Interview with Professor Thomas Schrock

February 3 and 4, 2016

Part 1

Gayle McKeen: This is Gayle McKeen here with Tom Schrock, and Tom Schrock took several courses with Strauss in the late 1950s and early 1960s. I have on the rosters that he took a seminar on Plato in the autumn of 1959, the Origins of Political Philosophy in 1959, the Intro course in the spring of 1960, [and] another course, which I didn't note the title of, in the winter of 1962. And no doubt there were other classes that you sat in on or that you did not take for credit or for a grade.

Tom Schrock: Yes, right.

GM: So could you just say a bit about how it was that you came to Chicago, and how it was when you arrived?

TS: All right. Well, I grew up on an Indian reservation, a hardscrabble cattle ranch; not much education going on there.

GM: In what state?

TS: The state of Washington. The Colville Indian reservation. And we eventually went to Oregon where my dad had a ranch again; and I went to Willamette University, in the Willamette Valley. And there I had as a classmate a fellow named Dave Finlay, and another, Bob Packwood. Bob Packwood became Senator Packwood from Oregon. I followed Bob Packwood to law school, where both of us had something called the Root-Tilden Fellowship at New York University. And from New York University, Bob, after he graduated, went directly into politics on the local level in Oregon and had his career. I drifted, you could say, into law school and drifted out. But the one—

GM: Did you finish?

TS: Yes, I did. I even passed the bar, so if anybody says: "Did you pass the bar?" I could say: "Yeah."

GM: That doesn't sound so much like drifting.

TS: Yeah, but I knew pretty soon that I wasn't going to be a lawyer, and I knew—I read a Pulitzer Prize-winning author recently who was talking about her history, and she went to law school and graduated and then practiced a little, and said she was a *terrible* lawyer and she was glad to get out of it, and so she went off and got the Pulitzer Prize as a novelist. Well, I had to do something, and so I called up my old classmate Dave Finlay from Willamette, who was then at

Stanford [in political science], and asked him if he could get me a teaching assistantship at Stanford. And he said, "Sure," and he did. [Laughs]

GM: Those were the days.

TS: Yes, those were the days, yeah. So I went out there with my bride, Jean, and had this year at Stanford. Everybody treated me well. It was—

GM: In what department were you?

TS: Political Science. It was a fine experience. While I was there, it was a year of interesting maneuvering in that department at Stanford; they had lost their previous theorist and couldn't decide on the kind of theorist they wanted, so they brought in two kinds: a pacifist and a war mongerer. And I didn't become acquainted with the pacifist, but Willmoore Kendall[1] was there the year I was there, and he had been given a couple of Earhart [Foundation] fellowships to dispose of. And he knew Dave Finlay pretty well, so he said: "I've got two of these to dispose of and know the one will go to Leo Paul de Alvarez"—who later became the cofounder of the Political Science Department at the University of Dallas with Willmoore Kendall. And Willmoore said to Dave: "Who should I give the other one to?" So Dave said: "Well, there's my friend Tom Schrock. He's always on the make. He always wants something." So Dave arranged a meeting between me and Willmoore at Dave's apartment, and Willmoore, who could really be a tiger, was a pussy cat; and he didn't grill me, he didn't challenge me: the only thing he did is he corrected my pronunciation of a word.

GM: What word was it?

TS: I said "dour," and he said: "I do believe it's 'doer'." And for whatever reason, maybe just because no other name came up, he got this Earhart Fellowship, gave it to me. Leo Paul, his other nominee, went to Notre Dame to study under Voegelin. And I was sent to Chicago to study under Strauss.

GM: And had you heard of Strauss before you went?

TS: Barely. Barely. No, I was just so naïve. I wasn't even a political science major at Willamette, and—

GM: What was your major?

TS: History. And then in law school, well, you never heard any of that sort of thing. And no—so I was just a babe in the woods. And I mean, coming from my impoverished educational background—[though] Willamette was a very good place, [it wasn't rigorous]. It was good for one's character and so forth, but I, at any rate, didn't come out of it with much of an education. And I've got to say, I didn't exploit law school the way I might have because I learned subsequently with my studies in the law, even though in a political science department, that I a)

[1] Willmoore Kendall: see "People Mentioned in the Interviews" [hereafter "People"].

know a little bit about the law and b) can learn a lot about it, and that the law is important for political science, political philosophy, and especially for my current study, which is of Hobbes and the law. I even have a title. I don't have book, but I have a title: The Law of Leviathan. Well, so Dave connected me with Willmoore, and Willmoore sent me directly to Chicago. And I first met Herman Pritchett,[2] the chair of the department, who was very gracious and he was a great friend of Strauss. And he was tolerant, I think, of the Straussians, and so when I announced [that] I came there to study under Leo Strauss, I might have come there to study under Herman Pritchett because I had a law degree and he was in law, so he was—they were all very nice, [and] understanding of my bumptiousness.

The first time I saw Strauss—probably didn't go to his office, I'm not sure—was in the first session of the course on the *Symposium*.[3] And to say that I was blown away by the whole thing is just understating it, because that particular dialogue and that particular class, had been—the prospect of it, the prospect of Strauss teaching the *Symposium* had excited people all around the campus, and so they were all there: just people standing up and lying down and trying to get a—being able to see, you know.

GM: It was in one of those rooms in the Social Sciences, yes?

TS: Pretty small room, right. Not huge; and so much excitement, and you know not all of it friendly excitement. Some of the people from Classics or from other departments around had sort of rivalrous relations with Strauss or surely weren't Straussians. A fellow named Sinaiko[4]—a fellow—well, I'm not thinking of this fellow. His father was a great anthropologist, and he—

GM: Redfield.

TS: Redfield. Yes, he was there. Sinaiko.

GM: James Redfield[5] was the son—is. He is still around. Yes.

TS: Is he? Really? And Blankenship. Blancken—

GM: Blanckenhagen.[6]

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[2] Herman Pritchett: see "People."
[3] In the autumn quarter of 1959.
[4] Herman Sinaiko (1929-2011), a Plato scholar, was professor in the Humanities Division and the College at the University of Chicago.
[5] James Redfield is Edward Olson Distinguished Service Professor of Classical Languages and Literatures, of Social Thought, Committee on the Ancient Mediterranean World, and in the College at the University of Chicago and author of several books on ancient Greek literature. Robert Redfield (1897-1958), father of James, was a distinguished cultural anthropologist who taught at the Univerity of Chicago from 1927 until his death, and served as Dean of the Social Science Division.
[6] Peter von Blanckenhagen: see "People."

TS: Blanckenhagen. My, you know these—

GM: Yes, I know the names.

TS: Right.

GM: Well, I never met him, of course.

TS: And of course I'm pretty sure that Allan Bloom[7] was there, and probably just a number of other Straussians that I wasn't aware of at that time. But Strauss was excited about it, and he threw himself into it. And I—for some reason or other, I had good luck in what I dealt with in connection with Strauss so that he didn't learn the depths of my inadequacy. [Chuckles] In a term paper, or probably an examination, I wrote on my questions about the Aristophanes section of the *Symposium*; and whether my questions were cogent at all, I don't know, but it turns out that Strauss was gearing up to write a book on Aristophanes and Socrates. So he was interested in that. Then—

GM: Did he respond to you in class? Did you read a paper on the subject to the class?

TS: I think I didn't in *that* class. I don't think he had people reading papers in that class. It was pretty much—he had to keep it under control, it was such a—

GM: It was a lecture class, yes.

TS: So he wrote something complimentary on it, and then when I spoke with him he said he was interested in that. He was interested in what I said about Aristophanes. Okay, I had never heard of Aristophanes. [Laughs] A total, total—a new, new thing for me. And then, let's see what else did I do in classes with him. In one of these classes that you mentioned, like the Introduction or the whatever, I did something on the *Crito*. And again, I was just extremely fortunate in the dialogue that was being discussed and the shortness of it, the accessibility of it, and so forth. And so I zeroed in on something that didn't just puzzle me but intrigued me. It had to do with the early morning start of the dialogue, when Crito comes to see Socrates, and so I said something about the very introductory stuff there, and again, it caught his eye [laughs] and he was very complimentary again. Well, it was downhill from then, I believe. [Laughs] Because one of the classes was on Thucydides. And at the beginning of the Thucydides seminar, where he planned papers, he was looking around: "Is Mr. Schrock in the class?" So, yes, I said. And so he wanted me to do one of the introductory—do the plague, I think, or something, I really can't remember too well—at the very beginning, Pericles and everything. And I labored on that paper, and it underwhelmed him. But it didn't disillusion him, apparently. So—and I guess I had good credit with Storing[8] and Cropsey,[9] and so when Bob Faulkner,[10] who was my predecessor [as assistant to Strauss], was going off to Princeton, to his job in Princeton, having finished his degree, they

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[7] Allan Bloom: see "People."
[8] Herbert J. Storing: see "People."
[9] Joseph Cropsey: see "People."
[10] Robert Faulkner: see "People."

looked around for somebody to drive Dr. Strauss around, be his assistant, and landed on me. And so at a certain point, I became the "go to" guy.

GM: And what did that involve?

TS: Well, he was not mechanical, and so there might be household implements that he wouldn't know how to work or something, and so it would be that. Then he called me almost the first day that I was on the job—and I got to admit that my Latin was miserable—and he wanted to know about a volume of Augustine and he gave me the Latin title. And so I didn't get it at first [laughs] and so we had this kind of lurching beginning. But I found it in the library. And so it would be things like that, but mostly it would be driving him from his apartment across the Midway to class or to wherever—doctor appointments, whatever. I'll tell you about the time I drove him to the train depot. But that was the job. And then recording—making the records, the tapes.

GM: Did you enjoy the times you got to spend with him? While you were driving, did you have interesting conversations?

TS: Oh, yes. But you know, on reflection, I've known other fellows who maybe became Straussians, maybe weren't so lucky as to do so, who would have exploited the thing much more systematically and resourcefully than I did. I was sort of bashful, I would say, in his presence and not too given to initiating things; or if I initiated something, then my driving deteriorated. [Laughter] And so one of my friends, kind of parallel fellow, named Harold Levy, who graduated from the University of Chicago Law School and then came across the Midway and gradually came under the influence of Strauss and became a good Straussian—but he never had this wonderful, wonderful opportunity that I had. Because Strauss was always available—you know, you wanted to talk about something, he wanted to talk about it too. And so I could imagine Harold just exploiting it in the way I think Bob Faulkner probably did, and I'm sure Chris Bruell[11] did, because Chris came with a real classics background and they could get into texts right away, you know, and have wonderful exchanges, I'm sure. But altogether it was just a fabulous, fabulous trajectory I had, you know, going to the top so soon and being a whole year in the company of this great man who didn't present himself, of course, as a great man. Yeah.

GM: How did he strike you when you first saw him in class?

TS: Well, I hadn't realized—as Harvey Mansfield said—Strauss was short. Harvey said in this thing I saw last night, it was the [Jack] Miller thing. He was shorter than I am, Harvey said. But that wasn't the impression that was left after a while; you didn't notice the shortness of physical stature at all. And you could see him, furthermore, showing his stature by being seated and looking up at somebody, giving no quarter. And, he stood up for himself, or sat down for himself and looked up, but not looking up in awe.

I was in a couple of situations where he had a classroom assigned to him and then some other faculty person, say, from another department, came in and said: "We're sorry, Mr. Strauss, but this is our assigned venue, and, in effect, you will have to vacate the premises." And Strauss said

[11] Christopher Bruell: see "People."

something to the effect: "Well, you've got the bayonets. I'll concede this but only under protest." He stood up for himself wonderfully well.

I mentioned the time I took him to the train station. I'm going to shock you and all the Straussians by what I'm going to say now. He had contracted to give Page-Barbour lectures at the University of Virginia, and he didn't like to fly. He didn't fly, so he was taking the train. And the Page-Barbour lectures became *The City and Man*, so there's a lot riding on this. And I, who have pioneers in my genealogy—Daniel Boone; and my grandfather came across in a covered wagon, and my dad always knew where he was, he always was oriented—I'm *never* oriented, and I wasn't oriented that night as I was taking Leo Strauss to the train. And midway in this journey—this was in the evening, like 8 or 9 o'clock—I realized that, hey, I'm heading the wrong way in the middle of a boulevard of about eight lanes, all of which come toward *me*. [It was] under the post office, I think, and then up like this and then swooping out all in a row. [Laughs] Dr. Strauss never knew the peril he was in. I switched directions and we got him there, and got him there in time unscathed. Alive. And he took off.

And that trip of his was important for me in another respect. Not only did I get him there alive, but while he was on the trip, he went into a bookstore in the train station and was pawing around looking for something that he might be able to while some time away [with], and he found the DeFoe, *Roxana*,[12] and I guess he purchased it and he read it. And apparently he had read a little Defoe before, but this kind of interested him. And so it was about the time I needed to find a dissertation topic, and I was linguistically stunted or impaired, and so I really couldn't do something that wasn't in English, and I hadn't really figure out what to do. So I came to see him and he mentioned that he had read Defoe on his trip, and what had occurred to him was that maybe someone needed to write on *Robinson Crusoe*. So he gives me this just wonderful thing to do. It couldn't have been more thoughtful and perfect for me, because I was trying to understand Hobbes and Locke and early modernity, and here we have sort of the working out of the state of the nature, and in a classic. So there I was. There I was.

GM: And how much did he guide your thematic interest in the text? Did he just present it as an idea and—

TS: The latter.

GM: And you just took off and ran with it.

TS: The latter, yeah. Right.

GM: He seemed to have a talent for understanding people's interests, capacities—and capacity for endurance.

TS: Yes, yes, he had. I don't think he was an infallible judge of American students. I think having the wonderful education that he had, I don't think that he was aware always of our limitations. I think he gave sometimes too much credit for—

[12] Daniel Defoe, *Roxana: The Fortunate Mistress* (1724).

GM: He thought that you had much more background than you had?

TS: Yes. Yes, that we knew more; that we were better educated. But he was just very encouraging. But it was a run with it, yeah, and I ran with it in a very eccentric way, to which he protested. But he was pleased with the dissertation despite the eccentricity.

GM: What did he protest?

TS: That my bibliography was eccentric to the point of ludicrous: one book [laughs] and a few Hobbes and Lockes and Machiavellis thrown in. But it was just a study of *Robinson Crusoe*, and I tried to understand that book. And he appreciated the dissertation a lot, and when it became necessary to defend it, my defense was quite halting, I believe, and he was somewhat stricken with disappointment, I think, about my defense, but he continued to be a partisan of the dissertation and spoke well of it. And I then went into job hunting and also he, having formed a good impression of me, had thought that I might write a chapter for the Strauss-Cropsey history.[13] And I endeavored that.

GM: And what was the chapter on?

TS: Oh, I'd rather not say.

GM: All right.

TS: Thank you. And I endeavored that, and I was not successful. And he was very clear, he said: "You know, Mr. Schrock, I'm sorry. This won't do." Just very clear like that. But I could tell it hurt him to say that.

And so what he did in the infinite kindness of his heart: first of all, he I think called Irving Kristol[14] and wanted his Basic Books to publish my Robinson Crusoe. And I was not able to follow up on that, though so wonderfully intended, and Irving Kristol's call was so gracious. And so then he didn't give up. He talked to Hillel,[15] and said: 'Why don't you contact Schrock and do something about this dissertation? So Hillel did, and I was honored and privileged to be, I think, in the first issue—not the lead article but [in] the first issue of *Interpretation*, and then I had a follow-up in the second issue.

And Hillel was so gracious and supportive. And so that happened. And the next time I saw Strauss, he had read it, what was in *Interpretation*, and he was very cross with me for what I had included. I had no bibliography in the dissertation and I had too much of the wrong kind of bibliography in the article in *Interpretation*. There was a whiff, a scent, of all things, in it: Heidegger. And that appalled him because he didn't think Heidegger, you know, belonged there.

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[13] *History of Political Philosophy*, eds. Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey (University of Chicago Press, 1963). The volume's second edition was published in 1972, the third in 2012.
[14] Irving Kristol: see "People."
[15] Hilail Gildin: see "People."

Whatever one thinks of Heidegger as such, he didn't belong in this thing on *Robinson Crusoe*. And so when I saw him, I think in Claremont, he was cross. But I appreciated what he was saying, and the next time I saw him was a very dear time. He was still at Claremont, and he had been invited by the Southern California Political Science Association to come and have an evening at a one of the colleges here. And I think he came probably with people that he didn't know well. I don't think Jaffa[16] was there. I don't think Diamond[17] was there. I don't know who brought him, but when I found him in this crowd, he was kind of lost, I think. And he was also at the point where he wasn't trusting himself too much to be as sharp as ever. So when he saw me, it was just like I was an island there, you know. It was just wonderful to be needed, to be needed by him. It was just so grand.

Before he did the little talk, we had a dinner, and my colleague Raghavan Iyer,[18] a Brahmin from India, sat next to Strauss because he was going to introduce Strauss. And it was like a reversion to the time of the tribes meeting, as in *Natural Right And History*, there's a lot of talk about the ancestrals. This ancestral tradition meaning this one, and this tribe. Because he noticed right away—you know Raghavan, being a Brahmin Indian, had certain dietary needs. And I guess Strauss was maybe into his Jewishness at that point or something, and he was feeling sort of like his dietary needs needed to be met too. And so they were sitting right next to each other. It was almost as if it was directly out of chapter three of *Natural Right and History* or something, these two tribesman sort of looking askance at each other's dietary practices or something. But Raghavan gave him a gracious introduction, and then he proceeded to talk about what he was interested in and working on at the time. And he mentioned Willmoore Kendall, that they were good friends and that they communicated a lot about political philosophy, and he knew that Willmoore was not in good odour with the rest of the political science profession, really. And so he was very happy to stand up for him at that time. And so we had that wonderful, just happy reunion, so to speak.

I never saw him after that meeting, at whatever college that was, where he gave the lecture. But I did hear something about his last times in Annapolis from Leon Kass.[19] Is Leon one of the people that you have interviewed?

GM: I think that's a very good idea, actually. Thank you for mentioning that.[20]

TS: Yes. Yes, he was one of the physicians at Strauss's final—at his death. And he was there in the room, probably with another doctor. And Strauss expired, and then he came back. And he said—I hope I'm getting this accurately—he said to Leon: "fooled ya' huh?"

GM: That sounds almost like Socrates. Yes. That's so remarkable.

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[16] Harry Jaffa: see "People."
[17] Martin Diamond: see "People."
[18] Raghavan Iyer (1930-1995), professor of politics at University of California Santa Barbara.
[19] Leon Kass: see "People."
[20] Dr. Kass declined the invitation to be interviewed.

TS: Yes. Well, before you publicize this, you'd actually want to check with the original, where I'm just going on rank hearsay. But I did hear it from Leon. I had gone to Chicago to attend the wedding of one my students who was one of Nathan's[21] students, who had also taken a course [or] courses from Kass, I guess. Matthew Crawford. He got his degree in the Committee, on Plutarch. And so I was there because he was one of my students from UCSB here. I was attending his wedding, and this was at the—probably the reception or something where I jostled in[to], bumped into Leon and Nathan. And one of the nice things about that is I complimented them on, you know, taking the time to—wonder if they did that for all of their students—to come to their weddings. Well, Leon said: "I sure do try, because I think marriage is so important and I want to get behind it." Very touching.

GM: He [and Amy] wrote that book on marriage and courtship.[22]

TS: Yes. Yes, yes. You might want to look into Matthew Crawford, who himself has written a couple of books and has a very interesting career trajectory. One of them is Soulcraft in Shop Class or something like that.[23] He's written two books. I recommend them highly. In fact, Harvey Mansfield gave him a blurb, [and] said: "You starting reading this book, you can't put it down." This fellow Matt Crawford was an undergraduate student of mine but actually a physics major, and the first time I saw Matt he approached me and he looked like a wild man, and he was carrying a book in his hand and it was *The Closing of the American Mind*.[24] And apparently that book had just absolutely described his life and the way he thought about himself as an undergraduate and an American undergraduate, and of the education that he was getting or not getting, as the case may be.

So he approached me looking like he found this either imperishable or horrible thing, you know, that described his life so accurately. His father was a physicist at Berkeley. And the father had made a deal with his son. He said: "Get a B.S. in physics, and if you want to go on, fine. If you don't, that's okay too. I won't require that you do." So he did, and at the end of his four years he decided that he wanted to go in political philosophy, and he interviewed at Toronto but held out for Chicago. And when he got there, Nathan was his chair, I think. He wasn't in political science; he was in the Committee, I think. He tried to get Martha Nussbaum;[25] he had learned Greek but he hadn't learned Latin yet and she turned him down for that reason. But he got other people that were quite able. He wrote a very, very interesting dissertation on Plutarch and marriage, or Plutarch and some sexual angle, erotic angle. And marriage—he was very interested in that. He had been turned on to Plutarch in that connection by Foucault. Well, Matt had the degree, but he couldn't see himself going to North Dakota to teach, so he went to a think tank and was disillusioned. So he decided to do what he really wanted to do, and that is open up a motorcycle maintenance shop. He's a mechanic. So he got to working on motorcycles, and he reflected that

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[21] Nathan Tarcov: see "People."
[22] Amy Kass and Leon Kass, *Wing to Wing, Oar to to Oar: Readings on Courting and Marrying* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2000).
[23] Matthew Crawford, *Shop Class as Soulcraft: An Inquiry into the Value of Work* (Penguin, 2009).
[24] Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (Simon & Schuster, 1987).
[25] That is, to serve on his dissertation committee.

there was more thinking going on in the motorcycle shop than had been going on in the think tank. So that's kept him from going to think tanks ever since. Nor does he actually teach. He continues to repair motorcycles but also writes, and his books are kind of a merger of motorcycle maintenance and political philosophy, if you can believe it. So I recommend them to you.

GM: Yeah, thank you.

TS: Nathan was his supervisor. I sent a couple of other people to Nathan, I think. Eduardo Velasquez,[26] I believe I did. So that's the story of the pipeline from UCSB to the University of Chicago.

[Now back to] Strauss and his classes. We talked about my experiences with him. One of the things he liked to do when he wasn't in a hurry was to drive over to a place on 53rd Street where there was a restaurant that served good rice pudding, so we would go there sometimes, and he would usually be in a good mood and maybe telling stories. One concerned his service in the German army in the First World War. And he didn't tell me much about that—'course I could have probably gotten more from him, but what he wanted to tell about was the time they were on a forced march and had been gone, I don't know—days, or hours, or whatever, and they were just totally fatigued. And the army sent a band out—I mean, pop [umpa] band out. And he said: "You know, that just revived us." And I think he developed a deeper political kind of connection, or observation, or inference from that; but though he wasn't probably a musical man, he was one who could be affected by music. He probably didn't go in for the arts too much except for poetry and Goethe, and so forth. But he did tell about being at a museum where he saw a group of paintings that he thought said to him: "We belong here. It's a good thing that we're here," whereas there were some others that really didn't have that kind of message.

GM: "We" meaning human beings on the—

TS: Well, no, "we paintings."

GM: Oh, we paintings.

TS: We paintings are serious enough. Incredible and beautiful enough to deserve to be here. I can't remember exactly his formulation.

GM: How do you remember Strauss as a teacher? What—did he influence your own teaching in any way?

TS: Yes, absolutely. He taught me how to teach. He wasn't the kind of teacher that comes in and, say, tosses a question out or takes a paradoxical stand and makes students react to it and come up with their own take on the question or the problem. That wasn't his way of doing it, and I've never been able to do that myself, but I am able to do [haltingly] what I saw him do, namely, start at the beginning of the dialogue—[interruption]

[resumption of interview]

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[26] Eduardo Velasquez, professor of politics, Washington & Lee University.

TS: [in progress]—at the beginning. And he liked to have a reader, and when I was there he favored a fellow whose name I can't recall.

GM: Was it Donald Reinken? Reinken read in many, many of his courses.

TS: He called him Mr. Reinken, yes. Well, he liked him. Reinken was from some other department, I think.[27] I don't know whether he was in any degree program with Strauss. I don't know. But he just liked his mode of reading and his cheerfulness; and he was quick on the uptake and so they could have repartee. And so he would designate a page or a sub-page and Mr. Reinken would read it, and then he would comment on it and invite other comments. And then we would go on. And what was really going on, though, was not just his attention to this little passage, this little text, but a whole grasp of the movement of the argument. That you only learned about maybe the second or third lecture when he started drawing things together. And his memory was almost infallible. Once or twice he got into it with some student or other—some critical student or other—on an issue, and I remember one time when his own memory was fallible on something in Aristotle. [Laughs] So he was very chagrined about that.

But his—just the location of the whole emerging argument was in his mind, and it was becoming apparent to us as we went along. And the argument wouldn't necessarily be what you would call esoteric, necessarily; it would just be the argument adequately comprehended. So you just were astonished at this, what was right in front of you but only now becomes apparent. The most dramatic thing I saw of that, I think, was in his course on the *Meno*. I don't think he had a big love for the *Meno*. I don't think maybe it was his favorite dialogue, but Klein wrote a book on it,[28] so Strauss said to himself: "Well, hey, this is a good chance for me to exploit my old friend and learn something, as it were, together with him." So he assigned the dialogue and Klein's book and, well, that didn't work out.

GM: Why not?

TS: I don't know. I don't know. I don't know whether he was disappointed in Klein's book.

GM: Or he just couldn't use it to engage his own reading of the dialogue?

TS: Right. Yes, I guess not. I don't know what it was. I think it was a fairly conventional book, and it had wonderful, wonderful footnotes. It had a wonderful footnote quoting Schleiermacher, which just—when I read that, wow. And there were others. He collected a lot of stuff on reading Plato, Klein did. It was all there—a very wonderful thing for students, but Strauss didn't take to it, so he then started doing his own thing. This is a great dialogue, but not one that's one of his favorites. But he did something with it that was just astonishing. I want to go back and read that transcript again because it was almost on the fly that he comprehended it and displayed it so

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[27] Reinken, who served as reader in many of Strauss's courses, was a student of mathematics. He collaborated with political science professor Morton Kaplan on a computer analysis of "balance of power" systems, as Kaplan noted in *System and Process in International Politics* (1957).
[28] Jacob Klein, *A Commentary on Plato's Meno* (University of North Carolina Press, 1965).

vividly and cogently. That was almost a high point. After the terror of the *Symposium*, where I was a new, totally new and there was this grand gala of luminaries—and everybody in there, and this great dialogue which he was very excited about. This was a more—this was a quite a different experience, but to me almost more bracing than the first.

GM: He didn't assign a lot of secondary reading in his classes.

TS: No. No.

GM: He would often make recommendations of things he thought students should read. But how much did you, as students, read Strauss's own work? It's a lot of work just to keep up with reading the text and the assigned materials but—

TS: Yeah, yeah.

GM: Were you reading his work and discussing it as well?

TS: We were trying to. Trying to.

GM: So where did you read Heidegger? Because of course he never really taught Heidegger.

TS: No. And nor had I. My Heidegger was secondhand. I got onto the subject of boredom and which was appropriate to, which was a "Defoeian" theme. But it led me—and it immediately alerted him to the presence of a foreign body in this thing which was really supposed to be early modernity. And so my importation of boredom into the dissertation, or really not into the dissertation but into the articles that I wrote for *Interpretation*,[29] was what shocked his system. So no, I haven't—I can't claim to have been a student of Heidegger, but I know that there's no understanding Strauss without that.

GM: Earlier you used the term Straussian more than once. What is a Straussian, do you think?

TS: Well, I think to begin with, he's an enthusiast. He is somebody for whom Strauss has sort of supplied a need for guidance, for certification that a certain kind of inquiry is okay to do. That taking things seriously, taking texts seriously or philosophers seriously, is okay. And you *shouldn't* become a professional philosopher if you are a Straussian, because a professional philosopher, as brilliant and acute and contributory as so many of them are, they all have a kind of scrim in front of them, I think, a professional scrim or impediment, or something standing between them and the things or the truth of the matter. And Strauss and Straussians don't have that. So you'll have Straussians say things like: "Well, you know, Aristotle said"—meaning Aristotle made a point and, you know, by gum, it may be true. Or I heard Strauss say once, or somebody else heard him say—this is hearsay about somebody's argument, somebody's observation. Strauss listened: "Well, it's beautiful," he said. "But is it true?'" And that is what animated him always. Simple: [he] wanted to find out what the case was. What is the case? What

[29] "Considering Crusoe," parts 1 and 2, were published in the first volume of *Interpretation* in 1970.

is the truth here that we're looking at or for? And that sort of naïve and yet determined and ruthless quest is, to me, what Strauss means. And Straussians tend to take all that seriously and relish it and live in it and are reassured by it and supported by it, and boosted up by it, and sent along by it—which is not to say that Straussians understand Strauss better than others.

There's a fellow who denies being a Straussian and yet has great regard, I think, for Strauss: Robert Howse.[30] He does not acquiesce in being called a Straussian. But you could say that we belong to a sect—I mean, all the things that are told about us are in some sense a little bit true. We really—our immediate reaction is: "Well, that sounds pretty plausible to me," and if Strauss said it, we know it's thoughtful and so other things being equal, we can give it the benefit of the doubt. And so I don't hesitate to avow that, and that he gave my life its legitimacy, which it wouldn't have had if I had just stayed at Stanford and gotten a degree there. I would have been another professional and not a terribly good one, probably.

GM: Do you think that he cultivated an identity among you—

TS: Oh yeah. Sure.

GM: that led you to think that you were Straussians? How did he do that, though?

TS: Well, the first time I saw it was in *On Tyranny*.[31] I think it is *On Tyranny* where he speaks of a need almost to found a school of young men who will learn how to read, then read, and then write, and do exactly what Straussians have done. And if a person shows up and wants to be a student, he's happy to have them. And if they drop out and become insurance salesmen or something like that, he's very disappointed. He's sad, saddened—

GM: Even if it was not in their nature.

TS: Exactly. Still it's regrettable. But of course he does know something about nature too, and know that there are people who are gifted, and I did hear him say what Harvey Mansfield says in this talk, that his best student was Benardete.[32] Strauss himself said that. And then I don't know whether Harvey ever heard him say that, but Harvey figured out that Benardete was Strauss's best student. And there [was] a guy who could be called a Straussian, but that hardly captures it—so independent himself and so—but very grateful for having run into Strauss and having become a Straussian.

GM: It seems that the gratitude is something that you all have in common, from what I've heard from the interviews that have been conducted so far.

TS: Yeah. Yeah.

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[30] Robert Howse, Lloyd C. Nelson Professor of International Law at New York University Law School and author of *Leo Strauss: Man of Peace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
[31] Leo Strauss, *On Tyranny* (The Free Press of Glencoe, 1963).
[32] Seth Benardete: see "People."

GM: Because it's a very diverse group of people, with diverse interests, and—

TS: Yeah. Yeah, and his own interests, his own competences, his own accomplishments, are so vast and different that you just—you don't even know the guy that's living in the next region of Strauss, you know—there's Heidegger, or Maimonides, or Xenophon, or Aristophanes, or—my God, and yet just so generously inviting people in to, you know, to—Harvey said that somebody stopped him (Harvey), somebody who had just spoken to Strauss, who said [that] Strauss said to him: "Have you read Mansfield's book on parties?" I think, maybe on Burke. Parties. And Strauss said to him: "It's a book I wish I had written." So he'd say things like that. Very generous. Very generous and rewarding.

GM: There's such openness—as you said, he would talk. And talk, and talk, and talk—and after class, which often went way over time, and then whoever wanted would then decamp to the tea room where the conversation would continue even longer.

TS: Well, Mrs. Strauss would be concerned about him because this was probably after one heart attack or so. And she wanted to—in fact, Harvey Mansfield told about this. When he really got to know Strauss, he was at Berkeley, and Strauss was at Stanford for a year. And Harvey would go over there for a class, for a discussion which was supposed to end a midnight because Mrs. Strauss said it's got to stop or he'll just talk all night and get sick. But then they would talk after that. Yes. So, you're right, yeah.

GM: Why do you think that a person with that openness and willingness to engage would receive so much criticism from people who are alleged opponents of his thought? What is it about it that gets up people's noses?

TS: Well, the very idea of Straussianism, I guess; the very idea of these enthusiastic young men, not always tactful. Let's see, I was trying to think of—the parallels with Socrates are fairly strong. So you have people like Drury and Norton[33] talking about some rude behavior by Straussians—invading classes and so forth, upbraiding instructors. And so his puppies would, could become pretty rambunctious, and that's regrettable. Lamentable.

GM: But that wasn't an imitation of his own behavior.

TS: No, no. On the other hand, he took his understanding seriously, and it had been hard won, and he had been through many academic wars, and so when people would upbraid him for not making some shallow distinction, or not acknowledging this or that guy, it had to make him weary. And the fact that he then was in addition frankly, candidly in opposition to the fact-value distinction and to historicism, scientism, and so forth—the fact that he was foursquare against the

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[33] Shadia Drury, Canada Research Chair in Social Justice at the University of Regina (Canada), author of *The Political Ideas of Leo Strauss* (1st ed., St. Martin's Press, 1988) and *Leo Strauss and the American Right* (Palgrave Macmillan, 1999). Anne Norton, professor of political science at the University of Pennsylvania and author of *Leo Strauss and the Politics of American Empire* (Yale, 2004).

things that these people valued, that were their thing, their treasure. And that he did so in no uncertain terms, probably without flattering them quite enough. That got them pretty excited.

The Berkeley people—Wolin and Schaar[34]—they got to know Strauss a little bit personally because Mansfield had a job there and he brought Strauss over to give a lecture. Well, these people were not the typical fact-value or historicist person, they were serious scholars themselves. And Wolin is a declared democrat with a small "d," and has his own massive apparatus. So he attacked Strauss, not on terms of fact-value, which he himself dismissed, but other things. They just didn't like him, I guess you could say.

GM: Well, didn't the same process happen in the classroom, though? Was he not challenging a lot of the prevailing opinions, and orthodoxies, and prejudices that his students would have held?

TS: Yes, that's true.

GM: So how did you all cope with that? It seemed to energize you rather than to alienate you, clearly.

TS: Well, in my case, I was not combative because I was accepting. I mean, I was so privileged and so astonished at where I was that the last thing in the world I wanted to do was to take up the cudgels with him and quarrel with him on this or that. I mean, I did occasionally argue, but it was almost just a show, it wasn't a serious disagreement. There *were* people there who were from other schools of thought and—graduate students—who did argue. And I remember a fellow named Jack Dennis, from Oklahoma. He came across somewhat as an Oklahoma farmer. He had been to Oxford, I think, and he was trained in logical positivism or something, and so he was arguing all the time. And Strauss was always courteous, [and always trying] to keep a forward motion through the dialogue. He felt it was his duty to teach the whole dialogue in this quarter, and he was going to do it, by gum, and so he couldn't luxuriate in too many sidebars with Jack Dennis. But he was courteous. And he was not always—Strauss was not always well read in the latest logical positivist and in the latest linguistic philosophy.

There was a lot of, say, especially English, but Viennese as well, philosophy that Strauss was innocent of—and had to be, because you have to draw lines somewhere. You have to decide what you have time to read. And so there are a lot of brilliant people out there that he didn't even—probably didn't know about. I don't know how much he knew about Wittgenstein. But he did know about Berlin—

GM: Isaiah.

TS: Isaiah Berlin.[35] He had met him, I think, maybe in England. I don't know about that. But Berlin once made a courtesy call on him in Chicago, and well, he didn't take to Berlin. He didn't

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[34] See John H. Schaar and Sheldon S. Wolin, "Review: *Essays on the Scientific Study of Politics*: A Critique," *American Political Science Review* 57 (1963): 125-150.

[35] Isaiah Berlin (1909-1997), political and social theorist, historian of ideas, essayist. Among his most famous essays are "Two Concepts of Liberty," and "The Hedgehog and the Fox."

take to Berlin's teaching. And he in fact wrote something critical of Berlin, and a lot of Berlin students and people who venerated him took offense at that. And that's in something he called "Relativism,"[36] I think. The first few paragraphs to that are on Berlin and it is not nice.

So Berlin and others have the knack of being perhaps more gracious to their opponents than Strauss could be sometimes. He didn't have the knack. Strauss didn't cultivate the knack for being a hale fellow, whereas Berlin probably liked to get along a little more than—Strauss was, in a way, more serious. Reading Berlin is a pleasure, and even maybe a benefit and even an edification, but it is not the same kind of seriousness that Strauss brings. And that seriousness people don't necessarily like. And people don't like to be challenged on their deepest convictions. They don't like that.

Well, to explore that one would have to be more of a novelist probably than I am, to explore how he rubbed people the wrong way and so forth. And Saul Bellow tries to do something like that with his last book, the book on Bloom.

GM: *Ravelstein*.[37]

TS: Yes, in which he tries a little bit to try to explain—well, he's the one who said he's [Bloom] going to be torn down for this book when he reviewed it, I guess. And he surely was. Yes. Well, people don't like to be challenged in that way. That's not something they necessarily get up in the morning and say: "I want to be challenged in that way." It would require, like I say, some skilled novelist to do it. I don't think that was a very good book that Saul Bellow did on Bloom—mostly about Bellow, actually, as I recall, but—

GM: But it wasn't so much personally, as his ideas or his approach—

TS: Yeah, but it was a package, and he [Bloom] was a fairly confident expositor of his ideas, and they tended to rub people in the wrong way. And his intransigence didn't endear him, necessarily, to people. Of course they were intransigent in their ways, too, and these things become very—I mean, no getting out of it. Lifetime enmities develop.

One of the things it seems to me that Strauss has shown his greatness of soul in is that there were so many philosophers and commentators who just paid Heidegger no respect. They just dismissed him as gobbledy-gook, and they cut themselves off from the duty of wrestling with that. Strauss, on the other hand, who had multiple reasons for being antagonized, infinitely antagonized by Heidegger, he just thought, said: "Somebody I got to deal with, more than deal with." So I would be driving Strauss somewhere, and there would be Heidegger's *Nietzsche* there right with him, so that maybe between seminars or something, he'd be working away at it, you know. Whereas it's so heartbreaking, it seems to me, from my piddling position that you would grow up having to venerate the thought of such an evil man, and have to give him full credit where credit is due, given what he stood for. And Strauss did that. [end part 1]

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[36] Leo Strauss, "Relativism," in *Relativism and the Study of Man*, eds. Helmut Schoeck and James W. Wiggins (Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1961), 135-157.
[37] Saul Bellow, *Ravelstein* (Viking, 2000).

Part 2

TS: [In progress] —share a couple of other anecdotes. One I was at the Strauss's apartment one morning and Richard Kennington was there. This was around the time of Jenny's wedding, I believe, and Strauss was getting ready to go to his office or wherever and they got to talking about novels. And Kennington knew that Strauss favored Jane Austen and so he started kind of baiting him: "Now, you don't really mean that she's better than Dostoevsky, do you?" "Or Tolstoy?" [Laughter] Yeah, he just was very staunch. [Laughter]

And the other little snippet is his telling me about when they were living on Riverside Drive, probably when he was at the New School. It was a hot summer and when it was hot, he worked—they lived on a high promontory, I guess, above Riverside Drive, high apartment, [and] he worked near a window. And on this occasion he was doing something unprecedented for him: venturing into as it were non-political philosophy, plain old philosophy. Actually, he was working on Hume and causation. And he was writing in his usual way with half sheets, written—he didn't say this but I happen to know, because we all knew how he wrote—right out to the edge and putting the finished pages on the window sill. And at the point where he was nearly done, "a little wind came in and snatched them [laughter] and scattered them down Riverside Drive." But then further on in the narration, he spoke of a god who had reached in and snatched them, and he thought that in fact he had been protected by that god because he would have gotten into other things if he had been successful in publishing [laughter] a non-political philosophy piece. So he took that as an exhortation to—

GM: Not an omen?

TS: Not an omen, an exhortation to stay in his own—mind his own business.

GM: That's a great story.

TS: And then as I was talking I had another thought, but that thought wandered away from me, so I will now just do what I had planned to do. One was to say a little more about the Straussian business, or the sect business or the "school" business. It's like any school: it allows the members thereof, or the students thereof to begin at a certain level without having to establish all the premises each time one has a conversation. And of course the unavowed school of conventional American political theory is also that way; they just don't avow it, that they begin at a level also where there are a lot of presupposed pillars and premises. And furthermore there is a certain kind of, I think sense of humor that we have about our sect [TS laughs]. We are able to to laugh at ourselves fairly readily. So that's all my—all I have to say on that particular little issue.

The readings I selected for this morning—somewhere I think Socrates talks about getting together with friends and reading over a text. That's what we're doing And my two texts are *To Kill A Mockingbird* and *Billy Budd*. And *To Kill A Mockingbird* is something that millions of school children have read, so they would have read this wonderful page on irony or on esotericism without knowing it. And yet when they read it, I am sure they were charmed by it

and informed by it because it is truly wonderful. Jem, who is the brother, Scout's brother, is engaging Calpurnia, their black maid, in a conversation, and Calpurnia is telling him how she educated her son. And she did so out of Blackstone's *Commentaries*, because the father Atticus said it was good English and it was as good a place to begin as any. So Jem was thunderstruck:

> "You mean you taught Zeebo out of that?" "Why yes sir, Mr. Jem," Calpurnia said, timidly putting her finger to her mouth. "They were the only books I had. Your granddaddy said that Mr. Blackstone wrote fine English." "And that's why you don't talk like the rest of them, said Jem." "The rest of who?" "Rest of the colored folks, Cal. But you talk like they did in church." That Calpurnia led a modest double life never dawned on me." [the narrator is Scout, the girl—TS] "The idea she had a separate existence outside our household was a novel one. To say nothing of her having command of two languages." "Cal," I asked, "why do you talk nigger talk to your folks when you know it's not right." "Well, in the first place, I'm Black." "That doesn't mean you have to talk that way when you know better," said Jem. Calpurnia tilted her hat and scratched her head then pressed her hat down carefully over her ears. "It's right hard to say. Suppose you and Scout talked colored folks talk at home, it'd be out of place, wouldn't it? Now what if I talked white folks' talk at church and with my neighbors, they would think I was puttin' on airs to beat Moses." "But Cal, you know better," I said. "It's not necessary to tell all you know. It's not lady like." [Strauss would have loved that—TS] "In the second place, folks don't like having somebody around knowing more than they do. It aggravates 'em. You're not going to change any of 'em by talking right. They've got to want to learn themselves, and when they don't want to learn there's nothing you can do but keep your mouth shut or talk their language."

So there we are. That's the end of the reading from *To Kill A Mockingbird*.

GM: That's great. Thanks for sharing that.

TS: The other is the opposite. If Calpurnia exemplifies the ironical person, Captain Vere of the good ship Bellipotent of *Billy Budd* is the "un-ironical" person.

I neglected to say something about Calpurnia, however, and *To Kill A Mockingbird*. I read this to a Black student, Karen Miner, and she got a twinkle in her eye and managed to remind me that the irony ran both ways, or rather that black folks had to be ironical with their white acquaintances all the time because the whites had no idea what was going on in the black community and with black people. So the irony—there was much more irony the other way and so we don't want to overemphasize the one dimension of it.

Now Captain Vere

> had marked leanings[38] toward everything intellectual. He loved books, never going to sea without a newly replenished library, compact but of the best. The isolated leisure, in some cases so wearisome, falling at intervals to commanders even during a war-cruise,

[38] In original: "a marked learning"

> never was tedious for Captain Vere. [Now—TS] [h]is bias was toward those books to which every serious mind of superior order occupying any active post of authority in the world naturally inclines, [namely—TS], books treating of actual men and events no matter of what era—history, biography [and so forth, but no fiction—TS]. His settled convictions were as a dyke against those invading waters of novel opinion, social, political, and otherwise [he's a conservative. These opinions—TS] which carried away as in a torrent no few minds in those days, minds by nature not inferior to his own. While other members of that aristocracy to which by birth he belonged were incensed at the innovators [at the innovating thought of the eighteenth century, I guess—TS] mainly because their theories were inimicable to the privileged classes, Captain Vere disinterestedly opposed them [not alone—TS] because they seemed to him insusceptible[39] of embodiment in lasting institutions, but at war with the peace of the world and the true welfare of mankind. [Now—TS], with minds less stored than his and less earnest, some officers of his rank, with whom at times he would necessarily consort, found him lacking in the companionable quality, a dry and bookish gentleman, as they deemed. Upon any chance withdrawal from their company one would be apt to say to another something like this: "Starry Vere is a noble fellow" and "Sir Horatio is at bottom scarce a better seaman or fighter." But between you and me now, don't you think there is a queer streak of the pedantic running thro' him? Yes, like the King's yarn in a coil of navy-rope?

And the narrator, or Melville, says:

> Some apparent ground there was for this sort of confidential criticism; since not only did the Captain's discourse never fall into the familiar[40], but in illustrating of any point touching the stirring personages and events of the time he would be as apt to cite some historic[al] character or incident of antiquity as that he would cite from the moderns.[41] He seemed unmindful of the circumstance that to his bluff company such remote allusions, however pertinent they might really be, were altogether alien to the men whose reading was mainly confined to the journals [the newspapers—TS]. But consideration in such matters is not easy to natures constituted like Captain Vere's. Their honesty prescribes to them directness, sometimes far-reaching like that of a migratory fowl that in its flight never heeds when it crosses a frontier."[42]

And I think that is kind of at the root of irony is that it is susceptible to differences. It's aware of differences, of different audiences of different capabilities. As Strauss points out, it is the dissimulation of nobility or the leveling of the playing field—of the conversational field between the interlocutors: in this case these sailors on the one hand, and Captain Vere on the other. Or, as we find when we're talking to children, Aristotle's gentleman dissembled his superiority when speaking to his inferiors.

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[39] In original: "incapable"
[40] In original: "jocosely familiar"
[41] In original: "as he would be to cite from the moderns"
[42] Herman Melville, *Billy Budd* (1924), chapter 7.

And I looked at Arthur Meltzer's table of contents,[43] [to] refresh my memory a little bit of the four forms of philosophic esotericism. One is the fear of persecution—defensive esotericism, he calls it. And here Calpurnia is defending herself against persecution by her fellow Blacks. And the next one is dangerous truths: protective esotericism, not spouting philosophy to one's fellow citizens, necessarily; protecting the institutions, and customs, and traditions and ancestral beliefs of the city. And I suppose that that some of this could be fitted there. The third one is the educational benefits of obscurity: not telling everything, but letting your students figure things out a little bit and to their benefit. And then rationalizing the world: political esotericism, the esotericism of the modern time, when we are as esoteric as we need to be as we bring the rest of the world up to our rational standards [TS chuckles] and then we can do away with this nasty practice.

Well, actually I've got another little snippet here that I guess kind of illustrates the outlook of the modern. It's Hester Prynne from *The Scarlet Letter*. Hawthorne is talking about her age, the age in which she lived.

> It was an age in which the human intellect, newly emancipated, had taken a more active and a wider range than many centuries before. Men of the sword had overthrown nobles and kings. Men bolder than these had overthrown and rearranged—not actually, but within the sphere of theory, which was their most real abode—the whole system of ancient prejudice, wherewith was linked much of ancient principle. [And] Hester Prynne imbibed this spirit. She assumed a freedom of speculation, then common enough on the other side of the Atlantic, but which our forefathers, had they known of it, would have held to be a deadlier crime than that stigmatized by the scarlet letter. In her lonesome cottage by the sea-shore, thoughts visited her, such as dared to enter no other dwelling in New England; shadowy guests, that would have been as perilous as demons to their entertainer, could they have been so much as knocking at her door.
>
> It is remarkable, that persons who speculate the most boldly often conform with the most perfect quietude to the external regulations of society. The thought suffices them, without investing itself in the flesh and blood of action.

And so the moderns will hope that at a certain point she won't have to keep it entirely to herself but can start speaking about it. And that is pretty much what I had in mind.

I am studying Hobbes. I encounter a whole school of thought that insists on taking every word Hobbes says as sincere. These people do have their own private senses of humor, I think—I mean, I've even heard them make nice little jokes and so forth, but about Hobbes they're totally humorless; they're totally, insistently blind. They blind themselves when they put on their scholarly spectacles. Those spectacles are meant to blind them to the fact that Hobbes could have had different audiences in mind, could have been a little bit outspoken from here to here, and then maybe a little bit covert here and there. And they're they're like migratory fowls: they fly

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[43] Arthur M. Meltzer, *Philosophy Between the Lines: The Lost History of Esoteric Writing* (University of Chicago Press, 2014).

over these different types of human beings, and different types of discourses, and different types of audiences and they see nothing changing. It's all the same. So there you are.

GM: That's really, really impressive. Do you have any last thoughts that you'd like to share about Strauss? How you look back on him now, or you think about the meaning of his legacy? (That sounds terribly ponderous.)

TS: Okay. Well, both. Me personally: just like he gave me a life. [Laughter]

GM: That's got to be one of the nicest things anyone could say about someone else.

TS: Yes. [Laughter] Yeah, yeah, just like that. Gratitude and the chain of benefits is hard to—Hobbes insisted that gratitude is a great virtue. It's one of the first laws of nature: we've got to be grateful. And I got to say that I was not, you know, the best friend or the most grateful beneficiary of David Finlay, who connected me with Willmoore Kendall, who connected me with Strauss. And I wasn't the most grateful beneficiary of Willmoore Kendall. I didn't like his politics and so I guess you could say that we drifted apart, and that was to my discredit. He was a benefactor, and he was a good man and he was an admirable, admirable human being whose life I hardly knew. As I understand it he was in the CIA doing things that I had no idea of, as well as being a fine political theorist. (Sighs)

But one is grateful to what one is truly grateful to, and in this case it's Strauss. So that I should be grateful to all the people who made it possible for Strauss to come *here*. [Laughter] And the astonishing—it's the astonishing incongruences between where I came from educationally and the high pinnacles that I was pulled up to without any particular quality, merit on my own part. I hope that I merited something since I got there and began to become something of a serious person. In his terminology, I am at best a scholar and—but that's an honorable estate. So I try to be a good scholar, and when I'm reading Hobbes I try to be open to everything that's going on there, having a good laugh every now and then [laughter]. Strauss loved Hobbes. Boyish—

GM: Wickedness. [Laughter]

TS: Wickedness, yeah, right. So we've got to take our laughs where we can find them, I guess. And another thing one is bequeathed by Strauss is just the tendency to have good laughs. As far as the legacy, I think the legacy is—well, it's unpredictable. But the number of competent people who are out there, I mean, you can think of, say, think of just one one dialogue—the *Phaedo*, say—I think there are three spectacularly good commentaries on that dialogue by Straussian grandchildren. And just the wonderful work that's being done by—and that's exactly what he said in *On Tyranny* he wanted. He had that in mind, and it worked out because that's the way in which things do work. If you present people with opportunities and a little structure and a little legitimation, [and] say: This is all right to do; this is not only honorable, it's excusable; it's even justifiable, it's even noble. And you will be gratified and other people will be astonished by what has happened, because these strong people that you have, not harnessed but empowered have gone ahead and done what people like that have always done, namely, great work. So there you are.

GM: Thank you so much.

TS: You're welcome.