

A Proem

ANTONIO LASTRA

ἐπεὶ καὶ τὸ λοιπὸν οὐ πάντων ῥᾶστον διελθεῖν.

τὸ ποῖον;

τίνα τρόπον μεταχειριζομένη πόλις φιλοσοφίαν οὐ διολεῖται.

—Plato

Resp. 497d

Every philosophy conceals a philosophy. The “philosophy of the future”—of which Friedrich Nietzsche’s *Beyond Good and Evil* was only the prelude—could conceal, at least partially or between the lines, the philosophy of Leo Strauss (Kirchhain, Germany, 1899; Annapolis, United States, 1973).¹ The suggestion that the philosophy of Leo Strauss—forty years after his death, once the controversy about his political influence is over and when the world of readers has access to practically everything he wrote, and not only what he published—might be in itself a philosophy of the future, as paradoxical as it may seem applied to a thinker for whom reading the ancient writers and the biblical *teshuva* became the main lines of his considerations, would be based as much on the premise that philosophy as such has no tradition as on the difficulties involved in tracing its own history. The awkwardness of the philosopher in relation to historical sense is well-known.² Tradition and history always refer to a past—and a continuation of that past—that has overcome oblivion and has arrived, more or less altered, in the present. History and tradition refer to societies with their

customs, opinions, and laws that, as peculiar and different as they might be, remain customs, opinions, and laws of society, of the same society, whatever its regime, which would not exist and would not be intelligible without a history and tradition. On the other hand, philosophy is a *regimen solitarii* or transpolitical. The philosopher would therefore be closer to a hermit concerned about the salvation of his soul *sub quaedam specie aeternitatis*, or about living according to Nature, than to a citizen concerned about the salvation or the government of his country. Only by transcending these customs, opinions, and laws, or in a situation of extreme necessity could he become guardian of the city or guardian of his brother. Even in this case, it would be very difficult to separate what is due to chance from what might be expected of the miraculous intervention of a particular providence or from dispensations of fate.³ Society is necessarily conventional and religious, while philosophy is necessarily exceptional and unscrupulous: the philosopher's soul, unlike the body, is elsewhere. According to Nietzsche, in the writings of a hermit (*Einsiedler*), we perceive solitude and silence. The hermit is the guardian of the cave, which can be a labyrinth or a gold mine. The hermit's cave is his book: a hermit's book conceals a treasure. "The hermit—supposing that a philosopher always started as a hermit—never believes that the philosopher has expressed in his books his authentic and final opinions: aren't books written precisely to hide what we conceal inside us?"

In his only text specifically dedicated to Nietzsche—to a single book by Nietzsche—published shortly after his death, Strauss acknowledged that *Beyond Good and Evil* always "seemed" to him "the most beautiful of Nietzsche's books" and pointed out that, somehow, it was also "the only book published" by the author. The beauty of the book would be inseparable from its public nature.⁴ Nietzsche would admit in *Ecce Homo* that *Beyond Good and Evil* was essentially a "critique of modernity." The philosophy of the future was beautifully presented in public as a critique of modernity; the critique of modernity should have resulted in modern society becoming a chapter of the past. The fact that modern society became a chapter of the past would be just a sign of the intrinsic brevity of tradition and history: world history, as the young Nietzsche had guessed, was, after all, just a minute. The publication and

the beauty of a book of philosophy could be used, then, to hide “an even deeper cave”: only the descent to that deeper cave, to the deepest cave, would allow the subsequent ascent to the closest cave to the surface and sunlight, to the “pure spirit and good in itself”; that is, the natural or Platonic cave. (In one of his sentences closest to the enigmatic and mysterious nature of Nietzsche’s aphorisms, Strauss wrote that “the problem inherent in the surface of things, and only in the surface of things, is the heart of things.”) Strauss said in relation to the form—the publication and beauty—of *Beyond Good and Evil* that Nietzsche would have platonized much more than what his “fight against Plato” might suggest: the fight against Plato, against the pure spirit and good in itself, would actually be the adequate preparation for the critique of modernity. The critique of modernity and the fight against Plato would have created, in any case, “a magnificent tension of the spirit,” a tension that only the philosopher would be able to withstand.⁵ However, without cities, there are no philosophers. Unlike the existence of society, the possibility of philosophy can never be taken for granted. The mere preservation of a philosophy does not guarantee its being practiced or transmitted: philosophy requires much more than mere preservation. Every philosophy conceals a philosophy to carefully preserve it but also to allow the Socratic question of how a city that does not want to perish should practice philosophy to be formulated.⁶

The tension of the spirit created by the fight against Plato and the critique of modernity is especially manifest when trying to translate the language of philosophy into the language of society. The relationship between philosophy and society is the central subject in Strauss’s Platonic political philosophy and includes the question about philosophy itself: answering the question about what philosophy is requires elucidating the relationship between philosophy and society. Political philosophy is a response to the question about philosophy itself. Philosophy can destroy the society that falsely accuses it of being the cause of its destruction. Unable to perceive the pure spirit and the good in itself, the city accepts secondhand interpretations or opinions. The philosopher, by contrast, wants to find the original text (God or the world), wants to know everything, to know the articulations or the noetic heterogeneity of the whole.

From this perspective, we could read aphorism 28 in *Beyond Good and Evil* as if Strauss were the “transfiguring and ministerial” spirit (*verklärenden, complementären Geist*) that every text needs for its commentary.⁷ The decisive position of aphorism 28, whose beginning refers to “the most difficult thing to render from one language into another,” is given by the headings of aphorisms 27 (“It is difficult to be understood”) and 29 (“It is the business of the very few to be independent”): untranslatability belongs, then, to the same pragmatic sphere as misunderstanding and independence. The difficulty of understanding the free spirits, the nuances of freethinking, the subtlety of interpretation, the privilege and the need for independence would be as characteristic of the philosophy of the future as of Strauss’s philosophy. At the very heart of his argumentation, when he says that Lessing, unlike Goethe, was an “exception” in Germany, Nietzsche could not be referring only to his having been able, thanks to his “comedic nature,” to translate Bayle or “flee” with Diderot and Voltaire, thus overcoming the inability of the German language to translate Petronius or Aristophanes—even if his prose could not have ultimately “imitated” Machiavelli. Nietzsche could not of course ignore that the anti-machiavellism of the German language was one of the clearest signs of the hypocrisy and philistinism of modern society—nor that, revealing “Plato’s secret” (that is, that Plato never did truly reject Aristophanes), he was giving the keys to the old discord between philosophy and poetry (*Resp.* 607b). The imitation of Machiavelli and the discord between philosophy and poetry, exemplified by Thrasymachus’s or Aristophanes’s position in Plato’s dialogues and by their relationship with Socrates, would be important topics of Strauss’s philosophy.⁸ But Nietzsche’s identification of Lessing’s freethinking and “the flight from Germany” (*die Flucht aus Deutschland*) in Lessing was crucial to understand how and why this philosophy would conceal itself in another or conceal itself a philosophy. Lessing’s exception proved the rule of philosophy. Every philosophy, indeed, conceals more than one philosophy: Strauss concealed Lessing’s philosophy in his own to turn his exception into the rule that he would follow in his way of reading and writing philosophy books.

The plan of *Beyond Good and Evil* required the second section on “Free Spirit” to be preceded by a section on “the prejudices of

philosophers.” The spirit would be free because it got rid of the philosophers’ prejudices. The philosophers of the future, the “new philosophers” would be free spirits once “an old and stupid prejudice” had vanished and gone away. But Nietzsche distinguished his *Freie Geist* from *libre-penseurs*, *liberi pensatori*, *Freidenker* “or whatever all those brave defenders of modern ideas like to be called.”⁹ Lessing, meanwhile, had liked to call himself *Freigeist* almost from the beginning of his career as a writer and, as he wrote to his friend Moses Mendelssohn when that career was advanced enough to realize of the variety of his responsibilities towards the readers (as a playwright, poet, critic, scholar, theologian or philosopher), he was afraid that “by throwing away certain prejudices” he had “thrown away a little too much that I shall have to fetch back.”¹⁰ Strauss could find in Lessing both the free spirit and the investigator—or “antiquarian” (*Antiquar*) in Lessing’s own word, whose meaning Strauss inverted in translating it from German into English—that was not afraid that his task consisted of recovering something, restoring a reading, which he had discarded before. The spirit could also (or perhaps only) be free by recovering some prejudices. The philosopher can hold prejudices or be forced to use them as a matter of prudence in his relationship with society. Lessing’s imaginary flight from Germany would converge with Strauss’s “[real] parting from Germany.”

The reasons why Strauss concealed Lessing’s philosophy may have had to do with his own escape from Germany and with the philosophy he would have to deal with in the United States as a “good European” (“we good Europeans and free spirits,” in Nietzsche’s words), educated in German universities in the interwar period, for whom the presence of Martin Heidegger in the classrooms had been an intellectual shock and whose Jewish background had not prevented him from discussing radically—thanks to his knowledge of the critique of religion in Spinoza and Hobbes’s political philosophy—Carl Schmitt’s concept of the political just before the arrival of Nazism. Setting himself apart from an Orthodox family education, Strauss felt the same Jewishness was sufficiently ambiguous to allow him initially to believe that Zionism was a viable solution to the Jewish problem and also, associating the prestige of German science with traditional Jewish exegesis, to study and edit

the works of Mendelssohn, whom Strauss considered the founder of modern Judaism. In the United States, Strauss could answer the question about “why we remain Jews.” Strauss would admit at the end of his life that in all these cases “Lessing was always at my elbow.”¹¹

If Lessing—not the Lessing of a certain tradition, but the true and unknown Lessing—had always been at his elbow, that could mean only one thing: that Strauss had always been on the side of philosophy. The fact that Strauss had always been on the side of philosophy excluded his being on the side of theology or politics, of political theology; that is, on the side of society. In the famous autobiographical preface to the English translation of his book on Spinoza, Strauss presented the “author” (the *ego ipsissimus*) as “a young Jew born and raised in Germany who found himself in the grips of the theologico-political predicament,” and, in his only mention of Lessing, summed up in a single line all the works that young Jew had written in Europe: “Jacobi made public the fact that in Lessing’s view there was no philosophy but the philosophy of Spinoza.” Having always had Lessing at his elbow could mean that Strauss had always been on the side of Baruch Spinoza’s philosophy, which did not exclude his having been on the side of a liberal and democratic society like the one Spinoza seemed to have defended, but would exclude his being on the side of a non-liberal or orthodox society. If revelation was the foundation of orthodoxy, Judaism could never be assimilated to a liberal society. The foundation of liberal society would be *libertas philosophandi*, which was the limit of modern Judaism interpretations, as any reader of Mendelssohn’s *Jerusalem* could confirm. But neither could do Christianity, and that was the limit of the interpretations of Spinoza and Lessing.

In the last letter Lessing wrote to Mendelssohn, he expressed his craving to escape to “a country in Europe where there were neither Christians nor Jews.” Since Islam is unthinkable without Jews or Christians, Lessing could refer to a modern secular society—like the society that could be established, for example, after the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States—or to the ancient city. If, as Lessing knew perfectly well, the best of all possible constitutions would remain imperfect and the ancient city had its gods too, then that country in

Europe where to flee to could only be found in the old books of ancient writers: in the city of words, but not in the actual city.

In the last paragraph of the autobiographical preface, Strauss brought together, without mentioning them, Nietzsche and Lessing: the “change of orientation” that occurred in Strauss before taking flight or leave from Germany would have been to cast aside the powerful prejudice of thinking that a return to premodern philosophy was impossible. The return to premodern philosophy meant that there was another philosophy apart from Spinoza’s or that the philosophy of Spinoza was essentially the same as premodern philosophy. It is possible, indeed, that all philosophers form a class of their own and that what unites all genuine philosophers is more important than what unites any philosopher with any group of nonphilosophers. Strauss shed light on this dilemma by paying attention to how heterodox thinkers of earlier times had written their books. Heterodox thinkers of earlier times were not able to take revelation literally. As a result, Strauss would read the *Theologico-Political Treatise* in a different way from the way he had read it when he was a young Jew who found himself in the grips of the theologico-political predicament and “understood Spinoza too literally because” he “did not read him literally enough.”¹²

Literal reading discovers reticent writing. Literality and reticence are guidelines for the interpretation of Platonic political philosophy texts. The line “Jacobi made public the fact that in Lessing’s view there was no philosophy but the philosophy of Spinoza” was as literal as it was reticent. Judging only by the mentions of Mendelssohn and Lessing found in books, articles and reviews published by Strauss in the United States since 1939—when his first study on Xenophon came out—until 1973, when appeared his note on the plan of *Beyond Good and Evil*, no one could have guessed that the discoverer of exoteric teaching had not only cleared the path through a *terra incognita* until then, as Strauss said in his famous study *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, but had reached that unknown land through a deeply cultivated field of knowledge. As editor and interpreter of Mendelssohn’s writings, Strauss came to feel concerned about the spiritual situation of the enlightened Jew (i.e., the spiritual situation of the modern Jew that could be measured

against the Enlightenment and modernity as a whole). The line “Jacobi made public the fact that in Lessing’s view there was no philosophy but the philosophy of Spinoza” actually concealed many other lines. Publication, indeed, might not be the best or the only way to make known an opinion that, perhaps, inasmuch as it would be only an opinion, might not be authentic or final, and that in any case, insofar as it would be only an opinion, would always be inferior to knowledge. Philosophy as such, including Spinoza’s philosophy, as Strauss repeated on numerous occasions, consists in replacing opinion by knowledge. The fact that Jacobi had made public an opinion on Spinoza did not mean that he knew what Lessing really thought or knew nor that Jacobi himself had reached any knowledge beyond Lessing’s opinion about what really mattered; it did not mean either that in the controversy over whether Spinoza’s philosophy, and therefore philosophy as such, concealed atheism, Mendelssohn had been closer to the truth in arguing that Lessing had carried out a sort of “purification” of Spinoza’s philosophy.¹³ Jacobi had dragged Mendelssohn with him to the point that it was no longer possible to think, even in the case of a friend of Lessing, in a “salvation” (*Rettung*). To be saved, Mendelssohn would have had to be able to withstand the spiritual tension created by the critique of modernity and the fight against Plato, but there were no signs of that tension either in his *Phaedo* or in his *Jerusalem*. Mendelssohn was not, as Lessing and Socrates were, a free or ministerial spirit. Recovering the prejudice about the possibility of a premodern philosophy would take Strauss from Moses to Moses (השממ דע השמ). In his correspondence with Klein, shortly after finishing the last and longest of his introductions to the writings of Mendelssohn, Strauss refers to Maimonides as a free spirit. Maimonides, not Mendelssohn, would be for Strauss the central figure in his studies on the relationship between philosophy and Judaism.¹⁴

Lessing’s case is much more complicated. Lessing was part of Strauss’s concern for the relationship between philosophy and Judaism: Lessing had combined Maimonides and Mendelssohn in the character of Nathan.¹⁵ But Nathan was as much a biblical figure as Socrates’s modern counterpart: biblical Nathan and classical Socrates prefigure Lessing’s Nathan and Lessing himself. Strauss’s political philosophy is a

meditation on the relationship between philosophy and society—whatever the regime of society might be—whose deepest and most superficial intuition is that all societies, including the ancient city and modern secular society, are conservative.¹⁶ Strauss considered that the controversy over Spinoza’s philosophy was, despite what Jacobi had tried to prove, an improvisation by Lessing whose inspiration went back to the Platonic dialogues. In many respects, Lessing, for whom classical sources were as familiar as the reaction that could be expected from the modern public, had opened to Strauss the way to those sources and how to make them known. The fact that the conversation with Jacobi was a dramatic replica or paraphrase of the Platonic dialogues makes us think of Lessing as if Lessing had combined in his character the figures of Socrates and Plato; if Jacobi, not Lessing, was the material reporter of the conversation, then Lessing was given the role of Socrates; the fact that Jacobi (like Mendelssohn) was unable to understand what Lessing had said, made Jacobi into a sophist. Therefore, Jacobi was not Plato. (The *Pantheismusstreit* preceded the chapter in the history of philosophy about the relationship between German idealism and the “theory of ideas.”)

In 1971, Leo Strauss wrote to Alexander Altmann, who had resumed the edition of the works of Mendelssohn that had been interrupted by the Nazis, to thank him for his praise of the work that Strauss had conducted thirty-four years earlier in Germany. Lessing, not Mendelssohn, was still the “problem” as Strauss emphasized; not so much the existence of an esoteric doctrine in Lessing, about which Strauss and Altmann agreed, but its hypothetical content. “In 1937,” Strauss wrote, “I had meant to present, either in a concluding part of the introduction or in a separate article (under the title *Taking Leave of Germany* [*Abschied von Deutschland*]) the center of Lessing’s thoughts *de Deo et mundo*. The decisive points are still as clear to me now as they were then.” Strauss’s avowal, near the end of his life, that “the only thing I could do was to refer my better students strongly to Lessing” was a proper gesture of a philosopher of the future; that is, of a platonic political philosopher. We can think of Leo Strauss when reading, in Goethe’s conversations, that we need another Lessing.¹⁷

NOTES

1. See Laurence Lampert, *Nietzsche's Task. An Interpretation of Beyond Good and Evil* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), and the earlier *Leo Strauss and Nietzsche* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), and also the more recent *The Enduring Importance of Leo Strauss* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 72: "The purpose of my book—showing the enduring importance of Leo Strauss—includes arguing that Nietzsche read the spiritual situation of the present more accurately than Strauss did." The aim of this chapter is to provide, acknowledging the teachings of Lampert—especially his reading of Strauss's correspondence with Jacob Klein and of his writings on Jehuda ha-Levi, Xenophon and, of course, Nietzsche—a counterargument. See aphorism 3 of *Beyond Good and Evil* about "having read between their [the philosophers'] lines long enough" (*Beyond Good and Evil. Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, ed. Rolf-P. Horstmann and Judith Norman [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001], 6). Cf. Nietzsche's "Vorspiel" and the Platonic προοίμιον (*Resp.* 357a, *Legg.* 722c–723c), that Strauss's disciples Allan Bloom and Thomas L. Pangle translate as "prelude" (*The Republic of Plato*, ed. Allan Bloom [New York: Basic Books, 1991], 35, and *The Laws of Plato*, ed. Thomas L. Pangle [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988], 109–110). The Athenian Stranger introduces the proem or prelude at "noon," the time when, as everyone knows, "Incipit Zarathustra."
2. "Das Maass ist uns fremd" (moderation is foreign to us); Cf. aphorism 224 in *Beyond Good and Evil*. See Antonio Lastra, "Micrología: Leo Strauss y la historia de la filosofía," in *Tradición e innovación en la historia intelectual. Métodos historiográficos*, ed. Faustino Oncina (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2013), 131–140.
3. Cf. Plato, *Resp.* 412d–e and 456b–c, and *Genesis* 4:9, 4:17. Plato distinguished between the founders or legislators—that is, "us," the speakers in the dialogue—and the guardians of the city of logos, which would be neither Athens nor the "true" and "healthy" "city of pigs" (cf. *Resp.* 369c and 372d); Cain, who denies being his brother's guardian, is the founder of the Bible's first city. On the relation between πόλις and עיר, between Socrates and Nathan, see the first

- two paragraphs of Strauss's "What is Political Philosophy?" (*WIPP*, 9–10), and Leo Strauss, "Jerusalem and Athens: Some Preliminary Reflections," in *SPPP*, 147–173, and particularly 168 and 172. On the contrast between κατὰ φύσιν and παρὰ φύσιν, cf. aphorisms 9, 21, 51, 55, 49, 126, 188, and 197 in *Beyond Good and Evil*. See also Leo Strauss, "The Law of Reason in the *Kuzari*," in *PAW*, 133–141, and Strauss's letter to Gershom Scholem on 22 November 1960: "What you call *nihil*, the falāsifa call *physis*" (*GS* 3, 743).
4. Cf. *Phaedrus* 264b and 275d–276 and the last aphorism of *Beyond Good and Evil*. *Beyond Good and Evil* is not "the only book published by Nietzsche." The phrase is an example of the "deliberate mistakes" of reticent writing. Nietzsche had published the fourth part of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in a private edition. In the poem that follows the last aphorism of *Beyond Good and Evil* (that is, the final expression of the beauty of the book), Nietzsche refers to the arrival of Zarathustra. Nietzsche calls it "From high mountains"; in Platonic terms, however, this would mean a descent from philosophy to poetry.
 5. See the preface and aphorism 289 in *Beyond Good and Evil*, and Leo Strauss, "Note on the plan of Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*," in *SPPP*, 174–191. Compare the first sentence in the "Note" in connection with *ipsissimosität* and its relation to eternity with the first sentence in "Xenophon's *Anabasis*": "*Beyond Good and Evil* always seemed to me to be the most beautiful of Nietzsche's books"; "Xenophon's *Anabasis* seems today to be regarded universally as his most beautiful book" (*SPPP*, 174, 105). Both the note on *Beyond Good and Evil* and the study on the *Anabasis* are posthumous, although Strauss decided where they should have been placed in *SPPP*: between an essay on the gods in Thucydides's works and a study on natural law in Xenophon's case and between the study on Jerusalem and Athens and a note about Maimonides's *The Book of Knowledge* in Nietzsche. The "Note on the Plan of Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*" lies at the very heart of the book—the eighth of fifteen studies—where, according to Strauss, are to be found the most important lessons that an author wants to convey. See Joseph Cropsey's preface (*SPPP*, vii) and Laurence Lampert, *The Enduring Importance of Leo Strauss*, 311–314. Concerning the unnatural cave

- and the natural cave, see *PL*, 25, 135–136n2. On the relationship between Nietzschean and Platonic caves, see Hans Blumenberg, *Höhlenausgänge* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989), VI, v.
6. “How a city can take philosophy in hand without being destroyed,” as Bloom literally translates (*The Republic of Plato*, 177 [497d]). *διολεῖται* corresponds to *διαβολήν* (497a), that Bloom accurately translates as “slandered”: philosophy has been falsely accused, slandered, referring to the trial of Socrates. See the obscure passage of 496, with reference to the “flight” (*ὑπὸ φυγῆς καταληφθὲν*, “held in check by exile”) and the reluctance of Socrates (*τὸ δ’ ἡμέτερον οὐκ ἄξιον λέγειν, τὸ δαιμόνιον σημεῖον*), that prefigure the Athenian Stranger of the *Laws*. See *AAPL*, and “A Giving of Accounts” (1970), in *JPCM*, 457–466: “Without cities, no philosophers. They are the conditions.” (Leo Strauss)
 7. See the “ministerial” nature of the interpreter’s mediation in Strauss’s correspondence with Hans-Georg Gadamer (CCWM) and the “ministerial” nature of poetry in relation to Platonic political philosophy with the *complementärer Mensch*, whom Nietzsche identified with the philosopher (Laurence Lampert, *The Enduring Importance of Leo Strauss*, 128–155, 300–307).
 8. Cf. *Resp.* 607b and *OPS*, 119–142. See *TM* and *SA*.
 9. Cf. aphorism 44 in *Beyond Good and Evil* and paragraph 5 of the “Note on the Plan of Nietzsche’s *Beyond Good and Evil*.” See the preface and the first aphorism of the second volume of *Human, all too human: A book for free spirits*—of which Nietzsche published the second edition in the same year as *Beyond Good and Evil*—about those “disappointed in philosophy” (*Enttäuschten der Philosophie*).
 10. See “An Introduction to Heideggerian Existentialism,” in *RCP*, 40–41.
 11. See “Why We Remain Jews” (1962), in *JPCM*, 311–356 (particularly page 333, where Strauss mentions Lessing during the debate after his lecture). In the conclusion to a lecture Strauss gave in 1948 invited by Karl Löwith, which he wouldn’t publish afterwards, Strauss paid homage not to “the Lessing of a certain tradition, the Lessing celebrated by a certain type of oratory, but the true and unknown Lessing” (RR, 178).

12. About Strauss's "change of orientation," see "Preface to the English Translation" (1965), in *SCR*, 31 (*LAM*, 257), and *Reorientation: Leo Strauss in the 1930s*, ed. Martin D. Yaffe and Richard S. Ruderman (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).
13. On Mendelssohnian "purification" of Spinoza's philosophy understood as pantheism rather than atheism see Strauss's introduction to *Morning hours* and *To the friends of Lessing* in *LSMM*, 59–145, and also Yaffe's interpretative essay (219–317). Strauss's introductions to Mendelssohn's texts have been published in the original German in *GS* 2, 465–606. Cf. Apollonian "purification," *Resp.* 399e.
14. "Maimonides wird immer aufregender. Er war ein wirklich freier Geist" (letter to Klein on January 20, 1938, written in the United States, in *GS* 3, 545). Shortly before, in the preliminary remark to what was to be an essay about Lessing, Strauss had justified the choice of a Christian such as Lessing in the fact that "despite searching in earnest among the apostate or suspect Jews of modern times, he found not one man with Lessing's intellectual freedom [*der geistigen Freiheit*]" ("Eine Erinnerung an Lessing," *GS* 2, 607–608; *LSMM*, 161). See *LSMC* and Kenneth Hart Green, *Leo Strauss and the Rediscovery of Maimonides* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013). The three notes on Maimonides in *SPPP*—Strauss's last words on Maimonides—can be found between the note on Nietzsche and a chapter on Machiavelli.
15. A historical essay on Nathan the Wise, preceded by another on *Pantheismusstreit*—a chapter in the history of philosophy to whose understanding Strauss contributed in a way that was important as it was relatively unknown until recently—would have been the last one of those which composed the first book that Strauss intended to publish in the United States. See "Appendix 1: Plan of a Book Tentatively Entitled *Philosophy and the Law: Historical Essays*," in *JPCM*, 467–470.
16. See *SSTX*, 502–536:

For it would be an overstatement to say that philosophy was compatible with Athens: Socrates was executed for not believing in the gods of Athens, in the gods of the city. By considering and reconsidering this fact, we grasp the

ultimate reason why political life and philosophic life, even if compatible for almost all practical purposes, are incompatible in the last analysis: political life, if taken seriously, meant belief in the gods of the city, and philosophy is the denial of the gods of the city.

Strauss did not include this essay—the first on classic issues—in any of his books. Its publication was parallel to the appearance of his first work on Maimonides in English, a review of “The first book of Maimonides’s *Mišnèh Tòrah*” (see *LSMC*, 329–340), and to the writing of “Exoteric teaching,” that Strauss didn’t publish either (see *ET*, 275–292).

17. Cf. *Gespräche mit Goethe*, 15 October 1825. See Alexander Altmann’s preliminary notice to the Mendelssohn volume that Strauss had prepared in Moses Mendelssohn, *Gesammelte Schriften Jubiläumsausgabe* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Friedrich Fromman Verlag/Günther Holzboog, 1974) 3/2, vii–ix (in English in *LSMM*, 3–5). Strauss is referring to the same text he had entitled “Eine Erinnerung an Lessing” in 1937 in which he wrote that he “was not undmindful of the obligation of thanks owed by his *nation* [i.e., the Jewish nation] to that great son of the German nation, especially at this moment of farewell” (*LSMM*, 162). Strauss corrected *Abschieds* and wrote *Trennung* instead. The farewell or parting from Germany recalls the Nietzschean or Platonic flight of Lessing and Leo Strauss.