Knowledge or Power
Heinrich Meier and the Case
For Political Philosophy

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by

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The Dissertation of Justin Michael Gottschalk is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

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DEDICATION

This, like everything, for Carrie
There is no doubt a truth which is but the opposite of falsehood, but there is another which stands over or grounds both of them, and which is related to the very fact of formulating, for I can say nothing without positing it as true. And even if I say "I am lying," I am saying nothing but "it is true that I am lying"—which is why truth is not the opposite of falsehood.... Or again we could say that there are two truths: one that is the opposite of falsehood, and another that bears up both the true and the false indifferently.

– Jacques-Alain Miller, “Microscopia”

God must be thought to be subject to a necessity, an intelligible necessity, which he did not make. If we deny this, if we assume that God is above intelligible necessity, or not bound by intelligible necessity, he cannot know in the strict sense, for knowledge is knowledge of the intelligible and unalterable necessity. In that case, God’s actions would be altogether arbitrary. Nothing would be impossible to him. For example, he could create other gods, and the many gods, who, of course, cannot have knowledge, would fight.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science

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This dissertation investigates Platonic political philosophy as a possible means for understanding the relationship between knowledge and power. Via a close reading of Heinrich Meier’s early work on Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss, it attempts to articulate how political philosophy in Meier’s sense works, as well as to carry out *in actu* a piece of interpretation in accord with its characteristic approach. It finds that Meier “purifies” (*kathairo*) the figures of Schmitt and Strauss into the exemplars of political theology and political philosophy, respectively; that he traces postmodern relativism back to its roots in a moral-theological view associated with revelation; that he is able in this way to sharpen the distinction between political
theology and political philosophy, and, more generally, between the orders of knowledge and of power; and that these orders, despite much obvious interpenetration, are incommensurable in view of their extreme cases. Further, it finds that political philosophy operates in the interrogative mode for questioning the assertions and commands of political and theological authorities, and the hypothetical subjunctive mode for protecting itself, and philosophy generally, from persecution at the hands of such authorities; in addition, it employs these modes to gain insight into its own possibility and necessity, or to progress in self-knowledge. Finally, it finds that political philosophy makes a characteristic turn (periagogē) toward the good, and that this is only justified if the good sticks to the real or if truth is somehow primary or if not everything is possible.
Introduction

Today almost everyone acknowledges some relationship between truth or knowledge and power, though ideas about this perceived connection vary. Broadly, we might say that opinions run the gamut from positivism (which contends that the question of who is speaking can and must be kept wholly separate from the question of the truth of what is said) to historicism or postmodern relativism (which holds that the truth of what is said is entirely dependent on the identity and status of the speaker).¹ Straussian, or Platonic, political philosophy provides a third way, one that attempts to account for the connection between truth and power without either positing a concept of truth wholly separate from the influence of power (as does positivism) or giving up entirely on the notion of truth apart from power (as does relativism). Political philosophy in this sense tries to provide a basis for connecting truth and power that is able both to acknowledge the influence of power on truth, and to preserve a distinction between them, by re-orienting philosophy away from its desire for and direct fixation on the knowledge of truth, and toward the idea of the good, allowing it to seek the true by way of the good, and trusting in the natural bond between goodness and truth. Under this approach, truth itself is no longer dependent on power (as in relativism), but the way truth is communicated is a function of who or what is powerful. Likewise, truth is no longer entirely separate from power relations (as in positivism), since its heedless

¹ This typology is derived from Strauss, NR&H, esp. Ch. 1, pp. 9-34.
dissemination is both morally harmful and based on a theoretical misunderstanding of one’s “own” good.

In this paper, we will attempt to outline the approach of political philosophy in this sense. We will do so by way of a close reading of Heinrich Meier’s early writings on the thought of Leo Strauss and Carl Schmitt. Our approach will be tailored to the content under analysis: we focus on the hermeneutic endeavor of close or attentive reading, with particular emphasis on the esoteric-exoteric distinction that plays such a crucial role in Strauss’ analyses of the tradition of political-philosophical thought.\(^2\) It is our opinion that Meier’s texts are written exoterically, and that, in general, one need not subscribe to the view according to which such writing is justified or necessary to think it wise to read an author who does subscribe to this view according to the rules and prescriptions proper to it. Thus we will read Meier as Meier reads Strauss and Schmitt – carefully, not to say charitably, and with a view to putting his argument in the best light possible. We will do this not for Meier’s sake alone, but above all for our own sake, who wish to

\(^2\) For a broad overview of Strauss’ argument, cf. “Exoteric Teaching,” pp. 63-71 in *RCPR*. For more acute and revealing glimpses, cf. Strauss, *PAW*, pgs. 60-1 & 185-6, *inter alia*. An excellent summary of “Strauss’s Rediscovery of Esotericism” is provided by Lampert in *The Cambridge Companion to Leo Strauss*, pp. 63-92. – In this vein, we will pay attention to: central sections; first and second statements; initial and final words; *hapax legomena* and words used only a few times; passages marked by unusual orthography or terms; the numbers 7, 13, 17, and their multiples; arguments *ex silentio* and *e contrario*; use of the subjunctive and interrogative moods; uncited quotations; quotation-marks that do not indicate quotations; misquotations; the use of footnotes for important arguments; and section-, paragraph-, and sentence-counts. We will also keep in mind that a monomaniacal or pedantic attention to such factors is no substitute for, but at best only a supplement to, the philosophical practice of thinking for oneself.
learn something beyond the merely *ad hominem* in our examination of these texts. We will see that Strauss and Schmitt emerge as the representative figures of political philosophy and political theology, respectively, and that Meier’s task consists in the twofold move of 1) tracing postmodern historicism back to its roots in moral modes of thought associated with revelation, and 2) sharpening the distinction between it and a political philosophy that understands the need to justify its right and its necessity and to place emphasis on the notion of the philosophic life.

We will also see that according to political philosophy this life, the life of unreserved *questioning*, necessarily faces in the political realm any number of answers that are *asserted* authoritatively, and that generate *imperative* commands that philosophy must (if it is to remain philosophy), and yet cannot be seen to (if it is to remain secure), disobey. This it does by recourse to a *hypothetical* mode of reasoning, in which the philosopher tries to generate agreement with irascible interlocutors and thereby to protect the cause of philosophy, and by which he demonstrates his distinction from these very interlocutors, who are unable or unwilling to suspend their judgment regarding what is the good or the best life for man.3 These four modes, the *interrogative*, the *assertoric*, the *imperative*, and the *hypothetical*, will recur at times in our discussion, providing a loose framework in which to understand the relationship between political philosophy and political theology, as well as the interrelation of religion, politics, and philosophy more generally.

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3 Cf. Strauss, XS, p. 122.
In the quarter-century since the appearance of Heinrich Meier’s first pathbreaking studies on Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss, many of his arguments and formulations have traversed the usual arc from revolutionary, even insolent, provocation to received wisdom. As the editor of Strauss’ Gesammelte Schriften, Meier has set much of the agenda for German- as well as English-speaking studies of the “theologico-political problem” as the “nerve-center” of “Strauss’ confrontation with revelation...”4 Likewise, he has decisively influenced the so-called “theological twist” in Schmitt studies.5 Even his most astute critics are forced to concede that “[f]or Schmitt-interpretation, there is really no turning back from Meier’s work.”6 And even those usually hostile to the entire endeavor of “Straussianism” nevertheless allow that Meier’s work “is refreshing for avoiding the proclivities of much of Straussian scholarship...”7 But when friends and enemies line up to pay their respects from such seemingly diverse perspectives to an oeuvre, one wonders

4 Yaffe, “Leo Strauss and the Theological Dimension,” p. 659. Janssens calls Meier’s edition of Strauss’ collected works “an editorial tour de force that sets the standard for similar ventures (and for which part of the credit is due to Mrs. Meier)” (“Review: Leo Strauss and the Theologico-Political Problem,” p. 75).
5 Cf., e.g., Bendersky’s review of Meier’s Hidden Dialogue and Andreas Koenen’s Der Fall Carl Schmitt, another important work (which nevertheless does not agree with Meier in many decisive points) for this trend in Schmitt-interpretation (Bendersky, p. 892 ff.).
whether the text is not communicating differently, or communicating something
different, to each of them. The question arises: Have we understood Meier? More to
the point: have we understood Meier’s Strauss and Meier’s Schmitt? What image has
arisen from Meier’s work of Strauss and Schmitt, and how does that image accord
with or diverge from Meier’s intention? For we see, even from the outside of any
encounter with Meier’s work, that here intention and history have not always lined
up. Meier himself, in his own name, voices dissatisfaction with the fact that in the
reception of his Hidden Dialogue book in Germany and Japan, attention has been
“concentrated almost exclusively on one side of the dialogue, namely on Schmitt and
political theology.”

We are thus led to reopen the problem of political theology and
political philosophy, of their essential relationship, and to ask how the respective
figures of Schmitt and Strauss emerge from the “hidden dialogue” Meier contrives,
as well as what the intention behind such a contrivance could be.

Most obviously: Meier purifies the figures of Strauss and Schmitt into avatars
of the political philosopher and the political theologian, respectively. Everything
extraneous, everything merely biographical or accidental, is sloughed off for the sake
of presenting the existential confrontation of political theology and political
philosophy in the sharpest possible terms. The two figures are painted as facing
each other in the most fundamental opposition, i.e., as two ways of life that owe their
consistency to radically different principles (unreserved questioning and obedience

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the publication of the American edition will bring greater attention to the other side,
Strauss and political philosophy.”
to authority) and that challenge each other as comprehensively as possible. In this characterization, there is implied a certain symmetry, and indeed Meier explicitly states that his aim in the essay “What is Political Theology?” is to give “a nonpolemical definition of the concept” of political theology, “which shows it to be the symmetrical counterconcept to ‘political philosophy.’” In other words, Meier’s aim is to show that with Schmitt, the concept of political theology is transformed from a term of opprobrium only used to characterize one’s opponent or enemy into a term of identification by which one can characterize one’s own position. And indeed, this is the sense in which Meier’s distinction has been received into the literature.

From this perspective, it appears that political theology and political philosophy are separated by an insuperable decision regarding the basis of one’s way of life, i.e., a decision that cannot be criticized or justified from out of either way of life, since it underlies and and forms the basis of both. However, neither political theology nor political philosophy can rest satisfied with this state of affairs: political theology, because it must attribute the believer’s “decision” to believe to an act of grace performed by God; political philosophy, because from its point of view no “blind, unproven decision can ever be a sound foundation for the philosophical

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life."\textsuperscript{12} If philosophy is to justify itself rationally as a way of life, it is forced to confront its strongest adversary, political theology. But \textit{that it seeks} to so justify itself separates it from the beginning from political theology. Thus the “symmetry” between political philosophy and political theology depends on the untenable supposition that the \textit{claims} of each are equally justified. Philosophy's elenctic path to self-justification leads right through political theology's demand for obedience to authority. Thus Meier, like Strauss before him,

\begin{quote}
not only makes the challenge posed by faith in revelation as strong as he possibly can. He also occasionally makes it stronger than it actually is, or (what amounts to the same thing) he allows the position of philosophy to appear weaker than it proves to be on closer examination.\textsuperscript{13}
\end{quote}

To the objection of a “political theoretician and engaged moralist” that “the thesis of political theology makes Carl Schmitt much more interesting, and therefore more dangerous, than he was before, and political theology in turn looks stronger in light of [Meier’s] presentation than it actually is,” Meier responds with the dual rhetorical questions:

\begin{quote}
Is it possible to make the alternative too strong? Can one ever see the opponent strongly enough and take it seriously enough if the confrontation stands in the service of self-knowledge?\textsuperscript{14}
\end{quote}

The philosophical \textit{explanation} of revelation, i.e., the attempt to understand reasonably the difference between revelation and myth, treats revelation from the outset as a \textit{boast} regarding knowledge of the whole, or as an opinion masquerading

\textsuperscript{12} \textit{TPP}, I. 21.2 (41/23).

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{TPP}, I.15.2-3 (30/16).

\textsuperscript{14} “Nachwort zur zweiten Auflage” of \textit{LCS}, 6.1 (267/180) & 6.8-9 (268/181).
as knowledge. Thus the position of political theology or of revelation is not, from the perspective of philosophy or from Meier’s perspective, “symmetrical” to the position of political philosophy. The appearance of such symmetry is, however, salutary for the sake of turning potential philosophers toward philosophy and in particular toward the task of elenctically questioning the claims of political theology. This task, in turn, serves the proper end of political philosophy, and it alone, i.e., furthering the self-knowledge of the philosopher.

For Meier, politics and theology are united by the claim or demand they make on man for obedience. It is in regard to this claim that he is able to speak of “the political and the theological alternative” to philosophy. This dyadic formula expresses at once the difference between politics and theology (i.e., Meier does not speak of the political-theological alternative), as well as their basic continuity (i.e., he similarly does not speak of the political and the theological alternatives). By placing politics and theology together, and separating them from philosophy, Meier is attempting to further Strauss’ task of supplying a theological-political treatise with “the very opposite tendency to that of seventeenth-century theological-political treatises, especially those of Hobbes and Spinoza.” Whereas those treatises “aimed at the recovery and the persistent safeguarding of the libertas philosophandi [freedom to philosophize], by means of an effective separation of politics from

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15 Cf. TPP, II.2.1 (53/31).
16 Cf. TPP, I.4.2-3 (15/5).
17 III.1.n32 (37/30).
a treatise with the “opposite tendency” would have to recombine politics and theology, separating both from philosophy and thus potentially placing the *libertas philosophandi* at risk once more. But what could justify such risk? Meier’s gives us an answer – as well as a window into his understanding of the particular time and place in which he is writing, and thus of his particular task – when he writes that,

in times of severe persecution, not the rational justification but rather the political defense of philosophy will stand in the foreground of the teaching. With respect to a well-ordered political community – whether one actual in the present one actual in the present or one possible in the future – the political defense will avail itself in turn of a rhetoric that is clearly distinct from the rhetoric that may appear appropriate to the defense *in view of a society that is in decline and to a high degree worthy of critique*. Where there are powerful enemies of or strong reservations about philosophy, it will look different from *where the appeal to philosophy has become fashionable*. Whereas the defense in the one case will exhibit the healthy political influence and the great social utility of philosophy, or will at least assert its compatibility and harmlessness, *in the other case it is more likely to emphasize the oppositions, draw out the basic distinctions, and stress the need to justify philosophy in order to protect it from being usurped, losing its contours, or being leveled*.20

Meier’s strategy of “sharpening” the distinction of political theology and political philosophy is appropriate to a time and place in which philosophy is at greater risk

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18 GS3, 16.3 (xxvii/19); italics added.
19 Cf. Meier’s epigraph to *PdF*: “Fidem a philosophia separare totius dialogi praecipuum intentum [To separate faith from philosophy is the principal intention of the dialogue as a whole]” (155). This is an unobtrusively altered repetition of Spinoza’s claim regarding his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (Ch. 14, para. 3): “So in order to establish what are the limits of individual freedom of opinion in regard to faith, and who should be seen as belonging to the faithful in spite of their diverse opinions, we must define faith and its basic principles. This I propose to do in this present chapter, at the same time *distinguishing between faith and philosophy, this being the main object of this entire treatise*” (Elwes trans., p. 183; italics added).
20 *WPP?*, 21.2-5 (32-3/107-8); italics added.
of losing its status as a distinct way of life than of being persecuted as dangerous to a well-ordered political-religious community. His task, then, consists in foregrounding the *rational justification* of the philosophical life, which on his own account can only be done “elenctically, in confrontation with its most powerful antagonists and with the most demanding alternative.”

Thus the intention of visibly treating Schmitt’s political theology arises from the particular situation of political philosophy in the present, even if the end toward which this treatment is directed is not a function of this or that particular historical circumstance. Meier’s aim of attaining to an understanding of the thing/cause itself [*die Sache selbst*] of political philosophy must make its way through what Strauss called the “second cave,” i.e., through an “unnatural situation” into which philosophy has been led by virtue of its “fight... against the tradition of revelation” and the resultant “perverse interweaving of a nomos-tradition with a philosophical tradition...”

"Thus the intention of visibly treating Schmitt’s political theology arises from the particular situation of political philosophy in the present, even if the end toward which this treatment is directed is not a function of this or that particular historical circumstance. Meier’s aim of attaining to an understanding of the thing/cause itself [*die Sache selbst*] of political philosophy must make its way through what Strauss called the “second cave,” i.e., through an “unnatural situation” into which philosophy has been led by virtue of its “fight... against the tradition of revelation” and the resultant “perverse interweaving of a nomos-tradition with a philosophical tradition...”"

Not the least relevant supposition of this tradition is the notion that “all thought is essentially conditioned by history”; thus the movement through and beyond it must at least entertain the opposite possibility, i.e., that philosophizing is an eternal possibility of man as such, or that it is possible to replace opinions regarding the whole with knowledge of the whole. By opening himself up to this possibility, Strauss claimed to have rediscovered a tradition of esoteric-exoteric writing “that largely fell into oblivion for one and a half centuries,” following the

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21 *WPP?,* 13.8 (23/101). – Note that Meier writes “antagonists” here, not “enemies.”

22 *DvLS, 5.n7* (25/59). – We will further discuss the Straussian notion of the second cave in Chapter II below.

23 *DvLS, 9.9* (30/63).
French Revolution. If the rational justification of the philosophical life proceeds along “the path of a radical critique,” it is no less true for Meier that “l’essence de la critique, c’est l’attention.” Thus the “art of careful writing” emerges not only as the characteristic mode of political-philosophical pragmatics, but (consequentially) as one of its key theoretical components. Meier understands Strauss’ “rediscovery” of this art as an integral element in his recovery or renewal of political philosophy tout court, and “[i]t is especially this achievement that marks his place in the history of philosophy.” To the extent, then, that he writes from the position of political philosophy, Meier, too, ought to be expected to write esoterically, or to incorporate Strauss’ rediscovery of esotericism into his own teaching. It is this point that has especially been missed in interpretations of Meier’s thought. For Meier’s works are aimed not only at the elenctic analysis of theologico-political claims regarding the whole, but equally (if not even more) at the protreptic education of future philosophers in philosophy, or at turning those with philosophical natures toward the philosophic life. To this end, Meier, like Strauss, makes use of “the art of careful writing” and his texts, like Strauss’, are intended to be “written speeches caused by

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24 Ibid.
26 CS, LS & BdP, 0.4.9 (18/10).
27 DvLS, 9.7 (30/63).
29 DvLS is dedicated to “Philosophis futuris in partibus remotissimis Francistanis” (7). This formulation echoes Strauss’ question, posed in regard to Alfarabi, “how can the mere fact that a single philosopher is in existence somewhere in India have the slightest influence on the happiness, or misery, of people living in the remotest parts of Frankistan who have nothing in common with him or philosophy?” (“Farabi’s Plato,” p. 378).
love.””\(^{30}\) As we have said, one does not have to subscribe to the perspective for which esoteric-exoteric writing is justified and necessary to be convinced that the best way of approaching a writer for whom this is the case is via an esoteric-exoteric reading. Meier is such a writer, and thus any serious approach to his writings must at least pose the question of esotericism. Far too many readers of Meier are content to overlook this question or to brush it off with the disdainful charge of “elitism.” Besides the fact that in speaking of “natures,” Meier (and Strauss) have in mind not only ability, but habit or interest as well,\(^{31}\) it will simply not do to indignantly reject the practice of exotericism without paying attention to what is communicated indirectly via every esoteric-exoteric writing as such.\(^{32}\)

Even Meier’s best readers have been stymied in their interpretations by their disregard of Meier’s exotericism. Besides the general satisfaction with a “symmetrical” understanding of political philosophy and political theology (which we have already discussed), specific criticisms of Meier often abstract from his own task and mode of communication. This holds not only of the initially common misunderstanding that Meier has in mind a “Catholic” reading of Schmitt when he classifies the latter as a political theologian\(^{33}\) but also of the sophisticated critique of Wolfgang Palaver, who argues against Meier that “[i]n order to understand Schmitt’s

\(^{30}\) *DvLS*, 17.8 (43/73).  
\(^{31}\) Cf. *PPHO*, II.3.8.15 (121).  
\(^{32}\) Cf. *DvLS*, 9.7 (30/63). On the importance of “indirect communication” to philosophy, cf. Strauss, “Seminar on the *Gorgias*,” p. 3 and *DvLS*, 17.6 (43/72-3), along with the citations in 17.n22 (43/73).  
\(^{33}\) Cf. “Preface to the American Edition” of *LCS*, pp. xii-xiii.
political theology, a third pole must be introduced into the juxtaposition of Jerusalem or Athens: Rome,” and that, if one compares the Biblical perspective with Athens and Rome, one obtains a surprising result: The oppositions concretely raised by Meier prove not to be oppositions, but similar positions to one another.... In the Biblical perspective it becomes apparent that both the philosophical thought of Greek antiquity as well as the political thought of Roman antiquity are marked in their deep structure by a pagan-archaic theology that is fundamentally distinct from the Biblical religion of revelation. Meier’s distinction between Political Theology and Political Philosophy collapses before this theoretical background, because with the two concepts he ultimately addresses the same issue [Sache].

According to Palaver, Schmitt’s identification with Rome as opposed to Jerusalem places him on the side of Athens, and therefore the distinction between political philosophy and political theology breaks down. But, on the one hand, this analysis relies on a reading of the Sermon on the Mount that utterly disregards what Schmitt has to say on the subject of the enemy, and, on the other, fails to see that for Meier (as for his friend Benardete), ultimately “the Athens side comprehends the Jerusalem side.” Even more, by placing Rome in between Athens and Jerusalem, he appears to disregard Meier’s intention of sharpening the distinction between political philosophy and political theology, or to treat Schmitt’s identification with

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35 “The concrete content of Biblical revelation, which is the essential self-communication of God and has its high-point in the Sermon on the Mount, where the call to love our enemies points to the nonviolent essence of God, who lets his sun rise on the evil and the good and rain on the just and unjust (Matthew 5:45), makes impossible an equation of Biblical revelation and friend-enemy distinction” (45). Compare Schmitt, BdP, p. 29/29 on inimicos and hostes.
Rome (and therefore Athens) as a philosophical point regarding Athens and Jerusalem as such. A similar objection is made by those who reject Meier’s “generalization” of Schmitt’s political theology to the position of political theology simply. Shell, whose appraisal of Meier’s work on Strauss and Schmitt is basically positive, nonetheless wonders,

whether Meier does not proceed too quickly and too far when he treats Kierkegaard (or Schmitt’s idiosyncratic version of him) as both the model of faith-based religion generally and as the fundamental alternative to philosophy, or the life devoted to the question of what is right insofar as it can be answered by unassisted human reason.\(^\text{37}\)

Likewise, Reipen challenges Meier for claiming “to be able to identify that ontological knowledge of arcana that he understands as Schmitt’s faith not only as his [i.e., Schmitt’s] private mythology but also as representative for faith in revelation simply.”\(^\text{38}\) And Howse asks:

But what does this theology have to do with the God of the Bible? Is the fundamental thrust of the Bible to underwrite a politics, or a political elite, autonomous from or superior to all moral judgment and constraint? Does the God of the Bible really leave man unguided in the content of his “decision”, of his action here and now? The least one can say is that the few select quotations from Christian biblical sources cited by Meier cannot resolve this question in Schmitt’s favor.\(^\text{39}\)

To be sure. But Meier is careful to distinguish what he calls “the decisive determinations of the cause [Sache] of political theology” or of political theology as such – i.e., authority, revelation, and obedience – from what he calls “the particular

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actualization of it advanced by Schmitt,”\(^{40}\) and to place Schmitt’s version of
historicism squarely in the latter category, as one approach among many and in no
way as *the* Biblical or faith-based approach.\(^{41}\) To criticize Meier’s “purification” of
Schmitt into the representative figure of political theology, one would have first to
separate the *cause* of political theology, with its decisive determinations of
authority, revelation, and obedience, from *Schmitt’s* political theology, with its
Epimethean view of history and historical action in terms of the blind “anticipation
of a commandment that has to be obeyed [Vorgebot].”\(^{42}\) The authors mentioned
above make no such distinction, and thereby confuse Meier’s argument before they
(more or less) indignantly reject it.

* 

The present effort attempts to gain clarity on the purified images of Strauss
(the political philosopher) and Schmitt (the political theologian) by means of a
careful reading of Meier’s early work on the two thinkers and their hidden dialogue.
Chapter I looks at Meier’s brief response to Armin Mohler’s essay “Carl Schmitt und
die ‘Konservative Revolution,’” focusing on the question of how Mohler’s typology
influenced Meier’s early thought regarding the distinction between political
philosophy and political theology. Chapter II examines Meier’s entry on Strauss in

\(^{40}\) *WiPT?*, 5.2 (7-8/80).
\(^{42}\) *LCS*, I.15.19 (39/19-20).
the *Metzler Philosophen Lexikon* in order to determine his thinking on the question of political philosophy and in particular on the question of the “unobtrusive” alterations made by political philosophers in the works of their predecessors, and aims to situate Meier (as Meier does Strauss) within this tradition. Chapter III treats Meier’s book *Carl Schmitt, Leo Strauss und “Der Begriff des Politischen,”* with particular focus on Meier’s analysis of Strauss’ rhetorical use of the conditional tense for drawing out Schmitt’s basic presuppositions and commitments. Chapter IV offers a reading of Meier’s essay “What is Political Theology?” that attempts to look beyond the notion of “symmetrical counterconcepts” and see what is at stake in Schmitt’s reversal of the Augustinian prohibition on political theology, as well as in his own, twofold, concept of political theology. Finally, Chapter V examines Meier’s Schmitt book (*Die Lehre Carl Schmitts*) in order to lay bare the conceptual underpinnings of this highly detailed and complex work, and in particular to draw attention to the respective orders of power and knowledge that frame it on the whole. This final chapter is divided into three parts, which treat the first (“The Moral Order”) and second (“Virtue is Ignorance”) halves of the first chapter, and the entirety of the third chapter (“Power vs. Knowledge”) of the book, respectively.

Throughout, I make use of a system of annotation for Meier’s works that cites chapter (or section), paragraph, and sentence number, along with the page number of the German original as well as the English translation. I also use abbreviations and omit Meier’s name, and omit the name of the central text under discussion in the chapter or section in which it is under discussion. So, for example, *TPP*, II.3.2
(54/31) would mean: Das theologische-politische Problem, 2nd part, 3rd paragraph, 2nd sentence, p. 54 in the German and p. 31 in the English; likewise, the citation III.14.13-14 (138/86-7), appearing in the chapter on Die Lehre Carl Schmitts, would mean: Die Lehre Carl Schmitts, 3rd chapter, 14th paragraph, 13th & 14th sentences, p. 138 in the German and pp. 86-87 in the English. I also provide translations of untranslated German texts; unless otherwise noted, any translations of untranslated material are my own.
Chapter I

_A Christianity without Christ?_

Meier, “Carl Schmitt und die sogennante ‘Konservative Revolution’” (1986/88)

In this early piece on Carl Schmitt, we see the beginnings of Meier’s development of the idea of a fundamental opposition between political philosophy and political theology. In the form of a critique the “Conservative Revolution,” Meier aims to show both the essentially Christian character of Schmitt’s thought and the reason for its manifest and latent similarities to postmodernism. Going back to the beginnings of the CR against the arguments of its founder (Armin Mohler), Meier establishes the basis for an understanding of postmodernism that is informed by the CR’s distinction between a Christian, linear view of time and a pagan, cyclical one. In this way, he prepares the ground for an understanding of truth that is neither oblivious of the problem of historicism nor paralyzed by it, an understanding that will be incorporated into his later thought on political philosophy’s characteristic reflection on the philosophic life and that life’s difference from a life devoted to “authority, revelation, and obedience.” In the problem, first presented here, of how to understand and classify Schmitt, we are able see _in nuce_ the stakes of the “theologico-political problem” itself.

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43 Hereafter “CR.”
44 Cf. _WiPT?, _5.2 (7-8/80).
The “So-Called” Conservative Revolution

Meier’s earliest published reflections on Carl Schmitt appear in the pages of Complexio Oppositorum, a collection of essays and discussions on Schmitt edited by the German legal scholar Helmut Quaritsch. The volume, which appeared in 1988 – the same year as the initial publication of CS, LS & BdP – contains the proceedings of the Speyer University of Administrative Science’s 28th Special Seminar, on Carl Schmitt, which took place in 1986. Meier’s contribution, which appears in his Curriculum Vitae, though not in the book itself, as “Carl Schmitt and the So-Called ‘Conservative Revolution,’” was part of a “Discussion on Armin Mohler’s Presentation,” itself entitled “Carl Schmitt and the ‘Conservative Revolution: Unsystematic Observations.” Meier’s relatively unobtrusive addition – the word “so-called” – seemingly aims to put in question the idea – or at least the nomenclature – of the “Conservative Revolution,” an idea that Mohler was and still is well-known (particularly in Germany) for conceiving and championing. From the first, then, we see a polemical thrust in Meier’s work on Schmitt that is not obvious in his work on Strauss. At the same time, we should keep in mind that the particular form of this text – presumably first an oral presentation, given in response to

48 Ibid., pp. 129-51.
49 Cf. his Die Konservative Revolution in Deutschland.
another presentation and in the context of other oral presentations and responses – differs considerably from his subsequent work on both Schmitt and Strauss. Owing to the unique status of this three-paragraph text in the constellation we are aiming to analyze, we will be forced to make more extensive use of outside sources – particularly the Mohler paper to which it responds and to Mohler’s famous book on the Conservative Revolution – in order to do it justice. This approach follows from the acknowledgement that Meier’s contribution to the “Discussion” is more directly situated, in space and time, than are his other, self-standing volumes on Strauss and Schmitt. But neither can we afford to ignore the particular features of this text as a text, at least to the extent these features become perceptible and relevant.

Just as Meier’s title – “Carl Schmitt and the so-called ‘Conservative Revolution’” seems to cast doubt on the conceptual integrity of Mohler’s project, the text’s first sentence appears to issue a direct challenge: “The ‘Conservative Revolution’ is a construction.”50 We do not yet know how formidable Meier means this challenge to be, but the quotation marks around “Conservative Revolution,” as well as the addition of the adjective “so-called” to the title of Mohler’s paper, signal at least some potential uncertainty as to the validity or usefulness of this so-called “construction.”51 From the beginning, Meier emphasizes the fact that there are several possible versions of the “Conservative Revolution,” and that:

50 I.1 (154); italics added.
51 Note that Mohler, too, uses quotation marks around the term “Konservative Revolution,” at least in the title and at the beginning of his essay. He drops them when he begins referring to the CR simply (starting on page 129), and two pages
How much it actually captures depends on which determinations enter into it, which positions are to constitute “belonging” to the “Conservative Revolution.”52

Meier is again responding directly to Mohler’s paper, which had argued for a “paradigm shift” in understandings of the CR.53 “If one encounters a new model that can bring more to light and is more suitable for understanding,” writes Mohler, “one should substitute it for the old.”54 And indeed, the “new model” of the CR is obviously intended to amend or even supplant the model presented by Mohler in his famous book.55 Meier, however, seems to question the validity of this “new model,” for after briefly entertaining – and summarily dismissing – two versions of the “paradigm shift” that Mohler proposes, Meier returns to the original “hard core” of Mohler’s conceptual construction, the distinction between cyclical and linear time, or, as Mohler’s book puts it, between Kugel und Linie (Sphere or Globe and Line).56

The New Model of the CR: 2 Versions

later reintroduces the unabbreviated term without the quotation marks. By contrast, Meier retains the quotation marks throughout.

52 I.2 (154).
55 Mohler, Die Konservative Revolution in Deutschland.
56 Mohler, ibid., Section 40, “Linie und Kugel,” [Line and Orb], pp. 112-6. For the sake of clarity, we will retain the terms “cyclic,” “return” and “recurrence,” while noting that Mohler’s preference for the term “Kugel” would have to be adopted in any discussion of the of the terms and concepts undergirding the CR themselves. Our concern is much more the determination of Schmitt’s attitude toward and placement with regard to the CR, and it makes no difference for that concern whether the counterconcept of “line” is “cycle,” “sphere,” or “orb.” Mohler seems to tacitly acknowledge this by avoiding the use of the term “Kugel” in his paper on Schmitt.
The first, perhaps over-broad understanding of the CR that Meier considers groups thinkers based solely on their shared support for or opposition to liberalism. If, he says,

we suppose the “Struggle with Weimar, Geneva, Versailles” or the fundamental opposition to liberalism to be the center of the “Conservative Revolution,” it is not difficult to discern a common front that extends from Oswald Spengler to the most deranged volkisch sectarians; yet we have some difficulty naming in one breath Carl Schmitt with Othmar Spann and Lanz von Liebenfels.57

The problem with this version of the CR is that it “captures much more than Armin Mohler wanted to capture when he introduced the term into the scholarly literature. Hitler and Rosenberg would thus be about as ascribable as prominent figures of the ‘Conservative Revolution.’”58 Needless to say, it would be a problem for the CR if it could not meaningfully be distinguished from Nazism (and indeed Mohler seems to be at some pains to do just that – even if in so doing he is also forced to acknowledge some broad commonalities).59 And indeed, for Meier, this first “construction” of the CR is too broad to supply a “concept of distinction.”60

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57 I.3 (154). – Spann (1878-1950) was a radical Austrian anti-liberal scholar and influential professor who spent the bulk of his professional career at the University of Vienna and in various administrative roles in the Austrian government. Liebenfels (1874-1954), also an Austrian, began his adult life as a Cisterian monk, but is best remembered for the racist theories of eugenics spelled out in his book Theozooology (1904) and his magazine Ostara (1905). Both thinkers are associated with far-right German conservatism, though neither was embraced by the Nazis during their reign.

58 I.4 (154).

59 Cf. Mohler, ibid, pgs. 133 & 151.

60 We will discuss this formula in more detail in our treatment of LCS; for now, the interested reader may wish to cf. LCS IV.39.3 (260/173) with Leo Strauss, NR&H, p. 82.
But contrary to Meier’s apparent view, Mohler, too, would resist placing Schmitt and Othmar Spann in the same camp, and indeed, explicitly differentiates them according to the “new model” of the CR. In Mohler’s account, the anti-liberal Spann is to be set alongside “all universalistic philosophies... from the Platonic-Aristotelian system to Christian scholasticism, up to the secularized forms of Christianity combined by Hegel...”61 in the camp of what Mohler refers to as “intelligibility.”62 On the other hand, Schmitt belongs among those Mohler calls “paradoxical” thinkers.63 This distinction forms a crucial part of the basis for the “new model” of the CR, as well as the foundation for Mohler’s argument that it can be meaningfully linked to (above all, French) postmodernism. Meier, however, finds it unsatisfactory to extend “the line of the “Conservative Revolution”... up to the postmodernists of our day,” since in that version of the CR, “the concept captures no more, or not much more” than the previous version.64 This reads as a direct critique of Mohler’s alleged “paradigm shift,” which in its attempt to link up the CR with contemporary postmodernism, draws a new dividing-line between “intelligibility and paradoxical thought.” This line basically traces “the age-old conflict between universalism (rightly universal realism) and nominalism,” though Mohler is not fond of the latter term, which according to him “triggers associations that are negatively charged and steers into dead ends,” instead preferring to discuss “the international

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63 Mohler, ibid.
64 I.6 (154).
(in particular the French) debate on ‘Nietzsche and his Followers,’ thus on postmodernism,” which according to him “produces more useful concepts.” Meier’s rejection of this new understanding of the CR, which views postmodernism as its “illegitimate, somewhat wildly-raised child,” marshals as evidence against this view the allegation that the aforementioned “postmodernists of our day,”

would appear to the majority of authors associated by Armin Mohler with the “Conservative Revolution” as an extreme variety of liberalism, if not as the “personification of decadence”...

The fact that postmodernism would “appear” to be different from the CR to the “majority” of the members of the CR is advanced as an argument that the CR actually is different from postmodernism, or, the possibility that the “majority of authors associated by Armin Mohler with the ‘Conservative Revolution’” might be wrong is tacitly excluded. But Mohler’s argument is that postmodernism is an illegitimate child of the CR, and the mark of an illegitimate child is that it bears a less-than-complete (and perhaps a less-than-recognizable) resemblance to its “legitimate” parents.

65 Mohler, ibid., p. 137. Note here again Mohler’s use of quotation marks, this time with the hedge “so-called”; these, too, will soon disappear (two pages later, p. 139).
66 1.6 (154).
67 It suffices perhaps to note here that Meier’s very usage of the term “appearance” (and possibly “majority” as well) serves as a kind of subtle rhetorical critique of postmodernism itself. Since for the postmodernist appearance is reality, the use of the term “appearance” would be superfluous. “Appearance” is useful only where it can be meaningfully contrasted with reality or truth. Compare in this connection Nietzsche, “How the ‘True World’ Finally Became a Fable,” section 6 (in Twilight of the Idols), & The Will to Power, sections 566-8, inter alia, with Benardete, Socrates’ Second Sailing, p. 159.
The CR’s Hard Core: Sphere and Line

Having, then, more-or-less dismissed these two “lines” by which the Conservative Revolution might be demarcated, Meier undertakes a “return to what Armin Mohler originally understood as the hard core of his construction.”\(^68\) By means of such a return, he wants to win for the concept of the Conservative Revolution the “polemical sharpness” it had at its inception, when Mohler had “opposed it in sharpest contrast” to its evident alternative. The language of “sharpness,” which makes its first appearance here, will continue to play an important role, particularly in Meier’s own attempt to articulate the conceptual opposition between political theology and political philosophy (as well as in his understanding of Strauss’ attempt to distinguish philosophy and revelation).\(^69\)

Likewise, the notion that a “return” to the origin or inception of an idea can provide access to such conceptual sharpening will recur in Meier’s distinction between “history” and “intention.”\(^70\) Finally, the notion of the “core” of an oeuvre (aside from its appearance in Mohler’s paper as “core-exactitude”\(^71\)) reappears numerous times in key passages of Meier’s “Dialogue,” and is indeed a key term in his attack on those

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\(^68\) I.7 (154).

\(^69\) Cf. LCS, IV.39.7 (261/173) & III.4.8 with n.7 (115/70), and TPP, I.7.1 (16/6) & I.20.1 (40/22); for the ultimate motivation behind this project of “sharpening,” for both Meier and Strauss, cf. TPP, I.13.4 (27-8/14) & GS3, 17.5 (xxvii/19) with WPP?, 21.5 (32-3/107-8).

\(^70\) Most conspicuously, of course, in DvLS, which is subtitled, “On the History of Philosophy and the Intention of the Philosopher.” But cf. also GS3, 1.6 (vii) & 12.3 (xxiii/15-6).

\(^71\) Mohler, ibid., Section IV.2, entitled “Core-Exactitude” pp. 142-3; the term is taken over from the art critic Fritz Schmalenbach.
who find in Schmitt’s oeuvre only a disjointed and opportunistic “occasionalism.”

It seems appropriate to seek in these early usages some purchase on the later meaning of the terms introduced here, still more in that they raise what will become perhaps Meier’s central concern in the interpretation of Schmitt, viz., “the question of the significance of Christianity for Carl Schmitt’s oeuvre.”

Meier casts the question in terms of the “hard core” of Mohler’s original understanding of the Conservative Revolution, by which the concept obtained its polemical sharpness, claiming that,

Mr. Mohler had defined the “Conservative Revolution” by cyclical thinking, by the notion of the eternal recurrence, and opposed it in sharpest contrast to the linear picture of history and understanding of time of Christianity as well as of secular conceptions of progress.

This “hard core” had served to distinguish members of the CR from partisans of Enlightenment “progress,” on the one hand, and Christians on the other. In this way, the two latter camps, believers and unbelievers alike, were understood in fundamental opposition to the current of thought running through and forming the basis of the CR. That basis had been laid, above all, by Nietzsche, who in recovering the pagan world’s concept of cyclical time or “eternal recurrence” was supposed to

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72 Cf., e.g., CS, LS & BdP, I.5.1 (23/15), VI.2.20 (74/65) & VII.4.16 (96/87), and LCS, I.1.7 (13/1), III.5 ff. (116/71 ff.), III.12.18 (133/83) & IV.29.11 (241/159). The *locus classicus* of the “occasionalist” approach is Karl Löwith’s “Der okkasionelle Dezisionismus von Carl Schmitt,” citied in CS, LS & BdP n. 6 (15/7-8); for a contemporary version of this approach, see Gopal Balakrishnan’s *The Enemy: An Intellectual Portrait of Carl Schmitt.*

73 II.7 (155), quoting Schmitt, “Three Possibilities,” (928/168): “We know that the Enlightenment and the positivist faith in progress was only secularized Judaism and Christianity, and that it obtained its ‘eschata’ from them.”

74 I.8 (154).
have finally escaped the Christian worldview and its hegemony on thought in the West.\textsuperscript{75} Meier credits “the Jünger brothers and... Karl Löwith’s Nietzsche books” as the decisive influences on Mohler’s “distinction [of] cyclical versus linear and eternal recurrence versus Christianity,”\textsuperscript{76} and asserts, it would seem definitively, that Mohler “never replaced” this determination of the CR “by any other criterion of distinction,”\textsuperscript{77} i.e., neither that of “intelligibility” versus “paradoxical thought,” nor what Mohler elsewhere (using the words of Martin Greiffenhagen) calls the “core notion of the CR,” the “thought of creating conditions whose preservation is worthwhile.”\textsuperscript{78}

The first part\textsuperscript{79} of Meier’s reply to Mohler, then, consists of entertaining two possible – though in the end spurious – definitions of the CR (which is itself asserted to be a “construction”), followed by a return to the original definition of the concept in terms of the distinction between two opposed orientations toward time and history: \textit{the cyclical and the linear}. In this way, Meier silently rejects Mohler’s attempt to re-cast the CR in terms of one or another version of the “paradigm shift” to the “new model” and insists on the original conception of the CR, even against its

\textsuperscript{75} Cf. Mohler, ibid., III.1 (135-6) and his \textit{Die Konservative Revolution in Deutschland}, sections 39-41, pp. 106-22; e.g., “...the two thousand years of Christianity that lie behind us have formed our language. Thus in all words the meanings of the linear world-picture have been included, even where these words may have originally meant something different” (115).

\textsuperscript{76} I.8 (154).

\textsuperscript{77} III.1 (155-6).

\textsuperscript{78} Mohler, ibid., 130. – Greiffenhagen (1928-2004) was a German political scientist specializing in matters of German conservatism, political culture, and the influence of totalitarian ideologies on children.

\textsuperscript{79} I.1-I.9 (154).
very originator. But exactly how, and, more to the point, why did Mohler want to go about such a re-casting? In grasping this, and specifically in grasping the ways he tries to fit Carl Schmitt into the “new model” of the CR, we will gain access, not only into the intended target of Meier’s polemic in the text under consideration, but to the originary impetus for Meier’s interpretation of Schmitt as political theologian.

The New Model: Disorder and Order

Mohler makes a distinction between the form and the content of his “new model” of the CR. In terms of “form,” he gives two definitions that seem to be mutually supportive:

On one hand, the CR can be defined as the attempt of the disappointed Left and the disappointed Right to create something new (and third) out of the leftist and rightest impulses.80

This is the first formal determination of the CR: the desire for something new and different on the part of both the Left and the Right, whose expectations or hopes had been somehow disappointed. The second formal determination we have already mentioned:

On the other, it can be said what distinguished this “revolutionary conservatism” from old-style conservatism... “This thought of creating conditions whose preservation is worthwhile, is in fact the core notion of the ‘Conservative Revolution.’”81

80 Mohler, ibid., p. 130.
81 Mohler, ibid. – Note that it is not a matter of returning to an ideal or preferable past condition, but of creating such a condition, whether or not it ever existed before.
Though the reference to “what distinguishes” the CR from old-style conservatism might lead us to mistake this determination for one of content, we are disabused of this error by Mohler himself, who writes that “[b]oth of the above (I.3.) definitions of the CR,” i.e., the ones we have given,

may indeed be regarded as acceptable. But they are only acceptable, because they do not go beyond the general and formal; the substantive [Inhaltliche] remains largely excluded.  

The formal determinations of Mohler’s “new model” of the CR, then, are that it is 1) the attempt of the disappointed Left and the disappointed Right to create something new (and third) out of the leftist and rightest impulses, and 2) the thought of creating conditions whose preservation is worthwhile. The two determinations are mutually supportive in the sense that the second could be said to temper the revolutionary character of the first, while the first mobilizes the inertia inherent in the second: not novelty or change as such is to be sought (or avoided), but only that novelty or change that issues in conditions worth preserving. The CR, Mohler says, “is as far from mere preservation as from the haste of producing the perpetually novel.”  

The content of the new model is a little more complex. Following Mohler’s indication, it can be found in sections I.2 and III.1-8. In section I.2, the “Organizational” subsection of the section “Preliminaries,” Mohler calls the CR an

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82 Mohler, ibid., p. 135.  
83 Mohler, ibid., p. 130.  
84 Mohler, ibid., p. 149.
“intellectual [geistige] current.” He uses this phrase, he says, “in order to avoid the word ‘worldview’ [Weltanschauung].” Later, he argues that the new “currents” of postmodernism do “not occur this time as a world-picture [Weltbild], with the whole weight and claims of such.” Instead, they appear

as a reflection on language, on our relation to reality – thus as a theory of knowledge, but in a very broad and very unconventional sense.

Neither the CR nor postmodernism is supposed to co to sight as a comprehensive image or view of the world; both are described instead as “currents.” Mohler’s aversion to the idea of a “worldview” goes back at least to his book on the CR. There, he writes that,

“Worldview” is not the same as philosophy. While philosophy is a part of the oldest spiritual encasement of the West, we understand worldview as a result of the disintegration of this encasement... Thought takes on the features of tools: it seems only to serve the elaboration of guiding principles fixed from the start. And these in turn seem only to be there in order to achieve certain aims determined by reality...

A “current,” on the other hand, precedes the act of form-giving or construal of an image or picture. Mohler’s book begins with the claim that,

The basic work on National Socialism has not yet been written and cannot yet be written... We lack the necessary distance from it. This fact must be presumed in undertaking to draw a picture of that current of political thought which we have attempted to identify with names like “Conservative Revolution” or “German Movement.”

85 Mohler, ibid., p. 130.
86 Mohler, ibid.
87 Mohler, ibid., p. 137.
88 Mohler, Die Konservative Revolution in Deutschland, pp. 24-25.
89 Mohler, ibid., p. 11; italics added.
A current, like a movement, and as opposed to an image or picture, seems somehow indeterminate, extra- or perhaps pre-conceptual. It is certainly not marked by the presupposition of unity or coherence, even if it is able to find expression in formulas or slogans. Our first determination of the content of the CR is then that of a current. The double-meaning (in English) of this term is felicitous: one gets “swept up” in a current as something powerful but inchoate; and it is just this power and inchoateness that makes such a movement “current” – we lack distance from it.

A “worldview” is for Mohler the failed attempt to derive order from the flux of a current. It fails because, despairing of giving a complete picture of reality, it instead substitutes a part-image, blown up to the dimensions of the whole. Worldviews are essentially partial or partisan. Mohler quotes the classicist Gerhard Nebel:

“The worldview... undertakes to raise a part to the whole, something created and secondary to the final cause, and claims in this partiality to include the absolute truth as a fixed possession. Through this binding to any particular domain, such as economy or race, it lives strongly in negation, in its otherness from other worldviews, which just the same set other sub-regions on the throne of the absolute.”

“It belongs to the essence of worldview,” says Mohler, “that it occur in the majority, and its efforts aim at making this majority into a singularity.” Thus even if in Mohler’s conception of a worldview, “thinking, feeling, willing can no longer neatly be separated,” the resultant indeterminacy is a kind of falsification of the originary indeterminacy underlying the current. One might say that the worldview imposes a

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90 Mohler, ibid., pp. 25-6.
91 Mohler, ibid., p. 26.
92 Mohler, ibid., p. 25.
kind of ersatz “unorderedness” onto the order it by its nature must presuppose, which is in turn a kind of willfully intelligible construal of a more fundamental “disorder” or chaos.

In determining the content of the CR in its relation to that of postmodernism, Mohler proceeds along just these lines. Through the fundamental conceptual opposition of “nominalism and... universal realism,” he traces the development after World War II of “paradoxical thought” (associated with nominalism) and “intelligibility” (associated with universal realism):

Up till then, the representatives of paradoxical thought had at best enjoyed a benign condescension from the side of the universalists. One was a poor fellow who failed to see the “whole”; one was rebuked with “nominalism” for having become lost in merely “atomistic-individualistic” ideas. But mere talk of the “whole” (it was indeed by no means to be had) began to die out after the immediate postwar years.93

Concomitant with this decline or “languor of integral thought,” new currents of postmodern paradoxicalism grew in importance and visibility.94 But as the concept of the “whole” lost its conceptual power, it was not replaced by its old philosophical concept of the “part.” With the whole having been discredited, the part began to appear, if not as a microcosmic whole unto itself, then as something different from both a part and a whole.

With the formula “the whole and its parts,” the dichotomy of order and unorderedness [Unordnung] naturally also falls away. It is replaced by another dichotomy, that of “disorder and order,” [English

94 On the relationship of paradoxical to postmodern thought, cf. Mohler, ibid., p. 140.
in original –[G] which must be translated as something like “the non-ordered [das Nichtgeordnete] and order” (chaos and order).\textsuperscript{95}

The essential difference between these two dichotomies, i.e., “order and unorderedness” on the one hand, and “disorder and order” on the other, lies in the relative priority given to the terms. For the former, order is the basic condition, and unorderedness appears as a lack of order or as a failure to achieve the (teleologically predetermined) ordered state. For the latter, however, disorder is the primary term, with order appearing merely as a state, likely very rare and “unnatural,” of the originary disorderedness.\textsuperscript{96} Rather than disorder being seen in the light of order, order itself was now seen in the light of the disordered; according to the “French reporter” (for L’Express) at the scene of the “famous Stanford symposium” that constituted “one of the pilot events of postmodernism”: “‘Disorder’ (the non-ordered) was here no longer understood, as is usual, as the lack of order, but rather as the source and precondition of order.”\textsuperscript{97} This shift, from primary order to primary disorder (or from worldview to current), is the central determination of the content of Mohler’s new model of the CR, as well as the crucial link connecting it with its “illegitimate offspring,” postmodernism. All the other characteristics and relations attributed to it follow from this one.

Placing Schmitt: The New Model

\textsuperscript{95} Mohler, ibid., p. 139.
\textsuperscript{96} Nietzsche is the essential source of this perspective in modern and postmodern philosophy. Cf., e.g., The Will To Power, sections 515-7 and 634-6. (pgs. 278-280 & 337-340).
\textsuperscript{97} Mohler, ibid., p. 139; cf. n.22, citing L’Express, Paris, 10.16.1981.
On this basis, the new model places Schmitt, and the rest of the CR, on the side of the paradoxical thinkers or nominalists, the side of primary disorder. The “authentic father” of the CR “is undoubtedly” Nietzsche. Here Mohler sticks to his conceptual guns: in his famous book, Nietzsche had likewise been considered the father of the CR, though there it was on grounds of his concept of the eternal recurrence, rather than his prioritization of disorder over order. But Mohler realizes that it is problematic to place Nietzsche in the same camp as Schmitt: it even seems likely that a major impetus for the “paradigm shift” to the new model of the CR was in fact motivated by this difficulty. Though he claims that he does “not remember a clear statement from CS as to whether he is correctly classified under the initials CR,” and indicates that Schmitt’s “judgment was colored throughout by a positive bias: finally, it was one of the first books after the defeat that he treated with respect,” he nevertheless frankly acknowledges that,

For all his positive partiality for the book, CS could not reconcile himself to the recurrence model... The authentic cause of CS’s hostility was that he could not unite the recurrence with his concept of the political. A world standing in the sign of the recurrence was for him a world without politics, thus a dying world.

Not only would it be easier to reconcile Schmitt’s thought with the paradoxical current of postmodernism, but such a reclassification would reflect an act of deference, on Mohler’s part, to his teacher, whose resistance to the cyclical model

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98 Mohler, ibid., p. 131.
99 Mohler, ibid., p. 136. Compare Mohler’s two statements on Schmitt’s relation to Nietzsche in ibid., p. 131: “In one account of his spiritual fathers, addressed to Przywara, he clearly classifies ‘the braggart of untimeliness, Nietzsche,’ among the negative figures”; and, “As unequivocal as this sounds... CS comes to conclusions that return him to the vicinity of Nietzsche’s ‘followers.’”
would prove after all to have been justified. And, since the “CR” had from the beginning been a “paradoxical word-formation,” the move to the new model would itself appear to be a return of sorts to the fundamental idea encoded in the original formula. Thus the CR, as a “reflection on language,” would at the same time be a kind of self-reflection, albeit one that, owing to its very paradoxicality, would not degenerate into the “previously unheard of levels of reality-evacuation” characteristic of Neo-Kantianism, which “ultimately allow thinking to confront only itself”.

Let us clarify the significance of Mohler’s paradigm shift through the use of an example that is “more than an example”: the relative positions of Schmitt, Hegel, and Nietzsche in the two versions of the CR. In the new model, whose principle of distinction is that of nominalism (primary disorder) versus universal realism (primary order), Schmitt stands with Nietzsche (and the CR) on the side of the nominalists, while Hegel stands on the side of the realists:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Model of CR</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nominalism</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schmitt &amp; Nietzsche &amp; Hegel</td>
</tr>
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100 Mohler, ibid., p. 130.
We can say this with some confidence because, as we have seen, Mohler explicitly lists Hegel’s among the “universalistic philosophies” that take their cue from “the saying of Parmenides: ‘What one can say and think must also be; that is, being is, not-being is not.’”\(^{103}\) He also cites the American Germanist David E. Wellbery, who, with refreshing candor, analyses the attack of Jürgen Habermas against French postmodernism, embodied by Foucault, Serres and Lyotard... In his opinion, Habermas takes after the historical-philosophical discourse of Kant, Herder, Condorcet and above all Hegel. On the postmodern side, the inspirations are, according to him, Marx, Freud, Saussure and Heidegger: “But only in the case of Nietzsche can it be said that a certain creative reading of his works is constitutive of the postmodern style of thought.”\(^{104}\)

Mohler’s emphasis on the term “creative reading” might seem to cast doubt on the notion that Nietzsche himself would side with the postmodernists against the universalistic tradition represented by Hegel and Habermas. This doubt would perhaps be supplemented by the fact that Mohler, in referring to the “international (in particular the French) debate on ‘Nietzsche and his Followers,’ thus on postmodernism” does not explicitly endorse the view of their leader held by those followers, but instead claims only that it “produces more useful concepts” than would the use of the term “nominalism” (which “triggers associations that are negatively charged”). Nonetheless, the debate is about Nietzsche and his followers, not his followers apart from him, and so there is some evidence to conclude that

\(^{103}\) Mohler, “Carl Schmitt und die ‘Konservative Revolution,’” pp. 137-8. Mohler seems to rely on the translation of John Burnet, which in English runs: “It needs must be that what can be thought and spoken of is; for it is possible for it to be, and it is not possible for what is nothing to be.” Cf. Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*, p. 198.\(^{104}\) Quoted in Mohler, “Carl Schmitt und die ‘Konservative Revolution,’” p. 140; italics Mohler’s.
Mohler places Nietzsche in the same camp as his postmodern progeny. That one’s offspring is illegitimate, after all, does not mean it is not one’s offspring (there is at least a sense in which it is).

To plant Schmitt firmly in the “nominalist” camp is the main aim of the final section of Mohler’s essay, entitled “Conservative Revolution and Concrete Order.” We have already seen that the core substantive determination of the new model of the CR is the supposition of primary disorder rather than primary order. Mohler’s portrait of Schmitt following the latter’s first “caesura” focuses on his 1934 text On the Three Types of Juristic Thought. Even without entering deeply into Mohler’s argument, we can still see clearly that Schmitt’s thought is implicitly opposed to that of Habermas, who, in turn, had been contrasted with the postmodernists as a contemporary exemplar of the universal realist approach. The key point in Mohler’s characterization of Habermas is quoted from Wellbery:

“Habermas takes as starting point the notion of an ideal communication situation that serves as a criterion for evaluating concrete instances of discourse and as a Archimedean point from which to construct a social theory... It would be difficult to imagine a philosophical thesis more opposed to the views of the French writers listed above than this one... All postmodern philosophers (if they can still be called that), repudiate the dream of an innocent language.”

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105 Mohler, ibid., pp. 147-51.
106 On Mohler’s use of the term “caesura” to describe the two quasi-breaks in Schmitt’s oeuvre, occurring roughly around 1933 and 1945, cf. Section II.3, pp. 132-3, with Schmitt’s own allusion to the aforementioned dates on p. 132. Mohler employs the term “caesuras” [Zäsuren] as an alternative to “breaks” [Brüche], where the former is meant to designate “a resumption of the same thread on a different level, in a new situation.” The term, then, serves to differentiate his interpretation of Schmitt from “occasionalist” readings (cf. n.72 above).
107 Quoted in Mohler, “Carl Schmitt und die ‘Konservative Revolution,’” p. 141; italics Mohler’s.
Setting up a kind of “dialogue among absents” of his own, Mohler enlists the “unimpeachable witness”

108 Ernst Wolfgang Böckenförde to characterize Schmitt’s 1934 text.109 Böckenförde describes Schmitt’s notion of “concrete-order thinking” as fundamentally oriented by a criticism of the notion of law as a kind of “innocent language”:

“Concrete-order thinking views law as based not on an abstract Ought of normative legislations or postulates, or on arbitrary decisions, but rather in the concrete vital orders and super-personal institutions of historical-social reality that are antecedent to the dualistic rending of Is and Ought.”

110

Such orders and institutions, because they are antecedent to the splitting-off of the factual and the normative that is characteristic of all positivistic legal theories (normativist as well as decisionist), represent an analogue to the disorder or chaos which, according to the postmodern perspective, precedes every ordering. (That they are called “orders” presents no difficulty when we recall the “paradoxical” nature of both postmodern and Conservative-Revolutionary language – the most obvious example being of course that of the term “CR” itself). At the same time, they testify to the postmodern repudiation of the “dream of an innocent language,” since “institutional legal thought” has

108 Mohler, ibid., p. 149.
109 Böckenförde (1930- ) is one of Germany’s leading legal thinkers and a former judge on its Constitutional Court. He is especially well-known among political and legal theoreticians for the so-called “Böckenförde Dilemma,” which holds that liberal societies are compelled to base themselves on moral foundations which they themselves cannot provide.
110 Quoted in Mohler, ibid. p. 150; italics Mohler’s.
“brought to consciousness the fact that the law is not the sole normative social ordering power, but only one of many (in addition to custom, tradition, ethics, religion) and the “social reality,” which both opposes the law and is ordered by it, is in no way merely factual, norm- and order-devoid reality, but one previously – already ‘before’ and without law – influenced and shaped by norms...”

Thus via his interpretation of Schmitt’s 1934 text, On the Three Types of Juristic Thought, – which he considers to be “at least as important as “The Concept of the Political or the Romanticism book” – Mohler associates Schmitt with both of the fundamental aspects of postmodernism that he has described: the conceptual privileging of chaos over order and the repudiation of the dream of an innocent language. Schmitt, Nietzsche, the CR, and postmodernism are all placed on the side of “nominalism” or “paradoxical thought,” while Habermas, Hegel, Kant, Aristotle, Plato and Parmenides are placed on the side of “universal realism” or “intelligibility.” In this way, the new model of the CR presents itself as a “concept of distinction.”

Placing Schmitt: The (New Understanding of the) Old Model

As we have seen ,in the “old model” proposed in Mohler’s book, the criterion of inclusion or exclusion in the CR is a thinker’s orientation toward time. We have also seen that, according to Meier, Mohler has “never replaced” this criterion by any other concept of distinction. However, according to this criterion, the placement of Schmitt into the camp of the CR is highly problematic: Schmitt “could not reconcile

111 Quoted in Mohler, ibid., p. 151; italics Mohler’s.
himself to the recurrence model.” And indeed, the bulk of Meier’s contribution in this discussion is spent laying out examples of Schmitt’s commitment to a linear – Christian – orientation toward time. Meier begins the next part of his text by asking,

What position did Carl Schmitt take on the – according to Mohler’s view at the time – central question, cycle or line, recurrence or Christianity?112

For Meier (as well as for Mohler), the answer is relatively uncontroversial: Schmitt displayed his partisanship for the linear, Christian, historical picture, “not only in letters and conversations, but in a place accessible to everyone.”113 This “place,” or rather these places, are, in the examples adduced by Meier, respectively: a Festschrift for Ernst Jünger, which was edited by Mohler himself; the pages of the journal *Universitas*, in the context of a reply to Karl Löwith’s book “Meaning in History”; and the third edition of *The Concept of the Political*, by means of a treatment of the “‘magnificent dispute’ between Ernst Jünger and Paul Adams” in which,

“Ernst Jünger held the view of the agonal principle (‘man is not designed for peace’) whereas Paul Adams saw the meaning of war in the establishment of dominion, order, and peace…”114

Meier concludes his discussion with the succinct and definitive declaration that,

In the quarrel between Ernst Jünger and Paul Adams, Carl Schmitt takes sides with the Catholic commentator and against the Conservative Revolutionary Party.115

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112 II.1 (154).
113 II.2 (154), cf. II.3-11 & III.3-9 (154-6).
114 III.9 (156).
115 III.10 (156).
If there is still any question regarding Schmitt’s proper classification in terms of the “old model” of the CR, it can be dispelled by means of the central passage of Meier’s text, in which he quotes Schmitt’s essay “Three Possibilities for a Christian View of History” (a quotation to which he will return in subsequent treatments of the question of Schmitt’s political theology):

Christianity is in its essential kernel [Wesenkern] no morality and no doctrine, no penitential sermon and no religion in the sense of comparative religious studies, but a historical event, of infinite, non-appropriable, unoccupiable uniqueness. It is the Incarnation in the Virgin. The Christian credo speaks of historical occurrences.116

Compare this with Mohler’s own characterization of the Christian-linear orientation toward time:

By setting an “irrevocable hour,” Christianity interrupted the circuit. The Crucifixion of Christ117 happens in a wholly definite, unrepeatable point in the course of time that is possible in no other place. What came before it will not recur. What comes after it is different from everything before. But Christianity sets yet another such point. That is the end of all time, the Last Judgment. And all that happens, happens for the Christian on a line that stretches between these two points and is not reversible – is, in the words of the convert Weininger, “unidirectional.”118

Regarding the question of whether for Schmitt himself this orientation holds in every case, we can say that, in Meier’s view at least, it does:

116 II.1 (154).
117 I.e., not the Incarnation. The difference between the two events as origins for the Christian “timeline” is potentially very great. One might consider the centrality of the Virgin Mary to the latter, as well as the emphasis on death rather than birth inherent in the former. The crucial thing for our purposes now is that each represents a singular event from which history as such can be said to begin, or that irrits into the perpetual motion of the cyclical pagan world-picture.
118 Mohler, Die Konservative Revolution in Deutschland, p. 112; italics added. Cf. LCS II.20.34-5 (94/57).
the sentence “Jesus is the Christ” designates for Schmitt the pivot and turning point, the “axis of world history.”

We will come back to the question raised by this claim. For now we are trying to establish the appropriate classification of Schmitt, Hegel and Nietzsche based on the “old model” of the CR. Bearing in mind the Schmittian texts cited by Meier, as well as the admissions by Mohler of Schmitt’s hostility toward the cyclical- or recurrence-model of time (as well as toward Nietzsche himself), we are doubtless justified in placing Schmitt on the side of linear-Christian thought.

What about Hegel and Nietzsche? We have already seen that for Mohler Nietzsche is “undoubtedly the authentic father of the CR,” and that indeed the entire “cyclical” model of time proposed as a criterion for inclusion derives from Nietzsche’s concept of eternal recurrence. The “gap” between the “formal” and “substantive” determinations of the CR was supposed to be closed,

by calling upon the “return,” influenced above all by Nietzsche and Friedrich Georg Jünger, to clarify the contents of the CR. The confrontation of the cyclic notion of time with the linear view of time (and all secularized formations of Christianity, up to Marxism) was to explain the CR as a resistance to the annihilation of the world by abstractions (utopias), a resistance to the annihilation of the fulfilled moment through the displacement of everything important and essential into the distant future... Nietzsche had made it self-evident

119 II.13 (155). This formulation – “den Dreh- und Wendepunkt, die ‘Achse der Weltgeschichte’” – seems to be a combination of Nietzsche’s famous judgment on Socrates, “the one turning point and vortex of so-called world history” (in The Birth of Tragedy, Section 15, p. 96), and Jaspers’ loose quotation of Hegel, “Die Erscheinung des Gottessohnes ist die Achse der Weltgeschichte,” (in Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte, p. 19). Cf. Hegel, Philosophie der Weltgeschichte, p. 388: “Gott wird so als Geist erkannt, indem er als der Dreieinige gewußt wird. Dieses neue Princip ist die Angel, um welche sich die Weltgeschichte dreht.” – But what does Meier mean by combining these two sources, which seem to stand on opposite sides of the “fundamental distinction” between cycle (Nietzsche) and line (Hegel)?
to the author that the notion of the return was not a paralyzing, but a fruitful and stimulating thought (or better: a stimulating image).\(^{120}\)

If Nietzsche is not to be placed on the side of cyclical thought, no one is. But what about Hegel? In *The Conservative Revolution in Germany*, Mohler cites approvingly Karl Löwith’s 1941 book *From Hegel to Nietzsche*, calling it “from a purely philosophical-historical standpoint, probably the most clear-sighted presentation of the interregnum” (i.e., of the period between the collapse of the Christian world-picture and the ascendancy of the new world-picture of recurrence).\(^{121}\) There, Hegel is called “the last great representative of linear thought.” Mohler agrees with Löwith’s conception that the “upheaval in thought” characteristic of the interregnum can be thought of as a confrontation between Hegel... and Nietzsche: “Hegel and Nietzsche are the two end points between which the historical course of the German spirit in the 19th century moves.”\(^{122}\)

This classification of Hegel is confirmed by the fact that Mohler suggests “Marx and Kierkegaard” as “aside from Dostoevsky, probably the only two serious contenders for the key position that Löwith assigns Hegel in this unfolding,” since, on the one hand, Kierkegaard (as well as Dostoevsky) is a Christian – if an unorthodox and “paradoxical” one – and, on the other, Marxism represents a “secularized form of Christianity.” Hegel too, as Mohler still says in the later text, represents such a (secularized) form.

\(^{120}\) Mohler, “Carl Schmitt und die ’Konservative Revolution,’” p. 136.
\(^{121}\) Cf. Mohler, *Die Konservative Revolution in Deutschland*, pp. 116-22.
\(^{122}\) Mohler, ibid., p. 118.
We have no trouble, then, laying out the following classificatory scheme for the “new understanding” of the old model of the CR:123

(New Understanding of) Old Model of the CR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Christian-linear</th>
<th>Cyclical-recurrent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schmitt</td>
<td>Nietzsche</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&amp;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hegel</td>
<td></td>
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And this is indeed the thrust of Meier’s text. Having summarily – if not explicitly – rejected the new model of the CR, Meier returns to the origins of the concept, in order to examine its soundness as a principle of distinction, and in particular as a means by which to classify Schmitt. But we have already seen that Mohler’s reformulation of the concept had to do, in part, with the difficulty of assimilating Schmitt to the cyclical orientation toward time characteristic of CR-style thinkers, above all Nietzsche. We are justified in wondering about two things: 1) On what grounds does Meier reject the new model of the CR? and 2) What is his view with regard to the “new version” of the old model that appears in light of his argument that Schmitt is essentially a Christian-linear thinker (i.e., the one in Chart 2 that places Schmitt and Hegel on the same side)? If he is content with it, then the believer

\footnote{123 Since this “new understanding” of the old model is really just the old model seen in the light of Schmitt’s and Meier’s critiques, or of the acceptance of these critiques as definitive, we will continue to label it simply the “Old Model of the CR,”; hopefully this will forestall any confusion between it and the “New Model of the CR.” However, we must keep in mind that according to the “Old Model” simply, Schmitt would have to be placed on the side of Nietzsche, which placement he explicitly rejected.}
Schmitt and the unbeliever Hegel would be essentially closer together than the two unbelieving philosophers Hegel and Nietzsche. Schmitt’s religiosity would amount to little more than a “style” of thought and would not essentially separate him from philosophy as such. As we will see, Meier will not be satisfied with this conclusion.

Two Questions for Meier

Since Meier does not here undertake a systematic critique of Mohler’s argument regarding the connection between Schmitt’s “concrete-order thinking” and the paradoxical nominalism of the postmoderns, we cannot yet answer the first question with any conviction.\(^{124}\) The beginnings of an answer emerge from the juxtaposition of Meier’s claim that “the sentence ‘Jesus is the Christ’ designates for Schmitt the pivot and turning point, the ‘axis of world history’” and Mohler’s citation of the claim (made by the philosopher-scientist Edgar Marin) that because of the “paradigm shift” toward postmodernity, “[n]ot even in heaven is there any longer an eternal order of things.”\(^{125}\) But the core of the matter only comes out, however darkly and preliminarily, in the disagreement sparked by Mohler’s claim that “there

\(^{124}\) But cf. *CS, LS & BdP*, p.70 (73-4/64-5). – What in the end unites Schmitt with the postmoderns (and separates both from philosophy) for Meier is not their “paradoxicalism,” but rather their shared orientation toward the “absolute moment” in history, in which the truth is revealed to man by means outside his control, as the dispensation of fate, and after which the determinations “authority, revelation, and obedience” hold decisive sway over him (cf. *PdF*, 10.12-15, p. 170).

\(^{125}\) Mohler, “Carl Schmitt and the Conservative Revolution,” p. 139.
seemed to be for CS a Christianity without Christ.” Meier responds by insisting, in very strong terms, on the importance for Schmitt of the sentence “Jesus is the Christ”:

How, in view of his lifelong insistence on the significance of this sentence as the substance of Christian faith; how, in view of the importance that Schmitt attributed to the task of providing evidence that even for Thomas Hobbes the statement that “Jesus is the Christ” is an indispensable core of the political edifice of thought; how, in view of these facts one can speak of a “Christianity without Christ” in Carl Schmitt, I cannot understand.

Mohler’s view, then, which posits for Schmitt a pre-existent chaos and a contentless formal faith, is challenged by Meier seemingly on grounds of a single phrase, a single claim, which he holds for Schmitt to be “the pivot and turning point, the 'axis of world history.'” If this revealed truth holds, then neither is Schmitt's faith contentless nor does he presuppose anything other than the preexistence of the divine order of creator and creature. The reduction of the content of faith in revelation to a single sentence, or a small set of sentences, does absolutely nothing to change its essential character. To quote Leo Strauss’ interpretation of Kierkegaard, which will become essential for Meier’s respective interpretation of Schmitt:

Whereas the Reformation stands and falls by the absolute truth of the Bible, i.e., of a book which is subject to various kinds of human investigations, Kierkegaard took away this last link between the realm of actual knowledge and the realm of faith. He says (Philosophical Fragments 87): for faith it would have been more than enough if the generation contemporary with Jesus had left nothing behind than [sic] these words: “We have believed that in such and such a year God

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126 Mohler, ibid., p. 146.
127 II.14 (155).
128 Cf. LCS, III.12.18 (133/83).
appeared among us in the humble figure of a servant, that he lived and taught in our community, and finally died."^{129}

As to the second question, regarding Meier’s view of the new understanding of the old model (≠ the new model), we are likewise at something of a loss if we restrict ourselves solely to the text under consideration. In fact, Meier’s elaboration of the similarities, and the essential difference, between Schmitt and Hegel, can be said to be the nerve of his interpretation of Schmitt as a “political theologian.” It begins with the conclusion he draws in this text, based on Schmitt’s opposition, in the name of the political, to Jünger’s agonal view of war. In a formulation that he will modify and sharpen over the course of his engagement with Schmitt’s thought,^{130} Meier concludes this first published foray with the claim that:

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^{129} Strauss, “Reason and Revelation,” p. 178 (cf. also p. 161); Strauss’ translation differs from that given in the critical edition of Howard & Edna Hong. Among other differences, Strauss (or Meier) omits the word “except,” as in “had not left anything behind except these words…” (cf. Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments / Johannes Climacus, p. 104; italics added). At any rate, Meier provides no indication of this omission. Supposing, for a moment, that the omission is deliberate, the Straussian version would have had to use the word “other,” as in “other than,” rather than the word “except.” Does the substitution and subsequent deletion of “other” for “except” signify in a very indirect way the philosophic view regarding the Schmittean concept of the exception? One would of course be forced to presume that “except” is the natural translation of the Kierkegaardian phrase here, but even without this presumption, i.e., even without the involvement of the concept “exception,” Strauss’ (or Meier’s) omission can only be the omission of “other.” Cf. Strauss, NR&H, pp. 161-2 with Plato, Sophist, 257b-59c. – What could it mean that Heidegger, in introducing the basic concepts of Aristotelian philosophy, says much the same thing as Kierkegaard? Viz.: “Regarding the personality of a philosopher, our only interest is that he was born at a certain time, that he worked, and that he died,” (in Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy, p. 4).

^{130} In CS, LS & BdP, VI.2.16 (73/64) and cf. LCS, II.11.18-43 (67-70/38-40)
In the quarrel between Ernst Jünger and Paul Adams, Carl Schmitt takes sides with the Catholic commentator and against the Conservative Revolutionary Party.\textsuperscript{131}

It can be said, in a purely anticipatory way, that Schmitt’s characterization of Hegel as the “Heraclitean Epimetheus”\textsuperscript{132} in opposition to his self-characterization as the “Christian Epimetheus” – the latter in an essay that he published “several months after the appearance of The Conservative Revolution in Germany”\textsuperscript{133} – serves in the first place to awaken us to the awareness to the “gulf that separates Schmitt from Hegel.”\textsuperscript{134} This gulf, as we will see, is in Meier’s view weightier and more fundamental than that of either version of the CR: it is the \textit{nihil} between philosophy and the authority of “the theological and the political alternative.”

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Meier’s first published account of Schmitt’s thought comes in the form of a commentary on Armin Mohler’s concept of the “Conservative Revolution.” In it, 

\textsuperscript{131} III.10 (156).
\textsuperscript{132} Cf. \textit{LCS}, II.20.36 with n.87 (94/57).
\textsuperscript{133} II.10 (155).
\textsuperscript{134} \textit{LCS}, I.n42 (33/15). The key passages regarding the distinction of Schmitt and Hegel may be found in \textit{LCS}, I.12.7 with nn.40-2 (32-3/15), II.20.32-6 (94/57), II.n107 (105/65) and III.n99 (156-7/99-100); cf. also II.11-2 (66-75/37-43) and \textit{CS}, \textit{LS} & \textit{BdP VI.2} (71-5/62-6). On one hand, it derives from Schmitt’s doubt regarding “whether there can be an ‘enemy’ in Hegel at all” (Letter to Kojève, 12.14.55, quoted in \textit{LCS}, I.n40, 33/15); on the other, from Hegel’s “remaining in contemplation,” (\textit{LCS}, I.n42, 33/16) or his philosophic suspension of the question of the right or the best life or of whether human life can be guided by human thought alone. For Schmitt, as Mohler tell us, “every sentence is an answer…” (“Carl Schmitt and the Conservative Revolution,” p. 145); cf. in this connection \textit{LCS}, I.13.9 (34/16), I.15.16-9 (38-9/19-20) and I.16.10-3 (40/21).
Meier grapples with the problem of placing Schmitt with regard to the CR by going back to the CR’s conceptual origins in the division between “Linie und Kugel.” He agrees with Mohler’s claim that Schmitt may be associated with more recent exponents of postmodernity, but disagrees with the grounds on which this association is possible. Not (as Mohler thinks) by virtue of their shared orientation toward “paradoxicalism,” but rather by the common conception of a “linear” view of history, one marked by “absolute moments” before and after which the conditions of human thought and knowledge are fundamentally different, can a line be drawn from Schmitt to postmodernity. As Meier writes elsewhere, “if postmodernity were to gain its orientation in the future” from the model of “Abraham’s faithful obedience as the paradigm of the event,”

it would have left behind playful variety and advanced into a serious zone. It would find itself actually in conflict with the basic modern positions. However it would therefore not move on “postmodern” terrain. A life that finds the one thing needful in faithful obedience is neither pre- nor postmodern, but an “eternal possibility.” The attempt to answer the question of the order of human things on the basis of revelation was moreover from the very beginning a demanding and not-to-be-overlooked alternative to the project of modernity. Postmodernity would have finally found a secure grip and reached solid ground. But it would not find itself solely in conflict with modern philosophy. It would stand in opposition to all philosophy.135

By drawing out the ultimate consequences of both Schmitt’s thought and postmodern thought, Meier enables us to see what they have in common, and in what ways they diverge from, and even oppose, philosophy as such. By doing so in the form of a return to the origins of the Conservative Revolutionary movement,

135 “Moderne,” 7.4-12 (12-3).
even against the explicit intention of its founder, he at once signals the twofold character of political philosophy as, on the one hand, oriented toward political stability (the “founding” was done well) and, on the other, beholden to no authority in its quest for truth (the “founder” is himself mistaken regarding the nature of the founding). It is this twofold orientation toward the good and the true, or, more precisely, to the true by way of the good, that enables political philosophy to distinguish itself from both modern, unpolaritical philosophy (which “fails to recognize the necessity of the political defense as well as the rational foundation of its own way of life”) and political theology (which “denies the possibility of such a foundation from the very beginning”).

\[\text{136 LCS, II.12.31-32 (74/42). On this basis, Meier concludes that both “unpolaritical philosophy” and “political theology” are “based on faith” (LCS, II.12.33, p. 74/42).}\]
Chapter II

“With what ease dost thou, O Strauss, invent Platonic speeches.”


We have just seen how Meier locates the essential contiguity of Schmitt’s thought and postmodernism by uncovering their shared presupposition of a linear or “evental” concept of time. In the next chapter, we will explore this connection from the side of Straussian political philosophy. Unlike both Schmitt and postmodernism, Strauss sought to recover a pre- or extra-liberal horizon of thought by going back to the philosophical thought of classical antiquity, contrary to the “premise, sanctioned by powerful prejudice, that a return to pre-modern philosophy is impossible.”

Overturning this prejudice entails reconsidering the “evental” notion of time and bringing out the alternative view of both philosophy and revelation as “eternal possibilities” of man as such. Such a “nonhistoricist understanding of historicism” is possible only by beginning with the most widespread opinion or prejudice of the modern age, i.e., with historicism itself. By turning his attention toward the “second cave” of historicism, Strauss is able to pursue a non-historicist intention, viz. the recovery of the natural horizon in which philosophy is both possible and necessary. Within this horizon, not only does the

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139 Strauss, NR&H, p. 33.
The historicist-theological approach gain its fullest context and most thorough formulation, but the political-philosophical approach also gains its decisive insight – regarding the rightness of its (exoteric) subordination to the laws of the political community – that allows or compels it to become political philosophy. The reorientation from the true (natural philosophy or science) to the good (political philosophy), or, more precisely, to understanding the true in the horizon of the good, is thus the fruit of Strauss’ own Platonic-Socratic “turn to speeches,” or to “a propaedeutic which the Greeks did not need, precisely that of book learning.”

* Meier’s entry on Leo Strauss in the Metzler Philosophen Lexikon is his first published work concerned exclusively with interpreting Strauss. As such, it tempts us to look for the genesis of thought-movements that develop into more sustained arguments in his later works. This temptation risks leading us into giving a purely “genetic” account of Meier’s thought: a “historical” as opposed to an “eidetic” approach that focuses on “what a man says,” rather than “what he can consistently

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141 This term translates the German word “Denkbewegung”; for details on the importance of this term in Meier, cf. DvLS as a whole.
say.” Nonetheless, willful ignorance regarding the growth and development of Meier’s thoughts is almost no more justified than lack of concern with their truth-claims. So long as the “purely historical” investigation remains subordinate to the reasoned judgment of truth-claims, it can indeed shed light on the author’s intention and thereby provide access to the matter at issue. Therefore we will read this first account by Meier of Strauss (not only, but also) as a first account, alert for germs of ideas that will subsequently develop more fully, even as we remember that, on the philosophic level, what matters incomparably more than an idea’s provenance or origin is whether or not it is true.

The form of the Strauss entry in the MPL changes in each of its three editions, though its sentence-count (76) remains the same in each. In the first (1989) and second (1995) editions, the book’s formatting remains largely unchanged. In the second edition, however, Meier merges the fourth and fifth paragraphs of the first edition into a single paragraph. Thus the text of the first edition has eight paragraphs, that of the second, seven. The formatting of the third edition entails much narrower margins, and two columns of text per page. Meier now divides the text into ten paragraphs, splitting the second edition’s biographical third paragraph between its 8th and 9th sentences, and breaking its formerly two-paragraph fourth paragraph into three (not at the original break, between the 12th and 13th sentences, but rather, between the 14th and 15th and again between the 17th and 18th

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142 Cicero, Tusculan Disputations, V.10; cf. LCS, II.n40 (72/41), WPP?, n.19 (23/101), and Benardete, Plato’s “Laws,” pp. 1-53.
143 Strauss himself calls such “purely historical and merely preparatory or ancillary work” “legitimate and even indispensible from every point of view” (NR&H, p. 57).
sentences). Meier does not seem to be indicating the importance of the central (fourth) paragraph (as it is only central in the second edition) but the conscious change of an eight-paragraph text into a seven-paragraph text, and then, with the changed formatting, into a ten-paragraph text, seems to indicate the importance of these “philosophic” numbers to Meier’s understanding of Strauss. Whether this understanding changes between 1989 and 1995 in the sense of a more “moral” (eight-paragraph) interpretation to a more philosophical (seven- and ten-paragraph interpretation), or whether in that period Meier becomes more conscious of or more well-disposed toward the “art of careful writing”\textsuperscript{144} or, again, whether this change is of no significance whatever, will have to be evaluated in the light of an interpretation of Meier’s work as a whole.

A word on the entry’s structured content. Beginning in the 5\textsuperscript{th} paragraph (in the 1\textsuperscript{st} edition), Meier devotes each of the final four paragraphs to a particular subsection of Strauss’ oeuvre. He moves from a set of texts taking up the “causes célèbres” of political philosophy (Paragraph 5), to one expressing Strauss’ treatment of the “theologico-political problem” (Paragraph 6), to a discussion of Strauss’ recovery of “the art of careful writing” (Paragraph 7), which finally segues into a discussion of late texts that attempt “to understand Socrates” (Paragraph 8). From this overt structure, we may get the impression that Meier himself is conducting a primarily “historical” overview of Strauss’ oeuvre. However, this impression is belied by the inner connection between the issues mentioned, which Meier is at

\textsuperscript{144} Cf. 7.1-8.3 (764).
pains to point out. Not the development or alteration of Strauss’ thought, but the object or aim it pursues, is the central concern of Meier’s text. This can be seen most simply by the fact that the paragraphs do not proceed in chronological order, despite the appearance of the latest texts at the end. Indeed, Meier’s very first words here are “a year before his death,” suggesting that Meier’s strategy, like Strauss’, involves proceeding from what is nearest or “first for us” (i.e., from the particular historical-cultural or hermeneutic situation in which we find ourselves) toward what is “first by nature” (i.e., toward the unchanging ideas or intentions – if there are any – that give Strauss’ work its formal unity).  

The Beginning of Philosophy

Meier begins his entry on Strauss with a discussion of Strauss’ final work, conceived “a year before his death” and published posthumously: the collection entitled Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy. The title,” says Meier, “is likely to provoke wonder.” We should recall that, according to Plato, wonder (θάυμα) is the beginning of philosophy. According to Meier, then, the title of Strauss’ final work is philosophic, in that it causes us to wonder how the (twelve of fifteen) essays in it that do not explicitly deal with Plato can “be understood as Platonic political

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145 For a discussion of this difference, cf. Strauss, PPH (162/142 ff.).
146 1.1 (760).
147 1.2 (760).
philosophy." Elsewhere, Meier indicates the centrality of questioning to the Platonic-Socratic turn to political philosophy: here he poses three questions, presumably provoked by our “wonder” at Strauss’ philosophic title. Following the question regarding how the work can be understood as “Platonic political philosophy,” Meier asks: “What does Strauss refer to when he characterizes himself as a Platonist? How is the position of political philosophy to be determined in regard to that of Plato?”

His provisional answer to these questions follows almost immediately. Citing one of Strauss’ important essays on Alfarabi, written “in the middle of his life, in the garb of an interpretation,” Meier enacts the very same philosophic movement of thought he seeks to describe. We quote the passage in full in order to lay bare its self-referential quality and essentially philosophic, and not historical, cast. Meier writes, quoting Strauss (who is in turn discussing Alfarabi):

“His [i.e., Alfarabi’s -JG] attitude to the historical Plato” – thus one can express what he [i.e., Strauss -JG] communicates about himself therein – “is comparable to the attitude of Plato himself to the historical Socrates, and to the attitude of the Platonic Socrates himself to, let us say, historical Egypt: 'With what ease dost thou, o Strauss, invent Platonic speeches’ (Phaedrus 275b 3-4). By this very fact he reveals himself as a true Platonist. For Platonists are not concerned with the historical (accidental) truth, since they are exclusively interested in the philosophic (essential) truth. Only because public speech demands a mixture of seriousness and playfulness, can a true Platonist present

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149 1.5 (760); Meier returns to this question in WPP, 19.9 (31/107) and n. 30.
150 In LCS, II.12.n44 (75/43).
151 1.6-7 (760).
153 1.8 (760), italics added; cf. TPP, II.1.1 (51/29).
the serious teaching, the philosophic teaching, in a historical, and hence playful, garb” (*Fārābī’s Plato*, 1945).^{154}

The key passage is: “With what ease dost thou, o Strauss, invent Platonic speeches.” In Strauss’ essay, the passage reads: “With what ease dost thou, o Fārābī, invent Platonic speeches.”^{155} Strauss cites – and Meier too gives the citation – *Phaedrus* 275b 3-4. There, one reads Phaedrus’ words: “With what ease dost thou, o Socrates, invent speeches of Egypt or any country you please.”^{156} Unobtrusively, Strauss substitutes Farabi for Socrates just as Meier substitutes Strauss for Farabi. The justification seems to be that inasmuch as philosophy is concerned with the “philosophic (essential) truth” rather than the “historical (accidental) truth,” the names of philosophers matter not at all compared with their “speeches.” To anticipate, Meier ends this text with another quotation of Strauss, this one referring to the “necessarily anonymous truth.”^{157} If the truth is indeed “necessarily anonymous,” and if philosophy is concerned with the essential truth, then the lack of historical accuracy attendant upon substituting one name for another in a quotation pales in importance compared with the light this substitution potentially sheds on the issue of philosophizing. If philosophy is indeed right to weigh “essential truth”

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^{154} 1.9-12 (760-1).


^{156} An alternative translation would be: “Socrates, you easily make up stories [*λογοὺς ποιεῖς*] of Egypt or any country you wish” (Fowler trans., p. 565). This line appears in the context of a discussion of the relative weaknesses of writing compared to speech, perhaps foremost among which is writing’s inability to speak differently to different readers. The turn toward esoteric writing is – according to Strauss – the primary means by which Plato aimed to remedy this deficiency.

^{157} He will again quote the aforementioned passage, in *DvLS*, 16.7 (42/72) and *TPP*, II.16.23 (70/43).
more heavily than “historical (accidental) truth,” then it would be overly fastidious to insist on accuracy in quotation over against “essentially true” inaccuracies. Such inaccuracies would be akin to the “noble lies” told to the citizens of the Republic’s “city in speech” Kallipolis: justified with reference to the common good. In Why Political Philosophy?, Meier gives his most comprehensive account of this kind of activity, tying it to the very idea of Platonic philosophy: “the Platonic attempt to articulate the whole by means of the ‘What is?’ question occurs in the horizon of the question ‘What good is it?’” For the moment, it suffices to note the indication Meier gives here, in his first published work exclusively regarding Leo Strauss, who philosophizes “almost entirely” via “historical interpretations and commentaries”: Meier seems to include himself in the “we” of the philosophers; he writes about Strauss, not merely as an interpreter, disciple, or historian, but as a “friend.”

Meier closes his introduction to Strauss’ thought with a seeming recuperation of the historical. Strauss made use of “historical interpretations and commentaries” for much the same reason as did Farabi: “Just as the concrete situation of the medieval philosopher was largely determined by revealed religions’ claim to rule... so Strauss began and went his philosophic way at a time when historicism claimed to have brought philosophy to its end, if not to have made it a

159 WPP?, 19.5 (30/106).
160 2.1 (761).
thing [Sache] of the past.” The phrase “thing of the past” is later taken up and contrasted with the notion of political philosophy as having “received a present and ultimately become a thing [Sache] of the future.” Besides the use of Sache, which is a key term for Meier, we note also the “redirection” of the philosophical enterprise from the past to the future. “It is not pain-loving or self-forgetting antiquarianism,” begins Leo Strauss’ City and Man, “nor self-forgetting and intoxicating romanticism which induces us to turn with passionate interest, with unqualified willingness to learn, toward the political thought of classical antiquity.” In other words, owing to the doxastic prevalence of historicism, the philosopher would have first “to become a good historian if he wanted to become a true philosopher.” Being a “true philosopher” means, among other things, engaging in a “politics of friendship,” by which the philosopher leaves open the possibility of – and unobtrusively marks the path to – philosophy for future generations of potential philosophers. Thus Strauss’ “historicizing” is a specific reaction to a specific historical situation: he historicizes in order to become able to philosophize.

The Cave beneath the Cave

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162 2.3 (761).
163 In the “Vorwort” to DvLS 1.2 (9); reprised in “How Strauss Became Strauss,” 1.2 (363). Also cf. WLS?, 1.3 (192) for a different, though related usage.
165 DvLS, 3.7 (22/57).
166 Cf., e.g., WPP?, 22.3-4 (33/108) for an account of Aristotle’s “politics of friendship.”
Meier proceeds to give a more thorough characterization of the situation created by historicism for philosophy, a characterization he will revisit in many of his discussions of Strauss’ political philosophy. He has already made the critique of “provinces of culture”\textsuperscript{167} and “domains of human thought and action”\textsuperscript{168} central to his treatment of the “absentee dialogue” between Strauss and Schmitt in \textit{Carl Schmitt, Leo Strauss und “Der Begriff des Politischen.”}\textsuperscript{169} Here, he takes up the issue strictly from the side of political philosophy, though it should be kept in mind that this critique stands at the point of the “greatest proximity” between it and political theology, i.e., their shared “critique of the exclusion of what is most important,”\textsuperscript{170} even if the gulf separating them remains “insuperable.”\textsuperscript{171} The critique of historicism that Meier now levels is then twofold: on one hand, it is a critique of “modern culture-philosophy,” which “declared itself one ‘domain’ among others, one ‘province of culture’ next to art, religion, politics, economics, etc.”\textsuperscript{172} On this level,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{167} 4.7 (762); cf. \textit{CS, LS & BdP}, I.3.4 & I.3.7 (20/12), I.5.3 (23/15), & III.1.8 (38/31), as well as \textit{WLS?}, 13.3 (199).
  \item \textsuperscript{168} 4.7 (762); cf. \textit{CS, LS & BdP}, I.3.4 & I.3.7 (20/12), I.3.10 & I.3.12 (21/13), II.3.19-20 (30/22), II.4.1 (31/24), III.1.7 (38/31), VI.5.3 (79/70), & VII.2.26 (87/79).
  \item \textsuperscript{169} Meier borrows the phrase from Strauss’ “Notes on the Concept of the Political,” (102/94), who in turn mentions as its source Paul Natorp. Cf. Harald Bluhm, \textit{Die Ordnung der Ordnung}: “Above all, Strauss attacks the philosophy of Neo-Kantianism, wherein Paul Natorp is explicitly mentioned with the expression ‘culture-provinces of spirit...’” (95). Meier cites the Bluhm text in the 3\textsuperscript{rd} edition of the \textit{MPL} (710).
  \item \textsuperscript{170} \textit{CS, LS & BdP}, IV.3.7 (50/42).
  \item \textsuperscript{171} \textit{CS, LS & BdP}, IV.3.12 (51/43).
  \item \textsuperscript{172} 4.7 (762); we are perhaps justified in wondering whether “economics” is not here actually a \textit{finis ultimus}, or the true name for the spirit of bourgeois avoidance of the most important question, the question of the right or the best life. It is, after all, in the economic “domain” that “private matters” seem to become all-encompassing. Cf. \textit{CS, LS & BdP}, I.5.4 (23/15); also cf. Strauss, “Notes,” (118/111) for a Schmittian \textit{finis ultimus}.
\end{itemize}
political philosophy and political theology are united in opposition to liberalism, and in particular, to the liberal tendency to avoid or bracket questions regarding human life as a whole – existential, integral questions that are posed by, or to, man as man.\textsuperscript{173} On the other hand, Meier’s critique of historicism is a critique of every relativism that would deny “[e]ven the possibility” of the philosophical “liberation” and “ascent” from the cave of historical-cultural \textit{Weltanschauungen} “into the light.”\textsuperscript{174} In this regard, historicism or relativism and political theology belong together in their radical denial of the possibility of a life of “human guidance,” which possibility philosophy, as “a way of life,”\textsuperscript{175} supposes or asserts.\textsuperscript{176} Meier even mentions the “historicism of politics and of religion” here to underline the importance of their mutual opposition to philosophy and the philosophic way of life.

As we will see, Meier will couple politics and religion in a similar fashion again and again (as “the theological and the political alternative”\textsuperscript{177}) to drive home the fact that they are, on this, weightiest level, mutually opposed to the philosophic life.

The discussion of modern liberalism and historicism leads directly to a theme that is crucial for Strauss’ project as a whole: the so-called “second-cave.” Though the term is not mentioned here by name, it is pretty clearly indicated by

\begin{itemize}
    \item \textsuperscript{173} Cf. 3.5 (761), \textit{CS, LS & Bdp}, IV.3.9 (50/42), \textit{LCS}, II.12.8 (71/40), “Vorwort” to \textit{DvLS}, 3.8 (10), \textit{WPP}, 7.5 (16/96).
    \item \textsuperscript{174} 4.2-4 (762).
    \item \textsuperscript{175} 4.8 (762).
    \item \textsuperscript{176} Cf. \textit{TPP}, I.7.9 with n.4 (17/6), citing Strauss, “Reason and Revelation,” fol. 4 recto/4 verso: “No alternative is more fundamental than the alternative: human guidance or divine guidance. \textit{Tertium non datur.” Cf also Strauss, \textit{NR&H}, p. 74.
    \item \textsuperscript{177} Cf. e.g., \textit{TPP}, I.4.2-3 (15/4-5), where Meier implies that “the confrontation with the theological and the political alternative” is “the very heart of political philosophy.”
\end{itemize}
Meier’s allusion to “an undertaking that aimed to recover the natural horizon of political philosophy, which had been as obscured by the tradition as by the polemic against the tradition.” ¹⁷⁸ Note the emphasis here: not only the “tradition” (i.e., presumably what Strauss called the “perverse interweaving” of the “nomos-tradition” of “Biblical philosophy” with the “philosophical tradition” of “Greek philosophy”¹⁷⁹), but the reaction against the tradition has obscured the “natural horizon of political philosophy.” Not only the Scholastic theology of the Middle Ages, but also modern scientific thought, is colored by historicism or relativism, because the latter emerged in large part as a (more or less justified) reaction to the former.

Now, as Strauss says,

> in order to make philosophizing possible in its naturally difficult state, the artificial complication of philosophizing must be removed; one must fight against prejudices. Herein lies a fundamental difference between modern and Greek philosophy: whereas the latter only fights against appearance and opinion, modern philosophy begins by fighting against prejudices... [The Enlightenment] achieves the freedom of answering, but not the freedom of asking, only the freedom to say no, instead of the traditional yes... This liberation from the yes of tradition comes about through an all the more profound entanglement in tradition.¹⁸⁰


Such “entanglement” separates the thought of the modern epoch from philosophy to an even greater degree than was the case for the ancients: no longer are the obstacles to philosophizing merely natural; now, they are historical as well. This is the place of the “second cave,” the cave beneath the cave of Platonic philosophy:

All philosophizing begins with the awareness of the cave. That awareness is the only non-arbitrary beginning of philosophy. Descartes’ beginning with the universal doubt is derivative from that true and absolute beginning. Descartes has to prove that our knowledge of heaven and earth is not reliable. But if you are to prove, you presuppose something else. Presupposed is alleged knowledge of heaven and earth and what is between them.  

Not only “appearance and opinion,” but the “alleged knowledge of heaven and earth and what is between them” characteristic of the Bible and of Scholastic theology, present obstacles to philosophizing in the modern era.

To meet this challenge, Strauss had to perform his own Platonic-Socratic “turn toward speeches” or “second sailing” by undertaking “historical” studies intended to recover the natural horizon of philosophy. Strauss could not without further ado simply “abstract away” the history of the tradition and the polemic against the tradition as if it had never taken place. He had to become an historian in order to become capable of philosophizing, because only historical studies would permit him to see beyond the horizon of the Biblical tradition and the modern reaction to this tradition (the second cave), to the “natural beginnings” of philosophy in the first, Platonic cave. Nevertheless, Strauss had to become an “historian” in a very peculiar sense. Since his aim was not to do history, but to

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philosophize, that is, “to replace opinions about all things and beings by awareness or evident knowledge,”\(^{183}\) or to ascend from the “second cave” to at least the first, primary cave, and, if possible, “to the light,”\(^{184}\) Strauss’ “historical” studies had to seek to determine what was natural within or among the various disparate epochs and cultures known to history. To do this, he had first to place in question the historicist presupposition that philosophy “must remain radically dependent on the particular culture or epoch in which it originated and which it illuminates.”\(^{185}\) The “essentially unhistorical concern [\textit{Sache}] of philosophy”\(^{186}\) required taking the claims of non-historicist thinkers radically seriously; in Strauss’ famous phrase, one had to attempt to understand these thinkers “in the way in which they understand themselves.”\(^{187}\) To begin with the presupposition that one had already advanced beyond all previous philosophic thought, in other words, foreclosed from the start the needed access of a non-historicist philosophy to the essentially unhistorical thought-movement of philosophy. That “in and for philosophy nothing is decided that is ‘historically decided’”\(^{188}\) means that to the extent that philosophy or Enlightenment defeated Orthodoxy by simply “laughing” it out of court,\(^{189}\) the case would have to be reopened, not for Orthodoxy’s sake, but for philosophy’s, or for the sake of the self-knowledge of the philosopher. To begin the ascent from the second

\(^{183}\) 4.1 (762).
\(^{184}\) 4.2 (762).
\(^{185}\) 4.4 (762).
\(^{186}\) Ibid.
\(^{187}\) Cf., \textit{inter multa alia}, Strauss, \textit{NR\&H}, p. 56 ff. Here Strauss refers to this approach as “the strictly historical approach.” Also cf. \textit{MPL}, 8.3 (764).
\(^{188}\) 5.4 (763). Cf. also \textit{DvLS}, 8.11 (29/62)
cave, Strauss, like Socrates, would have to begin from where was: he "had to start
with the most powerful opinions of the time and place their strongest prejudices in
question."\textsuperscript{190} This meant, above all, that his undertaking “had to prove itself in the
liberation from historicism.”\textsuperscript{191}

The Natural Horizon

When Meier writes that Strauss’ “historical investigations” are intended both
“to bring to light the historical presuppositions of the 'historical consciousness'” \textit{and}
to “take up the \textit{causes célèbres} of the history of philosophy,”\textsuperscript{192} he seems to say that
we have so far only grasped \textit{half} the import of Strauss’ undertaking. After all, it is
not yet clear to us \textit{what} these \textit{causes célèbres} were, nor \textit{why} they were of crucial
significance to the Straussian enterprise, and, therefore, for our understanding of
the Straussian enterprise. Meier names them as “the controversy between
Enlightenment and orthodoxy”\textsuperscript{193} and “the quarrel of the ancients and the
moderns.”\textsuperscript{194} To the former he attributes Strauss’ “first two books... (Die

\textsuperscript{190} 4.11 (762); cf. also Strauss, \textit{C&M}, p. 241: “For what is ‘first for us’ is not the
philosophic understanding of the city but that understanding which is inherent in
the city as such, in the pre-philosophic city, according to which the city sees itself as
subject and subservient to the divine in the ordinary understanding of the divine or
looks up to it.”
\textsuperscript{191} 4.12 (762).
\textsuperscript{192} 5.1 (762).
\textsuperscript{193} 5.2 (762).
\textsuperscript{194} 5.3 (763). In \textit{TPP}, I.5.2-6 (15/5), in a somewhat different context, Meier speaks of
“the formula ‘Jerusalem and Athens,’” “the tension between the commonwealth and
philosophy,” and either replaces or modifies “the controversy between
Religionskritik Spinozas, 1930; Philosophie und Gesetz, 1935).”195 The latter he
bifurcates into “urgent confrontations with the founding fathers of modern
philosophy (Hobbes’ Political Philosophy, 1936; Thoughts on Machiavelli, 1958),” and
“the direct confrontation of the moderns with the ancients (Natural Right and
History, 1953; What Is Political Philosophy?, 1959).”196

But the appearance that this “reopening” of the famous cases of the history of
philosophy can be separated from Strauss’ intention to bring to light the historical
presuppositions of the ‘historical consciousness’ is misleading.197 In fact, the former
stands wholly in the service of the latter inasmuch as the latter is undertaken for the
sake of recovering the “natural horizon of political philosophy.”198 Thus Meier
writes that,

all attempts to put into effect a “progress” of philosophy by erecting
its edifice on an unquestionably valid basis are purchased at the price
of setting aside the questionability of the basis and at the far higher
price of the eventual forgetting of its question-worthiness.199

Enlightenment and orthodoxy” as “the conflict between philosophy and revelation.”
There, at any rate, the rhetorical strategy is to oppose these concepts to that of the
“theologico-political problem,” which according to Meier (and Meier’s Strauss)
names “the center and unity of his work.”
195 5.2 (762).
196 5.4 (763).
197 See WPP?, 23.7 (35/109) for a related account of Strauss’ attempt “to ‘repeat’ the
historical foundings and the querelles célèbres of political philosophy, that is, to
expound their fundamental principles and the intellectual experiences congealed in
them in such a way that they gain a new actuality in the present and draw renewed
attention to the question of the one thing needful.”
198 4.10 (762) & 6.1 (763).
199 5.4 (763). Cf. Strauss, NR&H, p. 31: “it is of the essence of traditions that they
cover or conceal their humble foundations by erecting impressive edifices on them.”
This language of “paying the price” for a founding, which is encountered here for the first time, will recur in Meier’s discussion of both the “founding” of modern political philosophy and Strauss’ own “founding” of a school. Likewise, the problem for philosophy of the tradition, and in particular the tendency in every tradition for “the answers [to] gain the upper hand over the questions,” will again be picked up and developed in subsequent works. For the moment, the crucial thing is to see that this reflection is pursued for the sake of undermining philosophy’s “petrification” in the tradition, in order to lay bare the “natural horizon... in which philosophy itself becomes visible as a problem.”

Only in this horizon can the understanding of philosophy as “skepsis in the distinct, original meaning of the word – thinking for oneself, movement, individually performed, unabbreviated questioning,” come fully to light. But – and this indicates an aporia that will continue to dog Meier’s Strauss’ account – the “assertion” of such a conception of philosophy, as “the actual quest for truth which is animated by the conviction that that quest alone makes life worth living, and which is fortified by the distrust of man’s natural propensity to rest satisfied with

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200 In *TPP*, I.13.11 & 13 (29/15). There Meier cites a letter from Strauss to Klein (7.12.49) in which one reads: “The U[iversity] of Ch[cago] would be a great opportunity if it were not also an equally great encumbrance,” and “Thus one cannot change anything by ‘politics’ but only in the class rooms.” Cf. *GS3*, p. 597. For “paying the price” cf. also *DvLS*, 6.2-3 (26/60) *WLS?,* 18.2 & 5 (201).

201 *DvLS*, 7.7 (27/61)

202 5.5 (763). This concept will also recur in *DvLS*, where it is contrasted with the “‘liquefaction,’ as it were, of the traditional philosophical teachings...” 11.2 (33/65). Cf. also *DvLS*, 9.1 (29/62), 14.14 (39/70), & 17.4 (43/72); *WPP?,* 23.7 (35/109); and *WLS?,* 9.3 (196).

203 6.1 (763).

204 5.5 (763).
satisfying, if unevident or unproven, convictions” (Fârâbî’s Plato) is itself an “unevident or unproven conviction,” at least as long as the possibility of revelation remains unrefuted or as long as philosophy remains unable to erect a system capable of closing every possible space of supernatural causation. That Meier is fully aware of this seeming self-contradiction is in evidence not only in the remainder of this text – which takes on the challenge posed by “the political and the theological alternative” – but in every subsequent treatment of the question of the “right and necessity of philosophy.” Tellingly, Meier stops referring to philosophy’s justifying and asserting its right after this text, and begins to refer to philosophy's justifying its right simply.

There is another instance of a seemingly “unobtrusive” misquotation of a source text in what follows. Meier quotes from Strauss’ exchange with Kojève in the pages of On Tyranny, calling it “one of the most memorable philosophical dialogues of the century.” In particular, Meier leaves out, without an ellipsis, a sentence from the passage of Strauss’ that he quotes (we place the omitted sentence in brackets):

“Philosophy as such is nothing but genuine awareness of the problems, i.e., of the fundamental and comprehensive problems. It is impossible to think about these problems without becoming inclined

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206 On this point cf. esp. Strauss, “Seminar on the Gorgias,” p. 5, where he calls the notion that “the problems are always more evident than the solutions” a “plausible assumption.”
207 6.3 (763).
208 6.1 (763).
209 Cf., e.g., “Vorwort” to DvLS, 4.8 (12).
210 5.6 (763).
toward a solution, toward one or the other of the very few typical solutions. [Yet as long as there is no wisdom but only the quest for wisdom, the evidence of all solutions is necessarily smaller than the evidence of the problems.] Therefore the philosopher ceases to be a philosopher at the moment at which the “subjective certainty” of a solution becomes stronger than his awareness of the problematic character of that solution. At that moment the sectarian is born…”

Since the sentence immediately following the omitted section begins with a “[t]herefore,” it seems highly incongruous that Meier would cut just this sentence: after all, it makes very little sense to deduce that the “philosopher ceases to be a philosopher at the moment at which the ‘subjective certainty’ of a solution becomes stronger than his awareness of the problematic character of that solution” from the observation that, “[i]t is impossible to think about these problems without becoming inclined toward a solution, toward one or the other of the very few typical solutions.” Indeed, the implication seems to be that the “inclination” of the philosopher remains somewhat arbitrary, one whose content is underdetermined by any basis for “subjective certainty.” It is as if one could be certain of just about anything, and, just as long as one did not become too certain of it, one could rightfully claim to philosophize. But in the omitted passage, Strauss makes an assertion: he asserts that “the evidence of all solutions is necessarily smaller than the evidence of the problems,” that is, as long as “wisdom” as such is not available to us, but only the “quest for wisdom.” If we are not wise, but desire wisdom, we must view the problems as more evident than any of their supposed solutions.

211 5.6-8 (763).
212 To the potential objection that it is after all possible that we – or some of us – have already become sages, cf. Meier’s approving reference to Seth Benardete’s lapidary phrase: “Wisdom is an idol of the cave.” In WPP?, 9.n. 13 (18/97)
thus have a basis for ‘subjective certainty’ (provided we accept philosophy’s truth-criterion of “evidentness”): we know that the problems are more evident than their solutions, and therefore we know that every solution has a “problematic character.” With the omission of the omitted sentence, this knowledge seems to deteriorate into a mere “act of the will,” wherein we have no evident reason to suppose that the “problematic character” of any solution is more evident than is the solution itself. It appears that Meier is unobtrusively trying to draw attention to the problematic character of this solution, i.e., that he intends that the reader should wonder at the silently abridged text’s evidently problematic deduction. In this way, his “art of careful writing” directs the reader to the source-text itself and from there to the philosophic consideration of the matter itself at issue.

The Political and the Theological Alternative

Be that as it may, Meier now proceeds from an account of the causes célèbres reopened by Strauss to a consideration of the sake for which they are reopened: the recovery of the “natural horizon of political philosophy... in which philosophy itself becomes visible as a problem, in which it is not self-evident...” Here Meier makes use of an almost mantric repetition of three “It is” [Er wird] statements to characterize the “natural horizon.” The central statement is:

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213 Cf. Strauss, “Mutual Influence,” p. 113. Meier cites this page of text in DyLS, 5.n. 7 (25/59) and again in TPP, I.8.n.6 (20/8).
214 Cf. TPP, I.15.5 (31/16), citing Strauss’ “Preface” to SCR, in LAM, p. 255.
215 6.1 (763).
It is marked by the political and the theological alternative, by the human and the superhuman authority in whose name philosophy can be put in question.216

This is the first appearance of a phrase that will assume a central significance in Meier’s thought on the theologico-political problem: “the political and the theological alternative.” At a glance, we can see what is most important: the formulation makes us wonder. Is the “alternative” an alternative between politics and theology, or one between politics and theology on the one side, and philosophy on the other? Meier makes use of the ambiguity of the word “alternative” (present in the German as well as the English): it can mean both the condition of having two or more things to choose from and any of the things, taken in isolation, that form part of this condition. One can be faced with the alternative of the lady or the tiger, and one can decide that the better alternative is the lady (or the tiger). Here it is fairly evident that Meier means to separate out, on the one hand, politics and theology, and, on the other, philosophy – he indicates this by reference to “the human” (presumably politics) “and the superhuman authority” (presumably theology) “in whose name philosophy can be put in question.” Here, then, the alternative is one between authority (i.e., politics and theology) and philosophy (which is elsewhere described as “a way of life whose raison d’être excludes its subordination to any authority”217). And though Meier’s intention is here relatively clear, elsewhere he will make use of the semantic ambiguity of the word “alternative” to unobtrusively contrast the perspective in which “politics and theology” appear as alternatives to

216 6.3 (763).
217 DvLS, 5.6 (25/59)
one another with the perspective in which they appear as a single “fundamental alternative”\textsuperscript{218} to philosophy, or in which it is made “perfectly clear once again the claims that both politics and religion contain” and in which “the understanding of the connection between the two” is reawakened.\textsuperscript{219}

Meier broaches the topic of the “theologico-political problem” by means of the testimony of Strauss and his friend Klein. In another formulation to which Meier will return again and again, Strauss is quoted as saying that “‘the theologico-political problem’ was ‘the theme’ of his investigations.”\textsuperscript{220} The quotation is slightly misleading. Its source, as Meier later notes (he does not give any citation here), is “the preface to Hobbes’ politische Wissenschaft,” written in 1964.\textsuperscript{221} In the original, Strauss refers to the fact that,

“The reawakening of theology, which for me is epitomized by the names Karl Barth and Franz Rosenzweig, seemed to make it necessary for one to study the extent to which the critique of orthodox – Jewish or Christian – theology deserved to be victorious.”\textsuperscript{222}

“Since then,” Strauss writes, “the theologico-political problem has remained the theme of my studies.”\textsuperscript{223} Meier’s uncited use of Strauss’ “testimony” in the Metzler Philosophen Lexikon is therefore misleading inasmuch as it leaves out the fact, pointed to by Strauss, that his focus on the theologico-political problem had initially

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{218} Meier’s earliest usage of this phrase in this context occurs in the “Vorwort” to CS, LS & BdP, 3.3 (7/xx).
\bibitem{219} GS3, 17.1 (xxvii/19).
\bibitem{220} 6.5 (763).
\bibitem{221} TPP, I.2.5 (13/4).
\bibitem{222} Strauss, “Vorwort” to Hobbes’ politische Wissenschaft, in GS3, pp. 7-8; cited in Meier, TPP, I.2.6 (14/4).
\bibitem{223} Ibid., 8; cited in Meier, TPP, I.2.7 (14/4); translation modified.
\end{thebibliography}
been occasioned by “the reawakening of theology” – that is, it was not his *only* theme: at the very least, we can understand his work *before* this “reawakening” as aimed at something *other* than the theologico-political problem. Klein’s apparently corroborating testimony, which Meier paraphrases without citing is similarly prejudiced. Meier claims that,

Jacob Klein said in 1970, in the presence of his friend, that Strauss’ primary interest had *from the beginning* applied to two subjects: the question of God and the question of politics.

Whereas the definitive edition of the conversation gives:

Now, while Mr. Strauss and I were studying we had many, I should say, endless conversations about many things. His primary interests were two questions: one, the question of God; and two, the question of politics.

There is no mention in the second version of any “from the beginning,” only a nod toward Strauss’ “primary interest” during his “endless conversations” with Klein. It is of course possible that Meier was working from a *Handexemplar* or a less-than-accurate transcript of the “Giving of Accounts.” But we ought at least to consider the possibility that the deviation from the letter of the text was intentional.

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224 It, like the passage by Strauss about Heidegger quoted in Paragraph 3, comes from “A Giving of Accounts,” in *JCPM*, 458. This is subtly indicated by Meier’s reference to the year – 1970 – in which the conversation took place, and which is cited in 3.8 (761).

225 6.5 (763); italics added. Cf. *CS, LS & Bdp*, VII.4.11-12 (95/86) for a slightly altered version of this passage, in which Meier makes the argument in his own name that “[t]he question of Socrates was *from the very beginning* the decisive, fundamental question for Strauss.” Whether and to what extent “the question of Socrates” is equivalent to “the question of God and the question of politics” must for now remain an open question.

If indeed this is the case, or on the hypothesis that Meier has here altered two source texts to make Strauss’ interest in the theologico-political problem appear to have been the theme of his studies from the beginning, we may characterize his intention as that of making Strauss appear to have been more consistent than he actually was. For philosophic readers, it makes no difference whether Strauss’ interest had been directed toward “political Zionism” or whatever other interest he may have had before “turning” toward the theologico-political problem. For them, all that matters is the truth of the claim that this turn had been necessary or justified, and the truth of the claims made on its basis. For non-philosophic readers, however, the apparent inconsistency between Strauss’ early and his later thought would serve to discredit him and prevent his ideas from getting a fair hearing from them. The rhetorical strategy of remaining silent on Strauss’ “pre-Socratic” (or even “pre-Straussian”) occupations serves to valorize Strauss in the eyes of the non-philosophic multitude: Here was a man so unerring in his instinct, so steadfast in his convictions, that he was able to remain focused on the same problem from beginning to end. The provenance\textsuperscript{227} of Strauss’ ideas, if not their reasonableness, would be lent credibility by such a rhetorical strategy. And it would do no harm to philosophic readers’ appreciation, since they would either simply entertain Strauss’ thoughts on their merits, independent of provenance,\textsuperscript{228} or else they would come to

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\textsuperscript{228} Cf. Plato, \textit{Phaedrus} 275c (Fowler trans. pp. 564-5), immediately following the passage cited above (at 1.9): “They used to say, my friend, that the words of the oak in the holy place of Zeus at Dodona were the first prophetic utterances. The people
see the reason for Meier’s strategy and its orientation toward the common good
(which they would then presumably evaluate on its merits). This example, then,
illustrates more clearly than most the meaning of philosophic friendship: *Amicus
Strauss.*

of that time, not being so wise as you young folks, were content in their simplicity
[ἐνθεσις] to hear an oak or a rock, provided only it spoke the truth; but to you,
perhaps, it makes a difference who the speaker is and where he comes from, for you
do not consider only whether his words are true or not.” – This passage presents a
fascinating paradox in that it is itself not only an “unobtrusive” reading of the past
intended to put it in the best possible light or make Socrates’ own position seem
unthreatening, but is, as a rhetorical tool, only useful to the extent that Phaedrus
begins by not heeding Socrates’ advice. Since Socrates’ appeal is one of provenance,
of the equation of the ancestral with the good or the true, it will be ineffective unless
Phaedrus supposes the way of the ancestors to be as such worthy of imitation. But
the ancestors’ way is said to be the way of not caring about provenance, of listening
even to the “oaks and rocks” if only what they say is true. Thus Phaedrus is led from
the initial equation of the ancestral with the true or the good, to a natural-
philosophic tendency to abstract from the provenance of any argument to its truth
or falsity, to the political-philosophic insight into the philosophical necessity of
Socrates’ philosophic rhetoric for the sake of his own, abortive, “first beginning.”

229 Cf. Strauss, “Restatement,” in *OT*, p. 196, almost immediately following the
passage quoted above (at 5.6-9): “And even if the philosophic friends are compelled
to be members of a sect or to found one, they are not necessarily of one and the
same sect: *Amicus Plato.*” The reference is to Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,*
1096a15: “for while both [the truth and one’s friends] are loved, it is a sacred thing
to give the higher honor to the truth” (Sachs trans., 6). Thus the phrase is usually
continued: *Amicus Plato, sed magis amica veritas:* “Plato is my friend, but truth is a
better friend.” Meier likely has this in mind when he writes: “[The contributions to
philosophy] refer to a reflection that precedes the individual contributions and
convinces the most diverse philosophers that the philosophical life is good – that it
will be good for kindred natures even if they are to reach answers that considerably
deviate from their own” *DvLS*, 17.6 (43/72-3). – That “[p]recisely the same
reflection is the ultimate ground of the art of careful writing” (*DvLS* 17.7; p. 43/73)
indicates the importance of a comment, which Strauss makes seemingly in passing,
and to which we will have occasion to return, viz.: “literally speaking, there can be
no complete falsehood, given the primacy of truth...” (“The Problem of Socrates,” in
*RCPR*, p. 109).
Meier counts Strauss’ concern for the “question of politics” as the impetus for his books “On Tyranny (1948), Natural Right and History, and The City and Man (1964)”230 He has already mentioned the central work cited here in regard to the “direct confrontation of the moderns with the ancients”231: thus we are to understand it as dealing with “the question of politics in the direct confrontation of the moderns with the ancients.” The “question of the gods, of revelation and of faith” is supposed to be dealt with in “Thoughts on Machiavelli, Socrates and Aristophanes (1966), Jerusalem and Athens (1967), Liberalism Ancient and Modern (1968) and The Argument and the Action of Plato’s Laws (1975).”232 Again, Meier has already mentioned Thoughts of Machiavelli, in the context of Strauss’ “urgent confrontations with the founding fathers of modern philosophy”233: thus we are to understand that text as concerned with “the question of the gods, of revelation and of faith in the urgent confrontation with the founding fathers of modern philosophy.”234

It is not, however, the same thing to broach the “question of God” as that of “the gods, of revelation, and of faith.” If we take the central object of the latter phrase as the most important or most relevant to our concern, we can perhaps understand it as attempting to subsume “the question of God,” into a larger perspective in which said question becomes “the question of the God of revelation,”

230 6.6 (763-4); it is likely Meier does not provide a date for the central work cited because he has already done so (at 5.4).
231 5.4 (763).
232 6.6 (763-4). Cf. n. 230.
233 5.4 (763).
234 This jibes with what Meier says about Thoughts on Machiavelli, viz., that it is “in large part a book about religion” (GWdP, 13.7, p. 1455).
i.e., of the *kind* of god that the God of revelation is. In this way, the *presuppositions* inherent in the formula “the question of God” are laid bare and are themselves subjected to scrutiny. The God of revelation is compared and contrasted with other species of god, the faith He demands with other species of faith. It appears that with the replacement of “the question of God” by “the question of the gods, of revelation, and of faith,” Meier is carrying on the questioning of the divine that Strauss claims is “coeval with philosophy.” However, by doing so “unobtrusively,” Meier carries on that questioning within a specifically Socratic-Platonic horizon.

Both theology and politics advance “answers” to and “claims” regarding the question of the one thing needful. Here Meier repeats almost verbatim an argument from *Carl Schmitt, Leo Strauss und "Der Begriff des Politischen"* before moving on to a consideration of what he calls the “closest connection” between Strauss’ “studies of the theologico-political problem” and his “reflections on the *art of careful writing.*” Since the “indispensable vital-element” of “political communities” as such is “the opinions, the beliefs, the convictions of their citizens,” and since philosophy is marked by “[t]he attempt to replace opinions about the whole by knowledge, and the refusal to acquiesce to unevident, unproven

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239 7.1 (764).
convictions,” there is an ineradicable “tension” between the two.240 The art of careful writing attempts to “reckon with the subversive character of philosophy,” both for philosophy’s sake and society’s: “philosophy is protected from censorship and persecution, non-philosophers from philosophy.”241 Of the four authors and six texts named as having been discussed by Strauss in his “numerous commentaries,” only those of Plato and Rousseau appear twice, perhaps indicating an authorial preference for these two thinkers above all.242 Since we know that Meier’s very first published work is an edition of Rousseau’s Discourse sur l’inégalité,243 it is perhaps not out of the question that he is here indicating a “natural kinship”244 with the Genevan not unlike Strauss’ own seeming kinship with the Athenian. Apart from the question that naturally arises out of this observation – viz., How would Meier’s Rousseau differ from (Meier’s conception of) Strauss’ Plato? – it may not be irrelevant to note that for Meier, this kinship or philosophic friendship with Rousseau has apparently constituted the ground and object of his philosophizing “from the very beginning.”245

The Philosophic Art of Writing

240 This Straussian argument is repeated, with some variations, in GWdP, 11.2-7 (1454), DvLS, 14.6 (38/69), WPP?, 12.8 (21/99), & TPP, I.8.20 (21/9).
241 7.3-4 (764).
242 7.6-7 (764).
244 Cf. DvLS, 12.6 (34/65) & TPP, I.14.4 (30/15).
245 CS, LS & BdP, VII.4.11 (95/86).
The final section of this text continues and concludes Meier’s discussion of the art of careful writing, considering it, however, from the side of philosophy rather than that of politics:

Beyond all political considerations, philosophers make use of the art of careful writing to lead readers who are able to think for themselves, and to educate them.246

This philosophic motive for esoteric-exoteric writing leads (back) to the problem of “understanding Socrates.”247 Meier begins the next two sentences with “Who” [Wer], suggesting a kind of provisional personalization that will precede the most radical depersonalization of the careful reader, in which “it no longer makes any difference to him whether he thinks the thoughts of the philosopher or his own, because he moves on a plain in which the arguments take the lead...”248 In the present context, the movement of careful reading and interpretation is described as summoning “every power in dealing with the matter [Sache] therein”249 in order to “make the historical distance between commentary and text, between the interpretation and the phenomenon, disappear.”250

246 8.1 (764). In GWdP, 11.7 (1454) Meier repeats this claim, this time attributing it (without citation) to Strauss.
247 8.5 (764-5).
248 DvLS, 16.4 (41-2/71); cf. also TPP, II.16, esp. II.16.11-19 (69/42), inter alia.
249 8.2 (764); this sentence is repeated and elaborated in WLS?, 7.2 (195-6), which continues: “in order to live up to the philosophical activity that found its expression in that work without having been absorbed by it or being identical with it.”– Thus it is not enough to say that the careful reader is “depersonalized”: there will have to be a kind of counter-movement that “enables him to find himself again in the whole,” TPP, II.16.21 (70/42). Cf. in this connection the references to “Beisichselbstsein” in Chapter V below.
250 8.8 (765).
Meier places quotation marks around the word “hermeneutic” when he asserts that,

the deepest justification for Strauss’ decision to develop his philosophy on the path of historical interpretations is to be sought in “hermeneutic” reflections of this kind.251

Perhaps this is meant to suggest that such “‘hermeneutic’ reflections,” far from being a mere matter of method or “interpretation” narrowly conceived, are an essential moment in the self-knowledge of the political philosopher, particularly the one whose way toward philosophizing must begin from within the historical-conceptual situation of the “second cave.” If this is true, it enables us to understand why it is “[f]or the same reason” that “Strauss’ lifelong confrontation with Nietzsche and with Heidegger is concealed under the motto: understanding Socrates.”252 For it is one and the same cause that justifies the unobtrusive or politic critique, in the form of “historical commentaries,” of the philosophic tradition and its two greatest recent exponents, and that determines the philosophic centrality of hermeneutics or interpretation, i.e., of political philosophy, to philosophy itself: “That philosophy in this sense has to become political in order to acquire a philosophically sound foundation,” Meier writes elsewhere, “is the decisive insight inherent in the Socratic turn.”253 As Strauss puts it, unobtrusively and laconically: “nothing which is practically false can be theoretically true.”254

251 8.4 (764).
252 8.5 (764-5).
253 WPP?, 13.6 (22-3/101); cf. also LCS, II.12.27-8 (73/42).
254 Strauss, OT, p. 99; the full sentence reads: “But a pupil of Socrates must be presumed to have believed rather that nothing which is practically false can be
Meier closes his text with a recapitulation: he again quotes a passage from Strauss’ “Fârâbî’s Plato,” and again substitutes Strauss’ name for Farabi’s:

It may be added, as Strauss states in his Alfarabi interpretation: “in that Strauss transmits his most precious knowledge, not in ‘systematic’ works, but in the guise of a historical account, he indicates his view concerning ‘originality’ and ‘individuality’ in philosophy: what comes to sight as the ‘original’ or ‘personal’ ‘contribution’ of a philosopher is infinitely less significant than his private, and truly original and individual, understanding of the necessarily anonymous truth.”

The original runs:

It may be added that by transmitting the most precious knowledge, not in "systematic" works, but in the guise of a historical account, Fârâbî indicates his view..."

On this level, Farabi, Strauss, and Meier emerge as committed to the twofold nature of esoteric-exoteric writing. Their aim is at once political (to protect philosophy from persecution, non-philosophers from philosophy) and philosophical (to lead those capable of it to philosophy). In this way, their philosophic art of writing resembles the art of legislation laid out in Plato’s Laws. There, the twofold nature of the laws appears in the distinction between the laws themselves (which are meant to command the unphilosophical multitude) and the preludes to the laws (which persuade the philosophical few by means of reasoned arguments). The “Great Tradition” of political philosophy stands in for the laws of the polis by both appearing to be authoritative and unquestionable and by being shot through with theoretically true.” Cf. also in this connection Strauss, S&A, p. 49; and Benardete, SSS, p. 21, with context.

255 8.9 (765).
inconsistencies and caesuras that the philosophic few are able to dialectically navigate on their way out of the cave. The very *answerability* of philosophy to the law that is on display here indicates that we have left the modern horizon behind in favor of a horizon in which the “primacy of the law” holds sway and in which therefore the “demands of politics” are treated with the gravity requisite to them.\(^{258}\) This impression is only reinforced by the apparent – though only apparent – reverence with which Meier (and Strauss) treat previous philosophical “authorities” like Farabi and Plato through their use of strategic misquotation and charitable reading. Like the Athenian Stranger, they are loath to speak ill of their “legislators,” preferring to say that they “had in view not just some part of virtue” but “looked to the whole of virtue” in framing the “laws” of the “Great Tradition” that includes political philosophy.\(^{259}\) This “Tradition,” then, not only marks the way from the second cave to the first, natural cave, but *is* the second cave itself. Like the city, it is both the obstacle and the way to philosophy.\(^{260}\)

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In the attempt to gain a horizon beyond modern liberalism and historicism, Strauss had to uncover the roots of the modern age in the challenge of, and reaction


\(^{260}\) Cf. Benardete, “Leo Strauss’ *City and Man,*” in *AS*, p. 361, citing Strauss, *C&M*, p. 29: “The city is both closed to the whole and open to the whole.”
to, revealed religion. By engaging in “historical” studies whose aim was essentially philosophical, he sought to leave behind the “second cave” and ascend to the natural, Platonic one, in order to lay bare character of modern thought in the contrast between it and Platonic political philosophy. Strauss’ “passionate interest” in the past arose from the twofold insight that historicism relies on an unhistoricist premise, or that the claim that all thought is historical is itself advanced in a categorical, non-historical fashion, and that “radical” historicism, or historicism that has become aware of, and tried to account for, this aporia, must posit an “absolute moment” in history, the moment in which the essentially historical character of all thought is recognized.  

It is this moment – “a historical event of infinite, non-appropriable, non-occupiable singularity” – that betrays historicism’s fundamental entanglement in the “nomos-tradition” of revelation, and that is separated by a gulf from the idea of “antiquity, that is, genuine philosophy” as an “eternal possibility.” Leaving the “second cave” of modernity means grasping that the “real theme of the quarrel [of the ancients and the moderns] is antiquity and Christianity.”

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264 Strauss, ibid.
Chapter III

Rhetoric Erotic and Polemical


The distinction between political theology and political philosophy first comes to the fore in Meier’s book on the “hidden dialogue” between Schmitt and Strauss. In the form of an examination of Strauss’ “Notes” to Schmitt’s Concept of the Political and Schmitt’s alterations between the Second and Third Editions of that work, Meier deftly guides the reader through a maze of rhetorics – Schmitt’s, Strauss’, and his own. Arguing persuasively that Schmitt’s revisions were influenced by Strauss’ critique, Meier at the same time uncovers a crucial difference between philosophy and revelation with regard to the subjunctive or conditional mood. In a sense, the philosopher’s ability and willingness to think conditionally, to put himself in the mind of his opponent and understand him as he understands himself, marks political philosophy’s essential superiority to political theology and accounts for the decisive rhetorical advantage of the former over the latter – an advantage enacted again and again in Strauss’ ability to see through Schmitt’s feints to what is central to his movement of thought.

Political philosophy is compelled to reason conditionally or “hypothetically” when it encounters (thumotic) opponents for whom disagreement signifies hostile
enmity.\textsuperscript{265} It is \textit{able} to reason conditionally according to its own conception of reason, which – unlike both the theological and the historical conceptions – does not require any prior “commitment” to an idea or position as a prerequisite for understanding that idea or position.\textsuperscript{266} For political theology, which stands under the question, first and foremost, “Does it obey God?,” the very abstraction from a committed and faithful attitude toward the revealed truth signifies the initial and decisive stirrings of disobedience.\textsuperscript{267} For the political theologian Schmitt, reasoning conditionally on a philosophical basis cannot be carried out in earnest for fear of Divine retribution; the assertoric or imperative truths of faith cannot seriously be suspended or viewed “hypothetically” because to do so would itself amount to unfaith. For the political philosophers Strauss and Meier, on the other hand, the will to believe ought rightly to follow philosophical reason in considering the object of belief, and so such reasoning can and should be conducted independently of any commitment to the truth of that belief.\textsuperscript{268} For this reason, Strauss is able to understand Schmitt in a way that Schmitt can never understand Strauss or any other political philosopher: by virtue of his philosophic rhetoric, Strauss \textit{circumscribes}

\textsuperscript{265} Cf. in this connection Strauss, \textit{XS}, p. 122
\textsuperscript{266} On this point, cf. esp. Strauss, \textit{SCR} (251/195) on Calvin: “Believing exercise of reason is set apart from unbelieving exercise of reason by the same gulf that yawns between belief and unbelief in general.” Compare Strauss, “Natural Right and the Historical Approach,” in \textit{IPP}, p. 117: “The radical historicist asserts, then, that only to thought that is itself committed or ‘historical’ does other committed or ‘historical’ thought disclose itself, and, above all, that only to thought that is itself committed or ‘historical’ does the true meaning of the ‘historicity’ of all genuine thought disclose itself.” Cf. also \textit{LCS}, II.22.17-18 (100/61).
\textsuperscript{267} Cf. Strauss, \textit{SCR} (249/194).
\textsuperscript{268} Cf. \textit{TPP}, I.19.24-25 (39/22).
Schmitt, entering into his characteristic movement of thought and at the same time shielding himself from the political theologian’s self-certain indignation.

If the characteristic mode of political philosophy is that of questioning, then turning an assertion into a conditional hypothesis (which depends on the ability to question or at least to suspend judgment regarding the assertion’s truth) is its characteristic (exoteric) rhetorical gesture.\textsuperscript{269} To paraphrase Strauss, we do not have to know whether the whole is comprehensible (the positivist supposition) or mysterious (the historicist-relativist supposition) to be able to know what would follow in one case or the other.\textsuperscript{270} Indeed, it is philosophy’s “gentle, if firm, refusal to succumb” to the temptations of either of these two positions that marks it as erotic, as the desire for wisdom, rather than “wisdom” itself.\textsuperscript{271}

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Preliminary Considerations

\textsuperscript{269} Cf. LCS, II.12.n44 (75/43), citing Cropsey, “On Ancients and Moderns,” p. 42: “Socrates asked while Parmenides told.” – On political philosophy’s characteristic esoteric rhetorical gesture, see Strauss, PAW, pp. 184-6 & A&A, pp. 60-4, and contrast PAW, p. 155. Note also the (probably intentional) error made by Meier in PPHO, II.2.8.8 (81) with regard to Strauss, ToM, IV.12.26/27, pp. 187-8, and consider that Strauss discusses the importance of the number 26 for Machiavelli in the 27\textsuperscript{th} paragraph of his own “Machiavelli” essay (SPPP, pp. 223-4).

\textsuperscript{270} Cf. in this connection Strauss’ “Restatement,” in OT, p. 196.

\textsuperscript{271} Strauss, WiPP?, p. 40. Cf. Benardete, SSS, p. 179: “Wisdom is an idol of the cave.” In the light of this, cf. Strauss, “Restatement,” in OT, p. 211 on the “only true philosophy” and consider the general disrepute of the word “sophistês” (discussed in Sachs, Socrates and the Sophists, pp. 1-2).
Before beginning to look into what Meier says in his *Dialogue*, we might perhaps cast a look into what he says about his *Dialogue*, particularly if it is our concern to uncover the intention underlying and motivating it. First, then, we have, from the Preface to *Die Lehre Carl Schmitts*, the claim, in the form of an admission, that, the two publications are related to one another. They deal with One cause [Einer Sache] and are guided by One intention [Einer Intention]. The elenctic-protreptic character that links them will not escape the attentive reader any more than the differences in detail to which it gives rise.

Such an indication leaves us wondering: how does the “elenctic-protreptic character” of the two books “link” them, and how does it give rise to “differences in detail”? Two possibilities immediately emerge. Either 1) one of the texts is elenctic (questioning, cross-examining) and the other is protreptic (instructive, conclusive), or 2) both texts are both elenctic and protreptic. If we assume the first possibility, it is hard to see how the texts can be linked by their (presumably common) elenctic-protreptic character, while if we assume the second, it is hard to see how (and why) any differences in detail might arise. Strauss refers to the dyad of protreptic and elenctic, contrasting “Socrates’ speeches which were not merely protreptic or elenctic” with those in which Socrates is concerned with “refuting those who believe to know everything.”

That is, it seems, both elenctic (shame-producing) and protreptic (turning-toward philosophy) speeches are contrasted with “what

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272 “*Vorwort*” to *LCS*, 1.2-4 (9/xxi).
[Socrates] passed his day with in saying to those who lived constantly with him.”

The elenctic-protreptic character of Socratic speeches, then, signifies that Socrates is speaking with someone other than those who “lived constantly with him,” i.e., someone other than his “companions.”

This is turn suggests that Strauss’ dialogue with Schmitt is fundamentally “hypothetical,” or that it is based on an unquestioned premise or hypothesis and leads to agreement, rather than truth. In order to lure Schmitt into revealing more of himself than he otherwise would, Strauss must play the part of a fellow traveller on the way to a “horizon beyond liberalism.”

We must give special credence to Meier’s questions in the light of Die Lehre Carl Schmitt’s implicit avowal of the principle: “Socrates asked while Parmenides told.” Meier refers to this as the form [Form] in which “the difference in content [inhaltliche Differenz] is expressed [zum Ausdruck kommt].” Political philosophy’s most radical task, the only task proper to it as such, is to place in question the assertoric mode itself, i.e., the mode in which claims are made. But can it thereby avoid making its own tacit claim, viz., that questions concerning the good may reasonably be put by man, or that misology is unjustified?

Meier explicitly cautions us against reading CS, LS & BdP genetically in relation to LCS when he avers that the two texts were conceived “at the same

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274 Strauss, ibid.
276 Cf. Strauss, XS, p. 122. – The mode of the dialogue thus requires that its elenctic character be obscured by its apparent satisfaction with doξα.
278 LCS, II.n44 (75/43). The line appears in the cited text by Cropsey, who wrote the Foreword to the English edition of CS, LS & BdP and to whom LCS is dedicated.
279 Ibid.
time.” CS, LS, & BdP is therefore not to be understood as an “imperfect” version of the theory of political theology set forth in LCS; instead, both texts spring from an original insight into the essential character of political theology and its relationship to political philosophy.

Title & Form

The original German edition of Meier’s book on the “Hidden Dialogue” between Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss is subtitled Zu einem Dialog unter Abwesenden. A more or less literal translation of that subtitle would give us: “Toward a Dialogue among Absentees.” The subtitle of the French translation (undertaken in 1990) reads: “Un dialogue entre absents,” which is roughly equivalent to the German (minus the initial preposition). But the subtitle of the English-language edition of 1995 – “The Hidden Dialogue” – alters the sense somewhat. A dialogue among absentees, or among those who are absent, is not the same as a hidden dialogue. After all, a dialogue among those who are absent could itself be totally present or unhidden; one need only think of the myriad anonymous dialogues taking place on the internet among interlocutors who will never know one another’s identities. Surely, such dialogues are far from “hidden,” yet they do in a sense take place among those who are “absent”; all the more so when messages, and

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280 PdF, 9.n18 (168).
thus conversations, occur months or years apart, even among those who are no longer living or, potentially, those who are not yet born.

The English subtitle of the book alters the sense of that of the original German in another sense as well. If the book is intended as part of an effort “toward” a “dialogue among absentees,” it seems less directly to refer to the “hidden dialogue” that, according to Meier, went on between Schmitt and Strauss in the time between the three publications of The Concept of the Political, and more directly to refer to the “dialogue” Meier himself sets up in this text, at least to the extent they are not exactly the same dialogue. Strauss and Schmitt are “absent” for the text under consideration here because as of its conception they are both dead, reduced or elevated to the influence of their texts and the constellations of their contributions that remain in the minds and habits of the living. To the extent Meier reanimates them, he behaves like a modern-day Plato, reconstructing tacit and half-articulate arguments in the service of philosophy, posing interlocutors before each other and permitting them to do battle on their own terms (to the extent that the dramatic or poetic capacity of philosophic writing permits this).

If we wanted to pursue this comparison, we would – as we have said – be compelled to place Strauss in the place of Socrates and Schmitt in the place of a Socratic interlocutor who is not one of Socrates’ “good friends,” and is therefore treated hypothetically, i.e., with a view to common opinions and generating agreement, for the double sake of protecting the cause of philosophy and sharpening the contours of the distinction between philosophy and one or the other of its
“fundamental alternatives” (the theological and the political alternative). The alteration of the subtitle in the English edition allows this entire aspect of the work to recede into the background (albeit presumably with Meier’s assent).

The book’s form would also testify to this double intention. Most straightforwardly, it is composed of eight chapters: an unnumbered introductory chapter and seven numbered chapters. Viewed in terms of paragraphs, the eight chapters form a chiasmus: they are comprised of 4, 5, 4, 5, 5, 4, 5, and 4 paragraphs, respectively. Now, a chiasmus is a palindrome or mirror image, and we are dealing with a book about a dialogue between two thinkers, thinkers, incidentally, whose images appear on the cover – in both the German and the English editions – facing each other. One would perhaps be forgiven for seeing in this structuring of this kind of book an attempt to mirror the doubleness of the interlocutors themselves. And indeed one does find certain correspondences in subject matter between mirror-image chapters, like the unnumbered introductory chapter (which we will call Chapter 0 for the sake of simplicity) and Chapter 7 (which is the eighth chapter overall).

This is not, however, the end of the story regarding the book’s form. We note that under the aforementioned reading, each “side” of the book (i.e., Chapters 0-3 and Chapters 4-7) contain the same number of paragraphs, 18, making the book’s overall paragraph count 36. This number has no seeming significance according to the Straussian “numerology” in which 7, 13, 17, and multiples thereof are particularly significant for the “art of careful writing.” Of course, the number 36 is a
very interesting number mathematically,\textsuperscript{281} and one could construe all kinds of interpretations even, as Muhsin Mahdi puts it in his reading of Alfarabi, “without going into fancy numerological notions.”\textsuperscript{282} But to do so would be \textit{ad hoc}, since we have limited ourselves to the relatively strict guidelines indicated by Strauss himself. The number of paragraphs in Meier’s text on the “hidden dialogue” would seem, then, to be of no significance; moreover, there would not even be a central, keystone paragraph, in which the esoteric teaching could be found, but only a palindrome serving to emphasize the mirror-symmetry between Schmitt and Strauss.

But this is likewise not the end of the story regarding the book’s form. When we look closely at Chapter 7, we see that three times – twice in paragraph VII.3 and once in paragraph VII.4 – Meier inserts a long dash between two sentences. Strauss had used a similar orthographic indication in \textit{The City and Man} to indicate a change in focus without a paragraph break. Now Meier seems to be indicating that the subject-matter before and after these long dashes will be distinct, and indeed the reader – attentive or inattentive – finds that it is. If, then, we count these “extra” sections as new quasi-paragraph breaks, the final chapter goes from having four to having seven sections, and the book itself from 36 to 39. Not only is 39 a multiple of 13, but it also gives us a central section in which to look for further indications (IV.2). Whether or not this new breakdown of the text is sound, it at least provides

\textsuperscript{281} It is, for instance, the smallest square triangle number, and the sum of the numbers from 1 to 36 is 666.
\textsuperscript{282} Mahdi, Muhsin, \textit{Alfarabi and the Foundation of Islamic Political Philosophy}, p. 68.
us some reason for thinking that Meier is referring, not only to the "hidden dialogue" between Schmitt and Strauss, but also to his own text, when he, quoting Strauss' quotation of Auguste Joseph Gratry without citing it, writes that “the essence of critique is attention.”

Chapter 0: Setting the Stage

The unnumbered introductory chapter (Chapter 0) contains four paragraphs, 12 notes, and 40 sentences. That makes it the shortest chapter, in terms of sentences, in the book. Its first sentence already foreshadows the problematic relationship of Schmitt and Hobbes that will constitute a key thread of Meier’s interpretation both in this book and in LCS. The purpose of the chapter is to “set the stage” for the dramatic dialogue. This it does by laying the foundation for the respective positions of CS and LS, as well as by indicating the fundamental problem that holds these positions together and at the same time keeps them apart. If a “political intention... determined Carl Schmitt’s course in his Concept of the

283 0.4.9 (18/10). Cf. Strauss, P&L, “Introduction,” n. 13 (25/137-8). – Gratry (1805-72) was a French theologian known for his criticism of the doctrine of papal infallibility. The uncited quotation above comes from his Les Sophistes et la critique (1864), in which he argued that modern philosophy had deteriorated into a variant of sophistry.

284 The first line of CS, LS & Bdp is “Carl Schmitt became more famous and more infamous through The Concept of the Political than through all his other works” (0.1.1; p. 11/3). The first line of Schmitt’s Hobbes book reads: “Hobbes became more famous and more infamous through the Leviathan than through all his other works” (LSH, p. 9/11).
"Political," the same cannot be said of Strauss’ “Notes,” which show how “an essentially ‘political’ discussion of the political can be answered philosophically” without “withdrawing into the unpolitical...” Note the use of quotation-marks around the term “political” in the phrase “essentially ‘political’ discussion”; this serves to undermine the idea that Schmitt’s “intention” really is political, or else to highlight a distinction between the “political” as viewed from the respective positions of Strauss (and Meier) and Schmitt.

For Schmitt,

A treatise about the political can only be – of this conclusion [he] is convinced – a political treatise, determined by enmity and exposing itself to enmity.287

For him, “political” appears to mean “determined by enmity and exposing itself to enmity.” By contrast, at the end of the book, Meier will claim that,

Whereas the political does have central significance for the thought of Leo Strauss, the enemy and enmity do not. Enmity does not touch the core of his existence, and his identity does not take its shape in battle with the enemy. 288

Strauss’ “Notes,” then, neither “expose themselves to enmity” nor are “determined” by it. Instead, his “philosophical perspective,”

protects Strauss from relying on what Schmitt presupposes as compelling and in need of no further foundation, namely, that every concept of the political must have a "concrete opposition in view" and be "bound to a concrete situation..." 289

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285 0.1.6 (12/4).
286 0.2.1-2 (12/4).
287 0.1.6 (12/4). Compare Strauss, P&L: “There is no inquiry into the history of philosophy that is not at the same time a philosophical inquiry” (29/41).
288 VII.4.15-16 (96/87).
289 0.2.6 (13/5).
That is to say, it protects Strauss from enmity by protecting him from relying on the deepest conviction of the present – that all thought, understanding, and action are historical, that is, have no other ground than groundless human decision or the dispensation of fate, and that accordingly we are denied any possibility of understanding thinkers of the past as they understood themselves...\(^{290}\)

For if Strauss were to rely on such a presupposition, the “unobtrusive” rhetorical strategy he makes use of, and which ultimately lures Schmitt out of his conceptual hiding place and causes him to reveal the center of his thought more clearly, would not have been available to him. This strategy is a kind of “charitable reading” or “charitable critique,” and its hallmark is that the contradictions and inadequacies of the interlocutor or opponent are pointed out as if “naively,” without any seeming polemical thrust, so that the interlocutor is as likely as possible to alter or sharpen his position, rather than covering himself up with rhetorical feints or defending himself with conceptual armature.

This critical approach is grounded in Strauss’ “new orientation” and finds expression in his turn away from “the prejudice that going behind modern thought is out of the question.”\(^{291}\) Meier indicates that this turn is in fact the basis of his own book via his uncited reference to Gratry’s expression (cited by Strauss in *Philosophy and Law*) *l’essence de la critique, c’est l’attention.*\(^{292}\) In Strauss’ citation of Gratry’s

\(^{290}\) VII.4.8 (93/84-5).

\(^{291}\) VII.4.10 (94/87).

text, the quoted material appears in a discussion of the distinction between “probity” and the “love of truth”:

The new probity is somewhat other than the old love of truth: by speaking of the "intellectual conscience," "one means the 'inner' rule of science over man, and not just any science but modern science" (G. Krüger, Philosophie und Moral in der Kantischen Kritik, Tubingen 1931, p. 9 n. 2). The impartiality that characterizes this probity is "the impartiality of not being partial to transcendent ideals" (K. Löwith, "Max Weber und Karl Marx," Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik, Vol. 67, pp. 72 ff.). This conception of probity recalls the definition of critique: "La critique . . . a pour essence la négation du surnaturel." To this it was objected: "L'essence de la critique, c'est l'attention" (A. Gratry, Les sophistes et la critique, Paris 1864, p. 9).293

The phrase in question appears as a rejoinder of sorts to the position of the "new probity [Redlichkeit]," that “critique has for an essence the negation of the supernatural.” This observation is of crucial importance to understanding Meier’s book, for, as we will see, according to Meier, Strauss rhetorically or “hypothetically” adopts the position of probity, in order to force Schmitt out of his – so to speak – hiding place. This rhetorical move has the effect of uncovering the extent to which Schmitt’s position itself relies on probity, and thus subtly reveals that those whom Schmitt had considered his enemies – Marx, Stirner, Bakunin – are in fact only his opponents, and that by opposing them he (i.e., CS) in fact blinds himself to his “true” enemy (i.e., his enemy from the “sharpest” or strongest version of his own perspective), the philosopher. The question of probity is then a hinge on which the text as a whole turns, and the use of the Gratry quotation indicates this without

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saying it in so many words, preparing the reader not only for the kind of argument that is going to be made, but, above all, for the way Meier is going to make it.

To that end, Meier also prepares his readers for the use of the hypothetical subjunctive or conditional mood that will so determine the book’s argument and action. In its third paragraph, immediately after characterizing the respective positions of Schmitt and Strauss, he pursues the question of the “exceptional” character of both the Concept of the Political and the “Notes” – “Let us disregard what is most obvious and adhere to the authority of Schmitt.”294 The German original reads: “Sehen wir vom Naheliegendsten ab, und halten wir uns an die Autorität Schmitts.” First, “disregard” translates “absehen”: “seeing” words will continue to be associated with Strauss in the dialogue, “hearing” words with Schmitt. This accords with the view of philosophy as zetetic skepticism, in which “hearsay” is replaced by what one sees with one’s own eyes, or in which opinion is (or at least may be) replaced by knowledge. Second, the term “authority” is one that Meier will continually associate with Schmitt, even referring to it as one of the fundamental “determinations” (along with “revelation” and “obedience”) of political theology. What is “most obvious” is that which “lies nearest” us, or that which is easy to see; by “disregarding” (or “abstracting from”) that, we provisionally – hypothetically – suspend our ability to “see for ourselves,” in order to follow

294 0.3.2 (14/6).
Schmitt’s authority (though, it must be recalled, ultimately philosophy cannot rest content with any answer provided by an authority).295

What, then, is the “most obvious” way that the two texts are exceptional? Meier has already told us: For Schmitt, the Concept of the Political is the work that has made him “more famous and more infamous” than any other. At the same time, it is the text in which the way or mode in which he argues appears to be most straightforwardly determined by the object of his analysis: “A treatise about the political can only be... a political treatise.” Among the “texts about Schmitt,” what is exceptional about the “Notes” is that they bring into sharpest relief the perplexity attendant upon juxtaposing Schmitt’s reference to a “pure and whole knowledge” with his claim that “every concept of the political must have a ‘concrete opposition in view’ and be ‘bound to a concrete situation,’”296 or between Schmitt’s overt historicism and his latent dogmatism. The “authority of Schmitt,” then, is expressed in the fact that

[t]he Concept of the Political is the only text that Schmitt issued in three different editions. It is the only text in which the changes are not limited to polishing style, introducing minor shifts in emphasis, and making opportunistic corrections, but reveal conceptual interventions and important clarifications of content. And it is the only text in which, by means of significant deletions, elaborations, and reformulations, Schmitt reacts to a critique.297

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295 Cf. e.g., WLS?, 11.3 (198).
296 0.3.1 (14/6) & 0.2.6 (13/5).
297 0.3.5-7 (14-6/6-7). William Scheuerman has argued persuasively that the revised editions of Concept of the Political, and in particular Schmitt’s shift from a “domain”-based model of the political to an “intensity”-based model had at least as much to do with a “Hidden Dialogue” between Schmitt and Hans Morgenthau, whose critique, Die internationale Rechtspflege, ihr Wesen und ihre Grenzen, appeared in 1929. Cf. Scheuermann, “Carl Schmitt and Hans Morgenthau: Realism and Beyond.”
Schmitt’s authority indicates the character of the Strauss’ *challenge*: it must be met. Since from Schmitt’s “Epimethean” perspective one must “answer by doing,” the judgment indicated by his actions is more informative than anything he might write concerning the matter (which would in all likelihood be political-polemical).

If we accept the “primacy of action against knowledge” (according to Meier, one of Schmitt’s basic presuppositions), we will find it persuasive that Schmitt was compelled to respond to Strauss’ critique by altering the content of his arguments. Nor will we be dissuaded (according to Meier) by Schmitt’s official “silence” regarding Strauss’ “Notes,” particularly after 1933. By “listen[ing] closely,” we can yet hear their “silent dialogue” (note the use of “hearing” words again here, where we are still under Schmitt’s “authority” regarding Strauss’ critique). Meier lists seven considerations that “should command the reader’s alert and patient attention to the dialogue between Schmitt and Strauss.” The central consideration is that of “the fundamental alternatives that… are in question in this dialogue.” By couching this essentially philosophical consideration among a set of more obviously political considerations, and by linking it up with the consideration of the “fundamental alternatives that become visible… in this dialogue,” Meier indicates the place of philosophy in his text: central, but unobtrusive.

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298 Cf. VII.3.8 (89/80): “Political theology defends the primacy of action against knowledge, because political theology places everything under the commandment to be obedient.”
299 0.4.2 (17/9).
300 0.4.6 (17/10).
301 Ibid.
302 Ibid.
“argumentative power” and “intellectual keenness” opened up by the philosophical perspective permit Strauss to understand Schmitt better than Schmitt understands himself, but only if, and to the extent that, he does not aim at doing so.

Chapter I: Starting with Liberalism

Chapter 1 begins with the name “Leo Strauss;” the previous chapter had begun with the name “Carl Schmitt.” It ends with a cited quotation from Schmitt: “Politics is destiny”; the previous chapter had ended with an uncited quotation from Strauss, or rather, an uncited reference to a Straussian citation of Gratry: “L’essence de la critique, c’est l’attention.” Chapter 1 contains five paragraphs, one more than the previous chapter, and 44 sentences, four more than the previous chapter. After that chapter, it is the shortest in the book. It contains the fewest notes – just four – of any in the book. Its fourth and fifth sentences mark the first and second appearances of the word “why” [warum], an interrogative associated with the Socratic turn to political philosophy.303

Immediately following the two “Why” questions just mentioned – “Why Carl Schmitt?” and “Why The Concept of the Political?”304 – Meier follows with a more straightforwardly Socratic “What” question:

What awakens, what kindles Strauss’ particular interest? Above all else, it is "the radical critique of liberalism that Schmitt strives for" (N26)... It is a critique that Schmitt strives for, yet does not himself

303 Cf. WPP?, 19.5 (30/106) with n. 28.
304 I.1.4-5 (19/11).
bring to a close... Put more precisely, what primarily interests Strauss in writing on the *Concept of the Political* is to complete the critique of liberalism.\textsuperscript{305}

We are not told until much later that

\[ \text{[i]t is not so much the crisis of liberalism... but, to a far greater extent, the fact that the "systematics of liberal thought" in Europe "has still not been replaced by any other system," that makes the confrontation with liberalism the task and point of departure of a venture that is ultimately not concerned with the critique of liberalism.}\textsuperscript{306} \]

That is, Strauss’ interest is awakened by the possibility of completing the critique of liberalism begun by Schmitt, though it does not end in the completion of such a critique. It is, rather, only for him a “necessary beginning,” because the “ascent from opinion to knowledge... has to start with the most powerful opinions of the age and question its strongest prejudices.”\textsuperscript{307} It is for the sake of this interest, then, that Strauss makes Schmitt’s position “stronger at decisive points – and thus taken as a whole – than it really is.”\textsuperscript{308} Elsewhere we find this motif repeated almost exactly:

\[ \text{In order to counteract the avoidance of the most important question, the question of the right or the best life, Strauss not only makes the challenge posed by faith in revelation as strong as he possibly can. He also occasionally makes it stronger than it actually is, or (what amounts to the same thing) he allows the position of philosophy to appear weaker than it proves to be on closer examination.}\textsuperscript{309} \]

Strauss’ “objective interest in the issue” can thus be equated with his desire to “counteract the avoidance of the most important question,”\textsuperscript{310} i.e., the question of

\textsuperscript{305} I.1.6-11 (19/11).
\textsuperscript{306} VII.4.3 (92-3/84).
\textsuperscript{307} VII.4.5 (93/84).
\textsuperscript{308} I.2.1 (19/11).
\textsuperscript{309} *TPP*, I.15.2-3 (30/16).
\textsuperscript{310} *TPP*, I.13.4 (27-8/14).
the right or best life. He and Schmitt agree in their opposition to the bourgeois 
demand for security, which allows that question to go (as if) unposed. Strauss 
performs the "critic’s duty" by paying "more attention to what distinguishes 
Schmitt from the prevailing view than to the respects in which he merely follows the 
prevailing view." What alone separates, but certainly does separate, Schmitt’s 
historicism from the historicism of his liberal contemporaries is Schmitt’s faith. Strauss pays more attention to Schmitt's faith than to his historicism because in this 
way he will be able to highlight "the fundamental difficulty that besets Schmitt’s 
undertaking in a liberal world" – i.e., the difficulty of gaining a horizon beyond 
liberalism, or beyond a perspective fundamentally colored by the will to security.

Meier's discussion of the "manner" in and "intention" with which Strauss 
strengthens Schmitt’s position begins his treatment of Strauss’ “abstraction” from 
that position. Strauss views

Schmitt’s theoretical approach as a whole and from the very 
beginning as an attempt to depart, in an original, logically rigorous, 
internally consistent way, from the liberal "philosophy of culture." That is, he treats Schmitt’s enterprise as if not only “truth” but also “irrefutability” 
counted for Schmitt. Or even: as if “internal consistency” had more weight for 
Schmitt than “truthfulness” (probity) or a clear conscience. In thus casting Schmitt’s

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311 I.2.2 (19/11).
312 VII.3.34 (92/83).
313 I.2.2 (19/11).
315 I.2.1 (20/12).
316 But cf. VI.3.21 (77/69).
concept of the political in these “logically rigorous” terms, Strauss from time to time must make subtle suggestions to Schmitt, suggestions which take the form of elaborations of what Schmitt “already” means and had “already” said. Strauss protects Schmitt from being misunderstood as "wanting, after liberalism has brought to recognition the autonomy of aesthetics, of morality, of science, of the economy, etc.," "now on his part to bring the autonomy of the political into recognition – in opposition to liberalism but nonetheless in continuation of the liberal aspirations for autonomy – the autonomy of the political."317

Such a “misunderstanding” would in fact be precisely the understanding that would most obviously or straightforwardly emerge from a reading of the text, i.e., a reading that did not take its bearings from a clear understanding of Schmitt’s underlying intention and tailor itself to the expression of that intention in the strongest way possible. In this chapter, at least, Meier expresses the view that would consider Strauss’ reading of Schmitt to be a “protection from misunderstanding.” Read this way, one attributes to the original author the strongest or most consistent possible interpretation of a text, while blaming the “superficial reader” for not seeing, by means of authorial indications, the actual thrust of the argument. And while this perspective may seem overly charitable to the author, it is not literally false. After all, Strauss did derive his reading from the text itself, did triangulate the position of its author by means of the indications given in the work, and did express the author’s intention more clearly than a superficial reader would be likely to grasp. That the author himself might not have grasped his own intention fully is immaterial: the argument in its strongest form is the one most worthy of both critique and

317 I.4.1 (21/13).
identification and is therefore presumably the one “intended” (whether for the sake of consistency or merely that of being convincing). If the “misunderstanding” Strauss protects Schmitt from includes “self-misunderstanding,” this makes no difference on the level on which “the arguments take the lead,” the level proper to philosophizing. Moreover, it permits one to get past the defenses of a political-polemical writer whose rhetoric is meant to conceal the heart of his thinking. It is thus indicative of an irony that abstracts from the intention of the author (in the sense that it treats every self-contradiction as an indication, a call to awakening or perplexity) in order to grasp the movement of thought animating this intention, or in order to grasp both the intention and its concomitant blind spots as components of a single, unified movement of thought.

In this case, the issue is the picture of the political as one autonomous domain among others as opposed to the picture of the political as a threshold of intensity that can be reached from any domain. Meier characterizes Strauss’ approach as follows:

Strauss explains Schmitt’s point of departure... not as resulting from indifference on Schmitt’s part to the question of the genus within which the peculiarity of the political must be ascertained, but as deriving from a "deep suspicion of what is today the most obvious answer." Schmitt "pioneers a path to an original answer" "by using the phenomenon of the political to push the most obvious answer ad absurdum."  

This “deep suspicion of the most obvious answer” is shared by political philosophy: the opinions of the political community are the medium in which it, too, makes its

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318 Cf. DvLS, 16.4 (42/71).
319 I.3.2-3 (20/12).
beginning. Likewise, the strategy of “using the phenomenon of the political to push
the most obvious answer ad absurdum” is not essentially unphilosophical: it
reminds of the Socratic-elenctic method, in which an interlocutor’s presuppositions
are brought out and set against one another in order to highlight their incongruity.
From this beginning, however, Strauss’ unobtrusive critique becomes more critical:

It must be granted that Schmitt "does not express" this criticism "everywhere. He too, using the terminology of a whole literature,
occasionally speaks of the 'various, relatively independent domains of human thought and action' [26]. "Because Strauss literally cited
Schmitt’s "occasionally" occurring expression only a few lines before
in his elucidation of the liberal concept of culture, the seemingly casual
indication of a logical inconsistency in the "expression" calls the
reader's – and primarily Schmitt's own – attention to Schmitt's lack of
clarity on an important point regarding the extent of his
undertaking.\textsuperscript{320}

To which Schmitt responds, according to Meier, by removing every trace of the idea
of relatively independent domains from the third edition of \textit{Concept of the Political}
(1933). Further alterations, though sometimes slight, “signal assent no less clearly
to his critic."\textsuperscript{321} Here the use of the word "clear" is tacitly contrasted with the
"silence" of the dialogue: it is both "silent" (so that "superficial readers," who hear
only "opinions" and "gossip" will not be aware of it) and "clear" (so that
perspicacious, sharp-sighted readers will).

One of these “slight alterations” noted by Meier has to do with Schmitt's
perspective on works of art. In the 1932 second edition, Schmitt writes:

\textsuperscript{320} I.3.9-11 (20-1/13); italics added.
\textsuperscript{321} I.4.4 (22/14).
“That art is a daughter of freedom, that aesthetic value-judgment is absolutely autonomous, that artistic genius is sovereign, seems self-evident to liberalism.”

In 1933, this is adjusted, so that the phrase “daughter of freedom” and the words “autonomous” and “sovereign” are placed in quotation marks, as if to further distance Schmitt from the use of these terms in this context. For Schmitt the use of quotation marks indicates the evocation of a contrary perspective about which he is dubious. That a work of art should have “its ‘purpose in itself’” for liberalism suggests precisely that it does not have its purpose in itself for Schmitt. Meier employs a similar tactic by placing words and phrases of Schmitt’s in quotation-marks in order to show his (Meier’s) and Strauss’ distance from them. This technique is both rhetorical and (especially) unobtrusive in the sense that on its surface, it could signify simply the borrowing and citing of those terms from the Schmittian text. However, the fact that Meier borrows from Strauss without bothering to use quotation-marks, coupled with the often dubious tone accompanying the use of the Schmittian terms, indicates that they are being put in question authorially.

Meier indicates what will be the movement of the dialogue when he mentions that “the political question of rightly distinguishing between friend and enemy gains a gravity that raises the significance of the question far beyond the political.” We do not see just how far beyond the political until the discussion of the debate between Ernst Jünger and Paul Adams in Chapter 6, but this indication

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322 I.4.n14 (22/14).
323 I.5.8 (23/16).
serves to buttress Strauss’ claim that for Schmitt the “position of the political... is in all probability not Schmitt’s last word.” Thus when Schmitt says that “the political is the total” or that it is “what is authoritative,” this is meant to refer to the “real possibility of physical killing” only in a rhetorical or an exoteric sense. In reality – according to Meier – Schmitt’s concept of the political is total or authoritative because it derives from the authority, God, and bears on one’s ultimate fate, i.e., one’s standing with regard to the Last Judgment. “Politics is destiny,” then, not because man is naturally belligerent, but because it God has ordained that man should have an enemy. For he who has no enemy is ipso facto a friend of the Adversary, and thus only appears to have or recognizes no enemy: Schmitt, alone if necessary, will be his enemy on Judgment Day.

“Schmitt’s “rhetoric of pure politics” is on display in this chapter, even though it is not yet mentioned by name. It is as if Meier is deploying his own rhetoric, a rhetoric of naivété, which acts as if it does not suspect that Schmitt’s rhetoric is intended to conceal his “demanding moral decision” and ultimately his theological presuppositions. In enacting such a rhetoric, Meier follows Strauss, who, as we have said, used a kind of irony to correct Schmitt’s inconsistencies without bringing them to the attention of the careless reader. Meier, likewise, is trying to generate the effect of such a rhetoric, perhaps in order to do justice to Strauss’

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324 V.2.3 (59/50).
325 I.5.13 (24/16).
326 Cf. VI.5.10 (80/71).
327 Cf. II.2.13 (27/19).
technique, perhaps to indicate to the reader the philosophic importance of this approach.

Chapter I thus takes the form of a preliminary discussion of Strauss’ technique of unobtrusively critiquing Schmitt, written in the mode of a naïve acceptance of this technique: for Meier, it seems, as for Strauss, Schmitt “really did” mean to indicate a concept of the political grounded in an intensity-model rather than a domain-model, for, it seems, Schmitt had already clearly grasped just how far the latter would remain mired in the “systematics of liberal thought” that had to be overcome. Only a “superficial reader” would interpret such seeming contradictions, ellipses, gaps in the argument, and outright employment of “liberal” terms as any kind of assent to liberalism on Schmitt’s part. And – and this is the decisive point – this “naïve” reading of Strauss, as well as Strauss’ naïve reading of Schmitt, would, in a philosophic sense, be perfectly true. We could perhaps say that Schmitt “did and did not” intend the position to which Strauss delivered him.

Chapter II: Schmitt’s Defensive Rhetorics

In Chapter II – compared to Chapter I – Meier tips his hand somewhat. Chapter II is longer than the first two chapters combined (with 92 as opposed to 84 sentences), with roughly the same number of notes (14 compared with 16 for Chapters 0 and I). In this chapter, Meier traces Schmitt’s “movement” from the “rhetoric of pure politics” of 1927 to a “rhetoric of scholarly modesty” by 1932. Its
first words are “Der Weg” ("the way" or “the distance”) in the sense of the “distance
Carl Schmitt covered on the way to the preceding statement,” – i.e., that “Politics is
destiny” – was greater than a ‘superficial reader’ of Strauss’ essay might suppose.”

This marks the first usage of "suppose/supposition" [vermuten/ Vermutung], which,
though (or because) it only appears six times in the entire book, is a key term for
Meier’s text. Here it is attributed to the “superficial reader” [oberflächlicher Leser],
as contrasted with an “attentive reader” [aufmerksame Leser]. The word for
“attentive,” aufmerksam, is likewise a key-term for the rest of the book. It has
already appeared twice, the first time just before Meier’s reference to Gratry, regarding the way the dialogue between Schmitt and Strauss ought to be read, the
second regarding Strauss’ unobtrusive mention of a Schmittian “logical
inconsistency.” The word seems to indicate the counterconcept to “superficial,” in
the sense of a posture of reading, where the latter ends in a more-or-less unthinking
“supposition” while the former, by “thinking through the fundamental alternatives
to the end,” is able to “[uncover] the presuppositions of those alternatives,” and to
“[clarify] the problems involved,” if not to arrive at an unequivocal solution to
them.

Now Meier reveals that if even an “attentive reader,” should
acquire the first edition [of Concept of the Political] and look at it more
closely, he will find, upon perusal of it, that not only a "superficial
reader could get the impression" that Schmitt wants "to bring the
autonomy of the political into recognition, in opposition to liberalism

328 II.1.1 (25/17); italics added.
329 0.4.6 (17/10)
330 I.3.11 (21/13).
331 0.2.12 (13/6).
but nonetheless in continuation of the liberal aspirations for autonomy.”  

In that first edition of 1927, moreover, Schmitt does not place “suspect” terms in quotation marks, nor does he offer a hint of resistance to, indeed, he even “expressly defines the political itself as a domain...” Meier says that Strauss “doubtless has good reasons [gute Gründe] to overlook [hinwegsieht] Schmitt’s changes and to pass over [übergeht] in silence the contradictions of the book...” This is an indication of Strauss’ basic orientation: not only does he have “good reasons” for adopting the rhetorical strategy he adopts in the sense that this strategy lures Schmitt into revealing more of himself than would otherwise be possible, but it also, in so doing, provides Strauss with self-knowledge regarding his own position and his own cause, showing him “what it is not, what it cannot be, and what it does not want to be.”  

His “good reasons” are not just “good” in the sense they enable him to manipulate or “manage all his interlocutors in any manner he wished”; rather, they are good in the sense of being oriented towards the good as such, the hallmark of Socratic political philosophy. For by means of Strauss’ rhetorical technique, grounded in those “good reasons,” Strauss is able, on the one hand, to maintain plausible deniability and naivité in the face of any hostile interpreter, and, on the other, still able to perform the “critic’s duty” of refining and sharpening distinctions, bringing

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332 II.1.3 (25/17).
333 II.15 (25/17).
334 II.1.6 (25/17-8).
335 LCS, IV.39.7 (261/173).
336 Strauss, XS, p. 12.
337 Cf. WPP?, 19.4-6 (30-1/106).
out hidden or latent contradictions, and questioning the presuppositions on which
any argument is based. Strauss’ “good grounds,” as the “sake” of political philosophy,
always maintain a connection to the sake of philosophy as such, which Strauss (in
the notes to a speech first published by Meier) names as “the elaboration of what is
possible or not.”338

His philosophical perspective thus enables Strauss to determine what is and
is not possible for Schmitt, though, as we have said, only to the extent that he bears
in mind the literal truth of his seemingly “naïve” fixation on Schmitt’s “hidden”
(whether from him or from the superficial reader) intentions. Elsewhere, Meier
draws a distinction between “history and intention”339; here, he attributes the
“changes” and “contradictions” of Concept of the Political to “the history of its
development” [Entwicklungsgechichte].340 The term itself does not appear in
Strauss’ “Notes,” so it seems that the quotation marks here serve either to introduce
a novel and perhaps questionable term, or to discreetly refer to another text. It is
perhaps safest to find in the term something of what Seth Benardete calls the
“genetic structure of law” as opposed to the “eidetic structure of good.”341 Benardete
glosses this distinction as follows:

”Eidetic” is short for what results from an analysis of something into
its kinds, "genetic" stands for the result of examining the coming into
being of a genus or one genus from another. The equivalent in the

339 In DvLS.
340 Meier is referring to the period between 1927 and 1932, during which Strauss
and Schmitt had no contact; Strauss’ “Notes” would be relevant only for the changes
between 1932 and 1933.
Republic to the difference between the eidetic and genetic is to be found in the twofold requirement that the class structure of the city be rigid yet allow for movement between the classes if any member of a class at birth or later deserves to be shifted from his original place (cf. Timaeus 19a1-5).342

It is perhaps worth noting here that Meier has called Benardete’s book Socrates’ Second Sailing “the most important on the Republic to have appeared in recent decades,”343 and that Benardete “wrote and brought to completion” the above-cited book on the Laws “as Carl Friedrich von Siemens Fellow in 1994 and 1998 in Munich,”344 of which institute Meier was and is director. Personal connections aside, there is “good reason” to think that Meier has something like the distinction between the “genetic structure of law” and the “eidetic structure of the good” in mind, for just as the genesis of Schmitt’s book is marked by changes and contradictions, the fact that Strauss,

as elegantly and discreetly as possible, calls attention to these things, is no less good a reason for us briefly to consider Schmitt’s initial conception and to examine more closely what Strauss, in his interpretation, leaves undisputed.345

In other words, the fact that the risks attendant upon Strauss’ critique do not prevent Strauss from bringing it indicate that there is something worth paying attention to, worth questioning and gaining clarity about, in Schmitt’s intention. Schmitt’s aim of overcoming the “systematics of liberal thought” is shared by Strauss (and presumably Meier), even if the ends for whose sake they pursue this aim are

342 Benardete, Plato’s “Laws,” pp. 18-19n.
343 PdF, 15.n44, (181).
345 II.1.7 (25-6/18).
ultimately different. Each, that is, appears to pursue some idea of the “good,” and this accounts both for their “superficial” agreement and their radical disagreement; it is, after all, “about right and wrong, and noble and disgraceful, and good and bad” that “you and I and other people become enemies, when we do become enemies…”

The rest of the chapter charts the trajectory of Schmitt’s “movement” from the initial conception of Concept of the Political in 1927 to its thoroughgoing revision in 1932. Schmitt is at pains to conceal “the distance” he travelled on that way, but its reconstruction would seem to be integral for an accurate account of the intention he pursued thereby. Beginning in 1927 with the “rhetoric of pure politics,” Schmitt is said to adopt a “defensive” position. This position provides him with several rhetorical advantages. On one hand, it postpones the problem of “how the ‘real enemy’ can be ‘known’…”

If the enemy attacks, the will to ward him off is "fully self-evident" (1, 29). The enemy defines himself as enemy by means of the attack; the reasons and motives of the enmity can then safely be neglected as secondary, or so it may seem from the viewpoint of the attacked.

Here the phrases “real enemy” and “fully self-evident” as well as the word “known” are set apart with quotation marks. The citation of Schmitt’s text seems to indicate that they are all taken directly from that text; however, the verb “erkennen” (“to know”) does not appear on any of the cited pages, nor is it used to describe the

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346 Cf. Epigraph (11/3).
347 II.2.5 (26/18).
348 II.2.9-11 (26-7/19).
349 Cf. the references given in II.2.7 (26/18).
relation to the “real enemy” [wirkliche Feind]. And of course Meier’s point is that Schmitt’s defensive strategy draws our attention away from this question— the question of rightly distinguishing friend and enemy. In light of this, the use of “knows” [erkannt] without any reference in the text suggests that such “knowledge” is perhaps not really knowledge at all, or that Schmitt’s intention precludes such knowledge: since one can identify one’s enemies as attackers without knowing “the reasons and motives” behind their attack, one can hardly be said to “know” them in the sense of being able to rightly distinguish them from one’s friends in the absence of an attack.

Schmitt’s “rhetoric of pure politics” also has the “double political advantage of shielding his own ‘purely political’ position” (note again the ambiguous quotation marks),

against all “normative” criticism and of simultaneously enabling him to attack, with the superior self-certainty of the morally indignant [moralisch Indignierten], any normative “intrusions” upon the region [Bereich] of “pure politics...”  

Meier’s first words in his book on Schmitt are “Moral indignation” [Moralische Entrüstung]. The use of the term “indignation” derives from Strauss’ analysis of the Platonic concept of thumos, usually translated as “spiritedness.” We will reserve our full treatment of Meier’s use of the term for the discussion of that book, but the fact that this passage marks its first appearance must make us attentive to the context in which it is used. Schmitt’s “superior self-certainty” [überlegenen

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350 II.2.13 (27/19); italics added.
351 LCS, I.1.1 (13/1).
Selbstgewißheit] must be thought of in opposition to the self-understanding and self-knowledge that may be possible for the philosopher on the path of a radical and thorough self-questioning. Schmitt’s certainty is to be contrasted with his “knowledge,” as only the latter appears in quotation marks. And this certainty must be borne in mind when we discuss the distinction between probity and the love of truth, where “honesty” and “truthfulness” are for the former the last word, while the latter, though far from blind to their importance, nevertheless finds its fulfillment outside their ken.

Via the evocation of the “rhetoric of pure politics,” Schmitt becomes able to mask the reality that the enemy qua attacker will always be, or can always be said to be, one who goes “beyond the political.”352 Schmitt’s moralism recedes behind the cover of his politicism. But, Meier explains,

[t]he rhetoric of pure politics, for all its political advantages for Schmitt, has a grave disadvantage. If Schmitt, with his initial conception, succeeds in bringing to bear the "proper objectivity and independence of the political," he does so only at the price of reducing the political to foreign policy.353

Note first the conditional character of the second sentence: “If Schmitt... succeeds bringing to bear the "proper objectivity and independence of the political..." That he does not succeed in no way hampers Meier’s analysis; the conditional tense allows the speaker or writer to entertain and evaluate an opponent’s arguments without committing himself to their presuppositions. Indeed, the only species of argument that would not allow such a hypothetical procedure would be the one that claimed

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352 II.2.18 (28/20).
353 II.3.1-2 (28/20-1).
that in order to properly understand its “truth,” one would have to already be committed to it. Only before such a claim would Meier’s rhetorical strategy fall short; and indeed it is just this claim that is made by the most radical proponents of revealed religion. As Strauss puts it, in his discussion of Calvin:

It is not conceded that the first step is to establish what God is, or, at the least, what the relationship is between God and man, what God requires of man; the first step, i.e., a step preceding one’s living piously, is to ask the question, Does it obey God? As is man’s whole life, so theory also is subjected from the outset to God’s judgment and to that question.³⁵⁴

Thus for Calvin,

the contrast between belief and unbelief is maintained in the exercise of reason by believers and unbelievers. Believing exercise of reason is set apart from unbelieving reason by the same gulf that yawns between belief and unbelief in general.³⁵⁵

From the perspective of faith in revelation, man’s actions appear to be decisive; but this would only be possible if man were somehow all-important, if what human beings did or did not do, how they lived and what decisions they made, mattered for the whole, that is, mattered in a moral sense, to a moral whole.³⁵⁶ Theory is useless

³⁵⁴ Strauss, SCR (249/194).
³⁵⁵ Strauss, SCR (250/195).
³⁵⁶ Cf. Strauss, SCR, (254/198 ff.) with ÚdGpL, II.22.11 ff. (339 ff.). – In the important essay “The Law of Reason in the Kuzari,” Strauss writes: “The philosopher denies the relevance, not only of ceremonial actions, but of all actions; more precisely, he asserts the superiority of contemplation as such to action as such: from the philosopher’s point of view, goodness of character and goodness of action is essentially not more than a means toward, or a by-product of, the life of contemplation... It is only on the basis of the assumption of the superiority of practical life to contemplative life that the necessity of a given revelation in particular can be demonstrated...” (in PAW, p. 114). Without this assumption, there can be no “exceptional moment” of revelation: the revealed truth would be accessible in thought just as well in one time and place as another (it would be a
from this perspective not (only) because the believer believes he knows that human knowledge is ultimately impotent, but because, “There are matters more important. There is but one thing needful.” The primacy of action, then, is a direct consequence of the moral view of the world: only if everything depends on man, only if man is responsible, can the moral import of his actions be weightier than the theoretical insights of his thought and intellection. Or, only in this case can the urgent replace the high absolutely. In a moral world, the urgent is the high, because the “one thing needful” is to fear God. This might account in part for the primacy of practical over theoretical reason in modern philosophy, as well as for the hidden kinship uniting Schmitt with modernity and preventing him from seeing beyond its horizon.

Schmitt alleged dependence on “foreign policy” reflects another nod by Meier to Strauss. In his editorial “Vorwort” to the second volume of Strauss’ Gesammelte Schriften, Meier presents a kind of “history of development” of Strauss’ thought. Briefly, Meier’s recounting holds that “in the second half of 1935 and in the first months of 1936,” Strauss arrived “at greater clarity in regard to the political dimension of [the medieval political philosophers’] confrontation with revealed

“natural possibility of man”). Only if thought is essentially subservient to action or to the “event” would the latter emerge as a determining condition of the possibility of the former in general. For Schmitt, this means that the truth of the Incarnation in the Virgin trumps and must trump every human attempt to subsume it into an explicable genus by means of reason.

357 Strauss, SCR (249/194).
358 Cf. LCS, II.16.12 (82/48).
religion.” Strauss’ view was “sharpened by his engagement with the medieval philosophers,” allowing him,

to understand and classify more precisely, for Hobbes and later for Machiavelli, the *reassessment of war and foreign policy* established by the founding fathers of modern political philosophy in critical opposition to ancient political philosophy. Thus, months after finishing *Hobbes’ politische Wissenschaft in ihrer Genesis*, Strauss inserts a paragraph on the *primacy of foreign policy in Hobbes*...  

That paragraph reads, in part, as follows:

> While for Plato and Aristotle, in accordance with the primary interest they attach to home policy, the question of the number of inhabitants of the perfect State, that is, the limits set to the State by its inner necessity, is of decisive importance, Hobbes brushes this question aside in the following words: “The Multitude sufficient to confide in for our Security, is not determined by any certain number, but by comparison with the Enemy we feare...” The *primacy of foreign policy* is taught not only by Hobbes but in *all specifically modern political philosophy*, whether implicitly or explicitly. This assertion needs no proof in view of the theories of “power politics.”  

Just because it appears to rest on a “theory of power politics,” 1927’s “rhetoric of pure politics” is forced to see war in terms of “armed conflict between nations”:

> Conflicts in the interior of a state are discussed within the horizon of the question of what effects they could have on the capacity of the political unit to wage war (I, 9 ff.). Schmitt speaks of "war" seventy-seven times in the thirty-three paragraphs of his essay. The term "civil war" does not occur once.  

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359 GS3, 12.1 (xxiii/15).
360 GS3, 12.3-4 (xxi-xxiv/16); italics added.
361 Strauss, *PPH* (184/163); italics added. Cf. esp. *PPHO*, II.3.13.5 ff. (136 ff.), according to which (Strauss’) Machiavelli levels “an attack on the self-sufficiency of the classical teaching that is of considerable importance. It concerns not only the conception of the best regime or the good polis and its stability. It applies in particular to the neglect of foreign policy that seems to pose no controversy of fundamental interest for “classical” political philosophy” (II.3.13.13-15, p. 137).
362 II.3.3-8 (28-9/21).
Such a rhetoric, then, is overtly modern in the sense that it takes its bearings from the presupposition of an enemy – and not just any enemy, but, as Meier puts it, “an enemy with a claim to universal mission and rule,” i.e., an enemy built in the image of revealed religion. For Schmitt, this means the Antichrist, in whatever guise and using whatever means he finds necessary or appropriate. And even if the position of “pure politics” is not Schmitt’s “last word,” it yet remains possible that it does in a sense touch the “core of his existence” — that he is, to the spiritual “sphere,” what Hobbes, or better, Hobbesian man, is to the political. Schmitt’s political theology would then be a kind of bourgeoisité of the soul.

Be that as it may, the fact that “pure politics” is not Schmitt’s last word enables him to change his tack in 1931-2, in the face of a “changed political situation.” In acknowledging this motivation, Meier appears to be effectively concurring with Armin Mohler’s view of Schmitt’s career as marked by “caesuras,” by which term Mohler means to indicate “a resumption of the same thread on a different level, in the new situation.” But while Mohler sees three more or less well-defined periods emerging as the result of such caesuras (first, the Schmitt of the Weimar Republic; next, the Schmitt of the 3rd Reich; and finally, the post-war Schmitt), Meier telescopes Schmitt’s adaptations into the years between 1927 and 1933, and also couches them explicitly in terms of rhetoric. For Meier, it is not exactly that the “same thread” is picked up “on a different level,” but rather that the

363 GS3, 12.2 (xxiii/15).
364 II.3.9 (29/21).
exoteric armature by which Schmitt protects the “core of his thought” changes in response to the changing historical-political circumstances. Certainly, both views attempt to account for Schmitt’s insistence that “all political concepts and ideas and words... are tied to a concrete situation.”\textsuperscript{366} They differ – and this difference is decisive – in the further claim, tacit or explicit, that every concept of the political is a political concept, or as Meier puts it, silently altering Schmitt’s text, “that every concept of the political must have a ‘concrete opposition in view’ and be ‘bound to a concrete situation...’”\textsuperscript{367} Since according to him, “politics is not everything,”\textsuperscript{368} there exists at least the possibility of an unpolitical concept of the political, or one that is not essentially polemical or “bound to a concrete situation.” Mohler’s historicist reading of Schmitt fails to see the core of his thinking because it does not understand faith in revelation as a permanent human possibility. In the same way, Schmitt’s “knowledge” that “all historical truth is true only once” would require the minor premise “all truth is historical” to lead to the conclusion that “all truth is true only once.” For the “Christian Epimetheus” the truth of the Incarnation, “a historical event of infinite, unpossessable, unoccupiable uniqueness,” remains true for at least the entirety of the Christian epoch, the “state of historicity,” of “probation and judgment” in which the “demanding moral decision” put to man by God remains in effect,\textsuperscript{369} and so is not “true only once.”

\textsuperscript{366} Cf. Strauss, “Notes” (99/91).
\textsuperscript{367} 0.2.6 (13/5).
\textsuperscript{368} VII.4.14 (95-6/87).
\textsuperscript{369} Cf. LCS, I.15.27-29 (39/20).
Thus Schmitt’s adoption of a “rhetoric of scholarly modesty” – to which he “reverts” in 1932, replacing 1927’s “rhetoric of pure politics” – is “no less misleading” than his previous posture. If the “intensity” model indicated that for Schmitt “everything is more or less – at all events potentially – political,” it would indeed be misleading of him to “maintain the fiction” that “especially intense and inhuman wars” could still in some compellingly significant sense be called wars “that go beyond the political” when the political itself is supposed to denote the most extreme degree of intensity...

But his insistence, after having moved to the intensity-model, on a criterion by which the political could be distinguished no less masks the basically moral character by which alone the enemy can be rightly identified. Meier cites three examples of Schmitt’s “rhetoric of scholarly modesty.” The first concerns Schmitt’s insertion of the caveat that the political “denotes no subject area of its own, but only the gradient of intensity of an association or a dissociation of men,” and his subsequent (in 1933) deletion of the word “only” from this phrase. The second refers to the use of the term “simple criterion of the political,” which appears in the 1932 edition but is dropped in the 1933 edition. The third points to a passage involving the “millennium-long struggle between Christianity and Islam,” in which it never occurred to a Christian to deliver Europe over to Islam, rather than to defend it, out of love for the Saracens or the Turks.

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370 II.4.18 (34/27).
373 II.4.20 (35/27).
Thus Meier says of *Concept of the Political* that “it is not merely or primarily a
description of what is,” i.e., of the *fact* that this or that group has distinguished
between friend and enemy. Rather, and even under the mask of “scholarly modesty,”
or, as Meier will later call it, “positivism,” Schmitt must be concerned with the
possibility of distinguishing *rightly* between friend and enemy, and it is just on *these*
grounds that Strauss (and Meier) will oppose him.

If *everything* can be political, Meier asks – and we know this “if” bears the
weight of a full-on hypothetical since later he asserts unqualifiedly that “politics is
not everything”\(^{375}\) – “what kind of politics would Schmitt count as political in the
eminent sense?”\(^{376}\) That is, “what enmity” would be the *most political* enmity, or “by
what enmity” do Schmitt’s “statements of the ‘essence’ of the political take their
bearings?”\(^{377}\) Meier supposes that Schmitt “takes his bearings” from the extreme
case, another characteristic of modern thought according to Strauss. In *Natural
Right and History*, Strauss levels a critique of this kind of thought that seems to aim
directly at Schmitt, even if its proximate target is Machiavelli:

Machiavelli denies natural right, *because he takes his bearings by the extreme situations* in which the demands of justice are reduced to the
requirements of necessity, and not by the normal situations in which
the demands of justice in the strict sense are the highest law.
Furthermore, he does not have to overcome a reluctance as regards
the deviations from what is normally right. On the contrary, he seems
to derive no small enjoyment from contemplating these deviations,
and he is not concerned with the punctilious investigation of whether
any particular deviation is really necessary or not.\(^{378}\)

\(^{375}\) VII.4.14 (95-6/87).
\(^{376}\) II.4.23 (35/27).
\(^{377}\) Ibid.
\(^{378}\) Strauss, *NR&H*, p. 162; italics added.
From the perspective of such an orientation, what is “most urgent” appears in the place of what is “higher in rank.” For the political philosopher, this is temporarily or situationally justified: questions of exigency may legitimately lead us to prefer to address ourselves to what is most urgent rather than to what is higher in rank.

But one cannot make a universal rule that urgency is a higher consideration than rank. For it is our duty to make the highest activity, as much as we can, the most urgent or the most needful thing.379

By placing the most urgent or the “most extreme” intensity of the political in the place of that which is highest in rank, i.e., the place of authoritative orientation, or by allowing his concept of the political to take its bearings from what is most urgent, Schmitt fails according to political philosophy’s standard of action, which is to make the highest activity into the most urgent or most needful thing. He indeed seems oblivious of or even hostile to this standard as such. Thus when he extols the “peaks of great politics” as the “most extreme point of the political,” he is not measuring himself by the standard of political philosophy, or he is allowing his apparent duty to rightly distinguish the enemy for the sake of the Lord and his own salvation to alienate him from what according to political philosophy is the best or right thing for him.

“Cromwell’s battle against papal Spain,” like the Christian enmity toward Islam, proves to be the “highest” example of enmity for Schmitt’s political theology. Cromwell’s enemy is a “natural enemy” because he is a “providential enemy,” and

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In the face of the providential enemy all further distinctions dissolve. He negates by the force of his being. The intensity of the opposition allows of no further increase.  

But what is “natural” in this sense is not natural in the sense intended by Strauss and Meier. Indeed, the hypothetical following-out of Schmitt’s apparent “commitment” to the concept of a status naturalis provides us with the single clearest example of Strauss’ hypothetical method: by it, he compels Schmitt to acknowledge the rhetorical character of his use of the term “nature.” Meanwhile, Meier’s own rhetoric now advances to the questions of nature and knowledge: the “peaks of great politics” are the moments [Augenblicke] in which the enemy is discerned [erblickte], in which he is known [erkannte] as the negation of one’s own being, of one’s own destiny – in which, and inseparably connected therewith, one’s own identity is established and gains a visible figure.

But if the enemy is – as Schmitt thinks – “one’s own question as figure,” then such moments can only be those moments in which one’s own question is “discerned” as a question, as questionable, as the question that would shake one’s “self-certainty” to its very foundations. Such “knowledge” would then begin with the awareness that one is not, after all, perfectly secure against the enemy or against “the question that is the enemy,” and would only lead to self-knowledge, if it first led one to wonder about one’s own desire or drive for the security of a certainty or a validity that

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380 II.4.27-34 (36/28-9).
381 II.4.25-26 (35/28).
382 VI.5.3 (79/70).
would remain forever unshakeable, or that would presuppose what is impossible without wanting to ask about the conditions of its possibility.

Chapter III: The Extreme Case of Schmitt and Hobbes – The Status Naturalis

Chapter III contains five paragraphs and 54 sentences, making it the third-shortest chapter in the book. Whereas the previous chapter had begun with the words “the way” [der Weg], this one begins with the word “Schmitt” and ends with the words “wants to remain” [bleiben will]. Thematically, then, we are led to expect that this chapter will emphasize Schmitt’s stasis as opposed to his parallactic or apparent “movement” in the previous section, from the rhetoric of pure politics to the rhetoric of scholarly modesty. This chapter also contains nine notes, the second fewest in the book. However its second note is one of the text’s weightiest. It concerns a citation from Strauss that Meier will return to again, and which will be a key determinant in his overall approach to what Strauss called “the theologico-political problem.”

After having formulated Schmitt’s “critique of liberalism” in terms of a “critique of the ‘philosophy of culture,’” Strauss specifies as “‘one crux’” of this “philosophy” “‘the fact of religion’; the other he specifies as the ‘fact of the political.’”\(^3\) Strauss continues:

"If 'religion' and 'politics' are the facts that transcend 'culture' or, to speak more exactly, are the original facts, then the radical critique of

\(^3\) III.1.4 (37/30).
the concept of 'culture' is possible only in the form of a 'theological-political treatise,' which must, however, if it is not to lead again to the foundation of 'culture,' have the very opposite tendency to that of seventeenth-century theological-political treatises, especially those of Hobbes and Spinoza.”

Meier meets Strauss’ conditional or hypothetical reasoning with a reference to “religion and the fact of the political...” That is, Meier unobtrusively signals that he does not consider religion to be a “fact that transcends culture” or an “original fact.” Of the two, only politics, he implies, has this status. However, religion and politics are united in their “integral” orientation: they question the “parceling of human life” into “autonomous provinces of culture”; and they equally “subordinate human existence to the dominion, law, and command of an authority [der Herrschaft, dem Gesetz, und dem Gebot einer Autorität].” Their difference, it seems, would reside in the authority itself of that command, or in the nature of the authority issuing it. Thus if Schmitt “embarks upon his confrontation with liberalism in the name of the political and... pursues it for the sake of religion,” only the name under which he embarks will be considered factual; the sake for which he pursues his critique is something other than a fact, or at least something other than an original fact.

Meier is then indicating that Strauss’ formulation is hypothetical because for him, as for Meier, religion is not an “original fact.” Here, it is precisely the conditional character of the rhetoric that indicates knowledge of the matter in

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384 III.1.n32 (37/30).
385 III.1.5 (37/30).
386 III.1.5 (37-8/30).
387 III.1.1 (37/30).
question. Owing to such knowledge, Strauss is able to grasp and articulate “Schmitt’s increasing uneasiness with the modern concept of culture... in the most fundamental way imaginable.” Against the prevailing view that “culture as a whole is autonomous," Strauss points out the simple and trenchant fact that “culture is always the culture of nature.” In response, Schmitt “deletes and replaces the words ‘culture’ and ‘cultural’” in the essay “The Age of Neutralizations and Depoliticizations” (formerly called “European Culture in the Intermediate Stages of Neutralization”) “no less than thirty-one times out of the original fifty-four occurrences.” Obviously Schmitt wants nothing to do with a concept so beholden to the concept “nature” despite the fact that he uses the latter concept fairly frequently, if polemically. One might say that he is content to deploy the concept of nature, but does not want to presuppose it – he desires that it should remain within his ambit, and not he within its.

Nonetheless, his rhetorical use of the term puts him under a certain pressure to “affirm” it; moreover, Strauss’ own rhetoric “has Schmitt bring the Hobbesian concept of the state of nature into a place of honor again...” Here again, Meier follows Strauss’ “rhetoric of naïvité” or his irony in viewing Schmitt’s “return” to the Hobbesian state of nature as possible (for Schmitt) in the strict sense. It is not. As we find out later, Schmitt,

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388 III.1.6 (38/31).
389 III.1.9 (38/31).
390 III.1.n33 (38/31).
391 III.2.5 (39/32).
like every Christian theoretician who “gives the writings of Moses the credence he owes them,” ... denies that men ever existed or could exist in a state of nature.392

Meier’s citation of Rousseau is closely related to the use of “hypothetical rhetoric,” as we will see. For the time being, however, Meier gives us to understand that in the first place, Strauss interprets Schmitt’s “'political status'” as the status naturalis in Hobbes’ sense. For the former, as for the latter, the point of orientation – the “political” and the status belli, respectively – consists “'not in fighting itself,' “'but in a behavior that is determined by this real possibility.”393 Both Schmitt and Hobbes orient their political thinking to the extreme case (though not necessarily the same extreme case); by means of this orientation, both construct their conceptual apparatus with a view to this case, or with a view to its possibility. This basic orientation colors both Schmitt and Hobbes’ thought, and it colors them the same color.

Strauss’ “translation” emphasizes this commonality, while provisionally or rhetorically abstracting from the differences between the two thinkers. But Strauss does not lose sight of these differences: most obviously, Schmitt’s “state of nature” is apparently a state of war among groups, while Hobbes’ is a state of war among individuals.394 Moreover, Hobbes’ state of nature is polemically constructed, intended from its conception to be overcome, the “negation of the political”;

392 IV.5.19 (56-7/49); italics added.
393 III.2.6 (39/32).
394 Cf. III.3.1 (39-40/32-3).
Schmitt's, in contrast, is “affirmed” as the “position of the political.” Since even in Hobbes’ account, the state of war among groups persists beyond the overcoming of the state of war among individuals, it “appears” that Schmitt will not be forced to “question the political in the sense if the Concept of the Political.” But this appearance is revealed to be deceptive via Strauss’ use of the “dire emergency” as a “test” [Probe]. In this case, the case of the individual’s being commanded to die on behalf of the group, the difference between Hobbes’ and Schmitt’s positions “becomes visible in its sharpest outline” [in voller Schärfe]. For while Schmitt’s position would demand that the individual obey such a command if it were issued in the service of the decisive battle with the real or providential enemy, for Hobbes nothing could authorize it, since for him, the “end and limits” of the state are “defined by an individual’s claim based on natural right, a claim that is prior to the state” and therefore the state can justifiably demand only conditional obedience from the individual, “namely an obedience that does not stand in contradiction to the salvation or preservation of the life of this individual....”

This test gives Strauss purchase on the fundamental distinction between Schmitt and Hobbes; he, like Schmitt’s “present God,” tests Schmitt, tests this “moral man”

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395 III.3.3-5 (40/33).
396 III.3.6-7 (40/33).
397 III.3.8 (40/33). – When Schmitt “directs the man who needs security... toward the present God Who tests [erprobt] him,” (III.1.3, p. 37/30). he seems tacitly to acknowledge that he is this man, or that the need for security will be satisfied via such a testing, however “doubtful” one may be or however “rigorous” one’s self-doubt regarding the purity of one’s faith.
398 Ibid.
399 III.3.9 (40-1/33-4).
whose most intense need is that of security, and who thus cannot resist the lure of a thinker who promises to deliver him from the clutches of his perceived enemy, Thomas Hobbes.

But Hobbes is not Schmitt’s enemy, only his opponent [Gegner]. This becomes clear first by the fact that Meier speaks of the “opposition” [Gegensatz] and the “political opposition” [politische Opposition], rather than the “enmity” [Feindschaft] between Schmitt’s position of the political and Hobbes’ negation of the political.400 In fact, the word “enmity” does not appear in the body of either Chapter III or Chapter IV, and the word “enemy” [Feind] appears in the body of Chapter III just once, in a passage about Strauss’ “unspoken criticism” of Schmitt, i.e.,

that the protagonist of the political achieves complete clarity neither about the position of the enemy [Feind] nor about the presuppositions and requirements of his own project...401

Thus the sole use of the word “enemy” in Chapter III occurs in a discussion of Schmitt’s failure to achieve “complete clarity” about the enemy’s position. His own position, then, the position of the political, renders him only the protagonist of the political, who will oppose, but not come to know, his enemy, since he is only capable of seeing antagonists, and above all the negater of the political, Thomas Hobbes. In the same vein, Meier writes that Strauss’ critique aims at what Schmitt “more strives for [anstrebt] than engages [unternimmt].”402 The usage of the verb “strives for”

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400 III.3.6 (40/33) & III.3.12 (41/34).
401 III.4.2 (42/35).
402 III.4.2 (42/35).
recalls Meier’s earlier citation of Strauss’ formulation that what “awakens Strauss’ special interest” is

"the radical critique of liberalism that Schmitt strives for" (N26). It is a critique that Schmitt strives for, yet does not himself bring to a close.403

But it also foreshadows his subsequent usages of the term, as, for instance, when he quotes Strauss a referring to

a powerful movement striving for the total elimination of the real possibility of war and hence the abolition of the political.404

In these examples, the thing “striven for” may or may not actually be possible; the term suggests a certain futility or even a pathos regarding an effort viewed sub specie aeternitatis, or even the recognition, via a certain conceptual simultaneity of origin and end, of fate as fate.405

Meier explicitly characterizes Strauss’ critique of Schmitt as intended to show the political theologian that he “did not recognize his most important theoretical antipode as an antipode at all.”406 On the surface, this means that Schmitt mistook Hobbes for a fellow-traveller on the path of the political, a fellow defender of the honor of the political. Whereas Strauss’ critique persuasively argues that,

"In truth Hobbes is the antipolitical thinker (‘political’ understood in Schmitt’s sense)."407

403 I.1.7-8 (19/11).
404 VI.1.12 (70/61).
405 Cf. uses of “must” as in IV.1.7 (47/39) as well as LCS, II.23.9 (103/63).
406 III.4.2 (42/35).
407 III.4.5 (42/36).
Schmitt, too, is apparently persuaded; his changes to the *Concept of the Political* testify to a deep reconsideration of the place of Hobbes in his thought. Meier’s citations tell a similarly persuasive story regarding Schmitt’s change of heart regarding Hobbes, at least provisionally, in the three editions of *Concept of the Political*. But Meier’s emphasis on the fact that Strauss brings to Schmitt’s attention the fact that Hobbes is in reality Schmitt’s “most important theoretical antipode” does not say that according to Strauss – or Meier for that matter – Hobbes is Schmitt’s enemy. Rather, everything points to an agonal opposition between Schmitt and Hobbes, one likely deriving from their shared presupposition regarding the nature of man: both begin from, and remain in the horizon of, a perspective that views man as naturally or essentially evil or culpable. Both Schmitt and Hobbes are decisively stamped by what Strauss elsewhere calls “the perverse interweaving of a *nomos*-tradition with a philosophical tradition, that is, of Biblical revelation with Greek philosophy, of a tradition of obedience with a ‘tradition’ of questioning that, insofar as it is traditional, is no longer a questioning...”408 The great distinction between Hobbes, on the one hand, and liberal-bourgeois modernity on the other, is that the latter, but not the former, has lost the awareness of the fact that “the liberal project has to be persistently fought for against the unliberal nature of man.”409 Schmitt concurs with this foundational presupposition, if not with the thrust of the liberal “solution” to the problem of man’s natural evil: for him the “right” (or imperative) solution is faith in the truth of revelation or obedience to God. From the

408 *DvLS*, 5.n.7 (25/59-60).
409 III.4.10 (43/36).
philosophic perspective, both Hobbes and Schmitt presuppose a definitive answer
to a question whose answer is not definitively known: the question, “What is man?” or the question concerning the right or the best life [die Frage nach dem Richtigen].

If Strauss’ ability to “test” Schmitt, or even to “have him bring the Hobbesian concept of the state of nature into a place of honor again” puts him in a somewhat Godlike position over the political theologian, nevertheless

[O]ne can hardly say that Schmitt answers Strauss’ arguments. He makes them, in this case, manifestly his own.410

But this does not undermine the aforementioned relation so much as it continues Meier’s critique of Schmitt’s political theology, his attempt to “answer in doing,” grounded in his belief that “every human word is an answer,” that every theory answers a unique signal” that Schmitt “believes he hears as a call.”411 Meier emphasizes that, just as the enemy is supposed to be “the negation of one’s own being, of one’s own destiny,”412 in making the “morally demanding decision” that distinguishes the enemy aright, “political theology stops here, and the political theologian is wholly in his own realm” [ganz bei sich]413 Schmitt’s “answers” are wholly his “own” because they could under no circumstances be based on any knowledge of God’s unfathomable will. Schmitt’s political theology is his own because it can only be based on his unique response to the unique call of history as

410 III.4.11-12 (43/36).
411 VII.3.32 (92/83).
412 II.4.26 (35/28).
413 VII.3.14 (89/80).
he believes he hears it.\textsuperscript{414} As his "own," his faith stands on the ground of opinion and hearsay rather than that of knowledge of or insight into the "necessarily anonymous truth."\textsuperscript{415}

When Strauss "shows Schmitt that the man of the Hobbesian system of thought is in fact the bourgeois..."\textsuperscript{416} he simultaneously levels a critique of Schmitt's own way of thinking. For just as the bourgeois "in possession and in the justice of private possession behaves as an individual against the whole,"\textsuperscript{417} so Schmitt brings his own answers to bear on the unique historical call with which he believes himself to be faced, despite his seeming commitment to the group as such. Just as the bourgeois is "a man "who does not want to leave the sphere of the unpolitical, risk-free private," and "wants to remain exempt from courage and removed from the danger of a violent death"\textsuperscript{418} so the intensity of Schmitt's "need for certainty" regarding the fate of his soul compels him to submit unconditionally to the will of the God of revelation. And just as the "very existence of the bourgeois" follows from "the foundations... laid by Hobbes's principles,"\textsuperscript{419} so Schmitt's existence follows from the fundamental orientation toward the most urgent matter rather than to the highest matter, to security and stability above virtue and excellence, and, ultimately, to fear of being-evil [Bösesein]\textsuperscript{420} rather than love of, or desire for, what is good.

\textsuperscript{414} Cf. IV.4.25 (54/47).
\textsuperscript{415} DvLS, 16.7 (42/72).
\textsuperscript{416} III.5.7 (44-5/38).
\textsuperscript{417} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{418} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{419} III.5.6 (44/38).
\textsuperscript{420} Cf. LCS, III.12.26 ff. (134/83 ff.).
Chapter IV: The Extreme Case of Strauss and Schmitt – The Final Tyrant

The next chapter, Chapter 4, consists of five paragraphs, 72 sentences, and 12 notes placing it in the central position – along with Chapter 5 – in terms of length, and – with Chapter 0 – in terms of number of notes. It also contains the book’s central paragraph (IV.2), if we follow the reading of Chapter VII as consisting of seven paragraphs rather than four. As we have already noted, the word “enmity” [Feindschaft] does not occur in the body of either Chapter III or Chapter IV, perhaps an indication that that concept is abstracted from in those passages. The word “enemy,” [Feind], which appears just once in Chapter III, appears no fewer than nine times in Chapter IV, though in all but one of those appearances we find it in the phrase “friend and enemy.” The sole exception refers to the “Providential enemy” in the context of a hypothetical abstraction: “only if there were no Providential enemy” could “the distinction between friend and enemy... ‘entirely cease even as a mere possibility’...”421 The mood of this chapter, like that of the previous chapter, is that of the “hypothetical subjunctive” because in both chapters something essential is abstracted from for the sake of the critique of Schmitt. And just as in Chapter III the apparent agreement with Hobbes turned out to be an opposition when it was “tested” by means of the “extreme case,” so here Schmitt’s apparent agreement with Strauss will turn out to be, not an opposition, but fully-fledged enmity – were it possible for the political theologian to see it as such.

421 IV.4.22 (54/47).
The chapter opens with the phrase “Schmitt’s affirmation of the political” [Schmitts Bejahung des Politischen], which “in Strauss’ interpretation, is the affirmation of the ‘state of nature.’” This opening reminds us of the ground covered in the previous chapter. The next sentence gestures toward the discussion of the “meaning of war,” in Chapter VI:

The affirmation of the "state of nature" as the status belli simply is not intended to be bellicose, however, and thus does not signify the affirmation of war.423

The quotation marks indicate that Schmitt’s affirmation of the “state of nature” is not an affirmation of the state of nature as such, or that, unlike Ernst Jünger, Schmitt does not, in affirming the status belli, affirm “fighting as such, wholly irrespective of what is being fought for.”424 Instead, Schmitt’s affirmation of the political first comes to sight as a consequence of his negation of bourgeois liberalism, or of its desire, for the sake of security, to put an end to enmity once and for all: “Schmitt’s affirmation of the political receives its concrete form from the rejection of the existence of the bourgeois.”425

The “concretization” of Schmitt’s position had already been achieved by Strauss, who in the previous chapter had

concretized the opposition between the position and the negation of the political by describing it as the conflict [Widerstreit] between the “position of the political” and the “position of civilization.”426

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422 IV.1.1. (47/39).
423 IV.1.2 (47/39).
424 VI.2.1 (71/62).
425 IV.1.6 (47/39).
426 III.3.12 (41/34).
On one hand, then, we see, from Schmitt’s perspective, his own position being “concretized” via his opposition to the bourgeois and to the ideal of civilization; on the other, however, we see the opposition itself between Schmitt’s position and Hobbes’ negation of the political being “concretized” by Strauss’ use of the term “position of civilization” for the latter. If “concretization” has something to do with the “positivization” of an originally negative position, then we can say that just as Hobbes’s negation of the political by means of the state of nature is concretized as the position of civilization against the status belli, so Schmitt’s negation of the ideal of civilization is concretized as the position of the political by means of the affirmation, not of war as such, but of the right kind of war, i.e., the war in which the enemy is rightly distinguished. But since both Hobbes and Schmitt are oriented “towards the possibility of war as, simply, the dire emergency for man,” they are both separated by a gulf from the political philosopher Strauss who as such is oriented by the dire possibility – if it is a possibility – of “the end of philosophy on earth.”

Thus by means of Strauss’ “concretization” of the opposition between Schmitt and Hobbes he provides himself clarity on the “political and the theological alternative” that demands he answer the question of the right or the best life rather than suspend judgment or “persist in contemplation.”

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427 IV.5.4 (55/47). – In his “Restatement,” Strauss speaks of “the Chief of the universal and homogeneous state, or the Universal and Final Tyrant,” who “will be an unwise man” and in order to “retain his power... will be forced to suppress every activity which might lead people into doubt of the essential soundness of the universal and homogenous state: he must suppress philosophy as an attempt to corrupt the young” (OT, p. 211).

428 Cf. LCS, I.12.7 (33/15).
“concretizations” of Schmitt (against Hobbes) and Strauss (against both Schmitt and Hobbes) take place in different conceptual horizons and “divide nature” differently: it is only because Strauss sees Schmitt’s deep longing for security that he is able to recognize his profound kinship with Hobbes and with the bourgeois in general, even if this recognition takes the rhetorical form of authoritatively convincing Schmitt that Hobbes is his “most important theoretical antipode,” which is not to say his enemy.

In IV.2, the central section of the book, Meier begins a rhetorical line of argumentation which, following Strauss, performs a *reductio ad absurdum* of the possibility of Schmitt’s maintaining the “position of the political.” Strauss writes (again, rhetorically) that Schmitt

"ultimately by no means repudiates as utopian" the ideal of a globe that has been definitively pacified and depoliticized " – he says, after all, that he does not know whether it cannot be realized – but he does abhor it.429

Here Strauss is bringing to light the contradiction between Schmitt’s claiming “not to know” whether such an ideal can be realized and his “certainty” regarding the necessity of the “demanding moral decision.” Schmitt *does* “know,” i.e., Schmitt does believe that he knows that the realization of a definitively pacified and depoliticized globe is impossible: after all, whoever has no other enemy will find at least Schmitt as his enemy on Judgment Day But this “knowledge” is essentially faith, because it depends on the truth of revelation, which is a truth of faith.430 This “knowledge”

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429 IV.2.1 (47/39).
alone, then, would seem to “guarantee” the impossibility of a definitively
depoliticized globe. At the very least, Schmitt will remain faithful to the cause of the
God of revelation, in the most extreme and therefore decisive case. In order to
highlight this self-contradiction, Strauss allows us to “listen to Schmitt himself!:

‘if . . . the distinction between friend and enemy ceases even as a mere possibility, there will only be a politics-free weltanschauung, culture, civilization, economy, morals, law, art, entertainment, etc., but there will be neither politics nor state.’”

It would not suffice for the actual disappearance of the distinction between friend
and enemy for the state of “definitive depoliticization” to be reached, since the
position of the political is oriented, not towards fighting as such, but towards the
possibility of physical killing and battle, or, more precisely, to the possibility of
rightly distinguishing the enemy who must be fought against. Here Schmitt seems
seriously to entertain the possibility of this state’s being realized by man, while
Strauss knows that he in fact cannot entertain this possibility seriously, that for him
the political is not in danger of disappearing from the face of the earth, because
there remains an omnipotent God who has ordained the real possibility of enmity,
and such a God and such an ordainment cannot be overturned by any purely human
means.

Strauss’ rhetoric allows him conceal the fact that he is aware of the
impossibility of this state for Schmitt, and rather than insisting on this point – rather
than, as it were, calling Schmitt out as a closet theologian – he calls Schmitt a
moralist, who considers possible, but abhors, the idea of a thoroughly pacified globe.

431 IV.2.2 (47-8/39-40).
Again, this is on the most superficial level, and thus in reality, fully and strictly true: Schmitt is a moralist, a “moral man” who “abhors” the thought of a world without a Last Judgment. But Strauss is confident that his pose will not be interpreted in these terms by Schmitt, and that the latter will at most understand a strictly theological abhorrence as being intended, if not simply a modish pose stemming from “purely personal” or “private” preferences. In other words, that Schmitt “wants the world to be serious” means 1) that Schmitt prefers the serious to the playful as a matter of taste or affect, 2) that Schmitt is committed to a theological position that presupposes and insists on the reality of enmity, and 3) that Schmitt’s theological position is itself undergirded by an unacknowledged moralizing impulse that demands security and retribution above all, and is itself a matter of something like “taste” or “affect” despite its traditionally all-too-grave – although perhaps ultimately necessary – status. Schmitt cannot or will not accept the possibility of the third meaning, and Strauss’ rhetoric takes advantage of this blind spot in order to force Schmitt at least to bring his concealed affirmation of the second meaning into the open. Thus when Strauss insists on the significance of the word “perhaps” in Schmitt’s phrase “perhaps very interesting,” he is not only pointing out “Schmitt’s nausea over this capacity to be interesting,” but is at the same time indicating the theological position to which such nausea is formally appropriate – as “enmity” is appropriate to the position of the political, whereas “hatred” qua personal affect is only appropriate in regard to the private enemy, or the opponent – and subtly

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432 Cf. LCS, I.9 (26-7/10-1).
433 IV.2.9 (48-9/41).
questioning the “purely formal” character of this appropriateness, or, in other words, he is indicating a link – precisely the one rejected by Schmitt – between the formal or public position of enmity and the private or material condition of nausea and hatred (undergirded by the fear of a threatened particularity).434

Paragraph IV.3 – the chapter’s central paragraph – begins with the phrase “Leo Strauss knows himself” [Leo Strauss weiß sich] and ends with the phrase “indeed agree” [in der Tat übereinstimmen]. It is bookended, then, by Strauss’ self-knowledge and by Strauss and Schmitt’s agreement in action or in practice, if not in theory. The paragraph concerns what Meier sees as the “pith [Nerv] of [Strauss’] confrontation with Schmitt”:

“Agreement at all costs is possible only as agreement at the cost of the meaning of human life; for agreement at all costs is possible only if man has relinquished asking the question of what is right; and if man relinquishes that question, he relinquishes being a man. But if he seriously asks the question of what is right, the quarrel will be ignited (in view of ‘the inextricable set of problems’ [90] this question entails), the life-and-death quarrel: the political – the grouping of humanity into friends and enemies – owes its legitimation to the seriousness of the question of what is right” (N28).435

Both “the greatest proximity” and “the deepest difference” between Strauss and Schmitt are contained in this passage: they agree most fundamentally on the “seriousness of the question of what is right”; they disagree about whether this

435 IV.3.4-5 (49/41-2). – Note the exoteric character of the movement from Schmitt and Strauss’ common opposition to liberalism to their agreement regarding the oblivion of the most important question; compare Strauss, XS, p. 122: Socrates’ ability to generate agreement with his interlocutors was not purchased at the price of relinquishing the question of how one should live. Instead, Socrates employed two different kinds of dialectic, one aimed at generating agreement, and the other aimed at investigating and uncovering truth.
question is a question “asked by man” or rather a question “put to man.” If the question is asked by man, then it is at least possible that man should be able to answer it, that “in the most fundamental respect, that question can be answered by means of human reason.”\textsuperscript{436} If, instead, it is put to man, human reason alone is incapable of addressing it, and it therefore must be met in an attitude of faithful obedience. As Strauss puts it in a passage cited elsewhere by Meier: “No alternative is more fundamental than the alternative: human guidance or divine guidance. \textit{Tertium non datur}.”\textsuperscript{437} Thus this central paragraph begins with a mention of Leo Strauss’ knowledge, and not his “knowledge” or the fact that he “believes he knows” something. He \textit{knows} why he disapproves “of a world-state”: his \textit{disapproval} is “indeed” or “actually” identical to Schmitt’s, but his \textit{knowledge} of the \textit{reasons} why he holds this position far exceeds Schmitt’s own. Strauss knows that he

rejects the homogeneous world-state because he recognizes it as the state of Nietzsche’s “last man” and because he sees the end of the particular political community as followed by the end of philosophy on earth. Schmitt opposes the "world-state" because he perceives it as an antigodly attempt to construct paradise on earth. To him, the striving for "Babylonian unity" is the expression of man’s making himself into a god.\textsuperscript{438}

But “man’s making himself into a god,” translated into the language of classical political philosophy, means man’s leaving the cave of appearances and entering into the realm of the eternal beings. Whether or not this is possible may not be definitively known, but the philosopher, at least, strives for it as a goal, while the

\textsuperscript{436} IV.3.8 (50/42).
\textsuperscript{437} Strauss, “R&R,” p. 149.
\textsuperscript{438} IV.5.4-6 (55/47).
theologian sees such striving not only as futile, but as evil, since it is a, indeed *the*, disobedience to God to wish to stand alongside him as an equal; for the theologian, we are all equal because we are *not* God, the creator. The philosopher, however, is opposed not only the world-state as such, but above all the *homogenous* world-state, in which the differences between men are levelled out, whether in the political manner of Hobbes – men are equal because any one man can be killed by any two men – or the theological manner of Schmitt – men are equal because they are equally blind with respect to God’s unfathomable will. The turn toward equality is a turn toward humility, and while humility helps the philosopher to resist self-aggrandizement, it also keeps him from accurate self-knowledge. Humility, like vanity, is a matter of opinion and not of knowledge because it intends to praise (and/or demean) and not specifically to uncover truth.\(^{439}\)

Toward the end of the paragraph, Meier attributes knowledge to Schmitt without using quotation marks:

Schmitt knows [weiß] why he has the "sequence of stages" of the neutralizations and depoliticizations begin with the "step taken by the seventeenth century in moving from the received Christian theology to the system of a 'natural' scientific approach..."\(^{440}\)

It is one of the very few times in the book that this occurs; elsewhere, “the moralist Schmitt” is said to know that,

there is "no rational end, no norm however right, no program however ideal, no legitimacy or legality that could justify human beings' killing one another over it."\(^{441}\)

\(^{440}\) IV.3.10 (50/42).
\(^{441}\) II.2.20 (28/20).
In the present context, however, and despite his beginning the previous sentence with “Schmitt believes,” Meier attributes to Schmitt “greater logical rigor [Folgerichtigkeit] than the immediate historical context of his historical construction might make apparent” in his recognition (from the viewpoint of his political theology) of that step, which for him describes the turning away from faith in particular Providence as "the strongest and most consequential of all intellectual turns in European history.”

We must note here, besides the attribution of knowledge to Schmitt, the modification of this knowledge as marked by “logical rigor” [Folgerichtigkeit], and indeed by “greater” logical rigor that the context “might make apparent.” The “turning away” [Abkehr] from Particular providence is said to be the “most consequential” [folgenreichste] intellectual turn [geistigen Wendungen] of European history. As Meier notes, the words “most consequential” were added after the publication of the first edition of the essay “The Age of Neutralization and Depoliticizations” in 1929. It is perhaps not irrelevant to remark that here, at the point of “greatest proximity” between Schmitt and Strauss, the “insuperable” “gulf between political theology and political philosophy” becomes most sharply visible, because just here the essential connection between “the moralist Schmitt” and his “opponent” [Gegner] Hobbes becomes likewise clear.

Meier’s use of the term “opponent” [Gegner] to characterize the relation between the bourgeois, on the one hand, and Schmitt and Strauss, on the other,

442 IV.3.10 (50/42-3).
indicates that he does not consider the bourgeois to be the “enemy” of either. The two previous usages of the term in this book had been in the context of quotations from Schmitt (l.4.n.14) and Strauss (IV.2.5) respectively. This is therefore the first use of the term in Meier’s own voice. In Strauss’ “Notes,” the term appears four times, including twice in the first section (paragraphs 1-6). In that section, the word “enemy” [Feind] does not appear. Strauss’ abstraction from the concept of the enemy is analogous to Meier’s abstraction from the concepts of the enemy and of enmity in Chapters 3 and 4. The use of the term “opponent” is a key expression of this abstraction: we might say that given the impossibility or the spuriousness of enmity and of the concept of the enemy, all “enemies” become mere “opponents” and all “enmities” become mere “oppositions.” This is another rhetorical usage of the hypothetical subjunctive, so important to the Socratic turn to political philosophy. If Schmitt and Strauss “in fact” or “actually” or “indeed” agree in their “political critique of a common opponent,” it is not because they share a common enmity, or any common basis for their critique, but rather because each aims at a revivification of the seriousness of the question of what is right: their nearest aim is the same even if the ground on which this aim is pursued is altogether different.

As the first part of this chapter had focused on the agreement in aim between the respective projects of Strauss and Schmitt, and its central paragraph combined this agreement with the first broaching of the topic of the “insuperable gulf” that separates them, the remainder of the chapter is devoted to articulating this gulf. This takes the form of an argument parallel to the one outlined in Chapter 3 (III.3.8-
10), in which Strauss is seen as driving the superficial resemblance between Schmitt and Hobbes to its point of divergence by means of the “test of the dire emergency.” In “the only case that matters,” i.e., in the extreme case, the case in which life and death is at stake – in this example, the case in which the subject is ordered to sacrifice his life for the sake of the state – Hobbes’s fundamental individualism, his theoretical basis in the “individual’s claim” to protection by the state, prevents him from demanding that the individual sacrifice his life on behalf of the state. Schmitt, on the contrary, would demand such a sacrifice, provided the lines between friend and enemy were “rightly” drawn, because for him it is a claim made on the individual, the demand that the individual “answer by doing” the work of the Lord, that undergirds his theoretical edifice, and not, as it may at first appear, a true state of nature – individual or collective – in which natural right can sensibly be claimed by this or that individual or fighting collectivity. For Schmitt any “primary tendency in human nature to form exclusive groups” can only be ordained and thus cannot be entirely primary, being instead a “secondary” cause derivative of an original creation or sovereign fiat.

As in the previous example, the divergence between Strauss and Schmitt is proved by reference to the extreme case. Here, it is the difference between Strauss’ rejection of “the homogenous world-state” and Schmitt’s opposition to “the ‘world-state’” simply. One sees already two differences in the formulations, differences

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443 III.3.11 (41/34).
445 IV.5.4-5 (55/47).
that reflect different reasons for opposing or rejecting the "world-state" or "homogenous world state." First, it is clear that Strauss rejects the homogenous world-state as such, either because it is homogenous, or because a non-homogenous world-state is impossible. Schmitt’s opposition to a “world-state” (the quotation marks are stronger here than usual because Meier has just used the term without them in regard to Strauss) would then perhaps not be a true opposition, because the “world-state” to which he is opposed would be a phantom. Schmitt, after all, knows that even if the Antichrist were to succeed in putting an end to wars and hostility, he will nonetheless not be able to put an end to the real criterion of the political, the distinction between friends and enemies: as Schmitt says, “Woe to him who has no enemy, for I will be his enemy at the Last Judgment.” 

Such a “world-state” is thus not a possibility for Schmitt; this revelation leads to one of the key discussions of the book, in which Schmitt is seen as having altered his text to reflect Strauss’ critique of his presentation of the possibility of the “totally depoliticized and pacified globe.” The insertion of words like “nearly” and “wholly,” the insistence on “this-worldly” security and the new reference to Augustine, and, perhaps most importantly of all, the change of “verbal mood” from the future tense to the “hypothetical subjunctive” in matters concerning the liberal “world-state,” allow Schmitt to indicate what he understands to be the ultimate impossibility of this state’s coming to pass, despite his overt rhetoric of the

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446 Cf. VI.5.10 (80/71).
447 IV.4.1 (51/43-4).
448 IV.4.19-20 (54/46).
endeavoredness of the political. So long as at least he – or his God – resists the siren-song of a world without enmity, this state will remain impossible and his salvation in order.

Strauss, it goes without saying, does not have such recourse. For him the world-state is and will remain an “eternal possibility” for man, linked to the triumph of homogeneity and the obscuring of the fundamental distinctions or alternatives among ways of life. On the most basic level, the philosophic way of life exists if it is possible to suspend judgment on the question of the right or the best life, i.e., if questioning regarding which life is the right or the best one can lead to knowledge regarding this matter. Or, if the disposition which holds that such knowledge is only available to the one who is already a believer, i.e., to the one who lives his life in a fundamental disposition or attunement towards belief, or if the claim that the passion of belief must irrevocably color all reasoning, and that, in general, the grounding attunements of the passions provide knowledge that is impossible for those not thus fundamentally attuned, is wrong. Strauss' gambit, the gambit of philosophy itself, is that reason, on its own and without regard to the passions originally awakening or animating it, is or can become aware of everything that those whose way of life is grounded in such passions are aware, and that it can be aware of those things, not as opinions, but as knowledge. If knowledge can lead human life, it means that the life of questioning, of seeking knowledge, and above all of seeking self-knowledge, as opposed to the life of answering the theologico-political demands of authorities with obedient deference, can be justified or is right
or best. Knowledge would then be knowledge of these fundamental alternatives themselves, rather than of the answers to them. Such knowledge comes to sight first in the passionate conviction that it is better to freely question than to submissively respond. But it does not remain grounded in this conviction, for it requires self-examination, and inasmuch as it is a position that does not want to remain grounded in a passionate response, but rather wants to be justified rationally, it must try to achieve clarity about what it is and what it cannot and does not want to be. The philosopher wants reason to be separable from indignation and the passions; and inasmuch as he knows or bears in mind that this is what he wants, it can be. The political theologian cannot know that he hates knowledge (and loves power), because he must attribute knowledge (and power) to his God. Thus he divides the world in two, making a distinction between the divine and the human worlds, between divine knowledge and human “knowledge” (i.e., faith or probity). The philosopher, likewise, makes a distinction in the whole, between the human world and another world – the natural world. But he does not view this schism as definitively insuperable: indeed, his aim as a philosopher is to see the human in the light of the natural, or to gain knowledge regarding human nature, in order to gain knowledge regarding all the beings. He knows both that he does not yet possess knowledge of the natural whole, and that he does not know whether it is possible for him to possess such knowledge. But he wants to find out, because he presupposes that such knowledge is possible and good, and that it will enable him to live well inasmuch he is a natural being. The political theologian presupposes that
knowledge is bad, and yet he cannot know this since he must attribute to his God a knowledge that is presumably good. But a good God cannot at the same time be omnipotent, or, if he is, he cannot be good in the ordinary – or even any humanly comprehensible – sense (i.e., he must be inscrutable). For who would trust that a God for whom desolation, misology and oblivion are good would be a just – in humanly comprehensible terms – arbiter on Judgment Day? And if this could not be trusted in, if such a God’s idea of a “reward” turned out to be the greatest of all human evils, as must be possible, who could love such a God? Who could desire his love, his tyranny? Only by keeping in mind Strauss’ claim (in a letter to Benardete) that “the question ‘what is a god’... is equipollent to the question ‘what is man’” can we attain to the Platonic-Socratic insight that most men, whether they know it or not, look to the life of the tyrant as the best life possible, and begin to understand exactly why this common opinion is profoundly mistaken.

Meier’s reference to Rousseau at the end of Chapter 4 is revealing in that it, like the quotation in IV.3.4-5, illustrates both the specific resemblance and the general difference between political philosophy and political theology. At the end of his reductio it emerges that Schmitt’s distinction from Hobbes is akin to his distinction from Strauss, i.e., the impossibility, for him, as a “Christian theoretician who ‘gives the writings of Moses the credence he owes them,’” of ever affirming “that men ever existed or could exist in a state of nature.” For the political

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449 *TPP*, I.n42 (47/27).
451 IV.5.19 (56-7/49).
theologian, the entire drama of history is fundamentally eschatological, not natural, oriented towards the end rather than he beginnings or origins\textsuperscript{452}; it is a “state of historicity, a state of demanding moral decision, or probation and judgment.”\textsuperscript{453} On the cited page of Meier’s critical edition of Rousseau’s Second Discourse, following the claim regarding the impossibility of the state of nature for a Christian theoretician, Rousseau makes the famous conclusion to his introductions:

Let us therefore begin by setting aside all the facts, for they do not affect the question. The inquiries that may be pursued regarding this subject ought not to be taken for historical truths, but only for hypothetical and conditional reasonings; better suited to elucidate the nature of things than to show their genuine origin, and comparable to those our physicists daily make regarding the formation of the world.\textsuperscript{454}

To which Meier appends the following note:

The genealogy that Rousseau presents in the Discourse does not have as a model forms of argumentation and fictions of the legal doctrine of the state of nature, but rather “hypothesis-formation” in the “natural sciences.” Rousseau wants to address the question of the development of man and society as “our natural scientists daily” consider the question of the “formation of the world.” This comparison illuminates not only the philosophical claim that Rousseau raises for his reconstruction, it gives in addition a hidden indication of the conditions of religious censorship to which Rousseau is subject in the treatment of his subject. Conditions without whose consideration neither an adequate understanding of this much-discussed section nor of the Discourse as a whole is possible…\textsuperscript{455}

\textsuperscript{452} Rousseau, \textit{Diskurs über die Ungleichheit} (ed. Meier), n. 4, pp. 4-6.
\textsuperscript{453} IV.5.18 (56/49); italics removed.
\textsuperscript{454} Rousseau, \textit{Diskurs über die Ungleichheit} (ed. Meier), p. 70 (Gourevitch trans, p. 132).
\textsuperscript{455} Rousseau, \textit{Diskurs über die Ungleichheit} (ed. Meier), p. 71.
Following this is a recounting of Buffon’s contemporaneous investigation of the “formation of the world,” followed by a long quotation from his forced recantation of “anything that might contradict Moses’ report.” The note ends as follows:

When Rousseau writes at the beginning of the paragraph that he would like to “set aside all the facts,” this in the context means all Biblical facts with which Rousseau’s genealogy is incompatible. Similar formal insurance can be found several more times in the Discourse, in order to pave the way for the investigation of the actual facts, among which Rousseau counted the state of nature itself.456

That is, according to Meier, Rousseau presents his argument concerning the state of nature, which for him is an “actual fact,” in the form of an “hypothesis-formation” after the manner of the natural sciences, and he does so because the “conditions of religious censorship” make the topic of the “formation of the world” dangerous to discuss openly. In analogous fashion, the political theologian Schmitt talks about the liberal “world-state” of “depoliticizations and neutralizations” in the subjunctive, as if he considered it possible, that is, as if he did not consider history to be a “state of probation and judgment” that is foreordained to end with the separation of the saved from the damned, or as if he considered it a real possibility that man had existed or could exist in a state of nature rather than having been created by God. And Schmitt, like Rousseau, disguises his true teaching politically, with a view to the

456 Rousseau, Diskurs über die Ungleichheit (ed. Meier), p. 72; cf. ibid. pp. 168-9, n. 212. – Whether or not Rousseau intends to exclude only Biblical facts in this “setting aside” is less certain than the fact that in setting aside “all the facts,” the Biblical “facts,” too, must be set aside. One might say that the gesture of “setting aside” works above all against those who would under no circumstances allow that their claims be “set aside” and thus tacitly identifies Biblical proponents as those incapable of or resistant to such “hypothetical” reasoning. Cf. LCS, I.5-6 (17-21/4-6) inter alia.
prevailing conditions of the society and epoch in which he lives. If it is not strictly speaking dangerous for Schmitt to proclaim his faith as the basis of his theoretical works on the state and on the political, it would nevertheless make it difficult or impossible for him to respond to the “unique historical call” with which he thinks himself faced, and so would represent less than his personal utmost in the effort to answer this supposed call.

Chapter V: Strauss’ Abstraction from Political Theology

Chapter Five begins with the words “Strauss pursues” [Strauss führt] and ends with the word “transcends” [transzendiert] in a quotation from Schmitt. It contains 77 sentences, making it the fourth-longest chapter, and 12 notes tying it for fourth with Chapter 0. In this chapter, Meier’s reading of Strauss’ strategy is laid bare with perhaps the greatest clarity:

[Strauss] interprets the Concept of the Political as though he were interpreting the text of a theoretician who merely lays claim to a knowledge that is accessible to man as man, or as though only such a knowledge were of significance for the confrontation he is pursuing. In this way he makes Schmitt’s position as strong as it can possibly be made if the political theology on which it rests is abstracted from it.457

By means of this strategy, Strauss “induces” Schmitt to disclose “more of his identity as a political theologian” in the 1933 third edition of Concept of the Political than he had in either of the previous two editions.458 By treating Schmitt’s position as if it

457 V.1.2-3 (59/50); italics added.
458 V.1.5 (59/50).
rested on grounds proper to political philosophy (i.e., on the presupposition that human guidance is sufficient for answering the question of the right or the best life), Strauss draws attention to those “aporai”\(^{459}\) that emerge in Schmitt’s account, to those places or moments in which Schmitt is forced to appeal to divine guidance.

This strategy of Strauss’ compels Schmitt’s clarification on two related topics: that of the “dangerousness” of man and that of his essential “innocence” or culpability. Schmitt’s own rhetoric de-theologizes the “fallenness” of man due to Original Sin into a seemingly “anthropological” claim regarding man’s “dangerousness.” Strauss, however, emphasizes that under Schmitt’s evident construction, the “thesis of dangerousness” is qualified “as a ‘supposition,’ as an ‘anthropological confession of faith.’”\(^{460}\) If it is only a supposition, however, the “dangerousness” of man is not really known, but rather at best only believed in.\(^{461}\) If Schmitt really were advancing a purely anthropological thesis he would presumably be willing to concede this point. But his anthropological thesis rests on a theological truth, i.e., the truth of man’s fallenness or inherent evil. As such, it cannot be conceded to be a supposition, any more than the revealed truth on which it is based can be believed in only “provisionally” or “for the sake of argument.” Such “belief” is precisely not belief in the strict theological sense. Schmitt’s “real intention” of “anchoring the political in the theological”\(^{462}\) depends on the truth of revelation – a truth that man can only believe in, to be sure, and which can never be verified or

\(^{459}\) V.1.4 (59/50).
\(^{460}\) V.2.5 (60/51).
\(^{461}\) Cf. V.2.6-7 (60/51).
\(^{462}\) V.2.12 (60/51).
checked by purely human means – but a truth nonetheless, a supra-human “truth of faith.” Strauss opposes knowledge to faith in order to draw out this basis of Schmitt’s thinking, and at the same time to subject it to a “barely concealed attack” when he “emphasizes that faith does not suffice.” Schmitt cannot merely suppose man to be dangerous; he must assert it without qualification, on the basis of his faith in revelation. Since his own strategy of “conditional” or “suppositional” rhetoric mirrors that of political philosophy (he must speak to unbelievers as an unbeliever), he does not so much “demonstrate that politics is founded on theology” as “induce the reader to believe in such a foundational relationship” by means of arguments that appear to be essentially rooted in anthropology or in the “sociology of knowledge.” The notion of “political theology” as a thesis in the history of ideas or as an hypothesis coincident with the “secularization theorem” hides the substantive commitment that underlies every theology of revelation: the priority of faith to knowledge, the essential dependence of knowledge on faith, and the strict unavailability of a purely human knowledge that owes nothing to revealed truth.

Schmitt’s alteration of “a single word” in the 3rd edition of The Concept of the Political confirms that for him the political is not “endangered” because the “supposition” of man’s “dangerousness” is in reality a claim, founded on revealed truth, of man’s fallenness or evil. “In a good world, among good men... the priests

464 V.2.11-12 (60/51).
465 V.2.13 (60/51).
466 Cf. V.2.21 (61/52).
and theologians are just as disturbing as the politicians and statesmen.” In the previous version, “the priests and theologians” were said to be “superfluous,” not “disturbing.” Meier takes this alteration to signify that Strauss’ emphasis on the ostensibly suppositional character of man’s dangerousness has forced Schmitt in the meantime to reflect on his own belief that the political, and enmity, are ordained by God and thus in no way in danger of being overcome by man alone. The political is not (only) connected with the theological by means of a set of analogies and common forms of thought; the political depends on the theological essentially, “to provide a foundation for its own necessity.” The political is inescapable, indeed, is “the inescapable,” because theological truths cannot be dispensed with by purely human means. For the political theologian, it is not a matter of “faith vs. knowledge,” but instead of the decision” for faith or for chaos.” The statement that “the denial of original sin destroys all social order” “tolerates no contradiction” because it is not a truth of reason but one of faith. Accordingly, from the perspective of political theology, such contradiction would essentially signify disobedience to the commandment of revelation.

Meier shows that what appear merely to be “correspondences” between the political and theological “spheres” are in fact for Schmitt rooted in the theological

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467 V.3.17 (63/54).
469 V.3.22 (64/55).
470 V.2.1 (59/50).
471 V.3.8 (63/54).
472 V.3.5-6 (62/53). Cf. VI.3.21 (77/69).
origins of the political.\textsuperscript{473} This origin is at the same time a “destination [Bestimmung]”\textsuperscript{474} to the extent that the theological not only gives rise to but also entirely \textit{comprehends} the political. The revealed truth of enmity founds the “inescapability of the distinction between friend and enemy in the political ‘sphere,’” which “corresponds’ to the inevitability of the decision between God and Satan in the theological ‘sphere.’”\textsuperscript{475} Here the “correspondence” between “spheres” marks a still-liberal outlook that fails to recognize the total character of the claims of politics and theology (thus the quotation marks). Taking account of these claims – taking them \textit{seriously} – means coming to understand the “correspondences” between politics and theology as different modes of expressing the same (revealed) truth-content. These modes do not appear to be symmetrical, however, because according to this view politics depends on theology and not the other way around: God, who has ordained enmity, can revoke it, and cannot be bound to it against his will (without compromising his omnipotence). Thus the political reaches its determinative moment in “the ‘only case that matters,’” i.e., “the battle with the Providential enemy... against whom finally, at the end of time, the ‘battle of decision’ must be fought.”\textsuperscript{476} In this battle, the “correspondence” between “friend and enemy” on the one hand and “God and Satan” on the other turns into a strict identity: the friend is he who fights on the side of God, the enemy he who casts his lot with Satan. But even the “must be fought” here obscures an aporia: does this “must” bind God as

\textsuperscript{473} Cf. V.3.33 (65/56).
\textsuperscript{474} V.3.28 (64/55).
\textsuperscript{475} V.3.29 (64/55-6).
\textsuperscript{476} V.3.33-34 (65/56).
well? Can God really do away with Satan as easily as he has apparently conjured him? Is Satan created by God by means of his wholly free and inscrutable commandment, or, rather, might Satan be generated by God, as it were “against his will,” as a kind of caput mortuum of God’s impossible desire to be both omnipotent and entirely good?477

After considering Schmitt’s “supposition” of man’s dangerousness, Meier concludes the chapter with a treatment of Schmitt’s denial that “man’s evil” is “innocent evil.”478 Again, Schmitt’s position is drawn out by Strauss’ rhetoric. Strauss argues that “for purposes of the radical critique of liberalism that Schmitt strives for” the task arises

of nullifying the view of human evil as animal and thus innocent evil, and... return[ing] to the view of human evil as moral baseness.479

But “Schmitt does not see himself as facing” this task “because he does not subscribe to such a view.”480 In other words, Schmitt accepts Strauss’ proposed “way out” of liberalism, but imagines himself to already be in a position outside the “systematics of liberal thought”481 due to the fact that he, unlike Hobbes, affirms the existence of sin. Not only does Schmitt confess his faith anthropologically, he confesses his faith anthropologically; i.e., not only is his anthropology substantively grounded in faith, it is also presented in the mode of a justification or avowal of guilt.482 Such an

477 Consider in this connection LCS, III.7.9 (120-1/74).
478 V.4.1 (65/56).
479 Strauss, “Notes,” (117/110).
480 V.4.2 (65/56).
481 Strauss, “Notes,” (125/119).
482 Compare V.2.5 (60/51) with V.4.5 (66/57).
avowal would be wholly foreign to one with no belief in sin – a confession is, after all, not a treatise, and its true aim is salvation rather than wisdom or edification. Unlike “the philosopher Hobbes,” Schmitt understands man to be essentially guilty or culpable. Meier now returns to the discussion of Schmitt’s rhetoric of “dangerousness” to underline its advantages for Schmitt as against the open admission of his theological commitments. By keeping his own position out of view, he is able to show that “all truly political theories are in harmony with the truth of original sin, quite apart from the question of whether the respective theoreticians accept the dogma itself.” He can likewise distance himself from any “‘moral theology’” that reduces the political to a set of norms and does not see in it a profound theological or metaphysical truth. And, finally, he can protect his own position from scrutiny from the sides of both theology and politics. This usefulness notwithstanding, Schmitt nevertheless “deletes a whole series of statements that could awaken” the impression that his advocacy of the political rests on the “‘admiration of animal power,’” rather than on the revealed truth of providential enmity. Such enmity is for Schmitt impossible for innocent animals, and thus to some extent marks man as man, i.e., as spiritual. The spiritual basis of enmity can only be created by God, and not, like the “‘rivalries of all kinds’... that motivate animals,” generated by nature. For Schmitt, the most profound enmity is not

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483 V.4.4 (65/57).
484 V.4.7 (66/57).
485 V.4.11-12 (66-7/57).
486 V.4.14-15 (67/58-9)
487 V.4.16 (67/59); cf. V.4.19 (68/59).
necessarily the most brutal, violent, or bloody fight between rivals; it is, rather, determined by the extent of spiritual opposition, by the being whose every existence is able call one into question “spiritually or morally,” that is, to embody one’s own question as a figure and to be in a position to challenge the very interpretation of one’s own way of life. Thus the figure of the philosopher, who as such abstracts from the idea of sin as much as from the “supposition” or assertion of man’s evil, begins to emerge as the political theologian’s providential enemy, if indeed, as he thinks, one has been assigned him.

Chapter VI: The Center of Schmitt’s Thought

The penultimate chapter begins with the words “Schmitt’s answers [Schmitts Antworten]” and ends with the words “Last Judgment [jüngsten Tage].” Right away a connection is established between Schmitt’s answers to Strauss and his perceived answerability or responsibility before God. Strauss, the philosopher, again appears “in the place” of the God of revelation. Moreover, Chapter VI marks the culmination of Meier’s analysis in the sense that it, and only it, explicitly revolves around and even names “the unifying center” of Schmitt’s thought. Finally, in this

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488 V.4.18 (68/59).
489 VI.1.1 (69/60) & VI.5.10 (80/71).
490 So important is the notion of the “historical answer” of the faithful to the question put by God or Providence that it becomes an essential component of Meier’s interpretation of Schmitt’s understanding of history in LCS. Cf., inter alia, LCS, I.13.9 ff. (34/16 ff.)
491 VI.1.1 (69/60). Cf. VI.3.21 (77/69).
chapter appears a fundamental key to the interpretation of the book as a whole, i.e.,
the replacement, within Schmitt’s ambit, of the concept of “necessity” by that of
“duty.” Thus when Schmitt speaks of the “necessity of the political” he in fact
refers to the “duty” of the political, of defending the political, i.e., of a moral duty or
“transprivate obligation.” The notion of “necessity” in the strict sense cannot
survive the existence of an unfathomable, omnipotent God, since for such a God
nothing is necessary, nothing unalterable. Schmitt cannot remain “in harmony” with
himself as long as he wants to appeal to the notion of necessity in the strict sense.
Thus Strauss again draws out Schmitt’s essential interest and thrust by taking aim at
the “rhetorical ‘positivism’” he evinces when he writes:

“Whether and when” the definitively depoliticized “state of the earth
and of humanity will occur, I do not know. For the time being it does
not exist. It would be a dishonest fiction to assume that the state is
now at hand.”

Strauss lays emphasis on this “for the time being,” which, he says, can offer relief to
“no one, and ‘least of all Schmitt himself...’” Strauss asks the logical follow-up of
whether war will “still be a possibility present tomorrow? or the day after
tomorrow?” According to Meier, Schmitt answers Strauss’ challenge by replacing
the word “today” with the phrase “in an age that veils its metaphysical oppositions
in moral or economic terms.” Meier takes this to mean that Schmitt is suggesting

\[492\] VI.1.2 (69/60) with VI.3.6 (76/67).
\[493\] VI.1.2 (69/60) with VI.3.5 (76/67). Cf. LCS, I.16.58 (47/25).
\[494\] VI.1.7-9 (69/60) with VI.3.11 (69/60).
\[495\] VI.1.10 (69/60).
\[496\] VI.1.12 (70/61).
\[497\] VI.1.14 (70/61); italics removed.
that "war is based on metaphysical oppositions"\(^{498}\) and so will remain inescapable “as long as metaphysical oppositions are unavoidable.”\(^ {499}\) That means: as long as the duty of defending the political remains obligatory for man, or as long as failing to defend the political amounts to attacking it. Since God has made the defense of the political into a duty, since he has always already made a claim on man, man cannot ignore this duty without being disobedient to God. “Whoever does not side with” revelation “sides against it.”\(^ {500}\)

What follows is a discussion of the “metaphysical anchorage and metaphysical meaning”\(^ {501}\) of Schmitt’s position with regard to the question of war. Specifically, Meier shows that for Schmitt what counts is not war itself, i.e., not the bloody battle or contest of the *agon*, but rather “‘what is being fought for,’”\(^ {502}\) i.e., not *that* one fights, but *why* one fights. In this way, Meier helps us to disentangle Schmitt’s position from those – like Jünger’s – that superficially resemble it but in fact focus, not on obedience to the divine sovereign, but on the affirmation of the immanent, of power relations, of becoming, etc. Since this passage is expanded in one of the most important discussions of *LCS*, we will refrain from commenting further on it here.\(^ {503}\) It suffices to say that Meier distinguishes the “agonal” from the “political” positions based on the latter’s will to ascribe metaphysical meaning to battles of decision, in which the *meaning* of the battle is the essential thing fought

\(^{498}\) VI.1.15 (71/62).
\(^{499}\) VI.1.19 (71/62).
\(^{500}\) *WiPT?,* 6.14 (10/82).
\(^{501}\) VI.2.1 (71/62).
\(^{502}\) Ibid.
\(^{503}\) Cf. *LCS*, II.12 (70-5/40-3).
for. For the political position, the dark meaning of history emerges from “battles of faith” between orthodoxy and heresy, i.e., “holy wars and crusades” between communities of faith. It does not acknowledge the possibility of a position not based on faith, nor does the agonal position compel it in any way to do so. The position of political philosophy, however, aims at just this presupposition in grounding and justifying itself, as far as possible, reasonably.

Meier poses the question of “Schmitt’s intentions” explicitly in the central paragraph of the sixth chapter: “Why does Schmitt keep his intentions obscure for so long?”504 This question encompasses Schmitt’s “rhetorical positivism,” i.e., the stance that attempts to pass itself off as describing what is when it fact it is advancing an agenda regarding what should be; his “suppositions,” which are actually his “deepest convictions”; and above all “his moral judgment, his evaluative stance, toward the political...”505 According to Meier, part of the answer lies in the fact that Schmitt feared that his “evaluative stance” regarding the political would inevitably be understood as “a free, unmonitorable decision that concerns no one other than the person who freely makes the decision,”506 or that it would be understood in exclusively liberal terms. Here Meier makes the point regarding the “translation” of duty into necessity. But there is are more foundational reasons for Schmitt’s rhetoric and for the fact that he keeps the theological presuppositions of his concept of the political out of sight. First, Schmitt is responding historically to the

504 VI.3.1 (75/66).
505 VI.3.2-4 (75-6/67).
506 VI.3.5 (76/67).
providential challenge of liberalism when he removes his own metaphysical commitments from view. So long as liberalism does not grasp these commitments of his, it will be unable to carry out its work of “dissolving” them, and will in fact remain incapable of grasping, and thereby conquering, the political theologian Schmitt.  

Meier calls this the “political reason” for Schmitt’s rhetorical strategy: Schmitt faces in liberalism the enemy that confirms his faith in the truth of providential enmity. The second reason is “theological”: “Carl Schmitt envelops the center of his thought in darkness because the center of his thought is faith.”

There is for Schmitt nothing to be gained from openly declaring his belief, since no amount of discussion would alter its basic composition: “In such matters arguments make no difference.” The “truths” of revelation to which he subscribes are truths of faith, not truths of reason – supernatural, super-human truths. Nor does his defense of the political require or lack a concomitant rational justification of his way of life: he presupposes that no such justification is possible, and therefore deploys his rhetoric, not as a participant in a discussion, but as a soldier in spiritual warfare, the rightness of whose cause is not subject to negotiation.

Under the command of the Lord of history, “Schmitt believes himself to be obligated” to “engage in political action.” His faith compels him to his own destiny.

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508 VI.3.16 (77/68).
509 VI.3.16-17 (77/68).
510 VI.3.20 (77/68-8).
512 VI.4.1-3 (78/69).
over which he is not master. Like Strauss, Schmitt is looking for a way out of “the relativism of ‘private matters’” characteristic of liberal thought. But unlike Strauss he does not find this way out in the universal claim of reason, but rather in the universal and “authoritative power of revelation and of Providence.” The only transcendence he sees is in the direction of obedience; not the imitation, but the exaltation, of God appears to him the sole or best escape from liberalism. His concept of truth – as revealed to, not discovered by, man – leads him to imagine the question of what is right to be “irreversibly settled,” and so his efforts are directed toward obeying and championing (however covertly) the “known” answer to this question, instead of toward developing it in the most comprehensible way possible for man. But, as Meier reminds us, this knowledge is only “knowledge” because it rests on the command of an authority, not the observation and verification of the independent seeker, on hearsay, not on what one can see with one’s own eyes.

It thus becomes clear that for Schmitt’s political theology, which believes it knows that enmity has been authoritatively enjoined on man by God, the “objective power of the enemy” consists in the ability and will to raise the divine commandment as a question, “the question that is the enemy.” Despite every personification, every historical embodiment, Schmitt gains clarity on his own cause when he is made to recognize that the question itself of what is right, or the posing of this question by man to man, as if it has not already been settled by the most

513 VI.4.8 (78/69).
514 Ibid.
515 VI.4.10 (78/69).
516 VI.5.3 (79/70).
superhuman of means, that this *posing*, this presumption, this self-confidence bordering on self-aggrandizement, is the constant vocation of the Providential enemy and the very source of the ever-renewing enmity that for Schmitt drives world history. The enemy poses as (a) God when he "imperiously demands an answer."517 And as in the case of the God of revelation, there is "no escaping" this genuine enemy, who as such "cannot be deceived."518 Only he, the "tool of Providence," can be "the guarantor of the seriousness of life."519 In Schmitt’s view, without such seriousness, the human being loses his dignity compared with the animals; the realm of history collapses into that of nature; and the course of providential destiny loses its all-important moment of ultimate, irrevocable decision, the Last Judgment. But – for the philosopher at least – the *question* of what is right can be serious without any of the positive *answers* advanced hitherto being serious or worthy of veneration or not being mere boasts.520 Schmitt’s opposition to liberalism essentially holds that both the question of the right or best life and the answer provided by revelation are to be taken seriously; Strauss, radicalizing the first claim and silently denying the second, tacitly presents Schmitt with an alternative way out of the impasse of liberal thought, one that is able to grasp the "obligatoriness of the political" by means of reasoning and without recourse to "the authoritative power of revelation and of Providence."521 For Strauss, the political is

517 VI.5.6 (79/70-1).
518 VI.5.7 (79-80/71).
519 VI.5.4 (79/70) & VI.5.8 (80/71).
520 Cf. IV.3.8 (50/42).
521 VI.4.7-8 (78/69).
not destiny or fate, but nature; as such, it is the basis of any attempt at philosophical self-knowledge that wishes to account for the “conditions” of philosophical thought, for its necessary embeddedness in the human world of competing claims regarding the good. On this view, the political is not defended as a moral duty, but justified as a necessary concession to the fact of different human natures or types, none of which a priori takes precedence in regard to the question of the good. Strauss, unlike Schmitt, writes esoterically, not because he does not want his own center to be exposed to discussion, but because he wants it to provoke different discussions and reactions among different types of readers. He does not (like Schmitt) desire enemies, but neither does he seek (like liberalism) to deny or negate their very existence. Instead, as in the case of Schmitt, he seeks with every enemy to find “the good in the evil,” i.e., to profit from enmity against the enemy’s will.522

Chapter VII: Who is Schmitt’s Enemy?

The last chapter, Chapter Seven, is comprised of 4 paragraphs and 110 sentences, making it the longest chapter (by number of sentences) in the book. It is further divided through the use of three intra-paragraph dashes (two in the third paragraph and one in the fourth), which, if taken as paragraph divisions, increases the chapter’s paragraph count to seven and the book’s to 39. In it, Meier poses the key question of whether liberalism is Schmitt’s enemy in a merely provisional sense,

522 Consider in this connection LCS, II.13.16 (76-7/44) & PdF, 21.7-11 (189-90).
an enemy that in the end must be swept aside to clear the ground for the "battle of
decision" between political theology and its true enemy, or whether liberalism is not
an authentic object of enmity for political theology, i.e., whether it does not "stand in
the service of that 'activistic metaphysics'" that Schmitt sees as the real enemy.523
Meier's question is twofold: "Is liberalism not a real enemy to Schmitt, and Schmitt
not a genuine enemy of liberalism?"524 This means: Is liberalism not able to place
Schmitt in question existentially? And, on the other hand, is Schmitt not able to see
through liberalism's apparent harmlessness to its essentially anti-theological
impulse?525 For Schmitt, liberalism is economism, the "ideology that not politics but
the economy is destiny..."526 Liberalism (and Marxism along with it) supplies an
answer to the question of the right or the best life by means of the turn to the
 technological domestication of the world and the installation of man as the new
ruler in the new age of global peace and security. Liberalism thus rests on the faith
that nature, human nature, will be able to be cultivated or overcome via education,
progress, and technological innovation. For Schmitt, this utopianism is a Satanic
aping of the genuine Biblical promise of felicity in the world to come. Man, weak by
nature, is aided technical prostheses to become powerful, if not omnipotent. The
faith in this-worldly progress makes liberalism susceptible to Schmitt's attacks, just
as it places liberalism on the level of political theology, i.e., the level of faith or of
metaphysics.

523 VII.1.2-8 (81/72).
524 VII.1.4 (81/72); italics added.
525 Cf. II.2.7 ff. (26/18) & VI.5.7 (79-80/71).
526 VII.1.12 (82/73).
The discussion of Schmitt’s opposition to Bakunin’s anarchism is developed further in both the essay “What is Political Theology?” and the book on Schmitt. We will therefore reserve our analysis of it for those more appropriate places. Distinctive here, however, is the treatment of technicity and the “faith in technology,” which, according to Meier’s Schmitt, “is not neutral” but is rather “based on turning away from the true religion.”527 This faith, with or without the Marxian corollary of world history as the history of economic class struggle, can only be perceived by Schmitt as heretical. In the “neutrality of weapons that technology supplies for the battle,” every liberal pretention to substantive neutrality regarding the question of what is right vanishes and what emerges are two irreconcilably opposed parties with equally opposed answers to that question. Only one of those parties knows itself to be based on faith and wants to be – political theology. The other party, which thinks it has brought or will bring world history to an end, is based on the faith in progress without wanting to be based on faith. Political theology thus appears superior; “it seems to have been sentenced to conquer.”528 Satan cannot avoid serving the purposes of Providence, and via a kind of cunning of revelation the “evil and devilish spirit” of technicity is condemned to lose, again and again, the battle between right and heretical faith.529

This is the setup. In the final two (or five) sections, Meier casts doubt on this very picture, or shows that it is sketched from the perspective of political theology

527 VII.2.22-3 (87/78); italics added.
528 VII.3.1 (88/79).
529 VII.2.29-31 (88/79).
and not that of political philosophy. He begins with the question: “But what is the point of a victory if defeat is excluded”? How can the courage of the political theologian be true courage if the truths of revelation are never really placed in question? Does the bourgeois need for security, the flight from the risk of the political, not mirror the political theologian’s self-certainty and unwillingness to expose the center of his thought to discussion and possible attack? Is, then, the political theologian a kind of bourgeois, albeit one who does not acknowledge the indispensability of knowledge, even in the form of interpretation, for his endeavor? “Political theology defends the primacy of action over knowledge, because political theology places everything under the commandment to be obedient.” But does not this very move presuppose (or ought it not to presuppose) knowledge of what is most important, i.e., of the right or best life for man? Political theology’s “most urgent task” consists in identifying and opposing the enemy, but as grounded in faith rather than knowledge it “cannot prescribe any particular taking of sides or give action a ‘concrete’ orientation, for the paths of Providence are unfathomable.” Without recourse to knowledge, then, the political theologian has no basis for his historical action other than faith, and faith, as Meier now acknowledges, goes hand in hand with honesty, truthfulness, and probity

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530 VII.3.2 (88/79). – An interesting attempt to respond to this question can be found in LCS, IV.32.6-13 (246/162), viz.: “The notion of the katechon... protects historical action from the disdain [Geringschätzung] for politics and history in the certainty of promised victory.”

531 VII.3.8 (89/80).

532 VII.3.10-12 (89/80).
[Redlichkeit], which in the end “has to carry the whole burden” on its own.  
But truthfulness is not the same as truth, and it is all-too-easy to be honest but mistaken.

With nothing to go on, Meier wonders whether

the decision born of the obedience of faith in the supreme authority cannot, in the end, be distinguished from the decision that bases one’s commitment on nothing.

Schmitt is another Stirner and political theology a kind of nihilism if the resolution to defend the political in the name of the God of revelation amounts to the same thing, politically speaking, as the contentless resoluteness of heroic existentialism. If Schmitt’s “decisionism” is to be something more than a “decision to decide,” it must be based on the truth of revelation, the truth of divinely ordained enmity: “In the case of Carl Schmitt, everything depends on the answer to this question.” If Schmitt is only deceiving himself, if his faith is not genuine, then he will be forced to give up “the certainty that the course of faith in always in order already and that salvation is the meaning of all world history.” By means of a telling paradoxical formulation, Meier suggests that the true burden borne by the political theologian, weightier than any particular decision regarding the enemy, is the relief afforded by just this certainty, i.e., by the self-deceptive belief that total security from the vicissitudes of life and death is possible, and that such security can be, and in fact really was and is, guaranteed by the sovereign Lord of history and of Providence in the commandment of obedience to divine revelation.

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533 VII.3.17 (89/80-1).
534 VII.3.15 (89/80).
535 VII.3.16 (89/80).
536 VII.3.18 (89-90/81).
The first section marked off from the rest of the paragraph (VII.3.19-27) has for its subject the problematic figure of Schmitt’s enemy. Having established probity as the sole criterion by which the political theologian is able to demarcate friends and enemies, Meier pushes forward: “in what figure” must the “mass faith of an antireligious, this-worldly activism” be opposed? Bolshevikism or liberalism? The “new faith” in technology or Judaism? Is National Socialism an avatar of the Antichrist or an embodiment of the katechon? And how, in general, are restrainers of the eschata to be distinguished from hasteners? No concrete criterion of distinction is apparent. The final two sentences of the section pose an even more difficult problem. First:

If the enemy is our own question as a figure, is Schmitt’s figure not “unambiguously” determined?

If Schmitt’s enemy is “the ‘mass faith of an antireligious, this-worldly activism,’” then the question proper to such faith, asked or unasked, is the question of progress or of whether human wisdom suffices for human happiness or of whether virtue can be taught. The “figure” of Schmitt would represent a haunting reminder that the question has not been definitively answered and that the possibility of an answer other than the one given by liberalism still exists. But Meier continues:

Or might the identity of the political theologian be interchangeable with that of his real enemy?

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537 VII.3.21-22 (90/81).
538 VII.3.22-25 (90-1/81). – Recall at this point the added emphasis due to questions in the light of LCS II.n44 (75/43).
539 VII.3.26 (91/82).
540 VII.3.27 (91/82).
This question asks whether the commitment that bases itself on God and the commitment that bases itself on nothing are in fact finally distinguishable. Would the position that answers in favor of human wisdom, based on the faith that the whole is not mysterious or that it is ultimately “clear and distinct” be, as an answer, decisively different than the position that answers in favor of obedience to divine revelation? Would the fact of providing an answer at all, i.e., a claim to know the character of the whole, not in some sense unite them? Would the position of political philosophy, which does not raise such a claim, but proceeds from the lack of any authoritative, positive answer regarding the question of the whole to seek such an answer, not remain, in a sense, outside the battle of faith between theology and modern science? And would the question, then, of human or divine guidance not give way before the philosophical twin-inquiry: What is a god? and What is man?

The second demarcated section (VII.3.28-34) continues the critique of Schmitt’s position. It locates a knowledge to which Schmitt lays claim apart from his faith. As a Christian Epimetheus, Schmitt believes he knows not only that salvation is the meaning of world history, but further that “all historical truth is true only once.”\footnote{VII.3.29 (91/83)} This does not imply the corollary that “all truth is historical.” On the contrary, it appears to suggest a space in Schmitt’s political theology for non-historical, and therefore non-relative truths. Nonetheless, “in the state of historicity and Judgment,” Schmitt views “every theory” as answering “a unique signal” and
thus as essentially derivative of the action of answering the call of history.\textsuperscript{542}

Schmitt’s “historicism” is that of a believer: it is based on the duty of responding, via action, to the challenges presented by history \textit{qua} salvation-history. Thus what superficially (and not only superficially) looks like “the historicism of a Croce or a Collingwood” is in fact a theological position that bases itself on the singular event of the Incarnation in the Virgin and the truths of faith revealed therein. Schmitt’s faith is faith in a truth (of faith), i.e., in a “pure and whole knowledge” regarding the meaning of history.\textsuperscript{543} Schmitt believes he knows that politics is destiny for man, and on that basis – and on it alone – he proceeds with conceptional actions whose seemingly arbitrary character have caused many in the past to label him an “occasionalist.” But faith in revelation permits “occasionalism” only on grounds of a deeper certitude, and it is this certitude to which Meier looks in attempting to tease out the center of Schmitt’s thought.

The book’s final paragraph is about Leo Strauss. Strauss is said, finally unlike Schmitt, not ultimately to be concerned with liberalism, but solely with the ascent from opinion to knowledge that must take “the systematics of liberal thought” as its starting point because they constitute the prevailing “cave” of the present. He does not, according to Meier, have in view the “horizon of faith” that Schmitt sees as the only possible escape from liberalism.\textsuperscript{544} Instead, he is seeking precisely the “pure and whole knowledge” that Schmitt lays claim to as an unquestioned

\textsuperscript{542} VII.3.30-31 (91-2/83).
\textsuperscript{543} VII.3.33 (92/83).
\textsuperscript{544} VII.4.1 (92/83).
presupposition. The aim of gaining a horizon beyond liberalism and its task of reaching “an ‘appropriate understanding of Hobbes’” is a necessary first step in Strauss’ real project of the “revival of supposedly obsolete, ‘historically decided’ controversies” for the sake of ascending from opinion to knowledge. Ultimately the interest in Hobbes gives way to the problem of Socrates, the “founder of political philosophy,” and the understanding of “what he set into motion.” Socrates, as a founder, is and is not a god. He marks an “event” or caesura in the history of philosophy, but philosophy as philosophy must try to understand history in terms of nature. Gaining purchase on Socrates and on the Great Tradition of political philosophy will allow Strauss to “come to grips ever anew with the answers as well as the claims of theology and politics”; the answers because philosophy wishes to be able to give a rational accounting of itself and in the absence of a “pure and whole knowledge” (of “wisdom”) can do so only elenctically, through the analysis of various answers to the question of what is right; the claims because philosophy is threatened by every claim that aims at the whole and demands obedience or acquiescence – philosophy, as in Socrates’ time, remains threatened by the demands for obedience made by political and theological authority. Meier now asserts, seemingly in his own name, that “politics is not everything” – or that there is something unpolitical (perhaps nature) – and that “not everything is faith” – or that

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545 VII.4.5 (93/84).
546 VII.4.7-9 (93-4/84-5).
547 VII.4.9 (94/85).
there is something we can know by virtue of our own powers, that truth can be reached by human reason.

The final section of the final paragraph (VII.4.15-17) points us to what remains outside the ambit of political theology. It concerns at the same time Strauss’ reasons for writing esoterically, which are not the same as Schmitt’s. Schmitt writes esoterically because for him the question of his own good need not be posed, both because it has always already been resolved by the ultimate guarantor and because it is perpetually under attack by his providential enemy. For him, discussion is war, not an opportunity to reopen, reexamine, and perhaps even progress from opinion to knowledge. Strauss, on the other hand, writes for his friends even more than his enemies – he writes politically, but also erotically, disclosing himself to the extent required to do justice to his interlocutors’ or readers’ nature. What Strauss desires is the transcendence or sublation of his own in the true or in knowledge, which as such belongs to no one. Strauss, unlike Schmitt, does not view the (natural, as opposed to the human) whole as political, but as erotic, and so he, unlike Schmitt, is not too fearful to open himself up to the questions of others. For him, friendly rebukes as well as hostile attacks provide opportunities for progress in self-knowledge. Like Socrates, Strauss would “furnish himself to the comic poets deliberately, ‘For if they mention any of my faults they’ll be amended; if not, it’s nothing to me.’”548

548 Diogenes Laertius, 2.36 (reprinted in Aristophanes, Fragments, p. 47).
By means of his hypothetical rhetoric, Strauss is able to draw out Schmitt’s hidden premises and convictions while shielding himself from raising the political theologian’s ire. At the same time, this rhetoric enables him to remain consistent with his philosophical view that reason should and can lead will and desire, or that it is not necessary to be committed to a position to be able to think it through to its ultimate conclusions. Strauss’ erotic rhetoric is thus both political and philosophical: it forestalls persecution at the same time as it unobtrusively enacts an “unreserved questioning and inquiry that does not stop at any answer that owes its authentication to an authority.”

If, as Strauss claims, it is true that the “all-important question” *quid sit deus?* is “coeval with philosophy,” it is no less true that this is a *conditional* question: not “What is (a) god?” (which *presupposes* the existence of at least one divinity), but “What would (a) god be?” The “all-important question” with which philosophy is “coeval” did not arise in “political innocence,” despite the evident presupposition of the Presocratic natural philosophers. It had from the beginning to be posed hypothetically, so as at once to be able to raise and develop the question as far as possible by human reason and to do so without offending or harming the authoritative political order in which it

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549 *WLS?,* 11.3 (198).
551 *PdF,* 14.18 (179), citing Benardete, *The Bow and the Lyre: A Platonic Reading of the Odyssey,* pp. 80-90, which reads, in part, “If man cannot live except politically, he must live with men who, if they do not know what constitutes man, must have a version of the knowledge of what constitutes man that does not preserve, however much it may reflect, the nature of man” (88).
arose and continues to arise. It is, as Meier says, the question “for the sake of which philosophy must become political philosophy.”

Schmitt’s inability or unwillingness to question his own opinion regarding the right or best life, an opinion that he believes has been sanctioned or confirmed by a millennia-old tradition of authoritative testimony, ought rightfully to be tempered by an acknowledgement that that opinion remains an opinion and cannot be called knowledge in any rigorous sense. That it is not so tempered marks him as a political theologian, for:

[w]hat sets the political theologian apart [from a mere doctrinaire] is, on the one hand, his awareness of the fact that the problems that emerge from the demands of political theology cannot be solved by means of reason and, on the other hand, the intransigence with which he nevertheless insists on the inevitability of those demands.

The political theologian as such is unwilling to grant, or even entertain, the possibility, that the theological assertion regarding, for example, man’s fallenness, is a conditional assertion or an hypothesis – still less a matter for impudent human questioning – since he much rather considers it an all-consuming “truth of faith” that has come down from the highest authority and therefore is couched in an

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552 LCS, III.14.13 (138/86); this sentence is one of the two central sentences of the book’s central paragraph (in the 105-paragraph reading). The other reads: “The biblical God reveals himself to whomever he wants, whenever he wants, wherever he wants, and however he wants” (III.14.14, pp. 138/86-7).

553 I.e., since it is based on hearsay rather than “seeing with one’s own eyes” (Strauss, NR&H, p. 86 ff).

554 PdF, 6.5 (161); also in the “Preface to the American Edition” of LCS, p. xiv.
unconditional imperative.\textsuperscript{555} The political philosopher, who as such “refuses assent to anything which is not evident to him,” refuses assent to revelation, since it is for him not more than an unevident, unproven possibility. Confronted with an unproven possibility, he does not reject, he merely suspends judgment.\textsuperscript{556}

It is this ability or willingness to “suspend judgment,” with which philosophy “stands or falls,” that gives it the decisive advantage over political theology (or else condemns its practitioners to an eternity of torment at the hands of an indignant Deity).\textsuperscript{557} In the absence of knowledge regarding the character of the whole, philosophy needs neither to “despair” in abject relativism nor to take refuge in the “delusion” of revealed faith.\textsuperscript{558} For while it may not be possible to know whether the whole is mysterious or comprehensible, it is, or at least might be, possible to know what would be the case if the whole were mysterious and what would be the case if it were comprehensible. And, if such knowledge were indeed possible, acquiring it would be imperative for the philosopher, since for her, the “full understanding of a problem is infinitely more important than any mere answer.”\textsuperscript{559}

\textsuperscript{555} At the same time, he remains aware of his own inability to properly grasp – and adequately obey – this imperative by means of his own powers.

\textsuperscript{556} Strauss, “Mutual Influence,” p. 113.

\textsuperscript{557} Strauss, “R&R,” p. 147.

\textsuperscript{558} Cf. ibid.: “Philosophy asserts that man has ultimately no choice but that between philosophy and despair disguised by delusion...”

\textsuperscript{559} Ibid., p. 148. The passage continues: “What counts from the philosophic, i.e., the theoretical, point of view, is the articulation of the subject matter as an articulation supplied by the argument in favor of two contradictory answers rather than the answers themselves. Philosophy in its original sense is disputative rather than decisive.”

Like Strauss’ political philosophy, Schmitt’s political theology seeks to advance beyond the modern horizon of liberal and historicist thought. Unlike political philosophy, however, political theology is led by a fundamentally moral motive. Instead of seeking – as does political philosophy – the true by way of the good, political theology seeks what is good or just by way of what it believes to be true. More specifically, it seeks to honor God and obtain salvation for the believer through obedience to God’s revealed commandments, the truths of revelation. Such truths bear no relationship to natural necessity, since they originate in a God for whom all things are possible. Thus for political theology truth is a matter of authority, or is closely tied to the identity of the speaker of truth. Political theology is then not so much the overcoming of historicism as its purification: it is a historicism that knows what it is – the life of obedience to a fateful dispensation of truth that is not subject to human control. Every argument,

560 On the potential distinction of the good and the just, or on the question of “whether the just is good (by nature good),” cf. Strauss, NR&H, p. 95 ff.
561 Cf. Mark 14:36.
every claim, every appeal to reason, is for it ultimately only a weapon in the spiritual warfare of souls: winning converts, obeying commands, and obtaining salvation (all *actions*) are what matter for it in debate or discussion, not learning, developing, or understanding what truth or goodness are (this it believes it already knows). Schmitt’s concept-formation is polemical, not erotic; it treats truth as a means of exercising power; in this way, it betrays its vision of the highest being: omnipotent, and therefore unfathomable, with no need of or use for omniscience.562

The twofold character of Schmitt’s political theology can and perhaps even must be understood in several different registers – descriptive vs. prosecutive, weapon vs. instrument, justice vs. expediency; term of denigration vs. term of identification – but the term’s characteristic ability to resonate on two levels at once arises most simply and profoundly from its rejoining – after centuries of being held apart – the issues of politics and theology. Political philosophy, too, risks the thought of this rejoining, and it too thereby becomes able to speak in two different registers at once. To simplify, we might say that political theology appears to be speaking theoretically, but is in reality speaking morally, while political philosophy appears to be speaking morally, but is in fact speaking theoretically.563 This difference is

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562 Consider Strauss, *NR&H*, p. 90, on a very different understanding of “omnipotence” as “power limited by knowledge of ‘natures,’ that is to say, of unchangeable and knowable necessity.” Compare the idea of “a faith for which everything appears possible because it knows nothing to be necessary” (*TPP*, I.17.17, p. 36/20) & cf. *LCS*, III.17 (145/91-2). In this connection, cf. also Benardete, *SSS*, p. 101: “That all injustice is willed and that there are no excuses possible have their origin in the belief, generated by the unbeatable nature of *thumos*, that there is no necessity.”

reflected in their respective rank-orderings of politics and religion – for political philosophy, religion is properly a part of politics,\textsuperscript{564} while for political theology, politics is properly a part of religion.\textsuperscript{565} The mirroring here suggests a conceptual symmetry wherein political philosophy meets political theology as a fundamentally opposed “existential position,”\textsuperscript{566} for which the moral has greater weight than the theoretical and justice greater weight than truth. This symmetry is preserved and elevated in the contrasting figures of the “god of the philosophers” (whose “rule consists in knowing, in his knowing himself”\textsuperscript{567}) and the “God of revelation” (who “demands obedience”\textsuperscript{568}). The two opposed orders of knowledge and power thus

\textsuperscript{564} TPP, I.12.3-5 (25-6/12): “Avicenna’s statement that the treatment of prophecy and divine law is contained in Plato’s \textit{Laws} disclosed to Strauss a new access not only to the medieval philosophers Alfarabi, Avicenna, Averroes, and Maimonides but also to Plato... The Arabic philosophers and Maimonides followed Plato when they grasped the divine law, providence, and the prophet as objects of politics...”

\textsuperscript{565} In addition to LCS, III.10.11-14 (125/77-8) see now the passages in \textit{PPHO} that deal with “transpolitical religions” (II.2.7.20-24, p. 78; II.2.13.9, p. 97; and esp. II.2.17.36-37, p. 106, which concludes: “Machiavelli has in common with his successors and his most significant predecessors the intention of establishing the primacy of politics over religion”).

\textsuperscript{566} \textit{PdF}, 6.1 (161).


\textsuperscript{568} LCS, IV.38.11 (258/171). – The “humility” appropriate to the believer is “according to the Christian understanding essentially obedience, and the completed negation of the philosophical principle that virtue is knowledge” (\textit{PPHO}, II.2.6.13, p. 75). Thus for the political theologian Schmitt the principle would hold: “Virtue is ignorance,” or better (since for the thumotic Schmitt there is no “excusable” or unintentional ignorance) “virtue is power” or “virtue is \textit{having no need of knowledge}” (cf. \textit{ÜdGpL}, II.24.1 & 14-20, pp. 346-8, in which Meier argues that in the “doctrine of God” that presupposes “edifice of the moral world-order,” “[t]he highest intelligence... does not require reasonable deductions. It evidently knows... no
emerge more clearly as the result of the sharpening of the conceptual distinction between political philosophy and political theology, and Schmitt contributes to this sharpening via his “purification” of historicism, i.e. via his positioning of faith in revelation, rather than knowledge of nature or of history, in the “center of his thought.”

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Title and Form

The relatively short essay What is Political Theology? asks a Socratic question with regard to a fundamentally non-Socratic matter. Its complement is the essay Why Political Philosophy?, which asks a Platonic-Socratic question of a fundamentally Platonic-Socratic matter. In the background of both stands Strauss’ well-known collection What is Political Philosophy? Is it possible that Meier’s fullest treatment of political theology, the book The Lesson of Carl Schmitt, is the missing fourth piece, i.e., a work aimed at answering, as far as possible, the question: Why Political Theology?

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negativity. It sets nothing apart, but instead preserves everything in the undifferentiatedness of pure intuition, i.e., it does not think.”).

569 “What alone separates, but certainly does separate, Schmitt’s historicism from the historicism of his liberal contemporaries is Schmitt’s faith” (CS, LS & Bdp, VII.3.34, p. 92/83). For the “center of his thought,” see CS, LS & Bdp, VI.3.17 (77/68).
Be that as it may, in the work under consideration Meier appears to be as far from political philosophy – in which “the ‘What is?’ question occurs in the horizon of the question ’What good is it?’”\(^{570}\) – as we ever see him. But that the question “Why Political Theology?” does not occur here does not mean that the question “What is Political Theology?” is not asked in the horizon of the “Why?” question. We are therefore led to consider the present essay as essentially preparatory to the work of political philosophy undertaken in *The Lesson of Carl Schmitt*. In so doing, we are only following Meier’s own claim to have conceived the *Hidden Dialogue* book at the same time as the Schmitt book, and therefore to have already had the latter in mind when this essay appeared.\(^{571}\) To say that this work is preparatory, however, is in no way to say that it is unimportant, or even peripheral. In a way, it represents Meier’s most direct encounter with political theology, and therefore his clearest and most straightforward account of it. In the “Preface to the American Edition” of his essays in which it is collected, he says that this essay “gives a nonpolemical definition of the concept [of political theology], which shows it to be the symmetrical counter-concept to ’political philosophy.’”\(^{572}\)

In the aforementioned volume’s title essay, Strauss had written that we “are compelled to distinguish political philosophy from political theology. By political theology we understand political teachings which are based on divine revelation.”\(^{573}\) Meier takes this succinct definition to heart: against every view that would make of

\(^{570}\) *WPP?,* 19.5 (30/106).


political theology merely an “assertion of conceptual history” or a “hypothesis from
the sociology of knowledge,” he will insist on the “demanding sense”574 of the term,
i.e., one that takes its bearings from the fact that political theology “claims to present
a political theory or political doctrine that in the final analysis is based on divine
revelation.”575 The essay’s subtitle is: “Introductory Remarks on a Controversial
Concept.” From the beginning, then, Meier wants to highlight that the meaning of the
term is itself part of the problematic that the term raises. In insisting on the
“demanding sense” of the term, Meier is at once trying to make a move in this
polemical battle and to remove the concept from it by finding in this formulation the
decisive symmetrical counter-concept of political philosophy.

The essay “What is Political Theology?” has appeared in multiple editions in
various languages. Not every edition maintains the paragraph- and sentence-count
of the first edition, nor of the apparently definitive one published in 2006.576 Nor
does the English translation published in a bilingual edition with the latter translate
it literally at every point. We will therefore rely on the authoritative German edition,
albeit with reference to the English as well as the original German editions.

574 “Streit,” 2.4 & 2.9 (270-1/184).
576 The first version of the essay was comprised of 12 paragraphs; in chronological
order, the translated editions contain 14 (Italian, 2000), 13 (English, 2002), 14
(Polish, 2003-4), 14 (French, 2008) and 13 (Spanish, 2008-9). The presumably
authoritative English-German edition (2006) both have 13 paragraphs, as does the
English version that appears in LS&TPP. In the following, paragraph and sentence
numbers will refer to the 2006 German edition and the English edition appearing in
LS&TPP.
Originally, the essay appeared as a preface to Jan Assmann’s short book, *Politische Theologie zwischen Ägypten und Israel*. Much of the essay’s final paragraph is altered between the edition that appears in the Assmann volume and subsequent editions. Nonetheless, the essay’s initial appearance in this volume suggests at least a sympathy, if not a strict concordance, with its argument. It thus seems appropriate to take a moment to spell out the basis of Assmann’s argument.

Assmann begins by claiming that political theology “has to do with the turbulent relationship between political community and religious order; in short: between lordship [Herrschaft] and salvation [Heil]. It arises where this relationship becomes a problem.” At this point, the point at which the theologico-political problem arises, a bifurcation emerges that irrevocably colors the concept of political theology:

It is **prosecuted** [betrieben] by those who take a certain stand here, and it is **described** [beschrieben] by those who are interested in the history of the problem, the relative positions and solutions found. The concept thus circulates in two forms: as a descriptive and as a political concept.”

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577 The following does not appear in any of the independent publications of the essay: “But the great theme of “lordship and salvation” [“Herrschaft und Heil”] that is in dispute between political theology and political philosophy can also be illuminated from wholly different quarters. One can approach it, for example, via psychology or ideology-criticism, sociology or history of religion. Political theologians as well as political philosophers are well-advised to acquaint themselves with what historians and ethnologists have to say to their questions. They can only learn that when a scientist expresses himself who speaks with knowledge of the theologico-philosophical debate. Particularly when archeological accuracy and a liberating ethnological view come together as is the case in the brilliant contributon of Jan Assmann” (1992 ed.: 12.3-7, p. 19).


579 Assmann, ibid. I am translating “betrieben” as “prosecuted” in the sense that a war or a cause might be prosecuted. “Betrieben” can also mean “operated” in the
Assmann places himself squarely in the “descriptive” camp, opposing his position to Schmitt’s political position, for which the term, “[a]s a political concept... has, ‘like all political concepts, ideas and words, a polemical sense’ that is lacking in the descriptive concept.” And while he concedes that Schmitt also uses the term in a “descriptive” sense from time to time, for Assmann, as for Meier, the salient meaning of the term for Schmitt is its political meaning:

Schmitt uses the concept political theology in the “descriptive” as well as in the “prosecuting” sense: sometimes as a descriptive term that outlines a research program (the investigation of the theological lineage of political concepts) and sometimes in a polemical, dogmatic-normative sense, which rejects a rational foundation of political order, allowing only a theological foundation to apply and legitimizing a specific political form by appeal to such a foundation. As political theology it is directed against political theory or philosophy, which starts from a purely secular-rational foundation of political order.

Assmann goes on to outline Erik Peterson’s occupation with the concept as well as Erik Voegelin’s related concept of “political religion” and K. M. Kodalle’s concept of “political mythology.” He discusses Kantorowicz’ “descriptive” use of the term as well as Metz and Moltmann’s “political” uses of it. And he breaks the “descriptive” use of the term up into “three basic forms” of the “relationship

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580 Assmann, ibid. Cf. CS, LS & BdP, VII.2.2 (84/75).
581 Assmann, ibid., p. 27.
582 For Peterson, cf. Assmann, ibid., pp. 27-9; for Voegelin, p. 30; and for Kodalle, p. 31. Concerning Meier’s thoughts on the issue of “political religion” and “political mythology,” cf. PdF, 8.12-17 (165-6). Briefly, he argues that the very terms themselves presuppose that the truth-claims contained in them are not taken seriously, unlike the term “political theology” in the “demanding sense.”
583 Assmann, ibid., pp. 31-2.
between religious and political order.” In contrast to Schmitt’s project, which Assmann says could even be titled “The Birth of the Political – or better: of Public Law – out of the Spirit of Theology,” Assmann advances a counterproject that seeks the “Birth of Religion out of the Spirit of the Political.” Finally, Assmann makes an important distinction between “primary” and “secondary” religion, i.e., between “religion that belongs to the basic conditions of human existence,” and “religion, emerging as a reflexive form and critically raising itself above other religions, of the true worship of God, in Israel and elsewhere.” It is this distinction that will later become central to Assmann’s thought in the form of what he calls “counterreligions.” We will not be able to provide a detailed analysis of that concept here; but it is important nevertheless to see its integral relationship to Meier’s work and thought. In a later text, Assmann writes of these “counterreligions”:

These new religions are all monotheisms, religions of the book (or revealed religions), and world religions... What all of these religions have in common is an emphatic concept of truth. They all rest on a distinction between true and false religion, proclaiming a truth that does not stand in a complementary relationship to other truths, but consigns all traditional or rival truths to the realm of falsehood. This exclusive truth is something genuinely new, and its novel, exclusive and exclusionary character is clearly reflected in the manner in which it is communicated and codified. It claims to have been revealed to humankind once and for all, since no path of merely human fashioning could have led from the experiences accumulated over countless

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584 Assmann, ibid., p. 33. The three basic forms are: “Dualism: the categorical distinction and institutional separation of religious and political order and leadership”; “Theocracy: the subordination to the point of abolition of political leadership in favor of purely divine rule”; and Representation: the correlation of divine and political rule in the form of analogy and the consequent unification of political and religious leadership in the hands of earthly representatives.

585 Assmann, ibid., p. 36.

586 Assmann, ibid., p. 37.
generations to this goal; and it has been deposited in a canon of sacred texts, since no cult or rite would have been capable of preserving this revealed truth down the ages... For these religions, and for these religions alone, the truth to be proclaimed comes with an enemy to be fought. Only they know of heretics and pagans, false doctrine, sects, superstition, idolatry, magic, ignorance, unbelief, heresy, and whatever other terms have been coined to designate what they denounce, persecute and proscribe as manifestations of untruth.587

This “emphatic concept of truth,” and its resultant “enemy to be fought,” appear to refer more or less directly to Schmitt and to the “demanding sense” of political theology. And whatever one thinks of Assmann’s claim, it appears to have had some influence on Meier’s conception of political theology and thus of the conceptual relation between it and political philosophy. For that reason alone it is important for us to keep in mind.

Paragraphs 1-2: Political Theology: A Contested Concept

Meier signifies his interest from the start: the “concept [Begriff] of political theology.”588 The first two paragraphs of the essay move from Schmitt’s introduction of the term “into the literature” to the “issue [Sache] of political theology,” which “did not enter into the world with the articulation of Schmitt’s theory [Theoriebildung].”589 Anyone who wants to raise the issue of political theology today has to do so “in the horizon of the debate that Schmitt inaugurated.”590 But the fact that one has to begin in the cave does not mean that

587 Assmann, The Price of Monotheism, pp. 3-4; italics added.
588 1.1 (3/77).
590 2.5 (4/77).
one has to or will end there. If the issue or sake [Sache] of political theology is successfully raised by asking the question “What is political theology?”, then that question will be seen to lead and point “far beyond the confrontation with, or reflection on, Schmitt’s position.”

Nevertheless, in raising this question and seeking a way to this issue, one is faced with controversy, particularly in regard to the meaning and significance of the term itself. It is not a merely descriptive term, as we have seen, but also a political-political polemical one, a term whose meaning carries political consequence and therefore the quarrel over whose meaning is charged with polemical force. Not least is this the case because it “is most intimately connected with the name Carl Schmitt,” a name that, since the Second World War, has been steeped in infamy and ignominy, even if it has also exerted a kind of dangerous or beguiling fascination. Just this connection “would alone be enough to make political theology a controversial concept.” But Meier is not content to leave it at the connection of a concept with a name. Rather, he goes much further, connecting the concept with the “core [Zentrum] of Schmitt’s theoretical undertaking” and the “unifying center [Mitte]” of his entire oeuvre. Already he is signaling that he cannot mean “political theology” in a purely descriptive sense, as a “mere secularization-theorem” or a “scientific-theoretical” or

591 2.3 (4/77).
592 1.1 (3/77).
593 1.7 (3/77).
594 1.5-6 (3/77).
'conceptual-historical’ thesis”\textsuperscript{595} – for what ‘conceptual-historical’ thesis could form the unifying center of an entire oeuvre, much less one as “rich”\textsuperscript{596} as Schmitt’s? Owing to the force of Schmitt’s influence the question concerning political theology has today to pass through his oeuvre. The thread out of the cave must be grasped hold of in the cave, even if the cave itself must remain a cave: “The ascent from the Cave is not the ascent of the Cave.”\textsuperscript{597} The cave of “debate” [Debatte] or “quarrel” [Streit]\textsuperscript{598} regarding political theology is so much fired by Schmitt’s work because Schmitt was “the first theoretician in the history of political theology to make that concept his own and to use it for the purpose of self-characterization…”\textsuperscript{599} Schmitt saw, like no one else, the possibility contained in the term “political theology” for a “positive recasting”\textsuperscript{600} as a term of identification. Even more importantly, \textit{that} this is true, that the term “political theology” is the “right thing [das Richtige]”\textsuperscript{601} for bringing “cause [Sache]” and “concept [Begriff]” “into accord,”\textsuperscript{602} “sheds light on the issue itself [die Sache selbst].”\textsuperscript{603} Against the wishes and current of liberalism, politics and theology are to be thought \textit{together}. Meier’s interest in Schmitt is essentially a philosophical or theoretical interest in “the issue itself” of political theology, which “is as old as faith in

\textsuperscript{595} \textsuperscript{3.8 (5/78; translation modified).}
\textsuperscript{596} \textsuperscript{1.6 (3/77).}
\textsuperscript{597} Benardete, \textit{TCL}, p. x.
\textsuperscript{598} \textsuperscript{2.6 (4/77).}
\textsuperscript{599} \textsuperscript{2.7 (4/78); italics added.}
\textsuperscript{600} \textsuperscript{7.2 (11/82). Cf. LCS, IV.38.18 (259/171-2) & \textit{PdF}, 8.4 (164).}
\textsuperscript{601} \textsuperscript{Cf. 5.3 (8/80).}
\textsuperscript{602} \textit{PdF}, 8.9 (165). Cf. \textit{WiPT?}, 5.6 (9/81).
\textsuperscript{603} \textsuperscript{2.7 (4/78); translation modified.}
revelation, and... will continue to exist, as far as human beings can tell [nach menschlichem Ermessen], as long as faith in a God who demands obedience continues to exist.” This “as far as human beings can tell” signifies both a prudent acknowledgement of the intrinsic boundaries of political philosophy, which, as philosophy, is “limited to what is accessible to the unassisted human mind,” and, at the same time, an unmistakable indication that this essay will stand and fall with those boundaries.

Paragraphs 3-4: Schmitt Raises the Flag

The year 1922 marks a “caesura... in the history of the concept ‘political theology’” because in it Schmitt first “raises the flag of Political Theology” as a term of identification “for all to see.” Twice more, in 1934 and again in 1970, he will raise this flag. Obviously “three very different historical moments” are represented by these dates. Any interpretation of Schmitt's thought that takes its bearings from Schmitt’s repeated insistence on the “situational” character of his

604 2.2 (3-4/77); italics added; cf. LCS, IV.38.11 (258/171).
605 Strauss, WiPP?, p. 13
606 PdF, 8.n12 (165).
607 3.1 (4/78).
608 3.1 (4/78). – Interestingly, the English edition adds to the date 1934 the phrase, “one year after joining the National Socialist Party,” which does not appear in either of the German editions, nor in the Italian, Polish, or French editions. It is hard to know whether its inclusion is merely a reminder to the non-Continental reader, for whom 1934 might not immediately suggest Nazism, or whether there is some further intention for making the English-speaking reader especially aware of this connection.
concept-formation will have to take this obvious fact into account. Could it be that Schmitt wants to conceal, to the best of his ability in every situation, the centrality of political theology (in the demanding sense) to his thinking?\textsuperscript{609} This certainly appears to follow from Meier’s argument, which explicitly raises doubts concerning Schmitt’s later styling of \textit{Political Theology} as “a ‘purely juridical text’” and of his own statements as those “of a jurist’ who moved in the ‘sphere of inquiry in the history of law and sociology.”\textsuperscript{610} Meier indicates that Schmitt would have had two basic reasons for such a concealment. On the one hand, “as a non-theologian,” Schmitt “would not dare... to enter a discussion on theological” matters “with theologians.”\textsuperscript{611} Meier calls this “the most obvious \textit{nächstliegende} reason for self-stylizations of this kind.”\textsuperscript{612} On the other, Meier indicates the “most profound \textit{tiefsten} reason for Schmitt’s defensive strategy”\textsuperscript{613} to be the fact that “the center of his thought is faith.”\textsuperscript{614} Because the center of his thought is faith, “arguments make no difference”\textsuperscript{615} to him; he uses them essentially as \textit{weapons} for disarming his enemy, but they do not enter into the foundational context in which his own thought moves. Since he sees in liberalism, “an enemy who ‘would like to dissolve even metaphysical truth into a discussion,’” he “adopts the strategy of making the

\textsuperscript{609} Cf. \textit{CS, LS & BdP}, VI.3.11 (76/68): “Why, then, it must finally be asked, why does Schmitt take pains to conceal the theological presuppositions of his politics?”
\textsuperscript{610} 3.9 (5/78).
\textsuperscript{611} Schmitt, \textit{PT II}, (101, n. 1/148, n. 2).
\textsuperscript{612} 3.n2 (5/78).
\textsuperscript{613} 3.n2 (5/78). The English edition of this citation appears to contain an error: not pp. “57-60” (V.4.4-V.1.11) are referred to in the original note, but instead the section corresponding to English pp. 65-9 (VI.2.22-VI.3.21).
\textsuperscript{614} \textit{CS, LS & BdP}, VI.3.17 (77/68).
\textsuperscript{615} \textit{CS, LS & BdP}, VI.3.20 (77/69).
'metaphysics' of liberalism the object of criticism... without exposing the core of his own politics to discussion...”616 Schmitt’s self-stylizations are rendered in the service of historical action in which faith meets errant faith and in which reason is only a handmaiden or tool with which those who do not share his convictions can be made to agree with him. His theology is “political” because it not only refers to, but takes place in the medium of, a “quarrel of faith” whose meaning is the very object of the quarrel.617

Determining the enemy against whom Schmitt raises his flag is then crucial for determining “what kind of flag Schmitt raises” when he “gives a book the title Political Theology.”618 Meier traces the proximate usage of the term to that of Bakunin, who “had hurled the concept against” the Italian politician and Freemason Mazzini.619 For Bakunin, it had been a “weapon [Waffe] in a war in which two irreconcilable armies face one another, one under the banner of Satan, the other under the sign of God.”620 Meier emphasizes that in Schmitt’s view, Bakunin saw this

616 CS, LS & BdP, VI.3.13-14 (77/68); cf. LCS, II.5.15-17 (57/31).
617 Cf. LCS, II.20.16-17 (93/56)
618 4.1 (5/79); translation modified.
620 4.5 (6/79). Cf. Bakunin, La théologie politique de Mazzini, pp. 56-7. “According to Mazzini’s doctrine as well as to Christianity, Evil is the Satanic revolt of man against Divine authority, a revolt in which we, on the contrary, see the fecund germ of every human emancipation... [The Paris Commune] was finally the audacious realization of the Satanic myth, a revolt against God; and today, as always, the two opposed parties line up, the ones under the standard of Satan or of liberty; the others under the Divine flag of authority. What we call liberty, Mazzini calls egoism; what according to us constitutes the ideal sanction of every slavery, the prostration of man before God and before the authority of that State-Church which, if one is to believe Mazzini, is the permanent revolution on earth, he calls the supreme virtue.” Cf. LCS, I.n20 (23/8).
image in purely mythical terms, as “a man-made fiction,” while for him, Schmitt, it is “a God-given reality.” He takes up the “weapon” of “political theology” not as a figurative “weapon” in a mythical “war,” but as an actual weapon in a real war, and even the most serious war imaginable. For “Bakunin attacks the truth of revelation and denies the existence of God; he wants to do away with the state; and he negates the universal claim [Anspruch] of Roman Catholicism.” Bakunin’s attack presupposes, albeit in an inverted sense, the same thing as Schmitt’s political theology, i.e., that “[e]very temporal or human authority proceeds directly from spiritual or Divine authority,” even though the former views authority negatively and the latter positively. By moving onto this ground, by acknowledging the essential connection between religion and politics even in rejecting “the demands of politics... with the same matter-of-factness as those of religion,” Bakunin moves into an “arena” in which his own weapons can be turned against him by a political theologian of Schmitt’s caliber. The sole doubt regarding Schmitt’s superiority registers – but, to be sure, does register – in Meier’s unobtrusive inclusion of “believes” (Schmitt “believes he discerns” in Bakunin “the most persistent adversary

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621 4.6 (6/79). In the corresponding section of LCS, this sentence is emphasized by being moved to the end of the paragraph (I.7.15, 23/9). Compare CS, LS & BdP, VI.1.7-9 (69/60).
622 4.7 (6/79); italics added.
624 TPP I.10.9 (23/11).
625 4.9 (6/80).
[Widersacher] of morality and religion..." and "seems" ("what seems to him to him in 1922 to be the most extreme assault on theology and politics").\textsuperscript{627} We will only be reminded later, immediately following the corresponding section of LCS, that “[t]he most outspoken rebellion need not be the most threatening, nor the most conspicuous enmity the most decisive.”\textsuperscript{628}

Paragraph 5: The Right Thing [\textit{Das Richtige}]

According to Meier, Schmitt’s decision to oppose himself to Bakunin had a fateful consequence for the career of the term “political theology.” Because Bakunin had raised his flag in the name of Satan for the cause [\textit{Sache}] of “anarchy,” “atheism,” and “rebellion against the supreme sovereign,” Schmitt, in opposing him, was able or compelled to take up the cause of “authority,” “faith in revelation [\textit{Offenbarungsglaube}]” and “obedience.”\textsuperscript{629} “But,” Meier asserts, apparently on his own authority and in his own name, “\textit{authority, revelation, and obedience} are the decisive determinations of the \textit{substance [Sache]} of political theology – independent of the particular actualization of it advanced by Schmitt.”\textsuperscript{630} Bakunin’s bringing-

\textsuperscript{626} 4.10 (6-7/79). Cf. LCS, I.7.7 (22/8); compare \textit{WiPT?}, 4.11 (7/80) with CS, LS & \textit{BdP}, VII.2.4 (84/75): In the present text, Meier adds the words “in 1922” to the earlier claim that Bakunin’s “appears to [Schmitt] to be the most extreme attack on theology and politics.” The addition of the date emphasizes the Schmitt’s judgment would eventually change; cf., e.g., LCS, II.21, esp. II.21.15 (96-7/58-9).

\textsuperscript{627} 4.11 (7/80).

\textsuperscript{628} LCS, I.8.1 (23/9).

\textsuperscript{629} 5.1 (7/80).

\textsuperscript{630} 5.2 (7/80); cf. LCS, IV.38.10 (258/171).
together, for the sake of negating, the political and religious meaning of authority, faith in revelation, and obedience, put Schmitt in the position, via a negation of the negation, to advance a concept of political theology that did not remain “polemically dependent on Bakunin or the opposition to anarchism.” As a weapon, the positive concept of political theology is so effective because it was able to recover the original determinations of the cause [Sache] of political theology, which as such did not come about as a polemical negation. It is as if Schmitt found in Bakunin’s arsenal a weapon originally crafted on and for his side of the fight.

Bakunin had “negated the ‘right’ thing [das Richtige] in the double sense of the word.” On one hand, Bakunin had negated what Schmitt considered to be “in itself right,” i.e., “the authority of God and the state.” On the other, what he negated was “just what Schmitt need[ed]” for turning the concept from negative to positive and thus “appropriat[ing] it for his own ends.” There is a moral sense of “the right thing” (or “what is right”) and an effective sense, and in Schmitt’s negation of Bakunin’s negation the two senses merge. Nor is this merely accidental. The “moral” sense of “what is right” means something like “what is good” or “what is best”; the “effective” sense means something like “what is possible here and now.” For the political theologian, what is good in itself and what is right here and now are indistinguishable. Or rather, what is right is right because it is right here and now:

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631 5.3 (8/80-1); cf. CS, LS & BdP, VII.2.5-6 (84-5/75-6) & LCS, IV.38.12 (258/171).
632 5.3 (8.80); cf. LCS, IV.38.12 (258/171).
633 5.n12 (8/80).
634 5.n12 (8/80).
635 Cf. LCS, II.16.12 (82/48).
“When the call is made, all distinctions dissolve.” Schmitt believes he hears the call in Bakunin’s revolt “with Scythian fury’ against all dominion, all order, all hierarchy, against divine as well as human authority.” Or rather – if he is not to be said to have mistaken the Satanic battle-cry for the Divine call – he believes he finds in the echo of Bakunin’s revolt the intelligible contours of a matter [Sache] that has been wrongfully negated. It is a testament to his rank as a political theologian that he has in fact been proven right.

Such proof comes in the form of the consistent and widespread use of “political theology” as “a concept of self-identification [Selbstverortung] and self-characterization” since and because of Schmitt. 1922 marks a “caesura” in the history of the concept because “for the first time” it became possible to use it non-polemically, as something other than the term of opprobrium it had been since Augustine’s polemic against the pontiff Scaevola by way of Varro’s conception of the theologia tripartita. It is important to understand how central this claim is for Meier’s fundamental characterization of the concept and cause of “political theology.” The fact that by means of Schmitt’s recovery of the term, “[n]ot only political theologians who take up Schmitt’s teaching [die Lehre Carl Schmitts] or refer approvingly to it,” but even “those who sharply reject Schmitt’s political options or do not share his faith” are able and willing to make use of it positively,

636 LCS, II.16.13 (82/48).
637 4.8 (6/79); cf. LCS, I.7.5 (21-2/7).
638 5.4 (8/81); cf. LCS, IV.38.13 (258/171).
639 Cf. 4.3 (6/79) as well as LCS, IV.38.7 (257-8/170).
640 5.5 (8-9/81); cf. LCS, IV.38.14 (258-9/171).
as a concept of self-identification and self-characterization, means that thanks to Schmitt it has once again become possible to see clearly the fundamental opposition between political theology and political philosophy.

To grasp why this is so important, we need to look back at the “founder of the tradition” that “either rated ‘political theology’ as political misuse of theology or stigmatized it as the work of political deception,” i.e., at Augustine. In the famous discussion of the *theologia tripartita*, Augustine follows Varro in distinguishing between mythical (or poetical, or fabulous), physical (or natural), and political (or civic) theology, which are assigned “respectively to the poets, philosophers, and statesmen.” (This distinction is itself based on the conceptually prior distinction of “three kinds of gods” – mythical, physical, and political.) Augustine’s attack on Scaevola proceeds on grounds that the latter “wanted to keep the theology of the philosophers at a distance from the people because it is not compatible with the demands of political life... although he in no way believed it to be false.” That is, Augustine’s reproach of Scaevola “pays particular attention to the untrue character of political theology” of which both he and Varro “were aware.” Augustine first makes the term “political theology” a term of opprobrium on grounds that it is

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641 “Streit,” 11.5 (291/199). – The fact that Meier comes back to this point in his relatively recent Appendix to *LCS* confirms its centrality to his conception of political theology since the first appearance of “What is Political Theology?”

642 Meier says that the *theologia* itself “reaches back to the older Stoics, to Poseidonius and Panaetios...” (“Streit,” 11.6, p. 291/199).

643 “Streit,” 11.7 (291/199).

644 Ibid.

645 “Streit,” 11.10 (292/199).

646 “Streit,” 11.8 (291-2/199); italics added.
untrue, i.e., that, for the sake of the “political community,” for whom “it is advantageous... to be deceived in the things of religion,” 647 lies are told regarding the gods. Augustine’s claim to the needfulness of theological truth is so strong that no lie, no matter how ostensibly “noble,” could be justifiably told to believers:

Excellent religion! to which the weak, who requires to be delivered, may flee for succor; and when he seeks for the truth by which he may be delivered, it is believed to be expedient for him that he be deceived. 648

The term “political theology,” then, began its long career as a term of opprobrium because of its public or at least insufficiently tacit association with the Platonic noble lie. Not only did it consciously distance itself from the physical or natural theology of the philosophers, because its truths were not salutary for the political community, but, even worse, it availed itself of the fabulous or mythical theologies of the poets, which even Scaevola conceded were “absurd.” 649

However, Scaevola does not reject the poets’ theologies for being untrue; rather, as Augustine emphasizes, he rejects them “because they so disfigure the gods that they could not bear comparison even with good men...” 650 He rejects them, in other words, because they are bad or because they do not present the political community with good models of behavior to emulate. Scaevola takes his bearings by the good, and for this Augustine reproaches him by means of resolute emphasis on the “true.” The long history of “political theology” as a term of opprobrium thus

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647 “Streit,” 11.11 (292/199).
648 Augustine, City of God, IV.27, p. 134.
650 Augustine, ibid.
begins not with a liberal or proto-liberal critique of the undue interference of
religion in politics, but with a moral-religious critique of its lack of truthfulness or
probity or of its basis in mendacity. Schmitt’s recovery of the term, then, would have
to face this critique and come to terms with it, even if Schmitt himself would remain
“persistently silent” on its “Augustinian stigma [Brandmarkung].”651 This means that
Schmitt would have to reorient the concept back to its original orientation with
regard to the right or the good, and away from its Augustinian orientation toward
the true. The opposition to Bakunin afforded him the opportunity to do just that,
while sparing him “the direct confrontation with the Augustinian tradition.”652

At the same time, to make his reoriented concept of political theology
persuasive to secularists and believers alike (to make it effective), Schmitt would
have to emphasize different aspects of his political theology in different situations
and in front of different addressees. He would have to speak to scientists
scientifically, appealing to the notion of political theology as a thesis from
conceptual history or the sociology of concepts, and to theologians, if not
theologically, then at least “in the persona of the jurist,” following his great
precursor Tertullian.653 Schmitt’s theology had to be political, not only because he
believed it to be true that God had ordained enmity in Genesis 3:15, but also because
in order for his theology to be effective, and thus in order for him to carry out his

651 “Streit,” 13.3 (296/202); cf. ibid. 13.n48 (296/202). Compare Meier’s use of the
verb “brandmarken” in reference to Bakunin’s intention in regard to Mazzini, WiPT?,
4.11 (7/79) and LCS, I.7.8 (22/8).
652 “Streit,” 12.9 (295/201).
653 “Streit,” 13.22 (298-9/204).
“own” historical task *rightly*, he had to obscure the fact that “the center of his thought [was] faith.” If this meant disobedience to Augustine, it meant still more obedience to God. For the political philosopher, it meant and means that Schmitt was willing to operate within the classical horizon of political thought whose primary orientation is not to the rigorously true or, rather, not to the *irrefutable*, but instead to the right or the good. In short, it means that political theology and political philosophy could face each other as symmetrical counterconcepts on the ground of their mutual acknowledgement of the question of what is right [die Frage nach dem Richtigen], even, and especially, if "with the answer that each gives to this question, they stand in insuperable opposition to one another."  

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654 *CS, LS & BdP*, VI.3.17 (77/68).
656 The “truth of faith” (cf. ibid.) names the political theologian’s need both to believe truly (i.e., to truly believe, and not to believe wrongly that one believes) and to believe in the truth (i.e., in *this* historical event that *really* occurred, in the Incarnation in the Virgin, etc.) – cf. *TPP*, I.17.12 (36/19). The former is a moral question, a question of probity or honesty or self-examination; the latter is a theoretical question, a question of actual fact; finally, however, the political theologian’s need for the former, based on his essential motivation, outweighs every serious claim to the latter (cf. *LCS*, IV.36.11, p. 253/167 along with Strauss, “R&R,” p. 178).
657 Cf. 10.6 (14/85) & *LCS*, II.12.7-8 (71/42) *inter alia*. For the notion of symmetrical and asymmetrical counterconcepts, cf. Koselleck, “The Historical-Political Semantics of Asymmetric Counterconcepts.” – We might also understand the importance of this question in philosophical terms by understanding it as the application of the Socratic question (“What is it?”) to the Platonic-Socratic question (“What good is it?”), i.e., as the question “What is (the) good?” That this question ought to be asked may be inferred from Benardete’s notion that we know non-hypothetically or finally that “it is indisputably good to know the good” (SSS, p. 155) if or because “there is a variety of” (equally authoritative) “divine codes” which “contradict one another” (Strauss, *NR&H*, p. 86 ff.).
658 10.3 (14/84).
Paragraphs 6-7: Schmitt’s Game à Deux Mains

The next section marks a turnaround (periagoge), from the issue [Sache] of political theology, to Schmitt’s political theology as such. The role that political theology plays for Schmitt is twofold: it names his teaching [Lehre] and acts as an instrument with which he is able to compel other, putative non-theologians, onto the ground of theology for theology’s sake. It is a flag whose end is sharpened into a bayonet. At the point of the bayonet, Schmitt forces fighters from the opposed camp into the garrisons and gulags of the Lord’s army, where they can be interrogated, exposed, condemned, and disposed of. Schmitt “knows how to detect ‘political theologies’ even where all theology is expressly repudiated.”

We must pay attention to the fact that Meier’s concept of political theology does not appear to perform the same function as Schmitt’s. For Meier (and Strauss), political theology is “a political theory or political doctrine that claims [in Anspruch nimmt] to be founded on faith in divine revelation”; it, or its substance [Sache], is “a political theory, political doctrine, or political position for which, on the self-understanding of the political theologian, divine revelation is the supreme authority and the ultimate ground.” Positions that expressly repudiate all theology would

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660 6.7 (9-10/82). Cf. CS, LS & Bdp, VII.2.10 (85-6/76-7)
661 5.4 (8/81); italics added.
662 9.4 (13/84); italics added. Cf. LCS, IV.39.2 (260/173). Note that the term “self-understanding [Selbstverständnis]” and not the term “self-knowledge [Selbsterkenntnis]” is used to characterize the political theologian’s mode of autocognizance (the term “self-knowledge” first appears in 13.1, 16/86, in reference
obviously not qualify under this understanding of political theology. Meier’s account diverges from Schmitt’s account because Schmitt wants and thinks he is able to find “political theologies” underlying every position, friendly or bellicose. Meier, however, appears to doubt this claim or its universal applicability or at least the use of the term “political theology” for the tacit or unnoticed “theologies” that appear to undergird non-theological positions once they are exposed by the political theologian “as metaphysics malgré lui.”

Without knowing it, we have stumbled into an aporia that is of the greatest significance for Meier’s critique of Schmitt’s political theology. Schmitt claims a “pure and whole [integres] knowledge’ about the ‘metaphysical core of all politics.” He has to claim such knowledge in order to provide a “theoretical foundation for a battle in which faith only meets faith – in which the right [rechte]
faith counters the thousand varieties of heretical faith [Irrglaubens].” But, as Strauss points out, the idea of a “pure and whole knowledge” contradicts the Schmittian “principle that ‘all concepts of the spiritual sphere... are to be understood only in terms of concrete political existence’... and that ‘all political concepts, ideas, and words’ have ‘a polemical meaning’”... since,

a pure and whole knowledge is never, unless by accident, polemical; and a pure and whole knowledge cannot be gained ‘from concrete political existence,’ from the situation of the age, but only by means of a return to the origin, to ‘undamaged, noncorrupt nature....”

In other words, to the extent that Schmitt’s political theology takes its bearings from the right or the good, i.e., from the right answer to the historical task or question that confronts the believer, it cannot take its bearings from a “pure and whole” or natural knowledge which, as such, is essentially non-historical, non-situational, and either true or false simply. The word “right” builds in this ambiguity between what is good and what is true, and Schmitt makes use of this ambiguity in his political theology to address different audiences differently, but if he is to remain in accord with himself, Schmitt will at some point have to address the question of the relative priority of the good and the true in his thinking. As it stands, the “truth of revelation,” which is a “truth of faith,” i.e., the twin claims of believing truly and of believing what is true, permits Schmitt a game à deux mains in which he can raise the moral flag of political theology precisely by pointing the bayonet of its “theoretical

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665 6.9 (10/82). In LCS, “Irrglaube” will rather be translated by “errant faith,” but will still be associated with “heretical metaphysics” (cf. II.12.38, p. 74/43).
667 6.11 (10/82); cf. LCS, III.1.2 (109/66).
grounding” at such “theologians of the antitheological” as Bakunin. But it also reveals his problem: because “there can never be evident knowledge of the fact of revelation,” Schmitt cannot know that he believes the truth; he is therefore faced with the unending and circular task of reassuring himself, for the sake of his need for security, that he believes truly, or that he truly believes. The problem of probity and self-deception thus takes its place in and as the very center of his movement of thought.

No Socrates, Schmitt believes, could possibly or rightfully escape taking a stand for or against the truth of revelation by virtue of “incomprehension or indifference.” Meier emphasizes the conceptual resonance of the entanglement of the moral and theoretical viewpoints when he writes that for political theology, “[w]hoever denies [leugnet]” the truth of revelation “is a liar [Lügner].” No room is left for someone to deny the truth of revelation because it is not evident or has not satisfactorily been proven. Everyone either subjects himself to the truth of revelation

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669 Strauss, “R&R,” p 176. This amounts to a properly philosophical assertion, because it elaborates “what is possible or not” (ibid., p. 177); cf. LCS, II.12.24 (73/43): “all demands and objections that claim to be authoritative are integrated into the philosophical confrontation, including those that political theology advances or can advance” (italics added). – But if “faith is knowledge, if a particular kind of knowledge” (“R&R,” p. 142), i.e. the “knowledge” that “with God all things are possible” or that nothing is necessary, then this “knowledge” amounts to the paradoxical assertion that “it is impossible for anything to be impossible.” – Or would it be possible for God to forge chains strong enough to bind even Him?
672 6.12 (10/82).
or else lies, i.e., knowingly and culpably denies the right and necessity of being so subjected; justifiable ignorance is not a possibility, nor is the “suspense of judgment” by which philosophy “stands or falls.”\(^{673}\) “The philosopher who refuses to assent to revelation because it is not evident therewith rejects revelation,”\(^{674}\) because revelation claims to supply an authoritative and final answer to the question of what is right. The refusal to acknowledge that claim by submitting to it is tantamount to disregarding and therefore disobeying it. “Whoever does not side with it sides against it”: this theologico-political Either-Or has been repeated countless times in the most diverse situations, but its unspoken message and implicit threat remain the same: You (yes, you) cannot avoid this decision. Not outward contradiction, but simply the failure to obey the command of the authoritative sovereign, appear to fix one’s place and decide one’s fate. For pure non-obedience is simply not possible: failure to obey, and a fortiori that particular failure to obey that takes the form of a questioning of the authority’s answer to the question of what is right and thus of the genuineness of his authority, remains obedience, albeit obedience “to the Old Enemy [Widersacher].”\(^{675}\)

In the essay’s brief central paragraph, Meier introduces its next section via reference to the double-use of the concept of political theology as a weapon and an instrument.\(^{676}\) While Schmitt uses the positive concept of political theology to “make

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\(^{673}\) Strauss, “R&R,” p. 147.

\(^{674}\) Strauss, “Progress or Return,” in JPCM, p. 121.

\(^{675}\) 6.13 (10/82); compare CS, LS & Bdp, VI.5.3 (79/70).

\(^{676}\) Compare Strauss, IPP, p. 124.
his enemies, as it were, ‘akin’ to himself,”677 others can and do use it to “distance themselves from political theologians whose political doctrines they disapprove of and to attack any political theology that is not grounded in their own faith.”678 The concept’s ability to be used as a term of identification as well as a term of opprobrium no longer depends on the Augustinian polemic against political theology’s lack of truthfulness. For it can be used equally well to characterize and to attack a fellow believer, i.e., someone whose fundamental beliefs are different from one’s own, but are no less beliefs, no less self-consciously founded on the rejection of reason as the basis for one’s way of life. Now, even those who do not consider themselves to be believers are forced onto the ground of political theology by Schmitt’s own “game à deux mains.”679 The term is used as a weapon in the

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677 7.3 (11/82); cf. LCS, IV.38.19 (259/172). – Note the interesting parallel with LCS, II.13.16 (76-7/44); that this “parallel” is not intended strictly may be inferred by the insertion of the parenthetic “as it were [gleichsam].”
678 7.3 (11/82-3); cf. LCS, IV.38.19 (259/172). More literally translated, the passage would read: “...from political theologians whose political theories they consider false or objectionable and to meet political theologies whose fundamental beliefs conflict with their own.”
679 7.1 (11/82). This is the central sentence of the essay’s central paragraph. – The term “à deux mains” appears no less than three times in the works Schmitt published in his lifetime (it appears in bold in the following citations). In LSH, we read: “It is in the interest of an indirect power to veil the unequivocal relationship between state command and political danger, power and responsibility, protection and obedience, and the fact that the absence of responsibility associated with indirect rule allows the indirect powers to enjoy all the advantages and suffer none of the risks entailed in the possession of political power. Furthermore, this typically indirect method à deux mains enables them to carry out their actions under the guise of something other than politics – namely, religion, culture, economy, or private matter – and still derive all the advantages of state” (117-8/74). In the 1962 edition of Bdp’s second “Corollarium” (like the Hobbes book, written originally in 1938), we find: “In fact there is today such an abnormal intermediate situation between war and peace, in which both are mixed. This has three causes: first, the
Paris Peace Dictate; second, the post-war period’s system for preventing war with the Kellogg Pact and the League of Nations; and third the extension of the notion of war to non-militaristic (economic, propagandistic, etc.) actualizations of enmity. Indeed, that Peace Dictate would make peace a “continuation of war by other means.” It has pushed the enemy-concept so far that thereby not only the distinction of combatants and non-combatants, but even the distinction of war and peace has been abolished [aufgehoben]. But at the same time, it sought to leagalize this indeterminate and intentionally held open intermediate state between war and peace via pacts and to pass it off juristically as the normal and definitive status quo of peace. The typical legal logic of peace, the typical legal assumptions from which the jurist in a genuinely peaceful situation can and must proceed, were grafted onto this abnormal intermediate situation. Initially this seemed to be advantageous to the victors, because they could play for a while à deux mains and, according to whether they assumed peace or war, have the Geneva legality on their side in any case, while they stabbed its concepts, like pact-breaking, attack, sanctions etc. into the backs of their opponents. In such an intermediate state between war and peace, the reasonable meaning, which the definition of one of the concepts by the other, of war by peace or of peace by war, could otherwise have, is eliminated" (106-7). Finally, in TdP, the expression appears once more: “The well-documented and materially rich work of Jürg H. Schmid, Die völkerrechtliche Stellung der Partisanen im Kriege (Zürich: Zürcher Studien zum Internationalen Recht Nr. 23, Polygraphischer Verlag, 1956) places ‘guerrilla warfare by civilians’—meaning implicitly the partisans of Stalin—‘under the aegis of the law.’ In this Schmid sees ‘the quintessence of the partisan problem’ and the creative legal work of the Geneva Conventions. Schmid would like to do away with ‘certain considerations on the law of occupation,’ those that remain from the previous conception of the occupying authority, and especially—as he calls it—the ‘much-lauded duty to obey.’ To this end he has recourse to the doctrine of the legal but risky War Accord, which he de-accentuates into a risky but not illegal War Accord. In this way he diminishes the risk of the partisan, to whom he attributes as many rights and privileges as possible at the expense of the occupying power. How he means to avoid the logic of terror and counter-terror I cannot see; for he is only able to do so by simply criminalizing the partisan’s enemy at war. The whole thing is a highly interesting crossing [Kreuzung] of two different statuts juridiques, namely combatant and civilian, with two different sorts of modern war, namely hot and cold war between populace and occupying power, in which Schmid’s partisan (following Mao) takes part à deux mains” (36-7/22). – In each of the three uses, then the term is one of – more or less subtle – criticism. Indirect powers enable themselves to enjoy the advantages of political power without suffering its risks; the victors of the first World War use the indeterminacy of a condition between peace and war to keep the vanquished on the wrong side of the law no matter what they did; and Schmid’s partisan blurs the line between the combatant and civilian in order to be able to fight while at the same time enjoying rights and protection. – Meier’s use of the term, then, in regard to
“confessional” quarrels among political theologians themselves; it is used as an instrument by political theologians who wish to force their unbelieving opponents to reveal the faith or hypothesis or decision on which their “theoretical” edifice ultimately rests. The reason political theology was effective in this second sense is precisely that philosophy had forgotten its own need to justify its right and necessity, or to become political – for “a blind, unproven decision can” never “be a sound foundation for the philosophical life.”

Paragraphs 8-9: Negative and Positive Political Theology

The next section of the essay is devoted to elaborating the case for the positive recasting by means of an example its of intra-theological usage. The term is used by “Schmitt’s friend from the 1920s” Erik Peterson to attack “all those political applications of theological notions that he considers to be misuses of Christian theology.” Meier emphasizes that Peterson’s attack comes from the side of political theology; it is not a criticism of political theology as such, but of “a

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Schmitt, must be understood in the light of these three examples; namely, in the sense that by means of his political theology, Schmitt was able to pass himself off as a “purely political” theoretician without exposing the center of his thought to discussion; in this way, his power, or the power of his political theology, was likewise “indirect.” – For a further usage of the expression with reference to “natural right, [Naturrecht],” see Schmitt, *Glossarium*, p. 141.

80 *TPP*, I.21.2 (41/23).
81 8.2 (11/83). Note: the German edition refers to Peterson rather as Schmitt’s “longtime friend and critic.” It is interesting to consider why the term “critic” was not carried over into the translation. Might it relate to the discussion in LCS, II.17.15 (85-6/50-1)? Could a “friend” at all be a “critic” for a political theologian?
particular kind of political theology,” the kind of political theology that Schmitt’s political theology is. Despite Peterson’s apparent denial of the possibility of any Christian “political theology” in the light of the doctrine of the Trinity, and therefore his apparent rejection of the premise that politics and theology belong together, it is in fact not this premise, central to every political theology as such, that he rejects, and therefore not the legitimacy of political theology as such that he attacks. Not even “the theological legitimation of a political rule or regime” is, despite appearances, the focus of his polemic, but only such rules or regimes as “the author disapproves of... for theological reasons.” Here Meier’s case relies heavily on the analysis of Peterson’s thought made by Barbara Nichtweiß. Especially important in the present context his her contention that,

This view, “according to which politics and theology have nothing to do with each other” and church and state must be separated from each other, was “not the expression of a universally valid human knowledge (...) but rather itself only the testimony of a concrete political attitude and situation, which at the same time includes in itself a particular theological outlook.”

According to Nichtweiß, the claim that “politics and theology have nothing to do with each other,” far from being Peterson’s basic position, is for him even “to be judged(...) as a heresy...” Contrary to Schmitt’s interpretation of Peterson’s monotheism-treatise, Peterson “did not in the least reject a theological interpretation of current political events or leave it, at best, to the theologically

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682 8.4 (11-2/83).
683 8.5 (12/83).
685 Nichtweiß, ibid., p. 820.
686 Nichtweiß, ibid., p. 821.
inexperienced and therefore also inconsequential layman.”\textsuperscript{687} Instead, the divergence between them “erupted at another point, namely their different views on the role of state or politics and church or theology in the struggle against the Antichrist.”\textsuperscript{688} In this divergence, Peterson emerges as, if anything, more willing to permit and even require an overt theological influence on politics than Schmitt:

According to Peterson’s view, “state-ideals” and “political ideas” are thus completely bound up with Christian faith, by which it is decided whether Christians can participate in the building of a community, must refuse, or even must bring down a political system in a “martyrs’ war.”\textsuperscript{689}

Against Schmitt’s palpable wariness of locating the “bridge” between political history and divine eschatology in any millenarian or chiliastic popular political movement, and against the in Schmitt’s view justified “eschatological paralysis” generated by the “vivid expectation of an imminent end,”\textsuperscript{690} Peterson appears to advocate a theologically-grounded “right of resistance” that has more in common with the “historical answer” of the “medieval community” than that of Hobbes’ “technically neutral state.”\textsuperscript{691} According to Nichtweiß,

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{687} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{688} Nichtweiß, ibid., p. 824.  
\textsuperscript{689} Nichtweiß, ibid., p. 825.  
\textsuperscript{690} Schmitt, “Three Possibilities” (929/169); cf. 1 Corinthians, 7:29-32.  
\textsuperscript{691} Cf. Schmitt, LSH (71-2/46-7). Here Schmitt remarks that the “distance that separates a technically neutral state from a medieval community is enormous... [this] shows itself in the legal status accorded to subjects in these two distinct configurations, which, in all relevant legal precepts, is basically different. In a medieval community, the feudal, or estate ‘right to resist’ an unlawful ruler is self understood. The vassal (or the estate) may invoke here divine right just as much as the feudal lord or ruler has the authority to do. Resistance as a ‘right’ is in Hobbes’ absolute state in every respect identical to public law and as such is factually and legally nonsensical and absurd. The endeavor to resist the leviathan, the all}}
Peterson’s definition of the relationship of church and state implies that with Christians – even if, under certain circumstances, they can participate in the construction and maintenance of a state – no absolutely crisis-proof, solid political unit can any longer be produced that, as per Schmitt, is recognizable by the capacity for the friend-enemy distinction. In particular situations of conflict, Christians could recall the fact that they authentically belong by baptism only to the “political” unit of the Kingdom of God, whose citizens have been called by God across all nationalities, ethnicities and social units, and then draw the friend-enemy line wholly otherwise than is in the interest of the state.692

Peterson’s theological treatise on “Monotheism as a Political Problem,” then, inasmuch as it appears to side with “the systematics of liberal thought” regarding the illegitimacy of any “political theology,” in fact argues from the side of theology for a position whose meaning and significance have to be considered in the light of the prevailing historical situation. In order to make his argument persuasive to non-believers, Peterson appears to side with liberal thought against the “connection of theology and politics,” and in order to make it persuasive to believers, he makes this move on purely theological grounds, as Schmitt himself recognizes.693 His famous assertion that “[t]here can be something like a ‘political theology’ only on the

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692 Nichtweiß, Erik Peterson, p. 826. – Whether one considers this characterization of Schmitt’s position to be entirely adequate depends on one’s understanding of what Schmitt means by politics “in the eminent sense” (cf. LCS, II.21, pp. 94-8/57-9).

693 Cf. Schmitt, PT II (105/112-3).
ground of Judaism and paganism” has then to be understood as part of a polemic against Jews and unbelievers, as well as political theologies “not grounded in his own faith,” which would misuse “the Christian proclamation for the justification of a political situation,” and not against political theology as such.

The fact that the term “political theology” could still be as polemically charged as it is in Peterson’s usage does not, according to Meier, “render hopeless the attempt to clarify the substance [Sache] of political theology.” For, since Schmitt’s recasting, and despite usages like Peterson’s, “the number of political theologians that avail themselves of the concept in characterizing their own positions is growing.” Meier sums up the thrust of his argument, while pointing forward to its next, and decisive, step, by means of three possibilities that have been opened up by Schmitt’s “positive recasting.” First, the cause or issue [Sache] “aimed at in the question “What is political theology?” can be hit on without being attacked; second, the “most important representatives” of this cause or issue [Sache] can be involved or included without having violence done to them; and, third, that the concept of political theology can remain “a concept of distinction [Begriff der

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694 8.n19 (12/83).
695 7.3 & 8.3 (11/83).
696 9.1 (13/84).
697 9.1 (12/84). I have slightly modified the translation because the English contains a typographical error (“theologies” for “theologians”). A more literal rendering of the German would read: “…the number of political theologians is growing whom the concept serves for self-identification [Selbstverortung] and self-characterization…” Compare WiPT?, 5.4 (8/81).
Unterscheidung]" without fostering “discrimination in a pejorative sense.” The expression “distinction in the whole” is then repeated with reference to the idea that political theology “is separated by an ineradicable difference from political philosophy.” It will appear again at the close of Meier’s Schmitt book, where the point receives its decisive elaboration:

[M]ore important than the quarrel [Streit] that divides political theologians is for us the insight that they quarrel among themselves about a cause that unites them and that makes political theology a concept of distinction beyond all historical polemics... Political theology becomes a concept of distinction, insofar as the determination of its cause [Sache] distinguishes political theology from political philosophy, and in fact not after the manner in which two scholarly disciplines or two relatively independent domains of human thought and actions may be distinguished from one another. Rather, they are severed by the insuperable opposition in which their answers to the question How should I live? stand to one another. The opposition establishes an overall difference [einen Unterscheid im Ganzen], in the way of life, in the positions on morality, politics, revelation, and history.

9.3 (13/84). For the expression “concept of distinction,” cf. on the one hand, Assmann’s concept of the "Mosaic distinction" (in, e.g., The Price of Monotheism, pp. 2-4) and, on the other, Strauss’ claim that “'nature' is a term of distinction” (NR&H, p. 82; cf. pp. 90-1, and compare p. 93).

9.6 (13/84). The phrase translated as “overall difference” (“Unterscheid im Ganzen”) is translated elsewhere as “distinction in the whole” (WPP?, 5.9-6.1, p. 14/95 & TPP, i.19.7, p. 38/21; cf. ÜdGpL, II.26.40, p. 358). It is possible, and in my view even likely, that this expression is intended to refer to the Straussian notion of “noetic heterogeneity” (cf. OT, p. 277 ff.) according to which the Socratic turn to the logoi (his “second sailing”) is occasioned by the insight that the only knowledge to which we can lay claim, of the city, of the ends of man, in short, of the human whole, is not the same as knowledge of the whole, i.e., of the natural whole or the “all-embracing whole” (cf. Strauss, “Social Science and Humanism,” in RCPR, p. 8) but that, since every human action, and therefore the human whole as such, is aimed at the good, our only conceivable access to the whole would come by way of pursuing the idea of the good to the things or beings themselves. The “distinction in the whole,” then, is a distinction made in the pre-philosophical whole that aims to distinguish the human whole of
The “insuperable opposition” between the “answers to the question How should I live?” given by political theology and political philosophy is an opposition not only of content but one of mode.\footnote{701} For political philosophy’s answer presupposes that the answer is not available, since knowledge of the right or best life would depend on the nature of the whole, and the nature of the whole is not known.\footnote{702} Therefore, political philosophy questions. Political theology, on the other hand, believes it knows the answer to the question of the right or the best life, since that answer has once and for all been revealed to it by God. It, therefore, asserts, or claims, or demands.\footnote{703}

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\footnote{701} Cf. LCS, II.12.n44 (75/43). For a discussion of the difference between mode, or “how” and content, or “what,” cf. Bernardete, “Plato’s Sophist 223b 1-7,” esp. p. 130 ff. Consider also the double-meaning of “Lehre,” as both the substance or content of the doctrine and the “teaching” or “lesson” that is communicated in the manner in which the activity of investigation is conducted (cf. Pangle, Aristotel’s Teaching in the “Politics,” p. 1), and compare with the notion of “indirect communication” in Strauss, “Seminar on the Gorgias,” p. 3.

\footnote{702} Cf., inter multa alia, Strauss, NR&H, p. 126: “For the meaning of a part depends on the meaning of the whole.”

\footnote{703} In PdF, Meier writes that it is an “open secret” that “the confrontation with political theology ultimately is not aimed at this or that doctrinal edifice, but rather concerns the foundation and assertion of an existential position” (6.1, p. 161). Whether this means the “foundation and assertion” of political theology, or of political philosophy, is not immediately clear. For it appears that political philosophy, in contradistinction to political theology, as well as to natural philosophy, is based not on asserting but on questioning. More precisely, however, one could say that political philosophy too rests on a tacit assertion, i.e., that knowledge of the whole is not available to it, but that this assertion remains on the level of the ad hominem because it really only claims that a) I have not yet seen such
We note in passing the irony of Meier’s characterization of Augustine as the central example of the “most significant representatives of political theology,” despite the latter’s vitriolic and tradition-founding attack on political theology in the name of truth and truthfulness. Perhaps we are even meant to infer the author’s opinion regarding the relative rank of “political theologians” who are not able to resist characterization by means of Schmitt’s concept, yet who did not or do not consider themselves political theologians.

Paragraphs 10-11: Political Theology and Political Philosophy

The next section constitutes a précis of Meier’s later work on the distinction of political theology and political philosophy. The distinction is elaborated in almost evidence regarding the whole as would be convincing and b) you have therefore not supplied such evidence. Philosophy, or rather political philosophy, does claim to possess knowledge regarding the human whole, but that knowledge is based precisely on awareness of the fact that one does not have knowledge regarding the (non-human, divine or natural) whole.

9.5 (13/84); the characterization is repeated in PdF, 6.10 (162), though this time Meier omits Tertullian and so deprives Augustine of his previously central position.

Cf. PdF, 7.1 (162): “The rank of a political theologian becomes manifest not least with regard to the clarity with which he knows how to distinguish the existential position that corresponds to his teaching from the position that is fundamentally opposed to it.” And yet: “It speaks for the coherence of Schmitt’s position that, even if without a clear concept of it, he does have a good sense of the dividing line that separates him from the philosophers” (ibid., 7.3, p. 162; cf. LCS, III.20.44-5, p. 155/99).
the same words elsewhere, in the context of a more thorough treatment. For now we will only briefly discuss the general logic of the distinction.

According to Meier, political theology and political philosophy agree that the question “How should I live?” is the “first question for man.” Here, he claims that the answer each gives causes them to stand in “insuperable opposition to one another.” Elsewhere, however, the distinction rests on the difference between the question of the right life’s being “asked by man” or, instead, being “put to man” (by an authority). Not the answer, but the question itself, or the poser of the question, the identity of the questioner, marks the distinction between political theology and political philosophy. From the perspective of political philosophy, man has every right to pose this question, because it is a question that in principle can – and can only – be answered by man. For political theology, this is already a presumption. Man cannot ask the question of the right life, but instead must answer the question put to him, the question of whether he will obey God or Satan. Thus the two forms of the distinction between political theology and political philosophy appear to merge – man’s posing the question presupposes the answer that the right or best life for man can and should be raised “entirely on the ground of human wisdom.”

This does not amount to a naïve faith that a positive answer to this question will be

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706 Cf. for ¶10 LCS II.12.20-25 (73/42) and for ¶11 II.12.32-40 (74-5/42-3) & I.16.2-8 (40/20-1).
707 10.2 (14/84).
708 10.3 (14/84).
709 CS, LS & BdP, IV.3.9 (50/42); italics removed.
710 Cf. ibid.
711 10.4 (14/84).
forthcoming, or that the whole will inevitably be known or knowable, but rather a heuristic orientation toward the “plausible assumption” that the question of what is right can only be “developed” by man and in strictly human terms, and that claims to do otherwise cannot stand the test of dialectical interrogation.\footnote{712} This is the sense in which the question of what is right is the “central object” of the “confrontation” between political theology and political philosophy, or of the “thorough reflection” of political philosophy on its own conditions of existence.\footnote{713} The substantive answer to the question of what is right is already implied in the very form of its proposal.

A crucial clue regarding the difference between political theology and political philosophy is given at the beginning of the 11\textsuperscript{th} paragraph. “From the very beginning, political theology denies the possibility of a rational justification of one’s own way of life.”\footnote{714} Political philosophy, on the other hand, finds itself faced with the “two
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fold task of providing the political defense and the rational foundation of the philosophical life.”\footnote{715} The “fourfold determination of political philosophy”\footnote{716} includes both a political defense and a rational justification of the philosophical way of life, while for political theology only the political defense is in the end significant, the rational justification merely an exoteric tool for persuading or fending off non-believers. Philosophy remains answerable to reason; theology employs reason as a


\footnote{713}{10.6 (14/85).}

\footnote{714}{11.1 (15/85).}

\footnote{715}{LCS, II.12.29 (73-4/42).}

\footnote{716}{WPP?, 5.1-2 (13/94).}
handmaiden in the service of obedience: it “has to want to be ‘theory’ out of obedience, in support of obedience, and for the sake of obedience.”\textsuperscript{717} The revealed truth to which it devotes itself is not a truth that could be discovered by man using purely human or purely reasonable means. Meier says that the “obedience of faith is the raison d’être of political theology in the best sense.”\textsuperscript{718} \textit{In the best sense}, meaning: if it is to “be consistent with itself.”\textsuperscript{719} A political theology that understands itself understands that for it human reason must yield to obedience to what is super-human or supernatural, that reason can only be justifiably employed in the service of what is beyond reason, or of authority.

If the \textit{interpretation} of the revealed commandment must be made by means of reason, nevertheless the reasoning itself must be carried out in an attitude of faithful obedience or of piety. The most various conclusions can be drawn regarding the significance of the commandment for one’s own life and action. In an analogous way, philosophers have drawn the most diverse conclusions regarding what is true according to human wisdom. But the fundamental agreement among philosophers that the philosophical life is good for man (or at least for the \textit{highest} kind of man, i.e., for philosophic natures) is mirrored by the agreement among political theologians regarding the “\textit{unum est necessarium} of faith…”\textsuperscript{720} In the orientation toward one or the other life, the philosophical life or the life of obedience to authority, a fundamental answer to the question of what is right or good is given that no amount

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{717} 11.5 (15/85).
\item \textsuperscript{718} 11.6 (15/85).
\item \textsuperscript{719} 11.5 (15/85).
\item \textsuperscript{720} 10.4 (14/84). Cf. \textit{DvLS}, 17.6 (43/72-3).
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
of disagreement regarding the specific details of “the true faith” or “the true philosophy” can dislodge. Again, the form – the way of life – already supposes a difference in content or a different answer to the question of the good. Meier’s task, the task of the political philosopher who lives in an age when the distinction between philosophy and other modes of living is becoming or has become blurred, is to place the heaviest emphasis on this formal-cum-substantive difference, and thus he is compelled to disregard for the time being the intra-philosophical and intra-theological differences that usually stand in the foreground. 721

Paragraphs 12-13: Philosophical and Political Relevance

Meier makes his overall aim clear at the beginning of the final section when he speaks of “restoring to a diffusely employed concept the sharpness that alone enables one to make distinctions regarding the matter at issue [in der Sache].” 722 This sharpening is aided by the additional aim of taking “political theology’s own claim to truth radically seriously in order to enter the horizon of its strength.” 723 Political theology is engaged in “the horizon of its strength” by being cast “in the best sense” as an internally consistent existential decision for the obedience of faith in revelation. To think “political theology itself,” however, does not mean to become a political theologian, despite Meier’s apparent assertions to the contrary.

722 12.1 (15/85).
723 12.2 (15-6/85).
724 12.3 (16/86).
For political theology, the decision to obey is the inscrutable outcome of a humanly unfathomable grace; only God Himself can enable or compel obedience, and to think otherwise would again be an act of all-too-human presumption.\textsuperscript{725} To the extent that the philosopher ascribes the political theologian’s faith to an “act of the will” or a decision, he remains excluded from the sacred circle of belief “in the best sense.” Yet political philosophy cannot rest satisfied with political theology’s claim to be based finally on divine revelation, for to do so would be to leave behind human reason and to accept the answer of authority. Were political philosophy to enter \textit{fully} into the horizon of political theology’s strength, it would cease to be able to grasp political theology by means of human reason or human questioning. Political philosophy thus faces the double-bind of needing to take political theology’s truth-claim seriously in order to “gain clarity on its own cause [Sache]”\textsuperscript{726} and being constitutionally unable to discard or disregard its own criterion of truth as discoverable via purely human means. The two truth-criteria on view here – truth as supernatural and revealed versus truth as natural and discoverable by reason – coexist uneasily where they do not enter into open combat for the interpretation or meaning of truth itself. In this way, the question “What is truth?” becomes central to the confrontation of political theology and political philosophy.\textsuperscript{727} Nonetheless, \textit{that} it appears as a question rather than an already-settled assertion signifies the irreducible perspective of the

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\textsuperscript{725} Cf. \textit{TPP}, I.15.10-13 (31-2/16-7).
\textsuperscript{726} 12.3 (16/86).
\textsuperscript{727} Cf. the subtitle to \textit{LCS}, Ch. II (49/26).
political philosopher for whom truth, like political theology itself, is an object to be investigated or a problem.

The essay ends with a fourfold discussion of the “political relevance” of political theology.\(^728\) The collapse of Soviet communism, resistance of global capitalism, and renewed interest in the question of theocracy all constitute platforms for political theology's reemergence in the modern world. To these narrowly political phenomena, Meier adds an unexpected reference to the Heideggerian “Ereignis (appropriating event)”\(^729\) and thus casts the majority of “postmodern” and “poststructural” “philosophy” as more-or-less veiled political theology. This emphasis brings out still more clearly Meier’s aim: to disentangle philosophy from postmodern “theory” and to take a stand for the former against the latter. The moral emphasis of the “broad stream of ‘postmodernity’”\(^730\) under discussion here is clarified in Meier’s critique of Derrida as expressing “the priority of justice to truth…”\(^731\) This basic priority connects every political theology with every position that – consciously or unconsciously – supposes the world to be moral in form and character and, for example, adopts the notion of a “wholly other” to whom an ethical burden is owed but who cannot, if he is to remain entirely other, be conceived as an object of philosophical or rational analysis. For political philosophy,

\(^{728}\) In the first version of the essay, this discussion is omitted in favor of a cursory introduction to the work of Jan Assmann; the paragraph presented in the essay’s final version is a word-for-word reprint of PdF, 10.2-15 (169-70); the same text appears as well in the “Preface to the American Edition” of LCS (xviii-xix).
\(^{729}\) 13.12 (17/86).
\(^{730}\) Ibid.
\(^{731}\) PdF, 13.13 (175).
as opposed to political theology, justice takes the first place only exoterically, while wisdom or insight – not least into the necessity of such exotericism – stands supreme in itself.\textsuperscript{732} Thus the question of political theology is, if not resolved, at least philosophically sharpened: political theology is that way of life for which – consciously or unconsciously – \textit{the demand for justice is essentially prior to the desire for truth}. Just as for it human reason can be at best only a means for interpreting the superhuman truth of divine revelation, so that truth itself, or that idea of truth, bespeaks a prior commitment to justice, to punishments and rewards, and to a view of the whole as characterized by an essentially moral relationship to man. Even, and especially, where this relation is pushed to its limit as an infinite debt that can never be repaid,\textsuperscript{733} the moral character of political theology’s concept of “truth” emerges nowhere more sharply than in its confrontation with, or analysis by, political philosophy.

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Schmitt’s “purification” or resolution of historicism into political theology allows political philosophy to see more clearly than before the fundamental alternative to the philosophic life and thereby to gain insight into its own cause or to progress in self-knowledge. Political theology’s moral motive separates it from the ground up from the theoretical impetus of philosophy. \textit{Political} philosophy adds to

\textsuperscript{732} Cf. Strauss, \textit{PPH}, (168/147).

this impetus the insight that morality or justice are, if not the highest virtues, nevertheless necessary to produce the political conditions under which the philosophic life first becomes possible. Because it relies on the essential linkage of the good with the true, political philosophy seeks the true by way of the good, or it tacitly replaces the unspoken “is true” that trails every possible or actual assertion with an equally unspoken “is good.” In this, it appears to be of a piece with political theology.

That their mutual orientation toward the good is not, in fact, identical, because it is based on opposite intentions, can be seen most evidently by the way political theology employs reason or truth as a weapon in the polemical milieu of its concept-formation and deployment. For it, the “true” (or what it believes to be true) must always follow the “good” or justice (i.e., obedience, humility, and ultimately the believer’s final victory in salvation), if for no other reason than that the supposition of an omnipotent, unfathomable deity scuttles the possibility of human knowledge (in the strict sense, as knowledge of necessity) from the beginning.734 As we will see, from the philosophical perspective this ordering of justice and truth reflects the ordering of will (or desire) and reason in the soul of the believer. Having thus answered the question, “What is political theology?” more or less satisfactorily – political theology is (in Meier’s “nonpolemical definition”735) any “political theory or political doctrine that in the final analysis claims to be based on divine revelation”736

734 On this point, cf. esp. ÜdGpL, II.17.11-18 (327-8).
736 “Streit,” 1.7 (269/183).
– Meier, and we, move on to that question in whose horizon political philosophy must pose the previous one, i.e., to the question “Why political theology?”
Chapter V

*The Causes of Political Theology*


*Die Lehre Carl Schmitts* is an inexhaustible book, one that repays rereading and rewards critical attention. In it, Meier performs an analysis of revelation that can preliminarily be understood as running along three axes. First, it contains a psychological critique of Schmitt himself as a thumotic, essentially moral man motivated by the demand for justice and the need for security. Second, it places the virtue of humility in the center of political theology, opposing it to political philosophy as a perfect reversal of the latter’s characteristic doctrine: instead of “virtue is knowledge,” for political theology, “virtue is ignorance.” Third, it answers the question *quid sit deus?* with regard to the God of revelation in the most radical terms: the God of revelation is a god whose will is omnipotent and unfathomable. Security, humility, and unfathomability. Surely these concepts only open the door to understanding a book as rich as *Die Lehre Carl Schmitts.* But they do open the door, because they provide us with a linked image of the political theologian who is fundamentally motivated by the need for security, whose characteristic

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737 Due to considerations of space, we will only be able to treat the first and third chapters of *LCS.* While this is regrettable, these chapters contain the most important sections of the book, and we will proceed under the plausible assumption that it is possible to gain at least a game understanding of the book as a whole by examining these preeminent parts, which are themselves also wholes.
excellence is the Christian virtue of humility, and whose divinity is the unfathomable God of revelation. From this linked image arise the twin hypotheses of a moral order in which justice is guaranteed by an omnipotent God for whom nothing is impossible and a theoretical order in which necessity reigns and knowledge in the strict sense is possible. In a later text, Meier gives us the lay of this land with admirable concision:

If the world were created out of nothing, the power that created it would be without limits. It would be subject to no necessity that it itself has not created and therefore could not nullify, break through, [or] repeal. The creation out of nothing is the necessary presupposition of the speech of omnipotence. But the speech of omnipotence indicates in so many words that everything is possible and nothing necessary. And if nothing is necessary, philosophy is impossible.738

We can see more clearly from this the sense in which political philosophy and political theology are existentially opposed; not just in their answer to the question of the right or the best life; nor even in their understanding of who poses that question; but finally in the very world or whole each understands itself as inhabiting. “If nothing is necessary, philosophy is impossible”: knowledge itself (as knowledge of necessity) is impossible; only power obtains, power unconnected to, and exclusive of, any knowledge whatsoever. The orders of power and knowledge diverge in the extreme case of the God of revelation, as well as his mirror-image, the perfectly humble believer. Neither recognizes the reality of necessity, therefore neither aims at, or in fact possesses, knowledge of necessity, natural knowledge. Not

738 ÜdGpL, II.17.13-17 (328). Consider in this connection ibid., I.2.26.2 (100): “knowledge is only possible if not everything is possible.”
only political philosophy, but all philosophy as such, depends on the possibility and reality of such knowledge. Political philosophy takes the extra step of seeking this knowledge by way of the good, or by following the directives of prudence (phronesis) in seeking the true. In this way, by locating the “good in the evil,”739 or by rendering evil harmless by understanding it, protreptically learning its “lesson,” and making it into a “friend against [its] will,”740 political philosophy seeks its own self-knowledge in the course of elenctic encounters with the position or positions fundamentally opposed to it – and it is in this way that Meier reads Schmitt. It is not the goal of political philosophy to save souls, but to know them; however, in knowing them, it necessarily saves them as well.

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740 II.13.14 (76/44): the original has “friend against his will” (italics added).
Title and Form

The title of the first chapter is “Morality, or One's Own Question as a Figure.”\textsuperscript{741} Die Lehre Carl Schmitts thus begins with a discussion of morality, and so fits the profile of what Strauss calls a “philosophic explanation of revelation,” whose “starting-point” would be “the fact that the foundation of the belief in revelation is the belief in the central importance of morality.”\textsuperscript{742} But if highlighting the difference between revelation and myth or politics\textsuperscript{743} (i.e., morality\textsuperscript{744}) will constitute the work’s first object, it will not remain its sole concern, for the next step in a philosophical explanation of revelation, according to Meier, would be that “the gulf separating myth and revelation be closed.”\textsuperscript{745} The orientation toward morality is a means by which philosophy can come to understand the “transition from nature to

\begin{footnotes}
\item[741] LCS (13/1).
\item[742] TPP, II.3.6 (54/32), citing Strauss, “R&R,” p. 165. Compare in this connection LCS, I.9.4 (26/11).
\item[743] This equation, which may at first seem unjustified, is supported by Strauss’s reference to “the original (mythical) idea of the θεος νομος”; if we understand by “politics” here that which relates to the sib or polis before or apart from the emergence of the fundamental alternative between philosophy and revelation, including the sense of “political” as “for the education of the many” (Strauss JPCM, p. 114; cf. ibid., pp. 112-4; “Mutual Influence,” pp. 111-2; & NR&H, Ch. 3, pp. 81-119), or that which relates to law or nomos in general, since “law is originally nothing other than the way of life of the community” (Strauss, NR&H, p. 84).
\item[744] TPP, II.3.4: “what is common to myth and philosophy is that morality possess no predominance for them (54/31).
\item[745] TPP, II.3.8 (55/32).
\end{footnotes}
historicity, the derivation of the asserted singularity from intelligible necessity,” or the emergence of revelation from out of myth, and therefore their fundamental contiguity, without thereby conflating them or “interpret[ing] revelation as a myth.” Understanding revelation and myth or politics together, or understanding that way or those ways of life for which “the critical-skeptical spirit has no predominance,” and thereby attaining to a “theological-political treatise” with “the very opposite tendency to that of Seventeenth-century theological-political treatises, especially those of Hobbes and Spinoza,” i.e., one which is no longer “aimed at the recovery and the persistent safeguarding of the *libertas philosophandi* [the freedom to philosophize], by means of an effective *separation of politics from theology,*” requires first a sharpening of the distinction between revelation or theology and politics or myth, which is to be accomplished by focusing, to begin with, on morality.

At first glance, Chapter I appears to contain sixteen paragraphs. This conclusion must be amended, however, in view of the sixteenth paragraph’s

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746 Ibid.
747 *TPP*, II.2.2-3 (53/31).
748 *TPP*, II.3.3 (54/31).
750 *GS3*, 16.3 (xxvii/19). Cf. *TPP*, I.10.4-11 (23-4/10-1): such a treatise would have to “bring once again to awareness, in perfect clarity, the claims that the ‘original facts’ of politics and of religion contain and reawaken the understanding of the connection that exists between the two” (I.10.11; 23-4/11); and *TPP*, I.13.10 (28-9/14): it would not “put philosophy to work for the purposes of politics,” but instead “turn to politics for the sake of philosophy’s self-reflection...” (28/14).
apparently being divided into two different sections by means of a triple dash.\textsuperscript{751}

This type of dash is unique in Meier’s work, though it recalls the single post-period dashes that divide the third and fourth paragraphs of the seventh chapter of \textit{CS, LS & BdP}.\textsuperscript{752} Just as the dashes there, counted as paragraph separations or quasi-paragraph separations, turn a 4-paragraph chapter into a 7-paragraph chapter and a 36-paragraph book into a 39-paragraph book, so the dashes here turn a 16-paragraph chapter into a 17-paragraph chapter and a 104-paragraph book into a 105-paragraph book. According to Strauss, in Maimonides “17 stands for nature.”\textsuperscript{753}

If “nature” is the concern of philosophy, then Meier’s appending a seventeenth section to his first chapter can be understood as an indication of its philosophical intention.\textsuperscript{754} It also generates central paragraphs for both the chapter (I.9) and the book (III.14) which, rightly understood, provide a crucial key to the overall analysis. Each marks a peak in the philosophical explanation of revelation, and the two are connected by a shared, uncited quotation of Strauss on the essential relation of revelation and morality.\textsuperscript{755}

\begin{thebibliography}{9}

\bibitem{751} I.16.41-2 (44/23).
\bibitem{752} \textit{CS, LS & BdP}, VII.3.18-9 (90/81); VII.3.27-8 (91/82); & VII.4.14-5 (96/87).
\bibitem{753} Strauss, “How to Begin to Study the Guide of the Perplexed,” p. xxx. – It is perhaps not without interest that this claim is made in the central paragraph of Strauss’ essay.
\bibitem{754} He does something similar when he appends a “Philosophical Postscript” to “Streit,” though there it is the 14\textsuperscript{th} paragraph rather than the 17\textsuperscript{th}. In the aforementioned essay by Strauss, we also read that in Maimonides’ \textit{Guide}, “14 stands for man or the human things” (ibid.). There, the question \textit{quid sit deus?} most clearly emerges as “equipollent to the question ‘what is man’” (Strauss, letter to Benardete, May 17, 1961, quoted in \textit{TPP}, I.n42; p. 47/27).
\bibitem{755} I.9.7 (27/11) & III.14.6 (138/86). The reference is to Strauss, \textit{PAW}, p. 140 (cf. \textit{CS, LS & BdP}, IV.n45, p. 54/47; and Lomax, “Carl Schmitt, Heinrich Meier, and the end of

\end{thebibliography}
I.1-I.2: Schmitt’s *Thumos*

The first words of the first chapter, and therefore of the text of the book, are:

“Moral indignation” [Moralische Entrüstung]. This term will be familiar to any reader of Strauss or of his students: “indignation,” and especially “moral indignation” is an English term designating or referring to the constellation of ideas associated with the Greek word *thumos*. *Thumos* is famous as the “middle” part of the soul in the tripartite scheme of the *Republic*, the characteristic quality belonging to the guardians or “philosopher-dogs” whose job it is to protect Glaucon’s *Kallipolis*. Also called spiritedness, harshness, waspishness, anger, irascibility and eagerness to fight, *thumos* is a fitting characteristic of the souls of the guardians because it “is essentially related to love of one’s own” and because it is equally associated with the vulgar or ordinary understanding of the virtue of courage (*andreia*), which, as “the virtue of the man (...)” includes surpassing one’s

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756 I.1.1 (13/1). “Entrüstung” in German refers literally to the condition of being “disarmed” or “unarmed.” Compare in this connection *LCS*, I.14.17 (36-7/18) & Strauss, *ToM*, p. 171.


enemies in harming them.” It is also integrally related to the virtue of justice 
(dikaiosune): “in its normal form,” thumos or spiritedness “is a zeal for justice, or 
moral indignation.” More generally, thumos (in the Platonic sense) is “the 
political passion” and “shows itself as a desire for victory, superiority, rule, honor, 
and glory.” This does not, however, mean only personal victory, superiority, etc.: 
the spirited man “divines something higher” and is “always on the lookout, or on the 
search, for something to which he can sacrifice himself.” Thus thumos is a major 
factor driving patriotism. It is the “locus of morality in the ordinary sense of the 
term” because it binds the higher with the lower, or reason with desire, and is 
thus the characteristic trait of politics or the political in general.

As the aspiration for what is higher, thumos becomes indignant when its own 
low origins are revealed. Nevertheless, owing to these origins, thumos remains 
essentially reducible to desire [epithumia]. Strauss even claims that the Republic’s 
division of thumos and epithumia into two separate parts of the soul is the exoteric 
result of the fact that the “city in speech” is being fashioned for Glaucon, a thumotic

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760 Strauss, XS, p. 126; compare the discussion of justice in C&M, pp. 70-1. The 
precise version of the virtue of courage is given in Protagoras, 360d (Sachs trans. p. 
88). It is indeed perplexing that Mansfield, in his treatment of “manliness,” never 
refers to this crucial passage, instead replacing it with the similar, but less direct 
(because spoken by Nicias instead of Socrates) definition given in Laches 195a 

761 Strauss, C&M, pp. 111; Strauss, RCPR, p. 167. Cf. also Strauss, OPS, pp. 242-3 as 
well as Benardete, SSS, p. 75.

762 The term has a wider scope of applicability before and apart from Plato’s usage 
(cf. Strauss, RCPR, p. 165). For an interesting discussion of the term’s meaning in 

763 Strauss, RCPR, p. 166.


765 Ibid.
youth, in order to convince him that the just life and the good life are identical.\footnote{GS3, p. 568, quoted in Lampert, “Strauss’s Recovery of Esotericism,” p. 72: “And thumos too is purely ironic! The distinction between epithumia [desire] and thumos is permissible only exoterically, and with that ‘Glaucon’s’ kallipolis breaks apart.”}

According to this view, thumos or spiritedness

arises out of the desire proper being resisted or thwarted. Spiritedness is needed for overcoming the resistance to the satisfaction of desire. Hence spiritedness is a desire for victory.\footnote{Strauss, RCPR, p. 166. Cf. Pangle, “Interpretive Essay,” p. 453: “we can best understand the part of the soul called thumos if we begin by reflecting on its manifestations in the phenomenon of angry indignation (cf. [Laws] 717d and Republic 441a-b, 572a). In its most elementary form, shared with many animals, anger is the courageous reaction to frustrated desire or to injury: it is an immediate, fear-suppressing, and uncalculating impulse to overcome the obstacle or source of hurt (cf. [Laws] 791d-792b, 863b, 866d, 963e). However, while it usually arises in service to desire or aversion, anger can rapidly take on a momentum of its own. This independence of anger is especially visible in man; indeed, the spectacular, even awesome, independence of thumos in its various aspects... constitutes a great part of what we mean by 'humanity.'”}

Thumos is “in the service of desire. It is essentially obedient... But as such it does not know what it should obey, the higher or the lower. It bows to it knows not what.”\footnote{Ibid.}

As desire, or as rooted in desire, thumos is rooted in other moral needs or affects. It cannot be understood simply as courage or willingness to sacrifice oneself for a larger cause, but must rather be understood in terms of the specific satisfaction that is derived from such self-sacrifice. For instance, Pangle says that it would be “oversimplifying to divorce thumos completely from the desire for security. For according to the Athenian [Stranger], the eidos that comprises thumos also}{

\footnote{766 GS3, p. 568, quoted in Lampert, “Strauss’s Recovery of Esotericism,” p. 72: “And thumos too is purely ironic! The distinction between epithumia [desire] and thumos is permissible only exoterically, and with that ‘Glaucon’s’ kallipolis breaks apart.”}

\footnote{767 Strauss, RCPR, p. 166. Cf. Pangle, “Interpretive Essay,” p. 453: “we can best understand the part of the soul called thumos if we begin by reflecting on its manifestations in the phenomenon of angry indignation (cf. [Laws] 717d and Republic 441a-b, 572a). In its most elementary form, shared with many animals, anger is the courageous reaction to frustrated desire or to injury: it is an immediate, fear-suppressing, and uncalculating impulse to overcome the obstacle or source of hurt (cf. [Laws] 791d-792b, 863b, 866d, 963e). However, while it usually arises in service to desire or aversion, anger can rapidly take on a momentum of its own. This independence of anger is especially visible in man; indeed, the spectacular, even awesome, independence of thumos in its various aspects... constitutes a great part of what we mean by 'humanity.'”}

\footnote{768 Ibid.}
comprises fear (864b; cf. 863e). This leads him to ask: “Could anger (thumos) and fear be alternative expressions of the same fundamental psychic motion, which arises from a sense of one’s threatened particularity?” We might equate the notion of “one’s threatened particularity” with a threat to one’s own. Thumos, then, is the reaction of fear-anger that arises from a perceived threat to what is one’s own; positively, it could be said to be rooted in the desire for security of one’s own, or for one’s own security.

As an essentially reactive movement, thumos is marked by ressentiment. It is a type of desire that is no longer “directed toward a good, the good simply,” but instead “is directed towards a goal as difficult to obtain.” Not the goal, but the difficulty of attaining it, is desired; the suffering or self-denial that was formerly a means toward achieving a desired goal is now an end in itself. One begins to believe that one deserves something merely because one has suffered for it or in the course of pursuing it. One demands, hopes for, and even expects justice in return for the suffering one puts oneself through, and, to the extent this expectation becomes a firm belief, one desires the suffering itself that will inevitably result in one’s just recompense. From this perspective, the object of desire is desired to the extent that its achievement is or appears to be impossible; for only an impossible desire can be

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770 Ibid.
771 Cf. Nietzsche, Genealogy of Morals, Section I.10, pp. 36-9, along with Max Scheler, Ressentiment, esp. Ch 1, pp. 3-27.
772 Strauss, RCP, p. 166.
773 Cf. ÜdGpL, II.26.48 (359): “Suffering an injustice,” moral man “is confident that the ‘just Being who rules everything’ will compensate him for it.”
relied on to produce pure suffering without the danger of a premature and all-too-human reward. But the abject pride taken in such suffering abhors the thought that its motives are impure. Thumos tries to separate itself from desire, by “personification” if necessary, so as to avoid the unwanted consequences of such an association as well as to “assign complete responsibility” for its suffering “to whatever opposes it.” Thumos wants to blame and to punish rather than to cure or to improve. Justice is for it not giving each what would be best for him but giving each what he deserves. Thumos views men as fundamentally distinct from animals, i.e., as agents with moral freedom and therefore with culpability if they do the wrong thing. Ignorance is not a valid excuse or defense, because man is and must be responsible, therefore equipped for responsibility, therefore, if ignorant, inexcusably ignorant. Luck plays no role here. Someone, either man or God or both, is free to decide and to act. In this regard, the opposite of moral indignation is

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774 On this desire for purity and its relation to security and validity, cf. *PPHO*, II.2.11.35-36 (93) regarding “the power of a need for security that puts all the security of the world to shame, and the depth of the desire for purity, for a moral order of unconditional validity. A need and a desire that correspond to the Biblical religion and find their fulfillment in the belief in the Holy God…”


776 Pangle devotes the central paragraph of his *Political Philosophy and the God of Abraham* to the question of thumotic punishment: “what are the intelligible grounds for the overwhelming conviction that the guilty deserve to suffer for what they have done; and what are the intelligible grounds for the concomitant hope that they – that even we ourselves – will suffer the punishment that they, and we, deserve?” (101). Cf. also Strauss, *C&M*, p. 71.

777 Cf. Strauss, “R&R,” p. 161; WiPP?, p. 214; *JPCM*, p. 385; *ToM*, p. 173; and *C&M*, p. 129. Also Benardete, *SSS*, p. 101: “That all injustice is willed and that there are no excuses possible have their origin in the belief, generated by the unbeatable nature of thumos, that there is no necessity. To will is to be perfectly effective.”
pity, which presupposes that the evil inflicted on the pitiable is not deserved.\textsuperscript{778}

_Thumos_ in this sense is a desire to protect one’s own, which does not want to be a desire, but instead wants to be “its own” part of the soul. On the basis of its inability to separate itself fully from desire, it grows resentful, personifies its desire and blames the personification for its own transgressions, demands justice or satisfaction, and, failing everything, resorts to self-sacrifice and even suicide, if only to prove once and for all that it is not desire, or to secure itself a reputation for not desiring repute.

Because of its insistence on its “own” as well as its antipathy toward desire, _thumos_ is basically anerotic. A thorough treatment of the difference between _eros_ and _thumos_ is beyond the scope of the present discussion. It is, nonetheless, of significance for understanding Meier and in particular Meier’s approach to Schmitt. Therefore, we will cast a brief glance at Ronna Burger’s distinction between erotic and thumotic souls, a distinction with which she seeks to interpret the work of Seth

\textsuperscript{778} Compare Aristotle, _Rhetoric_, II.8 on pity (\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\omicron\omicron\varsigma) with II.9 on indignation (\nu\epsilon\mu\epsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma) (Sachs trans. pp. 207-12). In a seminar, Strauss explicitly refers to this type of indignation as “moral indignation” (“Seminar on Aristotle’s _Ethics_,” Session XII, p. 15). Cf. Strauss, _C&M_, pp. 233-4 on Diodotus’ replacement of “the question of justice (are the Mytileneans guilty?) by the question of expediency (does Athens derive benefit from killing them?)...” Strauss claims that Diodotus puts “his audience in a mood that is willing to listen to a plea of innocence” by emphasizing the “involuntary” character of the crimes of the Mytileneans, or that he approaches the question of justice only after preparing a mood of pity in his listeners. According to Aristotle the feeling of pity blocks the feeling of indignation: someone who had no choice but to obey his nature in committing evil deserves rather pity and gentle correction than blame and harsh punishment. Cf. on this Bruell, “Thucydides’ View of Athenian Imperialism,” p. 17.
Burger begins with a reference to a Benardetean discussion of Sappho’s “Ode to Aphrodite”:

Benardete discerned in the poem what he took to be the two fundamental principles of Platonic psychology: “Eros and moral indignation seem to be alternative grounds for what constitutes the nature of man...”

The two types of soul are connected with two distinct types of rhetoric, because they aim at two distinct types of need or desire:

The art of speaking, which consists in the adjustment of speeches to souls, necessarily takes a twofold form, reflecting the two fundamental and irreducible principles of psychology: in connection with the longing for justice, which can inspire moral indignation, punitive rhetoric, in connection with love of the beautiful, erotic rhetoric.

The “longing for justice” and the “love of the beautiful” respectively animate the thumotic and the erotic soul. But the former is only an ersatz version of the latter, because it includes the thumotic desire to punish without improving, and therefore its rhetoric is oriented towards justice as opposed to goodness. Nevertheless, both give rise to “theological” elements:

The dual principles of psychology bring in their wake, as a consequence, a twofold theology – of punitive gods, who enforce justice, and beautiful gods, who inspire eros.

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780 Burger, ibid., p. 57, citing Benardete, RMP, p. 195.
781 Burger, ibid. pp. 57-8. – In TPP, Meier himself associates thumos in a sketch of Strauss’ with “obedience to the omnipotent God of revelation” and “the demand for universal justice” and eros with “the devotion to the eternally beautiful” (III.6.7, p. 81/51).
782 Cf. Burger, ibid., p. 62: “What is moving Leontius is the desire to see justice done.”
783 Burger, ibid., p. 58.
We have then a threefold distinction between thumotic and erotic souls: first, they are animated either by the longing for justice or by the love of the beautiful; second, they employ either punitive or erotic rhetoric; and third, they give rise to either punitive gods who enforce justice or beautiful gods who inspire eros.

But, one will rightly ask, if thumos is essentially desire, with what right can we separate it from eros in its entirety? Is eros, after all, not desire as well? And would the two not, even if aiming at different and irreconcilable objects, be connected precisely as desire? Strauss’ readings of the Republic and the Symposium provide us with a tentative answer. Starting from the “fact that desire includes eros, erotic desire in the highest and lowest sense,” he argues that spiritedness or thumos in the Republic is “an erotic or anti-erotic” because the primacy of justice in the Republic induces it to make a “deliberate abstraction from eros.”784 Eros is “primarily the desire to generate human beings,” but when “Plato indicates in the second book [of the Republic] the needs for the satisfaction of which men live in society, he mentions food and drink but is silent about procreation.”785 “[I]n its healthy forms” eros ranges “from the longing for immortality through offspring via the longing for immortality through fame to the longing for immortality through participation by knowledge in the things which are unchangeable in every respect,” but “to the extent to which high ambition is not transformed into full devotion to the quest for wisdom, and to the pleasures which accompany that quest, [the potential

785 Strauss, RCPR, pp. 165-6.
philosopher] will not become an actual philosopher.” Now, there is an essential
difference between the Republic and the Symposium:

love of one’s own is lower than love of the beautiful. The Symposium
transcends the love of one’s own. Eros is homeless. The Republic, as a
political work, does not transcend the sphere of one’s own... Because
the Republic remains within the limitations of one’s own, the
emphasis on spiritedness, repelling the foreign or the alien, is crucial.
The Symposium, by transcending the sphere of one’s own, is silent on
spiritedness.787

From this Strauss draws the crucial conclusion: “spiritedness is essentially the
companion of the lower forms of eros, and that is the crudity, if you will, of the
psychology of the Republic. On the higher stages of eros there is no thumos, no
spiritedness, as a companion.”788 The “desire to generate human beings,” as a lower
or as the primary form of eros, contains an element of thumos: “the mother loves her
son, not because he is, but because he is her own, or because he has the quality of
being her own.”789 But “the longing for immortality through participation by
knowledge in the things which are unchangeable in every respect” contains no
thumos, because it concerns “what can never become private or exclusive
property.”790 Thus we come to a central point of agreement between Meier, Strauss,
and Benardete: “Indignation has no place in philosophy proper.”791 But – Strauss
continues – “In its utterances or in its teaching, this is another matter.”792

786 Strauss, RCPP, p. 166 & OT p. 204.
787 Strauss, OPS, p. 243.
788 Strauss, ibid.; italics added.
789 Strauss, OT, p. 199.
790 Strauss, ibid.
791 Strauss, OPS, p. 243; cf. C&M, pp. 110-1: “Let us also never forget that while there
is a philosophic eros, there is no philosophic indignation, desire for victory, or
We are now in a better position to understand the basic movement of Chapter I.

Meier begins with “moral indignation,” or *thumos*, in order to analyze it into desire or need. This he does by structuring the chapter as an ascent, from the first to the ninth, or central, paragraph, whose theme is “Carl Schmitt’s need for security.”

The analysis of indignation into need corresponds to the task of analyzing revelation

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anger.” Compare *LCS*, I.1.2 (13/1) and Benardete, *E&R*, pp. 150-1. But cf. Cropsey, “Virtue and Knowledge,” pp. 154-5 alongside *LCS*, I.10.4 (27/11), as well as Shestov, *Athens and Jerusalem*, “Foreword,” p. 1 (50). – In his recent work on Rousseau, Meier writes that Rousseau’s indignation with his persecutors “denied him Beisichselbstsein” (*Beisichselbstsein*, a Meierian transcription of *amour de soi même* by way of Hegel, is translated in *LCS* as “being [one]self in a self-centered whole,” III.20.37, 154/98) and “did not correspond with his own good” (*ÜdGpL*, I.7.3.11-12, p. 264). He continues: “The vanishing point of Rousseau’s critique of indignation is the tranquility that he introduces in the fourth paragraph of the First Promenade as ‘the compensation for all of my ills,’ and which he says was ganted him upon his resigning himself to his fate, ‘without any longer struggling against necessity’” (*ÜdGpL*, I.7.3.13, p. 264). Compare to this Strauss, *RCPR*, p. 206: “[Philosophy’s] spirit is not hope and fear and trembling, but serenity on the basis of resignation” and cf. further *ÜdGpL*, I.7.3.14-I.7.6.22 (264-9). In general, the affects of fear, hope and indignation are contrasted with those of serenity (Seelenruhe, tranquillité, αταξία) and resignation to necessity.

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792 Strauss, *OPS*, p. 243. – The essential thrust of this appendix appears to have something to do with Plato’s use of *myth*, or of the noble/beautiful lie [καλὸν ψευδός]. According to Alfarabi – a claim that is of the highest importance for Strauss’ own understanding – Plato was “able to combine the way of Socrates, by which you can teach, dialectically, nice people, with the way of Thrasymachus, by which you can persuade nondocile people who must be frightened and terrified” (Strauss, *OPS*, pp. 246-7. Cf. “FP,” pgs. 364 & 383 and consider *SPPP*, p. 228, with C&M, p. 127). The ability or the will to make such speeches, to “deliberately [teach] a salutary untruth” is an “act of courage,” even if it is also manifestly unjust. (Strauss, *A&A*, p. 30 with *XS*, p. 126). Cf. Strauss, letter to Klein, 2.16.39, in *GS3*, p. 568: “the *Republic* is an ironic justification precisely of injustice [οδικία], for philosophy is injustice [οδικία] – this comes out wonderfully in the Thrasymachus discussion. Justice [δικαιοσύνη] loses the case; it wins it only through the myth at the end, i.e., through a noble lie [καλὸν ψευδός], i.e., through an action that strictly speaking is unjust [οδικὸν].”

793 I.9.6 (26/11). The ninth is also the only paragraph in the first chapter without any footnotes.
into myth, or of explaining the “transition from nature to historicity, the derivation of the asserted singularity from intelligible necessity...” by beginning with morality, a task that Meier – following Strauss – sets for the “philosophic explanation of revelation.” If moral indignation is essentially a reaction to “one's threatened particularity,” then its “asserted singularity” cannot be uncoupled from the twin affects of fear of dissolution and hope for a restitutio ad integrum. The sheer intensity of Carl Schmitt's need for security causes his indignation to be “transformed from an affect of moral need into a morally imperative act,” while this “moral need” remains in essence “the need for society or the needs of the body” and not those of “the life of the mind.” Carl Schmitt is not “inclined to virtue,” he is not “naturally pious,” because his need or desire is not “directed toward a good, the good simply,” but rather “is directed toward a goal as difficult to obtain.” Schmitt desires the impossible because it is impossible; he believes the absurd because it is absurd; he imagines the world to be moral in character, a world that will not fail to compensate his suffering even and especially if he must ostensibly “resign” himself to faith in the grace of an unfathomable God. Meier’s analysis therefore aims not only at Schmitt, but, above all, at the Christian values or

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794 TPP, II.3.8 (55/32).
796 On the twin concepts of hope and fear, cf. ÜdGpL, I.7.3-4 (262-6), PdF, 5.5 (160), and Strauss, RCPR, p. 206.
797 I.9.11 (27/11).
798 Strauss, RCPR, p. 163.
799 Strauss, ibid.
800 I.9.7 (27/11).
801 Strauss, RCPR, p. 166.
tendencies Schmitt represents, and Die Lehre Carl Schmitt’s is therefore an attempt to “personify” those tendencies for the sake of philosophy’s self-knowledge. After all, it is one thing for the fox to say to himself “the grapes were probably sour anyway.” It is quite another for the fox to deny the pleasing character of sweetness altogether, as Christianity denies the virtue-character of magnanimity.\textsuperscript{802} For magnanimity, or “a man’s habitual claiming for himself great honors while he deserves these honors,”\textsuperscript{803} cannot be divorced from that awareness of progress in truth and goodness that Strauss (pointing to Xenophon) calls “the self-admiration of the philosopher” and “the self-satisfaction or self-admiration of him who steadily progresses in virtue,” and, in its highest form, associates with those who at the same time “live best” and “most pleasantly.”\textsuperscript{804} Carl Schmitt, indignant political theologian and moral man, longs “with all his heart\textsuperscript{805} for revelation” because he is animated by a “passionate interest in genuine morality,”\textsuperscript{806} a “need for security” so strong as to outbid every human possibility of security, i.e., the security he believes he finds in “the certainty of his faith.”\textsuperscript{807} But faith that is certain of itself lacks humility; it is no

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{803} Strauss, \textit{JPCM}, p. 107; this definition stems from Aristotle, \textit{Nicomachean Ethics}, 1123a33-1125a35 (Sachs trans. pp. 67-72).
\item \textsuperscript{805} Cf. Strauss, \textit{RCPR}, p. 165 on \textit{thumos} “in the original sense,” i.e., “heart,” or “a Greek equivalent of the Biblical ‘heart,’” which includes both the Platonic \textit{thumos} and the broader sense of \textit{thumos} connected with or founded in desire.
\item \textsuperscript{806} I.9.5 (26/11). \textit{italics removed}.
\item \textsuperscript{807} I.9.5 (26/11).
\end{itemize}
longer faith, even if it is not yet knowledge.\textsuperscript{808} His basic need is directed toward an impossibility, or he desires the impossible as such.\textsuperscript{809} His soul is essentially thumotic, because his desire, unlike that of the philosopher, is essentially tragic.

Thus we see that the first words of the first chapter decisively influence its entire movement of thought (we will also see that this movement of thought is decisively linked to the book’s crucial central passages) as the term “moral indignation” gives way to the term “security” and the source of thumos is revealed to be epithumia. But let us go back to the beginning. “Moral indignation is no affair of political philosophy [Moralische Entrüstung ist nicht die Sache der Politischen Philosophie].”\textsuperscript{810} The book begins with a negation – fitting, in the sense that its task is essentially that of outlining in the form of the political theologian “what it is not, what it cannot be, and what it does not want to be.”\textsuperscript{811} Even more fitting, in the sense that it is, and must be, elenctic, i.e., shame-producing: it will attempt to reveal Schmitt as a boaster, or to show that he does not know what he thinks or believes he

\textsuperscript{808} Cf. \textit{TPP}, I.15.16 (32/17).
\textsuperscript{809} Cf. \textit{TPP}, I.18.n24 (36/20), esp., cited there, Shestov, \textit{Athens und Jerusalem}, “Foreword,” p. lxiii (translation modified & italics added): “the extraordinary absurdity of the biblical revelation exceeds the bounds of any human capacity and possibility permitted it. But for God nothing is impossible. God signifies, expressed in Kierkegaard’s words, borrowed from the Holy Scripture, that nothing is impossible. And thus fallen man, finally and ultimately, despite the Spinozan prohibitions, longs only for that promised him, ‘to you nothing will be impossible,’ this only he prays to his Creator” (compare Strauss, \textit{RCPR}, p. 203). – But if man were really omnipotent, there would be no necessity, and so knowledge as knowledge of necessity would remain denied him; in other words, the desire that nothing be impossible, for man or for God, cannot be fulfilled, because if it were possible to \textit{do} everything it would not be possible to \textit{know} anything, or at least to know anything as \textit{necessary}.
\textsuperscript{810} I.1.1 (13/1).
\textsuperscript{811} IV.39.7 (261/173).
knows. Philosophy cannot proceed otherwise, if its is to justify itself as a – or the – way of life of questioning, for such a way of life presupposes that the character of the whole is not known and that those who claim to know this are boasters. Metaphysics and morality are thus inextricably linked, each in a sense providing the basis of the other. If the “core of the political idea” is the “demanding moral decision,” then it appears that the political, no less than the moral, depends on theological support. But the relation is not finally unidirectional:

If it is true that the moral cannot continue to exist without the theological, then it is certainly no less true that political theology cannot be thought of without the primacy it grants morality. Morality or the need for morality or the needs of the body ground theology, even as theology, and the view of the whole it entails, compels a particular morality and a particular relation to political action.

In the case of Schmitt, the Nietzschean question cited by Meier, regarding “the ‘morality it (he) aims at’ [‘auf de es (er) hinaus will’]” (in spite of every exoteric disavowal of morality), reverses the political theologian’s ability to “detect ‘political theologies’ even where all theology is expressly repudiated.” Though both “unmaskings” appear to aim at the same thing – victory, or disarming one’s opponent by revealing his true but hidden character – Meier’s task is subtly

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812 I.16.9 (40/21). – We bracket for now the question of the distinction between political and natural theology in this regard, and speak of “theology” in the sense of “political theology” only (but cf. ÜdGpL, II.20.18-22, p. 335; II.24.37-9, p. 349; and II.26.97, p. 362 on natural theology and natural religion).

813 I.1.5 (13/1). – Strauss also cites this passage from Nietzsche in S&A, p. 7, along with BGE, Sec. 211, (Kaufmann trans. pp. 135-6), to which Meier likewise points.

814 WiPT?, 6.7 (9-10/82).
different: he does not aim to understand Schmitt for the sake of prevailing over him, but rather at prevailing over him solely for the sake of understanding him, and thereby understanding himself, and his cause.\textsuperscript{815} This difference is expressed in the difference between his question and Nietzsche’s: instead of asking what morality Schmitt aims at, or instead of only asking this question, Meier also, and more basically, asks “the question concerning the principal objective [ersten Ziel] and ultimate source [letzten Quelle] of moral indignation,” which, he says, “employed as a diagnostic probe [Sonde]... is able to unleash a disclosive power which does not fall short of” that of Nietzsche’s “other farther-reaching question.”\textsuperscript{816} One might say that in considering both the source and the aim of Schmitt and his teaching [Lehre], Meier is trying to view the “straight line” of Schmitt’s thought as a circle or to view Schmitt’s horizon as marking the outline of an intelligible sphere or (human) world.\textsuperscript{817} If this is so, it is similar to the one outlined in \textit{Die Denkbewegung von Leo Strauss}, in which “the question concerning the intention of the philosopher” is placed “in the center for the interpreter.”\textsuperscript{818} The difference – and it is a crucial one – is that whereas in the case of the philosopher, the interpreter is in the best case able “to think through the issue [Sache] towards which this movement is directed,”\textsuperscript{819} i.e., to address this issue in common with the philosopher so that “it no longer makes

\textsuperscript{816} I.1.5 (13/1).
\textsuperscript{817} Cf. Nietzsche, \textit{Twilight of the Idols}, “Maxims and Arrows,” #44, p. 473, along with \textit{The Gay Science}, Sec. 44, pp. 109-10, on “Supposed Motives.” Consider the juxtaposition of the terms “full circle” and “dividing line” in \textit{LCS}, l.13.2-3 (34/16).
\textsuperscript{818} \textit{DvLS}, 11.4 (33/65).
\textsuperscript{819} \textit{DvLS}, 11.6 (33/65).
any difference to him whether he thinks the thoughts of the philosopher or his own in the case of the political theologian the interpreter is in the best case able to view the entire revolution of the theologian’s thought, and thereby to grasp that which is the issue for the theologian as in a sense the alpha and the omega of an all-too-human movement of thought. Plato calls this type of movement “rolling” [κυλινδειοθεί] and associates it with the view the higher has of the lower, the ironic man of the boaster, or the soul of the body. One might even compare it to the relationship of god to man, or of man to animal, except that the animal’s “disinhibiting ring” cannot be revealed to it and thus it is incapable of vengefully reacting by pursuing the impossible, its most “profitable profit,” as such. And would it not be particularly appropriate to catch Schmitt in his “historical turns [Wendungen] and political convolutions [Windungen], in deliberate deceptions and involuntary obscurities” as he himself claimed to catch his own enemy, “turn and


821 This would be the meaning of Meier’s reference to “the point from and towards which Schmitt’s thought moves” (II.23.9, p. 103/63). Cf. II.9.10 (62/34); *Pdf*. 5.4 (160); and Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Sec. 19, pp. 25-7. – The “dour” or “peevish” orientation by extremes (*Philebus*, 44e-45a; Benardete trans. pp. 52-3) would appear to be highly relevant to Schmitt’s thought.

822 For the use of the term in this sense, cf. *Republic*, 432d & 479e (Bloom trans. pgs. 111 & 161); *Phaedo*, 81d & 82e (Fowler trans. pgs. 282-5 & 288-9); *Statesman*, 309a (Benardete trans. p. III.64); *Phaedrus*, 275e (Fowler trans. pp. 564-7); and *Laws*, 893e (Pangle trans. p. 291).


824 I.1.8 (13-4/1).
twist [sich drehen und wenden] as he will,” via the instrument of his political theology, i.e., via the “Ariadnean thread made accessible by the question of this political theologian’s indignation” or the line on which he sought to catch the leviathan in whom he saw his ownmost, his providential enemy?

There are ten questions posed in the first two paragraphs of Die Lehre Carl Schmitts. In the same space, only 9 assertoric sentences appear. The erotic, questioning mode is dominant. Its object appears to be the relationship between moral indignation (the theme of the first paragraph) and rhetoric (the theme of the second), i.e., the “center of [Schmitt’s] existence,” which “he is resolved to protect at all costs: the certainty of his faith.” But the interpreter cannot “stop and fall silent before that to which Schmitt himself lays claim”: the questions are, at least in part, answered, and Schmitt’s essential movement of thought is not wholly mysterious. Regarding the question of “the morality it (he) aims at,” or “the morality to which Schmitt aspires,” we read: “Man finds his salvation only in the obedience of faith [im glaubenden Gehorsam].” Further, Meier claims that “if we are to pursue the question as to which morality Schmitt’s political theology aims at,” we have to speak about humility as “the key to the proper understanding of Schmitt’s

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825 CS, LS & BdP, VII.1.23 (84/75). Cf. LCS, I.13.3 (34/16) & esp. III.18.2 (146/92).
826 I.1.8 (13/1).
827 Cf. the diagram on LCS, p. 262/174.
828 I.9.2-3 (26/11).
829 I.2.15 (15/2). – A more literal rendering would give “…that to which Schmitt lays claim for himself.”
830 I.13.6 (34/16).
Such humility "combines in itself, as it were, obedience, courage, and hope," just as "[f]rom the standpoint of political theology, morality, politics, and revelation are united in history..." Schmitt aims at or aspires to a morality that is essentially historical, or is historical "in an eminent sense." But the source of his morality, as appears from the central paragraph of the first chapter, is the "need for security," i.e., a natural need, if intensified to an unnatural or extreme degree. The reduction or analysis of history to nature means that the morality to which Schmitt aspires is not necessarily the one he attains, or that it is possible that his "being did not follow [gehorchte nicht] his will." Just because Schmitt sought to protect the center of his thought from discussion with unbelievers does not mean that he succeeded in so doing, nor that his appeal to history or to the situational character of moral-political decision-making did not belie a fundamentally natural or comprehensible origin in his desire.

To follow the current "opinions" in understanding Schmitt would be useless, would be to "move in a maze that has rampantly overgrown Schmitt's own labyrinth and affords a view of little more than its outskirts." Such opinions include that of Hans Barion,

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831 I.15.10-11 (38/19). Cf. I.15. 25 (39/20): “Whoever asks about the morality of political theology is thus referred to history.”
832 I.15.23 (39/20).
833 IV.1.5 (189/122).
834 I.15.27 (39/20).
835 “Streit,” 13.18 (297/203).
836 I.2.6 (14/2).
that Schmitt had adopted a “new position” in Begriff des Politischen and in the Leviathan book, “tantamount to a thetic cutting of the historical umbilical cord between theology and politics,”\textsuperscript{837}

which opinion, according to Meier, “served as the starting-point for the unfolding of the argument” in both Die Lehre Carl Schmitts and the Dialog unter Abwesenden.\textsuperscript{838}

Schmitt’s “reputation [Ruf]”\textsuperscript{839} might differ so profoundly from his actual standpoint precisely because he is not concerned “to find an answer to the question What is virtue?”\textsuperscript{840} or because he is all-too interested in a pseudo-virtue whose “aim is not virtue itself, but the appearance of virtue, reputation [Ruf] for virtue, and the honor which results from this reputation”\textsuperscript{841} – or, in this case, and given Schmitt’s air of “cold intrepidity”\textsuperscript{842} – in the reputation for having completely torn asunder “the political and the moral”\textsuperscript{843} and therewith in the appearance of purely secular virtù.

To move from this level of hearsay- or opinion-based analysis toward a truer understanding of Carl Schmitt would be to leave the labyrinth or cave behind and to ascend to a clear view of his movement of thought or of his psyche or soul. Such a view would be tantamount to grasping the “human world” in which his thought moves, or of uncovering the “fundamental context” in which the deepest connections of his thought emerge in their necessary (psychic) interrelation. To penetrate underneath the rhetorical sheen by which the political theologian Schmitt

\textsuperscript{837} PdF, 9.n18 (168).
\textsuperscript{838} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{839} I.2.2 (14/2). Cf. CS, LS & BdP, I.1.1 (11/3).
\textsuperscript{840} I.15.30 (39-40/20).
\textsuperscript{841} Strauss, PPH (166/146).
\textsuperscript{842} I.2.4 (14/2).
\textsuperscript{843} I.2.2 (14/2).
styles himself another Hobbes or Machiavelli, Meier will turn to the beginning and
the end of Schmitt’s productive life to see what his foremost objects of indignation
were and in what sense they remained the same, or differed, from 1916 to 1970.

I.3-1.6: Schmitt’s Indignation 1916-1970

Paragraph I.3 is given over almost entirely to a long quotation from Schmitt’s
“earliest coherent critique” of the “moral tableau of the age.”844 Meier claims to be
acting “on the authority of Schmitt” in looking out for the “historical challenge of an
oeuvre, a doctrine, a political-theological decision...”845 The challenge here appears
to be Schmitt’s own, a challenge directed against an age of “business,” in which the
“confounding” between a “sublimely differentiated usefulness and harmfulness”
on the one hand and “the distinction between good and evil... was horrific.”846 The
objects of indignation that Meier sees in this early work are the same ones that
“Schmitt encounters with indignation and abhorrence throughout his life...”847
Above all, and “[f]rom the beginning, it is the ‘age of security’ that provokes all of
Schmitt’s energies against it.”848 The other objects, the “world as business,” the “fall
from the truth of faith,” the “hubris” of Promethean men who “abandon themselves

844 I.3.1 (15/2). The phrase “im Zusammenhung umrissende” might also be
translated “relevant” as opposed to “coherent.”
845 I.3.1 (15/2). Compare with LCS, IV.38.7 (257/170) & WiPT?, 4.1 (5/79). – This is
the first usage in the book of the crucial term “authority” [Autorität].
846 I.3.17-18 (16/3).
847 I.4.1 (16/3-4).
848 I.4.4 (17/4).
to the belief ‘that everything in the world is an entirely human affair,’" are all attendant upon the “attempt to erect the unlimited dominion of security.”

Schmitt’s indignation, then, is directed foremost against the attempt to satisfy, through human means, a desire that also animates him, the desire or need for security. Schmitt as Epimetheus is brother to the Prometheans, and is their enemy. He knows the failure of their plans because he shares their desires, but only he, and not they, takes “what appears to reason as incommensurable” as “the supreme confirmation of the spirit of gravity.” That is, he does not attempt to gloss over by means of a pragmatic and positivistic scientism the extreme or incommensurable case, which is for him “the only case that matters.” His indignation or revulsion [Empörung] is directed against the “rebel [Empörer]” who “disavows his rebellion [Empörung].” The outstanding difference between Schmitt and his enemy appears to be that only Schmitt knows or admits his enmity, that he fights openly against an enemy who fights in secret. But might this impression, too, be the result of Schmitt’s rhetoric?

After looking at the early work from 1916, Meier jumps ahead to the end of the last work published by Schmitt in his lifetime, Political Theology II. The latter work culminates in a discussion of Hans Blumenberg’s The Legitimacy of the Modern Age, and “once again sketches a ‘counterimage’” in which Schmitt seeks “to discern

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849 I.4.1, 2, 3 & 6 (16-7/4).
850 I.4.5 (17/4).
851 I.10.4 (27/11).
852 I.4.11 (17/4).
853 I.5.7 (18/5) & I.4.6 (17/4).
854 That it is not the last word on the matter is implied by I.6.3 (20/6).
[his] own position more clearly.” Now the critique of the “age of security” is refined into a critique of the Prometheans who believe “that they can make anything and everything.” The hubris of the Titan [Himmelstürmers]... reaches its insuperable zenith [Höhepunkt] in the Titan’s refusal to grasp rebellion as rebellion, to perceive in any way the hubristic character of the anti-divine endeavor.

In this way, the Promethean “believes himself able to avoid the decision and the battle,” i.e., the “demanding moral decision,” and resultant “battle of faith,” which Schmitt sees as inevitable because ordained by the God against whom the Prometheans do not even acknowledge rebelling. The refusal to grasp enmity as enmity, or the desire to convince men that enmity can be put an end to by human means, is Satanic. Prometheus is the enemy not because he is the brother of Epimetheus, but because he is the negation of the Christian Epimetheus, i.e., because he is Satan, the adversary, the Old Enemy, in disguise. Ever a real enemy, Schmitt “cannot be deceived” about the “‘[n]ew, purely worldly-human Science...’ being ‘nothing but self-authorization.’” He forces the Prometheans onto the ground of his political theology because he knows how to see in their “New Man” the diabolical pretense to a “New God” and how to discern in their Science “the 'New

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855 I.5.1 (18/4).
857 I.5.6 (18/5). Cf. I.5.7-8 (18/5).
858 I.5.9 (18/5).
859 I.16.49-50 (45/24).
Theology it does not want to be...” Such a theology would leave “no room for miracles” because it would presume to construct a “realm ‘of purely worldly-human’ security” in which miracles would appear merely as “acts of sabotage” pointing to “the existence of an adversary [Widersachers].” Just as Schmitt’s “outrage” [Empörung] echoes the “rebellion” [Empörung] of the Prometheans, his God, i.e., the “God who demands obedience,” is transformed into an “adversary” in a world administered by the Prometheans. As we know, however, Carl Schmitt's need for security is too intense to admit of satisfaction by purely human means: he must deny the legitimacy of the modern age’s attempt to make everything and make everything secure if his need for security is to become susceptible, even in “theory,” of satisfaction.

But if “the Titan’s refusal to grasp rebellion as rebellion” is the “insuperable zenith” of his hubris, his is nevertheless not the only face of Promethean rebellion that Schmitt sees. Not this refusal, but simply “hold[ing] fast to ‘pure this-worldliness’ or fall[ing] prey to it in [one’s] actions” marks the crucial dividing line between obedience to and rebellion against “the transcendent God.” Schmitt does

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861 I.5.15-16 (19/5).
862 I.5.17-19 (19/5).
863 I.5.15 (19/5). This is the first usage in the book of the crucial term “obedience” [Gehorsam]. Cf. IV.38.11 (258/171).
864 Cf. I.6.1 (19/5).
865 I.6.11 (21/6). – Note that the formula for the Promethean “immanence ‘that is directed polemically against a theological transcendence’ without wanting to admit it” (I.5.12, p. 19/5) cannot simply be reversed, even if Schmitt’s God’s “transcendence” can be understood as in a sense directed against the “immanence” of the philosophical life or could have come about as a reaction to the emergence of this life. Consider in this connection Strauss, JPCM, pp. 114-5 along with ToM, p. 78.
not, or is unable to, distinguish between Prometheans and other adherents of a self-directed life: rebellion need not “renounce itself in principiis” in order to merit Schmitt’s enmity – the mere fact of standing for “the ‘functionalism of a calculable, causal sequence of events,” is reprehensible enough...”

Both modern (political) science and political philosophy itself are the objects of Schmitt’s indignation and enmity – he sees

self-arrogation in the self-authorization of those givers of meaning and big planners who have devoted themselves to work on the “Babylonian unity” of mankind, but also in the self-sufficiency of a life that gains its center on the path of autonomous thought.

We might also say that Schmitt, the proponent of revelation, sees no essential distinction between politics/myth [the Prometheans] and philosophy because both are for him marked by the fact that “morality possesses no predominance for them” and because for him, as “moral man,” “the attitude towards ‘the moral’ marks a dividing line of which [he] never loses sight.” Schmitt is thus compelled to conflate “the anarchic rejection of every authority” with “the bourgeois diligence to make the world ‘secure’” and thus to miss seeing what binds him to the latter but not the former, i.e., the predominance of the will to security. Meier

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866 I.6.3 (20/6).
867 I.6.7 (20/6). Compare II.12.23 (73/42).
868 TPP, II.3.4 (54/31). – In this sense his error is the mirror-image of the philosophical error of “interpret[ing] revelation as a myth” (TPP, II.2.2 p. 53/31).
869 III.14.6 (138/86).
871 This is said in nearly as many words to be a characteristic quality of philosophy in WPP?, 12.7 (21/99); cf. WLS?, 11.3 (198).
872 I.6.8 (20/6). – The respective significance of the anarchist and the bourgeois for Schmitt is the theme of the next section (I.7-I.8).
forms the “anarchic” view further and further into one that is manifestly that of philosophy in referring to the “idylls of self-pleasure and the trouble-free character of the ‘Panians’” and then to the “naturalism of those who want to be true to the earth.”\textsuperscript{873} In doing so, he at once highlights the distinction between this view and that of the “religion of technicity” and “the artificialism of those who reach for the stars”\textsuperscript{874} and underlines Schmitt’s indifference to it, i.e., to the distinction between philosophy proper and an essentially “practical philosophy” that operates entirely in the service of politics.\textsuperscript{875}

I.7-1.8: Anarchist and Bourgeois

The next part (I.7-1.8) traces Schmitt’s turning of the concept “political theology” against its proximate source Bakunin, before training its gaze on its most appropriate opponent, “the born embodiment of the system of accountability [Rechenhaftigkeit] and calculation [Berechnung]”\textsuperscript{876} constituted by the “age of security,” i.e., on the bourgeois. Most of what appears here in the discussion of Bakunin’s anarchism has already appeared in the essay \textit{What is Political Theology?}, albeit with some minor alterations in sentence-formation and -order.\textsuperscript{877} Three such alterations stand out most visibly. First, a two-sentence prelude is added to the

\textsuperscript{873} I.6.9-10 (20-1/6).
\textsuperscript{874} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{875} “Vorwort” to \textit{DvLS}, 6.5-7 (13-4); cf. \textit{DvLS}, ¶6 (26/60); \textit{WPP?}, ¶21 (32-3/107-8); & cf. “Moderne,” 13.n6 (18).
\textsuperscript{876} I.8.9 (24/9).
\textsuperscript{877} Cf. \textit{WiPT?} 4.4-4.11 (6-7/79-80).
Bakunin discussion, apparently to set up the contrast between Bakunin’s “open
enmity” and the “cunning” of the bourgeoisie “flight into invisibility.” Bakunin
raises rebellion “to a principle,” asserts it to be “the most distinctive feature of man,”
and declares it to be “the origin and determinative moment of his historical
ascent.” Far from any self-renunciation in principle, Bakunin’s declaration of open “enmity towards the omnipotent sovereign” takes as its principal object of
attack “what is most precious to Schmitt; he denies that of which Schmitt is most
convinced.” Bakunin “attacks the truth of revelation” and revolts “against divine
as well as human authority”; this attack on authority is an attack on Schmitt’s
certainty, as well as the certainty of the bourgeoisie, of remaining “secure.” In the
second notable alteration from What is Political Theology?, Meier adds a long
footnote in which Bakunin criticizes the “universal claim of Roman Catholicism” and
the exaltation (and existence) of its God. In this note, the word “justice” appears
four times, its first four appearances in the book. Each time, it appears in the context

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878 I.7.1 (21/7) & I.8.3-4 (24/9).
879 1.7.1 (21/7).
880 Cf. I.6.3 (20/6).
881 I.7.2-3 (21/7).
882 I.7.4-5 (21-2/7). – This is the first time in Die Lehre Carl Schmitts that Meier uses
the term “revelation” [Offenbarung] and the third in which he uses the term
“authority” [Autorität], two of the three (along with “obedience” [Gehorsam])
decisive determinations of the substance [Sache] of political theology... (IV.38.10, p.
258/171 & WiPT? 5.2, pp. 7-8/80; cf. LCS, I.2.1, p. 15/2 & I.6.8, p. 20/6). The phrase
“truth of revelation” will appear once more near the end the first chapter, when
Meier emphatically claims: “Political theology presupposes faith in the truth of
revelation” (LCS, I.16.1, p. 40/20). Schmitt is most convinced of his faith in the truth
of revelation because the “vanishing point” of his thought is “the certainty of his
faith” (LCS, I.9.1-2, p. 26/10-1).
883 I.7.4 (21/7).
of a contrast between divine justice and human justice.\textsuperscript{884} In this way, Meier points to the centrality of the connection between Schmitt’s faith in the omnipotent God and his desire to see justice done – or rather, to the tragic impossibility of those two mutually inconsistent demands, since “’the vision of justice is the pleasure of God alone.’”\textsuperscript{885} This can be better understood by recalling the context of the “divine trial by ordeal [Gottesurteil]” in which “war is waged by ‘just enemies’” who do not place “the binding order in question” in which victory or defeat in war is experienced as divine justice.\textsuperscript{886} God’s vision of justice consists in viewing a “divine trial by ordeal” whose winner and loser is preordained but whose meaning is not the subject of the struggle. Meier appears to assert that Schmitt’s battle with Bakunin is of another, more intense, type, when (in the third key alteration from the previous version) he moves to the end of the paragraph the claim that the “war in which two irreconcilable armies face one another, the one under the banner of Satan, the other under the sign of God,” is “nothing but a manmade [menschengemachte] fiction for the atheistic anarchist,” while it “is God-given reality for the political theologian.”\textsuperscript{887}

The “battle” fought between Bakunin and Schmitt is metaphorical for the former,

\textsuperscript{884} I.n16 (21/7): “God being truth, justice, goodness, beauty, power and life, man is lie, iniquity, evil, ungriness, impotence and death. God being the master, man is the slave. Incapable of finding justice, truth and eternal life by himself, he only achieves it by means of a divine revelation... against Divine Reason there is no human reason, and against God’s Justice there is no terrestrial justice that holds...”

\textsuperscript{885} I.14.n47 (36/17). – Compare Schmitt’s “moral indignation” at the “joy of the spectator Spinoza (IV.26.n77, p. 231/152). – Following this usage, the term “justice” does not appear again anywhere in the book (text or footnotes) until III.16.9 (143/90).

\textsuperscript{886} II.20.14, 17 (93/55-6).

\textsuperscript{887} I.7.11, 15 (23/8-9).
literal for the latter. This appears to set Bakunin up as a kind of non-ministerial poet\textsuperscript{888} and Schmitt as a listener or audience-member who takes the poet’s fabrications for great and terrible realities. As we will see, the belief in a God of justice can be understood in precisely these terms.

The next paragraph is devoted to the figure of the bourgeois. In moving from the open enmity of the anarchist to the near-invisibility of the bourgeois, Meier is setting up the decisive move of the entire chapter, i.e., the reduction or analysis of \textit{thumos} into \textit{epithumia}. For the truly characteristic quality of the bourgeois is his “need for security.”\textsuperscript{889} In the bourgeois, Schmitt sees himself reflected without knowing what he is seeing. The essential difference between Schmitt and the bourgeois is the \textit{intensity} of Schmitt’s need for security. Thus many of the things predicated of the bourgeois can \textit{a fortiori} be predicated of the political theologian Schmitt.\textsuperscript{890} This may be understood in two ways. In Schmitt’s view, the “\textit{t}ruly satanic”\textsuperscript{891} “pseudo-religion” of the bourgeois is “so dangerous precisely because it appeals to the ‘values’ of the Christian religion and promises their realization in this

\textsuperscript{888} Cf. Plato, \textit{Republic} 379a-380c (Bloom trans. pp. 56-8).
\textsuperscript{889} 1.8.11 (24/9).
\textsuperscript{890} Meier tellingly uses the term “moral indignation” on another occasion, in \textit{WPP?}: “The course of the action of the comedy – beginning with the head of the school, who hovers in the airy heights and there devotes himself to his natural philosophical contemplations, and ending with the destruction of the entire ‘thinkery’ by a simple citizen who, driven by \textit{moral indignation}, actively supported by a slave, and applauded by a god, burns down the house of Socrates and his companions – contains a clear warning” (3.3, p. 11/93; italics added). The “simple citizen” Strepsiades is driven by indignation over the prospect of Òedipal incest being able to be justified rhetorically (cf. Strauss, \textit{S&A}, p. 43)
\textsuperscript{891} 1.8.3 (24/9).
world.” It is no accident that Schmitt, the believer, and the bourgeois, the adversary’s avatar, look so much alike: the latter apes the former and the God of the former. This is how it looks from Schmitt’s perspective, the perspective of the political theologian. From the perspective of political philosophy, the bourgeois appears as a reduced version of the political theologian, one whose “need for security” is still dominant, but is less intense. For the bourgeois’ need for security leads him to desire and seek to procure security via human means, while Schmitt’s need is so intense that only divine means for satisfying it will do. One could also say that the bourgeois need for security has forgotten its “religious” provenance, and that it has always already crossed over into *thumos* without being aware of it. Bourgeois security would then be partially founded in the will to probity, “the self-satisfaction at the moral merit that derives from renunciation, sacrifice, and the cruelty towards oneself,” which also animates the political theologian. The difference between the two would then be reversed: instead of the bourgeois being essentially a less intense version of the political theologian, he would appear as fundamentally unaware of the religious character of his faith in the universal applicability of human science and technology for solving every possible problem (for the sake of his security). His “will to security” would be governed not by the

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892 I.16.40 (44/23).
893 This is part of the logic underlying Weber’s *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. But Weber relies on a version of the “secularization theorem” that appears to neglect the originary, thumotic relation of religion and politics when he casts this process as one of essentially progressive “de-magification.”
erotic “desire for truth” but by the thumotic interest in “himself and his property.”

His practical or “unpolitical philosophy” would “move closer” to political theology “in one cardinal point”: both would be “based on faith.”

Political theology, however, would know this, while the “pseudo-religion of absolute humanity” would not. The philosophical interest in security, on the other hand, which is governed by the desire for truth, receives a distant but discernible echo in the bourgeois interest in security, which no longer asks whether its need is essentially that of the body (moral) or that of the mind (theoretical). We may recall that the “theological-political treatises” of the seventeenth century aimed at the “persistent safeguarding of the libertas philosophandi [the freedom to philosophize]” – i.e., were impelled by a theoretical interest – but that they resulted in a modern scientific enterprise that would achieve “[p]eace and security... on the path of the progressive domination of nature” and thereby enabled “the transformation... of human living conditions in general” – i.e., were turned toward or put in the service of a moral interest, an interest in bodily comfort and social stability. The bourgeois is just as anathematic to a political philosophy that knows how to answer the question “Why philosophy” as well as the reason that it must be asked as it is.

896 II.12.30, 33 (74/42). – In this passage, Meier is contrasting natural or unpolitical philosophy with political theology; but the practical philosophy or science we are discussing here follows from the same lack of self-knowledge.
897 I.16.40 (44/23).
899 *TPP*, I.10.6 (23/10).
to political theology. But their “political critique of a common opponent”\textsuperscript{901} does not in any way narrow the gulf between political theology and political philosophy. On the contrary, it allows us to define their fundamental difference all the more sharply, for if the political theologian and the political philosopher agree, against the bourgeois, that “the quarrel over what is right is the fundamental quarrel and that the question \textit{How should I live?} is the first question for man,” they nevertheless part ways decisively over the “answer that each gives to this question,” and, perhaps still more basically, over whether the question of the right or the best life is one put to, or instead one posed by, man.\textsuperscript{902}

I.9: Certainty, Security, Validity

The next paragraph is the central paragraph of the chapter (according to the seventeen-paragraph reading – I.9). It also begins the discussion of tragedy that will segue into the treatment of Christian political theology which comprises much of the rest of the chapter. The logic of the chapter has brought us from Schmitt’s moral indignation and his rhetoric (I.1-I.2), to the objects of his moral indignation (I.3-I.6), to the characteristic figures of the enemy at whom his outrage is directed (I.7-I.8), to the source of Schmitt’s enmity itself (I.9). The final, decisive step is taken in bridging Schmitt’s enmity for the bourgeois (owing to the latter’s “need for security”) and Schmitt’s own need for security, which is more intense than the former – so intense

\textsuperscript{901} \textit{CS, LS & BdP}, IV.3.12 (51/43); cf. \textit{LCS}, II.12.17 (72/41).

\textsuperscript{902} II.12.21-22 (73/42); cf. \textit{CS, LS & BdP}, IV.3.9 (50/42).
in fact as to require a supernatural protector and guarantor. All this points to the irrevocable fact that Schmitt hates in the other what he cannot acknowledge in himself. The enemy is his own question as a figure.

The “vanishing point” of all Schmitt’s “valuations” is “the certainty of his faith.” As we have already noted, the desire for faith to be certain is tragic, since a faith that is certain is no longer faith. The vanishing point of Schmitt’s valuations is a tragic, thumotic desire that is “directed towards a goal as difficult to obtain.” His will to security results in a will to probity that cannot become sure of itself or attain to a good conscience without negating itself. Schmitt’s certainty of faith, his tragic desire, is the “center of his existence.” But this center can only “support and preserve [tragen und halten] him” if he defends it “in the center of all things.”

Now, defending the “certainty of his faith” in the “center of all things” would mean transposing his own tragic, thumotic principle into the character of the world or of the whole. It would mean making the world in his own image, or in the image of his thumos. It would mean transforming “an affect of moral need into a morally imperative act,” i.e., transforming his resolution to protect the certainty of his faith for the sake of his need for security into the “commandment of obedience” issued by a God interested in justice and salvation. It would be a characteristic

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903 I.9.1-2 (26/10-1).
904 Strauss, *RCPR*, p. 166.
905 I.9.3 (26/11).
906 I.9.3-4 (26/11).
907 I.9.11 (27/11).
“externalization” or “repelling”908 of desire on the part of thumos, whose resolution to obey is tendentiously conceived as earning it the moral merit attendant on ascetic renunciation, rather than as satisfying a desire by which it is animated and with which it remains essentially linked. Schmitt requires “the certainty of the God who demands obedience, rules absolutely, and judges in accordance with his own law”909 because only such a God “could lay claim to absolute validity” and therefore “deserve unqualified devotion,”910 but even more because only the abject faith in such a God “puts an end to uncertainty.”911 And this is so because “[f]or faith the source of certainty, the provenance [Herkunft] of truth, is alone decisive”912; in worshiping the “God who demands obedience,” Schmitt worships the “God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, not of the philosophers and savants,”913 i.e., he

908 In a lecture on “Plato’s Republic,” Jacob Klein refers to the thumotic part as “the repelling part of the soul” (304).
909 I.9.6 (26-7/11); italics added.
910 Ibid.
911 III.19.1 (147/93).
912 III.19.2 (147/93).
913 III.n72 (147/93). Cf. Strauss, SCR (262/206) and JPCM, pgs. 121 & 397-8 (also in SPPP, p. 166): “In his likely tale of how God created the visible whole, Plato makes a distinction between two kinds of gods, the visible cosmic gods and the traditional gods – between the gods who revolve manifestly, i.e., who manifest themselves regularly, and the gods who manifest themselves so far as they will. The least one would have to say is that according to Plato the cosmic gods are of much higher rank than the traditional gods, the Greek gods... It goes without saying that according to the Bible the God Who manifests himself as far as he wills, Who is not universally worshipped as such, is the only true god. The Platonic statement taken in conjunction with the biblical statement brings out the fundamental opposition of Athens at its peak to Jerusalem: the opposition of the God or gods of the philosophers to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the opposition of Reason and Revelation.” Compare Taubes, Ad Carl Schmitt (9/2). – That Schmitt either worships the Jewish God without being able or willing to acknowledge it, or else sets against
worships the God of his fathers, who is authoritative by virtue of being ancestral and
good by virtue of being his “own.”\textsuperscript{914} Not the internal consistency of a truth on which
his certainty might be based, but the source and origin of that “truth” are what
counts, because for Schmitt \textit{certainty is more important than truth}, or the need for
security (as the demand for justice) is more powerful than the desire for truth.

Because of this need, Schmitt “is resolved [entschlossen] to protect” the
(paradoxical) certainty of his faith “at all costs”\textsuperscript{915} And yet his “resolution
[Entschlossenheit] to defend the seriousness of the moral decision”\textsuperscript{916} both depends
entirely on the certainty of his faith (his \textit{resolution} demands an underlying \textit{certainty})
and entirely grounds it (his \textit{faith} rests on a \textit{need or demand} that is resolutely
pursued). His “[i]ndignation” is thus “transformed from an affect of moral need into
a morally imperative act,”\textsuperscript{917} and his “polemic is assigned the task of supplying the
moral disjunction” (i.e., the “Either-Or” that results from the commandment of
obedience) “with validity...”\textsuperscript{918} One notes immediately the apparently paradoxical
quality of a polemic that is assigned the task of supplying a Divine commandment
with validity alongside a need for security for which “[m]an’s efforts ‘to give
meaning’ do not give any meaning, and his ‘posittings of value’ do not bring about

\textsuperscript{914} Cf. Strauss, \textit{NR\&H}, p. 83 ff.
\textsuperscript{915} I.9.2 (26/11).
\textsuperscript{916} I.9.9 (27/11).
\textsuperscript{917} I.9.11 (27/11).
\textsuperscript{918} Ibid.
anything that... could lay claim to absolute validity." The apparent paradox is perhaps resolved by analogy to what Strauss calls the “commandment to philosophize” or to interpret the law, which constituted an important duty of a ministerial philosophy for medieval political philosophers like Averroes and Maimonides. The perspective in which such a commandment can be understood already brings us to some extent beyond the “systematics of liberal thought” in which the relationship of law and philosophy has to a large extent been forgotten.

According to Strauss, for Averroes:

Philosophy owes its authorization, its freedom, to the law; its freedom depends upon its bondage. Philosophy is not sovereign. The beginning of philosophy is not the beginning simply; the law has the first place. The literal sense of the law may be abandoned only if the opposite is proven; it is not that one occupies from the outset a standpoint outside the law, from which one proceeds by the path of rational reflection to submission to the law.

Therefore, says Strauss:

The question whether human intellect is sufficient or insufficient, whether it needs or does not need guidance by revelation, whether it is in this sense free or bound, proves to be secondary if one considers that for Averroes no less than for Maimonides the primacy of the law is firmly established: philosophizing is commanded by the law, philosophy is authorized by the law. The freedom of philosophy depends upon its bondage. On this assumption philosophy as authorized by the law is nothing other than the understanding or the demonstration of the truth already imparted by the law, nothing other than the appropriation of the law.

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919 I.9.5 (26/11).
920 Strauss, P&L (67/81).
921 Strauss, “Notes” (125/119).
922 Strauss, P&L (74/88).
923 Strauss, ibid. (78/92).
In this perspective, reason or philosophy is ministerial to law or revelation – only revelation’s need to be interpreted authorizes reasoning about it, and such reasoning remains always within the limits set by revelation. In the same way, Schmitt’s “polemic” attempts to supply a “moral disjunction with validity” by means of reason, while at the same time remaining wholly subject to the commandment by which this disjunction is laid down, a commandment issued by the God who alone can claim absolute validity. Schmitt’s ministerial use of reason, or his use of reason as a handmaiden to revelation, gives his political theology its typical character. By means of it, he is able to generate historically-situated rules for action whose very failure to achieve the ends they set for themselves are taken to illustrate an essentially ministerial reason’s essential blindness. He is also able to speak convincingly to unbelievers and thus to fulfill the positive command to proselytize, even while appearing merely to defend.\textsuperscript{924} And he is able to protect the center of his thought, which is in no way grounded on human reasoning or knowledge but is always more or less anchored in the circulus vitiosus of his certainty of faith.

Schmitt’s polemic is the “holy war” by which the meaning of history or of revelation is interpreted.\textsuperscript{925} But, as polemic, it is much more concerned with vanquishing its enemy than with attaining to reasoned truth through argument. Thus Schmitt’s indignation, his thumos or desire for victory, again overpowers the erotic desire for truth as “the defense of the moral decision itself appears to be a moral duty” rather than a perverse result of his thwarted (because impossible) need

\textsuperscript{924} Cf. IV.35.7 (251/166) & IV.36.5 (252/167).
\textsuperscript{925} Cf. II.12.6 (71/40) with IV.36.1 (252/167).
for absolute security. The essentially spurious and fantastical quality of this “duty” appears when one considers that the “courage” required to carry it out is “the courage of the man who lines up for battle although he knows that he has already won the victory,”\(^\text{926}\) and the “certainty” on which it is based “the certainty that the course of fate is always in order already and that salvation is the meaning of all world history.”\(^\text{927}\) So long as Schmitt never poses the question of this interpretation of world history, but rather only uses it as a weapon in the most extreme battle against the enemy, he will be plagued by the twin problems of a duty that is the “hypocoristic of necessity”\(^\text{928}\) or of fate and a “necessity” for which “everything appears possible...”\(^\text{929}\) Perhaps we can resolve this apparent contradiction by concluding that the omnipotent and unfathomable God has freely ordained that man should be subject to a fate in which he nevertheless must “answer in doing” and “risk” the inscrutable judgment of the grace of the Divine Will. Only the unity of such a will would, it appears, be able to generate a “moral disjunction” that, instead of rending the whole into a perilous dyad, “holds reality together in its innermost core,”\(^\text{930}\) and only a dogma as unmistakable as the one laid down in Genesis 3:15

\(^{926}\) CS, LS & BdP, VII.3.3 (88/80). – But cf. LCS, IV.32.10 (246/162) for a complicating factor.

\(^{927}\) CS, LS & BdP, VII.3.18 (89-90/81).

\(^{928}\) Benardete, SSS, p. 151.


\(^{930}\) I.9.11 (27/11).
could ground a faith so self-certain as to render every possible interpretation superfluous and even presumptuous from the beginning.\[931\]

The language used in the ninth paragraph is striking and calls for particular attention. Meier refers to Schmitt’s “valuations” [Werkschätzungen], as opposed to man’s “positings of value” [‘Wertsetzungen’], which “do not bring about anything that would be free of arbitrariness [Willkür]” or could “lay claim to absolute validity [unbedingte Gültigkeit].”\[932\] The language of value and valuation is placed alongside the language of will and arbitrariness: human valuations, the valuations of the human will, are all-too-arbitrary, and thus lack unconditional validity. For unconditional validity, certainty [Gewißheit] is required. Certainty provides security [Sicherheit], and Schmitt’s need for security is so strong that “[o]nly a certainty with respect to which all human security goes to ruin,” i.e., all human valuations emerge in their radical arbitrariness, can satisfy it.\[933\] Certainty, security, validity [Gewißheit, Sicherheit, Gültigkeit]: this triad determines the center of Meier’s psychological account of Schmitt as a political theologian. Let us follow out these terms to make the picture a bit clearer. “Moral man’s need [Bedürfnis] for absolute validity [unbedingter Gültigkeit] longs for a world in which the moral Either-Or is everlastingly inscribed, for a reality in which the conflict [Widerstreit] of ultimate opposites is irrevocably anchored in man.”\[934\] Initially, Meier had spoken of a “need

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931 Cf. Shestov, pp. 229-30, on the ”words that God addressed to Adam” in Genesis 3:15: “their meaning is perfectly clear and admits of no tortured interpretation.”
932 I.9.1, 5 (26/10-1).
933 I.9.6 (26-7/11).
934 I.10.1 (27/11).
for security [Bedürfnis nach Sicherheit]” that is only satisfied by “a certainty with respect to which all human security goes to ruin,” i.e., “the certainty of the God who demands obedience, rules absolutely, and judges in accordance with his own law.” A need for security is satisfied by the certainty of the omnipotent, unfathomable God. Only such a God, or rather, only the commandments of such a God could “lay claim to absolute validity.” The “need for absolute validity” is anchored in the need for a God whose commandments could lay claim to absolute validity, and the need for such a God derives from the possibility of being certain of such a God, and thereby satisfying the need for security. The need for validity is a need for certainty, and the need for certainty is a need for security.

But the God who demands obedience demands above all faith or the “obedience of faith.” Thus assured security requires the “certainty of faith” – there is “no security outside the certainty of faith.” But how is such certainty to be attained if faith that is certain of itself is no longer faith? Only if the impossible as such is made possible by faith would the certainty of faith be possible: “As [revelation’s] premise and its content it has the certainty of the faith that nothing is impossible for God.” Only the God for whom all things are (or appear) possible could justify a faith certain of itself. “Faith puts an end to uncertainty [Ungewißheit]” because the “source of certainty” is not the human will but

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935 I.9.6 (26/11).
936 III.2.5 (110/67).
937 I.11.1 (29/12).
938 III.15.3 (141/88).
939 III.19.1 (147/93).
rather divine grace. The source of certainty is the omnipotent, unfathomable God, whose commandment “founds a certainty that radically surpasses human security or insecurity and thereby perfectly satisfies the need of moral man for absolute validity.”\textsuperscript{941} However, this source, even if it is originally the omnipotent and unfathomable God, is mediated by “the validity of traditional valuations [Wertschätzungen] adopted from others.”\textsuperscript{942} The commandment, and its claim to the certainty that alone can satisfy moral man’s need for unconditional validity, must pass through the medium of an all-too-human \textit{tradition}. Such a tradition can only lay claim to conditional validity, and thus cannot found “a certainty that radically surpasses human security or insecurity.” The believer in revelation must rely on hearsay. Political theology, which “builds unreservedly on the \textit{unum est necessarium} of faith and finds its security in the truth of revelation,”\textsuperscript{943} therefore must find its security in a “truth of faith,” i.e., in the truth of revelation, which it presumes or “presupposes.”\textsuperscript{944} Truths of faith, as opposed to truths of reason, are, according to Aquinas, “those truths that are above the human reason,” which man must therefore “receive from God as objects of belief.”\textsuperscript{945} Above all, for Schmitt as a political theologian, what is at issue is “the truth of the doctrine of original sin”\textsuperscript{946} as it is expressed in Genesis 3:15:

\textsuperscript{940} III.19.2 (147/93).
\textsuperscript{941} III.14.5 (137-8/86).
\textsuperscript{942} II.12.34 (74/42)
\textsuperscript{943} II.12.23 (73/42).
\textsuperscript{944} III.1.2 (109/66).
\textsuperscript{945} Aquinas, \textit{Summa contra Gentiles}, I.5.1.
\textsuperscript{946} I.16.17 (41/21).
The doctrine of original sin names the guarantor who ensures the unavoidability of a radical Either/Or until the end of time: *I will put enmity between thy seed and her seed*. The belief in the truth of Genesis 3:15 is the foundation on which Schmitt’s political theology is erected.\(^947\)

But this “radicality” is radical only for man, not as such – it is *ordained*; it rests on the presupposition of an omnipotent, unfathomable ordainer, a Lord of history whose purpose and will no adversary can avoid serving.\(^948\) Because *this* God has ordained that “*salvation is, in opposition to all concepts, the decisive meaning of all world history,*”\(^949\) Schmitt can claim to possess a “certainty of salvation [Heilsgewißheit]” in view of which the “human uncertainties as to who the restrainer, who the hastener could be… pale in significance.”\(^950\)

In such certainty of salvation, “even that tragedy, which no human arbitrariness [Willkür] is able to conquer, is abolished and overcome in advance.”\(^951\)

The longing for tragedy is not moral man’s last word, but apparently only “the touchstone [Prüfstein] of faith on the way to final salvation.”\(^952\) Moral man longs for tragedy because in tragedy the “necessity of making a moral decision, the imperative ‘Thou shalt!’ reaches further than human insight” and “Providence has an effect through the ‘mysterious concatenation and entanglement of incontestably real events,’” whereas “[u]nraveling the mysteriousness is as a rule denied to the

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\(^{947}\) I.11.7-8 (30/13).
\(^{948}\) Cf. *CS, LS & BdP*, VII.2.31 (88/79).
\(^{949}\) IV.36.6 (252/167)
\(^{950}\) IV.36.8 (253/167).
\(^{951}\) IV.36.9 (253/167).
\(^{952}\) IV.36.10 (253/167).
agents [Akteuren]." Otherwise put, moral man longs for a tragic reality because only in such a reality can moral man prove his humility – can he find, again and again, “just how much he as an agent [Handelner] is struck with blindness” in regard to his attempt to answer “the word the Lord of history speaks in and through history, a word which for the obedience of faith [glaubenden Gehorsam] is a call to action.”

The longing for tragedy, which is based on a need for unconditional divine validity, is also a longing for unconditional human blindness for the sake of proving one’s humble obedience to the Lord of history. In this way, the secure possession [sichere Bestiz] of the truth of faith [Glaubenswahrheit] that promises salvation shifts the weight [Schwergewicht] that bears on the “demanding moral decision,” from the right judgment of the concrete historical opposition, only to load it onto the probity of faith [Redlichkeit des Glaubens].

The political theologian, as a moral man, “proves” his worthiness to be saved by means of the double articulation of a resolute insistence on the seriousness of the duty and “task of distinguishing rightly between friend and enemy,” which as such “obviously requires knowledge,” and an equally resolute denial of the human possibility of carrying out this task and duty. As Meier puts it:

What sets the political theologian apart is, on the one hand, his awareness of the fact that the problems that emerge from the demands of political theology cannot be solved by means of reason

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953 I.10.5-7 (27-8/11).
954 I.15.20 (39/20) & I.15.16 (38-9/19).
955 Compare I.8.11 (24/9): “…security from any interference with the increase and enjoyment of his possessions [Bestizes].”
957 II.1.10 (52/27).
and, on the other hand, the intransigence with which he nevertheless insists on the inevitability of those demands.\textsuperscript{958}

This means that Schmitt, if he is a political theologian, cannot simply be content to rely on the authority of tradition and thereby place his hopes on all-too-human claims to validity. If he is a political theologian, Schmitt must \textit{live} the contradiction between a commandment [Gebot] that demands historical action on grounds of a human knowledge of good and evil, and a prohibition [Verbot] that “denies him the means” of obeying such a commandment since, in denying him the knowledge of good and evil, it denies him “the means he needs in order to lead a life that positions itself outside of obedience”\textsuperscript{959} – for “[c]ontemplating is not obeying.”\textsuperscript{960} Only by living this (to us) contradictory order can Schmitt testify as far as he is able to his humble faith in and faithful obedience to the omnipotent, unfathomable, Lord of history. The political theologian “only becomes a political theologian” when he “discerns a connection” between the twin distinctions \textit{redeemed/unredeemed} and \textit{friend/enemy}, and “establishes the bond between the theological and the political ‘line of thought’ \textit{himself}, elaborates it theoretically, and develops [zur Entfaltung bringt] it practically.”\textsuperscript{961} This “connection” \textit{is} the impossible command/prohibition of revelation, for it names the nexus between the mysterious divine distinction of

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{958} \textit{PdF}, 6.5 (161-2).
  \item \textsuperscript{959} III.14.9 (138/86).
  \item \textsuperscript{960} I.13.1 (34/16).
  \item \textsuperscript{961} III.11.43 (130/81); italics added.
\end{itemize}
redeemed and unredeemed and the blind human distinction into friends and enemies. For the political theologian, it is the locus of grace.\textsuperscript{962}

Certainty, security, and validity are thought together, on the one hand, in the notion of divine grace, and, on the other, in the notion of the probity of faith. For the ambiguous object of faith’s striving, the point at which it “turns over” and gains what is most proper to it, is the good – or bad – conscience [Gewissen]. We might describe the essential relation as follows: the need for security drives faith to desire self-certainty, i.e., certainty that it really is faith, or the good conscience of not presuming to any all-too-human security. But, when the object of this desire is attained, it transforms: possessing a good conscience is itself, alone, sufficient grounds for having bad conscience. One has a bad conscience about the fact that one has a good conscience. Even the bad conscience, then, inasmuch as it constitutes grounds for a good conscience, is also grounds for a bad conscience. The circle keeps circling as one seeks with greater and greater intensity to gain and to repel the impossible object of an impossible desire, of a desire for the impossible as such. One cannot “know” that one is “intellectually honest,” because “knowing” that one is intellectually honest would be intellectually dishonest. The “good conscience of probity”\textsuperscript{963} must rest on faith as long as “intellectual probity” is “emancipated from the love of truth”; to this very extent, “the good – or bad – conscience becomes the unappealable instance.”\textsuperscript{964} In the same way, the thumotic political theologian cannot

\textsuperscript{962} Cf. \textit{TPP}, II.15 (67-8/40-1).
\textsuperscript{963} Cf. \textit{TPP}, I.20.1 (40/22).
\textsuperscript{964} \textit{TPP}, III.4.6 (78/48).
acknowledge his fundamental “interest in security” because as an “act of the will” he cannot ascribe it to himself but instead must attribute his very “faith to the grace of God.” Were he able to recognize it, even “Carl Schmitt’s need for security” would have to be attributed to divine grace. The apparent injustice of a God who creates man with a need for security so intense as to be impossible for satisfaction is answered easily by the postulate of God’s unfathomability: His justice is not our justice.

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965 TPP, I.20.1 (40/22).
967 Here, as elsewhere, one might ask oneself whether there might not be a more natural explanation (I.16.13, p. 40/21). Such an explanation, too, could perhaps begin from morality, i.e., sit venia verbo, from Heidegger – for, “[w]hat distinguishes the philosophy of the age of Heidegger from the philosophy of earlier ages is its morality” (TPP, I.16.10, p. 34/18). Consider in this connection Meier’s critique of Derrida in Pdf, Part II (171-81) as well as TPP III as a whole (71-82/45-51).
Part II (I.10-I.16)

Virtue is Ignorance

I.10: The Tragic View

In the following paragraph (I.10), which opens the second half of the chapter, what begins as a “need for absolute validity” that “longs for a world in which the moral Either-Or is everlastingly inscribed” or that “longs for tragedy,” is transformed into a world conceived in the “image” of tragedy, a world “as fate and dispensation, as the indissoluble interconnection of guilt, judgment and concealed meaning, of sin, punishment and salvation.” The longing of a need becomes an image of the world, just as an “affect of moral need” becomes a “morally imperative act.” The image of the world as tragic is imperative [gebotenen] because for it that which is “incommensurable,” and – let us not be unclear about this – above all, death, is “regarded as the supreme confirmation of the irrefutability [Unabweisbarkeit] of the spirit of gravity.” Otherwise put, the fact that man currently lacks knowledge of the whole is taken to imply that man must always lack such knowledge. If this is so, then the philosophic suspension of judgment regarding the question of the right or the best life is unjustified and the “necessity,” i.e., the

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968 I.10.1, 4 (27/11).
970 I.10.4 (27/11). - The translation of “Unabweisbarkeit” as “irrefutability” could be misleading in light of CS, LS & Bdp, VI.3.21 (77/69). Probably “inevitability” (as it is translated at LCS, II.5.18, p. 58/31) would be preferable.
moral duty” of making the moral decision,” is in effect, because “the imperative [gebierterische] ‘Thou shalt’ reaches further than human insight.” “Seriousness [Ernst],” whose defense appears to Schmitt to be a moral duty, appears to be “superior to all disputation [Rechten], weighing [Wägen], and understanding [Verstehen].” This seriousness, the seriousness of the “demanding moral decision,” remains based on the “moral emphasis” that only “the certainty of the God who demands obedience, rules absolutely, and judges in accordance with his own law” could provide. It would appear that even for such a God, seriousness would be “superior to all disputation, weighing, and understanding,” since for him the will rules reason and renders knowledge impossible. The omnipotent God, then, in a sense lacks omnipotence because he does not have the “power” to know. Thus the tragic view of the world, adopted superficially as a “touchstone of faith on the way to final salvation,” appears to dictate a necessity to the very God crafted to overcome it. In other words, or seen from the other side, one would have to say that for such a God the postulate “knowledge is only possible if not everything is possible” does not hold, or that knowledge of necessity is possible without necessity’s being possible, or even that for such a God both necessity and the absolute lack of

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971 Cf. CS, LS & BDP, VI.3.6 (76/67). – “Necessity” must be paraphrased as “moral duty” not only because Schmitt aims to root out the presupposition that “all ideals are private and thus nonobligatory” and consequently that “obligation cannot be conceived as such, as duty, but only as inescapable necessity,” but, and above all, because if Schmitt’s God exists then necessity does not.

972 I.10.5 (27/11).

973 I.10.6 (27/11).

974 I.9.6 (27/11).

975 IV.36.10 (253/167).

976 ÜdGpL, I.2.26.2 (100).
necessity are possible “with respect to the same part and in relation to the same thing”\(^{977}\) – and on the basis of such speculations human reason can say literally nothing.

For moral man’s need for unconditional validity, “all that matters is the sublime source from which the tragic reality descends...”\(^{978}\) However, should this source prove not to be sublime, but profane, or natural, “the mysteries it poses”\(^{979}\) likewise take on a different aspect. They appear not so much as mysteries as “deliberate deceptions and involuntary obscurities.”\(^ {980}\) If the “‘seriousness’ of the tragedy portrayed by the poet” is not based on the “seriousness of the tragic event that on Schmitt’s view forms the basis of the poetic portrayal of tragedy,”\(^ {981}\) but if there is, for instance, an essentially unserious or playful basis for the poetic depiction of tragedy, then tragedy loses for Schmitt at the same time its seriousness and its interest. If time never irrupts “into the play” or if history is not “ruled by divine Providence,” i.e., if tragedy is not at bottom the reflection of reality, but always only a more or less playful creation of reality, then Schmitt’s moral need cannot be satisfied.\(^ {982}\) But Schmitt’s moral need will be satisfied. Therefore reality is tragic, at least for man: the “rock of fate” dashes every Promethean hope of being able to “make anything and everything.”\(^ {983}\) But tragedy, or the spectacle of tragedy, is

\(^{977}\) Plato, Republic, 436b (Bloom trans. pp. 114-5).
\(^{978}\) I.10.9 (28/11).
\(^{979}\) Ibid.
\(^{980}\) I.1.9 (14/1).
\(^{981}\) I.10.11 (28/12).
\(^{982}\) Ibid.
\(^{983}\) I.10.15 (28/12) & I. 5.3 (18/4).
ambiguous: a “distancing” renders suffering enjoyable, while the spectacle thereby engendered attempts to pass itself off as *theoria*:

Imitation transforms the cannibalistic eye of Leontius into the innocent eye of the spectator, so that he believes he is taking in through reason what he is absorbing into his heart. His heart is the place of his unitary experience, but he himself has split it between his pity for the protagonist and his pleasure in the poem. It is in the light of this spurious distancing that the ancient quarrel between poetry and philosophy is to be understood.984

Poetry, and tragedy as poetry, as “making” *par excellence*, undertakes a fundamental deception: by distancing the spectators from the spectacle, it obscures the makers of the spectacle as makers, and the character of the spectacle itself as *made* – “[t]he lovers of poetry do not become poets.”985 Instead, it attempts to show the makers of tragedy as the makers of reality, i.e., the gods:

No god can be the maker of the idea of philosophy. The poets, on the other hand, induce in us an admiration for themselves without emulation and all the while turn us into their inventions. While we despise the reality whose images we delight in, we become that reality whose makers we praise.986

Tragedy makes us think that life is tragic while making us forget that in the tragedy life has been made to *appear* tragic. It compensates us for this loss by means of a spectatorial delight in suffering that passes itself off as a judgment of reason. But Schmitt’s tragic reality is not one in which the poets stand behind the scenes preparing a *deus ex machina* for its descent. It is, instead, one in which “*the vision of*

984 Benardete *SSS*, p. 222.
985 Benardete, ibid.
justice is the pleasure of God alone,” or in which God has become the spectator, and we, along with human history, have become the spectacle. In such a reality the essentially made quality of tragedy is so effaced that the very artifice of the spectacle is forgotten as artifice. In such a world, the poets have definitively succeeded in convincing the audience that they, the makers of this type of reality, do not even exist – so much so that the very place of the gods is no longer behind the scenes, but instead in (and as) the audience. Such gods do not differ markedly from “the majority of the whole” nor from their champion and exemplar, i.e., the tyrant.

The motif of the tragic event of “time’s irruption into [the] play” is expressed by means of variations of the German verb “stoßen,” meaning, generally, “push, shove, thrust; kick punch, jab, knock, strike.” In tragedy and the tragic event, Schmitt “lights [stößt] upon an insuperable, unavailable power”; he “comes upon ‘an incontrovertable [unumstößliche] reality that no human mind thought up, but that is given, has happened [zugestoßen], and is present from outside [von außen].’” This “incontrovertable [unumstößliche] reality is the silent rock against which the play smashes and the breakers of genuine tragedy foam,” and the “rock of fate on which Schmitt builds is the stumbling block [Stein des Anstoßes] for the aspirations and plans of the Prometheans.” The tragic event thrusts into play with adamantine resolution, bringing with it the seriousness of human life, its essential

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990 I.10.12 (28/12).
exposedness and subjection to the commandment of the Lord of history. In aiming at the “final conquest of tragedy,” the Prometheans deny the reality of the tragic event and therewith the seriousness of human life. The end of tragedy would spell the end of enmity on earth, and the elimination of any “room for tragedy” would also mean the elimination of any “room for miracles.” The “rock of fate” would be overcome by human ingenuity, and men, like Schmitt’s God, would no longer be subject to any necessity. What the Prometheans wish for man Schmitt hopes for in his God: the God of revelation is the first and purest expression of the rebellion against natural necessity represented by the Prometheans. But Schmitt’s apparent renunciation of omnipotence for himself is only a façade if for him the “silent rock” of fate is only “the touchstone on the way to final salvation.” Fallen man, the man of faith in Original Sin, “aspires, in the final analysis, only to the promised ‘nothing will be impossible for you’; only for this does he implore the Creator.” The “definitive end” of tragedy – understanding “end” as “aim” or “goal” – is the same as that of the Prometheans; only the means are different. For while the Prometheans seek to make themselves omnipotent, i.e., no longer subject to natural necessity of any kind, believers in revelation seek or hope to receive God’s grace and salvation, by which they would become – though this part cannot be acknowledged – as gods.

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993 I.10.17 (29/12).
994 I.10.19 (29/12).
995 I.5.17 (19/5).
996 IV.36.10 (253/167).
There is of course an “an overall difference” in the “way of life”\textsuperscript{998} between the Prometheans and the Christian Epimetheus that is in no way trivial. But, so long as they (the Prometheans) presuppose the possibility of achieving a state in which “nothing is impossible” (forgetting or overlooking that, according to reason, if everything is possible knowledge is not possible, and that therefore it is impossible that everything should be possible), they base themselves on faith rather than reason without being aware of it, and to that extent their position is inferior to Schmitt’s, which bases itself on faith and “knows that it is based on faith, and it wants to be, because it believes it knows that every human life must be based on faith.”\textsuperscript{999} For Schmitt, the Prometheans are actors in a tragedy without realizing it. But for political philosophy, Schmitt is the spectator of a tragedy who imagines himself to be an actor, who has forgotten the difference between gallery and stage, and whose very God is an image of the desire and the pleasure he cannot in good conscience avow in himself.

The section ends with an uncited quotation from Däubler: “First is the commandment, men come later.”\textsuperscript{1000} That means, first of all, that “the authority of

\textsuperscript{998} LCS, IV.39.5 (261/173).
\textsuperscript{999} II.12.35 (74/43).
\textsuperscript{1000} I.10.21 (29/12). – The second edition adds a reference to Däubler on this page (29) though he remains uncited in the footnotes (cf. LCS, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed., p. 269). The verse comes from Däubler, Das Nordlicht, Second Part, “The Denial” [“Die Verneinung”], p. 675. The verse appears as the motto of Schmitt’s Der Wert des Staates und die Bedeutung des Einzelnen (cf. LCS, I.10.n28, p. 29/12), and elsewhere Schmitt says that in it “the deepest problem of philosophy of state and law is clearly formulated” (Theodor Däublers “Nordlicht,” p. 29).
Him who commands is prior to the utility of him who serves.” 1001 The “God who commands obedience,” the god of revelation, “necessarily” receives less than he commands: “God wants nothing less than everything, he demands unconditional obedience, and the world does not fulfill this demand.” 1002 The “dogma of sinfulness” tries “to capture the relationship of the world to this God. In the doctrine of original sin, the concern is first of all God and then man.” 1003 Otherwise put, “[t]he decree I shall put enmity between your seed and her seed precedes Cain’s fratricide” 1004: human enmity is ordained and only as such authoritative. The commandment is prior to man. Yet is the commander not prior to the commandment? If “law is essentially antitheistic,” 1005 then the commandment [Gebot] of God cannot have the character of a law [Gesetz]. The commandment can in no way bind the commander, nor can any end of commanding other than commanding itself be taken to guide or instruct in any way the sheer will expressed in the commander’s command. The Prometheans search for “laws of nature” for the sake of expanding their own power, but for the political theologian all such “laws” are eminently revocable decrees,

1001 III.18.n68 (146/92). – Meier says of the sentence in Tertullian in which this saying appears that it “can serve as the motto of Schmitt’s political theology in toto...”
1002 II.21.1 (95/57). – In this regard, the original of the command would appear to be the “Fiat Lux” of the Creation, just as the original of the miracle is the creatio ex nihilo itself.
1003 III.11.4-5 (126/78).
1005 IV.37.n137 (256/170). – Meier remarks that this “logos” of Benardete’s “cannot be stressed enough.”
binding by virtue of their issuing authority and not by any intrinsic virtue or
necessity – “We are obliged to something not because it is good but because God
commands it...” Meier directs us to two passages in Schmitt’s *Ex Captivitate Salus*
in which Schmitt explicitly associates the author of the verse “First is the
commandment...” with a Promethean movement of thought. All that matters to
Schmitt is the *source* of the command, because the source alone can guarantee the
certainty, security, and validity he longs for. Every commandment is conditional
upon the sovereign will of God – that will alone is unconditional. Thus while the
commandment *is* the tragic event or miracle that irrupts into the play of the world,
the tragic event or miracle *is* a tragic event or miracle *solely* because it is also a
commandment, i.e., because it has been commanded by the omnipotent,
unfathomable God. If we can still draw a parallel between that God and death, it will
only be on the grounds that death was ordained for man as a punishment for his
original sin; as such, death is nothing extraordinary, nothing exceptional, nothing
external to life itself. This punitive aspect of death is a corollary of the imperative of
obedience: the commandment entails at the same time a prohibition, and if man is
fated to transgress this prohibition then he is fated to suffer for it. The world is
moralistic, even if man is not free, even if his decision to obey or to disobey, to

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1006 III.18.2 (146/92).
of the artificialism of those who reach for the stars” (*LCS*, I.6.10, p. 21/6) recalls the
passage in Schmitt: “Today I know that the Northern Lights [Nordlicht] light up in
the pale shine [fahlen Schein] of a humanity-gnosis” (*ECS*, p. 49).
1008 Cf. *TPP*, II.10.17-18 (62/37): “The law can demand obedience in all respects...
only if the law is the source of all that is good for man. So that the law can become
one law and the source of all blessings, the lawgiver must be an omnipotent God.”
restrain or to hasten, is not a decision at all, is essentially blind and thus in human terms ineffective – for God’s justice is not man’s justice, though God is just. God alone views the justice his will has ordained, and it is only he who can say of it: “very good.” But it is good, and he loves it, solely because it is his own: *tout ce qui arrive est adorable.* 1009 The love of such a God is finally nothing other than his tyrannical desire. 1010

I.11-I.12: A Touchstone and a Dividing Line

In the next section, Meier names “the belief in the truth of Genesis 3:15” to be “the foundation on which Schmitt’s political theology is erected,” because it names the guarantor [italics added – JG] who ensures the unavoidability of a radical Either-Or until the end of time: _I will put enmity between thy seed and her seed._ 1011

The guarantor is “I will” or “I shall be what I shall be,” i.e., the omnipotent, unfathomable God of revelation. 1012 Schmitt believes in the truth of Genesis 3:15 because of its source, not because he has observed or deduced that “’the denial of original sin destroys all social order.’” 1013 If this were the foundation on which his political theology was built, it would be built, at best, on a truth of practical reason, and, at worst, on a beautiful or noble lie; yet this too Schmitt “believes he

1009 IV.37.27 (257/170). Cf. Strauss, _OT_, p. 199
1010 Cf. Schmitt, _PT II_ (123/127).
1011 I.11.7-8 (29-30/13).
1012 Cf. III.17.n67 (145/92)
1013 I.11.4 (29/13).
He can only know this, however, if the social order, and with it the political, stands or falls with the moral, and the moral with the theological: only in this case would the denial of a theological truth, a truth of faith, destroy social order. The “most profound connections” are for him theological – these connections undergird every social, moral, and political edifice, providing them their anchoring in the weighty seriousness of tragic reality. The order of natural necessity is inverted: the “absolute commandment” or law of nature is impossible without an “omnipotent commander,”; the “moral need” no longer generates God in order to fulfill it, but instead “Christian morality” is based on the “Christian God” (as, one supposes, all manner of pagan, i.e., inauthentic, “moralties” are based on the corresponding pagan “gods”); and “security” is based on the “certainty of faith” instead of the demand for certainty’s being based on the need for security. The reversal characteristic of ressentiment finds its perfection in forgetting itself as a reversal. One might see in this a low or thumotic form of the erotic reversal in which “[b]ecause the beloved is responsible for the eros of the lover, he is, the lover believes, eros. The cause is identified with its effect.” Here, the god that is conjured (say, by the poets) to satisfy a moral need is identified with (and as) the source of the moral need itself. God ordained enmity as a punishment, but he also fated man transgress his commandment and thus “deserve” to be punished. Just as

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1014 Ibid.
1015 Cf. I.11.3 (29/12).
1016 I.11.2 (29/12).
1017 I.11.1 (29/12).
1018 Benardete, AS, p. 254.
the “doctrine of original sin is concerned with the opposition between... God and Satan,”\textsuperscript{1019} i.e., with an \textit{asymmetrical} opposition\textsuperscript{1020} one of whose members “cannot avoid serving [the] purposes”\textsuperscript{1021} of the other, so the “ultimate Either-Or”\textsuperscript{1022} with which man is confronted becomes the dark choice between two gods, in which man must choose blindly, so blindly, in fact, that – if he is to avoid being proud of his blindness – he must not even be aware that he is choosing blindly. \textit{The sole appropriate attitude in which the “demanding moral decision” can be made by man is one of self-deception or “humility.”}. Only a believer whose blindness is so thorough that it lacks all knowledge of itself as blindness can act in humility and therefore with good intentions. For knowledge of ignorance is not ignorance simply, and man is condemned to ignorance simply if he is condemned to live in a world ruled by an omnipotent – albeit equally ignorant – God. The decision between faith and unfaith is always already decided because the world is always already “in order” – and yet man is commanded to act. The weight of the human decision between obedience and disobedience rests wholly on the good intention or pure heart with which a man makes the decision, and not at all on the substance of the decision itself. In view of Genesis 3:15, such a heart – so it appears – would never deny the “necessity,” i.e., the \textit{duty} of making this decision, for to do so would be to contradict God’s express

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{1019} I.11.9 (30/13).
\item \textsuperscript{1020} Compare II.21.4 (95/57-8).
\item \textsuperscript{1021} \textit{CS, LS & Bdp}, VII.2.31 (88/79).
\item \textsuperscript{1022} I.11.10 (30/13).
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command. For that reason, “the ‘demanding moral decision’ is [Schmitt’s] touchstone [Prüfstein]” and “the attitude towards ‘the moral’ marks a dividing line [Scheidelinie] of which Schmitt never loses sight.” A touchstone (the “demanding moral decision”) and a dividing line (the attitude towards “the moral”): with these tools, derived from Schmitt’s faith in the truth of Genesis 3:15, Meier will attempt to navigate the “deliberate deceptions and involuntary obscurities” of Schmitt’s political theology.

The following paragraph (I.12.) is dedicated to such a navigation in regard to Schmitt’s attitude toward, respectively, the bourgeois, the anarchist (Bakunin), the Promethean, the romantic, the aestheticist, and, finally, the Heraclitean Epimetheus Hegel. The bourgeois wants to “avoid the decision” and is thus “sentenced” (presumably to eternal damnation) for not being able to live up to the requirements of Schmitt’s touchstone. Bakunin follows, because the “final defeat of the enemy” that he aspires to would mean that “‘every moral and political decision’ would be ‘paralyzed in a paradisiacal this-worldliness of immediate, natural life and

\[1023\] If the question should arise here as to whether Genesis 3:15 does not require interpretation, we must again appeal to Shestov’s claim that the meaning of “the words God directed to Adam” is “perfectly clear and admits of no interpretation” (Athens and Jerusalem, pp. 229-30; translation modified).


\[1025\] Recall that above it was claimed that for Meier “what is common to myth and philosophy is that morality possess no predominance for them (TPP, II.3.4, p. 54/31). Schmitt’s “dividing line” would then equally distinguish him from myth and philosophy.

\[1026\] I.12.1 (30/13).
unproblematic carnality...”1027 The Promethean’s motto “Nemo contra hominem nisi homo ipse [no one against man except man himself]” denies the radical character of the moral Either-Or and so “could not be in sharper conflict with the doctrine of original sin”; so much so that the Promethean’s “will to lead his life based entirely on his own resources and his own efforts, following reason alone and his own judgment – that is the original sin...”1028 This life, the philosophical life – whether or not it knows itself as such – may be said to be the enemy of the life of faithful obedience, even if the life of faithful obedience cannot be said to be its enemy in the same sense.1029 It is not the Promethean will to make everything – which will is characteristic of modern, but not ancient, philosophy – that makes the philosophical life the embodiment of original sin, but rather the fact that the philosopher “forgets that there is nothing that he may do on his own authority [aus eigenem Recht]...”1030 The romantic would put his own ego in the place of God as the “final instance” and would live “in a ‘world without substance and without functional commitment, without firm guidance, without conclusion, and without definition, without decision, without a last judgment...”1031 In such a world, history would not be a “state of

1027 I.12.2 (30/13).
1029 Since for the believer action is primary over knowledge, the “impudence” of the philosophical life is more serious (because it is an action or a way of life) than that of any philosophical teaching or position. On the other hand, because for the philosopher action is secondary to knowledge, the knowledge permitted him via analysis of the believer is, in the same sense, weightier for him than is the believer’s opposed way of life.
1030 I.12.4 (31/14).
1031 I.12.4 (31/14); italics Meier’s.
probation and judgment”\textsuperscript{1032} because it would have no concluding moment, to \textit{telos} to which it would lead and in which it would culminate. Nothing would be urgent, “all religious, moral, and political distinctions” would “dissolve ‘into an interesting multitude of interpretations’ and certainty” would evaporate “into arbitrariness.”\textsuperscript{1033} For the aestheticist, likewise, “moral, political, and religious oppositions are transformed... into noncommittal contrasts, delightful nuances of a work of art” that nevertheless cannot call “upon him to make the ‘great moral decision’” or “make him discharge his duty.”\textsuperscript{1034} Finally, Hegel’s system of history admits nothing “from the \textit{outside}” to enter into the “‘peristalsis of this world spirit,’” and so “the decided and decisive disjunction... has no place in this system...”\textsuperscript{1035} The single \textit{touchstone} of the demanding moral decision has traced out a \textit{dividing line} between Schmitt and his opponents, despite their multifarious appearances and his manifold polemical approaches to them. His faith in the truth of Genesis 3:15 provides the key to his polemics as a whole.

Nevertheless, a few questions remain. Meier says that the example of Hegel here is “more than an example” and that

the most profound reason for the fact that the “demanding moral decision” has no place in Hegel is that “at its core” Hegel’s theory remains “ever in the contemplative realm” or that, put more precisely, Hegel as a philosopher persists in contemplation.\textsuperscript{1036}

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{1032} I.13.7 (34/16) & IV.1.1 (189/122).
\textsuperscript{1033} I.12.5 (31-2/14).
\textsuperscript{1034} I.12.6 (32/14-5).
\textsuperscript{1035} I.12.7 (32-3/15).
\textsuperscript{1036} I.12.7 (32-3/15).
\end{footnotesize}
If the example of Hegel is “more than an example,” it must be because Schmitt comes closer to him, or appears to come closer to him, than to the other figures mentioned. If “Hegel as a philosopher persists in contemplation,” he does not act, does not take seriously the command to act out of faithful obedience, and thus decides against the God of revelation. But Hegel does act: as a philosopher, he necessarily lives the philosophical life. Perhaps the point is that he does not take cognizance of the crucial importance of this fact and therefore does not act in the manner specific to political philosophy – i.e., he does not perform any “political action in the service of philosophy,” or he is not a political philosopher. In this case, his persistence in contemplation would also be an imprudent insistence on contemplation, or a denial, not only of the intrinsic value, but of the practical importance of political action in any sense. If both Hegel and Schmitt posit “absolute moments” in history, these moments nevertheless have different causes – for one cannot say that reason causes God to will the creation of the world or the ordaining of enmity or the bestowal of his only begotten Son on the world, while for Hegel the agent of historical change is always reason, and at the moment at which the Sage attains absolute knowledge and history comes to an end it is reason and reason alone that determines him. Meier says that the

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1038 Thus history for Hegel is “a process without a final instance and without a definitive disjunctive judgment” (1.12.n41, 33/15; italics added) – i.e., the Sage may judge history from the perspective of his absolute knowledge, but nothing about this knowledge comes “from the outside” of history, even if its possession ends history as such. History generates absolute knowledge – the Sage does not create history.
gulf that separates Schmitt from Hegel becomes visible nowhere more sharply than in Hegel’s position on the “God manifested in the midst of those who know themselves in the form of pure knowledge”... 1039

This means that Hegel’s standard is that of knowledge, not will (or power), and as such his notion of divinity is not the single God of revelation, but the pantheon of all those who attain the absolute knowledge of the Sage. The mere fact that Hegel’s standard of judgment is “pure knowledge” rather than pure power separates him most distinctly from Schmitt and his God, whose standard is his own, unconstrained will and who therefore remains incapable of knowledge, pure or otherwise.

I.13-I.15: The Political Theologian’s Virtues

Having followed the dividing line of attitudes toward “the moral” and the touchstone of the “demanding moral decision,” Meier says that we “come full circle” with the italicized appendix to Hegel’s “remaining in contemplation”:

“Contemplating is not obeying.” 1040 Obedience is (obedient) action. Contemplation is justified only to the extent it prepares the way for obedient action; as such, it itself is not obedience. To “remain in contemplation,” then, betrays a heterodox attitude: in this case, contemplation becomes the end rather than the means of ascertaining right action by means of the interpretation of revelation or law. The attitude of “faithful obedience” must color every interpretative endeavor from the start, because if it is lacking one will not be able to “hear the call that confronts him with

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1039 I.12.n42 (33/15-6).
the decision between either God or Satan,”¹⁰⁴¹ and thus one’s interpretation will remain all-too-human, untouched by divine grace. Political theology “revolves around” the problem of faithful obedience, or the “obedience of faith,” in which alone man “finds his salvation.”¹⁰⁴² Since the political theologian’s primary interest is the interest in security, his theorizing exists solely for the sake of preparing his historical action or of determining the obedient course. However, since this interest cannot be avowed, the moral man’s interest in salvation is transformed into a total and unconditional love of and obedience to God. If he were merely acting self-interestedly, after all, he would be obeying God only as a means to his own good, rather than as an end in itself or with a pure heart, as the God of revelation demands. Meier insightfully compares the Hobbesian *protego ergo obligo* with “the *obedio, ut liber sim* of the political theologian,” finding the archetype of the former in the latter, “an archetype not distorted by any secularization...”¹⁰⁴³ But if the political theologian *really is* to be saved, if he really is to possess a pure heart, he cannot view this relationship as such, as a kind of Divine *quid pro quo*, since doing so would make

¹⁰⁴¹ I.13.4 (34/16).
¹⁰⁴² I.13.3, 6 (34/16). – That the two phrases, “faithful obedience” [glaubenden Gehorsam] and “obedience of faith” [Gehorsam des Glaubens] appear to be more or less equivalent hardly justifies translating the former as the latter, as in the passage cited here. At any rate, “faithful obedience” is the “morality to which Schmitt aspires,” while the “obedience of faith” is that “in which political theology has its raison d’être” (III.2.5, 110/67). Calvin claims that faith *is* obedience, or that it is “properly that by which we obey the gospel” (*Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, immediately following the passage cited in III.n2, 110/67). If obedience is impossible without faith, then “faithful obedience” is redundant; “obedience of faith,” then, may be understood as the more precise locution. In other words, in the present passage, Meier is being deliberately *imprecise*. The translation obscures this.
¹⁰⁴³ I.13.17 (35/16-7).
the “moral virtues... appear as ways and means to a natural optimum” rather than ensuring that they possess the character of “unquestionably valid demands.”

This is the sense in which the opposition between the philosophical life and the life of obedience to divine revelation “determines a difference in the stance towards morality...” For the former, morality is a means to social stability for the sake of enabling the highest life, the philosophical life, and morality is only this. For the latter, the world or the whole is itself moral in character, and the creator of the whole is a moral agent who demands obedience of man, not for man’s sake, but for his own (or for “God knows why”). Elsewhere Meier distinguishes between “[f]ull obedience in the extensive sense” and “[f]ull obedience in the intensive sense.”

The latter, which is what we are dealing with here,

demands that man love the omnipotent lawgiver with all his heart... It calls for right intention. It insists on the purity of the heart. Man’s incapability of such obedience and the inevitability of sin find expression in the believer’s consciousness of sin. The judgment of faith that all men are sinners alludes to human nature as the obstacle to the fulfillment of obedience.

This kind of obedience segues seamlessly into selfless love and total unconcern with one’s own good for the sake of the “beautiful,” i.e., the Divine. But inasmuch as the need for revelation is originally grounded in a need for security, i.e., in an interest in one’s own good, total obedience in the intensive sense is impossible –

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1044 I.13.11-2 (34/16).
1045 PdF, 7.7 (163).
1046 Cf. Strauss, PAW, pp. 113-4.
1047 TPP, II.12.1 (64/39) & II.13.1 (65/39).
1048 TPP, II.13.1, 3-6 (65/39).
1049 TPP, II.13.7 (65/39).
thus sin becomes “necessary” for man.\textsuperscript{1050} Sin is then the result of the contradiction between a need for security that cannot avow itself and the demand of a guarantor who “wants nothing less than everything.”\textsuperscript{1051} The power that must be granted to the guarantor for the sake of the need for security returns in the total character of His rule: no Hobbesian sovereign, the God of revelation cannot stop at external obedience to the state cultus; he must demand the most thoroughgoing interior devotion and love if he is to be who he is. This love understood to be an echo of His love in creating the world and man from nothing, and, like its apparent model, it is nourished by a desire for total control that is not unconnected with tyranny.\textsuperscript{1052}

Meier places Schmitt alongside Augustine when he cites the Augustinian notion that, “in the rational creature,” obedience is “as it were, the mother and guardian of all virtues.”\textsuperscript{1053} Under the heading of obedience, the virtue of courage is said rhetorically to possess a special status. Foremost because the “life-and-death encounter of the enemy demands courage.”\textsuperscript{1054} In two very important “additional notes” to his “Some Remarks on the Political Science of Maimonides and Farabi,” Strauss associates the elevation of the virtue of courage in the \textit{falusisha} beyond the

\textsuperscript{1050} Cf. III.11.2 ff. (126/78 ff.).
\textsuperscript{1051} III.11.2 (126/78).
\textsuperscript{1052} Cf. Schmitt, \textit{PT II} (123/127).
\textsuperscript{1053} I.13.10 (34/16). – The fact that for Augustine “political theology” is a term of opprobrium does not alter the situation one bit. It Meier’s view, it seems, Augustine would, like Peterson, be attacking only “a certain kind of political theology,” i.e., one that “the author disapproves of” because it “misuses the Christian Proclamation for the justification of a political situation…” (IV.n145, pp. 259-60/172). In the \textit{demanding} sense, then, of political theology – i.e., conceived “as a theory that understands itself based on the obedience of faith” (“Streit,” 1.10, pp. 269-70/183) – Augustine is clearly a political theologian.
\textsuperscript{1054} I.14.3 (35/17).
position attributed to it in classical philosophy with the former’s religious heritage, if not actual belief:

The falasifa attribute greater value to courage than did Plato or Aristotle... The increased prestige accorded courage is explained by two characteristics of Islam: the missionary tendency which is inherent in a universal religion; and the polemic against "superstitious" menaces which are inherent in a universal religion that is thereby popular.1055

Courage gains prestige in the world of monotheistic universalism compared with the world of classical political philosophy, on the one hand, because of the necessity of civilizing wars for the sake of the universalizing mission, and, on the other, because of the antipathy toward myth on the part of a truth-proclaiming revelation. However, in this elevation the distinction between the ordinary and precise meanings of courage found in Plato is forgotten. The precise meaning of courage, based on the Socratic principle that virtue is knowledge, is: “wisdom about what is and isn’t frightening...”1056 The courage of the political theologian totally lacks the knowledge-character of the classical virtue, or it is based on a truth of faith whose guarantor is not human reason but Divine Will. In this regard, then, the political theologian’s courage is not the opposite of the cowardice of the bourgeois, but is that cowardice rendered on the level of the soul: the political theologian is willing to

1055 Strauss, “Quelques remarques” (156-7/27).
risk everything except salvation, i.e., except what alone matters to him. "Political theology makes courage appear indispensible"\textsuperscript{1057}; courage, in the precise sense, may be dispensed with, but the political theologian must labor under the illusion that he is being courageous, even and especially where he is risking nothing of consequence or value to him. His courage, we recall, is “the courage of the man who lines up for battle although he knows that he has already won the victory.”\textsuperscript{1058} Thus when Meier poses the Socratic question, “what kind of courage is it?,”\textsuperscript{1059} he provides a clue regarding the underlying thrust of the chapter’s argument: the political theologian’s courage is not that of Heidegger\textsuperscript{1060} nor that of Nietzsche\textsuperscript{1061} – but “least of all” [italics added –JG] is it “to be confounded with the courage that stands alongside wisdom and moderation.”\textsuperscript{1062} The courage of the political theologian is closer to courage in Nietzsche and Heidegger’s sense than to courage in Plato and Aristotle’s sense. This is due to its essentially moral character and its relation to probity or the “new fortitude,” the “heroic resoluteness to subject oneself to what is most painful,”\textsuperscript{1063} whose moral grounding means that it “can easily degenerate into a race in which he wins who offers the smallest security and the greatest terror.”\textsuperscript{1064} But, Strauss continues from the theoretical perspective, “just as an assertion does not become true because it is shown to be comforting, so it does

\textsuperscript{1057} I.14.8 (35/17); italics added.
\textsuperscript{1058} \textit{CS, LS & BdP, VII.3.3} (88/80).
\textsuperscript{1059} I.14.10 (35-6/17).
\textsuperscript{1060} Cf. I.14.11 (36/17).
\textsuperscript{1061} Cf. I.14.12 (36/17-8).
\textsuperscript{1062} I.14.13 (36/18).
\textsuperscript{1063} \textit{TPP, III.3.4} (77/47).
\textsuperscript{1064} Strauss, “Preface to the English Translation” of \textit{SCR} (21/11).
not become true because it is shown to be terrifying.”\textsuperscript{1065} The moral basis of modern political philosophy places it in greater proximity to the probity of the pure heart required by the believer in revelation than to the rationalism of classical political philosophy.

Meier once again alludes to this proximity when he conspicuously leaves the virtue of justice out of the accounting in mentioning courage alongside the classical virtues of wisdom and moderation. Justice may be said to be the virtue of the political community, and, as such, it remains in some ways at odds with philosophy in the most natural sense: “philosophy is injustice [\alpha\delta\iota\kappa\alpha]”\textsuperscript{1066} Nevertheless, political philosophy must appropriate justice or mimic the appearance of justice for the sake of its own security. So much so that justice appears to be its virtue par excellence: “In itself wisdom stands supreme, but justice stands supreme from an exoteric point of view.”\textsuperscript{1067} Why, then, is justice absent here, precisely where one would expect it to appear alongside courage as the foremost exoteric-moral virtue? A clue is provided by Benardete, who claims that “in no case does justice go by the name of justice in the city,”

The perfectly good city is imperfect; and its imperfection is the invisibility of justice in it. Should justice therefore ever come to light in the city, the city would believe it was perfect and hence cease to be perfectly good.\textsuperscript{1068}

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{1066} Strauss, letter to Klein, 2.16.39, in \textit{GS3}, p. 568.
\footnote{1067} Strauss, \textit{PPH} (168/147).
\end{footnotes}
The word “justice” does not appear here because justice is invisible in the city, and the “city” in which Schmitt’s thought moves, i.e., the milieu of exoteric virtues whose esoteric meaning has been forgotten by the “perverse interweaving of a nomos-tradition” of revelation “with a philosophical tradition,”\textsuperscript{1069} forms the basis of modern thought in general. Thus we can say that justice slips into the city unnoticed because “the principle of its founding turns out to be justice,”\textsuperscript{1070} and that from the perspective of modern thought, which is precisely not the “political perspective of the founder” that “distinguishes the rationalism of the Platonic political philosophers from modern rationalism,”\textsuperscript{1071} justice does not appear because it is the principle of such thought’s founding in just the same way. But only if “the course of fate is always in order already” and “salvation is the meaning of all world history”\textsuperscript{1072} would justice as “doing one’s own work” really be justified. Or – only if a law is just would obedience to it constitute justice in the precise sense. The order is presupposed; here is where justice slips in. The word “justice” [Gerechtigkeit] does not appear in the text of \textit{Die Lehre Carl Schmitts} until past the halfway mark,\textsuperscript{1073} so that it may be said to be the principle of its founding – at least exoterically – as well. But “doing justice” to Schmitt’s thought proceeds here from no moral motive; rather,

\begin{footnotes}
\item[1069] Cf. \textit{DvLS}, 5.n7 (25/59).
\item[1071] \textit{GS2}, 6.8 (XIX/368).
\item[1072] \textit{CS, LS & BdP}, VII.3.18 (89-90/81).
\item[1073] Cf. III.16.9 (143/90). – The term \textit{does} appear (in French and German) in several footnotes prior to its appearance in the text (cf. I.n16, pp. 21-2/7; I.14.n47, p. 36/17; and II.12.n38, p. 72/41), and the adjective “just” [gerecht] occurs at least ten times before the appearance of the substantive (cf. II.12.6, p. 71/40; II.20, pp. 90-4/54-7; and III.9.4, p. 123/76).
\end{footnotes}
like the moral-political virtue of justice viewed from the theoretical perspective of classical political philosophy, it is solely for the sake of philosophy and the philosophical life.

If the classical virtues of wisdom and moderation are replaced here by “faith and hope,” the missing virtue (for classical political philosophy) of justice would be echoed by the missing virtue (for Christian theology) of charity. The invisibility of the latter in the modern age would correspond to that of the former in the city as such. Not obedience to the law, but the good conscience of probity, is the true mark of the Christian morality of depth. According to Strauss, this morality carries over into the Enlightenment:

the Enlightenment wants to restore Greek freedom. What does it achieve? It achieves the freedom of answering, but not the freedom of questioning, only the freedom to say No, instead of the traditional Yes (mortality as opposed to immortality, accident as opposed to providence, atheism as opposed to theism, passion as opposed to intellect). This liberation from the Yes of tradition comes about through an all the more profound entanglement in tradition. Thus, the Enlightenment conducts its fight against tradition in the name of tolerance, i.e., ultimately in the name of the love of the neighbor [Nächstenliebe]...1075

In this way, the “extreme (‘theological’) virtue of charity [Liebe] becomes the ‘natural’ (‘philosophic’) virtue” and an “extreme” of the tradition (i.e., universal love as the extreme form of the prosocial obedience to law) is made “into the foundation

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of a position that is completely incompatible with the tradition."\textsuperscript{1076} The extreme case of charity is rendered invisible to modern thought because it is the basis and presupposition of such thought, which "in its origin and in all cases where it is not restoring older teachings, understands the typical from the extreme."\textsuperscript{1077} This is another way of saying that modern thought is essentially poetic, i.e., pervaded by a "dour"\textsuperscript{1078} perspective in which all pleasures are understood as "flights from pains"\textsuperscript{1079} and whose principle is the "counter-principle [Gegensatz] of tragedy: I wish I had never been born."\textsuperscript{1080} For such a perspective, security against the dangers of life is desired above the pleasures life has to offer; life, or being, is as such bad, fallen, lacking "justification" – thus Meier’s basic contrast between this perspective’s "being evil" [Bösesein] and the "being good" [Gutsein] of the philosophical outlook.\textsuperscript{1081} For us, the essential point here is that what appears poetic from the perspective of classical political philosophy (i.e., from the "political perspective of the founder") appears theological or as concerned with revelation from the "second cave" of modernity. From this perspective the natural relation of philosophy and poetry, with the latter as ministerial to the former, appears in reversed form, so that poetry no longer appears as poetry, but as an authoritative textual tradition.

\textsuperscript{1078} Cf. Benardete, \textit{SSS}, p. 97.
\textsuperscript{1079} Plato, \textit{Philebus}, 44c (Benardete trans. pp. 51-2).
\textsuperscript{1081} Cf. III.13.2 (135/84) & III.13.7 (136/85).
demanding obedience and employing philosophical means solely for the sake of its own ends.\textsuperscript{1082} Our age is distinctively marked by this additional, “historical,” obstacle to philosophizing.\textsuperscript{1083}

The obedience of faith replaces wisdom, and hope replaces moderation – but the political theologian’s courage is not that of classical political philosophy, so courage as “the courage the believer needs in order to lead his life in the face of the ‘terrible decision,’ which awaits believers and unbelievers in the other world and promises them either eternal beatitude or eternal damnation”\textsuperscript{1084} and with which the believer faces the “metaphysical mission” of “[t]he assertion or realization of one’s own”\textsuperscript{1085} must replace justice in the sense of “minding one’s own business” (to say nothing of minding one’s own business “well”).\textsuperscript{1086} This kind of courage is entirely dependent on the historical conditions or “challenge” with which the believer sees himself faced. His morality, grounded in the obedience of faith, can ground the most diverse actions because for Schmitt every historical situation is unique and therefore calls for a unique response. The sole constant is the \textit{attitude} in which the “call” to historical action must be answered – in every case, the political theologian must respond in and with \textit{humility}. Arrogance [Hochmut], courage or fortitude [Mut], and humility [Demut] possess in German a certain morphological

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1082} Consider Strauss, \textit{JPCM}, pp. 115-6.
\item \textsuperscript{1084} I.14.19 (37/18).
\item \textsuperscript{1085} II.17.4 (83/49).
\item \textsuperscript{1086} Strauss, \textit{C&M}, pgs. 108 & 127.
\end{itemize}
consistency that the terms lack in English. Though Meier uses a synonym for “Mut” to denote courage in this chapter (“Tapferkeit”), he follows Schmitt’s usage later on in naming “drive [Antrieb], faith, hope and courage [Mut]” as “[w]hat counts in the political reality” in light of Mussolini’s fascism. If not paradoxical, it is at any rate curious that Meier names “humility” [Demut] as a virtue alongside courage [Tapferkeit or Mut] here. Humility is even said to combine “in itself, as it were,

1087 The word “Mut” is cognate with the English “mood” and originally carries the sense of “spirit” or “cheer.” It receives its present restricted sense via semantic narrowing only in the modern period. (One can perhaps grasp the movement of thought underlying this change if one considers the English expression “in a mood,” which denotes a certain irascibility or high dudgeon connected with a sense of being justifiably or unjustifiably emboldened or brazen.) There are a host of related terms whose root is “Mut” (courage or mood), including Gemüt (mind or disposition), Schwermut (melancholy), Anmut (grace or charm), Übermut (insolence), Vermuting (presumption or conjecture), Armut (poverty), and Zumutung (exacting or unreasonable demand); cf. Keller, A German Word Family Dictionary, pp. 144-5 for further examples. – The root also plays an important role in Heidegger’s discussion of “fundamental attunements” and the “poverty in world” of the animal in The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics. In the passages cited by Meier of this text (LCS, I.14.n48, p. 36/17), it appears in its unmodified form (248/167) and as Schwermut or melancholy, Gemüt or disposition and in the verbal form zumute sein or “being in a certain ‘state of mind’” (270-1/182-3; cf. English version, p. 182, n. 1). Does the significance of the term for Heidegger imply that his thought moves, as it were, in the “milieu” of courage without being aware of it? Is his privileging of mood or fundamental attunement over against reason a legacy of the nomos-tradition of revelation, a tradition in which reason is demoted from its place at the pinnacle of human virtue and replaced with the passion of fear or the action of obedience to God? If, as Heidegger claims, philosophy “remains in an exceptional proximity to a particular fundamental attunement” (270/182; italics removed), does it not remain ministerial to the desire or passion expressed in the basic mood? Especially if “the fundamental attunement of metaphysics in a specific case, and the manner and measure of its attunement, is a matter of fate, that is, something which can change and does not remain binding for every era” (270/182)? Would the “mood of melancholy” in which “[a]ll creation resides” (270/182-3) provide a distant echo of the dour or peevish view of the poets according to which every pleasure is only a relief of the fundamental pain and whose fondest desire is never to have been born?

1088 IV.20.16 (220/143).
obedience, courage and hope” in taking its place among them as the “cardinal virtues.” Thus humility is understood to be “the key to the proper understanding of Schmitt’s historicism” as it “completely determines” his “attitude towards history” as a “Christian Epimetheus.” Humility [Demut] as a virtue is opposed to arrogance or pride [Hochmut or Stolz], and specifically the pride that derives from the believer’s certainty of faith. The believer’s victory and salvation owes nothing to his own merit and everything to the grace of God, and the moment the believer forgets this, or – what amounts to the same thing – the moment he becomes certain of God’s grace or of his desert thereof, he loses every claim to it (and, paradoxically, again becomes worthy of it). This circulus vitiosus of pride and humility revolves around the central conceptual axis of courage [Mut], the virtue of the guardians of Kallipolis, which according to Strauss gains in prestige in the falasifa compared to its essentially subordinate position in Plato.

But Schmitt’s courage is neither the “original political virtue of the andreia-ideal” nor the “late, devout resolution [gläubige Entschlossenheit] of ‘heroic realism’” because it is essentially, and knowingly, based on the truth of revelation. As such, it requires humility in order to be a virtue, and precludes the virtue of magnanimity, which – according to Aristotle – consists in

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1089 I.15.26 (39/20).
1090 I.15.11-12 (38/19).
1091 Cf. TPP, I.15.16 (32/17).
1092 Cf. I.15.2 (37/18).
considering oneself to be worthy of great things, and being worthy of them. A humble person who is worthy of great things cannot know he is worthy of great things without ceasing to be humble: “Biblical humility excludes magnanimity in the Greek sense.” There is thus a kind of blind spot in the conceptual systematics of revelation: it is impossible for a “great-souled” man to know that he is great-souled and therefore to “consider himself worthy of great things.” Perhaps this arises from a requirement of practical reason: men are more likely to over- than to underestimate themselves, and therefore it is safer if everyone considers himself unworthy of great things, both those who actually are unworthy and those who are worthy alike. But that something is safe or recommended by practical reason does not make it simply true. “Magnanimity” is understood to be mere “pride” in all

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1096 Consider in this connection Strauss, *SCR* (136-7/93-4): “False evaluation is overvaluing. Undervaluing one’s own powers is not taken into consideration at all. The reason for this is plain. The man who underestimates his own power, the meek and the poor in spirit, is not a danger to others. Hobbes’ political philosophy takes into account men seen only in respect of how they imperil others.” Cf. further Strauss, *PPH*, Ch. 1, esp. pp. 31-41/18-28: “For what is the antithesis between vanity and fear of violent death, if not the ‘secularized’ form of the traditional antithesis between spiritual pride and fear of God (or humility)… But even if this affiliation is right, it by no means follows that the moral antithesis in Hobbes’s work… is simply the superfluous residue of a tradition which has in principle been cast aside. On the contrary, this antithesis is an essential indispensable element, or, more accurately, the essential basis, of Hobbes’s political philosophy” (28/41; the original ends: “das wesentliche Fundament der Hobbes’schen Politik,” i.e., “the essential foundation of Hobbesian politics”).
1097 That Luther, at least, rejects this line of reasoning and speaks of humility *en pleine connaissance de cause* can be seen from his rejection of Socratic virtue, which the “best and sincerest among [the philosophers]… practiced… not in order to
cases, and therefore the figure of the great-souled man, who stands in a “close relation” to the “perfect gentleman,” it falls into oblivion. Or rather, the charm or grace of the perfect gentleman is transposed onto the God of revelation, for whom alone the virtue of magnanimity would be reserved if it (if knowledge in the strict sense) were still possible. For man, “magnanimity” is simply pride, and the avoidance of pride for the sake of salvation dictates that no one ought to “know” that he is “worthy of great things.” Humility is marked by a fundamental lack of—more, a fundamental resistance to—self-knowledge. The humble man cannot know that he is humble. But Meier goes even further: even humility “itself,” if it is true humility, “does not know itself to be a virtue.” Humility is a virtue, is the virtue in which the other cardinal virtues meet for the political theologian, because its basic sense is the inability to know itself to be a virtue. In this way, it constitutes the “completed negation of the philosophical principle that virtue is knowledge.” For the political theologian, in direct contrast to the political philosopher, virtue is ignorance.

impress other people or to seek their own glory but adhered to it from a true feeling of virtue and wisdom—and yet they could not refrain from being inwardly pleased with themselves and to praise themselves in their heart as righteous and good men” (Lectures on Romans, p. 3, cited in LCS, I.15.n54, p. 38/19).—It is, then, for him not a matter of the possible self-overestimation of this or that person, of the feeling of unjustified pride in this or that instance, but of the lack of justification of—not only all pride—but of all self-satisfaction or magnanimity, especially among those who appear most to deserve it. For him, every such appearance is merely an intensification of the Devil’s trickery meant to deceive man out of his soul by making him imagine himself worthy of God’s grace on his own account in any regard.

1098 Strauss, JPCM, p. 107.
1099 I.15.6 (37-8/19).
1100 PPHO, II.2.6.13 (75); cf. context.
However, Meier continues, “we have to speak about it in yet another regard if we are to pursue the question as to which morality Schmitt’s political theology aims at [hinaus will].”

Humility in Schmitt’s sense is not identical to humility in Luther’s sense (to say nothing of Aristotle’s or Plato’s sense). For Schmitt, humility is essentially related to his historicism: it “completely determines the attitude towards history which Schmitt... characterizes as the attitude of a Christian Epimetheus.”

This attitude involves the belief in a divine Providence that rules history and thus the view that history itself is an “indivisible whole” corresponding to the will of the Lord of history. Human reason can only be the “handmaid of the Lord” whose will remains unfathomable to it and whose “intentions remain concealed from human foresight.” Unlike the political philosopher but like the political theologian, the Lord of history wants to remain unfathomable to those who would wish to understand him. His calling the faithful “to action” stands in the place of the philosopher’s calling of future philosophers to contemplation; the Lord of history does not want to be understood, only obeyed, because he thinks he knows what his own good is without having to question himself on its account.

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1101 I.15.10 (38/16).
1102 I.15.12 (38/16).
1103 Cf. I.15.13-16 (38/16).
1104 I.15.15 (38/19); italics removed; & I.15.17-18 (39/19). – Meier repeats the saying “Behold the handmaid of the Lord...” (Luke 1:38) without explicitly mentioning that it appears on a page of Weiss’ Der christliche Epimetheus that he cites (p. 105). There, Weiss calls the saying, “the decisive basic reason [Ingrund] of all right thinking.”
1105 I.15.16 (39/16).
What is called for, then, is a “daring-humble [wagend-demütigen]
‘anticipation of a commandment that has to be obeyed’ ['Vorgebotes'].”\textsuperscript{1106} The humility intrinsic to Schmitt’s historicism, then, is also a kind of “daring”: the “Vorgebot” requires both the humble reception of the call of history and the daring action of response. It appears here that humility plays the paramount role, since “daring” action only comes about on grounds of a call that is perceived through humility. But this dyad of passionate responsiveness is also apparently subject to a kind of reversal – later, Meier will speak of “the daring feat [Wagnis] of an ‘anticipation of a commandment that is to be obeyed’ ['Vorgebot']”\textsuperscript{1107} as well as of the Christian Epimetheus’ “humble-daring [demütig-wagenden] ‘post-anticipation’ ['Nachvorwegnahme’]” and the Christian’s “humble-daring [demütig-wagenden] ‘anticipation of a commandment that is to be obeyed’ ['Vorgebot’].”\textsuperscript{1108} The daring humility of the believer’s attempt to locate and support with his means the \textit{katechon} or restrainer of the Antichrist is revealed also to be a humble daring that aims at “the spread of Christianity no less than its defense.”\textsuperscript{1109} With this reversal, “the Christian faith in history abandons its defensive stance,”\textsuperscript{1110} or the rhetorical nature of this stance comes into view, along with the decided advantages for the political theologian of adopting it as a rhetorical posture.\textsuperscript{1111} The “daring” aspect of the

\textsuperscript{1106} I.15.19 (39/19-20).
\textsuperscript{1107} IV.4.4 (191/124).
\textsuperscript{1108} IV.9.14 (197/128) & IV.35.4 (250/165).
\textsuperscript{1109} IV.35.7 (251/166).
\textsuperscript{1110} IV.35.4 (250/165).
\textsuperscript{1111} For a discussion of these, cf. \textit{CS, LS & BdP}, II.2 (26-8/18-20); for a “grave disadvantage” of this kind of rhetoric, cf. ibid. II.3 (28-31/20-4).
“Vorgebot” would seem to have to do with the possibility of being “unrecognized” in one’s “piety” (as was Schmitt’s Hobbes)\textsuperscript{1112} or in one’s “blind will to obedience” or “good intention of faith.”\textsuperscript{1113} But if the “Vorgebot” is and must be blind, then those who intend to restrain will turn out to hasten and vice-versa: the Christian Epimetheus cannot avoid the vicissitudes of time and reputation, and even less if “his humility is proved insofar as he sees in retrospect just how much he as an agent is struck by blindness.”\textsuperscript{1114} This retroactive seeing provides a comical parallel to the philosopher’s “awareness of progress” in the “quest for truth”\textsuperscript{1115}: for where the philosopher, in seeing in retrospect that he did not know what he thought he knew, and now knowing that he does not know, makes himself able to avoid the error of imagining himself to know that particular thing in the future, the Christian Epimetheus, in looking back at his not knowing what he took himself to know, cannot seriously even take himself to know this (i.e., that he does not know), since to do so would be to presume to knowledge and thus would be the sin of pride. Not the progress in knowledge, but the dumb repetition, again and again, of blind error, confirms to the Christian Epimetheus that he is following his proper path or that he is acting humbly. And it is not until the end of history that a final accounting of just who the “hasteners,” who the “restrainers,” were, becomes possible.\textsuperscript{1116}

\textsuperscript{1112} IV.4.4 (191/123). Compare this to the actually just but reputedly unjust man of Plato, Republic, 361c-d (Bloom trans. p. 39).
\textsuperscript{1113} IV.9.14 (197-8/128).
\textsuperscript{1114} I.15.20 (39/20).
\textsuperscript{1115} Strauss, OT, p. 204.
\textsuperscript{1116} Cf. IV.9.12 (197/128).
If the Lord of history rules with a Providence whose intention “remains concealed from human foresight,” then every humble attempt to hear the “call to action” as well as every daring attempt to answer that call, must remain blind. If God is omnipotent and His will unfathomable, then knowledge as knowledge of necessity is impossible. Even this knowledge, which appears necessary from the point of view of natural reason, is not necessary from the perspective of a believer in the God “for whom all things are possible.” But, if there is such a God, then (according to human reason) it remains necessary that man, on his own, without the help or grace of God, cannot foresee the providential future and thus must act blindly: “If humility is a virtue, then one may certainty say that here a virtue is made out of necessity.”

We see here again something of the logic of ressentiment, which tends to trans-substantiate inability (here, the inability to foresee the future) into virtue. In Scheler’s telling:

We have a tendency to overcome any strong tension between desire and impotence by depreciating or denying the positive value of the desired object. At times, indeed, we go so far as to extol another object which is somehow opposed to the first. It is the old story of the fox and the sour grapes. When we have tried in vain to gain a person’s love and respect, we are likely to discover in him ever new negative qualities. When we cannot obtain a thing, we comfort ourselves with the reassuring thought that it is not worth nearly as much as we believed.

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[^1117]: I.15.21 (39/20). Cf. Benardete, SSS, p. 151: “Morality is the hypocrotic of necessity.” Compare Bloy’s “Tout ce qui arrive est adorable” (IV.37.27, 257/170). Cf. further Strauss, P&L, Intro., n. 2 (14/136) on the “extreme case of the ‘right of necessity’” being “made into the foundation of natural right...” – The term here is “Not,” rather than “Notwendigkeit,” which can also be translated “neediness” in the sense of “misery” or “destitution.”

[^1118]: Scheler, Ressentiment, pp. 23-4.
What begins as a merely *external* judgment that is “only supposed to deceive the
‘spectators’ whose mockery we fear” turns in the end into an *internal* one, in which
we “modify our own judgment” in order to relieve “the tension between desire and
impotence” and reduce “our depression”:

Who can fail to detect this tendency when he is told that this
“inexpensive” ring or meal is much “better” than the expensive one, or
to feel that it underlies the praise of “contentment,” “simplicity,” and
“economy” in the moral sphere of the petty bourgeoisie? In this
context, let us point to such sayings as “a young whore, an old saint”
or “making a virtue out of necessity,” and to the different evaluation of
debts by merchants or nobles.\textsuperscript{1119}

The necessity of the blind Vorgebot points to a *tragic* necessity, just as Weiss is
c charact erized by Schmitt as a “great German *poet.*”\textsuperscript{1120} Humility is thus a virtue from
the point of view of tragic man, who as such is both forbidden from and compelled
to transgress the purely human order, to overstep the limits of man and thus earn
the wrath of the gods. Schmitt, like all men, lives in the shadow of Adam’s Original
Sin. And, from the perspective of this shadow-existence, life appears to be worth
living only so long as there is hope for reward in the hereafter.\textsuperscript{1121}

Schmitt’s humility “combines in itself, as it were, obedience, courage, and
hope.”\textsuperscript{1122} Humility is, in a sense, the “final cause” of the political theologian’s
“cardinal virtues”: in it, the other three are united. In another context, when talking
about the fourfold cause [Sache] of political philosophy, Meier says of “the self-

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{1119} Scheler, ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{1120} Schmitt, “Three Possibilities,” (930/170); italics added.
  \item \textsuperscript{1121} But cf. ÜdGpL, I.22.61 (342-3): “the moral man’s highest enjoyment, which
natural religion holds out for him, i.e., the consciousness of self-acquired moral
merit, does not suffice as a justification of evil.”
  \item \textsuperscript{1122} I.15.23 (39/20).
\end{itemize}
knowledge of the philosopher” that it “thus proves to be the comprehensive
determination that binds together the other three and orders them in relation to
one another.”1123 The self-knowledge of the philosopher is analogous to the humility
(i.e., the active blindness) of the political theologian in the sense that the one, like
the other, enfolds and confers meaning and order on the rest: virtue is either
knowledge or ignorance. In Schmitt’s case, humility totally determines the attitude
towards history, and history in turn is able to encompass or unite morality, politics
and revelation. Just as “obedience, courage, and hope are united for political
theology in humility,” so from its perspective “morality, politics and revelation are
united in history…”1124 History assumes the dominant role here as the “cardinal
virtues” themselves “are tied to the Christian eon” and therefore “historical ‘in an
eminent sense...’”1125 In this way, the “morality Schmitt aims at” is historicist:
“Whoever asks about the morality of political theology is thus referred to
history.”1126 What is “morally imperative” depends entirely on the “concrete
situation” and is “measured on the basis of the question with which history
confronts” the political theologian.1127 The cardinal virtues are not virtues “in
themselves,” but rather only with respect to the historical challenge posed by the
unique event of revelation. Nor is Schmitt troubled by the transitory character of the
virtues: for the goal of political theology “is not the knowledge of what is always

1123 WPP?, 16.5 (27/104).
1124 IV.1.5 (189/122).
1125 I.15.27 (39/20).
1126 I.15.25 (39/20).
1127 I.15.24 (39/20).
valid but rather the action that obeys the challenge of the historical moment...”1128

Obedient or humble action, not knowledge, is the goal. Political theology wants “to be ‘theory’ out of obedience,”1129 and wants to be obedient for the sake of security. More specifically, it wants to protect itself against self-deception and secure itself a “pure heart,” which alone will provide the possibility (though not the guarantee) of God’s grace.1130 “Theory” in this sense is only a handmaiden to faith, and such “theory” cannot, in the end, provide historical action with any concrete orientation.1131 If obedience means responding rightly to the call to action and correctly identifying the enemy, then “theory” cannot help political theology to obey. If it cannot help political theology to obey, it cannot keep the political theologian secure; “To what end,” then, “would it be ‘theory’?”1132 If Schmitt’s “need for security” is so great that he cannot be satisfied with being a “mere doctrinaire, who seeks, by referring to firm traditions or higher institutions, to relieve himself of problems that the commandment of obedience poses for “historical action” in general and for the “historical action” of the theoretician in particular;”1133 then what in addition does his “theorizing” provide him? Is his “probity of faith”1134 sufficient for furnishing him with the good conscience he needs in order to “secure”

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1128 I.15.31 (40/20).
1129 I.16.4 (40/20).
1131 Cf. IV.38.1 (257/170).
1132 IV.1.12 (189/122).
1133 *PdF*, 6.4 (161).
1134 IV.36.11 (253/167).
himself from self-deception? If the real enemy who “cannot be deceived” also cannot be located, who then will protect Schmitt from self-deception?

I.16: The “Nature” of the Enemy

Schmitt places knowledge in the service of action for the sake of obedience; for him, faith in the superhuman, revealed truth essentially precedes every rational interpretation of the commandment. By presupposing “faith in the truth of revelation,” political theology absolves itself of the need to pose the question “What is virtue?” as well as the further questions “What is God?” and “What is the Good?” The truth of revelation is a “truth of faith,” which as such is above human reason and must be received from God as an object of belief, not a truth of human reason. Every truth of reason remains for Schmitt subordinate to the revealed truths of faith, just as every usage of “theory” is done for the sake of obedience and ultimately of security. The “need of moral man” for unconditional validity demands that the truth be unequivocally known: only if it is known, only if the call is heard, can it provide the basis for an historical answer grounded in obedience. “Morality is thus” the principle of political theology “in a twofold sense”: it stands at its “outset” (as the need of moral man) and “remains its determinative ground” (as the commandment to obedience). But, Meier reminds us, the goal is “[t]o obey

1135 I.16.1 (40/20); I.15.30 (40/20); and IV.3.7 (191/123).
1136 III.1.2 (109/66); cf. Aquinas, Summa contra Gentiles, I.5.1.
1137 I.16.5-6 (40/20).
revelation or itself,”¹¹³⁸ i.e., it is not simply to obey revelation, but to obey revelation for the sake of obeying its own moral need for absolute security and unconditional validity. Obedience to revelation is a proxy for servitude to one’s own desire, even and especially if this fact is forgotten. The fact that “political theology in concreto can advocate divergent positions on morality”¹¹³⁹ only underlines that what is desired above all is not this or that morality, but morality, or obedience, as such, even at the price of a total lack of specific content. Such a desire is not concerned with unfolding the question of the human good or of virtue because it cares more about the certainty of its faith, i.e., about the omnipotent source and guarantor of revealed truth, than about any potentially uncertain knowledge regarding the objects of that faith. From Schmitt’s perspective, it is “hardly difficult” to explain “why the answers” to the “historically unique call” “can differ from one another so widely, not only in different epochs but also in the same historical moment,” for the believer is, and must be, blind in regard to the “counsel of Providence.”¹¹⁴⁰ Almost slyly, Meier adds, regarding this diversity, that “[o]ne might ask oneself whether there might not be a more natural explanation.”¹¹⁴¹ It is perhaps Strauss who offers one: in an early essay, after summarizing Plato’s cave parable, he concludes:

Thus, then, Plato presents the difficulties of doing philosophy, the natural difficulties. If they are so extraordinary, no wonder that there are so many contradictory opinions. Mindful of the Platonic parable,

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¹¹³⁸ I.16.4 (40/20); italics added.
¹¹³⁹ I.16.7 (40/20).
¹¹⁴⁰ I.16.11-12 (40/20) & I.15.17 (39/19).
¹¹⁴¹ I.16.13 (40/20).
we shall not be deterred by the anarchy of opinions, but we will have
to try as hard as we can to leave the cave.\textsuperscript{1142}

There is an “anarchy of opinions,” not because the will and providence of God is
unfathomable, but because philosophizing is difficult. Because philosophizing is
difficult, because it leads to a variety of systems or positions, men of action are led to
reject it.\textsuperscript{1143} But the existence of many contradictory philosophical ideas or systems
does not imply the nonexistence of a single correct one that is accessible to
reason,\textsuperscript{1144} and “no man needs to be ashamed to admit that he does not possess a
solution to the fundamental riddle.”\textsuperscript{1145} This accounts for the essential difference in
the way philosophers, as opposed to theologians, react to the variety in “material or
doctrinal content in the more restricted sense”\textsuperscript{1146}: philosophers, driven and united
in the drive by \textit{eros}, pose questions and suffer questions to be posed to them;
theologians, motivated by \textit{thumos}, quarrel, amongst themselves and still more with
nontheologians. Philosophizing is difficult because it is difficult seriously to question
the basis of one’s own position rather than merely to assert it as an unquestionable
given in a quarrel. The turn to an unfathomable Divine Will to explain the variety of
“historical answers” and to forestall to some extent the inevitable quarrel resulting
from them, is just the “radicalization” of the avoidance of this difficulty.

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{1142} Strauss, “Religiöse Lage der Gegenwart,” in \textit{GS2}, p. 386; quoted material appears
\textsuperscript{1144} Compare I.10.4 (27/11) with Strauss, \textit{NR&H}, pgs. 10 & 19.
\textsuperscript{1146} \textit{DvLS}, 17.5 (43/72).
\end{footnotesize}
Meier already begins separating Schmitt’s political theology from Catholic orthodoxy (and aligning it with Protestantism) when he claims that “the lex naturalis has no place in” it.\textsuperscript{1147} He implies that he does not believe himself “called” to decide whether “Schmitt’s fundamental position on morality” can “be called orthodox,” but nevertheless identifies Schmitt with as equivocal a figure in the history of Christian thought as Pascal.\textsuperscript{1148} The link between them is said to reside in the reliance on faith in revelation and “especially in the truth of the doctrine of original sin.”\textsuperscript{1149} The doubt that human reason can penetrate the secrets of natural law is based on the fallenness of man, which has resulted in the destitution of his thought:

Doubtless there are natural laws; but good reason once corrupted has corrupted all.\textsuperscript{1150}

For in fact, if man had never been corrupt, he would enjoy in his innocence both truth and happiness with assurance; and if man had always been corrupt, he would have no idea of truth or bliss. But, wretched as we are, and more so than if there were no greatness in our condition, we have an idea of happiness and can not reach it. We perceive an image of truth and possess only a lie. Incapable of absolute ignorance and of certain knowledge, we have thus been manifestly in a degree of perfection from which we have unhappily fallen.\textsuperscript{1151}

\textsuperscript{1147} I.16.16 (41/21).
\textsuperscript{1148} I.16.15-17 (41/21).
\textsuperscript{1149} I.16.17 (41/21).
\textsuperscript{1150} Pascal, Pensées (Brunschvicg ed., no. 294).
\textsuperscript{1151} Pascal, Pensées (Brunschvicg ed., no. 434).
Why cannot a virgin bear a child? Does a hen not lay eggs without a cock? What distinguishes these outwardly from others? And who has told us that the hen may not form the germ as well as the cock?\footnote{Pascal, \textit{Pensées} (Brunschvicg ed., no. 222); italics added. Cf. LCS, III.20.9 (151/95).}

What are our natural principles but principles of custom?... A different custom will cause different natural principles.\footnote{Pascal, \textit{Pensées} (Brunschvicg ed., no. 92).}

Custom is a second nature which destroys the former. But what is nature? For is custom not natural? I am much afraid that nature is itself only a first custom, as custom is a second nature.\footnote{Pascal, \textit{Pensées} (Brunschvicg ed., no. 93).}

This fear motivates in Pascal an aversion to digging down to the root of the customary laws, in the hope of locating some natural basis for justice:

We must, it is said, get back to the natural and fundamental laws of the State, which an unjust custom has abolished. It is a game certain to result in the loss of all; nothing will be just on the balance.\footnote{Pascal, \textit{Pensées} (Brunschvicg ed., no. 294).}

The “mystical foundation” of the authority of “equity” is entirely dependent on custom, so that “whoever carries it back to first principles destroys it.”\footnote{Ibid.} Because he fears the lack of a natural basis for morality, or the impotence of human reason to uncover such a basis, Pascal takes refuge in the submission of faith:

Know then, proud man, what a paradox you are to yourself. Humble yourself, weak reason; be silent, foolish nature; learn that man infinitely transcends man, and learn from your Master your true condition, of which you are ignorant. Hear God.\footnote{Pascal, \textit{Pensées} (Brunschvicg ed., no. 434).}
For Pascal, the *pudenda varietas philosophorum or pudenda varietas legem* is understood to imply the nonexistence of a single natural or right philosophy or law to which human reason has access, and thus to require faith in revelation. The weakness of human reason or the difficulty of philosophizing is (mistakenly) taken to imply the radical perdition of human reason or the impossibility of philosophizing. We can hear an echo of this fear in the fear of Luther, who, according to Meier, sees philosophy as “the beginning of a path at the end of which stands forlornness of nothingness.” If the question “*quid sit deus?*” is coeval with philosophy, then the belief in the radical impotence of human reason amounts to the assertion that God cannot be fathomed and that therefore the aforementioned question is asked in vain and therefore ought not to be asked at all. Not only is it supreme presumption to inquire into the genre or type of a God who can only be utterly singular, can only be “what he will be,” but it is above all, from this point of view, to lead oneself into confusion, doubt, and despair. Luther, like Pascal, as well as the Savoyard Vicar, believes that,

Doubt about the things it is important for us to know is too violent a state for the human mind, which does not hold out in this state for long; it decides in spite of itself one way or the other and prefers to be deceived rather than to believe nothing.

According to Meier,

[w]e may assume that the Vicar understands the questions to which his teaching on natural religion provides an answer to be among the

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1158 III.14.17 with III.14.n55 (139-40/87-8); compare II.17.13 (85/50): “…that it fact it would not tolerate an examination.”

“things that it is important for us to know,” and that to be in doubt about the answer to these questions appears to him as “too violent a state” or as an unbelief that must be overcome by a new certainty of faith. This above all distinguishes the Vicar from a philosopher. It distinguishes him from Rousseau, who proved, contrary to some protestations, before and after the Profession of Faith that he knew how to live with “doubts” in regard to the teaching of the Vicar and of whom a more recent philosopher has said that he was equipped with that “well-contrived head for which doubt is a good cushion.”\textsuperscript{1160}

So long as what counts is certainty as opposed to knowledge, doubt appears as an objection to philosophy. It is the dominance of the longing for certainty (and thereby for security) that unites Schmitt, Luther, and Pascal and divides them from philosophers like Rousseau and Strauss.

Meier argues that Schmitt’s exoteric stance as a “critic of morality” in no way detracts from the “moral impetus” that lies behind his lifelong attacks on humanitarianism, normativism, and bourgeois morality.\textsuperscript{1161} Like Peterson’s attack on “political theology,” which according to Meier is an only attack on political theologies that differ from his own, Schmitt’s attack on morality is made on moral grounds and essentially attacks moral positions to which he is opposed. Schmitt’s indignation regarding “the deceitfulness of conducting politics under moral pretexts” as well as his “high regard for honesty and visibility” mark him as animated by a basically moral impulse for the sake of whose advancement alone he was willing to make use of a rhetoric of “pure politics.”\textsuperscript{1162} The moral thrust of this

\begin{footnotes}
\item[1160] \textit{ÜdGpL}, II.12.33-35 (316).
\item[1161] I.16.18-21 (41/21).
\item[1162] I.16.22 (42/21-2).
\end{footnotes}
rhetoric, according to Meier, is aimed “at the flight from responsibility.” If man is to be guilty, and thus in need of salvation, he must first be made responsible; for Schmitt, the primary responsibility is that of fulfilling one’s historical task, answering the call of the Lord of history, and concretely identifying one’s own enemy as such. The “touchstone” of the “demanding moral decision” remains the foremost tool Schmitt uses in attempting to locate this enemy and thus answering this call and fulfilling this task. A mankind that has forgotten its duty to obey the God of revelation views such a decision as avoidable, if not anachronistic or barbarous. The appeal to “mankind,” besides implicitly creating a class of subhumans who do not fall into that class, also points to that which “mankind” has replaced as “the ‘highest value,’” i.e., God. The new appeal to humanity generates a downward transcendence while forgetting or implicitly denying the possibility of an upward transcendence. But, even from Strauss’ perspective, “humanism is not enough”:

Since man must understand himself in the light of the whole or of the origin of the whole which is not human, or since man is the being that must try to transcend humanity, he must transcend humanity in the direction of the subhuman if he does not transcend it in the direction of the superhuman. Tertium, i.e., humanism, non datur.

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1163 I.16.25 (42/22).
1164 Recall I.11.12 (30/13).
1165 Consider Strauss, JPCM, p. 387.
1166 I.16.32-38 (43-4/22-3).
1167 Strauss, ToM, p. 78; cf. ibid. pp. 296-7 as well as Strauss, RCPR, pp. 7-8 & LAM, p. 207. – On the claim that “man must understand himself in the light of the whole,” see also Schmitt, PT (56-60/46).
To the extent that modern humanist thought denies this essential relation to the whole, it misunderstands itself. This does not, however, mean that the tendency to understand man in the light of the lower rather than the higher can or should be altogether neglected. On the contrary, Meier speaks approvingly of Rousseau’s appeal to the animal for the sake of “taking our bearings by what precedes what is specific to us and points beyond what is our own.”\(^{1168}\) Perhaps by this he intends to leave room for Nietzsche’s claim against classical philosophy: “To live alone one must be a beast or a god, says Aristotle. Leaving out the third case: one must be both – a philosopher.”\(^{1169}\) At any rate, the agreement here between political philosophy and political theology on the subject of humanism’s inadequacy does not imply that the “gulf” between them is anything but “insuperable.”\(^{1170}\) If nothing else, it at least serves to place in question Schmitt’s “knowing” saying: “Tell me who your enemy is, and I will tell you who you are.”\(^{1171}\)

Nonetheless, Meier does not shy away from this agreement, fortuitous as it may be. He says in his own name that “[t]here are good reasons for saying that the danger that arises from pseudo-religion increases to the extent that it makes itself similar to religion.”\(^{1172}\) Modern political thought can be called a “pseudo-religion” because it “fails to recognize the necessity of the political defense as well as the rational foundation of its own” scientific or “philosophical” “way of life,” or because

\(^{1168}\) II.17.10 with II.17.nn64-5 (84-5/50).
\(^{1170}\) *CS, LS & Bdp*, IV.3.12 (51/43).
\(^{1171}\) II.19.8 with II.19.n75 (89/53).
\(^{1172}\) I.16.39 (44/23).
it is "based on faith" without being aware of it and (unlike political theology) without wanting to be based on faith. As such, it is inclined (as in the case of Heidegger) toward,

expectations (verging increasingly on the metaphysical) placed on politics... and the devout charging of his philosophy, which after the failure of his political hopes in the present was redirected towards an event that would bring about the all-decisive reversal in the future.

That is, it would be "so dangerous precisely because it appeals to the ‘values’ of the Christian religion and promises their realization in this world." Aside from the replacement (which admittedly is decisive for Schmitt) of God by man, the “pseudo-religion of absolute humanity” would preserve Christianity’s essential vocation and take over its promise of catholicity and salvation, merely transposing it to the level of human reason and human politics. Such a religion “is an enemy that is all the more dangerous the more moral it is, or the more its deception is self-deception.” Here morality is explicitly equated with self-deception: we recall the tendency of thumos to try to separate itself from the desires undergirding it, as well as to forget its origin in the failed satisfaction of those desires. The new atheism “with a good conscience” neglects all the more its origin in the moral impulse to probity, and the more moral it is, i.e., the more it has examined its motivations and found them to be unimpeachable, the more “the man who murders king and

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1173 II.12.31, 33 (74/42); cf. II.12.40 (74-5/43).
1175 I.16.40 (44/23).
1176 I.16.41 (44/23).
aristocracy and organizes the levée en masse... knows himself to be free of all sin in doing so..." 1177 But such a man is doubly guilty: from the side of political theology, he presumes to a superhuman position of power and prestige though without, like the Son of God, "taking the sins of the world upon himself," while from the side of political philosophy he lacks knowledge of (and what is perhaps more, interest in) what is and is not possible according to human nature and thus of the essential limits of the political. 1178 We, however, can see the essential affinity between this man and the political theologian by recalling that for both, probity or "[i]ntellectual honesty, a kind of self-denial, has taken the place of love of truth because truth has come to be believed to be repulsive, and one cannot love the repulsive." 1179 The need for security of both the political theologian and the modern bourgeois thus stands revealed as a need for security from the truth that is feared, the awful "truth" of "being evil" [Bösesein]. 1180

Chapter One ends with a quasi-paragraph that is separated off within the last actual paragraph by a triple dash. If it is counted as a paragraph, it is the seventeenth paragraph of the chapter. This "paragraph" contains seventeen sentences (I.16.42-58). If we are justified in supposing Meier’s intention to be in

1177 l.16.n63 (44/23).
1178 Cf. ibid., along with Strauss, C&M, p. 138 & LAM, p. 207.
1179 Strauss, LAM, p. 218. Consider in this connection Strauss, SPPP, p. 223: "The Christian command or counsel not to resist evil is based on the premise that the beginning or principle is love. That command or counsel can only lead to the utmost disorder or else to evasion. The premise, however, turns into its extreme opposite"; as well as Strauss, P&L, "Introduction," n. 2 (13-4/135-6) & "Religiöse Lage der Gegenwart," in GS2, p. 387.
1180 Cf. III.13.2 (135/84), and recall the "counter-principle [Gegensatz] of tragedy: I wish I had never been born" (ÜdGpL, I.4.24.8, p. 167).
accord with Strauss’ claim that “17 stands for nature,”¹¹⁸¹ then we will expect this section to possess a more natural or philosophical character than the rest of the chapter (with the possible exception of I.9, the chapter’s central paragraph, which is central precisely in the light of the inclusion of I.17). And we are not disappointed in our expectation, since here, for the first time, Meier prepares his elenctic analysis of Schmitt’s political theology according to its own claims. The section begins with a signal that Meier will be challenging Schmitt on the latter’s own turf – it begins with a suppositional “if”:

If the question concerning what is morally imperative [Gebotene] is to be decided only on the basis of the unique historical situation, then the political-theological position on morality in concreto must take its bearings by the enemy.¹¹⁸²

The question is “thus essentially determined by his nature,” i.e., by the nature of the enemy.¹¹⁸³ In other words, the political theologian’s ability to obey the commandment of God depends on his ability to determine the nature of the enemy or to gain knowledge of the nature of the enemy. If he cannot gain such knowledge, he will not be able to obey, thus will be unable to find the security for which he longs. It is therefore of paramount importance for Schmitt to be able to acquire knowledge of the enemy’s nature. But if “the adversary [Widersacher] is a master of cunning and disguise,” he will not allow his nature to be known by means of the “demand for visibility and honesty,” nor will he, “who constantly talks about

¹¹⁸² I.16.42 (44/23-4). – For the sake of clarity, the citations for “paragraph” I.17 will refer to their straightforward textual position in paragraph I.16.
¹¹⁸³ I.16.43 (44/24).
morality,” be vulnerable to “moral appeals” to reveal himself.\footnote{1184} Moreover, if “self-deception opens doors for him,” every “unmasking” will remain inadequate, since masks are the symbols of a knowing deception, and the enemy, if he is truly cunning, will go so far as no longer to know the difference between artificial mask and natural visage.\footnote{1185} Self-deception protects the adversary from every unmasking because it shields him from the self-knowledge required to separate nature from artifice. Here Meier appears to be equating the political moralist Schmitt with the image of his own enemy: like the enemy, Schmitt too becomes more dangerous the more moral he is, or the more he loses the ability to distinguish the “affect of moral need” that motivates him from the “morally imperative act” that he comes to understand as prior to everything human.\footnote{1186}

This suggestion is immediately preempted or diverted by the subsequent sentence:

The political theologian seems to reach a certain [sichere], no longer circumventable line of resistance [Widerstandlinie] only where deception is driven to extremes and the end of all enmity is promised.\footnote{1187}

Two points stand out immediately. First, Meier does not say that the political theologian does in fact reach a certain... etc., but only that he “seems” [scheint] to. Second, Meier does not say “and the end of all enmity” on earth “is promised,” but that “the end of all enmity” simply “is promised.” Does this not suggest that the

\footnote{1184} I.16.44 (44/24).
\footnote{1185} I.14.44 (44-5/24).
\footnote{1186} I.9.11 (27/11); cf. I.10.21 (29/12).
\footnote{1187} I.16.45 (45/24).
omnipotent God of Creation and judgment might be intended, a God who might appear, in the promise of salvation, to promise final relief from enmity, an enmity that, finally, only He ordained and only He could have ordained? Whether or not this promise will in the end prove possible for such a god, is it not plausible that the believer hopes precisely for “peace and security” in the celestial bliss of his final salvation? And does the objection that, in any case, Satan and the leagues of the damned will continue to possess enmity for God not presuppose something that would be beyond Divine control, and therefore, under the presupposition of the omnipotent God, unjustified? Whatever the ultimate status of these questions, for now Meier directs us to Schmitt’s apparent line of thinking by means of a (seemingly) rhetorical question:

For how could the Old Enemy [Alte Feind] prepare his victory more cunningly than by making men forget the enmity that is sown between him and them, and how would such forgetting be brought about with greater prospects of success than through the promotion of the errant faith [Irrglaubens] that they no longer had any enemies or that without exception they are well on their way to getting rid of them?1188

The dialectical possibility that it might be even more “cunning” to appear to insist on enmity while in fact advancing the interest of a desire for security and comfort is not even considered. Or perhaps this desire is itself the mask for a “deeper” stratum of indignation regarding the apparent absence of justice in this world; after all, for moral man, the hope of salvation and fear of damnation for oneself is matched by the fear of salvation and hope of damnation for one’s enemies. In any case, the use of

1188 I.16.46 (45/24).
the question-form here indicates that Meier is not prepared to assert in his own name what for Schmitt appears to be the best (and perhaps sole) means for identifying the enemy based on knowledge of his nature. Meier’s doubt is reinforced by his use of the word “apparently” in the sentence:

In the midst of all historical variability, the invariable essence of the adversary apparently [offenbar] is the infallible [untrügliche] point of orientation, and enmity the only firm ground by means of which to escape with human methods the groundlessness of deception and self-deception: whoever wants to withstand Satan must insist on enmity.\(^{1189}\)

We note first of all the phrase “with human means”: here Schmitt is compelled to use reason in the service of faith, in order to “deduce” what the enemy “must be” according to his nature. Schmitt’s interest in using reason is grounded in his desire to secure himself a good conscience or a pure heart, through which alone he will be able to hear and answer the call of the Lord of history. If the enemy “is and must be by his very being” an enemy, if “the destiny of the Antichrist consists in being an enemy,” then it appears that the enemy must “pretend [dem Scheine nach] to negate” precisely his status as enemy.\(^{1190}\) He cannot really negate it, for then he would not be what he is. However, if God is omnipotent, and thus stands in the role of Creator rather than Generator of the enemy, Satan’s nature cannot be deduced through human means, and his nature can only be a “nature.” This is precisely what is indicated in the next sentence, the central sentence of the 17-sentence “paragraph”:

\(^{1189}\) I.16.49 (45/24); italics added.
\(^{1190}\) I.16.48 (45/24) & I.16.55 (46/25); cf II.20.30 (94/56).
Enmity proves to be Satan’s – *sit venia verbo* – Achilles’ heel, because his “nature” sets limits to his art of disguise [Verstellungskunst].

The use of quotation marks here points to an illusion that Satan, despite appearances, would appear to have brought off successfully against the political theologian: the illusion that he has a nature (as opposed to a “nature”) at all. If the enemy does not have a fixed nature or essence, then the premise that he can be found out by means of the “battle ‘for’ or ‘against’ enmity” proves to be an error or a self-deception, even and especially if it is also “the political-theological criterion of the first order.”

If this “criterion” is also an “indispensable touchstone,” then it appears to take its place alongside the “demanding moral decision”: the battle “against” enmity is also a battle against the unavoidability of the “demanding moral decision.” Satan, i.e., the enemy, apparently cannot avoid waging this battle. In identifying this criterion and this touchstone, Schmitt believes that he has found, using purely human means, the mark of the beast, the “hoofprint” that the enemy as enemy can neither avoid making nor become conscious of as such. And if he is wrong, after all, it will only prove his humility. Despite appearances, the stakes could hardly be lower.

The eschatological meaning of the battle against the enemy is a battle for the meaning of history in which the army of God “has long since been handed the

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1191 I.16.50 (45/24). – In the same vein, in II.19.21 (90/54), Meier refers to the “‘nature’ of enmity”
1192 I.16.51 (45/24).
1193 I.16.52 (45/24); cf. I.11.13 (30/13).
victory in advance.” The Antichrist knows how to make himself so similar to God as to trick the faithful out of their souls: he attains the goal of Promethean man in his “seeming ‘omnipotence’” and in the “age of security” he ushers in, grotesque parodies of the omnipotence of God and of the salvation which He alone can provide and guarantee. He appears to master nature entirely and “‘makes’ Providence just like any institution.” Meier returns to Schmitt’s early characterization of the “moral meaning of the age” with which he began his examination of the objects of Schmitt’s indignation. Again it appears that the “age of security,” or the reign of the Antichrist preceding the return of Christ, occupies a special role, despite or precisely because it is the parodic aping of his own most object of desire, the all-too-human attempt to satisfy his own, moral, need for security, which in the meantime he has transubstantiated into an entirely selfless occupation with God’s grace. At this extreme, the political theologian no longer even acts, but the grace of God “acts” through him. Even if the Antichrist succeeded in convincing man that enmity had been definitively overcome, there would still be enmity because “Satan has no power over Providence and cannot avoid serving its purposes.” Thus the battle “for” enmity is revealed to be only a “battle” for enmity: loss is never a possibility for whoever takes God’s side. The resolute conviction that appears to be necessary in order to hold “fast to the conviction that the destiny of the Antichrist consists in

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1194 Cf. epigraph to Chapter IV (189/122).
1195 I.16.53-54 (46/25).
1196 Ibid.
1197 CS, LS & BdP, VII.2.31 (88/79).
being an enemy”¹¹⁹⁸ is balanced out by an equally resolute conviction not to raise the question regarding one’s own good or to insist that it has already been definitively answered once and for all.¹¹⁹⁹ But this conviction also colors Schmitt’s notion of the enemy: the enemy is the one who thinks he can make everything but in fact cannot, as opposed to God, who can in fact make anything. Thus the enemy is the Promethean man who imagines he can overcome nature, whereas for Schmitt only God can and must rule nature (thereby rendering it “nature”). There is literally no place for the third person, i.e., the one who sees in nature a “play of chance and necessity,” which can be known, and therefore in some sense guided or cultivated, but not (and certainly not self-evidently) entirely overcome: Naturam expellas furca...¹²⁰⁰

The final sentence of the chapter repeats, with a difference, a sentence from its central paragraph:

For a political theologian, who is aware of the eschatological importance of the battle for or against enmity in an age in which “nothing is more modern than the battle against the political,” the defense of the political becomes a moral duty.¹²⁰¹

Earlier, we read:

For in light of political theology, which subjects everything to the commandment of obedience, the defense of the moral decision itself appears to be a moral duty.¹²⁰²

¹¹⁹⁹ Cf. II.17.12 ff. (85/50 ff.).
¹²⁰⁰ II.20.12 (92/55); cf. Strauss, NR&H, pp. 201-2, along with Horace, Epistles, I.10, p. 395.
¹²⁰¹ I.16.58 (47/25); italics added.
¹²⁰² I.9.10 (27/11); italics added.
The latter continues with the remark, which we have cited more than a few times already: “Indignation is transformed from an affect of moral need into a morally imperative act...” This fundamental transformation, which has indelibly colored everything based on it, underlies both the attitude toward the “demanding moral decision” itself, which one therefore has a “duty” to defend, and that toward “the political,” in which the demanding moral decision regarding the identity of the enemy takes place for man. Never mind that if there is a “God concerned with justice” the “very notion... of final redemption” is and will remain certain, and therefore that the “disappearance” of the political on earth is in no way tantamount to a sovereign pardon for Satan and his legions on behalf of Heaven. One may still wonder with what right Schmitt equates the “final decision between Christ and Antichrist [Widerchrist]” with the political decisions among men concerning the concrete identities of their enemies. All the more so if the danger of the “pseudo-religion of absolute humanity” consists precisely in appealing "to the ‘values’ of the Christian religion and promis[ing] their realization in this world." This would not be a problem, of course, if the commandment of obedience from the Lord of history did not need to be enacted by means of human reason, but, as we have seen, the identification of the adversary with those who wage battle against enmity is arrived at “with human methods...” Schmitt’s critique of the “apocalyptic expectations”

1203 I.9.11 (27/11).
1204 Strauss, JCPM, p. 344.
1205 I.16.57 (46-7/25).
1206 I.16.40 (44/23).
1207 I.16.49 (45/24).
of the absolute religion of humanity can with the same right be levied at his own
tries to delay the advent of Christ’s reign by means of the identification, using
human reason, of both the enemies of God and the “restrainer” of the Antichrist.

If “morality” and “politics” can be understood as standing for “political
theology” and the “practical philosophy” (i.e., philosophy in the service of politics) of
the Enlightenment\textsuperscript{1208} respectively, then we can say that here, at the end of a
chapter in which the two are furthest apart in the central paragraph’s emphasis on
morality alone, they are reunited in enmity regarding the status of the political itself.
One camp fights for the faith that enmity \textit{qua} human nature can and will be
overcome; the other for the faith that enmity \textit{qua} human fate is unavoidable. Neither
knows necessity in the strict sense, because each posits an entity, man or God, that is
or can be “above intelligible necessity.”\textsuperscript{1209} Moreover, each accuses the other of
believing that its highest moment can “make” what it is in fact incapable of making:
either God man or man the gods. The two camps are divided by their “attitude
towards ‘the moral’” but united by the fact that – in contrast with philosophy \textit{per se}
– “the critical-skeptical spirit has no predominance for them.”\textsuperscript{1210} Or rather, modern
philosophy is moral without knowing it and without wanting to be, while political
theology wants to be moral for the sake of security or salvation. And if modern
philosophy is more moral and more reliant on moral motives like probity than was
classical philosophy, it is only because of its “perverse interweaving” with the

\textsuperscript{1208} “Vorwort” to \textit{DvLS}, 6.5-7 (13-4).
\textsuperscript{1210} I.11.14 (30/13) & \textit{TPP}, II.3.3 (54/31).
“nomos-tradition” of “Biblical revelation”: in its “secular alliance with the political sovereign,” it imported this legacy in the form of the belief that together they could achieve “[p]eace and security... on the path of the progressive domination of nature and the transformation enabled thereby of human living conditions in general.”\textsuperscript{1211}

The modern alliance between philosophy and politics is shot through with the legacy of revelation in both a positive and negative sense. Negatively,

\[ \text{the quest for absolute certainty was a response to the challenge of revealed religion; the plan to erect a solid, firmly constructed, ever more comprehensive edifice of knowledge on an indubitable foundation was conceived in direct confrontation with the teaching concerning particular Providence and the irruption – possible at any time and in any place – of miracles into the world of natural events.}\textsuperscript{1212}\\

Positively, and as a result of this polemical opposition, revealed religion’s universal and chiliastic vocation is taken over and transformed into modern science’s universalistic faith in “the methodical conquest of nature” and utopian expectations for “the rational reorganization of society,”\textsuperscript{1213} as well as in modern philosophy’s disregard for the esoteric tradition, which likewise rests on the presumption (grounded in the demand for justice) that the highest excellence of man is universally attainable, or that every man as such is (or can be) equipped for virtue.\textsuperscript{1214} At the same time, modern philosophy no longer understood revelation as

\textsuperscript{1211} TPP, I.10.6 (23/10).
\textsuperscript{1212} DvLS, 6.6 (26/60).
\textsuperscript{1213} TPP, I.10.7 (23/10).
\textsuperscript{1214} That the consequence of this viewpoint, i.e., the idea that the truth is salutary for everyone at all times, appears to contradict what we have previously referred to as the bourgeois fear of the truth’s being ugly or bad, suggests that the modern concept of truth rests on a moral basis that is subject to dyadic “rolling” between a restricted
essentially subordinate to, or as a part of, politics. The intention to reduce revelation to myth, then, is directed to both the restoration of the proper or natural order of politics and religion and the recovery of the self-knowledge of the philosopher as naturally aligned with myth or politics on the basis of the fact that “morality possesses no predominance for them” and that both are in a certain sense restricted by opinion, tradition, and the need for social stability. Not only a sharpened concept of philosophy, but a sharpened concept of politics as well, emerges from the analysis of revelation into myth: philosophy recalls the necessity of becoming political precisely by knowing how to distinguish between the sober “demands of politics” and the extreme demands “of religion.” In this way, too, it begins to recover the “political perspective of the founder” that it had lost as a result of its mortal confrontation with revealed religion. The ground of this confrontation was precisely the idea of truth: “Philosophy and revelation are connected by the fact that each in its own way insists on truth contrary to myth.” Thus having distinguished revelation from myth or politics on the basis of morality, philosophy is better able to see the figure of its mortal enemy, an enemy that would challenge it on the basis and in the name of truth itself.

_1215_ _TPP_, I.10.9 (23/11).

_1216_ This expression appears in the English translation of _GS2_, 6.8 (xix), i.e., in “How Strauss Became Strauss,” p. 368; cf. in addition _TPP_, I.12.7 (26/13).

_1217_ _TPP_, II.3.2 (54/31).
Part III (III.1-III.26)

Power vs. Knowledge

Form

Chapter III is composed of twenty-six paragraphs, and includes the book’s central paragraph (III.14) if Chapter I is counted as having seventeen paragraphs. If not, it still appears to be central in the sense that its twenty-six paragraphs are bookended by 39-paragraph chunks (i.e., Chapters I and II taken together, on one side, Chapter IV on the other). Not just structurally, but also in terms of content, Chapter III is central. Its title, “Revelation,” names the central determination of the “cause of political theology,” and its subject matter forms the centerpiece of Meier’s analysis of Schmitt’s political theology and of political theology tout court.

Chapter III completes the analysis of revelation into myth begun in Chapter I, and its focus on “the truth of revelation, which is a truth of faith” at the same time marks the most decisive difference between myth and revelation and their greatest proximity. Their “most decisive difference” in the sense that according to Meier (following Strauss) revelation is marked by an essential similarity to history as against myth, owing to the assertion of both revelation and history that the events recounted actually happened, and that the fact of their occurrence is somehow

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1218 IV.38.10 (258/171); italics removed.
1219 III.1.2 (109/66).
decisively relevant for the present and future.\textsuperscript{1220} The “greatest proximity” in the sense that Meier’s analysis reveals political theology’s claim to truth to be a \textit{boast}, i.e., as predicated on “knowledge” of the whole that is not really knowledge, but always only faith, and so constitutive of a concept of “truth” that is equivalent to truthfulness or probity. The core of Chapter III consists in tracing the consequences of these concepts of “truth” and “knowledge” in the context of faith in an omnipotent, unfathomable God.

III.1-III.4: The Triadic Constellation of the Political

Meier reiterates from the outset the need of political theology to reduce “unfaith in its condensed form,” which “is able to place political theology radically in question” to “errant faith and to confront it as the ‘existential’ enemy...”\textsuperscript{1221} Political theology does not believe – does not want to believe – that a life positioned outside of faith is possible, so it attempts to understand every claimant to such a life as somehow still based on faith, as “metaphysics \textit{malgré lui}.”\textsuperscript{1222} But as we have seen, in Meier’s view the philosophical life that does not depend on a positive claim regarding the character of the whole, but only on a negative one regarding the whole’s unknownness, coupled with a view of man as capable of guiding his own life, is not based on faith. Thus Meier places quotation-marks around the word

\textsuperscript{1221} III.1.5-6 (109/66).
\textsuperscript{1222} \textit{WiPT?}, 6.8 (10/82).
“existential” [“seinsmäßigem”] here but not, for instance, when he discusses the
“foundation and assertion of an existential [existentiellen] position.”\textsuperscript{1223} i.e., that of
political theology, against political philosophy.\textsuperscript{1224} Be that as it may, Meier’s
reiteration of the usefulness of political theology as a tool for forcing hostile
interlocutors onto its ground\textsuperscript{1225} serves to lay the groundwork for Schmitt’s
identification of “revelation and politics,” which he “[u]nlike any other political
theoretician of the twentieth century,” saw “together and sought to the best of his
ability to combine...”\textsuperscript{1226}

Meier goes further in this chapter than in the previous one in regard to the
status of the political as the metaphysical. The question has to do with whether the
theology of revelation is \textit{essentially} political, or whether it is only \textit{accidentally}
political. As we have already seen, the world is “politomorphic”\textsuperscript{1227} for man because
the God of revelation as ordained it as such in Genesis 3:15. We have argued that the
claim that that God \textit{had} to so ordain it places a restriction on that God’s freedom and
thus renders him less than omnipotent. But if “[w]herever revelation does not
awaken faith, it must awaken rebellion [Empörung]”\textsuperscript{1228} and if every rebellion
makes a distinction in the whole between redeemed and unredeemed, and therefore

\begin{footnotes}
\item[1223] PdF, 6.1 (161).
\item[1224] The word “seinsmäßige” appears in LCS otherwise only in quoted material from
Schmitt, and, as far as I can tell, only in Chapter II (cf. II.3.12, p. 54/28 & II.8.11, p.
60/33). And while this could suggest that Meier is simply “repeating” Schmitt’s
word once again in the present section, at the very least the use of quotation marks
serves to distance Meier from the term thus employed.
\item[1225] Which first appeared in WiPT?, ¶6 (9-10/81-2).
\item[1226] III.3.1 (111/67).
\item[1227] III.7.14 (121/74).
\item[1228] III.1.13 (110/66).
\end{footnotes}
between friend and enemy, then the very act of the God of revelation’s revealing himself renders the world “political as a whole.” After that revelation, those who accept it as revelation are understood as friends of God or as the rightly faithful, while those who do not are understood as friends of Satan or as the errantly faithful. But could the God of revelation also have chosen not to reveal himself? Could he do so and still remain what or who he is? Is the God of revelation, too, subject to the political character of the whole? And if so, is he too faced with an unavoidable Either-Or? i.e.: either reveal himself and generate a distinction between obedience and disobedience or fail to do so and generate no such distinction? If revelation is to be understood as “inherently political,” must the God of revelation, too, be riven by the distinction between friend and enemy? One can hardly conclude otherwise when one reads, astonishingly, that for Schmitt the saying Nemo contra deum nisi deus ipse stands for “the appeal of the son, partisanship for the son, and alliance with the son against the father.”

There would be no distinction between faith and unfaith if the “historical event” claimed by revelation were founded in necessity, thus repeatable, via human means, and verifiable. The “obedience of faith,” which Meier now singles out as the “raison d’être” of political theology, depends on both the assertion of an historical event and the claim of a supernatural or divine origin for that event. Faith always makes a distinction, even if no one is actually an unbeliever, inasmuch as the

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1229 III.7.14 (121/74).
1230 III.2.3 (110/67).
1232 III.2.5 (110/67).
rejection of “knowledge” based entirely on faith remains a permanent human possibility. Therefore revelation and politics must be understood together, as two sides of the same coin. Schmitt’s determination to combine the two is a “source of true outrage for many theologians,”¹²³³ and not only for theologians. But the possibility of gaining a “horizon beyond liberalism” depends even and especially for the philosopher on risking the libertas philosophandi for the sake of sharpening the concept of philosophy as a determinate way of life. Thus one obtains “insight into the cause [die Sache]”¹²³⁴ by following Schmitt along this path. This does not mean, however, agreeing with him in every specific, or even on the whole; Meier again registers his doubt of Schmitt by placing the words “radicalism” and “most profound connections” in quotation marks.¹²³⁵ Nor does it suggest that the fact that politics and revelation both make claims on man mean that these claims possess, for Meier, the same status. That we are able, by means of Schmitt’s thought, to “think of politics and revelation in their relationship to one another and to confront the claims of each”¹²³⁶ suggests if anything that these claims are not equally justified.

According to Meier, the central element in Schmitt’s theoretical edifice which establishes the bond in both directions between revelation and politics is the conceit to reduce the political to a triadic constellation, which can set in everywhere and at any time such that two individuals, who unite against one enemy, suffice to constitute a political association, and three persons are enough to establish the political, whether natural,

¹²³³ III.3.2 (111/67).
¹²³⁴ III.3.3 (111/67).
¹²³⁵ III.3.4 (111/67). Cf. GS2, 7.7 (xxi/369), in which Meier makes the same point with regard to Strauss’s use of quotation marks around the word “radicalized.”
¹²³⁶ III.3.6 (111/68).
legal, or supernatural persons are involved and whether all three really are present or not.”

Thus the lone believer, in alliance with God, constitutes a political association against Satan. Or, the son, in alliance with the believer, suffices to render the father the enemy. The triadic constellation of the political is its degree-zero and unites “political” considerations in the narrow sense with the metaphysical enmity inherent in revelation. The “core” of both Schmitt’s “concept of the political and his political theology,” is, in Meier’s interpretation, this triadic constellation. Schmitt even attempts to “advance or trace back the triadic constellation all the way to the Trinity” when in Political Theology II he quotes from Gregory of Nazianzus: “the one is always in insurrection against itself.” The Christian doctrine of the Trinity has only “cloaked” “the Gnostic dualism of creator-god and redeemer-god... in the unfathomability of God,” without refuting it. Thus the attribute “unfathomable” appears as a problematic solution to a theological-political problem. It is to be understood in essentially the same way when it emerges as the solution to the problem of God’s goodness: How can the omnipotent God be altogether good or just if “goodness” is not beyond the grasp of human reason, given that bad things often happen to good people? The postulate of unfathomability not only “saves” the God of revelation’s justice; it also prevents his very being from emerging as fundamentally split between a creator who lacked the knowledge or the will to

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1327 III.3.8 (111-2/68); italics added.
1328 “Streit,” 6.5 (278/190).
1329 “Streit,” 6.7-8 (278-9/190).
1320 “Streit,” 6.18 (279/190).
1321 Cf. III.16.2-4 (143/90).
create a perfect world and a redeemer who more or less obtrusively accuses him for this failure.

The “final step” toward making the theological and the political “commensurable” “is taken with the turn to the conception of intensity.” By means of it – as we have already seen – the political becomes the authoritative instance that can break in on human life anywhere, at any time. Meier summarizes his findings from the previous chapter regarding the “battle with the providential enemy” as standard-setting because most extreme and history “as a process of salvation [Heilsgeschehen].” He likewise relies on his Hidden Dialogue book when he claims that Schmitt’s “conceptual expansion” of his concept of the political reveals his underlying orientation toward the “community of faith... as the most perfect or ‘most intensive’ political association and the battle of faith as the most profound or ‘most extreme’ political battle.” And he makes his own position known when he omits quotation marks around the word “radical” in speaking about Strauss’s pursuit of “the radical inquiry with which he pushes the interpretation of Schmitt’s theory until he reaches the conflict between the fundamental alternatives regarding the political,” and places them around the word “metaphysical” in speaking about “the deeper-lying theological or ‘metaphysical’ oppositions within political oppositions...” The political cannot be avoided because it is guaranteed

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1242 III.3.9-10 (112/68).
1243 III.3.13 (112/68).
1244 III.4.3-4 (113-4/69).
1246 III.4.11 (116/71).
by the author of the whole. Again, however, the question emerges: can Meier or Schmitt rightly speak of “the necessity of the political decision” if God himself has ordained enmity as a free choice? And if God had no choice but to generate enmity, can he really be considered omnipotent? And further, if God is not omnipotent, what then is he?

III.5-III.10: The Political is the Total

The examination of Schmitt’s claim, made in the “Preliminary Remark” to the 1933 second edition of Political Theology that “[i]n the meantime,” i.e., between 1922 and 1933 (i.e., pegged to the replacement of the domain-based concept of the political with the intensity-based model), “we have come to know that the political is the total,” affords Meier the opportunity to disclose the proximate impetus of his interpretation of Schmitt’s oeuvre in terms of political theology. This impetus is his disagreement with Hans Barion’s remark that after 1922 Schmitt sought a “‘comprehensive justification of an independent concept of the political’” and was led “to a position ‘equivalent to a theoretic cutting of the historical umbilical cord between theology and politics...’” In Meier’s view, Barion’s remark “presume[s]

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1247 III.4.10 (116/71); italics added. On the concept of “necessity” in this sense, cf. III.16.6 (143/90) & CS, LS & BdP, VI.3.6 (76/67).
1248 III.5.2 (116/71).
1249 III.5.4 (116-7/71). In PdF, Meier calls this statement of Barion’s “the starting-point for the unfolding of the argument” presented in CS, LS & BdP and LCS (9.n18, p. 168).
to make the assertion that Schmitt turned his back on political theology,”1250 without sufficient textual evidence from Schmitt, who would once again “raise the flag” of political theology over a half-century later in his final published work. If the political is the total, then Schmitt’s concept of the political need not turn its back on his political theology, and his talk of the “independent domain” of the political can be understood as a piece of rhetoric that does not strike at the core of his thought or intention. Instead, “the political is the total” means that the political has been pushed or found in the heart of the theological or “metaphysical core,” which must itself now be understood as essentially political.1251 “Schmitt’s redefinition of the political” in terms of intensity “provides the necessary presupposition for doing so”1252 because it places the political on a continuum with the theological and the God of revelation. If this God is omnipotent, then his commandments are the most intense or strongest dicta possible, and everything must be subordinated to them. The theological, which is political in the sense that it makes a distinction between friends and enemies of God, emerges as the authoritative instance for the friend-enemy distinction after 1933.

The next two paragraphs attempt to “consider the theological implications of Schmitt’s political totalism” on “two levels... the level of the political-theological confrontation with the opponent [Gegner]” (III.6) “and the level of ‘theory’ in the

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1250 III.5.4 (117/71-2).
1251 III.5.7 (117/72).
1252 III.5.8 (117/72).
narrower sense” (III.7).\textsuperscript{1253} Meier begins to investigate the first level with reference to Schmitt’s tendency or ability to discern “the ‘metaphysics,’ or, more correctly: the theology” at the “basis of every political theory, every political teaching [Lehre], every political attitude” and in fact of “every spiritual [geistigen] position.”\textsuperscript{1254} But this tendency alone only suffices to permit Schmitt to “‘know’ that the ‘metaphysical’ or the theological ‘is the total’”\textsuperscript{1255}; it says nothing about the political. Only from this perspective would Schmitt be in a position to discover that the political as the total, i.e., only if “the theological unlocks the whole and in doing so proves to be political.”\textsuperscript{1256} Otherwise, whence could the claim to know “the total” arise in the first place? Beginning from the position that holds that the theological is the total, Schmitt is able to discover that the political is the total simply by discovering that the theological is political. But how can the theological or “metaphysical” be political? Not theology as such, but only a theology that “claims to be blessed with the revelation of a sovereign authority that demands obedience” is in a position to make the requisite “distinction between friend and enemy” that is determinative of the political.\textsuperscript{1257} Thus not just any theology is political, but the theology of revelation must be political. For it, as we have seen, everything is placed under the commandment of obedience to the sovereign authority, so that what matters for it

\textsuperscript{1253} III.6.1-2 (117/72).
\textsuperscript{1254} III.6.3-4 (117/72).
\textsuperscript{1255} III.6.7 (118/72).
\textsuperscript{1256} III.6.10 (118/72).
\textsuperscript{1257} III.6.13-14 (118/73).
are not “knowledge and ignorance” but rather “sin and redemption.”\textsuperscript{1258} The political theologian uncovers the theological basis of every spiritual position not for the sake of the knowledge itself, but in order to provide his historical action with a foundation in orthodoxy. Meier here reiterates Schmitt’s belief to be able to force every opponent to reveal his theological commitments, even those who explicitly reject every theology or “metaphysics” whatever. In revealing such thinkers to be essentially disobedient to the authoritative command, Schmitt reveals, again and again, the political character of the theology of revelation.

On the level of “theory,” or regarding the “theological meaning” of Schmitt’s “central statements,” and especially of “his claim to have come to ‘know that the political is the total,’”\textsuperscript{1259} Meier surmises, in an especially important passage, that:

\begin{quote}
The political can be the total only when there is a god or are gods, and in fact a god – at least one god – who actively intervenes in world events and who as a person makes demands on men. Only then can everything be related to a person, to his will and to the adversary born of that will. For there can be politics only between persons, in the force field of their volition, their action, their insight, never between ideas, laws, or random series.\textsuperscript{1260}
\end{quote}

A person, his will, and the adversary born of that will: with this series Meier names the essential conditions of the theologico-political, conditions that can perhaps even be read back into the doctrine of the Trinity, where God the Father is the “person,” the Holy Spirit his “will” and God the Son the “adversary” born of this will. If this

\textsuperscript{1258} III.6.18 (118-9/73).
\textsuperscript{1259} III.7.4-5 (120/74).
\textsuperscript{1260} III.7.8 (120-1/74). Compare \textit{TPP}, II.1.n2 (52/30): “The philosopher distinguishes between a person and a cause [Ursache], the political-moral from the cosmological aspect, which the theologian combines in the one creator- and lawgiver-God.”
sounds farfetched, it suffices simply to recall Schmitt’s position regarding the
insurrection or *stasis* that lies at the heart of the Trinity and that is only imperfectly
remedied by that doctrine’s reference to the unfathomability of the idea of three
persons or *hypostases* in one entity. Meier even explicitly names “the God of
Marcion” here, in contrasting “the self-thinking god of Aristotle” and “the gods of
Epicurus” with the God of revelation.\textsuperscript{1261} The gods of the philosophers do not
“actively intervene in world events” nor “as a person make demands on men”; they
rather serve as standards of knowledge or virtue that are in no way “in need of glory
from needy men…”\textsuperscript{1262} With this discussion and division of gods according to genre
or type, Meier participates in and foreshadows the centrality for philosophy of the
investigation of the question: “What is a god”?\textsuperscript{1263}

In the next three paragraphs (III.8-III.10), Meier attempts to understand
Schmitt’s dictum that “the political is the total” in several different modes while
emphasizing the precedence of the theological mode for Schmitt. He now reveals
that “[i]n the most important respect… Schmitt’s political totalism does not
presuppose the primacy of the enemy; rather, it hinges on the primacy of God, of the
god who compels the decision, on the primacy of the God against whom
disobedience rebels.”\textsuperscript{1264} God’s primacy is crucial to political theology in several
ways, and it alone suffices to justify the precedence of the theological for Schmitt.

\textsuperscript{1261} III.7.12-13 (121/74). Cf. I.13.n45 (34/16) and note the lack of capitalization in
the translation of “god” and “gods” here.
\textsuperscript{1262} *TPP*, II.10.26 (63/38).
\textsuperscript{1263} Cf. III.14.13 (138/74).
\textsuperscript{1264} III.8.1 (121/75).
“The political is the total” means that the God of revelation is an obedience-demanding God and that the refusal to obey amounts to disobedience and thus enmity. As one of the “load-bearing ‘axes’ of his teaching,” the phrase “the political is the total” has “several valences”: it may be understood theologically as the claim that “The God who demands obedience is the Lord of the whole, of the world and of history”; historically, it amounts to a faithful response to the challenge presented by a liberal age; polemically, it opposes liberalism’s “domain-based” conceptuality; morally, it vents the political theologian’s indignation against the bourgeois, who would close himself off from all claims aiming at the whole; strategically it fulfills the duty of defending the political against “the loss of vital seriousness”; and “anthropologically it means the same as Man can only be grasped politically.”1265 Of all these modes, the anthropological will be most relevant to Meier’s upcoming argument; yet he assures us that this “anthropology” is essentially theological-political: “Man can be wholly grasped politically only because and insofar as the political obeys a theological determination; such is the position of political theology.”1266

Meier repeats his conclusion from the previous chapter when he makes a distinction between the quarrel over the question “How should I live” “concerns man wholly” (i.e., from the perspectives of both political philosophy and political theology) but that the notion that “man is wholly grasped in political participation,

1265 III.8.6-14 (122-3/76-7).
1266 III.9.2 (123/76). Note that here Meier is speaking neither about Schmitt’s political theology, nor about theology as such.
in political action... is tied to the assumption of a complete identification or an irresistible authority” (an assumption made by political theology but not political philosophy).\textsuperscript{1267} To be “grasped wholly,” what is needed is either “love” or “obedience,” or rather, the kind of obedience that is love, i.e., “full obedience” in the “intensive” sense.\textsuperscript{1268} For the believer capable of such obedience, not “the death that another can inflict on him,” but the displeasure of or eternal separation from his God, the object of his “self-forgetting devotion to the eternally beautiful” would be “the greatest evil...”\textsuperscript{1269} In this way Schmitt “distances himself” from Hobbes already in 1933.\textsuperscript{1270} Meier adds, as if parenthetically, that one need not be a political theologian to disagree with the Hobbesian “opinion that violent death represents the greatest evil for man,” and cites “the example alone of the friend Socrates which Plato relayed” as evidence for this.\textsuperscript{1271} In this way, Meier not only underlines the possibility of agreement between political philosophy and political theology concerning their mutual opposition to the liberal worldview, he also takes the opportunity to sharpen the image of the philosopher, and specifically, as one who regards the as greatest evil that of being “foolish” (αφρονεί) and not that of death, since “no one knows whether death be not even the greatest of all blessings to man, but they fear it as if they knew that it is the greatest of evils.”\textsuperscript{1272} Socrates knows

\textsuperscript{1267} III.9.4-5 (123/76).
\textsuperscript{1268} III.9.6 (123/76) & TPP, II.11.1 ff. (63/38 ff.).
\textsuperscript{1269} III.9.14 (124/77) & TPP, II.11.4 (64/38).
\textsuperscript{1270} III.9.10 (124/76).
\textsuperscript{1271} III.9.15 (124/77).
\textsuperscript{1272} Plato, Crito 44d & Apology 29a-b (Fowler trans. pgs. 157 & 107).
both that it would be better to know whether death were a good or an evil for man, and that he does not possess this knowledge.

In the next paragraph, a puzzle arises: “Schmitt’s orientation toward the exceptional case [Ausnahmefall] allows him to know that the political is the total without therefore having to deny the total claim of the theological.” But this orientation leaves out all of what is normally the case: “In the usual course of things... the theological and the political do not coincide.” It need hardly be said that the rarity of the exceptional case in no way mitigates its ability to serve as the authoritative standard of the political. But nevertheless, the majority – almost the entirety – of theological concerns need have no direct political relevance and likewise with most political concerns: that the theological and the political coincide in the exceptional case implies that they do not coincide (or coincide only accidentally) in all other cases. However, Meier argues, even in all of these other cases, what essentially matters for Schmitt is theological, not simply political: “The theological is ubiquitous, the political can be. The theological is the total tout court, the political conditionally.” But – and this is the puzzle – how can the theological, which is the total, be political, if the political is not always the total? The answer, it seems, has to do with Schmitt’s concept-formation: the exceptional case ensures that the theological is political (i.e., in the extreme case, and therefore as such) without signifying that the theological is always or only political. “The political as it

\[1273\] III.10.4 (124/77).
\[1274\] III.10.7 (125/77).
\[1275\] III.10.11-12 (125/77-8).
is usually understood,” i.e., the usual course of political actions and events, which are not as such theological, “stands for something that it itself is not, but that it emphatically calls to mind,” i.e., the extreme case, in which the political and the theological coincide. Here the theological is an “Other,” though “not the 'Wholly Other’” of, for instance, Karl Barth’s dialectical theology, “because in the case that decides everything the Other erupts, appears, and exists in real presence in the political.” The fundamental precedence of the theological to the political is ensured by this formulation: it, the theological, “always already and eternally” “lays claim to man” in a way that the political can, but by no means always does. And yet: one wonders whether the way the theological lays claim to man, i.e., in terms of a claim regarding obedience or disobedience to sovereign authority, is not itself always already political. Perhaps the best we can say is that the theological is always political, but the political – in the “usual sense” of the life-and-death battle – is not always theological, or that friends and enemies are not always rightly discerned.

III.11-III.14: Schmitt’s Confession of Faith

The next section leads into the heart of the chapter, which likewise is the thematic center of the book. It begins with a reiteration of the notion of “the

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1276 III.10.15 (125/78).
1277 III.10.16 (126/78).
1278 III.10.17 (126/78).
‘fundamental theological dogma of the sinfulness of the world and of men’” and ends with an italicized and unattributed quotation from Paul: “For whatsoever is not of faith is of sin.” Meier explains the dogma of sinfulness in terms of the failure of “the world” to fulfill God’s demand for unconditional obedience. More recently, in the context of an explanation of Strauss’s book on Machiavelli, Meier writes, in regard to an similary “unfulfillable” commandment:

the philosopher knows how to explain what for the obedience of faith remains an article of faith that is based on a deeply unsettling mystery: that and why man must be disobedient to the commandment of the Biblical God. “The Biblical command cannot be fulfilled: all men are sinners; the universality of this proposition proves that all men are necessarily sinners; this necessity must derive from a disproportion between the command and man’s nature or original constitution.”

From the perspective of philosophy, commandments are “unfulfillable” because they contradict man’s nature. God’s desire for unconditional obedience, like that of moral man for unconditional security, is impossible, and both for the same reason. And only the God of revelation, the God who by his own “nature” demands obedience, can embody such an impossible desire theologically: the doctrine of original sin “is not the fundamental dogma of every theology, but rather of those grounded in revelation and those treating a God who demands obedience.” The fundamental character of such a God is analogous to that of those faithful to him: grounded in will, in the desire for omnipotence, and motivated by the fear of non-being and

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1279 III.11.1 (126/78).
1280 Romans 14:23.
1281 III.11.2 (126/78).
1282 PPHO, II.8.20-21 (82-3).
1283 III.11.3 (126/78).
resentment of those who imagine they can know the world by their own means. The
dualism of commander and obeyer is, as in Nietzsche, a “stick with two ends,” and
the question *quid sit deus?* is equipollent to the question “What is man?”

Nevertheless, from the perspective of political theology, the Creator retains
an absolute priority over the creature: “the concern is therefore *first of all* God and
*then* man.”1284 Thus in Schmitt’s “anthropology,” the concern is not whether man is
“by nature” good or evil, but whether man obeys or disobeys God. Meier reads
Schmitt’s emphasis on the “anthropological” understanding of “evil” man as
“dangerous” as a rhetorical tactic aimed at those who do not already admit the
precedence of God to man, or of the theological to the political. Part and parcel of
this rhetoric is Schmitt’s claim that what is decisive is whether “‘man *is held to be* a
problematic or an unproblematic being,’”1285 that is, the implication that both
positions are nothing more than *suppositions* and are not – as they in fact are for
Schmitt – based on a truth of faith or else on a heresy. In the same way that Schmitt
appears to concede that the political might be under threat of annihilation by human
means1286 – a possibility that he cannot, as a believer, imagine to be serious –
Schmitt here appears to concede the possibility that man’s “being evil” is based on a
more-or-less plausible anthropological supposition, one that could be, for instance,
confirmed or undermined via fieldwork or ethnography. Nothing could be further
from Schmitt’s own view. Neither can the position that man is by nature good

1284 III.11.5 (126/78).
1285 III.11.16 (127/79).
constitute the basis of any *genuine* political theory,\textsuperscript{1287} nor does man’s “dangerousness” in the sense of the dangerousness of an “innocent animal” suffice for Schmitt’s political theology. Instead, the theological determination of man’s essentially evil character – i.e., of man’s inability or unwillingness to obey God’s *will*, and thus man’s status as an “adversary” – is “translated” into anthropological language so that

Schmitt can be certain of finding the broadest approval for the alternative “by nature evil.” For who would think of denying that man *is* a problematic, dangerous, risky being?\textsuperscript{1288}

Because Schmitt is not only on the defensive with his political theology, but is also enjoined by it to disseminate the good news of the Gospel as far as he is capable of doing so,\textsuperscript{1289} he tailors his rhetoric to be “immediately plausible to common sense”\textsuperscript{1290} and thus convincing even to unbelievers. By thus opting for the “lowest common denominator,” Schmitt aims to win as many “allies against liberalism and anarchism” as possible “in the political battle…”\textsuperscript{1291} He unobtrusively introduces the theological notion of original sin apparently only to indicate its agreement with every *genuine* political theory, without disclosing that from the point of view of his political theology it is the dogma that is ultimately decisive, and its “anthropological” translations that are essentially ornamental. At this point, Meier gives an essential characterization of the political theologian, who “only becomes a political theologian

\textsuperscript{1287} Cf. III.11.30 (129/80).
\textsuperscript{1288} III.11.21-22 (128/79).
\textsuperscript{1289} Cf. IV.35.7 (251/166).
\textsuperscript{1290} III.11.33 (129/80).
\textsuperscript{1291} III.11.34 (129/80).
once he discerns the connection between both distinctions,” i.e., those of “redeemed and unredeemed” and “friend and enemy,” “and establishes the bond between the political and the theological ‘line of thought’ himself, elaborates it theoretically, and develops it practically.”1292 That means: the political theologian dwells on and in the relationship between friends of God and enemies of God, those who will be rewarded infinitely and those who will be punished eternally. This forms his proper subject-matter. All talk of the “autonomy of the political” is then only a rhetorical means by which friends may be won for God and by which the political theologian himself seeks to ensure his own status as a friend of God. In the battle for the right order of Creator and creature, of commander and obeyer, the political theologian “confronts us with an apodictic Either-Or: faith or disorder.”1293

The next two paragraphs (III.12-13) attempt to show what the right order between Creator and creature amounts to by reference to the theologian Friedrich Gogarten, and contain the book’s first mentions of the crucial concepts of “being-good” [Gutsein] and “being-evil” [Bösesein]. The begin with a stark assertion in the negative regarding Schmitt’s supposed “supposition”: “What is in question in the ‘anthropological confession of faith’ in Der Begriff des Politischen is not a more or less plausible supposition regarding ‘anthropology.’”1294 Instead, what is in question is “the defense of the center of the theology of revelation,” i.e., it is for Schmitt “the

1292 III.11.42-43 (130/81).
1293 III.11.47 (131/81).
1294 III.12.1 (131/81). The word for “confession of faith” is “Glaubensbekenntnis”; the same word translates Rousseau’s “Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar” into German [“Glaubensbekenntnis des savoyischen Vikars”].
truth of his confession of faith.”¹²⁹⁵ We have already distinguished between truth and truthfulness; here we only note that the “truth” of a confession of faith could just as well refer to either – i.e., to the question of whether the believer truly believes as to the question of whether he believes the truth.¹²⁹⁶ Both are important for Schmitt, though Meier will conclude that only the former is really in play for his thought; the latter is simply presupposed or taken on faith, precisely as a truth of faith. This truth depends entirely on God’s sovereignty, which according to Meier is “the point in which the three distinctions between redeemed and unredeemed, chosen and unchosen, friend and enemy converge.”¹²⁹⁷ In this sense, “sovereignty” means just as well “unfathomability” in the sense of constituting the “ultimate determinative ground [Bestimmungsgrund]”¹²⁹⁸ of the aforementioned distinctions, without the possibility of appeal to a higher order or instance, particularly that of reason. To “disregard” God’s sovereignty means to disobey God’s commandment: “This ‘disregard’ [‘Absehen’] is exactly the target of Schmitt’s critique.”¹²⁹⁹ Moreover, since in this understanding reason is subordinate to faith, is faith’s handmaiden, the disregard of God’s sovereignty from the beginning closes off access to “the meaning of the doctrine of original sin and of grace...”¹³⁰⁰ Just as in the case of the “community of faith,” here too the stranger to the truth of faith is denied even “the mere

¹²⁹⁵ III.12.5-6 (131/81-2).
¹²⁹⁶ TPP, I.17.12 (36/19): “Everything depends for him on his believing truly and his believing the truth.”
¹²⁹⁷ III.12.10 (132/82).
¹²⁹⁸ III.12.11 (132/82).
¹²⁹⁹ III.12.13 (132/82).
¹³⁰⁰ III.12.12 (132/82).
possibility of rightly knowing and understanding\textsuperscript{1301} the articles of faith on which Schmitt’s confession depends.

Schmitt relation to Gogarten now comes to the fore, and in particular Schmitt’s agreement with – and possible dependence on – a lecture “published under the title ‘Secularized Theology in the Theory of the State’” (1933) which “explicitly mentions Schmitt’s \textit{Politische Theologie} and to which Schmitt himself refers several months later in his ‘Preliminary Remark to the Second Edition’ of that treatise…”\textsuperscript{1302} The agreement has to do with “the \textit{fundamental order of the world on which all other orders are based, namely, that of creator and creature}.”\textsuperscript{1303} This “fundamental order” of creator and creature, who are “distanced”\textsuperscript{1304} from each other via the act of creation itself, forms the basis of the agreement between Schmitt and Gogarten because it “strikes at the core of the cause [Sache]” that unites them.\textsuperscript{1305} Not \textit{Schmitt}’s political theology, but theology as such, must admit of and take into account this order of orders. Meier thus establishes that Schmitt was, at any rate, not misunderstood by all of his contemporaries,\textsuperscript{1306} and makes use of Gogarten’s discussion to clarify what Schmitt intends when he speaks “anthropologically” of man “by nature good” or “evil.” This discussion is of the utmost importance to Meier as a political philosopher, because it forms the basis of the clearing in which political theology and political philosophy for the first time

\textsuperscript{1301} II.22.18 (100/61).
\textsuperscript{1302} III.12.18-19 (133/83).
\textsuperscript{1303} III.12.18 (133/83).
\textsuperscript{1304} Cf. III.11.45 (130/81).
\textsuperscript{1305} III.12.19 (133/83).
\textsuperscript{1306} He makes a similar point at III.4.7 (114-5/69-70).
meet eye to eye. Man "by nature good" or "evil" is not meant in a specifically moral sense, at least within the "morally-religiously autonomous thinking" that dominates Gogarten’s – and our – present.\textsuperscript{1307} Gogarten does not have in mind a picture of man that does nice or mean things, and still less one of "innocent evil" à la Hobbes. Rather, by "being good" ["Gutsein"] he intends the notion of man's "self-authority" ["Selbstmächtigkeit"], i.e., of man able to follow his own reason in steering his own life.\textsuperscript{1308} On the other hand, man's being "by nature evil' precisely does not take the self-authority of man as its starting-point but, on the contrary, a power to which man is subject."\textsuperscript{1309} Being-good means: being able to follow one's own authority, or the authority of human reason. Being-evil means: having (without wanting) to follow the authority of another, higher, order. It is not, then, a matter of "good or bad" actions or even of "good or bad" intentions; rather, it is a matter of the goodness or badness of the human whole as such, of the ability or inability of man to know and pursue his own good via his own means. For political theologians, man is "by nature evil" not only because he requires divine guidance, but above all because he desires not to require such guidance – because he desires to be "good" and mistakes this desire for the truth about his condition. Man is evil because he

\textsuperscript{1307} III.12.22 (134/83). Cf. III.n39 (131/81-2) and III.n45 (135/84): This view of liberal morality goes a long way to supporting Meier's claim regarding Schmitt's reluctance to make himself understood in specifically moral terms, as he presumably feared the same kind of misunderstanding.

\textsuperscript{1308} III.12.26 (134/83). Compare I.5.14 (19/5).

\textsuperscript{1309} III.12.27 (134/84).
desires to know. On this ground, and in these terms, political theology is able to speak directly to political philosophy.\textsuperscript{1310}

From the perspective of faith in revelation, “the philosophical life” appears as “a persistent repetition and renewal of the Fall of Man”\textsuperscript{1311} and philosophers as such are united by their “fundamental agreement” that human “nature makes possible the philosophical life and therein reveals its being good [Gutsein].”\textsuperscript{1312} The philosophical life of questioning appears as the best life for man who does not know the positive nature of the whole; from the perspective of political theology, however, it appears as the quintessence of presumptuous disobedience. And despite this disagreement, the focus on the philosophical life allows political theology and political philosophy at least to agree on what is disagreed upon: for both, “philosophy itself appears to be the tree of the knowledge of good and evil”\textsuperscript{1313}; the disagreement arises concerning whether it is or is not an act of disobedience for man to eat of this tree.

The next paragraph (III.14) is the central paragraph of the book if the first chapter is counted as having seventeen paragraphs. It itself consists of 26 sentences.

\textsuperscript{1310} It is at first curious that in this account “being good” corresponds rather with “self-authority” than with the “simple, non-contradictory, childlike-obedient bondage to a power in the face of which [man] is himself” (III.12.36, p. 135/84). This curiousness is dispelled, however, when one considers that for Gogarten, and for political theology in general, man’s “total person, his total being as a person... is always already evil. It is always already caught up in rebellion” against God’s sovereignty because it cannot escape “the knowledge of good and evil...” (III.12.34-36, p. 135/84). Thus the “childlike-obedient” state is impossible for man as man.

\textsuperscript{1311} III.13.6 (135/85).

\textsuperscript{1312} III.13.7 (136/85).

\textsuperscript{1313} III.13.12 (137/86).
Its central dyad (III.14.13-14) contains both “the question which is co-original with philosophy and for the sake of which philosophy must become political philosophy: *quid sit deus?*” and the “biblical God,” who “reveals himself to whomever he wants, whenever he wants, wherever he wants, and however he wants.” It also contains a reiteration of the fundamental determinations of the central paragraph of the first chapter (I.9) – i.e., certainty, security, and validity – and the completion of that paragraph’s uncited, italicized, English quotation of Strauss: “*Moral man as such is the potential believer.*” By these indices alone, the present paragraph must be considered of the first importance for any adequate interpretation of *Die Lehre Carl Schmitts*. To this, however, we may add the reference to Rousseau that opens the paragraph (following the uncited quotation from Genesis 2:16-17) and foreshadows the “Genevan philosopher”’s central place in testifying against the Biblical “Golden Rule” with his “*maxime de bonté naturelle.*” Here Meier cites Rousseau’s appraisal of the Biblical interdiction against eating from the tree of the knowledge of garden of evil: he “saw the ‘reason’ of this commandment in the intention to ‘give human actions a morality from the start which they would not have acquired for a long time.’” Meier gives several references to his earlier edition of Rousseau’s Second Discourse, but somewhat curiously omits his own interpretation of the just-quoted passage. It reads:

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1315 III.14.5-6 (137-8/86); cf. I.9.5-7 (26-7/11).
1316 In III.20.32 ff. (153/97 ff.). In the same place, Meier refers to Rousseau as “Schmitt’s true antipode in the chapter on ‘anthropology’…” (III.20.35, p. 154/98).
1317 III.14.2 (137/86).
With this interpretation of the Genesis-account, Rousseau formulates the Judeo-Christian tradition’s theological alternative to the philosophical presentation of the *Discourse*, which disregards all “supernatural knowledge”: For according to it, human actions were from the beginning in no way of an intrinsic morality, but rather were able to acquire it only after an “immense span of time.”

Not only does this note indicate Meier’s early concern with the “fundamental opposition” of philosophy and revelation, it also locates the philosophical attitude in the “disregard” of “all ‘supernatural’” i.e., revealed, “’knowledge.” This is the same “disregard” [“Absehen”] that is now said to be “exactly the target of Schmitt’s attack.” The note also illustrates the nonmoral character of the nature of man viewed from the philosophical perspective: revelation gives man’s actions a moral character that they do not have on their own in the beginning. Thus although philosophy views man’s “being-good” as part and parcel of his nature, it has in mind “not some diffuse ‘faith’ in ‘natural goodness,’” but rather “the preservation of his fundamental independence...” Such “being-good” is separated above all from the “being-evil” attributed to man by Gogarten.

The second half of the paragraph segues into the next section on the God of revelation. From the beginning, several determinations stand out. Besides the already-cited reference to “whomever,” “whenever,” wherever,” and “however he wants,” that God is identified with “his action,” “his will,” and “the purposes his

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1319 III.12.13 (132/82).
1320 III.20.37 (154/98).
judgment determines.”1321 Everything takes place in a personalistic, moral-political register, to which the “question of philosophy” is an affront and an act of disobedience grounded in “rebellion, rejection, [and] hubris.”1322 Meier names the two foremost theologians of the Reformation – rather than any Catholic theologians – in identifying philosophy, from the position of faith in revelation, as “an act of presumptuous curiosity” or as “the beginning of a path at the end of which stands the forlornness of nothingness.”1323 One cannot but be struck by the dualism of the reactions to philosophy here: we have already seen that the political theologian Schmitt is comprehensible against the backdrop of a Calvinism that places knowledge in the service of obedience and sees obedience at the source of all right knowledge. The reference to Luther appears to be different. Not presumption, not hubris or rebellion is the source of the aversion to philosophy, but rather fear that the path of philosophy leads inevitably to nothingness. Nevertheless, the two are strictly related: philosophy ends in nothingness because fearful obedience precedes knowledge; thus the philosopher who as such is disobedient can have no knowledge of God and ends in a nothingness that the believer’s faith allows him to avoid. On one hand, Luther’s fear has its basis in Calvin’s primacy of moral action; but on the other, the basis of Calvin’s notion of primacy can itself be understood as Luther’s fear of despair. In Schmitt’s own fear as well, i.e., in the fear that “the decision born of the obedience of faith cannot, in the end, be distinguished from the decision that

1322 III.14.16 (138-9/87).
bases one’s commitment on nothing.”¹³²⁴ lurks the fear of Luther, the fear of a despair that must, at all costs, be avoided. And the premise of such fear connects Schmitt with the Savoyard Vicar, who “believes that the search for truth leads to no knowledge that is able to answer the question of the right life and to establish a coherent way of life” and indeed that “unbelief is unbearable simply, and therefore must necessarily be destroyed or given up.”¹³²⁵ For “moral man,” ending in incredulity, and therefore in despair, is reason enough to reject the philosophical life. The philosopher might even agree that philosophy ends in incredulity; but this moral objection carries no theoretical weight with him; indeed, he is apt to see revelation as the greater nihilism, because it cannot, and does not want to, know the truth regarding nature, and in particular regarding human nature, since it regards this truth from the beginning as evil, as something to be feared. Nor is this position of revelation any different between Christian and Jew, for as Strauss writes to Scholem, “you confirm my diagnosis of you by using ‘philosophic’ and ‘nihilistic’ synonymously: what you call nihil, the falâsifa call physis. Period.”¹³²⁶

At the end of this section, Meier unobtrusively sets up the subsequent discussion: “the obedience of faith seems to be permitted to hope for everything.”¹³²⁷ Elsewhere he succinctly elaborates what he intends here:

The life of faith in revelation would find its true coherence and its ultimate security therefore in the credo quia absurdum, in a faith for

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¹³²⁴ CS, LS & Bdp, VII.3.15 (89/80).
¹³²⁵ ÜdGpL, II.12.30 (315-6) & ibid. II.12.22 (315).
¹³²⁶ Strauss, letter to Scholem from 11.22.60, in GS3, p. 743 (English in original).
¹³²⁷ III.14.19 (140/87-8).
which everything appears possible because it knows nothing to be necessary.\textsuperscript{1328}

In the present context, the “most famous... phrase penned by Tertullian” (i.e., \textit{credo quia absur}dum) never appears explicitly, though it is gestured at in a note otherwise concerned with Pascal.\textsuperscript{1329} Nevertheless, it silently underlines the whole discussion and constitutes the quintessence of what Meier intends by “political theology.” It is the \textit{signum} of the precedence of faith to human reason, faith which “promises effective protection from the danger of nihilism”\textsuperscript{1330} entailed by the reversal of this precedence. The \textit{event} of revelation, the breaking-through of the divine into the mundane, the rupturing of “natural necessity” by the free will of the Creator of the whole, is also the moment of radical absurdity that must either be taken on faith or else disobeyed. It is the “extreme point” of orientation that, covertly or overtly, colors the normal order of things. It is not an “idea,” but an “historical event,”\textsuperscript{1331} one that, for the unbeliever, matters only in terms of its formal status \textit{as} an event, but for the believer cannot be dissociated from its concrete content. What looks to the philosopher like a “class” of events – the “‘incarnation in the virgin,’” the receipt of the Decalogue by Moses, the appearance of the angel Jibreel to Muhammed – appears to the believer as a, as \textit{the} “‘historical event of infinite, unpossessable, unoccupiable uniqueness,’”\textsuperscript{1332} set blasphemously alongside a set of pseudo-events that cannot possibly give rise to the One True Faith. We may add that Plato evidently

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1328} \textit{TPP}, I.17.17 (36/20).
\item \textsuperscript{1329} I.e., III.19.n72 (148/93).
\item \textsuperscript{1330} III.14.21 (140/88).
\item \textsuperscript{1331} Cf. III.14.n56 (141/88).
\item \textsuperscript{1332} III.14.23 (140/88).
\end{itemize}
took both sides seriously when he, at the same time, prevents his Athenian Stranger from raising “a single question about the ancient tyrant’s” (i.e., about Minos’) “virtue or his claim to have talked with Zeus”\textsuperscript{1333} and sets up a dialogue in which the Stranger appears in the role of the deity.

III.15-III.20: The God of Revelation

The following section is, thematically, the central section of the book. It has as its aim and object the explication of the nature of the God of revelation. Beyond every determination or attribute of that God, two characteristics stand out above all: omnipotence and unfathomability. The believer’s demand for absolute security and validity depends on “the certainty of the faith that nothing is impossible for God.”\textsuperscript{1334}

The impossibility of faith’s being certain is met and contested by the necessity that God be God: \textit{credo quia absurdum}, “[f]or only the incomprehensible God is omnipotent.”\textsuperscript{1335} Human reason cannot give access to the essence of things, just as the political “stands for something that it itself is not, but that it emphatically calls to mind.”\textsuperscript{1336} God is – must be – the \textit{other}, must be infinitely superior to his creation, even if he cannot be “wholly other.”\textsuperscript{1337} God’s ineradicable otherness renders him \textit{political}: for it is the \textit{otherness} of the enemy that enables him to signify “the negation

\textsuperscript{1334} III.15.3 (141/88).
\textsuperscript{1335} III.15.5 (141/89).
\textsuperscript{1336} III.10.15 (125/78).
\textsuperscript{1337} Cf. III.15.4 (141/89) & III.10.16 (126/78).
of one’s own kind of existence...”\textsuperscript{1338} God the Father, the God of the Jews, or his retrospective echo, thus emerges as a figure of profound ambivalence: He is at once the guarantor of the seriousness of life and of salvation and the source of every evil, every possibility of eternal damnation and despair for man’s soul. This ambiguity is dispelled only by the total abrogation of any human ability to tell right from wrong or good from evil, i.e., by the postulate of the unfathomability of the divine will. For God to be both omnipotent and utterly good, he must be unfathomable, because bad things appear to happen to good people. Yet this “unfathomable” God is nevertheless comprehensible from the point of view of philosophy precisely in terms of this conceptual necessity. Man \textit{wants} God to be God, i.e., to be both omnipotent and utterly good, and so posits God’s unfathomability as an answer to these two manifestly contradictory attributes. Once unfathomability is postulated, however, “contradictoriness” no longer matters: \textit{credo quia absurdum} – the truths of faith are not available to merely human reason. According to Meier, “[t]he political theologian is conscious of the inseparable connection between omnipotence and unfathomability...”\textsuperscript{1339} Thus every pretense to “reason” in political theology is strictly provisional and exoteric. “Reason” no longer – even for God – constitutes an essential element of the whole, because reason is impossible (from the philosophical perspective) if God is omnipotent: for reason to be possible, knowledge must be possible, and for knowledge to be possible, necessity must exist, yet necessity cannot exist if for God “all things are possible.” The believer might call the human

\textsuperscript{1338} II.23.18 (104/64).
\textsuperscript{1339} III.15.10 (142/89).
endeavor to understand the “normal course” of “natural” events, i.e., the course of
events into which God chooses not to intervene, “reason” or “knowledge,” but they
are not reason or knowledge in the strict sense since God *always can* intervene
between every cause and every effect, and, moreover, since the believer as a
believer is and must be oriented essentially toward this very possibility.

If man is free, then God is not omnipotent. According to this premise, Schmitt
takes a stand against Augustine and for his own political theology. For Schmitt,
thought is not to be understood in terms of “merely normative morals” or the
“viewpoint of the freedom of choice.” He takes a stand likewise against the
Church Father Irenaeus, who claims that:

Men are possessed of a free will, and endowed with the faculty of
making a choice; it is not true, therefore, that some are by nature good
and others bad.

For Schmitt, man as such is radically evil and in need of guidance from God. He
employs his political theology as a *weapon* in intra-theological quarrels against both
counters like Peterson and forebears like Augustine and Irenaeus. With
the postulate of man’s freedom, theologians had sought to protect the notion of
God’s goodness; i.e., they had saved God’s goodness at the price of his omnipotence.
Schmitt, following Paul, opts to save *both* God’s omnipotence and his goodness by
means of the postulate of his unfathomability. But as we have seen, this has the
effect of rendering human reason and knowledge radically uncertain and impotent.

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1340 III.15.15 (142-3/90).
1341 III.15.n61 (143/90).
This means that the believer can never be sure he is obeying the commandment of the sovereign authority, which is particularly relevant in Schmitt’s case with regard to the identification of the true or providential enemy. More specifically, it concerns whether Schmitt as a believer truly believes and thus whether his identification of the enemy is made in the appropriate attitude of humility. If it is made in such an attitude, the believer cannot be certain of his salvation, and thus his ultimate desire of security is not guaranteed. But if the God who promises him salvation also equally threatens him with eternal punishment, how can he approach this God in an attitude of love and reverence? Must he not split his God into the twin imagos of the fearsome, terrible Father who threatens judgment and the loveable, generous Son who secures salvation? And if the Father must be set against the Son in this way, must not the unfathomable character of their “unity” carry the whole burden? “But what must be presupposed in this case?” 1343

Meier makes reference to “what, with Paul, is called the glory [Herrlichkeit], gloria, doxa of God.” 1344 For classical political philosophy, doxa is not so much “glory” as “opinion,” the starting point of philosophic questioning that aims at knowledge or truth. 1345 The implicit equation of “opinion” with “glory” or sovereign “rule” suggests a proximity between the God of revelation and the realm of appearances, of seeming, of the cave. As we have already seen, if God is omnipotent then knowledge as knowledge of necessity is impossible. Thus if the God of

1343 III.17.6 (145/92).
1344 III.16.15 (145/91).
1345 Cf., e.g., Strauss, WiPP?, pgs. 92 & 167.
revelation exists, his rule guarantees the omnipresence of opinion and the impossibility of knowledge. Such a God “for whom everything is possible” is nonetheless not capable of knowing unless he relinquishes his omnipotence: thus from the perspective of philosophy one sees two mutually contradictory orders – that of knowledge and that of power. Only if a modicum of power is relinquished by the God of revelation is knowledge in any sense possible. But if he were so to relinquish, he would not be what he is, would not be “I am that I am” or “I shall be what I shall be.” God’s glory (qua absolute sovereignty) demands God’s ignorance. The God for whom everything is possible is himself impossible. Once again the sole recourse is to unfathomability.

The crux of the matter is laid out in the next paragraph (III.18). Meier identifies Schmitt with the Church Father Tertullian, and specifically with the latter’s dictum: “We are obliged to something not because it is good but because God commands it”; according to Meier, this dictum “accompanies Schmitt through all the turns and vicissitudes of his long life.” It also “calls to mind the no less famous question: does God want the good because it is good or is the good good because God wants it?” The question in its classical form is posed by Socrates to Euthyphro in the Euthyphro: “Is that which is holy [ooiovo] loved by the gods because it is holy, or is it holy because it is loved by the gods?” There, the two

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1346 III.17.n67 (145/92).
1347 III.18.2 (146/92).
1348 III.18.4 (146/92).
1349 Plato, Euthyphro, 10a (Fowler trans. p. 35). We cannot delve into the extensive literature on the so-called “Euthyphro Dilemma” here, but to see the contours of the
interlocutors decide on the first alternative, leading to the result that “that which is dear to the gods and that which is holy are not identical, but differ one from the other.”\(^{1350}\) Here, Schmitt is understood to opt for the second alternative: for him, “God’s will may be neither limited by the order of nature, nor ‘compelled with the aid of logical rigor’...”\(^{1351}\) Schmitt thus sides with Protestant theologians like Luther and Calvin and against philosophers from Socrates to Leibniz. Strauss sets out what is at stake from the philosophical point of view as follows:

> If that rule [i.e., the rules of justice] were subject to God, or dependent on God, or made by God, if it could be changed by God, it could no longer serve as a standard. God must be thought to be subject to a necessity, an intelligible necessity, which he did not make. If we deny this, if we assume that God is above intelligible necessity, or not bound by intelligible necessity, he cannot know in the strict sense, for knowledge is knowledge of the intelligible and unalterable necessity.\(^{1352}\)

The relationship between the relative priority of God and the good or the just bears directly on the question of knowledge: if God is not subject to any standard of goodness, of the good-in-itself or as such or of the idea of the good, then the good has no nature or essence and thus cannot be known. If God is subject to no intelligible necessity, then knowledge cannot be. Will would then be above reason.

> But that means, since will is above reason, prior to when reason had its say, it cannot be will, rational desire, it can only be desire. It is

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\(^{1350}\) Plato, *Euthyphro*, 10e (Fowler trans. p. 39).

\(^{1351}\) III.18.6 (147/93).

essential to this view that these gods, however modest he may be, these gods are desire incarnate.\textsuperscript{1353}

Will that is not led by reason is led by desire, is essentially desire. Thus the reduction of will to desire occurs again on the theological level: what appears initially as an inscrutable, free, sovereign commandment is revealed to be appetite, blinkered, and slavish. The \textit{desire} to stand above intelligible necessity is itself explicable in terms of intelligible necessity -- as arising precisely, as was the case with \textit{thumos} before, “from a sense of one’s threatened particularity.”\textsuperscript{1354} The First Commandment is: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”\textsuperscript{1355}

If God is above intelligible necessity, then justice is \textit{conventional}, and we find ourselves in a state of affairs similar to that described by Thrasymachus in the \textit{Republic}: “That is just, he says, which suits or pleases the most powerful.”\textsuperscript{1356} There is no independent standard, no measure, by which the most powerful can be judged, for the most powerful \textit{is} the measure. One observes here the latent proximity between absolutist theologies like those of Calvin and Luther and the “postmodern” relativism that holds truth to be nothing but the coercive play of power-relations. Both emphasize the lack of a stable, intelligible standard, and both conceive of truth and knowledge as secondary to power. In this way Meier aligns Schmitt with both the “broad stream of postmodernity revolv[ing] around the ‘\textit{Ereignis}’”\textsuperscript{1357} and

\textsuperscript{1353} Strauss, “Seminar on the Gorgias,” p. 90.
\textsuperscript{1354} Pangle, “Interpretive Essay,” p. 454.
\textsuperscript{1355} Exodus 20:3 (KJV).
\textsuperscript{1357} \textit{Pdf}, 10.12 (170).
“Tertullian, with whom Schmitt has so much in common,” while at the same time leveling a tacit critique of the former by means of association with the latter. For both, knowledge is abandoned for the sake of certainty, and certainty is sought and attained via faith. Ignorance is to be preferred to knowledge, since, “it is better to be ignorant through God because he has not revealed than to know through man because he has presumed.” According to Hans Blumenberg – whom Meier cites in this connection –

The value of truth, for Tertullian, is formal, not material: Not that one may expect accurate objective statements only from God – but only what one receives from God is the obligatory and beneficial truth for man, and it is so only because one receives it from Him. Hence Socrates’ daimonion could not convey any truth, no matter what it said, because its essence was praesumptio, not revelatio… What it is necessary for man to know is shown to him only by its source; all “knowledge” consists in knowing what one does not need to know and should not strive after.

The source of truth is God, and “the truth is God’s property”; but such “truth” is not truth, and it obligates man, “[n]ot in the way that knowledge which is binding for all who have acquired it puts an end to arbitrariness,” but rather “in such a way that the revealed or transmitted commandment confronts one with the decision between obedience and disobedience.” In this view, truth loses its relation to the world: it is no longer verifiable by means of observation, but instead must be taken on faith in

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1358 III.19.4 (148/93).
1359 III.19.1-3 (147-8/93).
1360 III.19.4 (148/94).
1361 Blumenberg, The Legitimacy of the Modern Age, p. 303 (translation slightly modified).
1362 Ibid.
1363 III.19.5-6 (148/94).
hearsay or the transmission of a tradition. What makes it truth is its source: “the authority of Him who commands is prior to the utility of him who serves.”\footnote{III.18.n68 (146/92).}

All this contrasts in the strongest way possible with philosophy and the philosophic life. Meier again reveals his own position in the “old opposition”\footnote{III.19.13 (149/94).} of theology and philosophy when he claims that “no historical event [Ereignis] is able to annul the order of things, nor would any more successful historical accommodation be in a position to abolish a principal opposition.”\footnote{III.20.3 (150/95).} From the point of view of Schmitt’s political theology, however, the event of the Incarnation in the Virgin does “annul the order of things” in the sense that God becomes man and in so doing bridges the essential “separation” between Creator and creature. Even the most foundational theological tenet, the order of Creator and creature, can be abolished by the omnipotent will of the God of revelation. Nothing of necessity remains, not even – or especially not – what the philosophers call “knowledge” and which is merely illusion based on presumption. Human guidance of human live is impossible: disobedience to God means obedience to the adversary. Thus the “fundamental opposition” between the philosophic life and the life of the obedience of faith emerges as clearly in Schmitt’s thought as in Tertullian’s. This opposition is not “epochally bound” or “merely directed against modern philosophy.”\footnote{III.20.15 (152/96).} On the contrary, “[t]here is even less room in Schmitt’s thought for Socrates than for
Nietzsche."\textsuperscript{1368} One can only presume that the basis of the difference alluded to here is the “moral” quality of modern philosophy as such.\textsuperscript{1369} Be that as it may, Meier emphasizes that Schmitt does not open himself to, nor “let himself get involved in a confrontation with their own claims to truth”\textsuperscript{1370} but rather protects himself and the center of his thought (i.e., his faith) to the best of his ability. He attacks Nietzsche and Spinoza directly in his \textit{Glossarium}, and treats Rousseau with deliberate silence in “the chapter on ‘anthropology’ in \textit{Der Begriff des Politischen}.”\textsuperscript{1371} In each case, he avoids taking the truth-claim of philosophy seriously, because to do so would threatened the certainty of his own faith. For this reason Meier contends that “one will not be able to deny that Schmitt has a good sense of who his enemies are. Even when he does not really know them.”\textsuperscript{1372}

The case of Rousseau is of special interest to Meier, not only because his first published work was a critical edition of Rousseau’s Second Discourse. He opposes Rousseau to Schmitt as “the philosopher with whom, more than any other, the notion of man’s being naturally good [natürlichen Gutsein] is linked.”\textsuperscript{1373} Rousseau’s conception of “natural goodness,” however, does not rest on “some diffuse ‘faith’” but rather “is the true counterconcept [wahren Gegenbegriff] and firm point of resistance [festen Widerhalt] to the ‘fundamental theological dogma of the

\textsuperscript{1368} III.20.16 (152/96).
\textsuperscript{1369} Cf. \textit{TPP}, I.16.10 (34/18).
\textsuperscript{1370} III.20.19 (152/96).
\textsuperscript{1371} III.20.32 (153/97).
\textsuperscript{1372} III.20.45 (155/99).
\textsuperscript{1373} III.20.31 (153/97).
This conception, called by Rousseau the "maxime de bonté naturelle" or "principle of natural goodness" says: "Do your good [Sorge für dein Wohl] with the least possible harm to others." Meier contrasts this Rousseauian notion with the Biblical principle "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," which Rousseau called "cette maxime sublime de justice raisonnée" ["this sublime maxim of reasoned justice"]. In this opposition, goodness stands against justice, just as nature stands against reason. As in the case of Gogarten, "being good" here does not mean doing or intending to do this or that good thing, or even good things in general: it indicates a disposition capable of identifying and following its own good apart from the vicissitudes of amour-propre. It arises from the insight that one's own good does not depend essentially on others, or that,

What allows man to be good is the preservation of his fundamental independence, the realization of his being himself in a self-centered whole [Beisichselbstsein], which his nature in principle permits him to achieve.

The idea of "being oneself in a self-centered whole" [Beisichselbstsein] is a complex and difficult one that will recur in many of Meier's subsequent texts. Here we can do little more than to note the term's provenance – it appears to originate in Hegel's Lectures on the Philosophy of World History – and, in its opposition to

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1374 III.20.38 (154/98).
1375 III.20.42 (155/98); III.20.29 (153/97); & III.20.41 (155/98).
1376 III.20.42 (155/98).
1377 III.20.37 (154/98).
1378 Cf., inter alia, Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of World History, p. 48: "Spirit, on the other hand, is such that its centre is within itself; it too strives towards its
Außersichseins or amour-propre, its apparent proximity to Rousseau’s “amour de soi-même or “self-love.” Contrary to Schmitt, who relies on a history of transmission or on hearsay for the sake of the truth that decides everything, the philosopher is capable of a kind of independence that likens him to the “savage” in Rousseau’s solitary state of nature. Of that pre-social, pre-moral being, Meier writes:

He is self-sufficient. [Er genügt sich selbst] His desires and his faculties balance the scales. He is just as distant from the spirit of dominion as he is from the spirit of servitude; the amour-propre, that sort of love for oneself that is transmitted through comparison to other living beings, “does not speak to his heart”; he knows no ressentiment... Hate and the demand for revenge, pride and superciliousness, jealousy and malevolence are foreign to him. His behavior is determined by the immediate amour de soi, the natural sentiment of self-love. Thus men in the state of nature can “do each other a great deal of mutual violence when they derive some advantage from it” (p. 370), without reciprocally corrupting one another and without forfeiting their fundamental independence, the being oneself in a self-centered whole [Beisichselbstsein], that lets them be good.

More recently, Meier has sharpened the concept and indicated more precisely the sense in which he employs it:

The Beisichselbstsein of the philosopher differs from the Beisichselbstsein that is accessible to the citizen via identification with the common self [moi commun] of the moral body [corps moral], whose inseparable member he understands himself to be. It differs likewise from the Beisichselbstsein that falls to the savage in the

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enclosedness of his natural horizon and the unity of his physical body [corps physiques].\textsuperscript{1381}

And regarding the question of whether Beisichselbstsein can “be differentiated into a ‘higher’ and a ‘lower,’ an inferior and a superior,”\textsuperscript{1382} Meier writes:

The Beisichselbstsein of the citizen is the most precarious since it, in itself, offers the least autarky and since the one thing needful for it is more to be wished for than to be found. It applies to the Beisichselbstsein of the citizen as well as to that of the savage that it is essentially supported, shaped, and safeguarded by external factors... A Beisichselbstsein that is established on ignorance cannot dispense with protection from necessity or from the help of him who understands, his farsightedness, his wisdom, his persuasiveness. In this respect, the Beisichselbstsein of the philosopher exposes itself to the comparison with other forms of Beisichselbstsein and as a Beisichselbstsein able to exist without any protection and without alien help, proves to be superior.\textsuperscript{1383}

This superiority is not to be understood as in any way invalidating the possibilities for being-within-oneself available to the savage or the citizen: the “deepening” permitted by the philosophic life does not “follow from contempt for other forms of Beisichselbstsein.”\textsuperscript{1384} Instead, we might find in it – and in the happiness it engenders – something of the Socratic-Platonic notion of purity, which, in opposition to the criterion of magnitude, is marked not by extension or intensity, but by the degree to which one can be deprived of something without feeling pain at its lack. In the Republic, the pleasures associated with smells are said to be of this kind:

“There are many others, too,” I [i.e., Socrates] said, “but, if you are willing to reflect on them, the pleasures of smells in particular. For

\textsuperscript{1381} ÜdGpL, I.4.19.7-8 (161); here I refrain from translating the term in question, which might be rendered literally as “being with oneself” or “being within oneself.”
\textsuperscript{1382} ÜdGpL, I.4.19.10 (162).
\textsuperscript{1383} ÜdGpL, I.4.20.6-7 (162) & I.4.20.10-11 (163).
\textsuperscript{1384} ÜdGpL, I.4.19.2 (161).
these, without previous pain, suddenly become extraordinarily great and, once having ceased, leave no pain behind.”


“Then, let’s not be persuaded that relief from pain is pure pleasure or that relief from pleasure is pure pain.”\textsuperscript{1385}

Let us recall that earlier we said that the position evidently refuted – that pleasure is merely the cessation of pains – is associated with the “dour,” whom we had reason to identify with Schmitt. Finally, on the topic of Beisichselbstsein, we again rely on Benardete:

“To be within oneself” is a Greek expression meaning to be sane... just as “to be outside oneself” is to be crazy or in a state of motion.\textsuperscript{1386}

The Beisichselbstsein of the political philosopher, then, may serve as a “firm point of resistance” against the “rolling” [κυλινδιοθαί]\textsuperscript{1387} of the political theologian, whose claims to know the truth concerning human nature can only be boasts, even and especially if the God he worships, the God of revelation, does in fact exist.

III.21-26: Schmitt’s Hobbes

In the first paragraph of the next section – the chapter’s last – Meier presents us with a fundamental breakdown, with, in fact, “the most fundamental taking of sides”\textsuperscript{1388} between political philosophers and political theologians. This “dividing


\textsuperscript{1386} Benardete, RMP, p. 135; in the omitted part, Benardete cites Plato, Phaedrus, 250a7 (Fowler trans. pp. 482-3).

\textsuperscript{1387} Cf. the references provided in n. 821 above.

\textsuperscript{1388} III.21.4 (156/99).
line” [“Scheidlinie”] is not supplied by Schmitt, but by Meier himself, and it, unlike Schmitt’s “dividing line,” occurs on the basis, not of attitudes toward “the moral” – which, we may now add, might erroneously separate “modern” from “ancient” political philosophers on the grounds that the former seem to be much more dismissive of “the moral” than the latter – but of their estimation of human nature as being-good [Gutsein] or as being-evil [Bösesein]. On the side of the philosophic life, Meier places Nietzsche, Heidegger, Socrates, Strauss, Plato, Rousseau, Hegel, and Spinoza; on that of the life of the obedience of faith, he places Kierkegaard, Konrad Weiss, Tertullian, Donoso Cortés, Augustine, Calvin, Friedrich Julius Stahl, and Joseph de Maistre. “For Thomas Hobbes alone,” i.e., for the seventeenth thinker named in connection with Meier’s “dividing-line,” “a different picture seems to arise.” Hobbes, whom even Schmitt calls a “philosopher,” is nevertheless for him still “a ‘brother’ and... his ‘friend,’ for whose soul no one can stop him from praying.” Meier poses the question of Schmitt’s Hobbes as a question of “the one counterexample of importance for which the careful interpreter has to be on the lookout” and of “an exception... contrary to which the usual views prove nothing whereas the exception proves everything...” What is the philosopher Hobbes for Schmitt? Meier says from the outset that “there is no other

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1389 Ibid.
1390 Cf. I.11.14 (30/13).
1392 III.21.7 (157/100); italics added. – This marks the first mention of the name “Thomas Hobbes” in the text of LCS.
1393 III.21.9 (157/100).
1394 III.21.12-13 (157-8/100-1).
philosopher of whom Schmitt’s judgment is subject to comparable vacillations and all in all is marked by such deep-seated ambivalence.”1395 And it will turn out that, in accord with this ambivalence, Schmitt divides “Hobbes, as it were, into two persons,” i.e., into “a philosopher and a vir probus.”1396 To the question of who or what Schmitt’s Hobbes is, then, Meier adds the question: “Why does [Schmitt] insist upon wanting to save the author of the Leviathan for faith at the price of” such a splitting?1397 What is the source of Schmitt’s interest in Hobbes? Whom, exactly, is he trying to save, and why?

Meier says of his interpretation of Schmitt’s Hobbes-book that it is “the test case for the entire exegesis” presented in the Hidden Dialogue and The Lesson of Carl Schmitt, and that his interpretation of Schmitt “stands or falls” with the “interpretation of the book on the Leviathan...”1398 No doubt the centrality of Schmitt’s Hobbes book for Meier rests on Meier’s analysis of the “hidden dialogue” between Schmitt and Strauss; as the result of this dialogue, Schmitt was compelled to seek a new interpretation of Hobbes, one that would either separate him entirely from Schmitt’s concept of the political and political theology, or else one that would “save” him for Christian piety. In his 1938 Leviathan-book, Schmitt attempts both. He criticizes Hobbes on the basis of political theology as “the ‘decisive first step’ on

1395 III.21.16 (158/101).
1396 III.26.13 (182/117) & IV.4.3 (191/123). – “Vir probus” translates roughly to “upright” or “honest man” and is found on Hobbes’ tombstone, which reads: “Vir probus, et fama erudition Domi forisque bene cognitus” [“An upright man well-known for his learning at home and abroad”].
1397 IV.4.3 (191/123).
1398 PdF, 9.16 (168) & 9.n18 (168).
the way to the ‘fundamental neutralization of every truth, a neutralization that culminates in technologizing.’” However, he also “wants to exempt the Christian Hobbes from the reproach he has to bring against the philosopher Hobbes, namely, that he is the ‘precursor,’ even the ‘revolutionary pioneer’ of the ‘fundamental neutralization of all truth’ and of the ‘scientific-positivistic age.’” This splitting forms the basis of Meier’s interpretation, which culminates in the sentence:

As for how both persons could be combined in Hobbes, as for how, for example, the philosopher of the state of nature, how the critic of religion and the Bible could be made to agree with the devout Christian, especially as for how the critic of all faith in miracles could have excluded the miracle of the incarnation of God from his thought and evaded his own critique – all that remains Schmitt’s secret.

The two persons or personas of Hobbes can only be reconciled or combined *mysteriously*, just as for Schmitt the Father and Son can only be reconciled in the doctrine of the Trinity by recourse to unfathomability. Schmitt’s Hobbes is split just as his God is split, i.e., into a Father-imago incapable of foreseeing the future of his creation, and thus unwittingly doomed to generate a need for redemption, and a Son-imago who possesses the attribute of goodness or uprightness or probity putatively lacking in the Father and is thus capable of bringing that redemption about. As in the Hidden Dialogue book, the philosopher appears in the place of God, though this time Hobbes appears as an all-too-human, Promethean, “mortal New

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1399 III.22.9 (159-60/102).
1400 III.26.24 (183/119).
When he places the social contract at the foundation of his Leviathan, Schmitt uses his political theology to force Hobbes onto the ground of the battle of faith, “God against God,” a ground on which not knowledge, but faith, is decisive, and thus on which the gods “who, of course, cannot have knowledge, would fight.”

Meier’s interpretation of Schmitt’s Hobbes-book rests on the premise that in it “Schmitt speaks essentially of himself” and “in the decisive respect [argues] e contrario, fixing his own position by means of comparison, contrast, and contradiction.” By this he means that “Schmitt’s object is the failure of the attempt post Christum to make religion a part of politics.” Perhaps no commentator has understood this better than Anna Schmidt, who paraphrases Schmitt’s alleged technique as follows:

If Schmitt can show that Hobbes did not succeed in making revelation a mere means to the end of worldly peace and security, then the demonstration of the failure of Hobbes’s supposed intention would serve him as proof for the superiority of political theology—and the superiority of revelation over all attempts at “so-called secularization.”

To understand Schmitt’s strategy, we must go back a little. Meier argues that in the first half of Schmitt’s Hobbes book, Schmitt takes aim at Hobbes “as a

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1402 III.23.18 (164/105). – In the text, this term is predicated of the Leviathan itself, but we are justified in applying it to Hobbes as well since in the Leviathan “‘material and artisan, materia and artifex, machine and machine-maker, are the same, that is, men’” (III.23.17, p. 163/105).
1403 Cf. Schmitt, PT II (123/127).
1405 III.22.4 (159/101).
1406 III.24.6 (169/108).
1407 Schmidt, “The Problem of Carl Schmitt’s Political Theology,” p. 239.
philosopher”1408 in three senses. First, he objects to Hobbes’ notion of the state as based on a contract, i.e., on “an ‘artificial product made by men’”; second, he takes aim at the Hobbesian state as a “‘machine that has its ‘right’ and its ‘truth’ only in itself’”; finally, he criticizes “the symbol” of the Leviathan itself as “the fatal mistake of the Enlightenment thinker ‘of giving rise to the great animal...’”1409 Artifice, machine, and animal: these three determinations constitute the foundation of the “new God” who, unlike the old God, is transcendent “only in a legal, not in a metaphysical sense.”1410 This new God lacks access to the inner thoughts and beliefs of its “faithful,” who in turn are only called on to make an outward show of obedience. Hobbes thus “neutralizes” the concept of truth and places it in the realm of that which can be created or fabricated by men. An all-too-human decision is sufficient to conjure this new deity – no preexisting divine order is presupposed. But, as Strauss taught Schmitt, no human decision can be based on the truth if it is not oriented toward the concrete-order of the divine things. What previously had led to Schmitt’s enthusiastic approval of Hobbes as a political thinker – his decisionism – is now viewed as a hubristic presumption of man to the place of the divinity. Hobbes had to fail because he evoked a theological symbol post Christum without being sufficiently aware of its essential inferiority to the Christian God: for “Satan has no power over Providence and cannot avoid serving its purposes.”1411

1408 III.22.16 (161/103).
1409 III.22.12 (160/102).
1410 III.23.7 (162/103).
1411 CS, LS & BdP, VII.2.31 (88/79).
In Schmitt’s tale, then, Hobbes’s Leviathan is trying to bring about the unity of politics and religion from the side of politics, “on the basis of his own absolute power.” A new “omnipotence” threatens the old. The new “omnipotence,” like the old, finds itself beholden to no overarching order, but instead has its “right” and its “truth” in itself. But the new “omnipotence” is essentially political, not religious, and thus claims no access to the souls of its subjects. According to Meier, Schmitt “uses the rhetorical device of seemingly adopting the perspective of his adversary [Widerparts] in order to be able to show all the more effectively how necessary it is that the adversary’s cause [Sache] fail.” That means: he adopts the position whose intention is to bring about the unity of religion and politics from the side of politics, in order to show the inevitable failure of any such project post Christum. To do this, he first mischaracterizes and then agrees with Strauss’s interpretation of Hobbes:

“The battle against the ‘Kingdom of Darkness’ striven for by the Roman papal Church, the restoration of the original unity, is, as Leo Strauss observes, the real meaning of Hobbes’s political theory. That is right.”

Again, Anna Schmidt correctly interprets the thrust of Meier’s argument:

In fact, that is not right. This is not Strauss’s interpretation of Hobbes, and it is a glaring misquotation of Strauss’s words. Strauss does not write that Hobbes is writing against the Catholic Church, but that Hobbes thinks that revelation as such, be it Jewish or Christian, Protestant or Catholic, “makes politics a part of religion: thus—as we

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1412 III.24.5 (169/108).
1413 III.24.9 (169/108-9).
understand Hobbes—it reverses the natural relationship which was realized in paganism.”\textsuperscript{1415}

Strauss’s argument actually has to do with the proper ordering of politics and religion, i.e., with the question of whether politics should be superior to religion or vice-versa. From the perspective of revelation – or of what Meier elsewhere calls “trans-political religion”\textsuperscript{1416} – religion is and must be superior to politics; from that of political philosophy, politics should be superior to religion. “The focus of attention for Hobbes and Strauss is the political consequences of faith in revelation, and the decisive political question for both as philosophers reads: Should politics become a part of religion,”\textsuperscript{1417} or, should the natural, “pagan” order be reversed? For Schmitt as a political theologian, however, this question is already answered from the beginning; thus he diverts attention away from it, to the other question: “split or unity of religion and politics.”\textsuperscript{1418} If the split of religion and politics proves untenable or impossible,\textsuperscript{1419} and if Hobbes’s attempt to bring about unity from the side of politics fails (and has to fail), then all that is left is for the unity to be brought about from the side of religion:

The endeavor to restore the “original,” the “natural,” indeed the “original and natural pagan unity of politics and religion” under the sign of the Leviathan is on the test stand [Prüfstand] and with it every position that finds in the Leviathan the “great symbol” of the battle against political theology. Political theology, which comes to speech only in the mode of negation, has to appear superior to the extent that

\textsuperscript{1415} Schmidt, “The Problem of Carl Schmitt’s Political Theology,” p. 238.
\textsuperscript{1416} Cf. PP\textit{HO}, II.3.12.25 (135).
\textsuperscript{1417} III.24.26 (171/110); italics added.
\textsuperscript{1418} III.24.28 (171/110).
\textsuperscript{1419} Strauss claims that for Hobbes “the distinction between the spiritual and the temporal power is absurd” (\textit{SCR}, 140/96).
it has successfully proved that the anti-Christian restoration is
 doomed to failure.1420

By battling overtly against Hobbes’s attempt to restore the pagan unity of religion
and politics from the side of politics, Schmitt battles covertly – and all the more
intensely – against Strauss’s Platonic attempt to elevate politics above religion.1421
Schmitt’s unobtrusive misreading of Strauss and Hobbes provides the basis for his
spiritual warfare against the political philosophers and against political philosophy
as such.

Schmitt’s reductio ad absurdum of the putative position of “Hobbes, or the
person of the same name on whom Schmitt conferred the role of ‘restoring the
original unity,’”1422 culminates in the introduction of “‘the distinction between inner
faith and outward confession’ into the political system of the Leviathan”1423 since
from the moment this distinction is made the superiority of inner to outer is a fait
accompli. Not only is the fictional or poetic character of Schmitt’s enterprise
repeatedly emphasized – Meier speaks of the careful staging of “the drama’s initial
constellation” as well as of “the climax of the drama”1424 – but even the person
“Hobbes” becomes one of the dramatis personae in Schmitt’s fabulation. The

1420 III.24.44-46 (174/112).
1421 On this “attempt,” cf. Strauss’s “momentous surprise” at Avicenna’s “statement
that the treatment of prophecy and divine law is contained in Plato’s Laws,” and his
insight that the “Arabic philosophers and Maimonides follow Plato when they grasp
the divine law, providence, and the prophet as objects of politics; they rely on the
Laws when they treat the teaching of revelation, the doctrine of particular
providence, and prophetology as parts of political science (and not at all of
metaphysics)...” (GS2, 6.1, p. xvii/367, & 6.6, p. xix/368).
1422 III.25.12 (175/113).
1423 III.25.11 (175/113).
1424 III.24.10 (169/109) & III.25.10 (175/113).
Leviathan’s tragic flaw, then, is its inability or unwillingness to make a claim on man’s soul as opposed to just his body.¹⁴²⁵ The hero emerges as a villain when he claims to be able to provide pax et securitas wholly apart from the God of revelation and within his own realm. The “determinations” artifice, machine, and animal “converge without exception in the ‘external power’ on which the Leviathan is based and in the ‘pure this-worldliness’ in which he arises: his auctoritas is nothing but potestas.”¹⁴²⁶ Such a power cannot grasp man “wholly”¹⁴²⁷ because “‘a mechanism is incapable of any totality.’”¹⁴²⁸ The external omnipotence of the Leviathan corresponds with an internal impotence.¹⁴²⁹ Without the ability to lay claim to man wholly, the Leviathan is incapable of reaching the level of intensity necessary to attain to the status of the political. Thus in the intensity of the battle of faith, the peak of the theologico-political confrontation, the symbol of the Leviathan cannot but fail.

The section’s – and chapter’s – final paragraph (III.26) appears to mitigate Schmitt’s judgment on the philosopher Hobbes somewhat. In fact, it does not mitigate this judgment at all; instead, it recounts the way Schmitt splits Hobbes into the two distinct personas of an irredeemable philosopher and a pious vir probus. Meier again speaks of “Schmitt’s dramatic narrative,” this time in connection with the respective roles of Hobbes and Spinoza, the latter of whom Schmitt blames for

¹⁴²⁵ Cf. III.25.24 (178/114).
¹⁴²⁶ III.25.25 (178/115).
¹⁴²⁸ III.25.28 (178/115).
¹⁴²⁹ Cf. III.25.22 (177/114).
recognizing “the barely visible point of rupture’ in the system of the Leviathan” and using it “for the unfolding of the libertas philosophandi.”\textsuperscript{1430} For Meier, on the contrary, it is apparent that “the defense of the libertas philosophandi matters no less to Hobbes than to his successor Spinoza,”\textsuperscript{1431} even if this defense is less overt in the former than in the latter. As a political philosopher writing in times of potential religious persecution, Hobbes would have opted for a rhetoric emphasizing “the healthy political influence and the great social utility of philosophy” or “at least assert[ing] its compatibility and harmlessness...”\textsuperscript{1432} This Hobbes does by making “[p]eace and security – and not pure theory –” into “the aim of [his] political theory.”\textsuperscript{1433} Meier implies that Schmitt misunderstands Hobbes on account of his misunderstanding of this rhetoric, or of Hobbes’ philosophic politics: “What in truth unifies both philosophers,” i.e., their conviction that the philosophic life is good for man, “is completely obfuscated and the point at which their attitudes toward religion are actually different,” i.e., in the fact that Hobbes, unlike Spinoza, “believes he is able to anchor the political allegiance of all the subjects of the State in reason alone,” “is distorted beyond recognition...”\textsuperscript{1434} Schmitt is unable to see the level or the ground on which both Hobbes and Spinoza emerge clearly as philosophers or as

\textsuperscript{1430} III.26.4 (180/116).
\textsuperscript{1431} III.26.2 (180/116).
\textsuperscript{1432} WPP?, 21.5 (32/107-8).
\textsuperscript{1433} Strauss, SCR, p. 138/94. – Anna Schmidt again provides the relevant citation: “As Strauss writes in his 1954 article on Hobbes, the political consequence of revelation, ‘the dualism of power temporal and power spiritual [...] is incompatible with peace, the demand \textit{par excellence} of reason...’” ("The Problem of Carl Schmitt's Political Theology," p. 238; cf. LCS, III.14.n52, p. 183/118).
\textsuperscript{1434} III.26.6 (180/116-7) & III.n148 (181/117).
advocates of the philosophic life. So, he “takes sides” with Hobbes and against the Jew Spinoza inasmuch as “‘the Englishman’ does not seek ‘to place himself outside the faith of his people with such a reservation,’” – that of the separation of inner and outer – “‘but, on the contrary, to stay within it,’ whereas ‘the Jewish philosopher approaches a State religion from without and for that reason brings the reservation with him from without.’”¹⁴³⁵ Despite every appearance to the contrary, Hobbes is still acting within a determinate theologico-political community when he decides for the Leviathan, unlike Spinoza, who, as a Jew, cannot but come to that community from without. Schmitt separates himself from “Jews, pagans, and – philosophers”¹⁴³⁶ because he does not see or will not acknowledge that in the decisive respect incomparably more connects him with the Jews (and the pagan “multitude”) than with the philosophers (and the pagan “few”): his “enmity” toward the Jews, those “‘real authors of the seditious, State-destructive distinction between religion and politics,’” authors who nevertheless “‘achieved the unity from the religious side,’”¹⁴³⁷ blinds him to the fact that Jews saw and see politics as part of religion rather than the reverse. Spinoza – and his God – is for Schmitt the enemy; Hobbes is a pious man who decides for impiety with the best intentions, and “a Christian with whom Schmitt sees himself bound insofar as, like himself, he held fast to the decisive truth”

¹⁴³⁵ III.26.6 (180-1/117). – Recall in this connection II.22.16-19 (100-1/61-2) regarding the impossibility of the stranger’s rightly knowing and understanding in making political decisions.
¹⁴³⁶ III.26.27 (184/119).
that 

“Jesus is the Christ.”\textsuperscript{1438} Schmitt, who in 1933 decides for the Nazis, tries with all his might to find “genuine piety” in Hobbes because in doing so he tacitly claims to be pious himself. Despite every unintentional result of his “blindness,” the Christian Epimetheus holds fast to the alleged purity of his intention: his “judgment... seems to find support solely in the blind will to obedience or in the good intention of faith.”\textsuperscript{1439}

Schmitt’s Hobbes is a “double-being composed of two persons.”\textsuperscript{1440} The connection between these persons is a mystery, like the connection of the Father and the Son in the Trinity; and, like the latter connection, the former papers over the enmity between 

founder and savior. Schmitt imagines polemios to be at the heart of Hobbes because it is at his own heart: the war between omnipotence and omnibenevolence comes only to a fitful détente in the postulate of unfathomability. Schmitt makes use of the “specific immunity of the commentator”\textsuperscript{1441} when he makes his readers “aware of his own creed” by referring them “emphatically to the creed of a “vir probus” who belongs to the Christian people...”\textsuperscript{1442} As a vir probus, Hobbes may well have been motivated by polemios; as a philosopher, however, he could only have been motivated by eros. It is perhaps owing to his abstraction from eros, too, that Schmitt proves unable to grasp the proper movement of political

\textsuperscript{1438} III.26.15-16 (182/118).
\textsuperscript{1439} IV.9.14 (197-8/128).
\textsuperscript{1440} III.26.13 (182/117).
\textsuperscript{1441} Strauss, PAW, p. 14.
\textsuperscript{1442} III.26.18 (183/118).
philosophy, despite his aping of its characteristic method. For Schmitt is unable to
affirm a non-polemical theology like this one outlined by Blumenberg:

In the still mythical image of the uninvented original idea, the conflict
of the gods can be avoided on the assumption that the (episodically)
hostile will is, in its innate logic, identical with the will to which it is
antagonistic. As a result, Prometheus’s long-range, historically
universal intentions for the human species that was present
independently of Zeus – “that is, which originally belonged to a
different world-order” – would finally converge with what Zeus
himself had wanted when he meant to “put a new species in place of
the present human one.” The god of salvation produces the same
mankind that the god of nature, in his rejection of the actually created
species, had in mind.1443

That the Son should carry out the Father’s own, unavowed wishes, that there is a
common good by which both are unknowingly bound – this remains impossible
within the ambit of Schmitt’s political theology and political theology as such.

Schmitt saves Hobbes solely because he wants to save himself. He never “develops”
the question of his own good to the point where is becomes identical with the idea
of the good. The “part” of Hobbes relegated to the status of “philosopher” does not
much matter to him because he is more concerned with the purity of Hobbes’s – and
his own – intentions and less concerned with the logical consistency of Hobbes’s –
or his own – thought or teaching. Schmitt saves Hobbes in order to save himself, or
in order to reassure himself that he is worth saving. But in so doing he betrays his
essential weakness: he would rather believe himself secure than know the
conditions of his supposed “security.”

1443 Blumenberg, Work on Myth, p. 555.
In opposing the moral and the theoretical orders – the orders of power and knowledge, respectively – *Die Lehre Carl Schmitts* gives thought to a fundamental alternative that is embodied in the opposed figures of the political theologian and the political philosopher. The central paragraphs of the first chapter (I.9) and of the book (III.14) sharpen this opposition as far as possible by linking the thumotic soul that demands justice for the sake of security to the Divine Will that demands faithful obedience for the sake of avoiding the question of what it itself is. Both the political theologian and his God fear and resent the possibility of being known, and so claim that in the final accounting every knowledge that is not based on pure command is not knowledge at all, but delusion, and that there in fact exists a power which surpasses all knowledge and thus must be encountered in the humble attitude of faith. From the perspective of this order, the assertoric mode itself stands wholly in the service of the imperative mode, just as reason stands wholly in the service of faithful obedience. If political philosophy's task is to interrogate the assertoric mode itself, to force it, again and again, to justify its right and its necessity, then this task cannot be fulfilled without at the same time inquiring into the imperative commands of authorities for which the assertoric mode is essentially a tool of compelling belief rather than a means of ascertaining truth. *Both* politics and theology make claims or demands on man; it is political philosophy's task to determine which, if any, of these claims are justified by the true nature and order of things. *Both* politics and theology
issue “answers that are asserted with authority,” i.e., answers before which questioning must simply stop and which presuppose knowledge of what is most important; political philosophy does not, cannot, and does not want to issue such answers.

Instead, political philosophy must suppose or assert that we do not have knowledge of what is most important for us, that we lack knowledge of the essential character of the whole, or that the whole we do have knowledge of is the human whole, the city, and not the (natural or divine) whole. We are able to possess this knowledge insofar as we are able to determine the limits of the city or of the political, and to learn their essential character thereby. If indeed we do lack knowledge of the whole, the best life would be the life spent seeking such knowledge, the philosophic life. And even if we do not know what the good is, we do know – non-hypothetically, or finally – that “it is indisputably good to know the good,” or that knowledge of the good is itself good. In view of this insight, which grounds Platonic-Socratic political philosophy, the “one thing needful” is to spend our lives inquiring into the nature of the good, the just and the true, or, to name the heart of the matter, into “what the ‘Athenians’ say.” Political philosophy only

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1444 II.12.9 (71/41).
1445 Cf. esp. II.12 (70-5/40-3), the central paragraph of the chapter.
1447 Benardete, SSS, p. 155. Cf. also Plato, Republic, 382a-d (Bloom trans. p. 60) & 505d-e (Bloom trans. p. 185); Xenophon, Oeconomicus, Chapter I (Lord trans. pp. 3-8); and Strauss, XSD, pp. 92-9.
1448 Strauss, PPH (163/143); the German reads: “was die Athener, was die Menschen sagen.” Cf. also on this subject Benardete, who associates the Socratic “turn to speeches” with “the realization that it is possible to examine the predicates without
works if “the good sticks to the real,”¹⁴⁴⁹ or if the human world, woven out of the myriad speeches of ordinary citizens regarding what is right or wrong, noble or disgraceful, and good or bad,¹⁴⁵⁰ retains at least a filamentary connection to the natural one, or if opinions can be exchanged for knowledge on the path of dialectical questioning and critical self-reflection. The philosophic life supposes or asserts that we can rightfully claim to be able to guide ourselves by means of our reason, and this claim would be unjustified if any of the authoritative claims made by politics or theology turned out to be justified or true. Thus the philosophic life is spent largely in attempting to refute such authoritative claims, i.e., in Socratic elenchus.¹⁴⁵¹ Philosophy’s own claim, the claim that we do not have knowledge of the whole, depends on its ability to show that every position that presumes to be based on knowledge of the whole is not in fact so based, and that every such claimant is merely a boaster. The boaster as such lacks self-knowledge and therefore presents no serious threat to philosophy, even if in his indignation he may present a significant threat to the philosopher himself (and therefore must be handled by recourse to “agreement-based” or hypothetical rhetoric). The man Carl Schmitt is a boaster if he believes he knows that the whole is mysterious or incapable of being

¹⁴⁴⁹ Benardete, TCL, p. 186; cited in LCS, II.17.n70 (86/51).
¹⁴⁵⁰ Cf. epigraph to CS, LS & Bdp (11/3), citing Plato, Euthyphro, 7c-d (Fowler trans. pp. 24-7). Also consider in this connection Strauss, WiPP?, p. 147 on “the light supplied by the contrast between men’s agreement in the despised and lowly arts on the one hand and their fanatical disagreement regarding the high and holy on the other.”
known by man. Carl Schmitt the *political theologian*, however, avoids this difficulty to the extent he consistently substitutes faith for knowledge, for faith is only faith in what is (or appears) mysterious. The “purification” of the former into the latter is not only the task of *Die Lehre Carl Schmitts*; it is emblematic of political philosophy as such, which progresses in self-knowledge by drawing out the “good in the evil” because it knows that in seeking the truth it at the same time follows its own good.
Conclusion

*The Primacy of Truth*

Political philosophy is not positivism, because it cannot and does not dogmatically assume that the whole is comprehensible and that only “clear and distinct” truths are admissible into the canon of being.\(^{1452}\) Still less is it relativism, because it seeks to, and believes it can, attain “final knowledge” of the human things or of the good, on the basis of which it can begin to interrogate the character of the natural or divine things. Nevertheless, it borrows from or resembles both of these approaches. Like positivism, it posits a standard of truth that is unchanging and impersonal; like relativism, it operates with the conviction that the opinions of the present situation cannot simply be disregarded or skipped over, but must instead be dialectically negotiated and passed through, on the way out of the cave. It deals with the problem of the relationship of truth and power by a double-movement. First, it externalizes the problem: power places conditions on the communication of truth in political society, but does not affect the idea of truth as grounded in necessity and as enabling knowledge of necessity. Second, it situates itself in such a way as to keep the question of truth or knowledge in this sense in the foreground, never allowing it to be merely presupposed, but instead interrogating, again and again, all authoritative claims to know the nature or character of the whole and to derive imperative commands from this nature or character. Political philosophy

\[^{1452}\] Cf. the Straussian formula of a “dogmatism based on skepticism” that is said to characterize modern science in, e.g., “Letter to Kuhn,” p. 23.
in this sense preserves a concept of truth separate from the influence of power and yet also takes seriously every claim that could potentially disrupt or overturn this concept, and in particular on the claim that there is an omnipotent, unfathomable God whose will is subject to no necessity and thus obviates knowledge in the strict sense. It does not dogmatically advance the conviction that this concept of truth adequately reflects the character of the whole, and could hardly do so, since it takes this character to be unknown to us. Instead, it thinks through the fundamental alternatives hypothetically, investigating what would be the case if the whole were comprehensible, what the case if it were mysterious. In this way, it generates the opposed orders of power and knowledge, justice and goodness, or morality and theory, and the opposing figures of the political theologian and the political philosopher.

This view of the whole is equivalent neither to pure knowledge nor to pure ignorance. It is based on the knowledge of ignorance. But of what sort? What we are dealing with here is best understood by means of the Straussian notion of noetic heterogeneity. Most simply, this concept holds that “the whole consists of classes or kinds, the character of which does not become fully clear through sense perception.” Not just perceiving, but thinking, “putting two and two together,” is required in order to connect different kinds of awareness or experience of the whole. Now, by virtue of the fact that we can and do know the

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1453 Cf. Strauss, WiPP?, pp. 39-40; RCPR, pgs. 142-3 & 132-3; and OT, p. 277.
1454 Strauss, RCPR, p. 132.
1455 Strauss, ibid., p. 143.
ends of men or of the human whole (typified by the idea of the good), but not those of the natural or divine one (typified by necessity or power), we can say that there is a fundamental distinction between the two, i.e., between “the political” whole in which we posit and pursue aims of our own, and the non-human (natural or divine) whole whose “aims” appear partially to be comprehensible and partially to be mysterious. Nevertheless, this distinction is mediated by the figure of the human itself, who is both natural and political, and who thereby somehow embodies that combination of the heterogeneity of political ends and the homogeneity of natural monads, which combination is otherwise “not at our disposal.” In his “turn to logoi,” Socrates gave expression to the this insight in the form of a new evaluation of the errors and opinions prevalent in the cave. If man is indeed natural as well as political, then the errors and opinions he holds on the political level are themselves somehow also natural, thus also comprehensible in terms of natural necessity – man’s opinions, though opinions and not knowledge, are nevertheless truly man’s, and therefore in a sense truly natural, and therefore susceptible of being known. This is the sense in which knowledge of ignorance sheds light on the problem of the whole as such. In opining falsely, man nevertheless testifies truly to his false opinion. There is always a way to “read” a false opinion as a true expression of a natural being. This task of “finding the good in the evil” is the task of political

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1456 Strauss, WiPP?, p. 39. Cf. Strauss, RCPP, p. 133: “The human or political things are indeed the clue to all things, to the whole of nature, since they are the link or bond between the highest and the lowest, or since man is a microcosm, or since the human or political things and their corollaries are the form in which the highest principles first come to sight, or since the false estimate of human things is a fundamental and primary error.”
philosophy. It suggests that “in a way, the most important truth is the most obvious truth, or the truth of the surface.”

But this is only possible if truth or knowledge preponderates over power or will, or if “literally speaking there can be no falsehood” owing to the “primacy of truth.”

This expression occurs, as far as I can tell, only once in Strauss’ published writings. But its force and its effect must be considered as obtaining throughout. We will end the present discussion with reference to two passages from his seminars in which its effect can be seen particularly clearly. First, I regard to the speeches in Plato’s Symposium, Strauss says:

> There are six speeches on eros. In a way the first five are wrong. They are all refuted. But there cannot be absolute error; every theory contains an element of truth. You can easily see that if you take an atrocious untruth like “The sun is not shining now,” which is obviously untrue, it nevertheless contains such important verities as “There is a sun” and “The sun is shining.” At any rate, there is no untruth without primary truth. Therefore, none of these speeches is simply untrue.

Not only do the very distinctions between knowledge and opinion on the one hand, and nature and convention on the other, depend on the primacy of truth – no opinion and no convention can be simply untrue, since “there is no untruth without primary truth,” or without the possibility of being led, step by step, out of the cave. Second, in his discussion of the Platonic parable of the divided line, Strauss

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1459 Strauss, OPS, p. 29; italics added. – Consider in this connection Strauss, PAW, p. 23.
1460 This point is equivalent to the one made by Nietzsche in the final step of the “How the ‘True World’ Finally Became a Fable” section of Twilight of the Idols, viz.: “The true world – we have abolished. What world has remained? The apparent one
associates this primacy of truth with an initial trust or natural reliance of man on
nature, meaning on his senses and his faculties, for guidance. This initial trust is
“faith” in the original sense, before its intensification and extremization into the
credo quia absurdum at the hands of revealed religion. As Strauss says:

Plato called our awareness of the cave, which means heaven and earth
and what is between them, “pistis” in Greek, which means trust, blind,
inevitable trust. We live in the derivative, in the conditioned, in what
is not in itself intelligible. We know with the greatest certainty that
this is a tree, but why it is, and what does it mean, here the difficulty
begins. We live in [a situation in which] that which makes intelligible
what is finally given, is less known to us than the given... Primarily we
live in the belief in the truth of questionable opinion[s] about the
whole. We live in the belief in the truth of opinions which claim to
solve the riddle of the whole. These beliefs do not have the character of
trust, of blind, inevitable trust. We are not compelled to accept them,
they lack that compulsory power, peculiar to that initial trust. These
opinions are questionable. In other words, we live primarily, again
using the Platonic terms, primarily in a mixture of trust and imagery.
You remember the divided line and its four kinds of knowledge – I
speak now only of the lower ones and the lower is called trust, and the
other is called imagery. The imagery does not have compulsory power
as trust has. If people for example, say, white sacred cow, whether the
cow is sacred is questionable. That the cow is white, that is not
questionable except in school rooms. That is what Plato means by the
distinction. The beginning of philosophy is the awareness of the
fundamental difference between this initial trust and imagery; it is the
resolve to take the difference seriously, as a matter of fact so seriously
that we – are prepared to apply that distinction to all matters.1461

This distinction between trust and imagery is another way of formulating the
philosophical distinction between nature and convention or between knowledge
and opinion. What all three have in common is that they assert, and never stop

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perhaps? But no! With the true world we have also abolished the apparent one” (486).
The difference between Strauss and Nietzsche appears starkly in their respective
attitudes toward this possibility.

questioning the assertion, that knowledge as knowledge of necessity is possible and that the search for such knowledge is the right or best life for man. No doubt, the acquisition of knowledge enables the philosopher (and especially the political philosopher, whose knowledge is knowledge of the human things) to “circumscribe” the other members of the human species and thereby to influence or exert power over them.\textsuperscript{1462} But, on the one hand, to the extent he becomes interested in this kind of power for its own sake he forsakes philosophy in favor of politics narrowly conceived; and, on the other, such knowledge is only available to him if “not everything is possible,”\textsuperscript{1463} or if omnipotence is not given in the order of the whole. The political philosopher is thus induced to renounce the common desire for tyranny in both senses, political and theological, on grounds of the problematic insight that connects the one to the other, i.e., that knowledge is and is not power.


\textsuperscript{1463} \textit{ÜdGpL}, I.2.26.2 (100).
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