

THE HUMANITIES AND
THE DYNAMICS OF INCLUSION
SINCE WORLD WAR II

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THE PLACE OF VALUE IN A CULTURE OF FACTS

Truth and Historicism

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CARVED IN STONE on the Social Science Research Building at the University of Chicago are the following words: "When you cannot measure, your knowledge is meager and unsatisfactory." That bold proclamation, attributed to Lord Kelvin, reflected the convictions of the sociologist William F. Ogburn, chair of the Committee on Symbolism, which was charged with ensuring that the exterior of the building accurately projected the aspirations of the social scientists it would house. Like natural scientists in their laboratories, some social scientists at the University of Chicago, such as Ogburn, the first sociologist ever named president of the American Statistical Association, envisioned themselves engaged in a quest for truth. From reliable measurements of empirical data they intended to generate significant and satisfactory results that would enable their contemporaries to solve pressing social problems. Not all Ogburn's colleagues agreed with him, or with Kelvin. Some preferred Aristotle's more open-ended dictum "man is a political animal." At least one denied that any words could capture the rich diversity of the work to be done by scholars who would follow different methodological paths toward diverse, and changing, conceptions of truth. Another of Ogburn's foes, the political scientist Charles E. Merriam, never accepted the claim emblazoned on his workplace; he wanted the misleading words removed.¹ The terms and the stridency of these scholars' debates have echoed ever since within the humanities as well as the discursive social sciences.

The same year that building opened, 1929, a new president, Robert Maynard Hutchins, arrived at the University of Chicago. The thirty-year-old Hutchins presided over the dedication ceremonies of the Social Science Research Building, and he almost immediately locked horns with its faculty. As a breathtakingly young professor and then dean of the Yale Law School, Hutchins had established himself as a champion of Legal Realism, which challenged the timelessness of legal principles and the usefulness of abstract reasoning. But

when he arrived in Chicago, Hutchins made it clear immediately that he did not share Kelvin's faith in measurement or Ogburn's commitment to empirical investigation. In his first address at the university he told the class of 1929 that "the purpose of higher education is to unsettle the minds of young men." The goal of education "is not to teach men facts, theories, or laws; it is not to reform them, or amuse them, or make them expert technicians in any field; it is to teach them to think, to think straight, if possible, but to think always for themselves."²

To that end Hutchins endeavored to transform the undergraduate curriculum at the University of Chicago. He wanted students to develop their ability to think not by learning to measure but by confronting the timeless wisdom contained in the great books of the Western tradition. Hutchins sought to appoint scholars who shared his enthusiasm for ancient philosophers such as Aristotle and medieval theologians such as Thomas Aquinas, scholars wary of Kelvin's confidence in natural science and equally skeptical about American pragmatism. Even though John Dewey had left Hyde Park for Columbia almost twenty years before Hutchins arrived, the sensibility associated with Dewey and with his fellow pragmatists Charles Sanders Peirce and William James remained influential at the University of Chicago. Two of Dewey's allies and champions, James H. Tufts and George Herbert Mead, bristled at Hutchins's attempt to appoint Mortimer Adler, Richard McKeon, and Scott Buchanan to the faculty. When the Chicago philosophers first met Adler and explained that they introduced first-year students to the discipline by assigning Will Durant's popular, accessible, and pragmatist-leaning *Story of Philosophy*, Adler is said to have fumed, "But—but—but that's a very bad book." Adler had first burst on the academic scene when, as a student at Columbia, he had enraged Dewey at a meeting of the undergraduate philosophy club by denouncing Dewey's account of "the religious" in *A Common Faith*. The usually equable Dewey, protesting that "nobody is going to tell *me* how to love God," walked out. Now Adler was turning his ire on the Chicago philosophers, and Hutchins was urging them to make room for scholars who would teach classical and medieval philosophy instead of instrumentalism. They responded much as Dewey had: Tufts resigned, and Mead made plans to move to Columbia. The philosophers who stayed eventually accepted McKeon but not Adler or Buchanan. Hutchins persisted; Adler joined the faculty of the Law School. Every Tuesday, for two decades, Adler and Hutchins together taught an honors course for freshmen, History of Ideas, in which undergraduates sat around a seminar table discussing the great books with two men committed to unsettling their minds.³

Although the battle between the sciences—both natural and social—and the humanities was seldom as pronounced as it was at Hutchins's Chicago,

more muted versions of the same struggle erupted elsewhere in the years after 1929. Equally spirited conflicts emerged within individual disciplines during the interwar years. Philosophers inspired by Dewey's conception of a pragmatist community of inquiry were challenged by analytic philosophers who focused on rigorous studies of ordinary language. Both had to face the challenge of the even harder-edged positivists who shared Rudolf Carnap's conviction that the "only proper task of *Philosophy* is *Logical Analysis*." When the exiled Carnap began teaching in the gothic buildings at Hutchins's University of Chicago, he admitted that being surrounded by Aristotelians and Thomists gave him the distinctly "weird feeling" of having fled Vienna only to find himself "sitting among a group of medieval learned men with long beards and solemn robes."⁴ Scholars of literature likewise divided into (at least) three different camps. Those who conceived of themselves as scientists sought to generate reliable bodies of knowledge about linguistics and historical philology. New Critics sought to discover and elucidate principles of literary form and expression through close readings that banished intent and context. Traditionalists continued to think of education as the cultivation of judgment along the lines of German *Bildung* and believed that such cultivation was best achieved by placing students in a situation in which they could read and reflect on challenging books of enduring value.⁵ A few natural scientists (Albert Einstein and Jacques Monod come to mind) continued to muse about the philosophical and even theological implications of their findings; others did not hesitate to declare such speculations a waste of time.

This chapter examines briefly two particular moments at which thinkers outside emerging scholarly orthodoxies tried—without great success—to defend the legitimacy of their forms of value-oriented humanistic inquiry against hostile critics; it then discusses in somewhat greater detail a more enduring effort in political philosophy that persists at the heart of American universities into the twenty-first century. The first two incidents, involving the German Gestalt psychologist Wolfgang Köhler and the French neo-Thomist philosopher Etienne Gilson, occurred in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The third, involving the German Jewish political philosopher Leo Strauss, is international in scope. I argue that all three are connected, albeit in paradoxical ways, and that they are important for our contemporary understanding of the humanities and discursive social sciences in liberal education.⁶

THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES stands across Irving Street from the home of William James, a gray clapboard house perfectly attuned to its neighborhood, and in the shadow of fifteen-story-high William James Hall, an imposing white modernist monolith that dominates the Cambridge skyline.

Unlike the Social Science Research Building at Chicago, William James Hall does not bear an inscription, but its towering form and its arrogant disregard for its surroundings suggest the imperious claims made for the work done by the social scientists it houses. In the decades before 1963, when Harvard built this temple to the behavioral sciences, the university paid homage in a different, more appropriate way to the maverick genius who studied both mind and truth: it sponsored the William James Lectures.

In 1934 the Harvard Department of Philosophy extended an invitation to deliver those lectures to Wolfgang Köhler, a renowned German scholar whose research was generating widespread interest on both sides of the Atlantic. Until later in the 1930s the Department of Philosophy included both philosophers such as James's biographer Ralph Barton Perry and experimental psychologists such as Edwin G. Boring; both disciplines were still proud to claim James's heritage in ways neither would do today.

Along with his colleagues Max Wertheimer and Kurt Koffka, Köhler was among the founders of the Gestalt school of psychology. As James himself had done, the Gestalt psychologists criticized the two traditions that dominated their discipline in its early years, associationism and intuitionism. They were equally critical of the newest development in psychology, behaviorism. Indeed, as Perry wrote in an appreciative review of books by Köhler and Koffka published in the *Saturday Review of Literature* in 1925, their work showed "the *esprit* of an armed revolution." Their "freshness of treatment" and "inventiveness and fertility of method" produced "an effect very much like the opening of a window."⁷

The Gestaltists argued, as James had done in *The Principles of Psychology*, that standard atomistic interpretations of experience as the combination of discrete simple elements mangled a more complex reality. They emphasized the importance of Gestalten, or configurations, in perception, and they argued that patterns of stimuli must be correlated with structures and relations within the perceptual field. Only thereby can we explain the human capacity to recognize the same tune played in different keys, or our ability to interpret sequences of blinking lights that the mind combines to read as signs or words. Our environment, according to *Gestaltists*, does not merely consist of physical objects near us, but must be understood instead as the result of the interaction between our perceptual field and those physical objects. All organisms impose on their environment certain configurations that filter and transform stimuli so that the organisms can deal with their environment. In 1929 Boring reported to Koffka, after Köhler had delivered a lecture in Cambridge sponsored by the Harvard Philosophical Club, that he was impressed with the new science. Boring's students had begun to characterize him as a Gestaltist,

and he did not deny the charge. By that time Köhler held a prestigious chair at the University of Berlin. As a reflection of his prominence, he was invited in 1929 to deliver one of the two plenary addresses at the Ninth International Congress of Psychology held at Yale. Ivan Pavlov delivered the other.⁸

That early consensus on the value of Gestalt psychology as an alternative to behaviorism did not endure. When Boring published his *History of Experimental Psychology* late in 1929, he was already beginning to worry that the Gestalt psychologists would never develop their ideas beyond their critiques of prevailing views. When Köhler's *Gestalt Psychology* appeared that same year, behaviorists began a counterattack. Frederick Lund, in "The Phantom of the Gestalt," charged that the notion of configurations "has no assignable value in psychological description nor any real existence within the experimental sequence." If it had no value for experimental psychologists, it could safely be ignored.⁹

The philosophers, however, remained intrigued, and with Perry taking the lead they selected Köhler to deliver the third series of William James Lectures in 1934. The book that resulted, *The Place of Value in a World of Facts*, the title of which inspired the title of this chapter, was greeted with greater enthusiasm by philosophers than by psychologists.¹⁰ Köhler observed that the natural sciences had difficulty addressing the question of valuation. Whereas many philosophers were urging their colleagues to banish the study of ethics and aesthetics from philosophy—or to characterize value statements as descriptions of emotions and nothing more—as part of their program to become scientific, Köhler recommended instead that science must acknowledge that values are irreducible dimensions of human experience: "Certain facts do not only happen or exist, but, issuing as vectors in parts of contexts, extend toward others with a quality of acceptance or rejection." All our experience, Köhler reasoned, is imbued with valuing. If we ignore that dimension of human life simply because we cannot conduct experiments on it, then our science might appear to rest on a more sturdy foundation of experimentation but will fail to address what it is and what it feels like to be human. He urged psychologists and philosophers to adopt a revised phenomenological conception of experience more consistent with the Gestalt psychologists' outlook than with Husserl's philosophy. Far from contending that his view of experience was inconsistent with the natural sciences, Köhler insisted that the natural sciences must be expanded to take into account the pervasive human experience of valuing. If we cannot yet see how we can build such concepts as "requiredness" into our experimental programs, then the challenge is to rethink our procedures rather than to truncate experience so that it corresponds to what we can now measure with confidence. In the history of psychology, perhaps no writer had developed such ideas with greater insight, or defended them with more energy, than William James.¹¹

Whereas the community of social scientists was being urged to measure lest its results be meager, and logical positivists and emotivists were advising philosophers not to confuse value judgments with meaningful statements of fact or logic, Köhler was urging scholars instead to widen their concepts of measurement and logic. Perry and some other members of Harvard's Philosophy Department greeted that message with enthusiasm. They urged Harvard's new president, James Conant, to make Köhler a tenured member of the faculty. Perry, one of several highly regarded scholars who contributed to a volume entitled *The Meaning of the Humanities*, which was reviewed in *Ethics* together with Köhler's *The Place of Value in a World of Facts*, still thought it possible to combine empirical studies with traditional humanistic inquiries into human values. But neither Perry's discipline nor Boring's was heading in that direction. Instead, the scholarly community of mainstream analytic philosophers and behavioral psychologists has echoed the judgment Boring expressed in a letter after Köhler's lectures: "I can say only that I heard the whole series and am terribly disappointed, and a little humiliated at the knowledge that I took the time to go to them. The content was not informed nor related to current knowledge. The ideas were not important or clear."¹² Boring and his fellow experimentalists succeeded in blocking Köhler's appointment, and none of the leading Gestaltists would end up teaching in a major American research university. The ideas of Gestalt psychology and phenomenology all but vanished from Harvard. The university only ratified institutionally what had already happened intellectually when it divided its increasingly behavioral psychologists into a department distinct from that of its increasingly analytic philosophers. Today, seventy years after Köhler's lectures, with the exception of issues in cognitive science, Harvard's Department of Psychology and its Department of Philosophy have little contact and little in common.

TWO YEARS after Köhler's William James Lectures, in 1936, Harvard celebrated its tercentennial. In a special issue of the *New York Times Magazine* commemorating the event, the historian Samuel Eliot Morison wrote, "The world is not going very well for learning, or for universities. The heavy hand of the State has quenched the flame of academic freedom in Germany, where in modern times it was rekindled. Pressure groups in America, copying the technique of Fascist Italy, are demanding oaths by teacher and professor to the Constitution and the flag, and tagging every sign of independent thinking in the social sciences as treason. Universities must serve the people, but they can only serve the people in the future, as in the past, by remaining constant in their search for the truth and true to their function of teaching it."¹³ During these years of crisis

many Americans, including many prominent American scholars in addition to Morison, worried that the principal danger facing the nation came from within. Many located that threat in the relativism they associated with Dewey and other pragmatists, who were understood by many to have inspired Mussolini's fascism. Others worried instead about the absolutist dogmatism of American Catholics, who were feared to be dupes of the pope and probably inclined toward Il Duce themselves. Still others pointed accusing fingers in a different direction, at value-neutral philosophers such as those of the Vienna Circle, who turned their backs on the great traditions of ethics and metaphysics. Given those anxieties, it came as something of a surprise when Harvard announced the names of those to whom it would award honorary degrees at its tercentennial celebration. They included prominent members from all those groups of suspects: the arch-empiricist from Chicago, Robert MacIver; the logical empiricist Rudolf Carnap; the cognitive psychologist Jean Piaget; and the neo-Thomist philosopher Etienne Gilson, among others. The university made a point of indicating that Dewey was not included only because he had already been awarded an honorary Harvard degree. In his remarks Gilson saluted his hosts by confirming their own inflated sense of their importance. He observed that the presence of so many eminent Europeans at the Harvard celebration demonstrated "that the fate of European culture and Western civilization ultimately rests with what the United States will make of it in the next 100 years."¹⁴

The following year, coincidentally, Harvard selected Gilson to deliver the William James Lectures—perhaps to signal its commitment to entertaining ideas considered repugnant by many Americans, perhaps to persuade wealthy Catholic donors to adopt Harvard, or perhaps to reward his perspicacity at the tercentennial.¹⁵ In the book that resulted, *The Unity of Philosophical Experience*, Gilson listed first among those to whom he was grateful Ralph Barton Perry. Gently needling his hosts, Gilson noted that his invitation testified to the continuing spirit of tolerating diversity that James had noted in 1901 as the hallmark of the Harvard Philosophy Department. "I think the delightful thing about us" philosophers, James had written to G. H. Palmer, "is our deep appreciation of one another, and our on the whole harmonious co-operation toward the infusion of what probably is objective truth into the minds of our students. At any rate it's genuine liberalism, and non-dogmatism." As James's puckish qualifiers "on the whole," "probably," and "at any rate" suggested, he had no illusion that he and his colleagues were dispensing "objective truth." Gilson sustained the same ironic tone when he applauded the persistence of James's broad-mindedness in "the Harvard of Perry, Whitehead, Hocking, Lewis, and Sheffer." Gilson did not acknowledge the presence of W. V. O. Quine, who had recently joined the Philosophy Department after completing his Ph.D. in two years, an oversight one

imagines Quine was happy to reciprocate. "When non-dogmatism shows itself generous enough to welcome even dogmatism," Gilson concluded mischievously, "it has obviously reached the point of its perfection."¹⁶

Gilson's compliment was as double-edged as James's. His lectures made abundantly clear how little he prized the nondogmatism with which he credited his hosts. He traced the path of modern philosophy from Descartes through Kant to Hegel and Comte, and then to James, Bergson, and contemporary irrationalism and agnosticism. Although Gilson had no doubt that such abominations would pass—"Philosophy always buries its undertakers"—he worried that the current mania for science might do some damage while it lasted. Gilson urged the community of philosophers to return to the urgent task of metaphysics, which had occupied all the great classical and medieval philosophers and without which they could not hope to escape the trap of historicism. In the absence of metaphysics "what is now called philosophy is either collective mental slavery or scepticism." The servile inclined toward Marxism, which satisfied "a fundamentally sound craving" "for positive and dogmatic truth" even though it was otherwise entirely wrongheaded. The skeptics, inspired by Hume, now turned toward varieties of behaviorism, or James's pragmatism, or Perry's neorealism, or Hans Vaihinger's philosophy of "As If." But none of those could meet the urgent demands of the age: "The time of the 'As If' is over," Gilson predicted. "What we now need is a 'This is so,' and we shall not find it, unless we first recover our lost confidence in the rational validity of metaphysics and our long-forgotten knowledge of its object." A renewed commitment to metaphysics, undertaken within the proper Roman Catholic framework, might enable us "to free ourselves from historical relativism" and open "a new era of constructive philosophical thinking."

Overall, however, notwithstanding his clear confidence in his creed, Gilson avoided the pugnacious tone of Köhler and Koffka. He concluded with these words: "Were it in my power to do so, I would rather leave you with a gift. Not wisdom, which I have not and no man can give, but the next best thing; the love of wisdom, for which philosophy is but another word. For to love wisdom is also to love science, and prudence; it is to seek peace in the inner accord of each mind with itself and in the mutual accord of all minds."¹⁷ In the aftermath of Gilson's William James Lectures, though, the Harvard Department of Philosophy not surprisingly returned to its own professionalized version of that quest, seeking not wisdom as Gilson understood it but the precision of a discipline that viewed scholastic metaphysics with a distaste bordering on contempt.

WHEREAS GILSON, like his revered Thomas Aquinas, considered philosophy to be consistent with (indeed, in the service of) scholastic theology, it was common

in the 1930s to observe that at the University of Chicago Jews taught Catholicism to atheists. Hutchins and Adler revered Aquinas as much as they did Plato and Aristotle. Appalled by recent developments in American academic philosophy, they welcomed to the faculty a Jewish émigré who appeared to share their scorn for analytic philosophy and logical positivism and their enthusiasm for ancient and medieval thought and for the careful study of great books. In Leo Strauss, however, they got more than they bargained for. Strauss fancied himself an authentic philosopher and dismissed Hutchins and Adler just as Adler had dismissed Durant, as dabblers who enjoyed posing as scholars while they engaged in entrepreneurial adventures inconsistent with the life of a university.¹⁸ Strauss was an atheist; his own attitude toward Judaism was complex, even murky. But Christianity he held in little-disguised contempt. Like Nietzsche, he considered it a slave religion utterly inconsistent with the life of a philosopher.

If Strauss proved a surprise and a disappointment to his patrons after he finally joined the faculty of the University of Chicago in 1948, it was only the last of several ironic twists in the long road that took him to Hyde Park. When Strauss first lectured at Chicago in 1936, the English historian Conyers Read, writing to a colleague, described Strauss unenthusiastically as "a little mouse kind of a man without much in the way of stimulating personality. I think with more experience he will develop into a fair teacher."¹⁹ The recipient of that letter, the economist John U. Nef, was a Hutchins ally who later founded the Committee on Social Thought and proved instrumental in Strauss's appointment. Nef admired the work and the Christian socialist principles of the English scholar R. H. Tawney, whom he and Hutchins wanted very much to lure to Chicago. Tawney and Strauss became acquainted when Strauss arrived in London in 1936, and the young German, at work on the medieval Jewish philosopher Moses Maimonides, made a lasting impression. In one of his letters replying to Nef's overtures, Tawney described Strauss as "certainly the best scholar among the refugees whom I have had to deal with."²⁰ Tawney, like Strauss and Nef, distrusted historicism. Tawney longed for a world radically unlike the bourgeois liberal capitalism of his day, a return, in Tawney's words, to "the true nature of man," or, as Nef put it, "to the ideals of classical and medieval philosophy, softened and enriched by the best traditions of the nineteenth-century English humanitarians."²¹ Hutchins and Nef found such ideas attractive, which explains their interest in Tawney. But the romantic, Ruskin-scented sentiments of his English champion repelled Strauss as much as did the ersatz neo-Thomism of the philistines Hutchins and Adler. He had encountered such ideas before.

Leo Strauss was born into an orthodox Jewish family in 1899, served in the German army during World War I, then completed his doctoral stud-

ies at the University of Hamburg. Although the neo-Kantian Ernst Cassirer directed his dissertation, a study of the counter-Enlightenment philosopher Friedrich Jacobi, Strauss's sensibility took shape in response to the deeper impact of several other thinkers, notably Edmund Husserl, Franz Rosenzweig, and especially Martin Heidegger. Already in his study of Jacobi, Strauss expressed his dissatisfaction with the Enlightenment's confidence in reason and his respect for Jacobi's attempt to unearth an authentic, ancient Jewish faith that refused to compromise with secular modernity or make peace with Christian persecutors. While working at the Academy of Jewish Research in Berlin, Strauss embarked on studies of Spinoza, Hobbes, and the birth of what he would call for the rest of his life "the modern." Whereas the ancients had understood that we have lost contact with nature, a condition captured by Plato in his image of the cave, Strauss argued that modern man, without realizing his condition, was in a far worse predicament, stuck in a second cave buried far beneath the first. So far had man fallen from the light of reason, from awareness of natural right, that he believed he would need altogether new tools to escape that deeper cave. Although Strauss began ruminating on this condition as early as 1932, he elaborated his argument about "the natural obstacles to philosophy" only in *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, a book published twenty years later. There he contended that science and history, more potent even than the passion and superstition that troubled Spinoza, conspired to blind modern man to nature. New tools such as hermeneutics and social science only further obscured what man needed to know, the nature of the eternal, unchanging problems probed by ancient philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Xenophon.²²

From 1932 at least until 1938, when he arrived in the United States and began teaching at the New School for Social Research in New York City, Strauss worked on developing the ideas that would make him a heroic champion to some and an evil genius to others. Strauss is perhaps best known today for having developed several sets of dichotomies, each of which has been examined in loving detail by Strauss's many admirers and scrutinized by his even more numerous critics with degrees of disapproval ranging from bitter disagreement to unmitigated fury. The first is the esoteric versus the apparent meaning of texts; the second is the classical versus the modern; the third is natural right versus historicism; and the fourth—the most complex and thus the most intriguing—is Athens versus Jerusalem. Although these dichotomies may seem at first difficult to comprehend, even intimidating, with the exception of the last they are fairly straightforward.

First, Strauss contended that great thinkers, including philosophers such as the ancients and a few medieval giants such as Maimonides, Averroës,

Alfarabius, and, notoriously, Machiavelli, masked their deeper insights by writing so as to conceal their explosive message from ordinary readers. This technique of esoteric writing requires readers to penetrate layers of apparent meanings before arriving at the hidden truths accessible only to those with the necessary intelligence, patience, and skill. Whereas in some traditions interpreters of texts win admiration for their ability to read creatively, Strauss insisted that the most careful readers always end up with the same interpretation of the problems addressed in the greatest texts, an interpretation he laid out—albeit through his own version of bivalent writing—in his own books and articles.

Second, Strauss distinguished between the classical philosophers, whose writings give us true accounts of virtue, beauty, reason, nature, and truth, and modern writers, who are stuck in the muck of relativism because they think science can provide knowledge when it really just gets in the way. Strauss called himself a friend of liberal democracy, but he savaged its failings and its excesses with venom equal to that of Friedrich Nietzsche or Herbert Marcuse at their most scornful. Whereas classical philosophers valued the genuine individualism of Socrates, the wise seeker of truth, liberal individualists inflate the unreflective desires of the most degraded persons into natural rights. Whereas classical philosophers understood that only the truly exceptional can discern truth and live the life of virtue, democracies pretend that all people are equal, a manifest lie that flatters the worst and robs the best of the opportunity to strive for excellence.

Strauss's third dichotomy, natural right versus historicism, flows from the second. Whereas classical philosophers understood that natural right, the one thing "truly needful," is the same always and everywhere, modern scientists deny the existence of eternal truth and offer instead only value-free empiricism, which cannot provide access to man's nature and inevitably culminates in the dead ends of historicism and relativism. Developed in its bluntest form in the book based on the Walgreen Lectures Strauss delivered at the University of Chicago in 1949, *Natural Right and History*, this is the distinction for which Strauss is probably best known. Strauss opened by quoting the Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." Strauss then contrasted this noble creed to the pernicious historicism that had enveloped his own native Germany and plunged the world into the most devastating war in history. Our "contemporary rejection of natural right leads to nihilism—nay, it is identical with nihilism." Moderns seek to escape the irrationality of nihilism, but "the more we cultivate reason, the more we cultivate nihilism."

As Strauss saw it, only two armies contest the field of modern philosophy, "liberals of various descriptions" and the "Catholic and non-Catholic disciples of Thomas Aquinas." Unfortunately, both armies are misled by their belief in modern science, which blinds them to the light of Aristotelian teleology and prevents them from seeing that "all natural beings have a natural end, a natural destiny, which determines what kind of operation is good for them." The ancients understood eternal natural right. Moderns have abandoned it and instead embraced "conventionalism," another term for the historicism that emerged in the horrified reaction of Europeans to the French Revolution and ended by destroying all "objective norms." Thus, modern man finds himself facing, together with Nietzsche, a stark choice: "According to Nietzsche, the theoretical analysis of human life that realizes the relativity of all comprehensive views and thus deprecates them would make human life itself impossible, for it would destroy the protecting atmosphere within which life or culture or action is alone possible." To avert that danger, Strauss continued, "Nietzsche could choose one of two ways: he could insist on the strictly esoteric character of the theoretical analysis of life—that is, restore the Platonic notion of the noble delusion—or else he could deny the possibility of theory proper and so conceive of thought as essentially subservient to, or dependent on, life or fate."²³ Nietzsche himself might have known better, but all other moderns made the latter, wrong choice, opting for history, science, or even scholastic theology—unsatisfactory and unsatisfying alternatives inferior to the dangerous, harrowing, lonely, difficult, but ultimately rewarding life of genuine philosophy, the search for the eternal, unchanging truth.²⁴

The fourth and final distinction, between Athens and Jerusalem, is more subtle. Much as Strauss claimed to prefer Jacobi to Spinoza, and Maimonides to later moderate Jews who tried to assimilate to modernity, and much as he embraced Jewish communities that would always be inassimilable and persecuted, he never renounced his own atheism. Strauss could not believe in God, but he appreciated the reasons why fellow atheists such as Plato tolerated, or even prized, religious faith: it stabilized society for unthinking nonphilosophers. Strauss particularly admired those Jewish philosophers such as Maimonides who embedded their ideas in esoteric writing to keep from unsettling the authority of the rabbis and the simpleminded religious faith of ordinary people. The tension between the lure of reason in classical philosophy (Athens) and the power of genuine belief (Jerusalem) remained the single acknowledged unreconciled problem in Strauss's writing. If we cannot find the answers to our questions in science or modern philosophy, can we find them in biblical religion? Strauss was ambivalent. The craze for scholasticism cannot help; neo-Thomism offers only the false comfort of dogma. But in the

deeper mysteries of theology, somewhere beyond the consolation of familiar rabbinic teachings and the deeper mysteries of Kabbalah, might lie a genuine and perhaps even compelling alternative not only to modernity but to classical rationalism. The ancients too had puzzled over the problem of piety, and all the most profound thinkers, from Socrates and Plato to Maimonides and Alfarabius (and, at least by implication, to Strauss himself), pondered the question of embracing religious faith. Strauss's invocation of "return" in his lectures in the 1950s at the University of Chicago's Hillel House seems to point less toward a renewed classical natural right than toward what Thomas Pangle, one of Strauss's most avid followers and among his most perceptive interpreters, calls "the precondition for true progress, human reverence and humility," which may in turn be the "precondition for the discovery of true human dignity; a certain sense of homelessness may be the precondition for true homecoming."²⁵ I will return to this problem in my conclusion.

Those four distinctions not only convey Strauss's central ideas, but also indicate the most prominent of the targets on which his critics have concentrated their fire. From the first reviews to the most recent denunciations, Strauss has attracted spirited attacks, a feature of his writings that his defenders interpret—much as Strauss himself did—as irrefutable evidence of his wisdom and his critics' wrongheadedness. Strauss never bothered to situate his interpretations in the scholarly literature or to locate the texts he studied in their historical contexts. He did not care much about his contemporaries in the community of scholars or about what meanings earlier readers might have taken from the writers he studied. His concept of esoteric writing—applied initially to those he studied and eventually to his own production as well—provided him an all-purpose escape hatch from any criticism. From Strauss's perspective, those who disagreed with him simply lacked the intelligence, the integrity, the insight, the erudition, or the persistence to read with sufficient care. According to his critics, Strauss's method showed his monumental arrogance and authorized his virtuoso performances of willful misreading.

Finally, and most maddening of all, Strauss never felt compelled to advance arguments on behalf of the idea of natural right he found in the ancient philosophers he most admired. He considered their superiority self-evident and their meaning accessible enough for those inclined and equipped to study them as he did.²⁶ "I *really* believe," he wrote in a letter to the German historian of ideas Karl Löwith in 1946, "that the perfect political order, as Plato and Aristotle have sketched it, *is* the perfect political order."²⁷ Or as Strauss expressed his animating conviction in 1963: "Philosophy in the strict and classical sense is [the] quest for the eternal order or for the eternal cause or causes of all things. It presupposes then that there is an eternal and unchangeable order within which

History takes place and which is not in any way affected by History."²⁸ If we are to take these statements of his convictions not as examples of esoteric writing to be decoded but at face value, as his students and followers urge us to do, they signal clearly Strauss's unshakable attachment to his understanding of the ideals of Plato and Aristotle and to his understanding of their conceptions of philosophy, politics, and the world. But it is striking—and bewildering—that Strauss never deigned to explain either how to reconcile the obvious disagreements among the ancients he revered or the reasons why anyone else should agree with him about the enduring value of their ideas.

Strauss brought his extraordinary self-confidence with him when he arrived in New York City to teach at the New School for Social Research. In two lectures that he delivered there in 1941, he excoriated the methodological approaches of Marx, Weber, Dewey, Heidegger, Karl Mannheim, and Lenin—practically all the thinkers to whom his fellow faculty members had expressed their debts. Moreover, he faulted scholars on the left and right alike for failing to provide through sufficiently charismatic teaching the leadership that might have prevented German youth from falling under Hitler's spell. In short, not only were academics guilty of corrupting philosophy by succumbing to the lure of historicism; Strauss also charged them with facilitating Nazism.²⁹

When Strauss arrived at the University of Chicago, he had done nothing to mask his contempt for most of the work being done there. His critiques of empirical social science, pragmatism, individualism, and neo-Thomism were well known. Whereas many mainstream social scientists interpreted Kelvin's command to "measure" as a warrant for value-free empirical research, Strauss offered an alternative to that approach: "Political things are by their nature subject to approval or disapproval, to choice and rejection, to praise and blame." Their "essence" is "not to be neutral but to raise a claim to men's obedience, allegiance, decision, or judgment." One cannot understand "political things," Strauss insisted, "if one does not measure them by some standard of goodness or justice. To judge soundly one must know the true standards. If political philosophy wishes to do justice to its subject matter, it must strive for genuine knowledge of these standards."³⁰ From Strauss's vantage point, meager and unsatisfactory indeed were the measurements generated by scholarship not grounded on the bedrock of classical philosophy.

The "ritual" that social scientists called "methodology" or "logic" blinded them to their responsibilities. "While the new political science becomes ever less able to see democracy or to hold a mirror to democracy," Strauss warned, "it ever more reflects the most dangerous proclivities of democracy," its tendency toward the least common denominator of the herd. "By teaching in

effect the equality of literally all desires," empirical political science "teaches in effect that there is nothing of which a man ought to be ashamed." By thus "destroying the possibility of self-contempt, it destroys" even "the possibility of self-respect." By leveling all values, "by denying that there are things which are intrinsically high and others which are intrinsically low," political science "unwittingly contributes to the victory of the gutter."³¹ Such charges echoed the worries of Tocqueville, Mill, and Arnold in the nineteenth century and paralleled other anxieties being expressed in the 1940s and 1950s by critics of mass culture on the left and the right. But both his shrill tone and his unapologetic declaration of indebtedness to the truths of ancient wisdom differentiated Strauss's arguments from those issued by other critics of democracy.

During the eighteen years Strauss was at Chicago, American culture changed in ways he either did not recognize or refused to acknowledge in his writing. By 1967, when Strauss reached age sixty-five, his relentless denunciations of his scholarly colleagues, academic culture, and liberal democracy had worn down the forbearance of the administration of the university. As was the case at Brandeis University, where the equally tireless German émigré Herbert Marcuse was continuing to launch from the left his own denunciations of American democracy, spirited efforts by the old men's allies did not save them from being forced to retire. Marcuse headed west, to the lotusland of La Jolla, California, where he briefly became the darling of leftist rebels. Strauss continued teaching the ancient texts he revered, within the rigorous curriculum of St. John's, Annapolis, until his death in 1973. From the left and from the right, drawing on insights from early Marx and Freud, and from Aristotle and Maimonides, these two lonely voices kept calling on social scientists and political philosophers to return to the questions of value bracketed by mainstream social science. Outside the academy Marcuse and Strauss were sometimes heralded as prophets. Most scholars working within their own disciplines dismissed them as embarrassing cranks and got on with the serious work of measuring empirical data.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED to the distinct challenges that Köhler, Gilson, and Strauss presented in the middle decades of the twentieth century? Although certain insights from the Gestaltists were to resurface later on the fringes of cognitive psychology, in the developmental psychology of Jean Piaget and his followers, and in the "humanistic psychology" of the 1960s, the discipline as a whole has continued to move in the direction of behaviorism. Finding funds for behavioral studies is easier, in part because their results can be measured and thus characterized more plausibly as science, and in part because such research is prestructured according to the instruments of control sought by an expert society.³² For a variety of reasons, psychology as a discipline rarely examines the

issues of consciousness or values central to the inquiries of the Gestaltists. The questions that once brought together philosophers and psychologists are rarely asked outside the fields of developmental or educational psychology. When they are, the answers tend to come from cognitive scientists such as Daniel Dennett or Arthur Zeman, who think in terms of parallel processors or electroencephalographic measurements of neural activities rather than the experience of awareness or the phenomenology of volition.³³ Reflective undergraduates intrigued by such issues are gently steered from psychology toward philosophy. There they encounter courses in logic and linguistic analysis often taught by technicians who shrug that value statements describe emotional states outside the purview of serious philosophy.³⁴ Not surprisingly, such students sometimes wind up in cultural studies, where their passionate engagement is "validated" (if not always heightened or deepened), or, more often, they leave the world of scholarship altogether. Paradoxically, in recent decades the concern of Gestalt psychology with meanings and frameworks has reentered academic life through a series of side doors, largely as a result of work done by scholars outside the disciplines of psychology and philosophy. This broader development has attracted considerable scholarly attention.³⁵

Scholasticism too is not what it used to be. But if the Gestalt psychologists would be demoralized by the evaporation of their profession's interest in the questions that drove their investigations, Gilson might be even more surprised by what has happened to Catholic thought. The shift away from unquestioning allegiance to Thomas Aquinas was already apparent in the later work of Gilson's fellow French émigré Jacques Maritain, some of whose ruminations had carried him in the direction of Vatican II by the mid-1950s. The spirited exchange between Robert MacIver and John Courtney Murray, reported by John McGreevy in chapter 7 in this volume, indicates that the divide separating many Catholic thinkers from secular social scientists remained as wide in the early 1950s as it had been when Hutchins imported Aristotelians to save the University of Chicago from Kelvin's measuring sticks. Were Gilson's heirs, with their yearning for universal truth, then to be Strauss's allies? Not immediately, and certainly not all of them, for several reasons that merit consideration. First, when Strauss was passing through Paris on his way to England and eventually to the United States, the neo-Thomist Maritain was, with Alexandre Kojève, among the French intellectuals whom he encountered. At the time Maritain was already experimenting with the idea of a "Judeo-Christian tradition." He used the phrase in lectures delivered in Spain in 1934; in his book *Humanisme intégral* (1936) he was among the first scholars to identify the close relation between "Judeo-Christian values" and the concept of alienation advanced by Marx in the 1840s. The fact that Maritain had converted to

Catholicism from Protestantism and his beloved wife Raissa to Catholicism from Judaism no doubt played a part in broadening his sensibility. So too did the political convictions that led Maritain to admire Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker movement, a progressive sensibility that prompted some observers to dub Maritain "the Catholic Marx" or, more aptly, "the Catholic Jaurès."³⁶

But none of that ecumenical spirit impressed Strauss, for whom Judaism remained distinct from all forms of Christianity, and for whom philosophy, not theology, remained fundamental. From Strauss's perspective reason could provide no foundation for religious faith. For him scholasticism represented a retreat from philosophy into dogmatism. Using the concept of the "Judeo-Christian tradition," he observed, served only "to blur and to conceal grave differences. Cultural pluralism can only be had, it seems, at the price of blunting all edges."³⁷ Strauss preferred to keep his edges sharp.

So too did those on both sides of another divide that widened in the late 1930s, the divide between pragmatism, allied with science, and religion, which despite Strauss's grumbling came increasingly to mean just such an undifferentiated "Judeo-Christian tradition." Maritain was widely admired in Catholic circles as a neo-Thomist scholar, but unlike Gilson he wrote as much about contemporary issues as he did about medieval culture. His prominence drew the attention of Hutchins, who tried three times to recruit him to Chicago. Hutchins wanted Maritain as a counterbalance to the university's prevailing tendencies toward either Dewey's pragmatism or Carnap's logical positivism. For precisely that reason Chicago's philosophers objected to appointing a man they considered an "absolutist" and a "propagandist" rather than a scholar.³⁸

Similar mutual antagonism marred the efforts of Adler, the conservative rabbi Amos Finkelstein, and the Harvard astronomer Harlow Shapley to convene a national conference to air, and perhaps resolve, the tensions among science, philosophy, and religion. The conference organizers, following the architecture suggested in Maritain's *The Degree of Knowledge* (1922), conceived of knowledge ascending from a solid base of empirical science to the intermediate stage of metaphysics and finally culminating at the pinnacle of religious faith. The conference they had in mind would ratify Maritain's conception of science as subservient to philosophy, and both as subservient to religion. But Adler, typically, poisoned the proceedings even before they could begin. He demanded that the conference "repudiate the scientism or positivism which dominates every aspect of modern culture." Lest there be any misunderstanding, he insisted that "religious knowledge, because supernaturally generated, must be superior to philosophy and science as merely natural knowledge." MacIver

replied that Adler's demands would end inquiry before it began and thus prevent the "exploration" that Shapley offered as the purpose of the gathering. When the conference convened at New York's Jewish Theological Seminary in September 1940, Adler's paper "God and the Professors" picked up where Adler had left off when he was an undergraduate at Columbia. "Democracy has much more to fear from the mentality of its teachers," Adler wrote, "than from the nihilism of Hitler." Without firm religious foundations, he warned, American culture would crumble. Adler's listeners had no trouble identifying Dewey, America's premier teacher, and his naturalist allies as Adler's chief targets. Maritain, striking a more moderate tone, spoke in support of the idea that "experimental science" should not be taken as "the supreme standard of thought."

The philosophers Sidney Hook and Horace Kallen, Dewey's and James's bulldogs, returned fire immediately. Both Hook and Kallen remained engaged for the next three years as successive conferences debated the relative merits of pragmatism and religion and their affinities with democracy, which champions of both camps claimed as their own. Dewey himself, although invited by Finkelstein to participate in the discussions, refused on the grounds that naturalists should not be forced to subordinate their own worldview to that of religious apologists—as had happened in the opening session of the conference in 1940. Kallen's public presentations and his correspondence revealed his deep-seated distrust of Catholicism: ever since Al Smith's 1928 presidential campaign, the "totalitarian intent of the church has been extraordinarily aggressive and activist."³⁹ Kallen, usually heralded as one of the leading champions of cultural pluralism, had come a long way from James's celebration of the varieties of religious experience. That distance testified to the ways in which the international and cultural tensions of the late 1930s and early 1940s widened the rift between naturalists—including most pragmatists, empirical social scientists, and professional philosophers—and defenders of the new triple alliance of Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish leaders grouped beneath the rubric of the "Judeo-Christian tradition." Despite the depth and significance of that gap, however, another divide was beginning to emerge that would cut across and partially obscure it.

Evidence of that new rift appears in the different trajectories of Strauss and Maritain in the 1950s. Strauss, although as impatient with Catholic dogmatism as he was with value-free social science, nevertheless lamented the consequences of the decline of religious observance. Much as Strauss loathed the notion that philosophy should bow to religion, as Adler and Maritain both believed it should, he admitted that faith could keep ordinary people from interfering in matters beyond their understanding. When religion declined, culture

suffered. As he put it, since we now read the morning paper instead of saying the morning prayer, we face a crisis: "Not every day the same thing, the same reminder of man's absolute duty and exalted destiny"—the stuff of religious practice—"but everyday something new with no reminder of duty and exalted destiny." Modern man has lost his moorings. He is drowning in "specialization, knowing more and more about less and less; the practical impossibility of concentration upon the very few essential things upon which man's wholeness entirely depends." He tries to compensate for that specialization with "sham universality, by the stimulation of all kinds of interests and curiosities without true passion." In short, although Strauss did not draw this connection, we moderns face precisely the threat that Tocqueville and Weber as well as Nietzsche feared, "the danger of universal philistinism and creeping conformism."⁴⁰

Maritain, by contrast, was moving in the direction that the Catholic Church as a whole would take in the aftermath of Vatican II. Rather than insisting on the distance between faith and knowledge, or between the after-life and this life, Maritain became increasingly adamant about applying the principles of Christianity to the problems of society and politics. He conceded that "supernatural faith does not provide us with any particular social or political system," but he insisted that the fundamental Christian doctrine of the equality of all of God's children provided the strongest foundation for the democratic ideals to which the United States was committed as a nation.⁴¹ In a nod to Dewey's conception of a "common faith," he conceded that people could share the same commitment to justice even though they grounded it on different philosophical premises: "The point we are again stressing is that this faith and inspiration, and the concept of itself which democracy needs—all these do not belong to the order of religious creed and eternal life, but to the temporal or secular order of earthly life, of culture or civilization. The *faith* in question is a *civic* or *secular* faith." Although religious believers would continue to base their political thinking on their religious faith, they should be able to ally with secular people who share their commitment to "truth and intelligence, human dignity, freedom, brotherly love, and the absolute value of moral good." Such allies should be able to reach agreement, Maritain wrote, on a "democratic charter" that would include a long list of ideals, a list that might seem banal to most readers today but was hardly that among Catholics in 1951. Maritain included, among many other ideals, "political rights and liberties, social rights and liberties, corresponding responsibilities," "mutual rights and duties of groups and the State; government of the people, by the people, and for the people; functions of authority in a political and social democracy," "human equality, justice between persons and the body politic," and, finally, "civil friendship and an ideal of fraternity, religious freedom,

mutual tolerance and mutual respect between various spiritual communities and schools of thought."⁴² Few French Catholics endorsed such ideas so enthusiastically a decade before Vatican II.

Not only did Maritain commit himself to the ideals of democracy, equality, and pluralism, but he also argued that just as those who challenged social hierarchy were considered heretics in the Middle Ages, so "in a lay society of free men the heretic is the breaker of the 'common democratic beliefs and practices,' the one who takes a stand against freedom, or against the basic equality of men."⁴³ He singled out and explicitly renounced Aristotle's conception of static social orders and his exclusion of ordinary people from participation in public life as antithetical to the democratic creed. The mid-twentieth-century heretic, in other words, was an unrepentant Aristotelian such as Leo Strauss.

In stark contrast to Dewey and to Maritain, Strauss did believe in hierarchy. In equally stark contrast, he denied that his classical political ideal could ever be realized in practice. For that reason he advised those committed to the pursuit of truth that they should separate themselves from the affairs of the polis. All the great philosophers of the past had learned a hard lesson from the death of Socrates: the masses will neither understand nor appreciate your quest for truth. If you persist, and if you let the common people know what you are doing, you will be persecuted. Philosophers should instead withdraw into esoteric writing. They should take refuge behind a veil that masks their dangerous ideas from all but those few brave souls with the intelligence and courage to become disciples.⁴⁴ Philosophers, Strauss insisted, should devote themselves to the heroic quest for unchanging truth, which is to be found, as Strauss put it in the letter to Löwith already quoted, in the proper understanding of Plato and Aristotle. Strauss proclaimed himself friendly to liberal democracy—although his admission that he could not flatter it might be taken as a hint to his deeper readers—yet his concept of eternal natural right was essentially inconsistent with the principles of equality, toleration, mutual respect, and popular sovereignty that Maritain and Dewey both offered as the heart of an open-ended and experimental culture of democracy.

When American Catholic culture left its seclusion and wholeheartedly embraced the civic ideals of American democracy after World War II, the most virulent forms of American anti-Catholicism began to wane. When the vision of Catholicism that emerged from Vatican II began to attract increasing numbers of Catholics, and when their commitment to transforming their church began to antagonize those who remained committed to its older traditions of isolation, hierarchy, and obedience, the American Catholic Church, previously divided along ethnic lines but more or less united on doctrine and practice,

ruptured. Millions of ecumenically inclined post-Vatican II Catholics made common cause with Reform Judaism and the denominations of liberal Protestantism, while more conservative Catholics went looking in other directions for the stability and serenity they missed. Many such disgruntled Catholics turned toward the idea of natural law, and some believed that Strauss's classical political rationalism could offer them a philosophical home.

Some of Strauss's own writings about religion seem to suggest grounds for such an alliance. From the time of his early critique of Spinoza's naturalism and his appreciation of Maimonides' rationalism, Strauss portrayed the rabbinical and Christian traditions of biblical hermeneutics as the opposite of genuine religion just as he portrayed positivist science as the opposite of genuine philosophy. Strauss thought that revelation must provide believers with bedrock truths as unchanging as the truth of natural law. But like his account of philosophy, his account of religion provoked spirited criticism. As Strauss's contemporary Simon Rawidowicz argued in his essay "On Interpretation," the rabbinic tradition put at the center of Judaism a series of intersubjectively established understandings of scripture. Rather than a unitary truth revealed once and for all, a truth grasped immediately by reason, Rawidowicz identified an unstable and unfolding tradition of interpretations. Just as Strauss rejected the practice of empirical philosophy, which he saw as a pathetic and futile denial of ancient wisdom, so he rejected the practice of biblical hermeneutics. But in both cases his uneasiness with doubt exposed him as a captive of the post-Cartesian obsession with certainty that he excoriated when he saw it in the modern philosophers of science and naturalism. Strauss rejected the alternative that his *bêtes noires*, Rousseau, Weber, James, and Dewey, embraced, the possibility that uncertainty might prove fruitful rather than sterile. If truths are discursively generated and admittedly provisional, they lack the grandeur Strauss sought in philosophy. But in light of Strauss's late admission of his own uncertainties about the relation between religion and philosophy, an admission I will discuss in my conclusion, and in light of his final denial that there was a rational basis for choosing between the claims of faith as he understood it and the claims of reason, the confidence of many of his followers that they could make common cause with conservative Christians—and vice versa—seems misplaced.⁴⁵

AT THEIR LEAST CONVINCING, Strauss and his students sometimes resemble the pre-Vatican II Catholic Church: inward-looking, cultish, ritualistic, dogmatic, authoritarian, and convinced they have access to a truth known to them alone. And at our most intemperate, we critics of Strauss and his followers can resemble the conspiracy-mongering anti-Catholics of the 1930s and 1940s

(*mea culpa*). If the dynamic of inclusion drew Catholics out of their parochialism and into the broader culture and drove the most fanatical of their foes to control their paranoia, might a similar dynamic lead more Straussians and anti-Straussians, and perhaps other scholarly antagonists, to moderate their claims and counterclaims?⁴⁶ Does it matter?

The stakes for the twenty-first century remain high. Nationally, enrollments in nonrequired courses in the humanities and the discursive social sciences are shrinking. Students today have urgent questions. Do humanists and social theorists have any answers? A look back to the middle third of the twentieth century suggests that international tensions can poison academic discourse, and the implications of the recent return to prominence of Straussian ways of thinking and talking can hardly encourage those of us still stuck in the second cave. As the resurgence of interest in Strauss should remind us, in times of perceived crisis Americans have frequently turned to the rock-hard principles of patriotism and xenophobia. Strauss is back in vogue in part because he claimed to know the eternal and unchanging truth. Do we in the academy who criticize Strauss have any convincing alternatives to offer students who ask why they should believe us and not him? Many observers have noted that the dynamic of inclusion in American academic life has operated in such a way that the very ideals that drove it, tolerance of diversity and the celebration of pluralism, the ideals that Gilson accurately attributed to William James and Ralph Barton Perry, have undercut our confidence in the ideas of universal reason and human dignity. If all knowledge has become suspect, if all our inquiries now seek to unmask power and empower the dispossessed, then it is understandable that students wonder why they should bother with the humanities and discursive social sciences instead of simply learning how to wield power themselves once they leave school.

In 1945, when Harvard rethought its curriculum at the behest of President James Conant and issued *General Education in a Free Society*, the Red Book, which sold more than forty thousand copies and helped shape secondary and higher education for a generation, its authors invoked the idea of a "coherent national culture" that was "not wholly of the new world since it came from the old," and "not wholly given to innovation since it acknowledges certain fixed beliefs." Nor was this national sensibility "wholly a law unto itself," since Americans concede "there are principles above the state." Among the "intangibles of the American spirit" the report sought to incorporate were "the ideal of co-operation on the level of action irrespective of agreement on ultimates—which is to say, belief in the worth and meaning of the human spirit, however one may understand it." Harvard committed itself to teaching "the place of human aspirations and ideals in the total scheme of things."⁴⁷

Reading language of that sort today makes many scholars cringe. We distrust coherence, fixed beliefs, principles, ideals, ultimates, aspirations, and loose talk about "the human spirit." Yet the culture outside our universities is saturated with such talk, and many of our best students hunger for it. Meanwhile, we busy ourselves making our humanistic studies ever more particularist and historicist, and our philosophical and social scientific studies ever more bloodless and abstract. Professional pressures can be difficult to resist.

Despite the best efforts of analytic philosophers and value-free social scientists, however, and against the odds, all three of the unconventional challenges to mainstream academic culture discussed in this chapter have survived. First, interpretive or hermeneutical strands of inquiry descended from or reminiscent of Gestalt psychology persist in anthropology, history, and sociology, and even on the fringes of some first-rate departments of economics, psychology, and political science.⁴⁸ Second, Christian moral theologians, although less likely to invoke Gilson or Maritain than Curran or Küng, have created a thriving field, with contributions coming from women as well as men, and from the southern as well as the northern hemisphere. Amid the cacophony of world Christianity some believers perceive reasons for hope concerning the future of their faith, despite the gloomy prospects facing the state churches of northern Europe.⁴⁹ Third, and finally, Strauss's brand of Aristotelianism continues to attract ardent adherents uncowed by the persistent ridicule they face in scholarly circles. The appeal of the idea of eternal truth appears to have considerable staying power.⁵⁰ None of these rival discourses occupies a place in the academic mainstream; none has routed its foes. Yet all three persist, and I think they are here to stay. Why?

Strauss's most arresting and surprising ideas, I believe, appeared in a series of talks he gave for Jewish audiences in the Hillel House at the University of Chicago in the late 1950s. Consideration of those talks will lead to my conclusion. "Philosophy in its original and full sense," he contended, "is certainly incompatible with the Biblical way of life. Philosophy and the Bible are the alternatives, or the antagonists in the drama of the human soul. Each of the two antagonists claims to know or to hold the truth, the decisive truth, the truth regarding the right way of life." Although Strauss did not frame the inquiry in this way, from our perspective fifty years later I think we could add to his account of this struggle between Aristotle and the Bible two further contenders, the philosophy profession dominated by descendents of Carnap and Quine and the social and behavioral sciences pursued under the aegis of Kelvin and within William James Hall. Imagine then, in place of Strauss's battle between religion and philosophy, a four-way tussle. Yet, in Strauss's words, "there can be only one truth: hence, conflict between these claims, and necessarily conflict among thinking beings; and that means, inevitably, argument."

No independent, objective way to resolve this central disagreement exists, according to Strauss, because believers and nonbelievers alike invoke their own experience as irrefutable evidence to validate their claims. Since both sides must concede at least the possibility that the other might be right, even "the choice of philosophy," just as much as the choice of religion, "is based on faith. In other words, the quest for evident knowledge rests itself on an unevident premise. And it seems to me that this difficulty underlies all present-day philosophizing, and that it is this difficulty which is at the bottom of what in the social sciences is called the value problem: that philosophy or science, however you call it, is incapable of giving an account of its own necessity." Neither William James nor Max Weber could have put it better. Indeed, it was precisely the problem they identified at the heart of modernity, although Strauss conveniently neglected to acknowledge the perceptiveness of their analysis when addressing his audience at Hillel House.

Strauss resisted the impulse to decide such matters according to any consensus reached by the appropriate communities of inquiry, or according to consequences, as pragmatists or utilitarians might do, because he judged the consequences of both natural science and social science ambiguous at best and disastrous—"in the age of the hydrogen bomb"—at worst. He did concede, however, that this inescapable "antagonism" must be worked out "by us in action. That is to say: it seems to me that the core, the nerve, of Western intellectual history, Western spiritual history, one could almost say, is the conflict between the Biblical and the philosophic notions of the good life"—and, I would add, also between the visions offered by their competitors from twentieth-century logic and empirical social science. Acknowledging the inescapability of this conflict, Strauss admitted in a rare understatement, is "at first, a very disconcerting observation," especially within the framework of Strauss's own ambitious claims for classical rationalism. But there is nevertheless "something reassuring and comforting about it," he continued, because the "very life of Western civilization is the life between two codes, a fundamental tension."

Strauss's closing words strike a chord that should reverberate as we reflect on the status of the humanities today, on the dynamic of inclusion in the humanities, and on the consequences of that dynamic for ourselves and our students: "This comforting thought is justified only if we live that life, if we live that conflict. No one can be both a philosopher and a theologian, nor, for that matter, some possibility which transcends the conflict between philosophy and theology, or pretends to be a synthesis of both." There will be no *via media* here. "But every one of us can be and ought to be one or the other, the philosopher open to the challenge of theology or the theologian open to the challenge of philosophy."⁵¹

In the end even Strauss, among the most vociferous proponents of the idea of unchanging natural right in the twentieth century, was forced to face the stark choice imposed by the world's disenchantment. He had to concede that his choice—every individual's choice—is ultimately a leap of faith. After all the abuse Strauss had heaped on James and Weber, there is something uncanny about his own return to the existential dilemma that sparked their best writing in such essays as James's brilliant "On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings" and Weber's haunting "Politics as a Vocation." There is also something bracing, and perhaps even inspiring, about Strauss's advice to leave ourselves open to the challenges posed by the options we decide not to choose. Whether one leaps in the direction of Kelvin's measurements or Carnap's logic, or in response to Köhler's *Gestaltist* valuing or Gilson's scholasticism or Maritain's ecumenism, in the direction of Strauss's own concept of unchanging natural right, or in the direction of any other ideas or ideals, it is not possible to avoid choosing any more than James, or Weber, or Strauss himself could avoid it. Kelvin to the contrary notwithstanding, every measurement we make in the *Geisteswissenschaften* depends on qualitative judgments that we should face directly rather than trying to evade. All the chapters in this volume show how the *Geisteswissenschaften* and the range of people involved in such studies have broadened in recent decades. Were the scope of the questions we ask to shrink at the conclusion of those processes of expansion and inclusion, that result would be not only ironic but tragic. Studying the questions of value at the heart of the humanities and discursive social sciences remains worth the effort because it can help us, and because it can help our students, see more clearly and judge more perceptively the nature of the problems and the cultural rewards and the collective costs of the choices we make among the options we face. If we can persuade those we teach—and if we ourselves concede—that the unchanging truth that Ogburn tried to derive from Kelvin and that Strauss sought in Plato will elude us forever, we might enable our students to find through rigorous humanistic inquiry the resources they will need to answer for themselves James's urgent, perennial question: "What Makes a Life Significant?"⁵²

Notes

1. The quotation attributed to Kelvin actually appears on the Social Science Research Building with elegant rosettes situated where ellipses belong. The full passage reads: "When you can measure what you are speaking about and express it in numbers, you know something about it; but when you cannot measure it, when you cannot express it in numbers your knowledge of it is of a meager and unsatisfactory kind." A more accurate rendering here would therefore be "When you cannot measure . . . your knowledge is . . . meager . . . and . . . unsatisfactory." In that form, however,

the words not only lack the force they communicate when seen on the building itself, they mock the message it conveys. Thus, "When you cannot measure*your knowledge is*meager*and*unsatisfactory" comes closer to reproducing the effect Ogburn and the architects sought. Jacob Viner spoke for several dissenters on the Chicago faculty when he quipped, "And if you can measure . . . your knowledge will still be meager and unsatisfactory." For information on the Social Science Research Building I am grateful to conversations and correspondence with Professor William Novak of the University of Chicago Department of History and to current faculty members of the Committee on Social Thought, who discussed these issues with me when I visited Chicago in February 2004, to deliver the John U. Nef lecture. Further information on Ogburn's role in designing the building and the controversy surrounding its decoration is available in the Ogburn Papers at the University of Chicago; Barry Karl, *Charles E. Merriam and the Study of Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974); Mark C. Smith, *Social Science in the Crucible: The American Debate over Objectivity and Purpose, 1918–1941* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994); and Mark C. Smith, "A Tale of Two Charlies: Political Science, History, and Civic Reform," in *Historicizing Politics: Anglo-American Approaches to Political Science since 1900*, ed. Robert Adcock, Mark Bevir, and Shannon Stimson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, forthcoming).

2. Hutchins quoted in Milton Mayer, *Robert Maynard Hutchins: A Memoir*, ed. John H. Hicks (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 90.

3. On Hutchins's attempt to appoint Adler and the response of Tufts and Mead, see Irene Tufts Mead's interview with Lloyd E. Stein, reported in "Hutchins of Chicago: Philosopher-Administrator" (Ph.D. diss., University of Massachusetts, 1971), 99–101; and Mayer, *Robert Maynard Hutchins*, 120–126. For Adler's account of his run-in with Dewey, see Mortimer Adler, *Philosopher at Large* (New York: Macmillan, 1977), 49.

4. Rudolf Carnap, *Philosophy and Logical Syntax* (London: Kegan Paul, 1935), reprinted in *The American Intellectual Tradition*, vol. 2, 1865 to the Present, ed. David A. Hollinger and Charles Capper, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 253; see also Carnap, "Intellectual Biography," in *The Philosophy of Rudolf Carnap*, ed. Paul A. Schilpp (LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court, 1963), 36. For overviews, see Bruce Kuklick, *Philosophy in America: A Cultural and Intellectual History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); and his essay in this volume, "Philosophy and Inclusion in the United States, 1929–2001" (chap. 6).

5. On divisions within literature, a good place to begin is M. H. Abrams, "The Transformation of English Studies, 1930–1995," in "American Academic Culture in Transformation: Fifty Years, Four Disciplines," ed. Thomas Bender, *Daedalus* 126 (Winter 1997): 105–131.

6. A great deal has been written about the role of European émigrés in twentieth-century American thought. Since several of the contributors to this volume have done distinguished work on many of these thinkers—particularly Martin Jay on the Frankfurt School—it would be pointless for me to focus on those who have already been subjected to close scrutiny. My reasons for choosing instead the less familiar Köhler and Gilson, and the all-too-familiar Strauss, will, I hope, become apparent.

7. Perry's review of Koffka, *The Growth of the Mind: An Introduction to Child-Psychology*, trans. Robert M. Ogden (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1924), and of Köhler, *The Mentality of Apes*, trans. Ella Winter (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1925), is quoted in Michael E. Sokal, "The Gestalt Psychologists in Behaviorist America," *American Historical Review* 89 (1984): 1240–1263; the quotation is on pp. 1245–1246. More comprehensive accounts of the Gestaltists in Germany and the reception of their ideas in the United States include Mitchell G. Ash, *Gestalt Psychology in German Culture, 1890–1967: Holism and the Quest for Objectivity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Anne Harrington, *Reenchanting Science: Holism and German Science from Wilhelm II to Hitler* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Mitchell G. Ash, "Emigré Psychologists after 1933: The Cultural Coding of Scientific and Professional Practices," in *Forced Migration and Scientific Change: Emigré German-Speaking Scientists and Scholars after 1933*, ed. Mitchell G. Ash and Alfons Söllner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

1996), 117–138; and Katherine Pandora, *Rebels within the Ranks: Psychologists' Critique of Scientific Authority and Democratic Realities in New Deal America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

8. Edward Boring to Kurt Koffka, April 20, 1925, quoted in Sokal, "The Gestalt Psychologists in Behaviorist America," 1246.

9. Frederick Lund, "The Phantom of the Gestalt," *Journal of General Psychology* 2 (1929): 307–323. See also F. M. Greeg, "Materializing the Ghost of Köhler's Gestalt Psychology," *Psychological Review* 39 (1932): 257–270.

10. Arthur Liebert, writing in the *Philosophical Review* 44 (1935): 24–45, concluded a survey of recent German work in the fields of epistemology, value, and ontology, an article paying respectful attention to thinkers ranging from Heidegger to the neo-Kantians, with the following sentences: "It should be observed, however, that in these works the concept of *Gestalt* is no longer taken in a merely critical sense as a methodological or heuristic principle but is accepted as a genuine form of reality. . . . Of this development we have offered here merely a few noteworthy examples. The account might be, indeed should be, extended, especially by enumerating works from the *Gestalt* psychology, so fruitfully developed by Wolfgang Köhler and Max Wertheimer. With justice, this psychology is widely known and highly valued in the United States" (45).

11. Wolfgang Köhler, *The Place of Value in a World of Facts* (New York: Liveright, 1938), 100.

12. Edwin Boring to Leonard Carmichael, December 20, 1934, quoted in Sokal, "The Gestalt Psychologists in Behaviorist America," 1261.

13. Samuel Eliot Morison, "Harvard Celebrates, 1636–1936," *New York Times Magazine*, September 13, 1936, section 7, pp. 1, 2, 24.

14. Gilson's remarks, reported in *Time*, September 28, 1936, 22–26, are quoted in Morton Keller and Phyllis Keller, *Making Harvard Modern* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 9.

15. On the efforts made to persuade Catholic donors that Harvard was receptive to scholasticism, see Bruce Kuklick, *The Rise of American Philosophy: Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1860–1930* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 455. On anti-Catholicism, see John McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom: A History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003); and McGreevy's contribution to this volume, "Catholics, Catholicism, and the Humanities since World War II" (chap. 7).

16. Etienne Gilson, *The Unity of Philosophical Experience* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941), viii–ix. On the crucial role played by Quine in reorienting American philosophy toward a conception attuned to natural science and averse to questions of metaphysics and ethics, see Joel Isaac, "W. V. Quine and the Origins of Analytic Philosophy in the United States," *Modern Intellectual History* 2, no. 2 (2005): 205–234.

17. Gilson, *The Unity of Philosophical Experience*, 293–296, 306–307, 319–320.

18. For Strauss's withering critique of "general education" and the great books conceived as "a machine, or an industry," see his *Liberalism Ancient and Modern* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 23–25.

19. Conyers Read to John U. Nef, October 29, 1936, John U. Nef Papers, University of Chicago Regenstein Library, cited in Eugene Sheppard, "Leo Strauss and the Politics of Exile" (Ph.D. diss., University of California at Los Angeles, 2001), 111.

20. Tawney to Nef, March 17, 1942, Nef Papers, quoted in S. J. D. Green, "The Tawney–Strauss Connection: On Historicism and Values in the History of Political Ideas," *Journal of Modern History* 67 (1995): 264.

21. Nef to W. V. Morgenstern, March 21, 1939, quoted in Green, "The Tawney–Strauss Connection," 275; and Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (London: J. Murray, 1926), 285. To compound the irony, two of Strauss's other patrons were the British political theorist Ernst Barker and the socialist Harold Laski. See Gunnell, *The Descent of Political Theory*, 176.

22. Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1952), 155–156. My understanding of Strauss's ideas derives from reading his work and from a number of intel-

ligent critical commentaries, the most lucid of which, in my view, is Robert B. Pippin, "The Modern World of Leo Strauss," originally published in *Political Theory* 20 (1992): 448–472, and reprinted in *Hannah Arendt and Leo Strauss: German Emigrés and American Political Thought after World War II*, ed. Peter Graf Kielmansegg, Horst Mewes, and Elisabeth Glaser-Schmidt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 139–160. Another particularly clear account, unfortunately marred by its tendentiousness, is Thomas Pangle's introduction to Leo Strauss, *The Rebirth of Classical Rationalism: An Introduction to the Thought of Leo Strauss* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), vii–xxxviii. Most scholarly treatments of Strauss, pro and con, require readers to penetrate a fog of polemical excesses that obscures his already murky ideas.

23. Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950), 1–26.

24. I will indicate only a few of the ways in which recent scholarship challenges the interpretations of modern theorists that Strauss advanced in *Natural Right and History*. Strauss indicted all social science for its simpleminded, unreflective empiricism, a characterization offered with greater sophistication (and no less invective) by several members of the Frankfurt School. His account depended on his characterization of the thought of Max Weber, "the greatest social scientist of our century," in which he flattened Weber's complex and subtle writings concerning the relation between ethical commitment and scholarly objectivity into a simple statement of ethical neutrality. See Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, 35–80; the quotation is from p. 36. I have discussed Weber's ideas on these issues in my *Uncertain Victory: Social Democracy and Progressivism in European and American Thought, 1870–1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 331–346, and "Democracy and Disenchantment: From Weber and Dewey to Habermas and Rorty," in *The Virtues of Liberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 100–198.

Strauss conceded that his wildly unbalanced account of Locke as the theorist responsible for justifying unlimited property accumulation was shared only by the Marxist C. B. Macpherson; it is a view that few students of Locke since Peter Laslett and John Dunn in the mid-1960s have taken seriously. See Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, 202–251, and contrast his reading with two recent overviews of the literature on Locke and his significance in shaping American liberal democracy, Joshua Foa Dienstag, "Serving God and Mammon: The Lockean Sympathy in Early American Thought," *American Political Science Review* 90 (1996): 497–511, and Dienstag, "Between History and Nature: Social Contract Theory in Locke and the Founders," *Journal of Politics* 58 (1996): 985–1009; and with the recent study by Jeremy Waldron, *God, Locke, and Equality: Christian Foundations in Locke's Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

Strauss's readings of Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, and Marx, when viewed from the perspective of more thorough, less polemical, and more historically contextualized accounts, are no more convincing. See Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, 252–295, and compare the splendid survey of these issues, and the convincing demonstration of the inadequacy of Strauss's interpretations, in Pippin, "The Modern World of Leo Strauss." Multiplying such observations would be easy—and pointless. Strauss did not care what mere historians, or mere historians of philosophy or political theory, thought of his ideas, nor do his followers care now. His readings, attuned as they were to the eternal truth, allowed no room for dissent.

Given Strauss's own dogmatic self-assurance, there is something either comic or pathetic about his followers' inevitable squabbles (inevitable at least from the perspective of an intellectual historian committed to Dilthey's hermeneutics and a moderate historicism) about the proper way to understand his ideas and honor his achievements. For clear evidence of their disagreements, which demonstrate eloquently if unwittingly the folly of insisting on the possibility of providing interpretations true for all readers and all time, see the essays by his followers collected in John L. Deutsch and John A. Murley, eds., *Leo Strauss, the Straussians, and the American Regime* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999).

25. Pangle's Introduction to Strauss, *The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism*, xxxvii.

26. Samples of the critiques Strauss has attracted over several decades include the following. Strauss's fellow émigré Carl J. Friedrich, "Thomas Hobbes: Myth Builder of the Modern

State," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 3 (1938): 251–256, puzzled by Strauss's idiosyncratic reading of Hobbes, suggested that Strauss might turn out to be a "historical relativist" himself. The renowned classicist Gregory Vlastos, reviewing *On Tyranny* in the *Philosophical Review* 60 (1951): 592–594, observed that Strauss managed to misinterpret Socrates, Plato, and Xenophon, perhaps as a result of "his addiction to the strange notion that a historical understanding of a historical thinker is somehow a philosophical liability." The historian of political thought George H. Sabine, reviewing *Persecution and the Art of Writing* in *Ethics* 63 (1953): 220–222, observed that Strauss's reliance on an alleged distinction between exoteric writing for the vulgar and esoteric writing for the elite holds little attraction for historians, challenged the accuracy and coherence of Strauss's interpretation of Spinoza, and worried that Strauss's method provides a warrant for the cultivation and display of "perverse ingenuity." John Schaar and Sheldon Wolin, reviewing Herbert Storing, ed., *Essays on the Scientific Study of Politics*, a book that contains an epilogue in which Strauss advanced a stinging indictment of empirical social science, in the *American Political Science Review* 57 (1963): 125–150, detailed the problems raised by Strauss's "intemperate," "dogmatic" "polemic" and concluded by wondering what would happen if the profession of political science were to produce scholars actually forced to choose between the "two stark alternatives" Strauss laid out: "either a morally corrupt and intellectually sterile scientism or a version of political philosophy distinguished by moral fervor and an intellectual certainty that the essential nature of all political situations has been revealed long ago" (150).

Versions of most of the critiques directed against Strauss over the past fifty years are conveniently available in the relentless indictment by Shadia Drury, *The Political Ideas of Leo Strauss* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), and in capsule form in Stephen Holmes's chapter "Strauss: Truths for Philosophers Alone," in his *The Anatomy of Antiliberalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 61–87. Two collections of inconsistent quality are Deutsch and Murley, *Leo Strauss, the Straussians, and the American Regime*, and Kielmansegg et al., *Hannah Arendt and Leo Strauss*. For an example of the restraint usually shown by Strauss's critics, consider this careful judgment by Drury, *Leo Strauss and the American Right*, 49: "Whenever Strauss examines the work of a great thinker, he invariably uncovers himself. Strauss's interpretations of Plato, Aristotle, Xenophon, Alfarabi, Averroes, Maimonides, and the other greats, tells us more about Strauss than about the thinkers in question. The point that Strauss wishes to impress upon us is that there can never be any disagreements among the wise on any matters of substance. And since his own teaching accords perfectly with ancient wisdom, its truth cannot be questioned, and anyone who dares to question it must be a fool. One thing for which Strauss deserves credit is his masterful use of the old argument from authority—something is true because the divine Plato says so. This is the subtle process of intimidation that is integral to a Straussian education." Thomas Pangle responds to Drury and some of Strauss's many other critics with similar equanimity in his Introduction to *The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism*, ix–xv.

27. Strauss to Karl Löwith, August 20, 1946, quoted in Sheppard, "Leo Strauss and the Politics of Exile," 177.

28. Strauss, "Restatement," a segment of his reply to Alexandre Kojève missing from the British version of *On Tyranny*, quoted by Laurence Berns with Eva Brann, "Leo Strauss at St. John's College (Annapolis)," in Deutsch and Murley, *Leo Strauss, the Straussians, and the American Regime*, 31–32.

29. On these lectures, entitled "Philosophy and Sociology of Knowledge" and "German Nihilism," see Sheppard, "Leo Strauss and the Politics of Exile," 164–166. Strauss elaborated his critique of Dewey's naturalism in a review of Dewey's *German Philosophy and Politics* published in *Social Research* in 1942; it is reprinted in Strauss, *What Is Political Philosophy?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), 279–281. Strauss chided Dewey for failing to recognize that the United States stands on the "absolute" rather than "experimental" foundation of unchanging, God-given, "unalienable rights." Strauss's charges concerning the dangers of relativism

resembled those that some American scholars were beginning to sling at Dewey—and at each other—at about the same time. See Edward Purcell, *The Crisis of Democratic Theory: Scientific Naturalism and the Problem of Value* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1973), 115–232. Two illuminating essays that contextualize Strauss's project by locating it between the competing styles of "epic" political theory (practiced principally by other German émigrés such as Hannah Arendt), on the one hand, and the behavioral theory of American political scientists such as David Easton, on the other, are Robert Adcock, "Historical Political Science in the Behavioral Era," and Robert Adcock and Mark Bevir, "The Remaking of Political Theory," both in Adcock, Bevir, and Stimson, *Historicizing Politics*.

30. Strauss, *What Is Political Philosophy?* 12.

31. Strauss, *Liberalism Ancient and Modern*, 222–223.

32. See James H. Capshaw, *Psychologists on the March: Science, Practice and Professional Identity in America, 1929–1969* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); and Ellen Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology: Political Culture in the Age of Experts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). In his fine historical survey "Psychology," in *The Cambridge History of Science*, vol. 7, *The Modern Social Sciences*, ed. Theodore M. Porter and Dorothy Ross (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 251–274, Mitchell G. Ash concludes that the predominance of behaviorism in the middle third of the twentieth century should be understood as merely "an episode in a much larger story" and that the discipline of psychology has since become more open to diverse ideas and methodologies (274).

33. See Daniel Dennett, *Consciousness Explained* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1991), which, as a number of critics have noted, should be entitled *Consciousness Described*, because Dennett considers the attempt to explain the experience of awareness an unfortunate holdover of the old-fashioned "Cartesian theater," and the somewhat more eclectic but nevertheless physiologically (rather than "philosophically," in the preanalytic sense of the word) oriented Arthur Zeman, *Consciousness: A User's Guide* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003). Although Zeman's own explanations concentrate on neurophysiology, some of his observations recall James and Köhler at their most ambitious: "Our knowledge of the world pervades perception; we are always seeking after meaning. Try not deciphering a road sign, or erasing the face of the man in the moon. What we see resonates in the memory of what we have seen; new experience always percolates through old, leaving a hint of its flavor as it passes. We live, in this sense, in a 'remembered present'" (181).

Consider a second example. Scholars engaged in "affective forecasting," an informal categorization of social scientists who study how people respond to happiness and cope with unhappiness, aim less to understand felt experience than to predict future behavior based on the analysis of empirical data. See Jon Gertner, "The Futile Pursuit of Happiness," *New York Times Magazine*, September 7, 2003, 44–91.

Finally, some medical schools now expose physicians-in-training to courses in "narrative medicine," which are designed to equip them with a radical new diagnostic tool: listening. Some renegade psychiatrists contend that patients themselves might be the best judges of whether "talking through" trauma has greater therapeutic value than repressing memories of pain and loss. Making sense of medical conditions by understanding patients' lives and listening carefully to their stories before turning them over to the machines that will yield the measurements on which diagnoses will be based are approaches that descend directly (although probably unconsciously) from the insights of Gestalt psychology. Whether such techniques will meet the rigorous standards of insurance companies that determine medical practice by measuring costs against benefits remains to be seen.

34. In his chapter in this volume Bruce Kuklick quotes W. V. O. Quine's dismissive characterization of such a seeker as "misguided" and probably just "not a very good student." Kuklick's account of the abdication by most professional philosophers of any responsibility for addressing questions of value (an account that makes clear why John Cleese is the ideal choice as the offi-

cial voice for the outreach efforts of the American Philosophical Association) might also help to explain why courses in intellectual history, in some of which at least such issues remain central, continue to attract student interest.

35. See the concluding pages of Kuklick's chapter in this volume, and cf. David A. Hollinger, "How Wide the Circle of the 'We'? American Intellectuals and the Problem of the Ethnos since World War II," originally published in *American Historical Review* 98 (1993), and incorporated in Hollinger, *Postethnic America*, rev. ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2000). I have addressed these issues in two articles: "Why History Matters to Political Theory," in *Scientific Authority in Twentieth-Century America*, ed. Ronald Walters (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 185–204, reprinted in James T. Kloppenberg, *The Virtues of Liberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 155–178; and "Pragmatism: An Old Name for Some New Ways of Thinking?" *Journal of American History* 83 (1996): 100–138, reprinted in Morris Dickstein, ed., *The Revival of Pragmatism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 83–127. See also Richard J. Bernstein, *The Restructuring of Social and Political Theory* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), and Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), two brilliant studies that remain the best accounts of the complex dynamics that restored the rich traditions of critical theory, phenomenology, pragmatism, and hermeneutics to (at least the margins of) American academic discourse. A more recent overview of such work is Joan W. Scott and Debra Keates, eds., *Schools of Thought: Twenty-five Years of Interpretive Social Science* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

36. Jacques Maritain, *Humanism intégrale* (Paris: Aubier, 1936), 55. See also John Hellman, "The Opening to the Left in French Catholicism: The Role of the Personalists," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 34 (1973): 381–390; Mark Silk, "Notes on the Judeo-Christian Tradition in America," *American Quarterly* 36 (1984): 65–85; and James Terence Fisher, *The Catholic Counter-culture in America, 1933–1962* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 71–99.

37. Strauss, "An Introduction to Heideggerian Existentialism," in *The Rebirth of Political Rationalism*, 31. On Strauss in Paris, see Sheppard, "Leo Strauss and the Politics of Exile," 80–90.

38. On the campaign to hire Maritain, see Mayer, *Robert Maynard Hutchins*, 118–119.

39. My account of these conferences and the disputes they engendered follows the excellent account in James Gilbert, *Redeeming Culture: American Religion in an Age of Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997). All quotations are taken from pp. 62–93.

40. Strauss, "An Introduction to Heideggerian Existentialism," 31.

41. Two excellent compilations of Maritain's writings have been edited by Joseph W. Evans and Leo R. Ward, *The Social and Political Philosophy of Jacques Maritain* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), and *Challenges and Renewals* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966). The quotation is from the former volume, p. 122.

42. Maritain, *Social and Political Philosophy*, 136–140.

43. *Ibid.*, 140–141, 328–329. See also 264–265, in which Maritain emphasizes the duty of Christians to put their ideals into practice rather than remain aloof from politics. I do not want to exaggerate the progressivism of Maritain's social thought. His embrace of democracy is noteworthy only in contrast to the prevailing Catholic scholasticism of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the years following Vatican II his reputation waned among those Catholics eager for more rapid change than he was willing to countenance. See Bernard E. Doering, *Jacques Maritain and the French Catholic Intellectuals* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Notre Dame University Press, 1983).

44. Those in contemporary American politics (including some in the administration of President George W. Bush) who declare their allegiance to Strauss seem to have missed this important point, although Strauss himself emphasized it often enough. For one recent example of this curious blindness to the master's explicit warnings, see Steven Lenzner and William Kristol, "What Was Leo Strauss Up To?" *Public Interest* 153 (Fall 2003): 19–39. After acknowledging the danger of persecution that philosophers face and the consequent significance of

Strauss's reliance on esoteric writing, Lenzner and Kristol nevertheless opine that Strauss's preferred "classical writers" are "for almost all practical purposes what now are called conservatives" and conclude that "President Bush's advocacy of regime change—which avoids the pitfalls of a wishful global universalism on the one hand, and a fatalistic cultural determinism on the other—is a not altogether unworthy product of Straussian rehabilitation of the notion of regime." The distance separating such partisan polemics from Strauss's own conception of philosophical writing seems self-evident.

45. For the argument in this paragraph I am indebted to my colleague Peter Gordon, who directed my attention to the essay by Simon Rawidowicz, "On Interpretation," originally published in 1957 and reprinted in Rawidowicz, *Studies in Jewish Thought*, ed. Nahum Glatzer (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1974). As Gordon put it in an e-mail message to me dated March 3, 2004: "What makes Rawidowicz so appealing is that he cuts against [Strauss's] authoritarian notion of an incorrigible religious knowledge with the suggestion that, contra the Spinozistic phantasm of revelation, the rabbis and the greatest philosophers of the Jewish tradition understood that all revelation is interpretive, i.e., intersubjectively established. This possibility—the promising possibility of an ongoing intersubjective discussion as to what 'revelation' is, or as to what 'values' have a grip on us—is just what Strauss misses, since he seems to fear that any concession to the intersubjective and historical constitution of values is a concession to the mob, to history, and a betrayal of what he thinks values are supposed to be: incorrigible and beyond intersubjective revision, just like hard-and-fast naturalistic facts." Strauss appealed, Gordon concludes, "to a model of values that is not the *alternative* to a culture of facts, but seems to be modeled *after* the culture of facts." I return to this problem in my conclusion.

46. In other words, might William Kristol learn to sound more like William Galston?

47. *General Education in a Free Society* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1945). See the discussions of this book in Keller and Keller, *Making Harvard Modern*, and Richard Norton Smith, *The Harvard Century: The Making of a University to the Nation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986).

48. Even among champions of rational choice, change may be stirring. Following the pioneering efforts of founders such as William Riker and Mancur Olson, a later generation of rational choice theorists has begun taking its cues from political scientists such as Robert Bates. In his studies that apply rational choice models to developing countries, Bates recommends an eclectic approach that takes into account cultural meanings, social structures, and institutions. In his words, "Anyone working in other cultures knows that people's beliefs and values matter, so too do the distinctive characteristics of their institutions." See Bates, "Macropolitical Economy in the Field of Development," in *Perspectives on Positive Political Economy*, ed. J. Alt and Ken Shepsle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 87. For broader discussions of this phenomenon, see Gabriel Almond, "Political Science: The History of the Discipline," in *A New Handbook of Political Science*, ed. Robert E. Goodin and Hans-Dieter Klingemann (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), and S. M. Amadae, *Rationalizing Capitalist Democracy: The Cold War Origins of Rational Choice Liberalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003). On the more general topic of hermeneutics in the social sciences, see Bernstein, *The Restructuring of Social and Political Theory*; Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*; and Scott and Keates, *Schools of Thought*.

49. On these developments see Alister E. McGrath, *The Future of Christianity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001); Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion Is Christianity? The Gospel beyond the West* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003); and Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

50. Straussians' access to the generosity of wealthy foundations makes it difficult to portray them convincingly as marginalized outsiders, the image they cherish.

51. Strauss, "Progress or Return?" in *The Rebirth of Classical Rationalism*, 260–261, 269–270.

52. Are any of us prepared, as historians of the humanities and the discursive social sci-

ences, to make a case for what contribution these disciplines should make to American culture in the twenty-first century, or for what colleges and universities should offer their students as a liberal education? We are master unmaskers, superb debunkers, but what constructive ideas can we offer? I believe there are resources within the American tradition of pragmatism that remain attractive to us as inheritors and participants in a democratic culture descended from the classical and Judeo-Christian traditions. I have advanced that argument and discussed James's essays "On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings" and "What Makes a Life Significant?" in the introductory and concluding sections of my contribution to *Education and Democracy: Reimagining Liberal Learning in America*, ed. Robert Orrill (New York: College Board, 1997), 69–75, 100–104. James delivered several versions of these two essays in the mid-1890s; they were published in his book *Talks to Teachers on Psychology and to Students on Some of Life's Ideals* (1899; rpt. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983). Weber's speech "Politik als Beruf," first delivered and published in 1919 and translated as "Politics as a Vocation," is available in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans. and ed. Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills (1919; rpt. New York: Oxford University Press, 1948), and in a different and, from my perspective, superior translation in *Max Weber: Selections in Translation*, ed. W. G. Runciman, trans. E. Matthews (1919; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978).