>Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss - The Hidden Dialogue</u>, Lomax, Harvey J., trans., op. cit., pp. 114 & 115. My emphasis.

each other, and these answers allow of no mediation and no neutrality". This means that they represent "the order of the human things" from the biblical perspective (faith) that takes into consideration Original Sin, and the Socratic alternative that is based on reasoned, human discussion and search. However, Strauss's most urgent task, in writing the "Comments", was to gain an horizon beyond liberalism through "an adequate understanding of Hobbes". 401

#### 6. Order

In raising the question of "the order of the human things" in the first paragraph of the first division of his "Comments", Strauss begins to come to the basis of Schmitt's concept of the political. As already demonstrated, Strauss's understanding of Schmitt involves recognizing the problem of good and evil by initially raising the question, "what is right?". In answering the question of right, Strauss turns to the question of justice and the good found in Plato's philosophy. Strauss also suggests that Schmitt must accept Original Sin as his final understanding of evil. The fundamental question of the right order, which is either the life dedicated to the recovery of nature or a return to Original Sin, is the link that connects Strauss's response to Schmitt throughout Strauss's "Comments" and The City and Man. In his only mention of "original sin" in The City and Man, Strauss notes that it might not be possible to know the things that are just by nature if one accepts Original Sin. 402 This is why Strauss argues in his "Comments" that "what ultimately matters to Schmitt is not the battle against liberalism", but the question regarding the best way of life. The reason why the question of natural right, or natural justice, is connected to "the order of the human

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things", is that Strauss relates "order" to the moral question of how human beings live. Thus, what joins Schmitt and Strauss together is their emphasis on the regime (*politeia*), or the most authoritative opinions held by a group or nation. What ultimately separates the two thinkers is Schmitt's historicism, his emphasis on faith and Original Sin, as well as his rejection of natural right that is essential for Aristotle and Plato's best regime.<sup>403</sup>

Strauss's two citations to Plato, in his "Comments", show that the question Schmitt raises is related to ends as well as means. In transcending the concrete situation of Weimar in 1932, Strauss demonstrates that human beings, and groups, disagree over issues relating to justice and what constitutes the highest end, or the best way of life – i.e. what constitutes the good. Although Strauss does not include a full quotation of the parts of the two dialogues, he expects his readers to contemplate them as part of his analysis of Schmitt's arguments. In the context of his discussion on the dialogues, Strauss points out that in our liberal society, we are used to "agreement at all costs", but the price is high, since the philosophic question of "what is right", or what is "the right faith", is lost, as is the question regarding the best "human order". The implication of this loss, for both Strauss and Schmitt, is its necessary effect on the political and the moral seriousness of the citizen. As Strauss interprets Schmitt's friend and enemy concept, "the grouping of humanity into friends and enemies – owes its legitimation to the seriousness of the question of what is right". However, Strauss's comprehensive answer in The City and Man – already glimpsed in the "Comments" through his

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>403</sup> Strauss, Leo, "Notes on Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*", in Meier, Heinrich, <u>Carl Schmitt</u> and <u>Leo Strauss</u> - The Hidden Dialogue, Lomax, Harvey J., trans., op. cit., pp. 118 & 119.

references to Plato - resides in the contemplative life that stresses peace, philosophic discussion, natural justice and friendship in contrast to Schmitt's emphasis on enmity. 404

In turning to the sixth criterion as the natural order of the human things, based on knowledge, Strauss turns to Hobbes, particularly to his concept of "the state of nature". In addressing "the order of the human things", Strauss argues that, "Schmitt restores the Hobbesian concept of the state of nature to a place of honor", but only as a way back to the Greek concept of nature, and possibly, a way for Schmitt to return to the doctrine of Original Sin. 405 Strauss, in following Schmitt's thread, argues that Schmitt's initial interpretation of Hobbes's "state of nature" correctly begins with a discussion of modern "culture". Strauss agrees with Schmitt's questioning of the "autonomy" of culture. In using Schmitt's definition of culture, "as a whole" and as "autonomous", Strauss argues that, although there are many cultures, there is one overriding culture. In referring to Hobbes's part in the development of culture, Strauss calls it a "sovereign creation, the pure product of the human spirit" that exists above the many cultures. However, Strauss clarifies Schmitt's definition of culture, by arguing that the concept of culture presupposes something that is "cultivated" and this cultivation "is always the culture of nature". 406 In short, culture at its highest is "the order of human things from a pure and whole knowledge". 407 In amplifying Schmitt's partially correct interpretation of Hobbes's "state of nature", Strauss calls culture, "the nurture of nature", "whether of the soil or of the human spirit makes no difference". According to Strauss, culture is

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>404</sup> Ibid., pp. 114 & 115. My emphasis. The universal tyranny of the universal, homogeneous world state later became a serious debate between Alexandre Kojève and Strauss. See Strauss, Leo, <u>On Tyranny</u>, Gourevitch, Victor & Roth, Michael S., editors, The Free Press, U.S.A., 1991, pp. 177 – 212.

 <sup>405</sup> Ibid., p. 99.
 406 Ibid., p. 97. Strauss's emphasis.

Ibid., p. 119. Strauss's emphasis. This is Strauss's final statement on "order". Strauss's opening sentence of his "Comments" indicates that Schmitt attempts to answer the question regarding "the order of the human things". See p. 91. Cf. also pp. 97, 115 & 118.

developed through obeying "the orders that nature itself gives", but Strauss also argues that obeying nature can also include "conquering nature through obedience to nature", depending "on how nature is understood". In indicating his disagreement with both Hobbes and Schmitt, Strauss argues the "the presupposition of culture is primarily the culture of *human* nature" that presupposes the natural sociability of human beings. 408 Thus, he indicates that the true foundation of the political, and hence "the order of the human things", is found in friendship rather than in enmity. 409 In adding that the political must be based on a "human order", which is based on "pure and whole knowledge that cannot be gained from concrete political existence, from the situation of the age", Strauss points to Socrates's discussions on justice and the good, suggesting that the answer lies in the pursuit of philosophy, where the emphasis is on sharing knowledge through friendship. Thus friendship is the true measure of the political, for Strauss, rather than enmity, as Schmitt demands. 410

# Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that Schmitt's six criteria are listed, and discussed, by Strauss in the "Comments". It shows that Strauss knew that these criteria must be satisfied for the successful recovery of the political, even suggesting that Plato may provide an answer to that recovery. Strauss clearly states Schmitt's mistakes in describing Hobbes's concept of the political, already suggesting that Schmitt rejects nature and natural right as the foundation of the political because of his historicism. In simply focusing on enmity in his political concept, which resides only within historically determined faiths, Schmitt fails to transcend modern liberalism and cannot

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>408</sup> Ibid., pp. 97 & 98. <sup>409</sup> Ibid., p. 118. <sup>410</sup> Ibid., p. 119.

make claim to universal ("pure and whole") knowledge, according to Strauss. 411 In turning to Hobbes's natural right of self-preservation, Strauss points the way to what he later perceived as natural justice and the best regime, found in Plato and Aristotle's best regime, where the philosopher harms no one and the general emphasis is on friendship. Only then does Strauss claim to see the limits of the political and the life that transcends the political. This is what Strauss discovers when he calls for "the order of the human things from a pure and whole knowledge" that transcends the immediate situation of the age. Even though Strauss wants Schmitt to accept the divine knowledge of Original Sin, Strauss argues that this special knowledge of the "whole" is unavailable to Schmitt, because he anchors all knowledge in the various faiths that are found in "concrete political existence" (Schmitt's historicism). Strauss argues that knowledge of the "whole" can be glimpsed through "a return to the origin, to undamaged, noncorrupt nature" that becomes the universal standard of "Right", or "order", for judging various faiths, or it can be found in the transcendence of biblical revelation through accepting Original Sin. 412

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>411</sup> Ibid., p. 119. <sup>412</sup> Ibid., pp. 91 & 119.

#### **CHAPTER FIVE**

# THE CITY AND MAN: POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY AND THE POLIS

#### Introduction

Chapter five will demonstrate that Strauss begins with Schmitt's 1932 criticism of the concepts of culture and civilization to develop the meaning of the political. Strauss turns to the best *politeia* based on the order of the human things as his response to Schmitt's concept of friend and enemy. In conformity with his argument that the investigation should begin with what appears most authoritative for social scientists, Strauss commences his journey back to the *polis*, or city, by tracing the historical development of the modern concepts, of culture and civilization. This chapter will use three arguments that transcend Schmitt's concept of the political. They include: 1) Strauss's arguments for a return to political philosophy; 2) an explanation of Strauss's structure in The City and Man; and 3) Strauss's arguments for a return to the *polis*. Each of the three is treated in turn. Generally, Strauss responds to Schmitt's political criteria by writing his book in the form of a theologico-political treatise that is intended to rival Schmitt's The Concept of the Political.

### 1. Political Philosophy

Strauss gives the impression that his main theme, in the centre of his "Introduction" of The City and Man, is the evil of Communism that always takes the form of tyranny. Strauss prefaces his discussion on Communism by speaking of "the large majority of men on behalf of the large majority of men", who support "the universal state" that guarantees all human beings the "natural right to comfortable self-preservation", in a

society that is based on freedom and equality. Strauss describes the goal of the universal society as one that stresses the common good, which is "the most sacred end". By "sacred end", Strauss means the most valued, or most revered, end that cannot be questioned or changed. Strauss believes that Communism and "the Western movement" share the same political goal, arguing that both aim at creating "the universal prosperous society of free and equal men and women". However, he concedes that they differ on the means to achieve that end, concluding that the difference between Communism and the West was seen as one of "kind" and "not only a difference of degree". In the middle of the discussion, Strauss suddenly substitutes the word "morality" for the word "means". In the same context of Strauss's change to "morality", he announces that no violent, or non-violent, change can "eradicate the evil in man", because of the "malice, envy and hatred" that exist in human life. The point is that Strauss draws attention to Schmitt's definition of the political as groups, such as the Communists, who were engaged in murder and conflict over "the most sacred end". Strauss also draws attention to his and Schmitt's first criterion for the recovery of the political - that all human beings are morally evil.<sup>413</sup>

For Schmitt, emphasizing only sacred, or highly revered, ends implies that any means in achieving those ends are justified; however, unlike Schmitt, Strauss sees morality, defined as natural right (justice), as crucial in understanding differences in opinion regarding the means of achieving ends that are highly esteemed. Strauss points out that the Communists were prepared to assassinate those who opposed them in the pursuit of the most valued end of universal prosperity, whereas "the Western movement" did not condone assassination, even though it shared the same revered goal as the Communists.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>413</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., pp. 4 & 5.

This is how Strauss first introduces political philosophy that takes seriously natural justice when examining the means used to achieve what he calls "the most sacred end". What is special about Strauss's example, using the West and Communism, is that he argues that both share the same vision of the perfection of all human beings, thus reminding readers of the question regarding the best way of life. In discerning the fundamental difference between the West and Communism, Strauss raises the issue of "the choice of means" ("morality"), even pointing out that "The modern project was originated as required by nature (natural right), i.e. it was originated by philosophers". Here, Strauss indicates that sacred, or highly revered, ends should be judged in terms of natural ends, and that natural right, or natural justice, was an essential part of the natural ends that Hobbes and Locke outlined in their works on politics. Furthermore, he argues that the founding philosophers of "the modern project" assumed that human nature did In using the example of modern Communism and "the Western not change. movement", Strauss seems to contrast political philosophy with Schmitt's political theology, which ignores justice and nature. In drawing attention to the choice of means ("morality") used to achieve the most sacred political end – human happiness, Strauss indicates the interconnectedness of morality and natural justice. 414

In condemning modern Communism as "the iron rule of a tyrant", Strauss argues that there was a "twofold lesson" for "the Western movement" in "the experience of Communism". The first involves "a *political* lesson" and the second a lesson "regarding the principles of politics". Here, in challenging the sacred goal of Communism and Western democracy, Strauss agrees with Schmitt that there is a "fundamental cleavage" among states and that, "in the foreseeable future", there will

 $<sup>^{414}</sup>$  Ibid., pp. 4 – 7. Strauss mentions the word "evil" three times in his "Introduction" with its central appearance mentioning three human failings: "malice, envy and hatred". Strauss concludes that, given such human evil, society must "employ coercive restraint".

never be a universal world society, because there will always remain – "a partial or particular society whose most urgent and primary task is its self-preservation and whose highest task is its self-improvement". In agreement with Schmitt, Strauss rules out any future world peace because of the absurdity of recognizing that present state boundaries are just, as well as the "factual inequality" among nations. In drawing attention to the "particular" regimes, or the various ways of life dedicated to sacred ends, Strauss mentions the universal claims of Islam and Christianity as an example of two groups that have been forced to coexist with each other for the sake of self-preservation. In choosing religious groups that are based on faith, Strauss seems to agree with Schmitt regarding the foundation of the political, as one of conflicting faiths. However, unlike Schmitt, Strauss stresses their coexistence, rather than their potential for war. 415 In pointing to the need for moderation, and the need to examine, and judge, moralities, Strauss reminds readers that one must first recognize "the citizens' understanding of political things". The ordinary understanding of political things can be found in the moralities that come to light through the moral choices of people, or groups, actively engaged in political life. According to Strauss, the only way to attain the citizens' understanding of moral choice is to return to "classical political philosophy" where a "common sense understanding of the political things is primary". 416

Nevertheless, Strauss warns of the dangers in applying classical solutions to the modern world, particularly since he is going to outline the best regime according to Aristotle, Plato and Thucydides. In 1946, Strauss had argued that if one "claims to be a Platonist" and publishes books on Plato's political philosophy, "at this time", in the United States, then the writer "bears more than the ordinary responsibility that is borne by every

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>415</sup> Ibid., pp. 4 - 7. My emphasis. <sup>416</sup> Ibid., pp. 10 & 11.

writer". 417 Strauss was particularly aware of "the misuse of Plato's teaching by fascists" and the political threat to Platonists by over zealous scholars of Plato. 418 Like Schmitt's criticism of romantic longings for the classical age, Strauss states:

> "We cannot reasonably expect that a fresh understanding of classical political philosophy will supply us with recipes for today's use. For the relative success of modern political philosophy has brought into being a kind of society wholly unknown to the classics, a kind of society to which the classical principles as stated and elaborated by the classics are not immediately applicable". 419

Strauss opens his treatise arguing that his task in recovering the political, as understood by Aristotle, Plato and Thucydides, is "not self-forgetting and pain-loving antiquarianism, nor self-forgetting and intoxicating romanticism". 420 Strauss states, "Only we living today can possibly find a solution to the problems of today". 421 However, if readers grasp the original principles of political science, Strauss argues, they "may" find them useful through their "wise application", calling his return to

<sup>417</sup> Strauss, Leo, "On a New Interpretation of Plato's Political Philosophy", Social Research, vol. 13, no.

<sup>20, 1946,</sup> p. 367.

418 Ibid., p. 364. Strauss imagines that someone could write a book "on the political problem of our time in the guise of a book on Plato's political philosophy. While it would be a very bad book if regarded as an interpretation of Plato, it might be excellent as a guide amidst the perplexities of our age". The City and Man is not just a book on Plato's political philosophy, but Strauss seems to indicate that he was aware that interpretations of classical thinkers could also include a political guide.

<sup>419</sup> Strauss, Leo, The City and Man, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>420</sup> Ibid., p. 1. Schmitt also had criticised such attempts in his book. See Schmitt, Carl, Political Romanticism, Oakes, Guy, trans., M.I.T. Press, Mass., U.S.A., 1986.

421 Ibid., p. 11.

classical political philosophy, not only compelling, but also "tentative or experimental". 422

Strauss argues that political philosophy is "the rightful queen of the social sciences, the sciences of man and of human affairs". This is where he parts company with Schmitt, because Strauss argues that the best guide to political life is not political theology based on faith, but political philosophy that is based on reason, natural right and the best Unlike Schmitt, Strauss suggests that, "one cannot understand the regime. transformation" of classical political philosophy (no matter how "legitimate") into modern political philosophy without comprehending that "Nature as understood by modern natural science and History as understood by the modern historical awareness" have caused a "crisis" in modern political philosophy. 423 In contrast, Schmitt argues that history is decisive in providing the moments that demonstrate the conflict among faiths. According to Strauss, "the core" of our present crisis is that modern political philosophy has become "ideology", which has undermined "high culture", or "the culture of the mind". For Strauss, ideology implies that all human thought is culturally specific, denying the historical transcendence of philosophy. Strauss identified this historicist argument as the basis for our modern crisis that has led to the demotion of reason, particularly since reason was seen as a product of Western culture. Given that all cultures are now considered equal, and given that Western reason and its specific form, science, are parts of one culture among many, science loses its universal significance. Thus, in being only one way of understanding the world, science lost its

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>422</sup> Ibid., p. 11. <sup>423</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

status as the universal method of determining universal truths. In his "Introduction", Strauss gives a short history of the demise of modern reason. 424

Strauss states that "Social science has not always been as sceptical or restrained as it has become during the last two generations". He argues that the change was linked to the "modern project", which sought to conquer "the most powerful natural needs of men" that led to the questioning of the premise that there is an "unchangeable human nature". Strauss argues that a universal human nature would "set absolute limits to progress". To avoid such limits, the "natural needs of men" no longer became the guide to the modern project, which aimed at conquering nature. Strauss argues that consequently, "reason as distinguished from nature" became the basis of modern philosophy, turning into the "rational Ought" in contrast to "neutral Is". Strauss explains that the norms, or "the Ought", became "separated from science as the study of the Is". In short, the study of social science meant the recognition of the difference between facts and values. According to Strauss, this led to the "depreciation of reason" that gave greater power to human beings, while at the same time offered no guidance in the form of human By human wisdom, Strauss means that it was no longer possible to wisdom. "distinguish between the wise or right and the foolish or wrong use of power", since "Science cannot teach wisdom". 425 This is Strauss's summary of the development of positivism and why Strauss saw it as a crisis facing contemporary political scientists. In rejecting both historicism and positivism, and in attempting to recover political philosophy, Strauss argues that "the teachings of political philosophers" represent a singular "kind of ideology" and that the crisis caused by both positivism and historicism "may" offer an "accidental advantage of enabling us to understand in an untraditional or

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>424</sup> Ibid., pp. 6, 7 & 9. <sup>425</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

fresh manner what was hitherto understood only in a traditional or derivative manner", 426

In drawing attention to the *polis*, Strauss states that "the City and Man" is the theme of classical political philosophy. In the same context of his discussion of ideology and culture, Strauss uses a key Schmittean word, "legitimate", to describe the "transformation" of modern political philosophy that no longer places emphasis on the naturalness of the city. Legitimacy, for Schmitt, replaces nature. 427 In addition, Strauss's use of the words "legality and legitimacy", in his first chapter, "On Aristotle's Politics", is the exact title of a book by Schmitt, Legality and Legitimacy. 428 In his 1932 book, Schmitt had targeted value-free jurisprudence that chose to ignore the politeia, or the constitution (regime), behind the law of various states, as well as ignoring the friend and enemy concept that applied to the German constitution. Schmitt claimed he wanted the Reich government to ban actions that undermined the German constitution. 429 In responding to Schmitt, Strauss states in his "Introduction" to The City and Man, "But one cannot understand the transformation, however legitimate [of classical political philosophy] if one has not understood the original form". 430 Strauss uses the regimes to turn Schmitt's concept of the political on its head, by recovering Aristotle and Plato's best regime that stresses the centrality of the good, peace, natural justice and the superiority of contemplation to the political life. Strauss also specifically

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>426</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>427</sup> Ibid., p. 1. In <u>The Concept of the Political</u>, Schmitt emphasizes only "the legitimacy or legality" of a "form or order" (constitution) and not whether it deviates from the best regime - p. 52. As seen previously in Schmitt's book, Legality and Legitimacy, "legitimacy" is a key concept for Schmitt. For Schmitt, the concern with legitimacy replaces the traditional theme of the best regime.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>428</sup> Ibid., p. 48. Schmitt used "legitimacy or legality" in the context of "protection and obedience" in Schmitt, Carl, The Concept of the Political, Schwab, George, trans., op. cit., p. 52.

<sup>429</sup> Schmitt, Carl, Legalität und Legitimität, Fünfte Auflage, Duncker & Humblot, Berlin, Germany, 1993. See Dyzenhaus, David, Legality and Legitimacy: Carl Schmitt, Hans Kelsen and Hermann Heller in Weimar, Oxford University Press, N. Y., U.S.A., 1999, p. 70. See also Gottfried, Paul Edward, Carl Schmitt – Politics and Theory, op. cit., pp. 58 & 59.

430 Strauss, Leo, The City and Man, op. cit., p. 1. My emphasis.

uses the word "form" in his chapter on "Aristotle's Politics", describing "the politeia (the regime), the 'form' of the city". The highest form of the city turns out to be Strauss's final answer to Schmitt's criteria – the best regime that is according to nature and trans-historical. This regime will be examined in chapter seven. 431

The "Introduction" also reminds readers of Strauss's discussion of culture in the "Comments", revealing that The City and Man is a theologico-political treatise, i.e. it is a further response to Schmitt and his critique of culture that leads back to "the facts" of "religion" and "politics". For Strauss, politics and religion have been incorporated into the concept "culture". This is why Strauss begins The City and Man by addressing the problem of culture. 432 In a unique cluster of the word "culture" in the "Introduction", Strauss begins where he left off addressing culture in his "Comments". Strauss argues:

> "But precisely since the West is the culture in which culture reaches full self-consciousness, it is the final culture: the owl of Minerva begins its flight in the dusk; the decline of the West is identical with the exhaustion of the very possibility of high culture; the highest possibilities of man are exhausted". 433

Strauss's mention of "final culture" sounds much like the Hegelian universal and homogeneous state, where "the highest possibilities of man are exhausted". 434 However, Strauss makes it clear that the exhaustion of the 1960s gives rise to "an

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>431</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

Strauss, Leo, Philosophy and Law - Contributions to the Understanding of Maimonides and His Predecessors, Adler, Eve, trans., op. cit., footnote 2, p. 138. Strauss's emphasis.

Strauss, Leo, The City and Man, op. cit., p. 2. My emphasis.

<sup>434</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

accidental advantage of enabling us to understand in an untraditional or fresh manner what was hitherto understood only in a traditional or derivative manner". Strauss reminds readers that previous political philosophers believed that their "teaching" was "the true and final teaching regarding political things", indicating that the current final culture is also the result of similar philosophic speculation. In raising the issue of "the very possibility of "high culture", Strauss suggests a return to classical political philosophy. 435 In doing so, Strauss argues that a reader should suspend his, or her, "initial question in favor of the question with which his author is concerned", or examine the author's subject from the "author's point of view". 436

In countering any notion of a "final culture", Strauss draws attention to the original and naïve meaning of 'the culture of the mind' that will be associated with the philosophic life that is connected to the best regime. Similarly, Strauss suggests that the highest culture has not been discovered, because the "fundamental riddles" have not been solved. Furthermore, in turning to the authority of science, he argues, "natural science", or knowledge, is "susceptible of infinite progress" and that fact rules out the idea of a "completion of history", or a concept of a final culture. In mentioning the "fundamental riddles", Strauss reminds readers of Socrates's unending search for knowledge of the whole, as well as Oedipus's conquest of the city, Thebes, through his answer to the Sphinx's riddle – "Man". This could be why Strauss chose <u>The City and Man</u> as the title of his book, i.e. a reference to Socrates, and that the human things are the link to a knowledge of the whole. Unlike Schmitt's admiration of concrete, historical decisionism, Strauss prefers some Socratic uncertainty regarding the question of the best way of life, because such scepticism does not easily translate into political life as

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>435</sup> Ibid., p. 9. <sup>436</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

absolute rule, or the "iron rule of the tyrant". This also accounts for why Strauss preferred Aristotle's definition of political philosophy that also links Aristotle to Plato in agreement regarding the best regime. Strauss states, "For Aristotle, political philosophy is primarily and ultimately the *quest* for that political order which is best according to nature everywhere and, we may add, always". 438

# 2. The Structure of The City and Man

In <u>Persecution and the Art of Writing</u>, Strauss warns of the artful methods that some writers use to make it difficult for readers to follow their arguments. 439 One of those techniques relates to the "obscurity of the plan" of the book. In the case of a theologicopolitical treatise, such as The City and Man, Strauss indicates that readers must examine the details that appear in the text, if they wish to figure out its structure. 440 Seth Benardete concluded that Strauss intentionally divides Chapter One, "On Aristotle's <u>Politics</u>", into five distinct parts, using a dash and a colon to indicate an intended break. The five divisions include: "1) Aristotle as the founder of political science (pp. 13-29); 2) city and culture (pp. 30-35); 3) democracy (pp. 35-41); 4) nature (pp. 41-45) and 5) regime (pp. 45-49)". 441 However, Benardete neglects Strauss's dash and colon on page forty-eight, where Strauss begins to discuss the sixth division on the topic of Platonic irony and "good writing". Benardete is also unaware that Strauss draws attention to Schmitt's book, Legality and Legitimacy, in the first sentence after that break.<sup>442</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>437</sup> Ibid., pp. 2 & 5. Strauss's emphasis.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>438</sup> Ibid., p. 17. Strauss footnotes Aristotle's Ethics, 1135a 4-5. My emphasis.

<sup>439</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>Persecution and the Art of Writing</u>, op. cit., pp. 7 – 37.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>440</sup> Ibid., pp. 74, 77 (chapter headings), 36 & 184. See also Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., pp.

<sup>53, 180 &</sup>amp; 181.

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Strauss, Leo, The City and Man, op. cit., p. 48. Strauss writes, "We have come to distinguish between legality and legitimacy", reminding readers of Schmitt's book.

Nevertheless, Benardete is correct in discovering Strauss's divisions in the first chapter of The City and Man, although Benardete offers no explanation why Strauss divided his book in this way. 443 In providing readers with seventeen distinct divisions, Strauss emphasizes the importance of order in The City and Man, because Strauss knew that seventeen was the number representing "nature", and hence, the ordering principle behind his recovery of the best regime. The significance of nature, for Strauss, is that it is his comprehensive answer to Schmitt's political theology that first appears in Strauss's analysis of Hobbes's "state of nature". One could argue that the whole of The <u>City and Man</u> represents an attempt to return to "the order" of nature, thus answering the sixth criterion that requires the political to be based on "pure and whole knowledge". In replying to Schmitt's demand that the political must be an expression of something "concrete", yet able to be grasped as knowledge, Strauss first turns to the common experiences, or opinions, of human beings regarding the city. The reason Strauss gives for beginning his book with Aristotle's Politics, and not with Thucydides's history, is that Aristotle provides "common sense" arguments supporting the comprehensive and natural basis of the city or *polis*. 444 Without the city fully explained, Strauss argues, he cannot answer the question of the political, as the words, polis and "political", are interconnected. Without a full explanation of the polis, Strauss cannot establish the best regime that is directly related to the polis. In recovering the polis, Strauss is then able to give an alternative standard to Schmitt's concept of the political that stresses nations and groups that are united by a common faith. Furthermore, by returning to the concept of the city, or *polis*, using Aristotle, Strauss prepares the reader for his discussion of Thucydides's observations of the cities, Athens

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>443</sup> Benardete, Seth, "Leo Strauss' *The City and Man*", op. cit., p. 2. Benardete discovered that a full stop and a long dash, ".—", separate the different themes. See pp. 29, 35, 41 & 45. In contradiction to Benardete, I suspect that the 6<sup>th</sup> division occurs on p. 48, not on p. 49, so that the discussion of regimes blends into the next chapter, "On Plato's <u>Republic</u>".

444 Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., p. 12.

and Sparta. In addition, in satisfying the criteria for the affirmation of the political, in The City and Man Strauss argues that Aristotle's approach to the study of society was extremely "practical", or concrete, being more moderate than Plato's, because Aristotle recognized the "conditions" imposed on various societies, such as the condition of the land and the arts that directly affect politics. Strauss concludes his second division, relating to the city and culture, with the suggestion that the political is connected to the intended order of a society, because he argues that the question regarding "the good life", or the question regarding "the good society", leads one to view the regimes as attempts "to answer that question". 445 Strauss also begins with Aristotle because of his concern with the visible, concrete cities that also provide a link between the decent members of a community 'hoi kaloikagathoi - hoi aristoi" (i.e. noble and good people) and philosophy. In his chapter on Plato's Republic, Strauss argues that philosophers do not rule in the cities and that the cities are not open to philosophy, 446 but in turning to Aristotle, Strauss provides a practical solution in arguing that civic leaders, such as Pericles, who was taught by Anaxagoras, can be influenced by philosophy. In contrast to Plato, Strauss argues that Aristotle writes for "hoi kaloikagathoi - hoi aristoi", or the noble gentry, who are the public-spirited rulers of the city. According to Strauss, "the only serious alternative to the philosophic life is the political life" and the cities can become more just, if the noble and good citizens of those cities are influenced by philosophy. For Strauss, "the political life is subordinate to the philosophic life" 447 and that only the noble and good citizens, who have some leisure, are open to philosophy through poetry. In arguing for 'hoi kaloikagathoi - hoi aristoi" class of public-spirited rulers, Strauss suggests an historical answer to the affirmation of the political that

<sup>445</sup> Ibid., p. 35. The full stop and dash represent Strauss's end of his first division that deals with the theme of culture (civilization) and the polis.

<sup>446</sup> Ibid., pp. 124 & 125. 447 Ibid., p. 28 & 29.

replaces the necessity of the philosophers ruling society in order to realize the best regime. 448

Discovering the hidden structure of Strauss's chapters on Aristotle and Plato allows readers to grasp the significance of the divisions that Strauss makes. In the second division, relating to the city and culture, Strauss takes up where he left off in his "Comments" regarding the true nature of culture as one connected to the cultivation of the mind. Strauss also has a fourth division on "nature" in his Aristotle chapter, providing Schmitt with an alternative universal order to the one based on religious faith. The very next division after the one dedicated to "nature" is devoted to "the regime" that finally describes Strauss's comprehensive answer to Schmitt. This answer takes the form of Aristotle and Plato's "best regime". It is in this division, and the sixth division on the art of writing, that Strauss makes the most extensive references to Schmitt's political theology, drawing attention to Schmitt's support of the Nazis and alluding to Schmitt's book, Legality and Legitimacy. The whole chapter on Aristotle allows Strauss to focus on the notion of culture, which Schmitt and he began to examine in their earlier works.

## 3. The polis

Strauss's reading of Aristotle's <u>Politics</u> led him to conclude that the *polis* is a separate class of thing when compared with the modern conceptions, "civilization" and "culture". The terms, "society", "civilization", "culture" and "cultural" are used economically in <u>The City and Man</u> and, like Schmitt, Strauss addresses them first. They

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>448</sup> Ibid., p. 18. Strauss refers to Aristotle's "morally good man", or "well-bred man" as the 'hoi kaloikagathoi - hoi aristoi" – pp. 25 – 28, 36, 37 & 39.

mostly occur in the first chapter. Only in addressing them first, according to Strauss, can the *polis* represent a reasonable alternative to them, although it is not possible to make the *polis* a blueprint for a modern solution. In describing Aristotle's Politics, Strauss argues that it was the political philosopher, Socrates, and not the town planner, Hippodamus, who raised the fundamental question, "what is political? or rather what is the polis?", indicating that the city and the political are connected. In taking up the issue of culture, Strauss immediately addresses what is "first for us", as political scientists, because what appears dominant in political science is the concept of culture. For Strauss, this means that the very first things modern readers immediately hear, using their senses, are words such as "culture" and "society" and that they stand as the basis of our authoritative opinions regarding political matters. According to Strauss, in this sense, they have replaced the authority of the *polis*. 450

Before discussing the *polis* as the link to the sixth criterion – the order of the human things – it is necessary to follow Strauss's discussion of the terms, "civilization" and "culture". Unlike Schmitt's reliance on Kantian categories, in <u>The City and Man</u>, Strauss defines "civilization" as the unity of both "society" and the "state", while he defines, "society", as the "web", which comprises individuals striving to obtain the "conditions" for individual happiness. Strauss argues that the "state" merely protects the activities of its members within "society" and remains separate from "society". However, in agreement with Schmitt, Strauss argues that "society" has been replaced with the more comprehensive doctrine - "culture", which can be used in the plural. This

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>449</sup> Ibid., p. 30. The words, "civilized", or "civilization", appear in *three* chapters - p. 30 (twice - chapter one), p. 126 (chapter two) and p. 231 (chapter three). The word, "culture" appears on pp. 2, 30, 33, 34, 35, 38 & 43 (chapter one), p. 153 (chapter three) and p. 230 (chapter three). It is mentioned three times in chapter 3 and on all other occasions it occurs in the *first* chapter of Strauss's book. The word, "civilization", appears only twice in the whole book, once without inverted commas in paragraph 16, p. 30 and once with inverted commas in the 17<sup>th</sup> (central) paragraph of the Aristotle chapter, p. 30. <sup>450</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

means that "culture" has also encompassed "civilization", since "culture", when defined in the plural, rules out any one "culture", which is superior to all other cultures, including Western culture. Given this premise, the resulting cultural relativism including loss of faith in Western Civilization, is what Strauss defines as "the crisis of our time, the crisis of the West". To avoid the demise of Western culture that represents the comprehensive culture, which gives rise to the idea of many equal cultures, where the political is not considered the highest element, Strauss attempts to understand the polis in relation to the goal of the modern state, particularly with regards to the question of the best way of life that was substituted by freedom and equality. 451

According to Strauss, Aristotle argues that the opposite of the *polis*, or the city-state, is not the state itself, but the "tribe" or "nation", which sounds very much like Schmitt's description of the political as groups, particularly the group that forms a nation. Unlike Schmitt, Strauss notices that tribes and nations were considered "barbarian" when compared to the Greek polis, because Aristotle argues that they could not guarantee both "civilization and freedom". 452 By civilization, Strauss means "virtue" and "education", rather than the guarantee of peaceful exchange of "goods and services", which defines the role of the modern state. Strauss believes that Aristotle rejects such a role, equating it to Plato's "city of pigs" in the Republic. Strauss argues that "society", as understood today, has its roots in the competitive buying and selling that gives rise to a community that is equivalent to a market, where the state's role is both "servant" and "protector" to those engaged in exchange within the market-community. At the same time, according to Strauss, virtue and religion are relegated to the private sphere, where they become "supra-political", along with "morality", "art", and "science". In short,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>451</sup> Ibid., p. 1. <sup>452</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

Strauss argues that society and civilization have been replaced by the term, "culture", where culture becomes "the matrix of the state" and the political a "derivative from the In this way, he argues, "culture" is seen as more comprehensive than "economics" or "society". Given the comprehensiveness of culture, he concludes that culture is the true substitute of the *polis*. 453

In defining the comprehensive nature of the political, Strauss traces the word, "political", to its historical and etymological connection to the *polis*, or city, that did not separate itself into state and society, or what we mean by "civilization". Strauss argues that to understand the original meaning of the political, requires a full explanation of the The polis, according to Aristotle, includes both the country and the town, although it is "essentially an urban society". He emphasizes that the farming class is not "the core of the city", implying that the core is an educated, leisured class. Strauss also admits that the "City can be used synonymously with fatherland", but he reminds readers that there is a difference between the "country" and the "city". However, he argues that the best access to the polis, for modern readers, is through the concept, "country". What is very clear, according to Strauss, is that the *polis* cannot be a viable alternative to the modern state. 454

In avoiding Schmitt's reliance on the universalism of modern liberalism, Strauss argues that in contrast to "civilization or culture", the *polis*, although it antedates the former concepts, is equivalent to the modern theoretical unity of state and society and thus, by implication, can guarantee both "civilization and freedom". Strauss does not advocate replacing the modern state with the *polis*, as a practical alternative to the modern nation,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>453</sup> Ibid., pp. 32 & 33. <sup>454</sup> Ibid., p. 30, footnote 40.

or even an emerging universal homogeneous state. Strauss thinks that modern technology precludes any attempt to revive the polis as a better alternative to the modern state. In following Aristotle, Strauss implies that this is so, particularly because the *polis* is not too large and not too small, and partly because everyone knows one another. Furthermore, the city "is the most comprehensive and the highest society since it aims at the highest and most comprehensive good at which any society can aim". According to Strauss, the highest aim of the city is the good represented by happiness. 455 Strauss also suggests that happiness involves friendship. In reply to Schmitt's concentration on enmity in his concept of the political, Strauss centres on friendship among the citizens, especially the "moral virtue" of the leisured class that is natural to the polis. 456 Furthermore, for Strauss's interpretation of Aristotle, the polis is the most complete good for both the individual and the group, since it promotes "the chief purpose of the city" - "the noble life" - that is according to nature. The noblest life turns out to be contemplation, or philosophy. In contrast to the modern state's emphasis on protecting life, liberty and property, Strauss says that Aristotle argues that the polis is aimed at attaining "the highest good", that is "happiness", not in a plural sense, but through the "practice of virtue and primarily of moral virtue". 457

To emphasize the connection between the *polis* and "culture", Strauss gives the reader a short historical account of the development of "culture" in his second division, dedicated to the city and culture, by citing Schmitt's favourite political philosopher with

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>455</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>456</sup> Ibid., pp. 26 & 27. The noble gentry are leisured farmers.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>457</sup> Ibid., pp. 11 & 31. See Strauss, Leo, "A Giving of Accounts: Jacob Klein and Leo Strauss", in Strauss, Leo, <u>Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity</u>, Green, Kenneth Hart, editor, op. cit., p. 465 – "Strauss: Without cities, no philosophers. They are the conditions".

the "double face" – Hegel. In Hegel's book, "Wissenschaftliche Behandlungsarten des Naturrechts" ("Scientific Manner of Treatment of Natural Right"), Strauss argues, that "Plato's and Aristotle's polis" was rendered as "Volk" ("People"), reminding readers that "culture" originally was founded on religion, as seen in Hegel's terms, "Volksgeister" ("Folk-spirits") and "Weltanschauungen" ("World-views"). Strauss presents Hegel arguing, "it is in religion that a nation Volk gives itself the definition of what it regards as the truth". Strauss's purpose in mentioning Hegel is to argue that Aristotle and Hegel place the divine in a very high place in the city or state. However, in the context of Aristotle's political philosophy, Strauss argues, "the true concern with the divine is the knowledge of the divine, i.e. transpolitical wisdom which is devoted to the cosmic gods as distinguished from the Olympian gods". In a response directed at the Catholic Schmitt, Strauss cites the authority of Thomas Aquinas, stating that he encapsulates Aristotle's position in the expression, "reason informed by faith, not natural reason . . . teaches that God is to be loved and worshipped". Schmitt denies that reason is part of the political, or the best way of life. 459

Strauss, in following Aristotle, accepts the importance of the divine law, or sacred beliefs, of the city as the essential starting point of political philosophy. Furthermore, Strauss sees reason as essential in judging the competing faiths. Strauss argues that in investigating "the various forms of divine worship", Aristotle is also "concerned above all with the truth of religion". Thus, Strauss's purpose in mentioning the gods, "Thomas Aquinas" and "the divine" within the original Hegelian concept of "culture", is to highlight Schmitt's observation that modern historical development denies any

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>458</sup> Schmitt, Carl, <u>The Concept of the Political.</u> Schwab, George, trans., op. cit., p. 61. According to Schmitt, Hegel's trilogy of thesis/antithesis and synthesis is a political expression of how quantity miraculously turns into quality - p. 62.

<sup>459</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., pp. 33 & 34. The German "Naturrechts" means "natural right".

"recognition of an order of rank among the various elements of culture", including "the divine", which Strauss implies is "the political element" and the "highest and most authoritative element in human society". 460 As Schmitt indicates in his book, The Concept of the Political, religion, which focuses on the divine, no longer enjoys a privileged place among the modern categories, such as economics. In turning to the divine, defined as conflicting pieties (faiths), Schmitt attempts to restore the sacred as the key to understanding group and national politics. 461 In contrast to Schmitt, Strauss uses the city to recognize the regimes, as "the political order alone as the intended.—". In making his affirmation of the political as practical as possible, by describing it as what citizens look up to, Strauss implies that he satisfies Schmitt's demand that the political has to be "concrete" and beyond "norms", while addressing the sixth criterion relating to "the order of the human things", as the question related to the right way of life, based on "a pure and whole knowledge". 462

Schmitt's and Strauss's interest in the categories, such as moral and culture, links their original discussion to Strauss's final response concerning the political in <u>The City and Man</u>. Strauss's last mention of "culture", in chapter one, appears in the Aristotle fourth division on "nature", i.e. in the first chapter, where he argues that "culture" defined as "derivative issues" has replaced culture as the primary issue. Prior to mentioning culture for the last time, Strauss identifies the modern view that nature is now treated as an "enemy". He states:

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>460</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>461</sup> Schmitt, Carl, <u>The Concept of the Political.</u> Schwab, George, trans., op. cit., pp. 29, 38, 52, 61, 64, 65, 67, 68, 72 & 78.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>462</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., p. 35. Notice Strauss ends his "city and culture", second division oddly. He concludes, "the political order alone as intended.—". One immediately asks, "the intended" what? The beginning of the third division on Aristotle's supposed anti-democratic prejudice suggests that the democratic prejudice treats the "good life" and the "good society" as relative conditions and not the order of things.

"We must reckon with the possibility that the world is the work of an evil demon bent on deceiving us about himself, the world, and ourselves by means of the faculties with which he has supplied us or, which amounts to the same thing, that the world is the work of a blind necessity which is utterly indifferent as to whether it and its product ever becomes known". 463

The context of this quotation centres on Strauss's explanation for the premise of modern philosophy, which requires "the synthesis of dogmatism and scepticism" that leads to hypothesis forming and infinite progress. Strauss's description of the determinism of modern science reminds readers of historical necessity ("destiny") that is the basis of Schmitt's concept of the political, especially relating to biblical sin. However, in contrast to Schmitt's Christian theology, Strauss explains how "blind necessity" now rules the world, arguing that it was the "break with the primary, or natural understanding of the whole", that finally led to the replacement of "the primary issues" by the "derivative issues". Strauss argues that the modern method of science only requires knowing "the concepts, which I consciously make and of which I do not claim more than that they are my constructs". For Strauss, the primary issues are equivalent to "the natural understanding of the whole". He concludes by arguing that nature has been replaced by "the concepts", hinting at Schmitt's own rejection of nature and his acceptance of Kant's dismissal of the ideas, shown in Schmitt's use of the Kantian term "concept", especially in his book title, The Concept of the Political In pointing out his

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>463</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

answer to Schmitt's entanglement with the modern project, Strauss concludes with, "This shift may be illustrated by the substitution of 'culture' for city". Significantly, his statement occurs near the centre of Strauss's fourth division dealing with nature, demonstrating the argument that the city and nature are connected. 464 After the fourth division, in The City and Man, nature as 'the primary understanding of the whole", replaces "culture" as the predominant theme of the book, especially in chapter two, entitled, "On Plato's Republic". The word, "culture" only appears at the very end of the third chapter on Thucydides, in the context of "the interplay of motion and rest" that "enables us to understand, as far as in him [Thucydides] lies, the nature of human life or to become wise". 465

Strauss's final return to "culture" in his Thucydides chapter is to highlight the political, in contrast to the modern concept of "culture". His third last mention of "culture" appears in the context of his demonstrating why Thucydides is "so silent about economic and cultural matters". Here, Strauss points to the importance, for Thucydides, of "the unwritten laws, the divine law, the gods of the city" and the "chaste character of his [Thucydides's] piety". 466 The last two appearances of the word, "culture", refer to "Athenian culture" and why Thucydides was so "severely political", while the final mention of "Athenian culture" includes inverted commas, indicating Strauss's detachment from the expression. In short, for Strauss, true culture is learning about the highest things, or what he calls Thucydides's wisdom of human nature, or "divine law". In turning to the question of knowledge, as the basis of culture – as the order of the human things - Strauss also refers to the art of writing about "the nature of human life",

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>464</sup> Ibid., p. 43. <sup>465</sup> Ibid., p. 230. <sup>466</sup> Ibid., p. 153.

which he argues is synonymous with "becoming wise", meaning that the political is "inseparable from self-knowledge", or political philosophy. 467

In introducing the second division relating to culture and the city, in chapter one of The City and Man, Strauss makes a connection between the city and the country. He states, "Through our understanding of 'the country' we would have a direct access to 'the city', but that access is blocked by the modern equivalents of the 'city' which originate in theory". Strauss's statement takes place in the very short seventeenth paragraph, which is the exact centre of his chapter on Aristotle. Strauss's only other mention of "country", in his Aristotle chapter, takes place in the fifth division on regimes dealing with the "the supremacy of the regime", or *politeia*, and an hypothetical "Fascist". The appearance of "country" takes place after Strauss has explained "the modern equivalents", culture and civilization, that have replaced the city. Towards the end of the first chapter "On Aristotle's Politics", he mentions the word, "partisan" seven times in the context of an allusion to Schmitt's book, Legality and Legitimacy and an hypothetical "Fascist". Strauss uses the last mention of partisan as "the partisan of excellence", or the political philosopher, who judges the goodness and badness of regimes. Strauss, in his introduction to Aristotle's discussion on the change of regimes, includes "patriots" along with "partisans". Strauss defines the partisan as one who recognizes only one city, providing that city is "informed by the regime which he favors". In contrast, Strauss calls those who serve the city under any regime, patriots, who see themselves as good citizens. According to Strauss, Aristotle disagrees with both the partisan and the patriot, since Aristotle argues that a city does not become a new city with a change of regime, because the regime is different from the country.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>467</sup> Ibid., p. 230. This wisdom of political things is found in Thucydides's dualism, motion and rest, Athens and Sparta, war and peace and barbarism and Greekness. Strauss does not mention friend and enemy, but it is mentioned especially in the context of Diodotus's speech – p. 232.

Strauss argues that Aristotle means that "a change of regime is much more radical than the patriots admit but less radical than the partisans contend". In addressing Schmitt's sixth criterion relating to the order of the human things, Strauss attempts to provide political scientists, as well as partisans and patriots, with a standard to judge regimes. The standard that Strauss introduces is Aristotle's "partisan of excellence", who provides an indication when a regime moves from "nobility to baseness" or from the latter to the former. In providing a judge, who decides when a regime is good or bad, Strauss satisfies the first criterion for the affirmation of the political. Strauss also addresses the "legal question", which appears after a change of regime, admitting that Aristotle did not answer legal questions that arose after the change of regimes. Strauss argues that one can figure out from Aristotle the necessary answers to legal problems, because Aristotle was "a sensible man". In giving an example of a legal problem, Strauss turns to tyranny, arguing that in tyrannical regimes, honourable contracts (those benefiting the city) should be recognized and fulfilled by the new regime that overthrows the tyranny. Thus, Strauss's reply to those concerned with legality, and the limits of legality, takes the form of adaptable justice through the actions of the political philosopher, or through the actions of "sensible" readers of Aristotle, who belong to a group – the partisans of excellence. For Strauss, the key characteristic of this group is not faith, but reason, which is guided by the idea of the good and the just. Thus, in responding to Schmitt's concept of the political, Strauss sees justice as essential for judging the various regimes and hence, necessary for the city, as well as demonstrating that the philosophic life of virtue, defined as the search for the ultimate good, is the standard used to recognize good and bad regimes. 468

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>468</sup> Ibid., pp. 47 & 48.

Strauss outlines the city prior to introducing the regimes. In the second last paragraph of chapter one, Strauss argues that "the supremacy of the regime" is understood through the term, "loyalty", where loyalty to the "bare country" is different from loyalty to "the country informed by the regime". For Aristotle, the regime, or what the city looks up to, is a higher form than the country. In addressing Schmitt's failure to understand modern tyranny, Strauss gives an example of a Fascist or a Communist who, desiring to be loyal to the United States ("a liberal democracy"), undermines its regime of liberal democracy, because that person desires to replace it with either a Fascist or Communist regime. Strauss does not draw attention to the aim of the Fascist, or Communist, as being sacred, or highly revered, as he did when mentioning Communism in his "Introduction", but Strauss, in his second example introduces another unidentifiable person, "someone", as one who might hypothetically suggest that by constitutionally changing "the Constitution" the regime "would cease to be a liberal democracy and become either Fascist or Communist". Given this change, "every citizen of the United States" would then be expected to become either a Fascist or a Communist. However, Strauss argues that no sensible person would teach such a doctrine, especially if he, or she, were a loyal liberal democrat, because it would "undermine loyalty to liberal democracy". 469 This lesson is aimed at Carl Schmitt in his failure to remain loyal to liberal democracy. Here, Strauss is referring to Schmitt as an hypothetical liberal democrat, who claims that he wanted to curb the Fascist and Communist threat to Germany by giving the executive more dictatorial power, prior to 1933. 470 Yet, Schmitt gave his full blessing to "the Enabling Act of March 24, 1933", which legally changed the Weimar constitution and gave Hitler dictatorial powers. Even in 1934, after Hitler

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>469</sup> Ibid., pp. 47 & 48.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>470</sup> See Gottfried, Paul Edward, <u>Carl Schmitt – Politics and Theory</u>, op. cit., pp. 28 & 29. Gottfried shows that Schmitt was an enemy of the Nazis prior to 1933 and that he tried to support the constitution against both the Communists and Nazis by appealing to Article 48 of the constitution that "provided for the excise of exceptional powers by the president when a threat to the public order existed".

had killed one of Schmitt's political friends, General Kurt von Schleicher, Schmitt still "spoke of Hitler's 'saving' the new German state". 471 Hence, Schmitt is the "someone" in The City and Man, who teaches that "the Constitution could be constitutionally changed so that the regime would cease to be a liberal democracy and become either Fascist or Communist". 472 Furthermore, like the hypothetical person Strauss mentions, Schmitt also demanded that all citizens be loyal to the new "regime", as seen in his act of joining the Nazi Party in May of 1933. As mentioned previously, in 1941, Strauss had blamed Schmitt for aiding the rise of the Nazis through constant criticism of the Weimar constitution. 473 In The City and Man, and in the context of mentioning a "Fascist", Strauss condemns Schmitt for not knowing "what he is doing", in supporting actions that undermined liberal democracy, because "no one loyal to liberal democracy who knows what he is doing would teach this doctrine precisely because it is apt to undermine loyalty to liberal democracy". 474

This argument is made more credible when one knows the structure of the book, since the discussion of the "Fascist" takes place in Strauss's fifth division dedicated to the regime, the common ground between Schmitt and Strauss. It is no accident that Strauss's discussion of liberal democracy and the "Fascist" is immediately followed by the hidden sixth division, which takes up the issue of the Platonic art of writing, indicating that Strauss, like Plato, is addressing someone special.<sup>475</sup> What makes Strauss's sixth division so difficult to discern, for careful readers, is that it does not appear at the end of a paragraph, as did all the other divisions in Strauss's chapter on

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>471</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>472</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., p. 48. 473 Strauss, Leo, "German Nihilism", op. cit., p. 362.

<sup>474</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., p. 48.
475 On p. 54, and in the 6<sup>th</sup> division on the art of writing, Strauss states, "The model for the good writing is the good conversation", arguing that good writers address "one or more men known to the author".

Aristotle. 476 Instead, it appears just prior to the sentence referring to Schmitt's book, Legality and Legitimacy. More importantly, the sixth division that still falls within Strauss's Aristotle chapter takes up the chief characteristic of the best regime, which both Aristotle and Plato agree upon – that it "necessarily 'lives' in speech". Thus, Strauss's message to Schmitt is that Schmitt did not possess knowledge of the best regime that outlines the limits of the political, and this is the reason why he supported the Nazi regime. According to Strauss, had Schmitt known that the best regime exists only in speech, he would not have given his lovalty to the Third Reich. 477

In addressing Schmitt's failure to recognize the Nazi tyranny, Strauss only mentions "Fascist", or "Fascism", three times in the main body of his book. They appear in the penultimate paragraph of his Aristotle chapter, just prior to mentioning "legality and legitimacy", while "the best regime" occurs five times - three times in the last paragraph that begins his response to Schmitt in the form of Plato's best regime. Again, it is no accident that in the fifth division, regarding regimes and Strauss's discussion of "the partisan", Strauss speaks twice of the "tyrant". In his discussion of partisans and patriots, Strauss's example regarding the status of the legality of contracts when regimes change, refers specifically to "the deposed tyrant". Here, Strauss's argument is that the standard used to judge the contracts made by a tyrant must be justice, or the common good that results from those contracts. In short, Strauss points to justice as a way of judging tyranny, just after mentioning "the partisan of excellence", or what Strauss really means - the political philosopher. 478

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>476</sup> Given that Strauss understood the art of careful writing, it is likely that he structured his 32<sup>nd</sup> and 33<sup>rd</sup> paragraphs to remind readers of his 1932 encounter with Schmitt and Schmitt's 1933 mistake in not realising that the best regime transcends "liberalism" as well as Fascism.

<sup>477</sup> Ibid., pp. 47 - 49. 478 Ibid., pp. 46 & 47.

In the same paragraph, and in the context of mentioning "legitimacy" seven times, Strauss only refers to three legitimate regimes in claiming the neutrality of "natural law". They are: 1) democracy, 2) aristocracy and 3) monarchy. Here, Strauss does not mention tyranny. In contrast to Schmitt, Strauss, in following Aristotle, does not consider tyranny a legitimate regime, and hence, excludes tyranny from his list of legitimate regimes mentioned in the immediate context of the words "legality and legitimacy". In hypothetically speaking of "one" "Someone" and "no one" in the context of the three mentions of "Fascist" or "Fascism", 479 Strauss further implies that he is referring to Schmitt and Schmitt's ignorance of the ultimate lesson of the political, mentioned in Strauss's "Introduction" to The City and Man - "the iron rule of a tyrant". 480 Strauss suggests that Schmitt's support of Hitler, and German Fascism, was the direct result of his ignorance of the nature of tyranny, resulting from his oversight of the true legitimacy of Plato's best regime that is found only in speech. In the last paragraph of "On Aristotle Politics", Strauss uses the word, "contemplation" three times, clearly suggesting the trans-liberal solution he promised in 1932. It is not accidental that Strauss makes his most obvious reference to Schmitt in The City and Man take place in the context of the introduction to the chief characteristic of Aristotle and Plato's best regime, which occurs within the hidden sixth division, related to the art of reading. 481

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>479</sup> Ibid., p. 48. What is odd, is that in the first mention of "Fascist", the word is misspelled (minus an "s" in the first syllable) a fact that has escaped the notice of Strauss's editors, having not been corrected in the various reprints of the book. This is the only misspelled word in <u>The City and Man</u>. Could the missing "s" indicate the first letter of Schmitt's name, given Strauss's observation about mistakes that a great writer makes that would "shame an intelligent school boy"? See Strauss's "On the Forgotten Kind of Writing", in <u>What is Political philosophy? And Other Studies</u>, op. cit., p. 223.

<sup>480</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>481</sup> Ibid., p. 48. Strauss uses the term, "liberal democracy" three times in the context. "Contemplation" is also found three times. In highlighting the difference between liberalism and the polis, Strauss argues that "true happiness" transcends the city (as does liberalism) through virtue, rather than through freedom.

### Conclusion

Chapter five has demonstrated that there is overwhelming evidence that Strauss is addressing Schmitt's criteria in affirming the political, particularly when a reader discovers Strauss's hidden structure of The City and Man. In formulating six criteria from Schmitt's The Concept of the Political, Strauss begins with what is "first for us" at the moment, addressing the concept of culture (as did Schmitt) that appears as the second of seventeen divisions in the book. In tracing culture back to its foundation, particularly to its political foundations, Strauss argues that it is the modern replacement for the polis, or the city. Similarly, by recovering the polis and the regimes, Strauss points towards the best way of life, described as a public goal that is not neutral (criterion three) and "concrete opposition" (criterion two), while introducing an order (the best regime) of the human things, which is based on "pure and whole knowledge". Strauss requires the recovery of the natural *polis* for his second step in the recovery of the Socratic idea of a regime. Once the arguments for the existence of the regimes are produced, Strauss then presents his argument for the existence of "the best regime" as a solution to Schmitt's tendency to leave the political defined as conflicting pious groups or "partisans". Before discussing Strauss's best regime, as his final answer to Schmitt's call for an affirmation of the political, the next chapter of this thesis, chapter six, elucidates Strauss's arguments concerning nature and the Socratic ideas that form the basis of Strauss's answer to Schmitt's sixth criterion.

### **CHAPTER SIX**

### STRAUSS'S RECOVERY OF NATURE AND HUMAN NATURE

#### Introduction

Chapter Six will demonstrate that the Greek idea of "nature" is the foundation to Strauss's answer to Schmitt's criteria for re-establishing the political over the domains of culture, conflicting pieties and economics. Chapter Six will especially address Schmitt's sixth criterion concerning "the order of the human things" and Strauss's call for a return to "undamaged, noncorrupt nature". For Strauss, the recovery of nature presupposes knowledge and the possibility of a reasoned account of the political. Strauss argues that this knowledge takes the form of philosophy that leads to natural right, defined as the quest for the best order, or regime (politeia). This chapter will discuss Strauss's answer to Schmitt's criteria for the affirmation of the political through three themes: 1) the definition of nature, as argued by Aristotle and Plato; 2) Strauss's political interpretation of the Platonic ideas and 3) Thucydides's divine law.

### 1. Strauss's Concept of Nature

Strauss's letter to Schmitt in 1932 provides further evidence that he goes well beyond Schmitt's concept of the political. Strauss, in clarifying Schmitt's concept of the political, explains to Schmitt that "The *tendency* to separate (and therewith the grouping of humanity into friends and enemies) is given with human nature; it is in this sense destiny, period. But the political thus understood is not the constitutive principle of the state, or 'order', but only the condition of the state". It was not until he wrote <u>The City</u>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>482</sup> Strauss, Leo, "Notes on Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*", in Meier, Heinrich, <u>Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss - The Hidden Dialogue</u>, Lomax, Harvey J., trans., op. cit., p. 119.

and Man that Strauss gave his clearest meaning of the "constitutive principle of the state or order" as founded on nature and natural right. 483

Strauss begins his "Introduction" to The City and Man with a reminder that his book is a response to a moral "crisis of the West", arguing that the West had lost "faith" in the principles that guide liberal democracy. Strauss presents The City and Man as an answer to the "crisis" of faith, which is linked to the disappearance of nature that acts as a universal standard for judging regimes. In turning to nature, Strauss endeavours to give an alternative to Schmitt's historical providence that provides a basis for evaluating the regimes. Nevertheless, Strauss does not desire to undermine the biblical Faith of his decent readers, who listen to "the Divine message of the City of Righteousness, the Faithful City". Strauss wants to "consider to what extent man could discern the outlines of that City if left to himself". In his "Introduction" to The City and Man, Strauss announces that his aim is to show that political philosophy "is the rightful queen of the social sciences, the sciences of man and of human affairs". 484

Strauss makes a case for the central importance of the political, defined as "the human things", which is tied to the first criterion regarding the good and evil things. The connection to Schmitt's first criterion regarding "evil" is demonstrated through Strauss's interpretation of the Roman philosopher Cicero, arguing that the "human things" are the "good and bad things", especially the "just and noble things and their opposites". Strauss reminds readers that Cicero speaks of Socrates's turning to the human things as a turn, not from "heaven", but from three things: 1) "the whole nature" 2) "the kosmos" and 3) "the nature of all things". However, in underlining the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>483</sup> Meier, Heinrich, <u>Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss – The Hidden Dialogue</u>, Lomax, Harvey J., trans., op. cit., p. 125, "Letter Two". Strauss's emphasis.

<sup>484</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., p. 1.

universalism of nature, Strauss concludes Cicero's argument stating, "the study of the nature of man is part of the study of nature". 485 Strauss explains that Cicero argues that pre-Socratic philosophy centred on studying "the divine or natural things", but that it had to "be compelled to turn back to human things from which it originally departed". Hence, Strauss argues that there must be an emphasis on taking seriously the authoritative opinions held by the various cities. 486

According to Strauss, the traditional view is that the first to turn to the political were the Greek sophists and not Socrates. In refuting the traditional view, or the conventional view, Strauss uses Plato's Laws. From the Laws, Strauss argues that "nature" was understood by the sophists to be "first things", as "distinguished from human action". The Athenian Stranger, in the Laws, argues that the "first things" were not things at all, yet, they were responsible for "the coming into being and perishing of everything that comes into being and perishes". In explaining the importance of the early Greek discovery of nature, the Athenian Stranger, in Plato's Laws, argues that the opposite of nature is understood as three synonymous expressions: "nomos", "law" and "convention". 487 Strauss relates that the Athenian Stranger explains that the definition of nomos only includes the opinions that humans agree upon, i.e. what they establish in agreement as to the being of things. Strauss argues that nomos depends upon the existence of chance and that convention (nomos) emerges through its being "held" or "accepted" by society. 488 Reminding readers of Schmitt's pious groups, or nations, Strauss explains that the *nomos* is defined as the agreement on the existence of the gods,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>485</sup> Ibid., p. 13. My emphasis. The centre of the three is the "cosmos", which implies "order". In substituting "bad" for Schmitt's word, "evil", Strauss suggests that he does not accept the biblical teaching regarding Original Sin. For Strauss, the philosopher and the noble and good people ("hoi kaloikagathoi - hoi aristoi") are capable of blameless conduct.

<sup>486</sup> Ibid., p. 14. 487 Ibid., p. 14. 488 Ibid., p. 15.

or god, held by a group. 489 Strauss clearly argues that *nomos* does not mean human creation, since he concludes that nomos does not occur by "human making proper". In this way, Strauss explains that the Athenian Stranger is able to reassert the possibility of the existence of the gods, or god, and therefore, is able to support an argument for the affirmation of the political as one based on faith. The Athenian Stranger argues that only the sophists drew the conclusion that the "gods are only by law or convention". In defending Schmitt's affirmation of the political, Strauss excludes him from the class defined as sophists, as the Athenian Stranger argues that political science was not considered a serious study by the sophists, because it had "little to do with nature". Although Schmitt did not distinguish "nature" and "nomos" in his concept of the political, Strauss excludes him from sophistry because of his acceptance of the biblical belief in God's (Divine) "Right" and Original Sin. 490 For Strauss, the biblical God that stresses God's mysterious ways represents the only serious alternative to nature. <sup>491</sup> As someone who does not possess the truth, Strauss tacitly admits he must be open to Schmitt's religious foundations that point to biblical revelation. This is why Strauss continues to address Schmitt's arguments, rather than Schmitt the man, as late as 1964. Nevertheless, Strauss neither thinks that a concept of conflicting faiths provides a useful way of judging defective communities, nor does he think that political life is best served by guidance through faith alone. Instead, Strauss turned to nature, natural justice and human nature as the bundation of the best regime that acts as a standard for political activity.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>489</sup> This explains why Strauss ends his book with the words, "quid sit deus" ("what is a god?"). Strauss argues that Socrates questions the "nomos", and hence, the gods of the city, by asking the fundamental question, what is? By asking such questions concerning the "nomos" demonstrates that the charge of impiety, brought against Socrates, was a just one.

<sup>490</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>491</sup> Strauss, Leo, "Progress or Return? The Contemporary Crisis in Western Civilization", in Strauss, Leo, <u>Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity</u>, Green, Kenneth Hart, editor, op. cit., pp. 116 & 128.

However, in the <u>Laws</u>, the Athenian Stranger argues that the sophists thought the "just things", or the noble things, were part of "*nomos*", or "radically conventional", and that the tyrant's life, defined as having more than others and "lording it over others", was the life "according to nature". <sup>492</sup> For Strauss, the "only political art to be taken seriously", by the sophists, was the art of rhetoric. <sup>493</sup> Nevertheless, Strauss points out that the Athenian Stranger disagrees with the sophists, arguing that there "are things which are just by nature" and subsequently, political science is necessarily "the most serious pursuit" that presupposes the fundamental difference between convention and nature. Believing in divine justice, Schmitt and Strauss are in agreement against the sophists, although Schmitt does not accept natural justice, because he agrees with the modern distinction between history and nature, in which "history (the realm of freedom and of values) is of a higher dignity than nature (which lacks purposes and values)". <sup>494</sup>

The whole foundation of Strauss's Socratic argument in <u>The City and Man</u> regarding "nature", and hence, human nature, stands or falls on the existence of the "soul", according to the evidence given by the Athenian Stranger in the <u>Laws</u>. As Strauss states, "... the soul is not derivative from the body or inferior in rank to it but by nature the ruler over the body". According to Strauss's Stranger, the sophists failed to comprehend the "fundamental difference between body and soul". He goes on to say, "Justice is the common good *par excellence*" and that the "status of the just things depends on the status of the soul". <sup>495</sup> In interpreting Plato's <u>Republic</u>, Strauss argues, "More precisely, knowledge of the virtues derives from knowledge of the human soul:

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>492</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>493</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>494</sup> Ibid. pp. 15 & 16. Divine Right, for Schmitt, is part of fate, or historical destiny, or at best the rewards that await us in heaven.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>495</sup> Ibid., p. 16. This analysis of the <u>Laws</u> takes place in the chapter, "On Aristotle's Politics", indicating Strauss's desire to connect the key political works of Plato with Aristotle's <u>Politics</u>, particularly concerning the best regime.

each part of the soul has its specific perfection". 496 Socrates argues that the soul is comprised of "three kinds of natures" and the same three are also present in "the city", or polis. The three include "desire, spiritedness or anger (440a5, c2), and reason, just as the city consists of the money-makers, the warriors, and the rulers". <sup>497</sup> Thus, the highest part of the soul, the rational part, naturally rules over the lower parts - anger and desire, both in the soul and in the polis. In linking the political to the nature of the soul in his interpretation of Plato's Republic, Strauss, argues, "A man is just if the rational part of his soul is wise and rules (441e)". 498

One needs to read Strauss's essay "On Natural Law" for further insight into what Strauss means by the nature of the soul as presented in Plato's Republic. In turning to the philosopher, whose soul is in the best rational order, Strauss states, "The individual [the philosopher] is well-ordered toward his fellow citizens if he assigns to each what is intrinsically good for him and hence what is intrinsically good for the city as a whole". Although Strauss is initially ambiguous as to whether the philosopher receives the "good" from the city, or the individual citizens from the philosopher, he argues that it is impossible for the philosopher to assign "to each what is good for him by nature" in the existing cities. This implies that only the philosopher receives "what is intrinsically good" ("by nature") from the city. Even with the limitation of philosophic rule in the existing cities, Strauss argues, "this natural order [the ranking of prudence, moderation, justice and courage] is the standard for legislation (Laws 631b-d)". He concludes that "only the wise man or the philosopher can be truly just", through the perfection of the natural order of the soul. More importantly, for Strauss, nature, as seen in the "natural order" of the soul, is the grounding for the philosopher's aim at "the good", as the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>496</sup> Ibid., p. 26. <sup>497</sup> Ibid., p. 109. <sup>498</sup> Ibid., p. 109.

ultimate foundation of political science and the means to legislate good laws in the best city (society). Hence, a reader can work out that the title, The City and Man, means that Strauss intends Socrates to represent the singular "Man", whose natural order of the soul is a model for the (Socratic) best city, or what Strauss calls the best regime. Strauss also implies that the fundamental way of life of Socrates, the search for the truth, would be distinct from the way of life of the city, since the city already possesses the truth regarding the highest things (the gods). 499

According to Strauss's understanding of Plato's Republic in his article "On Natural Law", a city and an individual can only be healthy, if they are in "good order (cf. 444de)". 500 Strauss argues that the "good order" is the "natural order of the virtues as the natural perfections of the human soul (cf. Laws 765e-766a), as well as the natural order of the other things by nature good". Although Strauss does not spell out a list of these virtues, it is obvious that the highest virtue is wisdom. The best political order, according to Strauss's understanding of Plato's Republic, is where philosophers rule absolutely over a communist community, which is "according to nature, as distinguished from and opposed to the conventional order (Republic 456-c; cf. 428e)". However, he stresses that natural communism must be pure through communizing three things: property, women and children, but only applying to "those citizens who give the commonwealth its character". 501 In The City and Man, in his chapter "On Plato's Republic", Strauss agues that communism is limited only to the "upper class", because only they are capable of "music education", "i.e. by a most severe training of the soul" that counters the "desires of the body". Strauss argues that Plato's communism in the

<sup>499</sup> Strauss, Leo, "On Natural Law", in Strauss, Leo, Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy, op. cit., pp. 138 & 139.

<sup>500</sup> Ibid., p. 138. 501 Ibid., p. 139.

Republic is "intelligible only as a reflection of the superiority of philosophy to nonphilosophy", because things of the mind can be shared in common, as opposed to things of the body. In the same context, Strauss concludes, "only the philosopher's life is just". 502 In his article "On Natural Law", Strauss also argues that it is natural right, or natural justice, that supports the best regime, "in which those who are best by nature and training, the wise men, rule the unwise with absolute power, assigning to each of them what is by nature just, i.e. what is by nature good for him". However, Strauss argues that, in the Republic, Plato does not think such a communist society, that turns out to be the best regime, could ever exist. He states, "The actualization of the best regime proves indeed to be impossible or at least extremely improbable; only a diluted version of that political order which strictly corresponds to natural right can in reason be expected". In understanding Plato's blueprint for a perfect society, found in the Republic, as "impossible or at least extremely improbable", Strauss indicates his preference for a moderate, law-abiding regime, such as a liberal democracy. 503 His warnings against Stalinism and "Communism", in the "Introduction" of The City and Man, suggest that Strauss does not take seriously Plato's communist city as the perfect solution to our modern political problems. 504 In the Republic, Strauss notes that Plato's inclusion of the expulsion of all parents, over the age of ten, from an existing city, provides some evidence of the comedy behind Plato's proposals; hence, Strauss's final argument that Socrates's best city "necessarily 'lives' in speech". 505 Nevertheless, the key implication, for Strauss, is that natural justice "determines the best regime", in

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>502</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., pp. 114 & 115.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>503</sup> Strauss, Leo, "On Natural Law", in Strauss, Leo, <u>Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy</u>, op. cit., p. 139. See Strauss's Liberalism Ancient and Modern, op. cit., pp. 3 – 75.

<sup>504</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., pp. 3 – 6. See Strauss, Leo, <u>Political Philosophy: Six Essays</u> by Leo Strauss, Gildin, Hilail, editor, Pegasus, Bobbs-Merrill, U.S.A., 1975, p. 98. Strauss argues that liberal democracy has its roots in classical political philosophy. In Strauss, Leo, Liberalism Ancient and Modern, op. cit., pp. 23 & 24, Strauss praises "democracy" for its openness to "human excellence". This contrasts with Schmitt's criticism of liberal democracy and his praise of dictatorship that excludes the question of justice and human excellence. 505 Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., pp. 49 & 126.

which the philosophers assign "to each of them what is by nature just, i.e. what is by nature good for him". 506 However, in The City and Man, Strauss explains that the potential conflict caused by philosophers assuming dictatorial power is avoided, because the philosophers do not desire to rule and that they would have to be forced to rule the city, which is highly unlikely, since few people recognize the qualities of the philosopher. 507 Thus, in answering Schmitt's reliance on the political as the potential for war through raising the question, "what is Right?", Strauss suggests that the philosopher lives peacefully in contemplation of the best regime in speech, although, as the exception, the philosopher satisfies Schmitt's demand for the *Ernstfall*, or the potential for war. Without philosophy, Strauss seems to imply, many of those most gifted for the life of contemplation may become tyrants and pose a threat to legitimate and peaceful communities. However, in Strauss's interpretation of the best regime that only exists in speech, the philosopher rules absolutely, thus avoiding the potential for war that would exist if the philosopher tried to rule existing cities.

In realizing the impossibility of the natural rule of philosophers over nations or cities, Strauss's political response to Schmitt is one of moderation and attachment to the rule of law. Strauss points out that Socrates confirms that this best regime is "extremely improbable", or "impossible", because human bodies demand "a natural title to rule" – ("Laws 739c; Republic 464d"). According to Strauss's understanding of Plato, the demands of a human body are natural and dominate in all political associations, often causing people to disagree and act unjustly. Hence, for Strauss, human conflict is natural. In accepting Plato's explanation of injustice, Strauss agrees with Schmitt that moral evil will always exist in the world. Furthermore, in Strauss's opinion, forcing

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>506</sup> Strauss, Leo, "On Natural Law", in Strauss, Leo, <u>Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy</u>, op. cit., p. 130

Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., pp. 124 & 125.

ordinary people to live like philosophers would be unnatural and unjust; hence, the necessity of diluting wisdom (the best city in speech), with the consent of the many unwise through the rule of law, or nomos.<sup>508</sup> Although Strauss believes that "Plato and Aristotle" affirmed "the perfect political order" and that their regime was natural, he was convinced that modern technology had made it absolutely impossible even to return to the self-sufficient polis. In rejecting the polis as a practical solution to counter Schmitt's reliance on "concrete" groups, represented by faiths, Strauss, in a private letter to Karl Löwith, confirms that Plato's best regime "s the perfect political order", although the *polis* "cannot be restored". <sup>509</sup>

In the seventh division of <u>The City and Man</u>, which addresses Plato's <u>Republic</u>, Strauss again concludes that Socrates's "just city" in speech cannot be brought into physical According to Strauss, "It is impossible because it is against nature" that being. injustice, ignorance and evil should disappear from the world. Thus, evil is part of nature, and hence, Strauss satisfies Schmitt first criterion regarding the necessity of evil as the foundation of the political. However, Strauss distinguishes between the "just city" (the "city of pigs") and the best regime found in the "good city" – the soul - which is possible and is according to nature. Strauss argues that the "just city" is against nature, since "It is against nature that there should ever be a cessation of evils, for it is necessary that there should always be something opposed to the good, and evil necessarily wanders about the mortal nature and the region here". 510 This quotation is footnoted not to Plato's Republic, but to Plato's Theaetetus. In turning to the general context of Strauss's reference to the Theaetetus, readers of the Theaetetus learn that

<sup>508</sup> Strauss, Leo, "On Natural Law", in Strauss, Leo, Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy, op. cit., p. 139. My emphasis. In The City and Man, Strauss says that "the best regime is not possible" – p. 131.

Löwith, Karl and Strauss, Leo, 'Correspondence Concerning Modernity", Independent Journal of Philosophy, vol. 4, 1983, pp. 107 & 108. Strauss's emphasis. 510 Strauss, Leo, The City and Man, op. cit., p. 127.

Socrates also tells Theodorus that "one ought to try to flee from here as soon as possible" and that "Flight (is) assimilation to a god as far as possible, and assimilation (is) to become just and holy with intelligence", implying that philosophy is the only prudent response to evil in the world.<sup>511</sup> In his footnote to the Theaetetus, after his quotation above in The City and Man, Strauss also asks readers to compare the Theaetetus with the Laws. In Strauss's reference to the Laws, Plato has the Athenian Stranger argue that the soul "is the cause of things good and bad", that the "soul manages" "heaven" and manages all things "that are in motion". In addition, the Stranger asks his friends, Kleinias and Megillus, in conversation, "One or several? Several; I will answer for both of you. Presumably we should assume no less than two, anyway – one that does good, and another capable of doing the opposite". Hence, in turning to nature, and using Plato's Republic, the Theaetetus and the Laws, Strauss argues that there are two forces active in the natural world – good and evil. 512 In other words, Strauss satisfies Schmitt's first criterion on the necessity of "evil" for the affirmation of the political, without excluding the idea of the good. 513

Nevertheless, in contrast to Schmitt's universal enmity, Strauss's emphasis on nature leads to natural friendships, not enmities, since, he argues, what unites human beings in friendship is "the union in pure thought". According to Strauss, Aristotle calls this "the most perfect, the most intimate union" that is possible among friends, a union that transcends cities, places and history (time). 514 Furthermore, in the context of Strauss's discussion of the soul, it is significant that he is silent on enemies, since Socratic philosophy transcends the political in the final analysis, whereas there is no escaping the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>511</sup> Plato, <u>Plato's Theaetetus</u>, Benardete, Seth, trans., University of Chicago Press, U.S.A., 1986, 176a-b, pp. 1.42 & 1.43.

512 Plato, <u>The Laws</u>, Pangle, Thomas L., trans., op. cit., pp. 294 & 295.

513 Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., p. 49. The duality ("2") includes good and evil.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>514</sup> Ibid., pp. 16 & 17.

political for Schmitt, since there is no nature, and no contemplative life, in his definition of the political. For Strauss, Socrates teaches that friendship is natural, although Strauss agrees with Schmitt that there is still a potential for war, seen in the potential conflict between the philosopher and the city and the necessity of warriors in Plato's and Aristotle's best city. Whereas ordinary cities rest on orthodox beliefs, the philosopher questions those views and is seen as a subversive by good citizens, even though the philosopher rules in the best regime in speech. Furthermore, Strauss argues that the philosopher enters the existing cities to lure away young and talented potential philosophers, an activity that the city opposes. The citizens want their talented youth to dedicate themselves to the good of the city, not to the good associated with the philosophic life. Strauss also notes that even in Socrates's best (most just) city, war will not disappear and hence the need for an educated warrior class to defend the city from other cities. <sup>515</sup>

Understanding the hidden structure of <u>The City and Man</u> confirms that Strauss is responding to Schmitt's concept of the political. Strauss's fourth, and central, division of his Aristotle and Plato chapters, i.e. the centre of the seven divisions, specifically addresses "nature" as its theme. The most striking aspect of Strauss's discussion on nature is its concentration on the modern replacement of classical "nature", which Aristotle originally defined as being connected to "happiness", or "optimism". According to Strauss, for Aristotle, the natural inequalities found among human beings, is "proof that the city is the natural association *par excellence*". Strauss argues that only in the city, "one is tempted to say" can the "natural rank" of our "needs" be fulfilled in "the life of excellence". By this, Strauss means that our bodily and spiritual needs can

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>515</sup> Ibid., pp. 96, 110, 112, 123 & 124.

be listed in a hierarchy from least important to most important, the highest being that "man is by nature meant for the life of human excellence", which means the life dedicated to philosophy. 516 For Strauss, this highest "end" in the natural rank of our needs, is "universal", even though it "is very rarely achieved". In the same context of his division on "nature", and in the same paragraph that refers to "the life of human excellence", Strauss first mentions "the best regime", thus connecting the best regime to nature and the life of excellence (philosophy). 517 In contrast to Schmitt's political theology, Strauss argues that certain human beings can be "happy" and good in this life. The key to Aristotle, according to Strauss, is that "nature" is friendly towards human beings and supplies the necessities for the best life. Nevertheless, Strauss does not deny that, "the nature of man is enslaved in many ways so that only very few, and even these not always, can achieve happiness or the highest freedom of which man is by nature capable". Thus, Strauss, in citing Aristotle, concludes that the various laws established by human beings, in the cities, were the result of chance "rather than human reason". The implication is that Socrates had recognized a connection between philosophy ("human reason") and the laws (nomos) of the cities in solving the political problem of who, or what, should rule society. However, in his first chapter of The City and Man, Strauss attempts to give an explanation of what Socrates meant by "human reason". According to Strauss, the relationship between the city and philosophy ultimately defines "human reason" through a new interpretation of Socrates's discovery of the ideas.518

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>516</sup> Ibid., p. 41. <sup>517</sup> Ibid., p. 44. <sup>518</sup> Ibid., pp. 41 & 42.

### 2. Nature and the Platonic Ideas

To comprehend Strauss's argument supporting a return to nature, via what appears first, as the universal guide to the political, one needs to examine his interpretation of Plato's "ideas". The ideas are Strauss's political substitute for Schmitt's reliance on fate, or destiny, as the order of things and serve as his link between *nomos* ("men's opinions") and nature. In the seventh division dealing with Plato's Republic, Strauss claims that no one, so far, has made the "doctrine of ideas" understandable, by giving it "a clear account". The reason that Strauss gives, is that "the doctrine of ideas" is "very hard to understand". Without stating that he will give "a clear account", Strauss presents his arguments concerning the ideas as those clarifying their "central difficulty". Strauss's explanation of the ideas as problems takes shape in three statements. An "idea" is 1) "primarily the looks or shape of a thing", implying 2) "a kind or class of things which are united by the fact that they all possess the same looks, the same character or power, or the same nature"; and 3) "therewith it means the class-character or the nature of the things belonging to the class in question". Strauss means that things can be placed in separate groups through shared characteristics by asking the question, "what is something?", or what Strauss means by trying "to find out 'What' or the 'nature' of a thing or a class of things". By raising the fundamental question (what is something?) and in discovering that it belongs to a distinct group, or class of things, qualifies that thing to be called an idea. For example, in answering the question regarding the nature of justice, Strauss indicates that the idea of justice – the distinct political virtue – can be called "the idea of justice", because it means that it is according to nature. 519

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>519</sup> Ibid., pp. 119 & 120. My emphasis. In reducing the ideas to Hippodamus's "3", Strauss indicates that his explanation of the ideas is adequate, but not perfect.

In raising the question, "what is political?" in his first chapter on Aristotle, Strauss continues the question raised by Schmitt in 1932. In response, Strauss returns to fourth century B.C. Athens to remind Schmitt of the chief character in Plato's Republic -Socrates. Strauss points to Aristotle's discussion on the failure of the first political philosopher, the town planner, Hippodamus, to understand the political as "entirely Strauss argues that Hippodamus's quest for "clarity and according to nature". simplicity", together with his ambition, stopped him seeing that "the political things are in a class by themselves". Strauss implies that Hippodamus did not discover the Socratic ideas defined as the division among the various classes of things. Strauss highlights Hippodamus's plan to reward innovation, where inventors of useful things for the city were to be rewarded. Strauss argues that Hippodamus failed to understand that political stability required that the law (nomos) must not be changed and that its being obeyed, and respected, had something to do with long established customs. Strauss argues that "The law, the most important instrument for the moral education of 'the many', must then be supported by ancestral opinions, by myths – for instance, by myths which speak of the gods as if they were human beings", or what Strauss calls "civil theology". The reason Strauss gives is that the "city as a whole is characterized by a specific recalcitrance to reason" and needs a special kind of rhetoric. This partly explains why philosophy has to become political, as it must protect the divine opinions found in the city. In this way, Strauss intends to emphasize the importance of "ancestral opinions", for the health of all societies. Here, Strauss is in agreement with Schmitt regarding the significance of the sacred opinions of the cities in defining the political. Yet, Strauss also realizes that the good life is the philosophical life that questions those sacred opinions. Thus, in raising questions regarding the most important opinions of the city, the philosopher undermines the city's respect for law and order. To overcome this

problem, Strauss implies that the philosopher needs to exercise caution in the way he, or she, speaks and writes in public. 520

Strauss's general caution may be one reason why he returns to the moral opinions of the city to re-establish political philosophy, but it is not the most important reason. Strauss's interpretation of the "what is" question elucidates the "essential" differences among the things (opinions) that come to light, particularly in political life. He further argues that the whole of things is made up of parts, or what he calls "classes of being". Strauss understands that the true cause of things is always in "the class itself", confirming that the "class character, is the cause par excellence". This is what Strauss means when he examines Aristotle's return to "common sense", or to "sanity", seen in the "heterogeneous parts" that first come to light as "men's opinions". According to Strauss, these opinions have "a certain order" and the most important ones are the "authoritative opinions", representing the law that "makes manifest the just and noble things". Strauss also argues that the laws are the laws of the city and represent "the divine things" of the gods and that Socrates, noted for his piety through his "knowledge of ignorance", did not investigate "the divine things", but only "the human things" found in the law (nomos). This means that Socrates was "compelled to go the way from law to nature, to ascend from law to nature", but with "caution" and with a new "awareness", or prudence, since questioning the law undermines the law. 521

In turning to the law (nomos), Strauss admits that Socrates noticed that authoritative opinions contradicted one another and that he was "compelled" to move cautiously beyond the important opinions back to "nature" via "dialectics", or the art of friendly

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>520</sup> Ibid., pp. 19 & 22. <sup>521</sup> Ibid., pp. 19 - 22.

conversation. The nature behind opinion became obvious, in speech, if the opinion examined contained no contradictions in the argument. However, Strauss stresses that Socrates was only concerned with "the human things", primarily regarding justice and nobility and how they related to nature. In turning only to "human wisdom" Strauss maintains that, for Socrates, there was no final knowledge of the whole and hence, "only partial knowledge of parts" and this meant that political philosophers were not able to transcend "the sphere of opinion". By this he means they were always forced to return to the fundamental question - "what is something?" - which also included examining the most authoritative opinions of the city. Strauss argues, since the whole is elusive, "the beginning or the questions retain a greater evidence than the end or the answers". Strauss argues that the starting point of political philosophy must include an investigation of the divine opinions of the pre-philosophic city. This is Strauss's common ground with Schmitt's opinion that the political is connected to the various faiths of the cities. In order to respond to Schmitt, on the grounds of the sacred opinions of the city, Strauss turns to Thucydides, where the divine law of nature confronts the divine law, which represents the ancestral (divine) opinions of the pre-philosophic city. 522

## 3. Thucydides's Divine Law

In his essay, "Progress or Return?", Strauss argues that, "it is necessary to consider the right way as the divine law *theios nomos*" and that the quest for first things becomes the scientific investigation of "a natural order". He indicates that "the divine law" (sacred

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 $<sup>^{522}</sup>$  Ibid., pp. 19 – 21 & 241. On p. 241, Strauss defines the first opinions that come to light in the city as ones that are "inherent in the city as such, in the pre-philosophic city", i.e. "according to which the city sees itself as subject and subservient to the divine in the ordinary understanding of the divine or looks up to it".

ancestral custom) is "only the starting point, the absolutely essential starting point, for Greek philosophy, but it is abandoned in the process", and if retained, only done so for the education of the people. 523 Strauss suggests that Thucydides's presentation of "the divine law" can refer to philosophic "interplay of motion and rest", as opposed to "the divine law" that points to the sacred ancestral customs of a city or society. 524 The philosophic notion of "the divine law" is one based on nature that is similar to religion, as it is universal. It is crucial to recognize that Strauss distinguishes "the divine law", regarding the ancestral customs of a city, from the "the divine law" of nature as part of his response to Schmitt, who only sees the political in terms of highly esteemed faiths. Strauss indicates that Socrates and Thucydides were part of the "spirit of daring innovation" that included "active doubt of the divine law", although the divine law provided the link to the divine, or what Strauss calls Thucydides's "wisdom". In understanding the relationship between "the divine law" (ancestral piety) and "the divine law" of human nature in Thucydides, according to Strauss, requires that one becomes "wise oneself" and can "recognize wisdom in others". 525

In his article, "Preliminary Observations on the God in Thucydides' Work", Strauss refers to the philosophic notion of the divine law as "the divine" ("to theion"), but admits that Thucydides does not give a "precise meaning of the expressions" of "the divine law" and "the divine", except that Thucydides "clearly disapproves of breaches of the divine law, whereas he refrains from passing judgment on the Athenians' theology as stated by their ambassadors on Melos". The Melians had once been Athens's ally and were part of the Athenian empire, but now desired their independence

<sup>523</sup> Strauss, Leo, "Progress or Return? The Contemporary Crisis in Western Civilization", in Strauss, Leo, Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity, Green, Kenneth Hart, editor, op. cit., pp. 112, 113 & 114. I have corrected the misspelling of "theos" to "theios".

<sup>524</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., p. 161. 525 Ibid., p. 231.

from Athens. The Athenians insisted that they must submit to Athens, the greater power, or die. The Athenian argument is that weak cities must submit to more powerful cities. 526 In The City and Man, Strauss argues that Thucydides accepts the divine law of nature, which supports "the natural right of the stronger", described by Strauss as "a universal doctrine" that applies to both Sparta and Athens. Strauss also thinks Thucydides means that "the natural right of the stronger" also points to the limits of a city's expansion and that the Spartan regime had an "invisible" empire, which it had established "much earlier than the Athenian empire". He argues that this "natural right of the stronger" did not always lead to an expansionist policy and did not undermine Sparta's moderation. Strauss believes the Spartan empire had reached "its natural limits" and her empire was no longer "an object of surprise and offence" to other Greek cities. In the same context, Strauss even suggests that the famed moderation of the Spartans was based on a natural cause – the fear that her large number of slaves would revolt. Spartan leisure, needed for the pursuit of the art of war, was supplied by her domination of a very large group of slaves (Helots). Thus, Strauss argues that Thucydides teaches that nature provides an order of things, or a divine law, which can be recognized through studying the political affairs of cities, such as Sparta and Athens. Although Strauss points out that Thucydides is sympathetic to the ancestral beliefs supporting decent political life, he argues that Thucydides's understanding of politics is based on nature, especially human nature. 527 However, Thucydides's truths about nature were for the select few, or those considered "wise". Strauss sees Thucydides's whole work as an emphasis on "becoming wise oneself" in order that "one can

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<sup>526</sup> Strauss, Leo, "Preliminary Observations on the Gods in Thucydides' Work", in Strauss, Leo, <u>Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy</u>, op. cit., p. 96.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>527</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., pp. 191 & 192. In referring to "the Helots", Strauss cites Thucydides: VIII 40.2, 24.4; I 101.2, 118.2; IV 41.3, 80.3-4 & V 14.3.

recognize wisdom in others". 528 This explains Thucydides's caution in presenting the nature of things. Robert Bartlett suggests that Thucydides's respect for "the divine law", or "the depth of the human attachment to nobility and justice", is essential for the health of political life, because "most individuals, let alone whole cities" cannot understand "the world in terms of nature or necessity and compulsion". He argues that, if Thucydides's divine law is true, i.e. there is a natural right of the stronger as argued by the Athenians at Melos, then Thucydides's support for the divine law relating to the ancestral laws becomes essential in preventing great injustices among the cities, to say nothing of a degeneration into the chaos of civil war. He observes that "the divine law supports respect for the human law" and a belief in the gods, in terms of punishment and restitution, is essential for the survival of a community, suggesting that part of Thucydides's "humanity or generosity" was "to see to it that all do not understand themselves to act on the basis of shrewd calculation, nor perhaps even on that of selfinterest rightly understood". 529

In The City and Man, Strauss uses the words, "the divine law" to refer to two different things. The meaning of "the divine law" can relate to the philosophic understanding of nature, especially of motion and rest, while Strauss also uses "the divine law" to refer to the bonds of society, such as customs and prohibitions, which are linked to the gods. Regarding the philosophic definition of the divine law, he states, "One could say that according to the Athenians this law is the true divine law, the law of the interplay of motion and rest, of compulsion and right, compulsion obtaining among unequals and right obtaining among cities of more or less equal power". 530 In accepting Thucydides's

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>528</sup> Ibid., p. 231.

Bartlett, Robert C., <u>The Idea of Enlightenment - A Post-Mortem Study</u>, University of Toronto Press, Canada, 2001, pp. 102 & 105.

Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., p. 187. My emphasis.

divine law that points to a universal human nature, Strauss satisfies Schmitt's criterion that calls for the recognition of the *Ernstfall* (the potential for war) and the problem of "Right" seen in Strauss's rare use of "the natural right of the stronger". 531 Thucydides, according to Strauss, sees the desire to rule, and accumulate an empire, as something natural and part of human nature, but the same universal rule, described as the divine law, also defines the limits of empire. It does so, Strauss believes, by showing the natural limits that human beings can strive for, and thus points to what is right. 532 However, he warns his readers that "If however the divine law properly understood is the interplay of motion and rest, one must study his work in the light of the question of how that divine law is related to the divine law in the ordinary understanding". <sup>533</sup> The best case study of the relationship between "the divine law" (ancestral customs) and "the divine law" (relating to nature) is Strauss's discussion of the disaster at Mycalessus. 534

In contrast to Schmitt's reliance on an historical necessity that excludes justice, Strauss concludes that Thucydides "clearly disapproves of breaches of the divine law", as seen in the example of the mass murder of school children and all the inhabitants at Mycalessus. Strauss argues that Thucydides condemns the actions of a group of Athenian allies (Thracian mercenaries), who acted in a way that was against the customs of any civilized city. Strauss refers to the killings as a "lamentable disaster" and one that involved "senseless and cowardly butchery of women, children and beasts", indicating that the killings were a breach of the divine law, or ancestral customs.<sup>535</sup> Nevertheless, in total contrast, Strauss points out that Thucydides does not judge the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>531</sup> Ibid., p. 191.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>532</sup> Ibid., pp. 191 & 193.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>533</sup> Ibid., p. 161.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>534</sup> Ibid., p. 150. <sup>535</sup> Ibid., p. 150. See Thucydides's history: VII 29.4 – 5, 30.3.

"theology" that the Athenians used in convincing the Melians to surrender or die. 536 It seems that Strauss thinks that Thucydides distinguishes "senseless" killing from calculated killing, given that the Athenians wanted to make the Melians an example for other cities wishing to be independent of Athenian power. In another part of the chapter, Strauss again refers to the disaster at Mycalessus, but this time he only mentions "the murder" of "the children attending a Greek school" in the context of writing about the "most savage and murderous barbarism" that was still present in the build up of "Greekness", or civilization. Furthermore, Strauss, in only referring to "the children attending a Greek school", implies that the murder of school students was an attack on knowledge itself, the very thing that defines Athenian wisdom and greatness. In the same context of mentioning the school children, Strauss states, "The peak of Greekness is the peak of humanity". 537 Previously, in his section entitled, "The Case for Athens: Daring, Progress, and the Arts", Strauss had concluded that "human wisdom rather than anything else is the core of Greekness". Thus, even though Strauss argues that the unjust action of the mercenaries, in the pay of the Athenians, was against the law (nomos) of civilized Athens, he also suggests that it was an unnatural act that attacked the very soul of humanity – Greek education, defined as the peak of human wisdom 538

In addition to Strauss's first mention of the school children and inhabitants of Mycalessus, Strauss argues that Thucydides is sympathetic to those obeying "the divine law", or those devoted "to law-bred virtue", such as the Athenian leaders, Nicias and

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<sup>536</sup> Strauss, Leo, "Preliminary Observations on the Gods in Thucydides' Work", in Strauss, Leo, <u>Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy</u>, op. cit., p. 96.

<sup>537</sup> Strauss, Leo, The City and Man, op. cit., p. 157.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>538</sup> Ibid., pp. 158 & 230. The fact that Strauss refers to the murder of the school children as barbaric, shows that, for Thucydides, barbarism is always present in history, since barbarism is a part of human nature that is not eliminated by the development of civilization and *nomos*.

Demosthenes, who were involved in the Sicilian invasion. Upon capturing Nicias and his "fellow commander, Demosthenes", the Sicilians killed them. Strauss suggests that Nicias and Demosthenes, as followers of "the divine law", or ancestral customs, did not deserve their "fate". In raising the question of the unjust death of both Athenian leaders, Strauss argues that the issue Thucydides raises is one "between the dedication, guided by law and surely also by divine law, to virtue and a good end, between desert and fate" that "points to the rule of just gods". After mentioning the "rule of just gods", Strauss suddenly drops his discussion on the role of the gods in determining the fates of However, Strauss implies that, according to Thucydides, given the individuals. undeserved fate of both pious leaders, it is apparent that just gods do not rule. A reader of Strauss's discussion on Nicias and Demosthenes's fate may also reach a conclusion that Thucydides did not believe the gods ever existed. 539

Nevertheless, in the second section of chapter three, devoted to the divine law, Strauss admits that the "first impression" a reader receives is that Thucydides's horizon is the city's horizon, described as "the unwritten laws, the divine law", which Strauss identifies with "the gods of the city". In implying that Pericles disregarded "the divine law" in his Funeral Speech, Strauss draws attention to Thucydides's order of events, where Pericles's speech is immediately followed by the plague that particularly affected the Athenians. Strauss also notes that the Melian dialogue is immediately followed by the Athenian disaster in Sicily, suggesting to readers that, according to Thucydides, breaches of "the divine law" are severely punished. 540 However, it is not the gods who punish those who breach "the divine law", but rather the divine law of nature, or what Strauss refers to as Thucydides's understanding of "the true divine law, the law of the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>539</sup> Ibid., p. 150. <sup>540</sup> Ibid., p. 153.

interplay of motion and rest, of compulsion and right". 541 Strauss argues that Thucydides thought that excessive greed and the concern for one's private good were the human (natural) reasons why the Athenians lost the Sicily campaign. 542 According to Strauss, Thucydides's examination of the human causes made him "a philosophic historian", whose understanding is "not radically alien to that of Plato and Aristotle". 543 Thus, Strauss sees a common link throughout the three thinkers, particularly regarding the existence of nature that transcends history and provides an alternative to Schmitt's belief in Original Sin. 544

Strauss's Thucydides chapter demonstrates that the six criteria for the affirmation of the political are satisfied by a political historian, who "sees political life in its own light" and examines "actual cities, statesmen, commanders of armies and navies, citizens and demagogues as distinguished from founders and legislators". Nature provides a content that is not neutral and one that offers an answer to the question of right, particularly regarding the natural right of the stronger and the natural right associated with wisdom. In choosing Thucydides as the third thinker in The City and Man, Strauss comes closest to Schmitt's concept of the political as potential war among concrete groups, or nations, with different pieties. This is most evident in the war between Athens and Sparta, which Strauss calls the "most intense" and "bloody war both foreign and civil", where groups are involved in "life and death struggles". 545 Furthermore, in Strauss's introduction to his analysis and discussion of Thucydides, he uses Schmitt's favourite

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>541</sup> Ibid., p. 187. See also pp. 159 & 230. On pp. 228 & 229, Strauss says "not the gods but nature sets limits to what the city can reasonably attempt".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>542</sup> Ibid., p. 167. Hermocrates saw clearly the Sicilian "enemy by nature" in the Athenian "desire for the wealth of all Sicily". On p. 199, Strauss argues that the Sicilian invasion "could have succeeded but for the fact that Pericles' successors were concerned more with their private good than with the common good".
<sup>543</sup> Ibid., p. 236.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>544</sup> Ibid., p. 153. <sup>545</sup> Ibid., p. 139.

thinker on the political, Thomas Hobbes, to confirm Thucydides's credentials as an excellent authority on the political. In the eighth division of <u>The City and Man</u>, entitled, "1. Political Philosophy and Political History", Strauss seems to remind Schmitt that, "when the tradition stemming from Aristotle was being decisively shaken, Hobbes turned from Aristotle to Thucydides". Strauss also points out that, for Hobbes, Thucydides was "the most politic historiographer that ever writ" and that, as an historian, he "presents the universals silently". Strauss believed that Hobbes considered Thucydides to be a philosophic historian, particularly because Thucydides argues that universal human nature explains politics at its most intense. <sup>546</sup>

If human nature does not change, as Strauss's interpretation of Thucydides shows, then universalism, in the form of nature, takes on the same meaning that it had for Schmitt regarding Original Sin and historical providence. The difference between Schmitt's support for historical providence, i.e. destiny or fate as the foundation of the political and Strauss's argument for nature, is reaffirmed by Strauss in recognizing Thucydides's distinction between "nomos", or convention, and "physis", or nature, the same distinction that Aristotle and Plato made. Strauss argues the case for Thucydides's acceptance of the distinction between nature and convention (nomos) in the sixteenth division, entitled, "9. The Questionable Universalism of the City", using the centre of Diodotus's speech that argues, "Men do not realize that punishment does not deter men from crimes because nature compels men to commit crimes or because nomos is powerless against physis. They expect more from nomos now than in the olden times". In focusing on Diodotus's speech to the Athenians, Strauss argues that Diodotus is a mask for Thucydides, stating, "Still, Diodotus' speech reveals more of Thucydides

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>546</sup> Ibid., pp. 143 & 144.

himself than does any other speech". Hence, Strauss argues that Thucydides understands human actions in terms of an unchangeable human nature. Strauss points out that Thucydides does not believe that human beings are "wiser" or "gentler" "than they were in older times", because of their *physis* or nature. This is the same message Strauss gives in his discussion on the murder of the school children at Mycalessus. Strauss argues that, according to Thucydides, cities do progress in terms of art that give rise to "power and wealth", but "The progress of art is accompanied by a progress of *nomos* – of law doing violence to nature, if only concealing nature". Strauss concludes that Thucydides argues that "The belief in progress must be qualified with a view to the fact that human nature does not change", 547 thus reminding readers of Strauss's "Introduction", where he warns readers that "an unchangeable human *nature* might set absolute limits to *progress*". According to Strauss's understanding of Thucydides, in recognizing universal human nature, one must discover the difference between the law (*nomos*) and nature (*physis*). 548

In specifically addressing human nature, Strauss discusses the natural cause of the Athenian disaster in Sicily as one relating to greed and the fact that the successors of Pericles were "concerned more with their private good than with the common good". Strauss argues that "the Sicilian expedition would have succeeded if the Athenian *demos* had trusted Alcibiades (VI 15.4)", although Strauss suggests that the very nature of the Athenian democracy, that includes an attachment to piety, dooms the attempt to conquer Sicily. Strauss argues that "not indeed the gods, but the human concern with the gods, without which there cannot be a free city, took terrible revenge on the

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>547</sup> Ibid., pp. 231, 234 & 235. See Thucydides: III 45.

<sup>548</sup> Ibid., p. 7. My emphasis.

<sup>549</sup> Ibid., p. 199. Their aversion to making Alcibiades a tyrant is supported in their myth about the foundation of Athenian democracy that required the expulsion of the tyrant Hippias.

Athenians". 550 Thus, Strauss agrees with Schmitt that piety is an important characteristic necessary for the freedom of all cities. However, Strauss points out that Thucydides understands piety as part of human nature, rather than something that exists because there are gods. Strauss's interpretation of Thucydides demonstrates that the rulers of Melos rejected the philosophic insight into the nature of human beings, described as the divine law, just as it was rejected by the uneducated Athenian demos in agreeing to invade Sicily, with Nicias as a commander. Strauss further demonstrates that the Athenians acted like Melians in appointing the extremely pious Nicias, the parallel to Melian leadership, to give their invasion of Sicily legitimacy in the eyes of the gods. Strauss also implies that the tyrannical Alcibiades might have won the battle for Sicily, if the Athenian demos consistently supported the divine law regarding the right of the stronger by nature. However, the same divine law of human nature forced Alcibiades to accept a dual leadership with a man dedicated to the divine law of the city. The consequences were, of necessity, tragic. Strauss suggests that forcing the joint rule of nomos (Nicias) and physis (Alcibiades) in the face of the Ernstfall (the invasion of Sicily) meant disaster for the Athenians in Sicily.

In highlighting the problem of human nature, Strauss also raises the issue of the political problem of *eros*, or passionate desire, by focusing on Alcibiades's and the Athenian ambition for empire, as well as their greed for the wealth of Sicily. Strauss had established, in his chapter "On Plato's Republic", the goodness of *eros* in pursuing the truth, or the philosophic life, but in his Thucydides chapter, Strauss discusses its political consequences. Strauss's argument in the fourteenth division, entitled "7. The Dialogue on Melos and the Disaster in Sicily", is not a discussion of the gods, but a

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>550</sup> Ibid., p. 209.

discussion of excessive desire, and that "having more at the expense of other cities", encouraged the city of Athens to possess an empire. This injustice, caused by the unlimited desire for wealth, led to Athens becoming a tyrant city. At the same time, Strauss argues that unrestrained *eros* incited individual citizens to develop the same desire at "the expense of his fellow citizens", undermining the common good within Athens itself. In contrast to the Athenian *eros*, Strauss believes that Thucydides seems to "support the 'Spartan' praise of moderation and of the divine law", but that Thucydides did not accept such praise "in the last analysis". 551 Strauss contends that Thucydides believed that the "grandest imperial enterprise ever undertaken", namely, the invasion of Sicily, would have been successful had the Athenians allowed Alcibiades to become "a tyrant". 552 Nevertheless, Strauss argues that political eros leads to tragedy, because "eros is of necessity tragic or, as Plato seems to suggest, the city is the tragedy par excellence". 553 Unlike philosophic eros that aims at knowing more about nature, Strauss implies that political *eros* leads to the acquisition of material things that eventually promotes enmity and leads to war. In this sense, it is tragic, and comes close to Schmitt's concept of the political as the potential for war among groups. Furthermore, Strauss implies that the Athenians believe that the best way of life is found in the possession of an empire and in the pursuit of unlimited wealth. In this way, Strauss confirms Schmitt's friend and enemy concept, since the Athenians consequently accumulated many enemies, and this led to war. However, unlike Schmitt, Strauss adds the dimension of *eros* to his explanation of the political that is linked to human nature. Strauss also demonstrates that it is a factor in recognizing the political (the quest for the best way of life) both in ordinary political life and in the pursuit of philosophy.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>551</sup> Ibid., pp. 196 & 197.
<sup>552</sup> Ibid., p. 199.
<sup>553</sup> Ibid., p. 226.

Although *eros* is an important part of Strauss's interpretation of Thucydides's teaching regarding the political exploits of the Athenians, Strauss again confirms that it was human nature that caused the Athenian disaster in Sicily. For Strauss, it was the election of the pious follower of the divine law (ancestral beliefs), Nicias, "who came closest to holding the 'Spartan' or 'Melian' view", and not the impiety of the erotic Alcibiades that sealed the Athenian fate in Sicily. Part of the problem, according to Strauss, was that both Alcibiades and Nicias were concerned with their private good that reflected the workings of divine law, or human nature. In Strauss's opinion, Nicias could have saved the Athenian army in Sicily by leading it back to Athens, but failed to do this, fearing that he would be blamed for the disaster in Sicily and be put to death. Strauss suggests that the Athenians would have charged him with treason, "having been bribed by the enemy". In a rare mention of "enemy" and "enemies" - the crux of Schmitt's concept of the political – Strauss relates that Nicias knew "the natures of the Athenians", preferring to remain in Sicily and "die at the hands of the enemies as an individual ('privately') rather than to perish through the Athenians ('publicly') on a degrading charge and unjustly (VII 47-48)". Thus, Strauss implies that the Athenian demos was really Nicias's mortal enemy, just as it was Alcibiades's enemy, and that knowledge of what constitutes the most deadly enemies is based on knowing the "natures" of those enemies, rather than in accepting Schmitt's definition as the potential for war among groups with conflicting faiths. 554

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>554</sup> Ibid., pp. 198 & 200. In the same discussion of Nicias, Strauss uses Schmitt's key word, "legitimate" in referring to "man's more legitimate concern for his safety and honour which comes into conflict with public service". Strauss immediately cites a footnote to "Machiavelli, *Discorsi* I 28-31" that deals with the vice of ingratitude.

## Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that Strauss does address Schmitt's six criteria, especially the articulation of "the order of human things from a *pure and whole* knowledge". By pointing to nature, or human nature, as the universal ordering principle, as presented by Aristotle, Plato and Thucydides, Strauss argues that there is a separation between *nomos* (the law) and *physis* (nature). In providing a new interpretation of the Platonic ideas, Strauss demonstrates that the access to nature is through the investigation of conventions (*nomos*), made especially clear in Thucydides's discussion of the connection between "the divine law", or ancestral piety, and "the divine law" that is the outcome of a philosophic account of human nature. Before recovering the best regime that can be found in all places and at all times, as a reply to Schmitt's sixth criterion, Strauss had to establish the authority of universal "nature" and its link to human things, especially to the political, or the question of the best way of life.

### **CHAPTER SEVEN**

## THE POLITICAL AS SOCRATES'S BEST REGIME

#### Introduction

Chapter seven will demonstrate that Strauss recovers Socrates's best regime in order to answer Schmitt's call for the affirmation of the political, which can be defined as a way of life, or regime. Strauss's interpretation of the best regime provides a universal standard of the political that satisfies all six criteria outlined in Strauss's "Comments" on Schmitt's The Concept of the Political. This chapter will further demonstrate that Strauss responds to Schmitt's concept of the political by examining 1) what Strauss means by the best regime and 2) how Strauss uses the best regime to respond to Schmitt's argument regarding the potential for war.

## 1. The Best Regime

Strauss's new prefaces to his books are extremely clear and helpful in demonstrating his understanding of fundamental issues.<sup>555</sup> A few years before his death, Strauss wrote a new preface to his 1953 edition of Natural Right and History in which he clarifies his difference from other thinkers including, by implication, Schmitt. In the final paragraph, Strauss indirectly outlines his fundamental disagreement with Schmitt, and others, who appeal for an affirmation of the political that does not take into account natural right and the idea of the good. He states:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>555</sup> See Strauss, Leo, "Preface to Hobbes Politische Wissenschaft" in Strauss, Leo, <u>Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity</u>, Green, Kenneth Hart, editor, op. cit., p. 453, where Strauss, in a new "Preface" for his German translation of his Hobbes book, openly describes Schmitt's significance in strengthening his "interest in Hobbes".

"Nothing that I have learned has shaken my inclination to prefer 'natural right', especially in its classic form, to the reigning relativism, positivist or historicist. To avoid a common misunderstanding, I should add the remark that the appeal to a higher law, if that law is understood in terms of 'our' tradition as distinguished from 'nature', is historicist in character, if not in intention. The case is obviously different if appeal is made to the divine law; still, the divine law is not the natural law, let alone natural right". 556

In this "Preface", Strauss relates that throughout his life he never strayed from his "inclination" to natural right, or justice, in "its classic form", in preference to "the divine law". As Strauss concludes, "the divine law is not the natural law, let alone natural right". By "the divine law", Strauss means the ancestral laws that are based on either biblical faith or attached to the gods of the various societies. In arguing that Strauss's preference for justice, or natural right, as found in the best regime, is the core of his answer to Schmitt, one needs to examine the best regime in terms of "its classic form". Its "classic form" comes to light most clearly in his book, The City and Man, as his most comprehensive reply to Schmitt's demand for the affirmation of the political taking into account the six criteria. Strauss indicated that the difference between Schmitt and him involved answering the question regarding the right way of life — i.e.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>556</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>Natural Right and History</u>, op. cit., p. vii. Since Strauss died in 1973, these are his final words on the central importance of, and his "inclination" to, "natural right", especially "its classic form" in his political philosophy. Strauss argues that his view regarding natural right was "confirmed by the study of Vico's *La scienza nuova seconda*" – a book that Strauss claims reconsiders natural right.

either a return to faith as the basis of the political, or a return to nature and natural right in the form of the best regime. 557

Socratic political philosophy, as represented by Strauss's interpretation of Aristotle, Plato and Thucydides, provides an alternative to Schmitt's reliance on political theology, or conflicting faiths that are connected to history. Furthermore, in his 1971 "Preface", Strauss states that "the last ten years" of his life have been dedicated to the study of "classic natural right" with particular emphasis on "Socrates". Therefore, since The City and Man was published in 1964, Strauss had already decided that Socrates provides a better guide to the political than Schmitt's faith based political theology. As demonstrated in the title of the final book that he supervised for publication before his death in 1973, Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy, Strauss revealed his preference remained the same. 559

For Strauss, the most reasonable answer to Schmitt's concept of the political, defined as the right faith, or the best way of life, is presented as Socrates's best regime. Since the best regime is based on reason, and hence knowledge, Strauss argues that his interpretation of Socrates's best regime provides an answer to Schmitt's sixth criterion that requires an articulation of "the order of human things from a *pure and whole* knowledge". As the best order of the human things, it represents the life of contemplation, peace and the true standard of natural justice, according to Strauss's understanding of Plato and Aristotle. Strauss shows, in his analysis of Aristotle's <u>Politics</u> and Plato's <u>Republic</u>, that the best regime exists only in speech, because it can

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>557</sup> Ibid., p. vii.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>558</sup> Ibid., p. vii.

<sup>559</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy</u>, op. cit., published in 1983. There are also seventeen parts to this book, remembering that 17 is the number representing nature for Strauss.

exist in the soul of the best human being of any race and of any sex at any time, or in any place. For Strauss, the best regime for Aristotle and Plato indicates the "essential limits, the nature, of the city" – meaning the impossibility of solving the political problem – i.e. in providing for a perfectly just society. He argues that in seeing the limits, "one need not have answered the question regarding the whole, it is sufficient for the purpose to have raised the question regarding the whole". <sup>560</sup>

As already demonstrated in the previous chapter, the arguments for the best regime presuppose an argument in favour of nature, or more specifically, a consistent argument that points to a universal human nature in contradistinction to the present acceptance of the truth of "culture". Strauss's first chapter of The City and Man, elucidating Aristotle's argument regarding the polis, or the city, is part of Strauss's solution to Schmitt's search for an independent and a superior political alternative to the concept of "culture". In recovering the meaning of the political in terms of the polis, or the city, Strauss argues that Aristotle demonstrates that the city is natural and that human beings possess reason that includes the perception of justice, or natural right. More importantly for Strauss, by developing one's ability to read and think, one can figure out the best way of life, or the good life, that leads to self-sufficiency and happiness, as a complement to biblical revelation. 561 Strauss implies that Aristotle argues that the *polis* exists by nature and can be discovered through political philosophy at any time and in any place. His preference for the best regime and the *polis* is based on his assumption that all human beings are not equal in regard to understanding. <sup>562</sup> This is why Strauss does not think there can be a genuine unity among all human beings, and that any

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<sup>562</sup> Ibid., pp. 17, 37 & 38.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>560</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., pp. 138 & 157. Strauss implies that there can never be a just regime on earth.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>561</sup> Ibid., p. 1. Strauss argues that the best city, which is according to nature, is the same as "the City of Righteousness, the Faithful City".

attempt to establish a world state would lead to a world tyranny. In his book, On Tyranny, Strauss argues that the "few" "wise men" in any world state would not wish to rule and that "the Universal and Final Tyrant" would be "an unwise man", who poses "as the highest philosophic authority". According to Strauss, the leader of the world state would persecute the philosophers, substituting "suspicion and terror for law". 563 Strauss's opinion regarding the world state comes from his discussion of the relationship between the philosopher and the city that is outlined in Plato's Republic. In The City and Man, Strauss argues that the philosopher, knowing that the best regime only exists in speech, does not seek to rule, or impose the best regime on existing Similarly, while preferring the *polis* to any other political arrangement, regimes. Strauss realizes that it cannot be restored in the modern world. 564 Furthermore, since evil always exists in the world, according to Strauss and Schmitt, the world will never be a harmonious place. Nevertheless, in raising the issue of Aristotle and Plato's concern with "the good", in The City and Man, Strauss denies the comprehensiveness of Original Sin. 565 By finding an alternative to Original Sin, Strauss allows for the possibility of the existence of exceptionally good human beings, such as philosophers and Aristotle's group of noble and good people ("hoi kaloikagathoi - hoi aristoi"). For Strauss, the highest good, defined as "the order of human things", is the best regime that comes to light through the philosophic life, or more specifically, through political philosophy discovered by Socrates. 566

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>563</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>On Tyranny</u>, op. cit., p. 211.

<sup>564</sup> Strauss, Leo and Karl Löwith, "Correspondence Concerning Modernity", vol. 4, op. cit., pp. 107 & 108. See also Strauss, Leo, "Kurt Riezler" in What is Political Philosophy? And Other Studies, op. cit., pp. 237 & 238. Here, Strauss states, "One might wonder whether there is another alternative to cosmopolitanism than the political philosophy of Plato and of Aristotle who taught that the natural political community is, not the nation, but the city; the nation would thus appear as a half-way house between the polis and the cosmopolis". He goes on to say that an attempt to explain "the truth underlying nationalism" requires a recognition of the classical alternative found in the polis.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>565</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., pp. 29, 31, 105, 119 & 120. <sup>566</sup> Ibid., pp. 26 & 29.

As demonstrated in chapter five of this thesis, Strauss chooses Aristotle to commence The City and Man, because, he argues, the Politics begins with what is "first for us", or what Strauss calls the "primary" things associated with "common sense". For According to Aristotle, the city, as a *polis*, is the natural foundation of the political, and points to the goodness of human beings in their recognition of "the good", through government by regimes that claim to provide that good, especially in terms of justice. The existence of a number of regimes: democracy, monarchy and oligarchy in both Greek and non-Greek cities, confirmed for Strauss, that the political, as the claim to the best way of life, is effectively seen in the various claims to rule. Strauss argues that Aristotle saw a connection between the justifications of the various regimes and the one "best regime" that is universal and best for all time and all places. In recognizing Schmitt's unique biblical challenge in the form of political theology, Strauss turned to the practical question of who, or what, should rule or what Strauss calls the "theologico-political problem".

In his book, <u>The City and Man</u>, at the very beginning of the sixth division, Strauss concludes:

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<sup>°′</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

Ibid., pp. 13 & 48. See also Strauss, Leo, <u>The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism - An Introduction to the Thought of Leo Strauss</u>, Pangle, Thomas L., editor, University of Chicago Press, U.S.A., 1989, op. cit., p. 98. Strauss states, "Now, the quest for the best regime is only the political form of the quest for the good life".

<sup>569</sup> Ibid., p. 49. See Strauss, Leo, What is Political Philosophy? And Other Studies, op. cit., pp. 34 & 87. On p. 34, Strauss states, "Classical political philosophy is guided by the question of the best regime". On p. 87, Strauss states, "By the best political order the classical philosopher understood that political order which is best always and everywhere" – Strauss's authority is Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, 1135a45. Aristotle states, "... though the only one [regime] that is everywhere according to nature is the best kind" – see Aristotle, The Nicomachean Ethics, Sachs, Joe, trans., Focus Publishing, R. Pullins Company, U.S.A., 2002, p. 94.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>570</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>Spinoza's Critique of Religion</u>, op. cit., pp. 1, 3, 6 & 31. The question seems tied to the question regarding the character of "the divine". See Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., p. 241 - "the question *quid sit deus*".

"We have come to distinguish between legality and legitimacy: whatever is legal in a given society derives its ultimate legitimation from something which is the source of all law ordinary or constitutional, from the legitimating principle, be it the sovereignty of the people, the divine right of kings, or whatever else. The legitimating principle is not simple justice, for there is a variety of principles of legitimacy. The legitimating principle is not natural law, for natural law is as such neutral as between democracy, aristocracy, and monarchy". 571

The true legitimating principle, Strauss concludes in the same context as the quotation, is Plato and Aristotle's best regime, and it provides the standard for judging all other regimes. Strauss goes on to explain that each of the three regimes listed has its own "notion of justice", but he implies that only the best regime provides a standard of universal justice. Significantly, Strauss silently excludes tyranny as a legitimate regime, primarily because it excludes natural right, or natural justice. In excluding natural right, or natural justice, Strauss sees tyranny as unnatural. 572 In contrast to Strauss's position, Schmitt argues in The Concept of the Political that, "no reasonable legitimacy or legality can exist without protection and obedience". Schmitt's authority is Hobbes, and the basis for Hobbes's statement on protection and obedience is "human nature as well as divine right". 573 However, Strauss does not speak of "human nature", in the above quotation relating to regimes, but he does refer to the "divine right of kings" and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>571</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., p. 48.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>572</sup> Ibid., p. 48. In On Tyranny, Strauss states, "the classics understand tyranny as the opposite of the best regime" – See Strauss, Leo, <u>On Tyranny</u>, op. cit., p. 192.

573 Schmitt, Carl, <u>The Concept of the Political</u>, Schwab, George, trans., op. cit., p. 52.

"natural law". Strauss does not speak of natural right, unless the reader understands Strauss's introduction of "the best regime" in the same paragraph as Strauss's substitute for "natural law" and the equivalent of natural right. In this rare statement on natural law in The City and Man, Strauss agrees with Schmitt's rejection of the universalism of natural law, because it represents a rigid and unchangeable standard for the political and hence, fails to allow for the *Ernstfall*. Strauss's justification for rejecting it is based on the argument that natural law is "neutral" among the three legitimate regimes, since all three regimes have their own idea of justice. Being neutral, natural law does not satisfy Schmitt's criteria for the affirmation of the political, because a decision must be made on a content that is not neutral. Nevertheless, Strauss silently informs the reader that all are concerned with justice, as "in each case a specific notion of justice" is involved and hence, that universal commonality of justice points to a universal justice, i.e. to natural right that adapts to the exception. For Strauss, the exception is the Socratic (nonneutral) best regime that is equivalent to natural right and can be used to judge all other regimes. 574 Since the best regime is equivalent to the highest in human wisdom, Strauss argues that those who understand the best regime can use it to meet exceptional circumstances, including the potential for war. It can be implied from Strauss's argument that Schmitt would not have supported the Nazi regime if he had possessed knowledge of the best regime. It is not by chance that Strauss's admission of the problematic nature of justice is a partial agreement with Schmitt that takes place in the context of Strauss's most explicit reference to Carl Schmitt, where he uses the title of Schmitt's book, Legalität und Legitimität (Legality and Legitimacy), 575 the legitimating principle of Schmitt's foundation of the political ("divine right")<sup>576</sup> and in the context of Strauss's introduction to the best regime. The subtlety is highlighted through Strauss's

This argument is supported in Strauss, Leo, <u>Natural Right and History</u>, op. cit., p. 23.
 Schmitt, Carl, <u>Legalität und Legitimität</u>, op. cit.

<sup>576</sup> Schmitt, Carl, The Concept of the Political. Schwab, George, trans., op. cit., p. 52.

inclusion of Schmitt's title in his sixth division dedicated to the art of good writing, appearing within Strauss's chapters on Plato and Aristotle. 577

Furthermore, in the same context as chapter two, Strauss lists three examples of the "legitimating principle", the central example being "divine right of kings". As already stated, Strauss concisely answers Schmitt's rejection of "natural law" by arguing that natural right, or changeable justice, is found only within "the best regime", based on the legitimating principle that "the best regime" is "the highest end of man", or way of life. As such, its end is "true happiness" and self-sufficiency and that it is "the same for the individual and the city", although the city "is capable at best only of an analogue of the contemplative life". According to Strauss, if the best regime is a way of life that is a search for wisdom, then it satisfies Schmitt's second criterion that demands flexibility in facing the dire emergency or Ernstfall. Strauss does not exclude the rule of "enlightened statesman", such as Pericles, Xenophon or Diodotus, especially in extreme times of extreme danger. 578 In this context of Strauss's mention of "natural law" and its neutrality, the reader knows that Strauss is addressing Schmitt, because Strauss mentions "liberalism" twice in the final paragraph in his climactic explanation of the best regime. Here, Strauss indicates that philosophy allows the individual to transcend "the city", as does "liberalism", but unlike liberalism, limits "this transcendence only to the highest in man", meaning that philosophers pursue "true happiness" rather than "happiness however understood". Strauss rarely mentions the word "liberalism" in The City and Man and uses it as the link between the end of his "Comments" and the present

<sup>577</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., p. 48.

Ibid., pp. 23, 28, 231 – 234. Strauss also had a great admiration for the political wisdom and the "human excellence" of "the magnanimous statesman" - Winston S. Churchill. See Jaffa, Harry V., editor, Statesmanship – Essays in Honor of Sir Winston Spencer Churchill, Carolina Academic Press, U.S.A., 1981, p. ix.

argument that the best regime transcends liberalism and thus, affirms the political from an horizon other than liberalism. Hence, in raising the issue of liberalism, Strauss attempts to demonstrate that he solves Schmitt's dilemma in not being able to escape the systematics of liberalism by his interpretation of Plato's regime that transcends history, and hence, the liberal horizon. What makes the argument that Strauss is directly challenging Schmitt so compelling, is that Straus's does not use the word, "liberalism" anywhere else in The City and Man. 579

Since the discovery of the best regime is part of the art of reading, Strauss purposely hides the start of the sixth division, by not beginning with a new paragraph as he had done previously, i.e. when he ended his divisions in the Aristotle chapter with a full stop and a long dash. As previously mentioned, Strauss's characteristic full stop and long dash come within the second last paragraph of his Aristotle chapter, rather than at the obvious beginning of his second chapter "On Plato's Republic". In blurring the break between Aristotle and Plato in the context of the best regime, Strauss quietly demonstrates his opinion that Aristotle and Plato agree on the argument supporting natural right that comes to light as Socrates's best regime. In his final paragraph in the Aristotle chapter, that is also in the sixth division on Plato's art of writing, Strauss prepares his reader for the connection between the best regime and Plato's discussion of the best regime in the Republic, as he argues, "whereas of the best regime it is known only that it necessarily 'lives' in speech". As demonstrated earlier, in hinting that he is addressing Schmitt's arguments through the reference to a "Fascist" and Schmitt's book, Legality and Legitimacy, Strauss intends that "the best regime" provides a

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>579</sup> Ibid., pp. 48 & 49.

standard for recognizing tyranny and injustice, especially the kind that came to power in 1933 in Germany, with the full support of Schmitt. 580

In linking Aristotle to Plato's discussion of the best regime found in the Republic, Strauss states, "... the guiding question of Aristotle's *Politics* is the question of the best regime". Strauss uses the final paragraph in his chapter on Aristotle to refine the meaning of "the best regime" that "comes to sight only as the limit of the political". According to Strauss, the "principle" behind the best regime is the highest aspiration of a human being, namely "true happiness", but "happiness" is meant to be synonymous with "contemplation" and "the contemplative life", which means the philosophic life. Originally, according to Strauss, Aristotle blurs the best city and the "individual" into one, arguing that the city and the individual both aspire to "the highest end of man, happiness". However, Strauss argues that "the best life of the individual" transcends all cities, and that Plato and Aristotle were in agreement regarding the limits of the just city. Strauss speaks of "examples" of "men of the highest excellence (Plato and Aristotle)", who lived in the best regime, even though it was only a theoretical one, concluding, "whereas of the best regime it is known only that it necessarily 'lives' in speech". Unlike Schmitt's reliance on a mysterious fate, Strauss argues that the best regime can be "known" through "contemplation", i.e. through the philosophic life that is superior to the political life, thus satisfying Schmitt's sixth criterion. <sup>581</sup>

Furthermore, in his Aristotle, Plato and Thucydides chapters, Strauss answers Schmitt's call for concrete evidence of the political as "the best regime". What makes it concrete, for Strauss, is that it is based on the distinction between convention and nature. The

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>580</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., pp. 45 – 49. <sup>581</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

best regime is according to nature. Strauss's interpretation of Aristotle's practical solution, in the form of a "polity", is a synthesis of the oligarchic regime with the democratic regime, as the best practical solution for existing cities. However, Strauss does not discuss the problems in recovering a regime, or polity, that presuppose the existence of a class of wealthy noble and good human beings ("hoi kaloikagathoi - hoi aristoi") and a large slave population, although he stresses the need for compromise, pointing out that "The very nature of public affairs often defeats reason". He does argue that in "the best polity" Aristotle believes that the slave population can be given freedom, and citizenship, as most are not slaves by nature. Strauss's interpretation of Aristotle's natural slave is one who "is a slave by nature if he is too stupid to guide himself or can do only a kind of work little superior to the work done by beasts of burden". In this context, where he discusses Aristotle's "best polity", Strauss suddenly turns to Xenophon in raising the problem of ruling both "hoi kaloikagathoi - hoi aristoi" (the noble gentry) and ordinary soldiers. Strauss argues that the Greek general, Xenophon, was a good, practical ruler of human beings, because Socrates had educated him regarding "the sternness of politics". According to Strauss, Xenophon ruled the noble and good people, under his command in fighting the Persians, by means of persuasion; however, he ruled his ordinary soldiers through fear of punishment. Xenophon was an Athenian, who attempted to aid the younger Cyrus of Persia to obtain the Kingdom of Persia. In failing to topple the ruling monarch, Xenophon and 10,000 mercenary Greeks were forced to flee Persia by land. Xenophon was elected general and successfully led the Greeks to the safety of their homeland. Strauss calls his special education, "the full political art", arguing that it is the same as Aristotle's theme in the <u>Politics</u> that shows "the necessity of laws with teeth in them". Strauss argues that Xenophon knew how to instil his soldiers "with respect and fear of himself" and was

successful in disciplining them. Given Strauss's discussion of Xenophon, especially regarding the limits of Reason ruling in the cities, Strauss does not think that the best regime, or Aristotle's polity, is possible, but he does suggest that the next best thing to philosophic rule is one where good laws are strictly administered by rulers such as Xenophon. 582 From these observations, it seems that Strauss does not propose a blueprint to replace liberal democracy, but merely outlines the problems that need to be addressed by those interested in the political things. Strauss's discussion of Aristotle's polity, and his best regime, are controversial, because they begin with the premise that human beings are not equal regarding intelligence or wisdom. If Strauss is correct, then the argument leads to the conclusion that rule is necessary and natural. The necessity of rule raises the question of the best regime. What are common to both "the best regime" in speech and Aristotle's "polity", according to Strauss, is that they are based on nature and that their recognition depends on intelligence and chance, rather than on Schmitt's historical reliance on "destiny". Strauss's digression on Xenophon's military virtues, in the first division on Aristotle, provides a link to the chapter on Plato's Republic. 583

In Strauss's discussion of the best regime in chapter two, "On Plato's <u>Republic</u>", it appears that a warrior class is central to the survival of the best regime. In presenting Plato's best regime that includes male and female warriors, Strauss makes allowances for Schmitt's first two criteria regarding "evil" and the "dire emergency", or the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>582</sup> Ibid., pp. 22 & 23.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>583</sup> Ibid., pp. 48 & 49. On page 37, Strauss suggests that both Plato and Aristotle agree that the "two 'mothers' of all other regimes" are "democracy and monarchy". In the context of Schmitt's subtle book title that appears as, "legality and legitimacy", Strauss is silent on oligarchy and tyranny, only mentioning "democracy, aristocracy and monarchy". Strauss also makes an intentional grammatical error by using the comparative, "between", instead of "among" for more than two things, suggesting that monarchy and aristocracy are of one kind.

potential for war. 584 Towards the end of his life, Strauss confirms his interpretation of the best regime in The City and Man, concluding that the "cessation of evils that Socrates expects from the establishment of the best regime will not include the cessation of war". 585 As already pointed out, Strauss denies that the just city is possible by nature because of the existence of moral evil.<sup>586</sup> Part of the problem, for Strauss, is that philosophers, or the wise, prefer not to rule the cities. Here, he rejects the possibility of political rule by philosophers, because he argues that philosophers do not want to rule, being more attracted to "the *eros* for knowledge as the one thing needful" that promises "the most pleasant and blessed possession". According to Strauss, the philosophers are too busy and "have no leisure for looking down at human affairs, let alone for taking care of them". Philosophers look down on the "human things" as "paltry". Furthermore, Strauss sees Plato as rejecting the suggestion that most human beings would recognize the philosophers' claim to rule absolutely, particularly since "the good citizens" are "passionately opposed to philosophy (517a)". 587 The other problem with philosophy, according to Strauss, is that it undermines the respect for the law, because it questions those laws in the search for the truth. Strauss had learned from Aristotle's example of Hippodamus that, if the law were undermined or changed regularly, then the citizens would no longer respect it, thus leading the city into political instability. 588 Strauss calls the law, "the most important instrument for the moral education of the many" that is supported "by ancestral opinions" and "myths", particularly those myths associated with the gods. If philosophers undermine the laws, then they undermine the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>584</sup> Ibid., pp. 110 – 114. On p. 111, Strauss admits the truth of Schmitt's concept of the political, stating, "the opposition of 'We and They' is essential to the political association" and "human spiritedness seems to include a sense that one is in the right".

<sup>585</sup> Strauss, Leo, Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy, op. cit., p. 172.

<sup>586</sup> Strauss, Leo, The City and Man, op. cit., p. 127. Strauss cites "Theaetetus 176a5-8; cf. Laws 896e4 6".
587 Ibid., pp. 124 & 125.
588 Ibid., pp. 23 & 24.

gods, who represent the highest authority for the city. Furthermore, Strauss had learned from Aristotle and Plato that "the city as a whole is characterized by a specific recalcitrance to reason", and hence, the philosopher requires the art of rhetoric "as a servant to the political art". 589 Thus, Strauss and Schmitt would agree on the importance of the right faith held by the majority of citizens within the various cities and the maintenance of that faith. 590 Nevertheless, Strauss argues that the best regime provides a theoretical standard for judging the rationality of the various competing faiths that claim to be right.<sup>591</sup>

# 2. War and the Best Regime

Chapter two of The City and Man, which focuses on Plato's Republic, is Strauss's reply to Schmitt's concept of the political that relies on an interpretation of Plato's theory regarding public and private enemies. 592 In contrast to Schmitt, Strauss presents Plato's discussion of the political as one that focuses on the theme of justice and not war. Strauss outlines Socrates's three practical definitions of justice that lead to natural right (universal justice), namely those that appear in the first book of the Republic. They appear in this order: 1) "justice consists in paying one's debts" (Cephalus)<sup>593</sup>; 2) "helping one's friends and harming one's enemies" (Polemarchus)<sup>594</sup>; and 3) "justice is the advantage of the stronger" (Thrasymachus). 595 Apart from being the important central definition, Strauss argues, "Polemarchus' opinion properly understood is the only one among the generally known views of justice discussed in the first book of the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>589</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>590</sup> Ibid., pp. 124 & 125. Strauss's emphasis.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>591</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>592</sup> Schmitt, Carl, <u>The Concept of the Political</u>, Schwab, George, trans., op. cit., pp. 28 & 29.

<sup>593</sup> Strauss, Leo, The City and Man, op. cit., p. 68.

<sup>594</sup> Ibid., p. 70. 595 Ibid., p. 74.

Republic which is entirely preserved in the positive or constructive part of the work". Strauss points to the guardian class in Socrates's perfect, communist city, which is described by Socrates as, "by nature friendly to their own people and harsh or nasty to strangers". 596 Strauss's support of Polemarchus's definition of justice - helping friends and harming enemies - is tentative since Socrates refutes it, finally arguing that the most just person knows how to judge friends from enemies, but prefers to help "the wise", and harms no one. Strauss intended this definition to provide a less dangerous example for political leaders than Schmitt's definition that stresses an admiration for potential war among nations and groups. Nevertheless, Socrates points to the need for warriors even in the best regime (in speech) because of the presence of evil; hence, Strauss's partial (theoretical) agreement with Schmitt's concept of the existence of friends and enemies. As Strauss relates from the Republic, "The good city is characterized above all by the rule of those best in philosophy and with regard to war (543a5)", indicating that important connection between war and philosophy – a connection Schmitt ignores.<sup>597</sup> However, since Strauss equates the best regime with the philosophic life and natural justice, the standard for judging regimes remains the standard of peace (rest), not war. Although Polemarchus's definition is the most publicly spirited one cited by Strauss, he does point out that Socrates refutes Polemarchus's definition of justice and concludes that harming no one is the final definition of justice that is based on a life dedicated to knowledge. Strauss's emphasis on the contemplative life, peace, justice and friendship, where the wise will harm no one, remains his central standard to judge all regimes. <sup>598</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>596</sup> Ibid., p. 73. Strauss places great emphasis on good writers who list things using an odd number so that a central item can be highlighted as the most important.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>597</sup> Ibid., p. 112. <sup>598</sup> Ibid., pp. 70 - 73.

Unlike Schmitt's admiration of the potential for war, Strauss indicates that any revolutionary activity in overthrowing a decent regime (a constitutional democracy) would lead to disaster. Some of those present in Plato's Republic became victims of a revolution to restore "an aristocratic regime dedicated to virtue and justice" to Athens. At the very beginning of his seventh division "On Plato's Republic", Strauss mtes that it was the "Thirty Tyrants" who murdered "Polemarchus, Lysias and Niceratus", after the action portrayed in the Republic. As Strauss states, ". . . in the Republic he [Socrates] discusses justice in the presence of victims of an abortive attempt made by most unjust men to restore justice". Strauss footnotes this quotation by describing Polemarchus as a "magistrate in charge of lawsuits in which metics were involved", perhaps also alluding to Schmitt's profession as a lawyer. In other words, according to Strauss, the whole dialogue was aimed at demonstrating the impossibility of establishing the best regime, or any regime that attempts to solve the political problem, especially through warfare or violence. <sup>599</sup> For Strauss, the political problem cannot be solved on the level of politics. 600 In presenting the drama of Plato's Republic, in The City and Man, Strauss provides a political lesson similar to Schmitt's own failure to help restore order in Germany through his support of injustice, represented by Hitler and the Nazis. Strauss knew that Schmitt had actively supported the Nazi regime, a regime based on violence and militarism, and that Schmitt nearly became its victim after attracting the attention of the S.S. Schmitt was saved from the S.S., and certain death, only by the personal intervention of Herman Göring. In calling attention to the political fate of "Polemarchus" ("the War Lord"), Strauss seems to underline the dire practical

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>399</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>600</sup> Strauss, Leo, Spinoza's Critique of Religion, Sinclair, E. M., trans., op. cit., p. 6.

consequences of Schmitt's concept of the political – the friend and enemy concept - that relies on faith alone. <sup>601</sup>

Whatever the practical limitations of the best regime, it remains Strauss's complete, theoretical answer to Schmitt's criterion regarding the best way of life for an individual, i.e. the philosophic life, assuming that individuals choose to live in communities or cities, whether visible or invisible. If the attraction of living in a city is natural, and philosophers must live in a city to live well, then Strauss implies that the philosophers must take the political seriously in order to discover the best regime and help preserve the conditions for philosophy. Thus, it explains why the regimes are so important for Strauss's understanding of Socrates and why there is a connection between Socrates and the question of who, or what, should rule, described as the "theologico-political problem". This leads to the necessary confrontation, or potential conflict, between the philosopher and the city – hence, Strauss's title, <u>The City and Man</u>. Therefore, in some agreement with Schmitt's friend and enemy concept, Strauss admits that there is a possibility of conflict between the city and the philosopher, because the philosopher undermines the city's most authoritative pieties. Given this fact, Strauss argues that the Socratic philosophers needed to justify their "regime", or way of life, before the tribunal of the city. This is why Strauss pays attention to the rhetorician, Thrasymachus, who is best at representing the city's anger and defending its thesis that the city's laws benefit those in power. According to Strauss, the chief characteristic of the city is its thumos, spiritedness or anger, caused by its concern with the things that belong to it, especially the gods. In keeping with the theme of friendship, not enmity, Strauss makes it clear

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<sup>601</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., p. 63. See Gottfried, Paul Edward, <u>Carl Schmitt – Politics and Theory</u>, op. cit., p. 31. According to Gottfried, "Göring intervened against Heinrich Himmler to keep the S.S. from launching a fuller investigation of his appointee to the Prussian State Council" – see also Balakrishnan, Gopal, <u>The Enemy – An Intellectual Portrait of Carl Schmitt</u>, Verso, U.S.A., 2000, pp. 204 & 207.

that Thrasymachus is a friend of Socrates, and had never been his enemy. Furthermore, in the fifth book of the <u>Republic</u>, Socrates describes a city that requires Thrasymachus to become one of its citizens.<sup>602</sup> For Strauss, Thrasymachus, as the master of rhetoric, becomes a link between philosophy and the city and solves the threat posed by the philosopher, who questions the sacred laws of the city. Rhetoric hides the *hubris* of philosophy, while at the same time satisfying the religious needs of the city.<sup>603</sup>

When Strauss presents Socrates's clash with Thrasymachus, he gives the reader a glimpse of natural right within philosophic activity. Strauss states, "... by presenting Socrates' taming of Thrasymachus as an act of justice, it lets us see justice". 604 Since both Thrasymachus and Schmitt do not believe in natural justice, Strauss seems to imply that, The City and Man is a "theologico-political treatise" aimed at taming the political ambitions of political theology, by demonstrating that natural justice, in the form of the best regime, does exist universally through shared friendship in speech. Although Thrasymachus supported tyranny and injustice, Strauss points out that Socrates calls him his "friend", but there is no such indication that Strauss is Schmitt's friend, even though Strauss takes seriously the challenge of political theology. 605 Strauss indicates in a private letter that The City and Man is part of an obligation to defend philosophy, in contrast to his "real work" of interpreting Aristophanes. 606 In keeping with the suggestion that the political is linked to compulsion, Strauss reminds readers that the Republic is Socrates's least voluntary dialogue, pointing to

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>602</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., p. 116. Here, Thrasymachus becomes a "citizen" of the "good city". Strauss argues that Socrates becomes "the friend of Thrasymachus" when Thrasymachus, who represents or "plays the city", hears that philosophy for the young will be banned – p. 124, and on p. 129 Strauss calls Thrasymachus "Socrates' friend".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>603</sup> Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>604</sup> Ibid., p. 138.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>605</sup> Ibid., p. 129.

<sup>606</sup> Strauss, Leo, On Tyranny, op. cit., p. 309.

Polemarchus's forceful arrest of Socrates at the beginning of the dialogue. compulsion gives way to the persuasion that Adeimantus and Polemarchus use to keep Socrates in the Piraeus – to share in the spectacle of the introduction of a new goddess that includes a novel torch race on horse back dedicated to the goddess. Similarly, Schmitt's return to religion, as the foundation of the political, forces Strauss to defend what he sees as the best way of life in the context of asking the fundamental question, "quid sit deus", or "what is a god?". In order to answer that question, Strauss believes that he, like Thucydides, must begin with the religious beliefs that appear in prephilosophic society, thus explaining his continued response to Carl Schmitt and his political theology. 607

As seen in chapter two, Strauss's experience with Weimar forms part of his political philosophy that denies there are any final solutions to the human problem. Thus, he argues that Socrates remaining in the Piraeus was a political act of "duty" aimed not only at curbing "the extreme political ambition" of Glaucon, but also promoting political philosophy in its Socratic form. 608 Given that Schmitt was dominated by "extreme political ambition", not only in his desire to guide Nazi Germany, but also in his re-discovery of political theology founded on the potential war of differing faiths, Strauss knew that Schmitt's polemical arguments could contribute to "fanatical obscurantism", similar to the resoluteness that Strauss saw in Heidegger's philosophy. This is one reason why Strauss's response to Schmitt takes the form of a book entitled, The City and Man. Schmitt's polemics against liberalism provide a persuasive argument that Schmitt's concept of the political contributes to tyranny, especially given Strauss's condemnation of Schmitt's writings in 1941, and given that a notion of the

 $<sup>^{607}</sup>$  Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., pp. 63, 64 & 241.  $^{608}$  Ibid., pp. 64 & 65.

best regime plays no role in adjudicating the regimes, or faiths, in Schmitt's order of things. In addition, Strauss must have foreseen how popular Schmitt's arguments would become in the climate of modern nihilism that includes the disillusionment with modern liberalism that Strauss associates with the "crisis of the West", defined as the lack of "faith" in Western Civilization. Schmitt's growing popularity in Europe over the last decade, and his respect in Germany, add weight to Strauss's early recognition of the potential of Schmitt's influence. 609 In fact, in his 1941 lecture on "German Nihilism", Strauss spends a third of it referring to Schmitt's arguments. The most obvious suggestion that Strauss was addressing Schmitt is Strauss's mention of Ernstfall in the context of agreeing with Schmitt that morality, as the "serious life", comes to light in a "closed society" and not in an open one. Although Strauss agrees with some of Schmitt's arguments, he points out that "the decline of reverence for old age" and "the emancipation of youth", together with "progressive education" contributed to the dangerous character of German nihilists that finally led to German militarism. 610 Therefore, it is possible that Strauss's confrontation with Schmitt, in <u>The City and Man</u>, is intended to be an act of duty (and education) in preserving what Strauss argues is nothing short of philosophic freedom. He does this by presenting an interpretation of Plato and Aristotle's best regime that transcends the political, while undermining any notion that it is meant to be a blueprint for revolution or a recovery of militarism. <sup>611</sup>

<sup>609</sup> Strauss, Leo, Natural Right and History, op. cit., p. 6. "The inescapable practical consequence of nihilism is fanatical obscurantism". Strauss linked German nihilism to the rise of German militarism and the Nazis. Schmitt's admiration of enmity and wars of faith are central to the danger that Strauss perceives in Schmitt's concept of the political - cf. Strauss, Leo, "German Nihilism", op. cit., pp. 362 & 369. 610 Strauss, Leo, "German Nihilism", op. cit., pp. 358 & 361. Strauss's emphasis.

Strauss, Leo, The City and Man, op. cit., pp. 64 & 65. As previously mentioned, only Polemarchus becomes a follower of philosophy. According to Strauss, the whole of the Republic is designed to moderate Glaucon's "extreme political ambition", as well as demonstrating "the taming of Thrasymachus as an act of justice" – see pp. 63, 65 & 138.

In a private letter to a friend, Helmut Kuhn, Strauss states, "Plato's best polity is the order of human things dictated by natural right". According to Strauss, this presupposes the existence of the soul and that "the order of the soul", or what Strauss calls "the order of the virtues", is the "doctrine of natural right" understood as "the all comprehensive" and natural virtue that takes the form of "law" and "prudence". 612 As mentioned before, Schmitt denies the existence of natural right in political life, but Strauss thinks he has a practical version of natural right, as the best regime, for non-philosophers, particularly regarding Aristotle's polity, or regimes ruled by noble and good people ('hoi kaloikagathoi - hoi aristoi"). Nevertheless, in some agreement with Schmitt's concept of the political, Strauss points out the political nature of Polemarchus's definition and its superiority to Polemarchus's father's (Cephalus) definition of justice. Strauss argues that Polemarchus's definition of justice is noble, since it "means public-spiritedness or concern with the common good", and "full dedication to one's city as a particular city which as such is potentially the enemy of other cities, or patriotism". Here, Strauss stresses the natural importance of the cities forming friend and enemy divisions. He argues that Polemarchus's definition is based on the fact that "justice is full dedication to the common good" and that "one withhold nothing of his own from his city". Hence, according to Strauss, it is possible to have a transprivate, or public obligation, based on a non-neutral content, but still include justice. Nevertheless, according to Strauss, Polemarchus's warrior city must be a communist one – a conclusion that Schmitt, and Strauss, would reject. 613 Once again, Strauss sees his task as one that demonstrates the impossibility of the best regime, preferring to conclude his definition of justice with a reminder that the philosopher harms no one. For Strauss, the best way of life, described

<sup>612</sup> Strauss, Leo, 'Letter to Helmut Kuhn", Independent Journal of Philosophy, vol. 2, 1978, p. 24. Strauss refers to Plato's Republic 501b that "must be read in conjunction with" 484c 8-d and 597b-d concluding that natural right is "the same as the idea of justice". 613 Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., p. 73.

as the philosophic life, transcends the city and politics. Strauss argues that his interpretation of the Republic shows the limits of the political life without having answered the question regarding God or "the whole". 614 Strauss suggests that the most important section of the Republic is the one that examines philosophy, arguing that only the philosopher is truly just, because "only in the philosopher does the best part of the soul, reason, do its work well" and only in "philosophy do justice and happiness coincide". 615 Furthermore, the philosopher refuses to rule in the best city, or any city. 616 In short, Strauss demonstrates that the perfect city is both impossible and unnatural in deed, although the best regime naturally exists in speech. Strauss argues, "the transpolitical cannot be understood as such except if the city is understood" and that the city only can be understood through recognizing its limits. Strauss points out that Socrates shows the equality of the sexes, but "explicitly abstracts from the difference between the sexes in regard to procreation" and hence, the natural demands of the human body. He notices that Socrates drops his discussion of communism, i.e. his proposal to abolish the family in order to regulate procreation for the common good. Strauss argues that such a proposal would be too hard "for Socrates to prove that possibility", thus arguing that Socrates accepts the notion that "men seem to desire naturally to have children of their own". He concludes, "Since the institution [communism] in question is indispensable for the good city, Socrates thus leaves open the question of the possibility of the good city, i.e. of the just city, as such". 617 Furthermore, Strauss questions whether the natural attraction of parents for their children can be overcome in compelling every one over the age of ten out of the city. <sup>618</sup> According to Strauss, Socrates's proposals are not serious ones, particularly since many of the proposals disguise the problem of eros and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>614</sup> Ibid., p. 138. Unlike Schmitt, Strauss remains on the level of reason and does not rely on faith.

<sup>615</sup> Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>616</sup> Ibid., p. 124.

<sup>617</sup> Ibid., pp. 116 - 118. Strauss notices Socrates drops the discussion at 466d6. 618 Ibid., p. 126.

the demands of the bodies of the citizens in the city. For Socrates, in the best city, the communist group replaces privacy and eros with patriotism and justice, and Strauss argues that Socrates does not think that this is possible. The reason Strauss gives is that there can never be a "cessation of evils" even in the best city – the just city. <sup>619</sup> In addition, regarding the equality of the sexes, Strauss points out two problems which surface in warfare, where males and females join together in defending the best city. In following Plato, Strauss states, "... men are stronger than women (451e1-2, 455e1-2, 456a10-11, 457a9-10)". He argues that the natural physical difference between the sexes is "most relevant for fighting". Strauss also argues that the death of female fighters would be a greater loss to the best city, because of the special function females have in procreation. <sup>620</sup> Hence, Strauss argues that the strict requirements of the best city are unnatural and are included to demonstrate "the nature of political things". The political is limited by what is possible. Nevertheless, Strauss does not believe that Plato failed to provide readers with some guidance concerning justice, arguing that "Socrates' taming of Thrasymachus" is a demonstration of justice, as is Socrates's attempt to moderate Glaucon's and Adeimantus's political idealism. Finally, Strauss argues that one need not have divine knowledge, or divine faith, i.e. having "answered the question regarding the whole", in grasping the limits of the perfect city. In illustrating the limits of human nature, Strauss is able to answer Schmitt's criterion that the political must be based on knowledge. However, that does not mean that Strauss and Schmitt disagree on the issue of how groups function in political life. 621

In some agreement with Schmitt, Strauss argues that all political groupings, including erotic groupings, are "exclusive", although Strauss suggests that erotic lovers can hide

<sup>619</sup> Ibid., p. 127. 620 Ibid., p. 118. 621 Ibid., p. 138.

and avoid conflict with the city, whereas, cities cannot hide or seclude themselves "from the world", and hence, from their enemies. In agreement with Schmitt, Strauss points out that cities, or nations, cannot help having friends and enemies. Potential war is a necessary fact, given the nature of all cities. Thus, even in accepting both "the best regime" and other "legitimate" regimes, such as constitutional democracies that are just, Strauss argues that all "political association" is "exclusive" and all of them cannot avoid potential war with other cities. In clearly suggesting that he is specifically addressing Schmitt's friend and enemy concept of the political in the third chapter of The City and Man, Strauss argues that "the city" always "separates itself from others by opposing or resisting them; the *opposition* of 'We and They' is essential to the political association". In the same context, he also indirectly reminds readers of the fifth criterion addressing the question, "what is right?", agreeing with Schmitt that, "every act of human spiritedness seems to include a sense that one is in the right (404c)". Strauss's final answer to Schmitt concerning "what is right?" in judging among the actual competing political groupings, or nations, is the standard of the best regime, where the "quest for knowledge of the idea of the good" replaces the quest for "the idea of justice". The right way of life, defined as the best regime, according to Strauss, is the life dedicated to Socratic political philosophy. 622

#### Conclusion

Chapter Seven has demonstrated that Strauss answers all of Schmitt's criteria for the affirmation of the political, without having to rely on Schmitt's understanding of the political that is based on conflicting faiths. Strauss's final answer, regarding the sixth

622 Ibid., pp. 111 & 112. My emphasis.

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criteria, takes the form of "knowledge" of Plato's best regime, which exists only in speech. According to Strauss, since the best regime exists only in speech, it is only accessible through contemplation, or the philosophic life. In presenting the best regime, as an order based on knowledge, i.e. one based on nature, the "good" and reason, Strauss provides a non-neutral content that can provide a decision that includes the dire emergency (Ernstfall), as well as a standard for judging existing regimes. In arguing that the best regime is connected to natural justice, Strauss also includes the fifth criterion regarding the right faith, or the question, "what is right?". However, Strauss knows that in order to challenge Schmitt's concept of the political, he must also examine the political in its pre-philosophic state. To do so, Strauss turns to political history, or more specifically, to Hobbes's favourite historian - Thucydides. By including an historian in The City and Man, who takes seriously "the divine law", or the cities ancestral piety, Strauss meets Schmitt on Schmitt's preferred ground, namely, the political as defined simply as conflicting pieties in the concrete world that we experience as history.

### **CHAPTER EIGHT**

# THE POLITICAL AS THUCYDIDES'S BEST REGIME

#### Introduction

At the beginning of the third chapter of The City and Man, Strauss states, "The best city described in the Republic (and in the Politics) is at rest. But in the sequel to the Republic, Socrates expresses the desire to see the best city 'in motion', i.e. at war", meaning that he would like to view an account of Athens totally involved in a war with Sparta and other cities. Thucydides presents Athens on the verge of war and involved in "the greatest war known to him". In examining Thucydides's account of Athens's total commitment to war, Strauss suggests that readers can discover Thucydides's best regime. 623 Strauss commences his chapter entitled, "Thucydides's Peloponnesian War", describing Thucydides's account of the war, as "political life at its most intense, in bloody war both foreign and civil, in life and death struggles", 624 reminding readers of Strauss's "Comments", where he highlights Schmitt's definition of the political, as "the real possibility of physical killing of men by men". 625 This chapter demonstrates that Strauss, in addressing Schmitt's distinction between groups of friends and enemies in the state of a dire emergency, or *Ernstfall*, uses the cities, Athens and Sparta, and the speeches of Athenagoras, Brasidas, Diodotus, and Hermocrates from Thucydides's history, to present the best regime that only exists in speech.

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<sup>623</sup> Thucydides presents Athens both at war and at peace as a reflection of the duality of human nature.

<sup>624</sup> Strauss, Leo, The City and Man, op. cit., pp. 139 &140.

Strauss, Leo, "Notes on Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*", in Meier, Heinrich, <u>Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss – The Hidden Dialogue</u>, Lomax, Harvey J., trans., op. cit., p. 103. This definition is Strauss's answer to his statement that "Schmitt desires only to know *what is*". Strauss's emphasis.

# **Strauss's Thucydidean Best Regime**

Before turning to Thucydides's characters in demonstrating the best regime, it is necessary to discover Strauss's continuation of the theme of the best regime from his earlier chapter, "On Plato's Republic". In the second paragraph of his chapter on Thucydides, Strauss indicates that Thucydides is the fourth missing person in Plato's dialogue, Timaeus, and that "Socrates seems to call for the assistance of a man like Thucydides who could supplement political philosophy or complete it". In Strauss's footnote one citing Plato's <u>Timaeus</u>, the reference explains that Socrates sets out his desire to hear something like a Thucydidean history, that "sees political life in its own light". Strauss argues that Socrates wanted to see "the best city in motion" or at war, as expressed in "truthful speech". By this, he means to see Athens at war with its enemies, although Strauss points out that Thucydides and Plato knew the Athenian regime was "defective". 626 Strauss argues that what makes Thucydides's history true for all times is its presentation of "the universal" "in the 'singulars' of his time", meaning that Thucydides discovers universal human nature that can be discovered in the historical actions of his time. 627 According to Strauss, "By studying the Peloponnesian war Thucydides grasps the limits of all human things", including the cities engaged in war. Through examining the limits of the cities, particularly Sparta and Athens, Thucydides is able to provide a composite picture of what would constitute the best regime. 628 Strauss also points to Thucydides's grasp of "the limits of all human things" and hence, "the nature of all human things", a feature that makes the history of the war "a possession for all times". Hence, "nature" provides insight into the order of the human things, joining Plato and Aristotle to Thucydides in accepting "nature" as the basis of

 <sup>626</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., pp. 139, 140 & 141.
 627 Ibid., p. 143.
 628 Ibid., p. 157.

wisdom that constitutes Strauss's reply to Schmitt's emphasis on faith. 629 Although Emil Kleinhaus does not see Strauss's response to Schmitt, he does argue that The City and Man is Strauss's attempt to "prejudge" fascism and communism by presenting a "classical tradition" that "evinces a deep belief in moderation and the natural limits of politics". Kleinhaus argues that Strauss's works on Thucydides were a response to those "students who listened to Heidegger attribute the rise of Nazism to destiny" and were consequently "less likely to resist it". Thus, Strauss also counters Schmitt's belief in historical destiny, as the foundation of the political, by continuing the theme of nature in his Thucydides chapter, especially human nature that allows for political choices. 630

To continue the theme of the best regime in the third chapter of The City and Man, Strauss has to maintain a link between Socrates, Plato and Thucydides. In the beginning of the <u>Timaeus</u>, Socrates addresses three characters present in the dialogue, Timaeus, Hermocrates and Critias, noting that the fourth guest from "yesterday" is missing. In wishing to hear an account of the best city at war, Socrates excludes himself, because it would be beyond his capability "to celebrate our city and its citizens as they deserve". 631 Strauss suggests that it is possible that Socrates draws attention to Thucydides, who is absent in the Timaeus, as one who could give an account of Athens and "supplement political philosophy or complete it". 632 Benardete also agrees with Strauss that Socrates's "more precise request" for the city in motion was aimed at the fourth, missing interlocutor, Thucydides. 633 In linking Plato and Thucydides together, Strauss

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>629</sup> Ibid., p. 157.

<sup>630</sup> Kleinhaus, Emil A., "Piety, Universality, and History: Leo Strauss and Thucydides", <u>Humanitas</u>, vol. XIV, no. 1, 2001, p. 91.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>631</sup> Plato, Timaeus, Cornford, Francis M., trans., The Library of Liberal Arts, Macmillan, U.S.A., 1959, pp. 5 & 6. Strauss's footnote "1" refers to 19b3-d2, 20b3. Socrates calls on all four (including the missing Thucydides) to provide the "sequel". As Cornford notes, Timaeus was from Locri in southern Italy, which Socrates argues in the <u>Laws</u> (638b) is the best city in the West, p. 6, footnote 2.

<sup>632</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., p. 140.
633 Benardete, Seth, "Leo Strauss' *The City and Man*", op. cit., p. 13.

argues that Thucydides agrees with Plato "regarding the good and bad and noble and base" and hence, Strauss indicates that his choice of Thucydides satisfies the first criterion regarding the presence of moral evil. 634 Furthermore, in contrast to Schmitt's reliance on faith as the foundation of the political, Strauss, in presenting Aristotle, Plato and Thucydides, prefers "human wisdom" that "is the core of Greekness". 635 referring to Athens, which allows the best regime to be recognized through the encouragement of wisdom, especially the wisdom of Thucydides, Strauss speaks of Thucydides's history as bringing "to light the sempiternal and universal nature of man as the ground of the deeds, the speeches, and the thoughts which it records". In the same paragraph, Strauss immediately identifies "moderation" and "piety" as the key elements of a good regime, or what he calls "the universalism of the city". However, he concludes "not the gods but nature sets limits to what the city can reasonably attempt. Moderation is conduct in accordance with the nature of human things". Thus, Strauss clearly argues that Thucydides's best regime, in speech, is based on nature and that nature points to moderation as one of the crucial virtues of the best regime. 636

In chapter three of The City and Man, Strauss refers to a Corinthian's first speech to the Spartans (I 68-71) that is meant to incite the Spartans to make war upon the Athenians. Although Strauss distances Thucydides's own judgement from the Corinthian contrast between the Spartan character and the Athenian, the Corinthian's praise of Sparta appears similar to "Thucydides' favorable judgment on Sparta – a judgment whose major premise is the goodness of moderation, justice and piety". 637 Straus's uses the Corinthian's speech to contrast the existing regimes that point to the best regime. This

<sup>634</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., p. 237.

<sup>635</sup> Ibid., p. 158. 636 Ibid., p. 228. 637 Ibid., p. 148.

interpretation is supported by Seth Benardete's commentary on Strauss's The City and Benardete argues that Thucydides uses "elusive patterns", which appear as Man. dualities, similar to Strauss's section headings - "The Case for Sparta" and "The Case for Athens". According to Benardete, these dualities "seem to be the Thucydidean equivalents of the best regime of political philosophy". 638 Benardete emphasizes the importance of democracy, by quoting Strauss from his second chapter on Plato in The City and Man, "democracy is the only regime other than the best in which the philosopher can lead his peculiar way of life without being disturbed". 639 In his Plato chapter, Strauss argues that "every way of life, every regime can be found in it [democracy]", implying that, although democratic Athens is not the best regime, Thucydides's Athenian regime provides an adequate study for the discovery of the best regime, as the order of the human things based on knowledge. 640

Strauss indicates that one can discern aspects of Thucydides's best regime in contrasting the two cities, Athens and Sparta, calling Sparta "a good regime". He argues that, "we arrive at the conclusion that this great Athenian preferred the Spartan manner to the Athenian manner", seemingly undermining the fact that the best regime comes to light in Athens, either in Diodotus's speech, or in the Athenian (Thucydides's) history. Strauss notes that the Athenian Thucydides admires the "Spartan manner" that represents the "ancestral" belief in the gods (the divine law), going so far as concluding that Thucydides clearly "preferred" the stable, Spartan regime that lasted for 400 years. Strauss argues that Thucydides's judgement, in favour of the Spartans, is in striking contrast to the more "resplendent" praise given to Athens by Pericles in his Funeral Speech, although the love of beauty, and the admiration of the noble that Pericles

Benardete, Seth, "Leo Strauss' *The City and Man*", op. cit., pp. 14 & 15.
 Benardete quotes from p. 131 of Strauss's chapter on Plato's Republic.

<sup>640</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., p. 131.

praises, demonstrate some of the characteristics of Thucydides's best regime that has wisdom as its core. Strauss makes the point that Pericles praised the Athenian regime, "not democracy as such". 641 Nevertheless, Strauss does not suggest readers should be convinced by Pericles's excessive praise of the Athenian regime. Strauss states, "A sound regime is a moderate regime dedicated to moderation", defining "a sound regime" as one where "a fairly large group united by civic virtue of a fairly high level rules in broad daylight, in its own right". 642 In stressing Thucydides's reserved admiration for the Spartan regime, Strauss concludes, "It is not Thucydides' fault if his readers are more impressed by the brilliant than by the unobtrusive". Hence, in Thucydides's seeming preference for the Spartan regime, Strauss implies that the best regime must include respect for the divine law, defined as the respect for ancestral customs, justice, peace (rest), moderation and stability. It seems that Strauss answers Schmitt's concept of the political, defined as the potential for war, by highlighting Thucydides's seeming preference for a warrior state, such as Sparta, that represents the virtues of peace, justice, moderation and respect for the ancestral laws – all necessary virtues for the best regime. 643 However, in the final analysis, Strauss points out the best regime is "not with Sparta, but with the moderation and piety by which Sparta claimed to be guided and which reveals itself less ambiguously in Nicias than in Sparta". Strauss thought that Thucydides was aware of the limitations, and hypocrisy, of the actual city of Sparta, but argued that "the universalism of thought" allowed that Sparta's professed virtues were true for the universal, best city. In pointing to the pious

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>641</sup> Ibid., p. 169. See II 37.1 & II 65.9. Athens under Pericles was "a special kind of democracy", as it was ruled by the best citizen - Pericles.

<sup>642</sup> Ibid., p. 153. 643 Ibid., pp. 146 & 151.

Athenian, Nicias, Strauss indicates that the best regime is more clearly found in the virtues of individuals, rather than in the existing regimes of Thucydides's world. 644

Nevertheless, in focusing on Sparta, Strauss addresses the best regime within Schmitt's framework of the political, but unlike Schmitt, Strauss stresses Thucydides's claim that peace is ultimately superior to war, although Thucydides needed to study Athens in motion to understand human nature. Strauss implies that Thucydides agrees with Schmitt, suggesting that "the omnipresence of War puts a much lower ceiling on the highest aspiration of any city toward justice and virtue than classical political philosophy might seem to have admitted". This is why Thucydides seems to choose Sparta as symbolic of the best regime. Yet, it turns out that the best regime must include aspects of Athens as well as aspects of Sparta. Thucydides's own history is partly due to his being educated under the Athenian regime, the regime most accepting of philosophy. 645 The accumulation of wisdom, or philosophy, requires not only peace, but also daring and innovation. Strauss points to the Corinthian's first speech to the Spartans (I 68-71) where the Corinthian described Athenians as "always restless, innovating, quick to invent and to execute, daring beyond their power, full of hope and so on". Although the Athenian regime tolerates Greek wisdom in the form of philosophy, Strauss's discussion of the Corinthian speech demonstrates that Athens is unstable and prone to force its neighbours to defend themselves. If Strauss thought that Thucydides believed that the Athenian regime was the best regime, then Schmitt would be correct in arguing that the potential for war is the universal truth among groups, or nations, and therefore, there is no transcendence of the political. <sup>646</sup> However, according to Strauss, Thucydides states, ". . . war is a violent teacher, i.e. a teacher of violence by

<sup>644</sup> Ibid., p. 228. 645 Ibid., p. 239. 646 Ibid., p. 148.

violence", meaning that only in peace can people "have better thoughts". This implies that the best regime, according to Strauss's interpretation of Thucydides, is a peaceful one, but can only be grasped through speech that presupposes peace and leisure. 647 For Thucydides, the cities were at peace for most of the time, <sup>648</sup> and only in peace is "moderation, justice, and piety" praised. Again, this answers Schmitt's emphasis on the potential war and the *Ernstfall*. In an indirect reply to Schmitt's concept of the political, Strauss argues that the warrior city of Sparta is portrayed by Thucydides as very slow to declare war on Athens and is noted for a respect for "the superior wisdom of the laws" and moderation in general. Strauss lists the various positive features of the Spartan regime outlined by Thucydides: "moderation, tranquillity or restfulness, satisfaction with what they possess, hence clinging to immutable laws and aversion to being away from home". In addition, Strauss lists their "old-fashionedness", "reliability", "trust among themselves" and their avoidance of "insolent pride". All these characteristics begin to form a composite picture of what Strauss understands as Thucydides's best regime in motion, but no actual city satisfies Thucydides's complete picture of the best regime. 649 As Strauss points out, Thucydides "surely never speaks in his own name of a virtuous city whereas he speaks of virtuous individuals", indicating that virtue is a crucial aspect of the best regime and that Thucydides's best regime is similar to Aristotle and Plato's regime, the focus being on individual wisdom. 650

Strauss's interpretation of Thucydides's best regime also comes to light through the actions, and speeches, of key characters portrayed in Thucydides's book. Strauss

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>647</sup> Ibid., pp. 147 & 162.

<sup>648</sup> Ibid., p. 156.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>649</sup> Ibid., pp. 148 & 149. These characteristics are also evidence, according to Strauss, of Thucydides's humanity.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>650</sup> Ibid., p. 238. According to Strauss, for Aristotle and Plato, virtue and wisdom are inseparable. See pp. 49 & 127.

particularly mentions the role of the Syracusan demagogue, Athenagoras, as "an indirect characterization of the Athenian democracy". Michael Palmer argues that Athenagoras's speech to the Syracusan assembly is "the highest praise [of democracy] found in Thucydides". 651 Strauss asserts that the democratic characters in Athens, at the time of the invasion of Sicily, were similar to Athenagoras's character. The Athenian democrats were responsible for the re-call of Alcibiades to be tried for impiety, and hence, were responsible for the Athenian failure to secure Sicily. In using Athenagoras and his counterparts in Athens, Strauss indicates that democracy is not the best regime, because the majority of citizens, including some of its leading citizens, are not wise. Strauss points out that in Book Six (36-40), of Thucydides's history, Athenagoras dismissed crucial reports indicating that the Athenians were about to invade Sicily. In rejecting the reports, he saw them as a ploy by the Syracusan oligarchs to terrorize the democracy, so that the young oligarchs could take control of Syracuse. Strauss argues that Athenagoras thought that the Athenians were "much too clever" to launch such a disastrous and "hopeless enterprise" in Sicily; however, Athenagoras was unaware that "the Athenian invading force did come with the full approval of the Athenian multitude" and that it could have been successful, had Alcibiades remained with the Athenian fleet. Whatever Athenagoras's limitations, Strauss has him defending, and praising, the regime of democracy, implying that Athenagoras raised the question of the best regime as the wise rule by the majority of citizens within the city. According to Strauss, Thucydides had Athenagoras make "the clearest and most comprehensive exposition of the democratic view in his work". Strauss shows that Athenagoras argued that democracy was "fair and wise", providing for the common good by giving both the rich and the poor a chance to judge "the wisdom of the speakers". In presupposing that

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>651</sup> Palmer, Michael, <u>Love of Glory and the Common Good – Aspects of the Political Thought of Thucydides</u>, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, U.S.A., 1992, p. 112.

everyone can be wise and recognize wisdom in others, Strauss implies that Thucydides points to the criterion absolutely necessary for the recognition of the best regime – wisdom. However, in pointing out the failure of the unwise Athenagoras to perceive the Athenian threat to invade Sicily, Strauss suggests that Thucydides did not think that the best regime could be democratic. Furthermore, in portraying the political leader, Athenagoras, as unwise in his speech to his unwise fellow citizens, Thucydides points to the extreme rarity of wisdom in political life, implying that the best regime exists only in speech. Strauss also draws attention to the failure of the wise Hermocrates to persuade the Sicilians that they were about to be invaded by Athens, indicating that, when wisdom does appear, it rarely rules, implying that the best regime is not likely to be found in any city, Greek or non-Greek. 652

In the same context of mentioning Athenagoras, Strauss reminds readers of the limitations of democracy in regard to the recognition of wisdom. The Syracusan assembly (in the seventeenth year of the war) rejected Hermocrates's wise speech, which explained that the Athenians desired to subdue Sicily to enrich themselves. Instead, the Assembly was persuaded by Athenagoras to ignore Hermocrates's warnings. However, Strauss points out that Hermocrates's first speech at Gela, in the eighth year of the war, was "a masterpiece of statesmanly foresight", because he was able to see the Athenian invasion "many years before the event". Hermocrates's goal was to end the civil strife of conflicting factions and unite them against "the common enemy, their enemy by nature". In contrast to Schmitt's discussion of Cromwell's, and England's, enmity against Spain as divine based, Strauss uses Hermocrates's argument determining enemies as one based on "nature", as seen in the "desire" for "wealth".

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<sup>652</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., pp. 168 & 169.

Strauss argues that Hermocrates's wisdom was based on an "understanding of human nature", where "aggrandizement" was viewed as natural to both the city and the Although Strauss does not mention that Hermocrates's speech at Gela convinced the Sicilians to end their internal war, Strauss reminds readers of his later speech in the seventeenth year of the War and its failure to persuade his fellow citizens to unite against Athens. In the face of an imminent Athenian invasion of Sicily, Hermocrates composed a speech warning his fellow Syracusan citizens of the Athenian invasion; however, it was unsuccessful against Athenagoras's limited wisdom that was "unable to look beyond the party strife within Syracuse". The democratic Athenagoras thought that Hermocrates's speech was a plot by the Syracusan oligarchs to "make themselves masters of the city" by scaring the democrats into submission. Strauss points out Athenagoras's failure to comprehend that democratic Athena would invade Sicily was due to his inability to appreciate that Athens was a special kind of democracy "exercising quasi-tyrannical rule over her so-called allies". Only if the Syracusan Assembly had been truly "fair and wise", would it have recognized itself as something like Thucydides's best regime, which must include wisdom and a knowledge of human nature, especially regarding tyranny. Hence, in discussing the theoretical superiority of democracy, where all citizens are considered wise, and in presenting Hermocrates's failure against Athenagoras, Strauss provides another glimpse into Thucydides's best regime that transcends ordinary politics, residing, in this case, only in the speeches of politicians, who were not Athenians or Spartans. The fact that the speakers are not Athenian demonstrates not only that the best regime can come to light in places, which are not Greek, but also the universality of such a regime. 653

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 $<sup>^{653}</sup>$  Ibid., pp. 167 - 169. Hermocrates's speech is in Book IV 59 - 64.

For Thucydides, according to Strauss, the best regime is inseparable from wisdom, or becoming wise, which requires knowledge of nature and human nature. Since wisdom rarely ruled, according to Strauss's interpretation of Thucydides, the only concrete regime that could produce moderation, and justice, had to be a mixed regime. This explains Strauss's discussion of the Alcibiades led regime that appeared in Athens in 411 B.C., which Thucydides described as the best regime in his life-time. The moderation of the Athenian polity was connected to the war with the Spartans, the threat of civil unrest and the threat posed by the Persian king. However, Strauss is adamant that Thucydides did not think the best regime was possible on the basis of his discussion regarding Athenagoras's speech. In drawing attention to the failure of Athenagoras, Strauss concludes that Thucydides "prefers a mixture of oligarchy and democracy to either of the pure forms" and that in raising the claim that democracy is the best regime, Thucydides "cannot deny that it is necessary to raise the question of the best regime". Thus, it appears that the best regime of Thucydides's life-time was only a reflection of the highest rule that points to wise individuals rather than to groups or cities. 654

In turning to the speeches of other characters in the Thucydides's book, Strauss contrasts the Spartan Brasidas with the Athenian demagogue Cleon, in exposing the lack of wisdom in Cleon's understanding of imperialism. Strauss argues that Thucydides "loathes Cleon", because he "betrays the soul of Athens" that represents "generous compassion", "pleasure deriving from speeches" and the nobility represented by the "thought of everlasting glory" that were essential to Athenian imperialism. Cleon believed Athenian imperialism took the form of expediency and what was profitable for Athens. In contrast, Thucydides praises Brasidas for his justice, and lack

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>654</sup> Ibid., p. 238.

of violence, in pursuing a successful Spartan policy. Strauss reminds readers that Brasidas is "the only Thucydidean character praised by the author for his mildness". Strauss states, "He surpasses the other Spartans not only by his intelligence, initiative, ability to speak, and justice but also by his mildness (IV 81, 108.2-3, 114.3-5)". Strauss calls him "the Athenian among the Spartans", just as he sees Cleon as "the Spartan among the Athenians". Strauss also points out Brasidas's piety, arguing that he is "the only Thucydidean character who ever makes a dedication to Athena and apparently sacrifices to her (IV 116.2, V 10.2; cf. II 13.5)". In pointing out Brasidas's unusual piety, Strauss seems to imply that, since Brasidas worships the Goddess of Wisdom (Athena), his piety (moderation) is connected to his intelligence. In contrast to Brasidas's moderation, Strauss points out that Cleon's character is best understood in his demand that the Athenians kill all the Mytileneans, because they rebelled against Athenian rule. Strauss suggests that his speech to the Athenians, countering any generosity towards the Mytileneans, was like that of a Spartan appealing to "the wisdom of the law, i.e. to unchangeable laws of questionable goodness". Here, Strauss indicates that the best regime, the rule of wisdom, must transcend even the law, or nomos, hence, implying that Thucydides is making a hidden criticism of Spartan piety and Sparta's reliance on ancestral law as a defence of the superiority of its regime. According to Strauss, Cleon also told the Athenians that any speech that called for Athenian generosity towards the Mytileneans was only motivated by a desire to demonstrate the speaker's own cleverness. Strauss says that Thucydides "does pass judgment on Cleon's violence", because, as an Athenian, he should have known better. In contrast, Thucydides portrays Brasidas, who displays superior intelligence, piety, moderation and justice, as more of what it means to be an Athenian, although Brasidas was born and educated in Sparta. Without stating it, Strauss almost suggests that Brasidas was the

synthesis of the very best of Athens and Sparta. Nevertheless, Strauss suggests that Brasidas's political success had something to do with his justice, as well as his respect for speeches, both of which were connected to his intelligence. In contrast to Brasidas's speech before the battle of Amphipolis, Strauss draws attention to Cleon's failure to make a speech prior to engaging with Brasidas's forces. Instead, Strauss points out Cleon's condemnation of the Athenians for "being 'lookers-at' of speeches and of sophists". Strauss relates that his "contempt of speeches" was "severely punished" at the battle at Amphipolis against Brasidas (Book V 7.3-4, 10.2-5). Cleon subsequently lost the battle and was killed. Therefore, in using Brasidas and Cleon, Strauss implies that the Thucydidean wisdom, which underpins the best regime, comes to light through a respect for speeches and justice. This contrasts with Schmitt's criticism of liberalism, which promotes discussion (speeches) and his emphasis on decisionism that is found in historical necessity, which consequently excludes natural justice. 655

In turning to the superiority of speeches that reveal the best regime, Strauss also mentions Diodotus's speech opposing Cleon's speech calling for the killing of the Mytileneans. Strauss argues, "Still, Diodotus' speech reveals more of Thucydides himself than does any other speech", suggesting that it comes closest to outlining the foundation of the best regime. Strauss states that Diodotus's speech to save the Mytileneans was inspired by "moderation and mildness", meaning that Diodotus's

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<sup>655</sup> Ibid., pp. 213 - 215. Strauss indicates that Thucydides's discussion of the Spartan general Alcidas, "whom the Spartans trusted more than they did Brasidas" was another example of Thucydides's hidden criticism of Spartan piety that includes blindly following Spartan law, or *nomos*. In mentioning "friends" and "enemies" (a hint that he is addressing Schmitt) in the context, Strauss points out that Alcidas killed all of his prisoners, not out of cruelty, but because he followed Spartan "custom". Alcidas's thoughtless piety led to the conversion of many of those oppressed by Athens, i.e. converted "present friends" into Sparta's "enemies III 32; cf. II 67.4". When persuaded not to continue the foolish Spartan policy, Alcidas (Sparta) was seen as just and hence, Sparta made friends with Athens's enemies. In criticizing Schmitt's faith-based concept of the political, Strauss shows that justice and wisdom ("this simple thought had never occurred to him [Alcidas] or to any other Spartan with the exception of Brasidas") are absolutely essential in determining who is a friend and who is an enemy – p. 214.

speech was an act of justice in saving the Mytileneans and in preserving the Athenian empire. Earlier, the Athenians had made a hasty decision, ordering all the Mytileneans be put to death for rebelling against the Athenian hegemony, but now they had second thoughts. However, Cleon was determined that the Athenians should not change their minds regarding the fate of the Mytileneans. In discrediting any attempt to counter his proposal, Strauss points out that Cleon prevented Athens from receiving "good advice", because he made the citizens suspicious and fearful of the motivation of other speakers. Strauss points out that Diodotus's first task was to make the Assembly amenable to further advice, through listening to more speeches. In explaining Diodotus's speech, Strauss calls attention to Schmitt's concept of the political, where one distinguishes between enemies and friends. 656

Strauss indicates that Diodotus's demand for "complete equality" in the assembly did away with the distinction with which "democracy stands or falls", i.e. the distinction between "the friends of the *demos*" and "the enemies of the *demos*". Unlike Schmitt's friend and enemy concept, Strauss had Diodotus discern the battle between the friends and enemies as one between "honest men" who support the *demos*, as opposed to "corrupt men" who oppose the *demos*, indicating that Diodotus saw virtue, or the lack of virtue, as essential in discerning who is a friend and who is an enemy. In insisting that all members of the assembly be virtuous, Strauss suggests Diodotus was presenting Thucydides's best regime, which transcends enmity, democracy and the *demos*. This is supported by Diodotus's insistence that the assembly must be composed of friends who are "equally competent". Furthermore, he insisted that the speeches to the assembly should be regarded as distinct from the desire of the speaker to increase his prestige.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>656</sup> Ibid., pp. 231 & 232.

Although Strauss does not say that Diodotus was outlining Thucydides's best regime, he insists that Diodotus's outline of "the problem of democracy" was to "point to the regime in which only moderate and sensible men, in no way tainted by ambition, would have a say". 657 In other words, members of Thucydides's (Diodotus's) best regime would recognize the superior wisdom, and justice, of the speaker, implying that reason, justice and friendship were the essential characteristics of the best regime. Hermocrates, Strauss had Diodotus argue that "human nature does not change", but unlike Hermocrates's failure to persuade the city of Syracuse during the Ernstfall (the state of emergency caused by the imminent Athenian invasion), Diodotus was successful in persuading the Athenians to follow his advice and save the Mytileneans. Much of Diodotus's success in the assembly was attributed to his ironic argument that focused on physis, especially human nature, perhaps also another indication that the best regime must be based on nature. However, Diodotus presented nature as pointing to the limitation of "progress", where "human physis" ruled supreme, and noting, "no city is likely to consist chiefly of perfectly wise and virtuous people". In raising the issue of having "to deceive the assembly and to lie to it", Diodotus (Thucydides) did not think that the best regime was possible, because there were too few "perfectly wise and virtuous" people. This explains why Strauss's presentation of Aristotle and Plato's best regime, and his portrayal of the Thucydidean best regime, ultimately resides within speech, but more importantly, within the speeches of outstanding, and rare, individuals. 658

Apart from demonstrating the best regime within Thucydides's speeches, Strauss reminds readers that Thucydides speaks of the actual existence of the best regime - an

 <sup>657</sup> Ibid., p. 232. My emphasis.
 658 Ibid., p. 233 – 235.

Athenian regime led by a student of Socrates – and a regime that came about only in Thucydides's lifetime in 411 B.C.<sup>659</sup> According to Strauss, the recall of Alcibiades, during the greatest motion (war) was crucial in understanding the concrete existence of Athens's best regime, and like the presence of Pericles in the formation of Athenian policy, Alcibiades's existence at the time depended "on elusive chance". 660 Strauss shows that Thucydides did not expect the wise to rule in any city on earth, yet, Thucydides suggests that the moderation generated when the democrats, the oligarchs and Alcibiades ruled, came closest to what one could call the best regime. Even though the regime lasted only a few months, the historical existence of this regime did not detract from its universal example as a moderate and just regime, according to Strauss. As mentioned before, Strauss argues that Thucydides confirms that he preferred a mixed regime, comprised of oligarchy and democracy, although Strauss leaves open Thucydides's preference for the rule of the wisest. Strauss does this by suggesting that "it is not clear" whether Thucydides might "unqualifiedly prefer that mixture to an intelligent and virtuous tyranny" as the best regime, given that Thucydides did not consider an aristocratic regime, led by noble and good people ("hoi kaloikagathoi - hoi aristoi"), a possibility. Although Strauss does not explicitly go into details regarding Thucydides's preferred tyranny, given his presentation of the virtuous and intelligent characters, Brasidas and Diodotus, one could make a case that Thucydides supported such a regime. In contrast to his cryptic comment on Thucydides's preferred tyranny, Strauss does go into some detail regarding the regime of 411 B.C. 661

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>659</sup> Ibid., pp. 152, 153 & 237 (Thucydides "VIII 97.2"). Strauss calls this mixed regime a "polity". In the same paragraph he indicates his preference for moderation, concluding that a "sound regime is a moderate regime dedicated to moderation".

<sup>660</sup> Ibid., pp. 153, 199 & 227 (footnote 89).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>661</sup> Ibid., pp. 237 & 238. See Thucydides, Book 8: 97. The Athenians recalled the 400 and established the rule of the 5,000, including Alcibiades and other exiles. Strauss means aristocratic as Plato and Aristotle understood it.

Strauss presents his interpretation of the best regime in Athens, in 411 B.C., as the result of chance and nature, rather than through historical necessity. In replying to Schmitt's concept of the political that requires a concrete foundation, Strauss concludes his chapter on Thucydides by stating, "whereas Plato raises and answers the question of the best regime simply, Thucydides answers the question as to the best regime which Athens had in his lifetime (VIII 97.2)". 662 This concrete regime was the actual polity formed under the leadership of Alcibiades in 411 B.C., which was "a mixture of oligarchy and democracy". As Clifford Orwin argues, Thucydides thought that the rule of the 5,000 was "a better regime than the democracy that Pericles guided", even though it was formed by the oligarchs, who had lost faith in "the vigorous prosecution of the war abroad". In seeming to undermine Strauss's statement regarding the polity being the best regime, Orwin argues, "it was not able to resolve the fundamental problems of Athens" and that it was better characterized as the result of "sordid intrigue" within the oligarchy itself, whose members aimed at saving their own skins, and not something that was established "to preserve freedom and empire". 663

Nevertheless, despite Alcibiades's failings and the cynicism of the oligarchs, a Socrates educated Alcibiades contributes to Strauss's interpretation of Thucydides's best "polity" (politeia), that occurred in Thucydides's lifetime. In place of rule by the wise, Thucydides's best regime, or "polity", according to Strauss, is a mixture of oligarchy and democracy, and it was this combination that replaced the immoderate rule of the 400 without recourse to Athenian "democracy". This took place during the greatest war

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>662</sup> Ibid., p. 237.

Orwin, Clifford, <u>The Humanity of Thucydides</u>, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, U.S.A., 1994, pp. 190 & 191.

<sup>664</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., pp. 152, 227 & 237. Strauss's Aristotelian terminology and description of the "polity" points to the unity, which Strauss argues that Aristotle and Thucydides share, regarding the best regime.

(motion) when Athens was fighting for her survival, but Strauss does not discuss the common fear, or self-interest, that motivated the members of the polity. However, Strauss links Athens's failure in Sicily, and her desperate circumstances, to the return of Alcibiades in Athens. Since Strauss thought that Thucydides's criterion for a good regime was moderation, Strauss seems to raise the question how a partly wise, but very immoderate, Alcibiades was able to lead the moderate polity in the dire emergency. Strauss suggests that the polity could not have taken place without the presence of someone talented like Alcibiades, implying that chance and political wisdom were essential for the best regime to appear. In the first paragraph of the section, entitled: "9. The questionable Universalism of the City", and in a footnote, Strauss argues that the cause of the change in the Athenian regime, "from the democracy to the polity of 411 (VIII 97)" was connected to "the return of Alcibiades from Sparta to Athens (86.4-8)". Strauss also concludes, "the impious Alcibiades (53.2) restores moderation in Athens (cf. also 45.2, 4-5)". 665

In contrast to Strauss, Robert W. Connor minimizes the role of Alcibiades in Thucydides's best regime, arguing that Thucydides's mention of the polity "may allude" to "the desirability of a moderate restriction in the franchise", "a balancing of various institutions of government" and a way to get cooperation between the supporters of Athens and those stationed on Samos. 666 Steven Forde argues that the re-call of Alcibiades was tied to the needs of the polity, particularly in facing "its dire predicament" when Athens needed its most talented leader. 667 Forde's argument supports Strauss's reply to Schmitt that Thucydides's best regime, in his life-time, was

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<sup>665</sup> Ibid., p. 227 (footnote 89).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>666</sup> Connor, Robert W., <u>Thucvdides</u>, Princeton University Press, U.S.A., 1984, p. 229.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>667</sup> Forde, Steven, <u>The Ambition to Rule – Alcibiades and the Politics of Imperialism in Thucydides</u>, Cornell University Press, U.S.A., 1989, p. 159.

in response to the "dire emergency" (Ernstfall) or the potential for war. Given the threat to Athens's survival, Strauss interprets the character of the Athenian "polity" as one of moderation, which is also Thucydides's criterion for a "sound regime", defined as "one in which a fairly large group united by civic virtue of a fairly high level rules in broad daylight, in its own right". 668 However, what Strauss implies, is that the reason behind the restoring of the rule by the 5,000 hoplites, is a combination of necessity and a chance event that includes the presence of a superior intelligence, seen in the character of Alcibiades. Emil A. Kleinhaus points out that Thucydides's emphasis on "the power of compulsion and chance", which is essential for the formation of the best regime of the 5,000, is Strauss's way of uniting Plato and Thucydides in their belief that "philosophy is fragile and that idealism is dangerous". 669 Michael Palmer argues that it was the first regime that could "accommodate the ambitions of both Alcibiades and the Athenians", but with Alcibiades as its predominant leader. Furthermore, in a supplementary article on Thucydides, Strauss indicates Alcibiades's humanity, or justice, in saving Athens when the Athenians on Samos demanded that they invade the seaport of Athens, the Piraeus. According to Strauss, only an Alcibiades could have restrained them from a course of certain ruin. 671

As Strauss concludes, in his later article on Thucydides, "There seems to be a connection, not made explicit by Thucydides, between the first good Athenian regime that existed during Thucydides' lifetime and Alkibiades' unquestioned predominance". In his article, Strauss does not refer to the 411 B.C. regime as "the best regime", but

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<sup>668</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., p. 153.

<sup>669</sup> Kleinhaus, Emil A., "Piety, Universality, and History: Leo Strauss and Thucydides", op. cit., p. 90.

Palmer, Michael, Love of Glory and the Common Good – Aspects of the Political Thought of Thucydides, op. cit., p. 114.

671 Strauss Lee "Proliminary Observations of the Collins" City of Collins and Collins and

<sup>671</sup> Strauss, Leo, "Preliminary Observations on the Gods in Thucydides' Work", in Strauss, Leo, Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy, op. cit., p. 104.

describes it as first "good regime" to appear "during Thucydides' life", indicating that Strauss seems to have realized that it was not Thucydides's best regime in the last analysis. However, Strauss does single out Alcibiades's gifts in advising his former enemies. Alcibiades was forced to reside in Sparta, Athens's mortal enemy, during the peak of the Athenian empire, i.e. during the Athenian invasion of Sicily. Having been elected one of three commanders of the Athenian invasion force, Alcibiades, after embarking on his journey, was indicted on a capital charge of impiety, for his part in the desecration of the Hermes statues. Alcibiades's enemies did not want him to defend himself before the assembly, in case he might persuade the assembly of his innocence. Alcibiades fled to Sparta to avoid being put to death by the Athenians and became Athens's enemy, as he used his superior political knowledge to aid the Spartans in defeating the Athenians in Sicily. Later he was forced to flee from Sparta and became the adviser to the Persian king in dealing with both the Spartans and the Athenians. Since wisdom is essential for the existence of the best regime, Strauss seems to suggest that the superiority of Alcibiades's political wisdom is characterized by its universalism, in being useful to both Greek and non-Greek cities. In pointing to Alcibiades's superior wisdom, Strauss also suggests that Thucydides would not be against a regime that was ruled by one person possessing superior political wisdom. However, in Thucydides's "good regime" of 411 B.C., the coming together of all three elements (Alcibiades, the oligarchs and the democrats) was a matter of chance and did not guarantee the longevity of that regime, as Thucydides demonstrates. Once again, Strauss argues that Thucydides's "good regime", defined as the best polity, is found more in speech than in the short-lived regime that Thucydides claims is the best regime in his life-time.

Finally, in highlighting Alcibiades's failures, Strauss again demonstrates the limits of political wisdom in ruling the city. 672

#### Conclusion

Through Thucydides's speeches, Strauss shows how the discovery of the best regime, based on nature, provides an answer to the order of the human things that is founded upon knowledge of the highest order – wisdom, or knowledge of human nature. Furthermore, chapter eight has demonstrated how the Ernstfall, or dire emergency, is addressed through Strauss's selection of Thucydides's speeches on war that divides cities into friends and enemies. In his response to Schmitt's suggestion of a return to faith as the foundation of the political, Strauss presents the pre-philosophic cities that are influenced by piety, a piety based on universal human nature. Strauss continues his recovery of the political, that takes the form of the best regime in speech, by turning to Thucydides's outstanding characters, Brasidas, Hermocrates, Alcibiades, Diodotus and Athenagoras, who provide partial glimpses into what constitutes Thucydides's best regime. Through those characters, and the regimes of Sparta and Athens, Strauss presents aspects of Thucydides's best practical regime, finally choosing a regime that was a mixture of democracy, oligarchy and intelligence (Alcibiades), preferring it to the pure forms of oligarchy and democracy. Nevertheless, in presenting wise and virtuous individuals within political life, Strauss also suggests that Thucydides favoured the rule of one person, as a possible best regime, something similar to Aristotle and Plato's agreement regarding the rule of the wise. 673

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>672</sup> Ibid., p. 104.
 <sup>673</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., p. 238.

# **CHAPTER NINE**

### CONCLUSIONS

# 1. A Summary of the Thesis

This thesis has demonstrated that Strauss's articulation of his life-long interest in "the theologico-political problem", or "who or what should rule?", that first appears in his 1932 response to Carl Schmitt's <u>The Concept of the Political</u>, continues in Strauss's 1964 publication of <u>The City and Man</u>. It has been shown that Strauss, in satisfying Schmitt's six criteria for the recovery of the political, attempts to demonstrate that political philosophy provides a better, and safer, guide to the political life than Schmitt's political theology, particularly in recognizing the problem of tyranny. The thesis has demonstrated that in discovering the structure of <u>The City and Man</u>, and in discovering Strauss's art of writing, one can perceive <u>The City and Man</u> as Strauss's considered reply to Schmitt's understanding of the political.

The central issue, for Strauss and Schmitt, is what, or who, should rule society. This is Strauss's guiding theme in <u>The City and Man</u>, rather than an attempt to demonstrate that biblical revelation refutes philosophy as the best way of life. This thesis demonstrates that Strauss argues that Schmitt's recovery of the political as faith based, is dangerous and immoderate, especially since Schmitt admires fighting more than what is fought over. Strauss argues that Schmitt provides no rational base on which to judge the competing faiths that claim to be the right way of life, especially in their claims to rule. In addition, Strauss understands that the dangers of Schmitt's political theology come from its universalism through a reliance on history as metaphysics, rather than history defined as what has happened over time. Although Strauss does not specifically use

Weimar, and Schmitt's joining of the Nazi Party in 1933, to refute Schmitt's arguments concerning the political, they remain in the background when Strauss counters Schmitt's political theology with Plato's and Thucydides's best regime. In responding to Schmitt's six criteria for the affirmation of the political, Strauss must recover "nature" as the trans-historical "content" that is not neutral. By returning to nature, especially human nature, he provides the universalism that characterizes Plato's best regime in speech, Aristotle's best regime, and the Thucydidean best regime in speech. In recovering the best regime, Strauss provides Schmitt with a standard of universal justice (natural right) that allows for the exception – the political philosopher – to cope with the *Ernstfall* ("dire emergency"), that also includes a content demanding the recognition of moral evil. Wisdom, as the exception itself, provides a flexible basis to meet the *Ernstfall*. Since the best regime is either founded on wisdom, or knowledge, Strauss argues that he has satisfied Schmitt's sixth criterion regarding the order of the human things that must be based on "pure and whole knowledge".

In first recovering Plato's and Thucydides's idea of nature, especially human nature, Strauss argues that he provides readers with a universal standard that exists at all times and in all places. With the recovery of nature, and the Platonic ideas that presuppose the possibility of knowledge, Strauss satisfies the sixth criterion that calls for a 'pure and whole knowledge' of the order of the human things. According to Strauss, the pursuit of knowledge presupposes a complete whole (the good) that resembles the divine, or god, but one that can be grasped in parts, by the use of reason. Whereas Schmitt remains in the realm of the sacred opinions of the city, that vary according to historical periods, Strauss argues that political philosophy begins with those highly esteemed opinions and subjects them to rational investigation. In transcending the

political that includes the sacred beliefs of the city, Strauss also recognizes that the question of the political is connected to the question, what is a god? ("quid sit deus"). This is why Strauss turned to Thucydides and the distinction between "the divine law", relating to the ancestral belief linked to the gods, and "the divine law", relating to the laws of nature as discovered by philosophy. In linking Thucydides to Socrates, Strauss demonstrates that the political implies that the philosophic quest remains an unending search for the truth about the human things and god. Since Strauss argues that there can be no final knowledge, the divine, or the good, always remains somewhat mysterious. In demonstrating the limits of the political through the best regime that takes the form of the philosopher-king's refusal to rule, and the limits of Socratic knowledge of the good, Strauss argues that he promotes discussion and rule of law, together with the virtues of wisdom and moderation, in providing a guide to the political life. 674

More specifically, in presenting his book as a "theologico-political treatise", Strauss confirms the serious challenge of Schmitt's political theology that is based on an interpretation of biblical revelation and Original Sin. In addressing Schmitt on the common ground of the regimes, or ways of living, Strauss argues, in The City and Man, that Aristotle, Plato and Thucydides satisfy Schmitt's six criteria, through the introduction of nature and the best regime. What provides the common ground between Schmitt's concept of the political and Strauss's return to "Greek philosophy", in Strauss's opinion, "is the problem of divine law". However, according to Strauss, political philosophy and political theology "solve that problem [of divine law] in a

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>674</sup> Ibid., p. 241.

<sup>675</sup> Strauss, Leo, "Progress or Return? The Contemporary Crisis in Western Civilization", in Strauss, Leo, <u>Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity</u>, Green, Kenneth Hart, editor, op. cit., pp. 115 & 116. Strauss states, "Western spiritual history, one could almost say, is the conflict between the biblical and the philosophic notions of the good life", which is an "unresolved conflict" that "is the secret of the vitality of Western civilization" – p. 116.

diametrically opposed manner". Strauss confirms this public statement in a private letter to his Christian friend, Eric Voegelin, written in 1951. He agrees with Voegelin that "the Bible and philosophy" share a common interest in the "theioi nomoi" (divine laws). Strauss further states that "it is the problem of the multitude of the theioi nomoi (divine laws) that leads to the diametrically opposed solution of the Bible on the one hand and of philosophy on the other". Ultimately, the faith underlying Schmitt's concept of the political is a Christian one and is focused on the historical event of the Incarnation. Thus, Strauss's letter helps identify the beginning of "the theologico-political problem" as Schmitt's emphasis on conflicting faiths that require some sort of universal adjudication – either biblical revelation, or political philosophy. For Schmitt, his interpretation of the political as Christian faith informed by history, makes the right faith the only legitimate, and final, judge of the political, while Strauss's answer lies in his interpretation of the Socratic life dedicated to the pursuit of wisdom, in harming no one, in promoting peace and natural justice, and advising moderation in political life. <sup>677</sup>

In <u>The City and Man</u>, Strauss begins his answer to Schmitt using Aristotle's notion of "common sense", or citizen morality, as well as using him to recover nature and the Greek *polis*. In restoring the Greek understanding of the distinction between *physis* (nature) and *nomos*, (law or convention), Strauss attempts to show Schmitt the universality of nature that provides an alternative basis for more moderate politics than one based on faith and historical necessity. Since Strauss understood that the most serious "political" challenge to political philosophy comes from faith, in the form of political theology, he chose to respond to Schmitt only when he had "deepened" his

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<sup>676</sup> Ibid., pp. 106 & 107. Strauss also defines "justice" as "obedience to the divine law".

Strauss, Leo & Voegelin, Eric, <u>Faith and Political Philosophy: The Correspondence Between Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin, 1934 – 1964</u>, Emberley, Peter, & Cooper, Barry, editors, op. cit., p. 78 (dated 25.2.51).

"understanding of natural right and history", especially his knowledge of "Socrates". 678 Although Strauss chose Athens over Jerusalem in The City and Man, it does not follow that he rejected the existence of the biblical God. Strauss admits that the philosopher must be open to the possibility that biblical revelation is true. In Natural Right and <u>History</u>, Strauss states, "The mere fact that philosophy and revelation cannot refute each other would constitute the refutation of philosophy by revelation". <sup>679</sup> This confirms Strauss's introduction to The City and Man that speaks of political philosophy, as "the indispensable handmaid of theology" and the best regime as akin to "the Divine message of the City of Righteousness, the Faithful City". 680 In his essay entitled, "Progress or Return?", Strauss argues, "philosophy must admit the possibility of revelation. Now that means that philosophy itself is possibly not the right way of life". However, the central issue of this thesis is not whether revelation, or biblical faith, is superior to Socratic political philosophy. In discovering the structure and Strauss's art of writing in The City and Man, the thesis has shown that Strauss believes that Socratic political philosophy, and Thucydidean nature, provide a better guide to political life than Schmitt's reliance on the need for conflicting faiths within providential history. <sup>681</sup>

In turning to Plato's Republic, Strauss provides readers with an interpretation of the soul that contains a hierarchy of "goods", the highest, being reason. The existence of the soul is essential if Strauss's interpretation of Plato's best regime is to be understood. By including reason as the key to the universal existence of the soul, Strauss thinks that he has satisfied Schmitt's final criterion concerning "the order of the human things, from a pure and whole knowledge". In addressing the theologico-political problem, defined as

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>678</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>Natural Right and History</u>, op. cit., pp. vii & 75.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>679</sup> Ibid., p. 75.

Strauss, Leo, The City and Man, op. cit., p. 1.

Strauss, Leo, "Progress or Return? The Contemporary Crisis in Western Civilization", in Strauss, Leo, Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity, Green, Kenneth Hart, editor, op. cit., p. 131.

who, or what, should rule human beings, Strauss is in agreement with Schmitt's call for a return to the regimes, but in going further than Schmitt, he argues that the best regime is the standard for judging all regimes. However, in answering Schmitt's six criteria, Strauss argues that he provides a rational understanding of human nature that leaves open the need to investigate, and test, the truth or reasonableness of other faiths that lay claim to guide political life. At the same time, Strauss's concentration on the art of careful writing confirms his argument that the pursuit of knowledge is crucial in surpassing the political, as well as being central to the transcending of Schmitt's liberal horizon.

Strauss chose Thucydides to illustrate the limitations of Schmitt's political theology by turning to a pre-philosophic, historical setting that provided detailed evidence of enmity and warfare among groups. However, Strauss demonstrates that Thucydides is ultimately more concerned with "the nature of peace" than war, particularly since Thucydides's own wisdom became possible only through forced exile, which excluded his participation in war. Since wisdom is the highest object of Thucydides's history, it excludes the total emphasis that Schmitt puts on war and the division of groups into friends and enemies. Thus, Thucydides joins the ranks of Aristotle and Plato in making leisure, whether forced or voluntary, the necessary condition for producing works that reflect the highest wisdom regarding the quest to know the best way of life. Although Thucydides's wisdom comes to light through the examination of the greatest war, or motion, Strauss argues that Thucydides ultimately believes that the best way of life is characterized by peace, even though it seems over-powered by war. In investigating the greatest war, Thucydides understands war (motion) to form a duality with peace (rest) that is part of his philosophic presentation of human nature. As Strauss summarizes his

interpretation of Thucydides's history, "Rest, not motion, peace, not war is good", although war seems dominant in political life among cities or societies. 682 Thus, in using the concrete situation of war, Strauss meets Schmitt on the level of the cities' gods (faith) that are pre-philosophic and decisive for ordinary groups of citizens. Even here, Strauss points to universal nature (the divine), or Thucydides's understanding of human nature, as well as his presentation of the best regime through the speeches, and actions, characters such as Alcibiades, Diodotus, Hermocrates and Athenagoras. Furthermore, in choosing Thucydides, the historian, Strauss moves closer to Schmitt's reliance on fate as historical fate, although Strauss implies that Thucydides's emphasis on compulsion, or necessity, is different from Schmitt's reliance on the field of providential history.

### 2. The Limitations of the Thesis

The greatest limitation of this thesis is the one relating to the nature of Strauss's unorthodox manner of writing. This is why a number of sections within the thesis specifically address Strauss's way of writing. It is difficult to demonstrate, conclusively, that Strauss is responding to Schmitt's political arguments in The City and Man, particularly when Strauss begins his book by denying the authority of orthodox methods as the best way to discern the meaning of the political. <sup>683</sup> The greatest problem is how a reader deals with Strauss's cryptic comments that tend to hide his more revealing thoughts. In his sixth section of The City and Man, Strauss argues that "good writing" implies that every word is carefully chosen by the author and that the "proper work" of such writing, "is to talk to some readers and to be silent to others". Although

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>682</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., p. 156. <sup>683</sup> Ibid., pp. 9 – 12.

Strauss does not inform the reader that his work qualifies as "good writing", it has been demonstrated that Strauss intended his book to be regarded as well written and carefully constructed. 684

In addressing the issue of Strauss's failure to mention Schmitt by name, this thesis has demonstrated that Strauss addresses Schmitt's criteria regarding the affirmation of the political, rather than Schmitt the man. There is no conclusive evidence that Strauss preferred not to mention Schmitt by name because of Schmitt's active role in the Nazi regime. Strauss had written on Martin Heidegger, a thinker known for his pro-Nazi support and continued sympathy. One may construe Strauss's silence on "Schmitt" as educational, requiring intensive reading and careful attention to details. However, it is possible that Strauss sought not to identify Schmitt, because Strauss considered Schmitt's ideas dangerous and detrimental to moderate politics and liberalism itself. Furthermore, Strauss's caution in identifying Schmitt was also linked to Schmitt's association with Christianity. If Strauss made it too obvious that he was confronting Schmitt in The City and Man, readers could receive the impression that he was attacking Christianity, rather than the limitations of Christianity in political life. As seen on the first page of The City and Man, Strauss goes out of his way to indicate that he has no intention of undermining "the Faithful City", or "the Divine message of the City of Righteousness". 685 Strauss's prudence in keeping potentially dangerous ideas under cover is supported by his own discussion of "the literary question", which he defines as, "the question of the relation between society and philosophy", or the tension between unsettling ideas and society's need for stability. 686 Furthermore, as this thesis has demonstrated, Strauss shares similar views with Schmitt, and given Strauss's stress

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>684</sup> Ibid., p. 53. <sup>685</sup> Ibid., p. 1. <sup>686</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

on caution and prudence, it could well be that Strauss did not want to be closely identified with someone who was banned from teaching after the Second World War for pro-Nazi activities. One must also consider that, in 1941, Strauss had condemned Schmitt's writings for contributing to the rise of Hitler. However, the crucial issue is that Strauss was very intent on making sure his works did not contribute towards the destruction of Christianity as a way of life, and he certainly demonstrates, in The City and Man, that he did not want to "knowingly or ignorantly" pave the way to yet another tyranny. 687

# 3. The Theoretical Significance of the Findings

As stated previously, the overall goal of this thesis is not to question Strauss's interpretation of Plato, Aristotle and Thucydides, but to show that Strauss thought highly enough of Schmitt's 1932 arguments on the affirmation of the political to respond to his criteria in 1964, using those classical thinkers. The City and Man is Strauss's theologico-political treatise and his comprehensive reply to Schmitt's, The Concept of the Political, defined as who, or what, should rule society. In an age where rationalism, especially classical rationalism, is under attack, according to Strauss, political theology becomes an alternative choice for serious scholars. In agreement with Schmitt regarding the importance of the regimes in understanding the political, Strauss attempts to recover classical rationalism, in order to provide an alternative political science that is guided by the theme of the best regime and what Strauss calls "common sense". 688 What makes this argument particularly significant is that none of the commentators on Schmitt and Strauss has discovered Strauss's response to Schmitt's

 <sup>687</sup> Strauss, Leo, "German Nihilism", op. cit., p. 362.
 688 Strauss, Leo, <u>The City and Man</u>, op. cit., p. 12.

criteria in <u>The City and Man</u>. In discovering the six criteria for the recovery of the political in both Schmitt's and Strauss's early works on the political, and in discovering Strauss's structure of <u>The City and Man</u>, this thesis provides a coherent interpretation of <u>The City and Man</u>.

In elucidating Strauss's response to Schmitt in <u>The City and Man</u> this thesis provides an incentive for further research into Strauss's other works, to ascertain if Strauss continues his response to Schmitt after 1965, particularly since Strauss addressed theology through his study of the Greek poet, Aristophanes, while he addressed the divine law in his book on Plato's <u>Laws</u>. Finally, since few commentators understand, or agree on, what Strauss meant by his lifetime occupation with "the theologico-political problem", this thesis will contribute to the ongoing debate on the meaning, and significance, of that problem, in the light of his response to Schmitt's political theology.

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## APPENDIX

## 1 Strauss's Divisions within The City and Man

According to Seth Benardete, the whole division of <u>The City and Man</u> is as follows: Chapter One ("On Aristotle's <u>Politics</u>") five distinct parts - "1) Aristotle as the founder of political science (pp. 13 - 29); 2) city and culture (pp. 30 - 35); 3) democracy (pp. 35 - 41); 4) nature (pp. 41 - 45); 5) regime (pp. 45 - 49)". I argue that the first division is on p. 48, after the word, "defensible--", not p. 50 that begins chapter 2.

Chapter Two - "On Plato's <u>Republic</u>" is divided into two parts: how to read Plato (pp. 50 - 62) and the <u>Republic</u> (*politeia*) (pp. 62 - 138).

Chapter Three - "On Thucydides' War of the Peloponnesians and the Athenians" is divided up according to Strauss's sub-titles:

- 1. "Political Philosophy and Political History" (pp. 139 145).
- 2. "The Case for Sparta: Moderation and the Divine Law" (pp. 145 154).
- 3. "The Case for Athens: Daring, Progress and the Arts" (pp. 154 163).
- 4. "The Speeches of the Actors and the Speech of Thucydides" (pp. 163 174).
- 5. "Dike" (pp. 174 182).
- 6. "Ananke" (pp. 182 192).
- 7. "The Dialogue on Melos and the Disaster in Sicily" (pp. 192 209).
- 8. "The Spartan Manner and the Athenian Manner" (pp. 209 226).
- 9. "The Questionable Universalism of the City" (pp. 226 236).
- 10. "Political History and Political Philosophy" (pp. 236 241). 689

There are 17 divisions within the book. The "central" division is "The Case for Sparta: Moderation and the Divine Law" (pp. 145 - 154). Strauss argues that the number 17 is the designation for "nature" (*physis*).

In addition, the simple breakdown of paragraphs is as follows:

- 1. "Introduction" **18** paragraphs.
- 2. "I On Aristotle's Politics" **33** paragraphs.
- 3. "II On Plato's Republic" **78** paragraphs.
- 4. "III On Thucydides' War of the Peloponnesians and the Athenians" 82 paragraphs.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>689</sup> Benardete, Seth, "Leo Strauss' *The City and Man*", op. cit., p. 2. Benardete discovered that a full stop and a long dash, ".—", separate the different themes. See pp. 29, 35, 41, & 45. The 6<sup>th</sup> division occurs on p. 48, not at the beginning of chapter two as Benardete suggests. Hence, the discussion of regimes, including the best regime, according to Aristotle, blends into the next chapter "On Plato's <u>Republic</u>". <sup>690</sup> Strauss, Leo, <u>On Tyranny</u>, op. cit., p. 275.