

## LEO STRAUSS' *THE CITY AND MAN*

Leo Strauss' *The City and Man* seems at first to be a straightforward continuation of all his previous work: the articulation of the theological-political problem. Even the writers he examines here are the same as those who were most present to him from the start: Aristotle, Plato, and Thucydides are the names most frequently cited in the index to his *Political Philosophy of Hobbes*. Continuity, however, of theme and authorities can be deceptive. That *Natural Right and History* goes forward from the pre-Socratics to Burke, and *The City and Man* back from Aristotle through Plato to Thucydides, indicates some fundamental change in Strauss' way of approaching the ancients. They are no longer the beginning from which, they are now the beginning to which he goes. *Natural Right and History* concluded with the issue of "individuality"; *The City and Man* ends with a question, *quid sit deus*. It is, according to Strauss, the question of philosophy; but when he paraphrased Calvin to the same effect in his book on Spinoza he had not fully appreciated this fact (*Spinoza's Critique of Religion*, p. 194). The recovery of this question constitutes the action of *The City and Man*. It makes the book more like Thucydides' history than like either Aristotle's *Politics* or Plato's *Republic*. The search for the "common sense" understanding of the city that leads Strauss from the political science of Aristotle and the political philosophy of Plato to the history of Thucydides turns out to be equivalent to the most metaphysical of questions (*cf.* pp. 240-1). The confirmation of their equivalence is the most striking illustration in Strauss' own writings of his golden sentence: "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)." What is first for us and what is first by nature are and are not the same (*cf.* pp. 19, 22).

In the Introduction Strauss justifies his return to the study of ancient political philosophy in the following way. The difference between political philosophy and modern political science is thematic. Political philosophy is dual, modern political science is not, for the former is concerned with the city and man, the latter with ideology. Ideology blurs the difference between the political and the non-political supports for the political. The beautiful, the good, and the true are the same. Ideology thus forecloses any ascent from the political, for it forces ultimately modern political science to see itself

as ideological. The distinction between Is and Ought, which arose from the effort to escape from this difficulty, is no less self-defeating. Not only does the distinction blind modern political science to the political as it first comes to light, but it blinds modern political science to the derivative character of that distinction. Science cannot long remain scientific unless it re-examines continuously the ascent to science. Science cannot be institutionalized without becoming dogmatic. Decay is a necessary concomitant of any ascent. Only philosophy, as distinct from the modern understanding of science, can prevent that decay. The restoration of political philosophy demands the "deconstruction" of the tradition of political philosophy. Strauss first deals with the obstacles to the possibility of such a return in the first chapter on Aristotle's *Politics*. He then looks at Plato's *Republic* as the simultaneous representative of political idealism and of the critique of political idealism; and finally he shows Thucydides to be the indispensable supplement and complement to political philosophy. Thucydides thus proves to be no less the discoverer of the universal in the particular than Plato; but whereas Socrates is Plato's 'universal particular, Athens is Thucydides', and Socrates presupposes Athens. The true title of *The City and Man is Athens and Socrates*. Strauss' *Socrates and Aristophanes* is its twin.

*The City and Man* consists of three unequal parts and seventeen subsections. Strauss himself labels only the ten subsections of the third part; but the five subsections of the first part can be labelled as follows: 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). In each of these sections Strauss is concerned with disentangling the primary from the derivative. He begins with the oxymoron political science. The statesman deals with the here and now; he deals with the unprecedented; but science can only be of the permanent; and if the permanent can only be at best the conditions for the unprecedented, political science can only be diagnostic and never normative. Aristotle's political science, however, is normative; his understanding of the political is grounded in his understanding of the best possible regime. The best possible regime therefore looks like a fiction that is indispensable in order for there to be political science but which thereby distorts necessarily that which it sets out to understand. The science of the nature of political things is not the science of political things. This difficulty could be overcome if the political were only recalcitrant to reason

prior to the discovery of political science, but with its discovery the political could be shown to be as natural as every other part of nature. As a part of nature, the science of it would depend for its completion on the completion of the science of nature as a whole. It would therefore be incomplete as long as the science of the whole were incomplete; it could never present the best possible regime prior to such a completion. Accordingly, it is no accident that Hippodamus, the first political scientist, seems to have based his best possible regime on a certain interpretation of nature. Aristotle, however, does not question Hippodamus' interpretation of nature; he questions his interpretation of the political. He shows it to be based on the assumption of a perfect harmony between technical and scientific innovation and the city; but the city cannot dispense with the non-rational habituation to what can only be in part rational, the law. Law is opposed to nature. To deny their opposition would require the understanding of nature as "growth" and "history," the rationality of which cannot be proved prior to the proof of the completion of "history." Strauss' *Natural Right and History* was his study of the emergence of the replacement of the duality of the city and man by the unity of "history."

Philosophy had to be compelled to become political philosophy. It was ultimately due to a crisis in philosophy as the study of cause. Socrates, the founder of political philosophy, traced that crisis to the impossibility of understanding nature solely in terms of material and efficient causation, on the one hand, and the unavailability of a natural teleology, on the other. This double difficulty, which foreshadows the modern opposition between man and nature, resides ultimately in the enigma of "two," for the two causes of "two" are opposites-conjunction and disjunction-of which the most obvious example is body and soul, for their union is one. Philosophy as the practice of dying and being dead implies that philosophy confronts the soul, which transmits life to body, as the obstacle it strives to overcome by means of soul. The lifeless "ideas" are the end that annihilates the sole means to that end. Inasmuch as the desire for knowledge of the whole cannot be assumed to be necessarily consistent with the desire for the goodness or wholeness of the soul, philosophy is caught between the urgency of the human and the importance of its primary quest. Socrates' recourse to speeches, or dialectics, is the expression of this tension. It necessarily begins with the here and now as it is spoken of, for the here and now as it is

merely experienced is silent with regard to what is to be done. Philosophy examines opinions, especially the most.. authoritative opinions of the city. In subjecting the most authoritative opinions to examination, it denies their authoritativeness and transcends the city. Its transcendence of the city discloses the limitations of the city. The limitations of the city define the city. The city is the first thing about which philosophy can say what it is. The city thus comes to light as a special kind of part: while being the obstacle to philosophy it alone makes philosophy possible. "The city is both closed to the whole, and open to the whole (p. 29)." It is no wonder, then, that Socrates discerns in the structure of the city the structure of the soul.

The distinguishing mark of a science is the treatise. Just as the treatise takes the principles of its science for granted, so it assumes that its readers do not need to be converted to those principles. Aristotle, as political scientist, addresses men for whom morality is an absolute and not open to question; but insofar as Aristotle himself founds political science, he cannot be unaware of its problematical premises. His procedure in the *Politics* is not unlike that in the *Physics*, whose readers have to grant that there are things which have the principle of motion and rest in themselves, and for whom therefore the Parmenidean thesis is absurd; and yet Aristotle, as the founder of physics as a distinct science, has to face the Parmenidean thesis even if it is only in a digression. His *Politics* likewise does not remain a treatise as soon as it is engaged in its "most fundamental discussion," for this "involves what is almost a dialogue between the oligarch and the democrat (p. 21)." A theme of *The City and Man*, which becomes more and more prominent in the book, is that of presentation. Whereas Strauss says little about the form of the *Politics*, he devotes the first section of the second part to the enigma of the Platonic dialogues as imitations (pp. 50-62), and the whole of his discussion of Thucydides' history is as much concerned with the way in which Thucydides wrote as with what he wrote about. The closer one stands to the particular the more one's own perspective becomes an issue. Self-knowledge and ascent belong together.

Once philosophy made the turn to political philosophy it ran the risk of undergoing its own politicization. Neither Plato nor Aristotle failed to caution against that possibility, Aristotle by hinting that whereas "kingship in the highest sense belongs to the dawn of the city, the completion of philosophy belongs . . . rather to its dusk (p. 37)," and Plato by offering the philosopher-king as the unique

solution to the human problem, for the hyphenated name points to the irreducible difference between the highest of which man and the city respectively are capable. Modern philosophy, however, was ultimately incapable of distinguishing between political idealism and "ideals." Man too became his own construct. "To be in speech" therefore ceased to be heuristic, it became instead the stamp on man's freedom. "The rights of man are the moral equivalent of the *Ego cogitans* (p. 45)." Modernity lives and thinks in the element of negation and hence parasitically; the ancients proceeded by way of the double negative and hence were truly liberating. Inasmuch as the way out of the city lies of necessity through the city, neither the whole nor man can be understood without the city. It is not despite but because "the part of Plato's *Republic* which deals with philosophy is the most important part of the book (p. 127)," that Aristotle "legitimately disregards (the rule of philosophers) in his critical analysis of the *Republic* (p. 122)." Political philosophy is the eccentric core of philosophy.

Irony is incompatible with science; it is at home in political philosophy. Indeed, one might say that political philosophy is nothing but the irony of philosophy itself. Socrates the master ironist and Socrates the first political philosopher seem to be the same. And if they are the same, political philosophy would have to be double-faced with one face turned toward and the other away from the city. The Platonic dialogue is the replication of this Janus. It frames in the lie of "logographic necessity," according to which nothing in the perfect writing is by chance, the dissimulation of wisdom. It therefore seems to elude interpretation: "to speak through the mouth of a man who is notorious for his irony seems to be tantamount to not asserting anything (p. 51)." Strauss is certainly the only modern scholar who faced this difficulty squarely and showed the way to its solution. The way to its solution depends wholly on facing the difficulty. Simplicity of a certain kind is the secret ingredient in Strauss' "method." It alone is immune from routinization. The reason for Plato's choice of imitative dialogues becomes self-evident once Strauss calls one's attention to the resemblance between an "idea" and the collection of Plato's dialogues, each of which looks like both an individual member and a species of the same genus (*cf.* p. 55). To collect and divide the dialogues according to their most obvious features is to become initiated into the practice of dialectics. The set of groupings of which a dialogue is capable is an imitation of the

enigmatic relations that obtain between the parts and the whole in nature. These groupings, moreover, have the immediate advantage of replacing one big, unanswerable question with a series of smaller questions whose very smallness suggests their answers. To observe that Plato never has Socrates talk to any artisan, even though his Socrates speaks of almost nothing but artisans, and asserts besides that of those he conversed with they at least knew something, is already to anticipate the movement of the *Republic* from the city of arts to the city of armed gentlemen to the beautiful city of the philosopher king. It is, admittedly, not always as easy to see how the answer to a "Why?" emerges of its own accord from a classification; but the example shows at least the need to begin at the beginning in the interpretation of Platonic dialogues. Only if one comes to them with the innocence of a naive zoologist does one come sufficiently prepared. This innocence is the interpretative equivalent of Socratic ignorance.

Every Platonic dialogue is a whole; every Platonic dialogue deals with a part of the whole apart from the whole. The apartness of the part makes possible the appearance of its wholeness. It is through the abstraction from something essential to the understanding of the part as part that each dialogue can appear whole. That the impossible is the price for wholeness is less shocking than that it is the price for understanding as well; but it ceases to be shocking once one realizes that the wholeness of a dialogue is essentially a function of its being an instrument of communication, and that through the impossible Plato merely reproduces the conditions in which we stand initially in regard to anything. (We discuss, for example, Socrates' thesis in the *Gorgias* that it is worse to act unjustly than to suffer unjustly without our ever stopping to think that, according to Socrates himself, such a thesis cannot be discussed prior to our knowing what justice is.) The impossible, then, is the modality of whatever is first for us; and this is truer of the city than of anything else. It is not Socrates but Glaucon who introduces the word "idea" (*eidōs*) and demands that Socrates demonstrate the goodness of justice apart from its power in the soul. To use the impossible to reveal the city is merely to follow the way of the city itself, which cannot be or be understood apart from idealism. But the impossible when treated as possible is at the same time "the core of every Aristophanean comedy." The Platonic dialogue brings to its completion what could be thought to have been completed by

Aristophanes (p. 62)." Plato completes Aristophanes presumably because comedy, though it soars higher than tragedy, is parasitic on tragedy, and philosophy altogether transcends their difference.

The precise difficulty that the interpretation of any Platonic dialogue has to solve does not consist so much in the meaning of the speeches, which are "relatively easy to understand," as in the meaning of the deeds. "The speeches deal with something general or universal (e.g. with justice), but they are made in a particular or individual setting (p. 60)." "The deeds are in the first place the setting and the action of the individual dialogues: on what kind of man does Socrates act with his speeches? what is the age, the character, the abilities, the position in society, and the appearance of each? when and where does the action take place? does Socrates achieve what he intends? is his action voluntary or imposed on him? (p. 59)" The deeds, then, are the constraints on the universality of the speeches; they are the distorting medium of the universals at which the speakers aim. They are, on the other hand, that without which Socrates' speeches would remain incommunicable, for inasmuch as Plato does not present Socrates' thinking by himself, the manifold distortions of the universal which are the dialogues are inevitable. If the greatest constraint would be Socrates' forced conversation with a large number of men of the most varied backgrounds, then the *Apology of Socrates* is the dialogue farthest removed from the "ideal" silent dialogue; and if the least constraint would occur in Socrates' chosen conversation with an anonymous youth devoted to philosophy, then the *Erastai*, in which Socrates discovers political philosophy, is the closest to the "ideal" silent dialogue. Strauss interprets the *Republic* as the intersection of these two extreme cases. It begins with Socrates' descent and has as its centerpiece the ascent from the cave. The *Republic* is the education of Glaucon and Adimantus. This action is in a sense more visible in Polemarchus' sending his slave to detain Socrates, in Cephalus' getting up to attend to the sacrifices, in Thrasymachus' violent intrusion into the discussion, and in Polemarchus' whispering to Adimantus than in the speeches themselves. The *logos* of these deeds is the *logos* of the *Republic*.

The problem of justice is the problem of the common good: is there anything which by nature is common? The only possible answer to this question—knowledge—fixes the limits of the city, for even the community of the best city is grounded in the noble lie. It

could be objected that the common good does not require the sharing in knowledge; it would suffice if, the common good were the sharing in the search for knowledge; and the *Republic* as a conversation about justice is itself the model of the best city. (Socrates hints at this possibility by defining the city as a partnership among those who are not self-sufficient prior to his asserting that the needs of the body make the city (369b5-e1).) The elegance of this solution is vitiated by three deeds that occur before the common search for Justice begins: Polemarchus' threat of force against Glaucon and Socrates, Cephalus' departure from the community, and the taming of Thrasymachus. One would therefore have to modify the suggestion and state that the city could be grounded in philosophy if force could be shown to be not necessarily deaf to argument (*cf.* 327c12-13), if the sacred were not an irreducible surd in the city (*cf.* 458e4), and if anger or *thumos* could always be allied with reason. The proof of the impossibility of the first and third of these conditions being met is at the heart of Strauss' analysis of the *Republic*; the problem posed by the second condition encapsulates his analysis of Thucydides' history. The necessity that these three conditions impose on the city entails not only that the best city be in speech and only in speech but that even in speech it is self-contradictory. The impossible, then, which looks at first as if it is only an indispensable means for understanding, turns out to be so embedded in the best city that the best city is not even in speech. The most obvious practical corollary of this is the non-revolutionary character of ancient political philosophy, for one cannot set out to realize what is not just circumstantially unrealizable but resists being blueprinted as well. Strauss' proof that the imaginary city does not even exist as a paradigm laid up in heaven gives substance to his remark that "Machiavelli does not bring to light a single political phenomenon of any fundamental importance which was not fully known to the classics (*Thoughts on Machiavelli*, p. 295)."

A closer determination of the character of the *Republic* can be derived from a consideration of two possible subjects of discussion that Cephalus' long speech on old age offers. He speaks not only of the payment of debts but also of the tyranny of *eros* and the terrors of Hades. He thus allows for either a dialogue like the *Symposium* or a dialogue like the *Phaedo*. The theme of justice would seem to be a compromise between philosophy as *eros* and philosophy as the practice of dying and being dead, between, that is, philosophy in its



ascent from body and philosophy as the denial of body. One might therefore be inclined to say that *the Republic*, far from being a compromise between the *Symposium* and the *Phaedo*, is in fact their union, were one not deterred, on the one hand, by Socrates' assertion that the tyrant, or: injustice incarnate, is *egos* incarnate, and, on the other, by the non-eliminable root of the city being its satisfaction of the needs of the body and the virtue of the city's auxiliaries being essentially corporeal (518d9-e2). The city can never fully acknowledge or satisfy the needs of the soul and the community to which the soul is open. Since natural justice depends on the absence of any form of selfishness that is not in full accord with the common good, one has, only to observe that whereas Socrates' banishment of the poets, eliminates the kind of love which poets have for their own poems, and his communistic proposals abolish the love that fathers have for their sons, the class of money makers remains in the city, to recognize that Cephalus, who is not the moneymaker his grandfather was nor the spendthrift his father was, still haunts the *Republic* even after he leaves of his own accord (*cf.* 330c3-9). The necessity for his departure on the level of speech does not make him vanish on the level of deed. Thrasymachus, who wants to be paid for his participation, takes his place.

Strauss' interpretation of Thrasymachus's role in the *Republic* owes something in its origin to Alfarabi, who noted the difference between the way of Socrates and the way of Thrasymachus and the need of the philosopher to combine them (*The Philosophy of Plato*, tr. Mahdi, pp. 66-7); but Strauss goes far beyond Alfarabi in working out the connection between the two things for whose introduction into the dialogue Thrasymachus is responsible. The first, to which Alfarabi primarily refers, is Thrasymachus' ability to play the city in its anger, the second, which is the key to the *Republic*, is his insistence on distinguishing between art as it is precisely spoken of and art in its ordinary signification. The importance of the latter distinction lies in the double definition of justice to which it gives rise, for though the initial condition for anyone's acceptance into the city is his perfect knowledge of one art, the functioning of the classes depends solely on the principle of minding one's own-business. Each class is thus constituted according to the weak meaning of art, while the members of each class gain membership - according to the strict meaning of art. (This tension between structure and principle is not confined to the city: Timaeus' cosmology suffers from comparable

strains.) The split between class-membership and class-characteristic seals the impossibility of the best city when it turns out that the class of artisans is not a part of the city's structure as such but as the class of moneymakers. It is possible to regard wisdom as the artful perfection of natural intelligence, and courage as the artful perfection of *thumos*, but the art of moneymaking is not the artful but the conventional perfection of desire. Knowledge, in short, ceases to be the model of the city once the soul becomes the model of the city. Only as long as the city is considered as the means for the satisfaction of bodily desires is the city a cognitive manifold; as soon as the city seeks to transcend the body it falls back on opinion for the sake of its own unity. The inversion of the natural correspondence between body-opinion and soul-knowledge is a necessary inversion for the city. Its superiority to a gang of thieves cannot be shown without a weakening of the principle in which the city's title to such superiority ultimately rests. The principle-one man/one art-would never permit the auxiliaries to learn three arts-gymnastics, music, and warfare-; but if the auxiliaries are not so educated they could never be communized; and communism seems to be the only way to bring about a convergence of the criteria of class-characteristic and class-membership. Their convergence, however, is illusory because only the things of the body and not of the soul are communized; and the things of the body cannot be communized in any natural way. The *Republic's* failure to supply a precise account of soul is the same as the city's own failure to solve the human problem. Thrasymachus contradicts himself because he defines the just as the lawful while demanding that all speech have the precision of art. This self-contradiction is identical with the city's.

In order to appreciate Thrasymachus' other contribution to the *Republic*, one has to bring together what Strauss says about Thrasymachus' anger and about Socrates' genealogy of defective regimes. It looks at first as there should be a difference between Thrasymachus' playing the city and his being the city, as well as a difference between them and his playing the angry city, but Strauss treats them as the same (pp. 78-9). To say that Thrasymachus plays the city in playing the angry city is to assert that the core of the city is *thumos*, or that neither the ground of the city (the artisans) nor its peak (the philosophers) belong to the city, which is always "this city"; and "this city" must make a distinction between inside and outside to which both the arts and philosophy are indifferent; but

to say that Thrasymachus in feigning anger plays the city is to assert that Thrasymachus has an art that as such is no more devoted to "this city" than any other art is. These two assertions together imply that the false anger of Thrasymachus is the truth of the city's anger: the city's indignation always has an element of spuriousness. Its spuriousness arises from its tacit assumption that the evil it now rails against was once absent. All evil is the result of a willed degeneracy. So Socrates does not begin to account for defective regimes until he has established the prior existence of the best city: he appeals to the Muses. The precision of speech on which Thrasymachus insisted thus proves to be related to his playacting. It too is a fiction. Although it seems at first that such precision has its true home in mathematics, it now comes to light that it is no less at home in morality: "exaltation of spiritedness is the inevitable by-product of the utopia . . . taken seriously (p. 129)." Without the postulate of utopia's reality, morality cannot be based on the absoluteness of the will. Socrates' refusal to concede anything to will when he equated justice with an art has now collapsed. Morality is the animation of the mathematician's abstractions. The "idea" of justice, then, is the delusion of *thumos*. It is perhaps for this reason that Socrates, while speaking of *to logistikon* (the rational) and *to epithumetikon* (the appetitive) parts of the soul, does not speak of *to thumikon* but of *to thumoeides*, the translation of which, if it followed all other words suffixed with *Bides*, would have to be "that which has the *eidōs* (or form) of anger."\*

Strauss always had the gift of connecting the small with the big without making either the big a mere enlargement of the small or the small a mere anticipation of the big; rather, he showed that the correction each imposed upon the other altered the level of the argument itself. Socrates' radicalization of every initial thesis induces such a shift in the thesis that it tumbles into another thesis which may or may not be the original's antithesis. Dialectics, as it transforms an argument, both preserves continuity and reveals discreteness. Socrates' exception to Cephalus' definition of justice seems at first to be marginal, and Cephalus could acknowledge the exception without ceasing to believe his definition still to be broadly true; but a moment's reflection shows that Socrates' example introduces an

\* It is striking that the manuscripts of Aristotle and Xenophon are more or less divided between *thumdes* ("spirited")—a wholly different suffix—and *thumoeides*, but Plato's manuscripts are all in favor of the latter.

entirely new principle that far from being marginal usurps the whole range of justice and excludes any other principle. Once one admits that sanity is the condition for the obligatory return of a deposit, one cannot withhold one's assent from the proposition that knowledge alone establishes right. No one has a right even to his own life if he does not know how to use it correctly. The absurdity of this as a political principle points to the absurdity of the central thesis of the *Republic*: the strict parallelism between the city and the soul. If the city is to be perfectly, just, this parallelism is simultaneously necessary and impossible. Strauss' interpretation of the *Republic* is unique in keeping together its necessity and its impossibility. The poet, he observes, is banished from the city only to return as a god who is the poet of the eternal "ideas" (p. 79). The strangeness of this vanishes if one recalls that while Socrates forbids there to be either beds or tables in the "true city" (372d7-e1), beds and tables are precisely the examples Socrates uses to establish the poets' distance from being. A city grounded in the arts of making does not readily dispense with fictions. Socrates argues for the irrelevance of the city's possibility on the analogy of a painting of the most beautiful man. The banishment of the poets from the city serves only to transform them- into its founders. Socrates admires Glaucon for the finish he puts on the statues of the just and unjust men.

Strauss prepares the transition from political philosophy to political history with a reference to Thucydides in the course of his analysis of the eighth book of the *Republic*: "Socrates' exaggeration of the licentious- mildness of classical democracy" is "as if the Athenian democracy had not engaged in an orgy of bloody persecution of guilty and innocent alike when the Hermes statues were mutilated at the beginning of the Sicilian expedition (p. 132)." The meaning of that persecution is, according to Strauss, the subterranean thread of Thucydides' history. Its importance for Strauss can be gauged by juxtaposing it with his contrast between Machiavelli and Thucydides:

Other contemporary readers are reminded by Machiavelli's teaching of Thucydides; they find in both authors the same "realism," i.e., the same denial of the power of the gods or of justice and the same sensitivity to harsh necessity and elusive chance. Yet - Thucydides never calls in question the intrinsic superiority of nobility to baseness, a nobility that shines forth particularly when the noble is destroyed by the base. Therefore Thucydides' *History* arouses in the reader a sadness which is- never aroused by Machi-

avelli's books. In Machiavelli we find comedies, parodies, and satires but nothing reminding of tragedy. One half of humanity remains outside of his thought. There is no tragedy in Machiavelli because he has no sense of the sacredness of the common." (*Thoughts on Machiavelli*, p. 292)

That Thucydides is a tragic Machiavelli and hence neither tragic nor Machiavellian is, I believe, a proper inference from this passage; it is amply confirmed by the third part of *The City and Man*. The third part must in turn be supplemented by his essay, "Preliminary Observations of the Gods in Thucydides' Work," *Interpretation* 4/1 1974, pp. 1-16.

In the *Timaeus* Socrates confesses to his own inability to present the best city in motion; and since to be in motion turns out to mean to be at war, he seems to be asking for a Thucydides, whose theme was the greatest motion, to supply what he cannot. His more precise request for a rendering of the city's actions and speeches in wartime, as well as of its seemly entrance into war and its behavior in harmony with its nurture and education, suggests that the fourth interlocutor, whose absence Socrates notes at the beginning of the dialogue, was none other than Thucydides himself, and in his absence we are given a revised version of Socrates' original request—not the quasi-tyrannical Athens which suffered terribly in Sicily, but an Athens which liberated all of the East from the tyranny of a Western island (pp. 140-1). Socrates argues that poets imitate best whatever they are nurtured in, and the sophists because they wander from city to city and have no home of their own cannot hit upon the deeds and speeches of philosophers and statesmen (*Timaeus* 19d-e). The proper union of motion and rest, which the very phrasing implies, recalls a Thucydidean theme; and the union of poet and sophist sounds like the historian, who can put together in a single representation his own experience with the speeches and deeds of others. If, moreover, Socrates' desire to see the best city in motion must always be frustrated (for it cannot even be in speech), the compromise he accepts from Critias is no more satisfactory than Thucydides' history. Socrates himself admits that the political defectiveness of democracy has a philosophical advantage. Inasmuch as "democracy itself is characterized by freedom which includes the right to say and do whatever one wishes, . . . democracy is the only regime other than the best in which the philosopher can lead his peculiar way of life without being disturbed"; and this especially holds for the

political philosopher, "for every way of life, every regime can be found in it (p. 131)."

The absence of Thucydides, however, from the *Timaeus* does seem to have its compensations: Socrates is also feasted with a cosmology. That a cosmology is given at all is due to the need to introduce place and time as the conditions for the translation of what is in speech to deed. Place and time stand to each other as necessity to mind; and their relation allows one to reformulate the political problem in such a way that it is independent of the apparent arbitrariness of Socrates' construction. Neither without necessity nor without mind can anything truly great come into being; but whether it is possible to determine *a priori* the proper ratio between them is doubtful as soon as one recognizes that that *is* none other than the problem of the goodness of evil (cf. *Republic* 373e4-7, 379e1-2). The apparent indeterminacy of this *ratio* requires that one look at their reluctant cooperation in deed, not in the hope of discovering the ratio but in order to understand fully the impossibility of such a discovery. For this purpose, Thucydides' history proves to be superior to Timaeus' cosmology. Indeed, if *one* considers that the historian's framework is also place and time, and Thucydides dates the events of the Peloponnesian War not by any local calendar but by the natural year of summer and winter, one begins to wonder whether he is not Timaeus' superior in every respect (cf. p. 223, note 83). Causality, at any rate, is less of a problem for Timaeus than for Thucydides.

After a section on "Political Philosophy and Political History" Strauss juxtaposes a pair of sections, "The Case for Sparta" and "The Case for Athens," only to be followed by another duality, "The speeches of the Actors and the Speech of Thucydides"; this section is followed by a second pair, "Dike" and "Ananke," that leads into a consideration of Thucydides' plan, "The Dialogue on Melos and the Disaster in Sicily." The eighth section *is* a deepening of the second and third, "The Spartan Manner and the Athenian Manner," while the ninth is devoted to Thucydides, "The Questionable Universalism of the City," and the tenth inverts the beginning, "Political History and Political Philosophy." The structure of the whole is plainly designed to let each of the various aspects of Thucydides' history come *to* light by itself, *so* that one will both be tempted to see and be checked from seeing each aspect *as* the whole of Thucydides' meaning. Strauss' divisions, one might say, are the

initial cuts of dialectics into the phenomena. They are all based to an extraordinary degree on the way in which Thucydides has indicated he wished to be read. Strauss' pair, for example, "Dike" and "Ananke," has its source in the first words of the first two speeches in Book I: "(It is) just" and "(It is) necessary." The apparent meagerness of the clue indicates both the restraint Thucydides exercises in his policy of non-intervention into the account and the deftness with which he does intervene. In no other author does what is first by nature appear to come into being so naturally out of what is first for us.

Thucydides' history pivots on two double hinges: Pericles' funeral speech is belied at once by the plague; the Melian dialogue foreshadows the Sicilian disaster (p. 227, note 89). In both cases the speeches of others precede Thucydides' own account of great suffering; in both cases the key speeches are by Athenians who reject the divine law as it is conventionally understood; and in both cases the speeches are not in any "historical" way related to the subsequent events that seem nonetheless to express their meaning. Pericles' speech, moreover, with its boast that Athens does not need a Homer, seems to be in full agreement with the message of Thucydides' own archaeology which denigrates the *Iliad*; but the Sicilian expedition, on the other hand, is introduced by another archaeology that relies somehow on the *Odyssey*. The Sicilian expedition itself partakes of the fabulousness of the *Odyssey*, but with this difference—Thucydides' Odysseus, Demosthenes, fails to return home, thwarted by the piety of his companions; and the Archidamian War has the sobriety of a chastened *Iliad*, but with this difference—the plague which recalls Apollo's punishment of the Greeks at Troy does not result in instructing any Achilles in the sacredness of burial. This way, however, of presenting Thucydides (as well as the former way—Pericles/plague::Melos/Sicily), is obviously much too fragile, too poetic to capture the whole of Thucydides' thought. The elusive patterns which Thucydides lets us see glimmering through the most opaque things are not the kernel of but only the means to his thought. Inasmuch as these patterns are heuristic, they seem to be the Thucydidean equivalents of the best regime of political philosophy.

Implicit in Thucydides' first archaeology is the title *The City and Man*, for while Thucydides must argue for the weakness of the ancients in order to prove the unsurpassable greatness of the Pei-

oponnesian War, he cannot offer his book as a possession for all time unless human nature is at all times the same. Although it might seem that the degree of accessibility to the understanding of the human could be a function of the political without there being any alteration of the human, still the disclosure of the human is part of the human and hence a radical alteration of the human. This paradox is made all the more acute if one implies, as Thucydides does, that the Peloponnesian War as the peak of Greekness differs from all previous wars by its not requiring any interpretation that is not present in the deeds themselves. For the first time the facts speak for themselves, especially since their recorder is their contemporary and does not have to resort to conjecture. Homer lived long after the Trojan War; his exaggerations therefore are partly due to his ignorance of the past and partly to the need to make manifest what was not manifest in itself. The peak of Greekness, on the other hand, means self-manifestation, of which the total stripping of the body in the Olympic games is a sign (I.6.5). Thucydides indicates the transparency of Greekness at the time of the Peloponnesian War by his silence, on the one hand, about Themistocles' rhetorical ability while praising his nature (I.138.3), and the implication, on the other, of the sole Athenian speech given extempore at Sparta: "It is above all by the amazing frankness with which they defend the Athenian acquisition of empire that they reveal Athenian power, for only the most powerful can afford to utter the principles they utter (p. 172)."

Pericles' funeral speech also seems to be a proof of the superiority of this moment of Greekness. He criticizes the legislator who required that a speech be given over the dead, as if they needed the supplement of speech, and who thereby showed his ignorance of human nature. Pericles' attack on the law in light of nature is of a piece with his denial that Athens needs a Homer. Pericles thus makes a speech that undercuts his own speech. Thucydides indicates this self-contradiction by what he says immediately after the speech: "The burial was of this sort this winter (11.47.1)." He does not say, as one would expect, "Pericles spoke in some such way." One has to add, however, that Thucydides' failure to put his own signature at the end of the first year of the war shows the degree to which he is willing to go along with Pericles; but even on this level there is a difference, for, Pericles, unlike Thucydides, believes that the truth is not difficult to discover, it is difficult only to persuade another of it (*cf.* I.20.3; II.35.2). Pericles' failure, in any case, to account for



himself points not only to his failure to recognize that his praise of Athens assumes a harmony between the public and the private that he alone exemplifies but also, more generally, to the absence in the facts themselves of their cause. Thucydides' delay in revealing that his concern is with causality is meant to warn the reader of the opacity of facts however brilliant. The archaeology is only a first statement that is continuously modified throughout the history. Thucydides' seemingly needless quotation from Homer's Hymn to Apollo in the third book underlines the need to rethink the thesis of the archaeology: "The verses stand out from the rest of the work because they conjure an altogether peaceful scene. Homer exhorts the maidens who had participated in the Delian festival to remember him and to praise him as the sweetest and most enjoyable minstrel who frequently visited Delos. In post-Homeric times "the contests" ceased as a consequence of adversities. But now, in the sixth year of the Peloponnesian war, the Athenians restored the "contests" and added horse-races as an entirely novel feature. It is not clear whether the modern Delian festival surpasses the ancient. The horse-races surely constitute a progress; but will they compensate for the absence of a Homer?" (pp. 235-6). "

Just as Strauss in his book on Plato's *Laws* suggests that its action and argument are crystallized in the oaths of its speakers, so here he indicates how the sacred, in its observance and violation, signifies the intention and argument of Thucydides. He notes that the first reference to the sacred occurs in the archaeology, where Thucydides says that the Athenian purification of Delos (Apollo's birthplace) during the war revealed the graves of barbarians, and that the last sentence of the book records the sacrifice Tissaphernes made at Ephesus to Artemis. Apollo and Artemis are, as it were, the markers of the history, one of the theme of the archaeology—the barbarian origin of Greekness—, the other of the theme of the whole work—the rebarbarization of Greece. The rebarbarization of Greece gets reflected in the Spartanization of Athens (*cf.* p. 200): Cleon appeals to the Spartan principle of unquestioning obedience to law in order to confirm the Athenians in their decision to annihilate the Mytilenaeans (III.37.3; *cf.* I.84.3); and Nicias falls back on an implicit Spartan "theology" in order to persuade the Athenians and himself of the likelihood of a change for the better in their fortunes (VII.77.2-4). Sparta, of course, does not represent the barbarian in a Greek guise; Sparta is almost as much a representative of Greekness

as Athens. As Strauss remarks, Thucydides goes out of his way to point out that a certain Spartan military practice was "not for the sake of the divine (V.70)." The significance of Cleon and Nicias seems to be rather the distortion or even parody of Sparta that necessarily occurred in Athens once Pericles died. Theseus' unification of Athens, which destroyed local government but left the sacred in place, was completed by Pericles under necessity, so that not only were the country people forced to abandon the sacred outside but to occupy the sacred ground of the Pelargikon. "It was not because of the illegal occupation," Thucydides says, "that calamities occurred to the city, but because of the war its habitation was a necessity, and though the oracle did not name the war it knew the place could never be occupied for any good (II..17.2)." Thucydides thus suggests the following meaning of the sacred. The sacred, whether it be a thing, a place, a custom, or a sacrifice, is a guarantee by the gods that men will never be under the total sway of necessity. Men will never either need to use for themselves what is set aside for the gods or neglect to practice what is owed to the gods. The sacred is a token of grace. The Peloponnesian War, however, is nothing else than the revelation of universal necessity. The signal for the outbreak of civil war in Corcyra is the perversion of the sacred for the sake of faction: the demagogue Peithias charged that the five wealthiest men had cut stakes from the sacred precinct of Zeus and Alcinous (III.70.4). Nicias costs the Athenians a victory-trophy because he has to recover under truce two corpses (IV.44.6); and such a disharmony between the city's interests and the divine is wholly contrary to Nicias' beliefs. The Athenians at Delion defend their transgression of the prohibition against using lustral water for ordinary purposes (and hence of the injustice of the Boeotians in preventing them from burying their dead), on the grounds that "illegality is the name for evils not done by necessity (IV.98.6)." These examples could be multiplied; but what they all have in common is the peculiarity that the restraints on savagery (the humane, as it is commonly understood) do not rest on the natural but "on a specific piety, i.e., a specific understanding of the divine. . . . Thucydides' "curious interest (Gomme) in the casuistry regarding sacral matters is a necessary consequence of his interest in the fundamental issue of Right and Compulsion (p. 208, note 70, cf. p. 180)." The sacred, then, is not just a barbarian remnant which it would be better to dispense with; it is the irreplaceable source of the strength of Greekness itself insofar as Greek-

ness is not identical with those individuals who, like Themistocles, are at home everywhere. Athenian imperialism therefore is of ultimate importance for understanding how the universality which it seems to embody is necessarily in conflict with its own base. The abandonment of the sacred does not lead, as Pericles believes it would, to complete devotion to the public good; it leads instead to the domination of the private. The love of the beautiful, in which Greekness partakes to an extent not known elsewhere, is inseparable from the *law* (cf. pp. 210-1).

Strauss' interpretation of the *Republic* can be put in the phrase "the abstraction from *eros*." He showed that this abstraction is connected with two disparate elements of the city: the unerotic nature of the arts and the political superiority of *thumos*. It is therefore worthwhile to test this interpretation of the city with Thucydides' presentation of *eros*. When Pericles urges his listeners to behold the power of the city and become its lovers (II.43.1), it is not very clear how one is to sort out the implication of common self-sacrifice from the individual's compensation in ageless praise (cf. p. 195, note 61). The ambiguity recalls Aristophanes' *Knights* (cf. 732), in which the language of love is based on the conceit that the Athenian Demos is one person, and which as a conceit denies the possibility of which Pericles speaks. *Eros*, however, does strike Athens at the time of the Sicilian expedition: "*Eros* swooped down on all alike to set sail: to the elders . . . and to the young with a longing for the sight and beholding of what was absent (VI.24.3, cf. 13.1)." This phrase underlines the paradox of Pericles', who couples desire and beholding for what is present, at the same time that it suggests that "there is something reminding of religion in Athenian imperialism (p. 229)." The fantastic hopes of the Sicilian expedition were quickly joined by fantastic fears: the mutilation of the Hermae and the profanation of the mysteries. These fears were partly due to the founding lie of the Athenian democracy—that Harmodius and Aristogiton destroyed the Pisistratean tyranny. Thucydides, however, knows the truth: Harmodius and Aristogiton only succeeded in making the tyranny worse, and far from being animated by any public zeal they were prompted to act because of private *eros*. Thucydides' insertion of this story into the narrative of the Sicilian expedition has the effect of making the latter the truth of the truth of the former. Private *eros* in the context of the sacred which the Pisistratids strictly maintained is replaced by public *eros* in the context of the

violation of the sacred. Athens itself, in holding a tyrannical or quasi-tyrannical empire, becomes the incarnation of *eros*; but far from seeing the violation of the sacred as bound up with their own *eros*, and thus as making an advance over Pisistratean Athens, the Athenians believed that impiety and tyranny of the Pisistratean type belong together. They therefore put a man of the greatest piety and law-bred virtue in charge of an expedition inspired by *eros*. This self-misunderstanding is a necessity for the city; but inasmuch as piety too is grounded in fantastic hopes (p. 209), Athens' self-misunderstanding is in profound agreement with the true understanding of the essential limits of the city: the Athenian populace and army hoped that the acquisition of Sicily would yield them eternal pay (VI.24.3). Thucydides thus reminds us of the former Greek tyrannies which "only looked to the body and the increase of their private household, . . . and did nothing worthy of account (I.17)." Not Pericles, then, but Nicias is the truth of Athens.

It is not possible in a review to trace all the ways in which Strauss weaves together the various dualities of Thucydides' work-how, for example, right and compulsion, rest and motion, tragedy and comedy, deed and speech, law and nature are related to one another. A final point, however, should be made about the title *The City and Man*. Nothing in the book is not directly connected with the explication of the explicit conjunction and implicit disjunction of the "and" of its title. The prescientific etymology of the Latin verb *separo*, to separate, combined the prefix *se*, which means "apart," with a verbal form of *par*, which means not only "equal" but also "pair." Pairing and parting belong together. The Socratic name for this double procedure is dialectics. *The City and Man* is an example of it.

SETH BENARDETE

*New York University*

