

Memoir by Stanley Rosen

Leo Strauss in Chicago

I first met Leo Strauss when I was nineteen years old and a student in the College of the University of Chicago. It was the spring of 1949 – this was during the epoch of the presidency of Robert Maynard Hutchins, when the University was at the height of its glory. At that time, the College was famous for the eccentricity and precociousness of many of its students, and also for its highly unusual custom of allowing entering students to take examinations on the basis of which they were assigned course requirements. The intention of this program was to extend the time we spent in graduate school, provided that we already possessed the necessary foundation. It was therefore possible to graduate with a B.A. from the College in less than a month of residence. Apparently,

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the graduate of a Swiss private lycée accomplished this some years after my departure. In 1949, though, the record was one year, which was matched by eighteen members of my class, including myself and my classmate and friend Seth Benardete.

Another peculiarity of the College was that one could enter it at any age, and among my classmates were a number of virtual children. I still remember a party given by some of the older students. There, I entered into conversation with a man who seemed to be in his mid-thirties, a guess that his thick glasses and advanced baldness only strengthened. He informed me that he had broken with Catholicism and, thanks to a recent visit to Europe, with existentialism as well. I first inquired whether he was an instructor at the University, and then a graduate student. He replied in the negative to both queries and informed me that he was an undergraduate. "How old are you?" I asked. "Thirteen," he replied. I should add that when I arrived in 1948, I was, relatively speaking, an old man. I had been admitted to the College following graduation from high school in 1947, but I had chosen to live in New York for a semester, under the mistaken impression that I was a burgeoning novelist.

By the time I arrived in Chicago, my vocation had shifted from fiction to poetry. If I am not mistaken, I was the only one of Leo Strauss's long-term students who came to him from poetry. I was also virtually uninterested at the time in politics, unlike the majority of Strauss's students. Instead, I was an avowed metaphysician, who had elaborated a philosophical position partly influenced by T. S. Eliot, one of whose main tenets was that philosophy and poetry are two different languages about the same world. In addition to these intellectual propensities, which most of Strauss's students regarded as deficiencies, I was undisciplined in the academic sense and spent most of my time writing poetry, with some professional success and with reasonable hopes for future progress. These hopes were sustained by Hayden Carruth, who was then the editor of *Poetry Magazine*, and Henry Rago, who was about to assume that position, but also by Allen Tate, who taught in the College for a year.

High on my list of things that I had no intention of doing was to become a professor of philosophy. To my adolescent vision, being a philosopher and a professor were incompatible, and besides, I regarded myself as already a philosopher. Needless to say, this was about to be changed by my encounter with Leo Strauss.

I had a number of unusual classmates during my year in the College. Perhaps the most interesting was Seth Benardete, who went on to become Strauss's favorite student. Benardete stands out in my memory as a spirit of genuine distinction and, even at that early age, of rare scholarship. At the time my friends and I assumed that Benardete would go on to a distinguished career as a classical philologist, as in a sense he did. But he wrote his books in so oblique a style that

he was widely ignored by the orthodox classical establishment, with some important exceptions, including Pierre Vidal-Naquet.

In 1949 he was for me a formidable exotic. I remember vividly to this day a long conversation we had one night in his dormitory room during which Benardete informed me that he regarded it immoral to love a human being. As a youth with a certain proclivity to this form of immorality, I was incredulous and asked him what we should love. He replied in a magisterial tone: "Greek vases." This struck me as the most sophisticated view I had ever heard, but a view with one flaw: it was nonsensical.

My friendship with Benardete, whom I saw virtually every day during that first year in Chicago, was my only real preparation for my first meeting with Leo Strauss. I was a poet, a romantic, and a metaphysician, who had somehow wandered into the lair of the philosopher, the classicist, and the historian. There was for me no quarrel between philosophy and poetry, as there apparently was (albeit in a subtle form) for Benardete and for Strauss, who both followed Plato. The atmosphere around Benardete was redolent of Socratic irony and continental sophistication, whereas I represented something quite different. One of the entering examinations in the College required us to write an essay describing our philosophical position. Afterwards, a member of the philosophy department told me that my views were Fichtean, something of which I had never heard. A poet of Fichtean leanings was not in the best position to meet either the young Benardete or the middle-aged Strauss, to say nothing of my distinct deviation from the paradigm of the Aristotelian gentleman.

I should say at once that Strauss was not at all a snob, and that his conception

of decorum was quite reasonable. He was quite right to note in the margin of a first draft of my doctoral dissertation that I liked to *épater le bourgeois*. His asstringent follow-up – “I could wish that the entire dissertation had been written in the style of paragraph 2 on page 153” – taught me more about scholarly writing than a dozen texts on hermeneutics. Strauss’s own style, at its best, comes very close to the appropriate blend of the daring of thought veiled by the web of prudence. He was nevertheless capable of flexibility in selecting his students. Many years after I had left Chicago, I encountered an old professor and former colleague of Strauss’s who was noted for his elegance and aristocratic tastes. This colleague, a minor Latvian baron, told me that he used to complain to Strauss about my youthful uncouthness, to which Strauss would reply each time: “He’s getting better.” I owe my education to this willingness to overlook baronial standards.

Strauss had recently arrived in Chicago from New York and was, at the time, unknown to most of the Chicago student community. This may help to explain his charitable reception of so unpromising a potential student. Strauss’s stepson, who was also a student in the College, arranged the meeting. I had been preparing an honors paper on a Yiddish writer named Achad Ha’am. Strauss was a professor of political science, but his son told me that his father was also an expert on Yiddish writers, and asked if I would like to consult him on my paper. I agreed and set out, having been warned that Strauss would probably give me twenty or thirty minutes of his time.

It was a warm spring evening, and mosquitoes filled the humid air. Strauss received me in shirtsleeves, gesturing with a cigarette holder as if it were a ba-

ton. He was a rather short man with a thin, high-pitched voice. His initial demeanor was polite but understandably reserved. He opened the conversation by asking me what I did. I replied, “I am a poet.” Strauss immediately inquired whether I knew what Plato says about poets. To this I answered something like, “I don’t care what Plato says about poetry. I am a poet, and I understand it better than he does.”

This drove Strauss like an uncoiled spring from the easy chair in which he had been sitting, and he paced up and down the room, gesticulating with his cigarette holder, as if trying desperately to bring an unruly orchestra back to orderly response. I will not attempt to reproduce the entire conversation, which lasted for at least two hours. At the end of it, he invited me to become his student.

I respectfully declined, as I was planning to return to New York for another go at the literary life. When I told Strauss that I intended to study at the New School for Social Research, he suggested that I mention his name. I did and was promptly awarded a scholarship, so great was Strauss’s reputation at the New School. My experience in New York, however, proved unsatisfactory, and I decided to return to Chicago in 1950 in order to study with Strauss.

In the intervening year, Strauss had attracted the attention of a number of very gifted students, among them Benardete, Hilail Gildin, Victor Gourevitch, Muhsin Mahdi, and Allan Bloom. At or shortly after this time, Richard Rorty began to attend Strauss’s lectures, but left to take his doctorate at Yale. Despite his subsequent adventures with analytical philosophy and postmodernism, Rorty had great respect for Strauss and the best members of his circle.

I will not attempt to give a complete list of my contemporaries who studied with Strauss. Let me say only that the students were divided into two main groups: the political scientists and the members of the Committee on Social Thought. There were only a few members of the philosophy department, including myself (until 1952, when I transferred to the Committee), as well as a steadily increasing selection of visitors from a variety of faculties, both at Chicago and elsewhere, who had been attracted by news of the pied piper of the Midway. Eventually Strauss's audience included several priests, of whom perhaps the most interesting was Ernest Fortin.

One could also divide the students in a very general way into those who were primarily interested in American politics and those who were students of classics or one of the major periods in the history of political philosophy. This is, of course, not a rigid classification, but it is not entirely nebulous. Whereas all of us, I suspect, regarded ourselves as engaged somehow in the pursuit of wisdom, there is a difference between constitutional law, the *Federalist Papers*, or the fact-value distinction in contemporary political science, on the one hand, and Plato's analysis of the soul, Ibn Khaldun's philosophy of history, or Rousseau's anthropology, on the other.

In view of the subsequent explosion of interest in Strauss's politics, it is worth mentioning that several of his closest students were originally Communists. One of them told me that as a boy scarcely into his teens, he would walk the streets of Manhattan saying, "Someday this will all be mine!" Others, however, were, and often remained, Socialists or New Deal Democrats.

Strauss made no attempt to alter their political views. I doubt he was even aware of most of our political orienta-

tions. What he did was teach us how to read, and how to think about what we had read. Very far from producing extremist reactionaries, of which he is often accused today, he presented us with the path of moderation and practical wisdom. It is a tribute to Strauss's tolerance and brilliance as a scholar and a teacher that he could serve to unify a band of investigations as diverse as those just mentioned, undertaken by students of the most diverse convictions.

Strauss also led private reading groups devoted to topics that he could not conveniently teach in the political science department, such as Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* or Hegel's *Logic*. For obvious bureaucratic reasons, most of his students were not writing a dissertation on 'pure' philosophy, in the academic sense of that term. Most were officially political scientists, not specialists in causality, ontology, or German idealism, and, of course, not in the philosophy of science, epistemology, or the foundations of mathematics, which lay outside Strauss's (and most of our) competence. Instead, Strauss, the great enemy of historicism, was, at first sight, training historians of political thought and political scientists who were prepared to use that history as a foundation for rethinking the cardinal tenets of their discipline. From this standpoint, he was engaged in a radically reconceived version of the Heideggerian 'destruction' of Western philosophy – that is, a radically new close reading of canonic philosophical texts – with two massive qualifications: First, Strauss was primarily concerned with politics rather than ontology; and second, his archaeological excavations were designed to return us to the thoughts of the heroes of the Western tradition, that is, to the thoughts as these heroes had thought them and not, as in Heidegger's case, to the ostensibly deep-

er and unthought thoughts that constituted the authentic *Seinsgeschichte* of Western metaphysics.

Despite these important differences, both Strauss and Heidegger were engaged in the enterprise of 'uncovering' a concealed truth. It is not much of an exaggeration to say that for both thinkers the crucial figure in this excavation was Plato. For Strauss as for Heidegger, moreover, the appropriation of Plato for the reconstitution of late modernity entailed a type of strong interpretation that Strauss did not sufficiently emphasize, perhaps because doing so might have tied him too closely to Heidegger's even more extreme form of critical interpretation. One can surmise that Strauss's reticence on questions of this sort was part of his program to inoculate his students against Heidegger. Nevertheless, it is true that Strauss was deeply impressed by Heidegger, especially by the Heidegger of the early and middle period. I am certain that Strauss learned much from Heidegger about how to read a Greek text, not to mention that he also assimilated through Heidegger Nietzsche's critique of modernity and nihilism.

Heidegger had radicalized Nietzsche's critique of Enlightenment by extending it to Plato; his intention was to go behind or above Platonism to another way, a way entirely free of the presumably reified and subjectivist thinking of Western Platonist metaphysics. From this exalted standpoint, the Enlightenment was itself a version of Platonism and something to be overcome. Strauss, on the contrary, took us back through the history of philosophy to Plato, not in order to overcome the modern Enlightenment but to find its mistakes and to correct these in the name of a genuine liberalism and freedom of thought.

Heidegger has sometimes been called a liberator while Strauss is often de-

nounced for his conservatism. Both judgments are largely nonsense unless they are given careful qualification. Heidegger's conception of radical freedom has nothing to do with Western European liberalism. Strauss was, no doubt, a social conservative, but his political views were, in my opinion, designed to compensate for the exaggerated decline of modern liberalism into nihilism. His fundamental goal was to preserve philosophy, and it is from this point that serious arguments about his politics must begin. Otherwise stated, he undertook to preserve philosophy with the political tools of classical liberalism.

Strauss's form of liberalism is perhaps most obvious in his popular writings, which contain an eloquent defense of modern political freedom and a critique of Marxism. To the extent that this form of liberalism had deteriorated into what we came to call 'postmodernism,' Strauss of course responded as a conservative. Perhaps one could say that Strauss would have preferred to argue with Georg Lukács than Jacques Derrida. But he was altogether more flexible and more moderate than his close friend, the radical Alexandre Kojève, who accepted the bankruptcy of the West up to the Napoleonic counterrevolution, but who also accepted its purification by his own post-Hegelian fusion of Hegel, Feuerbach, Marx, and Heidegger.

When I arrived in Chicago for my 'second sailing' in the fall of 1950, I entered as a graduate student in the department of philosophy. Officially my mentor was Richard McKeon. But my serious education took place in Strauss's seminars or during conversations in his office or home. As time went by, I began to detach myself from the philosophy department, spending time in the Chicago art museum instead of attending

philosophy seminars regularly. But the serious part of the day was devoted to listening to or speaking with Strauss, and immersing myself in the texts that were being analyzed in his graduate courses. Interestingly enough, my status in the philosophy department improved under this regime, and just when I had decided to shift to the Committee on Social Thought, I was offered financial assistance to begin doctoral study in philosophy.

The story of my shift from the philosophy department to the Committee deserves mention because it illustrates the difference in admission procedures between bureaucrats and what would be called in France the *grands seigneurs*. I was a waiter at the University faculty club, where most of my customers were scientists like Enrico Fermi, Harold Urey, Edward Teller, and Leo Szilard. More immediately accessible to me was the eminent sociologist Edward Shils, a member of the Committee. I had a number of conversations with Shils, mainly about topics like how to cook oxtail soup in a pressure cooker. As a result, he asked me if I would like to join the Committee. Acting on the assumption that an organization with an interest in oxtail soup could not be all bad, I accepted. The second stage was an interview with the classicist David Grene, which I began by spilling tea over his orange tweed suit. The net result was a fellowship. At no point was I asked to supply references or to fill out forms and provide a statement of purpose, nor did Strauss raise these formalities. Direct contact supervised over conventional bureaucracy.

During the first two years of my study at Chicago, then, as a member of the philosophy department, I was, in a real sense, a man without a country, moving back and forth across the frontier with forged papers. One could call this a prac-

tical application of Strauss's understanding of esotericism.

Leo Strauss
in Chicago

Recounting my first impressions of Leo Strauss inevitably raises a question that has played a puzzling and, to be frank, irritating role in my professional life. It is also one of those aspects of the relation between teacher and student that is most difficult to explain. But it is important to get right for the sake of the general validity of my portrait of Strauss. Stated crudely, the question is whether I was then, or am now, a 'Straussian.'

My first inclination upon hearing this question is to reply, "Do you refer to Johann or to David Friedrich Strauss?"

In a less frivolous vein, one can say that the expression 'Straussian' has many counterparts among academics; one finds the students of all charismatic teachers being described as 'Hegelians,' 'Marxists,' 'Heideggerians,' 'Wittgensteinians,' even 'Quineans.'

Strauss himself liked to quote Nietzsche to the effect that the best thing a student can do for his teacher is to cut the umbilical cord that connects them. I will never forget a conversation with Strauss during the last year of my stay at Chicago, when we discussed the question of my finding a teaching position. "Disown me!" Strauss said, smiling hugely and straightening up in his swivel chair to facilitate the punctuation of his remark with the inevitable flourish of his cigarette holder. By this advice, Strauss did not mean to suggest that I forget or dishonor everything that I had learned from him, but that I do what is necessary to carry out his deepest teaching: live the life of a philosopher.

Let me therefore say at once that there were no 'Straussians' among the inner circle of Strauss's best students. Those who could legitimately be called such

were, to put it bluntly, second-raters. There was, of course, a certain area of agreement about the solidity of Strauss's scholarship; if this had not been so, it would have been folly to study under his supervision. We were all convinced that he was right about the tradition of esoteric writing – that is, the fact that a great many early modern philosophers, writing under conditions of censorship and persecution, felt compelled to write in a style that had to be carefully decoded in order to separate the true meaning from the superficial message of their texts. As a corollary, we accepted the need to read serious philosophical works written at least before the French Revolution with a kind of Talmudic eye. Even more important, we felt as a direct force the erotic strength of Strauss's spirit, and we were ourselves 'turned around' (to use Socrates' metaphor of the *periagōgē tēs psuchēs*) by that strength in a way that goes beyond inspiration to a reattunement of the soul and an opening of the eye of the intellect. This is something that does not come from reading books, but only from direct contact with a great teacher. And a great teacher is one who encourages critical analysis of his own views.

I am myself an example of the fact that Strauss did not demand unquestioning obedience from his students. I admired him enormously, and in due course I came to revere him as a rare blessing, without whose training and guidance my life would have been seriously diminished. But I was not from the outset, nor did I ever become, a 'Straussian.' I put this word in scare-quotes to indicate that it is a pseudo-term employed by ideologues as an excuse to avoid serious thought, or as a mask for their own ignorance. No one could deny that Strauss had his own views, and he was not quick to assume that his students knew more

or had thought more deeply than he. He was correct in both respects, of course. But he always accepted modifications or addenda to his interpretations when the evidence warranted it, and he welcomed competent, or at least sincere and well-argued, disagreement.

In my own case, I developed reservations about Strauss's general orientation on three main points: his position on the famous quarrels between philosophy and poetry; between the ancients and the moderns; and, finally, between Athens and Jerusalem (in other words, between reason and revelation).

On the first point, paradoxically enough, I might cite Strauss himself as my authority: he often interpreted Plato to imply that poetry is, in fact, one of two necessary components of the philosophical nature, the other being mathematics. If we think this through, it leads us directly toward the role of strong interpretation, and also of Kantian constructivism, in modern philosophy; this, in turn, reopens the problem of historicism, which we cannot resolve simply by recourse to common sense or the popular affirmation of natural right.

On the second point, I have always leaned toward the moderns in their famous quarrel with the ancients. Stated as simply as possible, the ancients, and Plato in particular, protect humankind from nature whereas the moderns take a progressively more aggressive stand toward freedom. I regret to say that Nietzsche's remark, first called to my attention by Strauss, is correct: "Advice whispered into the ear of a conservative. Man is not a crab." In other words, we must march forward through the semidarkness of nihilism. This forward march may fail, but it is inevitable. The serious question is how to keep up the morale of the marchers.

At this juncture, I want to interject a relevant observation about Strauss's critique of modernity. Although it is similar to that of Heidegger, it differs from his in a significant respect. There is virtually no emphasis upon the problem of technology, certainly none in the style of Heideggerian ontology. Instead, we are given numerous criticisms of *methodology*, particularly of the methodology of modern social science, with its mathematical model of rationality. A critique of methodology is useful, but it does not go to the heart of the matter. Whatever we may think of it, Heidegger's analysis of *technē* does go to the heart of the matter. I am certainly no Heideggerian, but I have studied him closely for fifty years, and I have been sometimes surprised and always struck by how much Strauss learned from Heidegger, but also by how much Heideggerian depth he sacrificed. It was, of course, part of Strauss's deconstruction of Heidegger to move back to the surface as a preparation for the descent into the depths. But one must in fact descend, and this Strauss did not do, whether from conviction or lack of theoretical strength.

With respect to the third quarrel, I have always found questionable Strauss's statement on the mutual irrefutability of reason and revelation. To pose the question of irrefutability already gives an edge to philosophy: the evaluation of arguments for and against religion is not so much religious as philosophical. At the same time, to repudiate reason is not to refute it. (I am reminded of Strauss's regular reference to an observation of Plutarch, that whoever asks, "What is a god?" is already an atheist.)

Perhaps Strauss's greatest accomplishment, at least for me, is that he inoculates the young against Heidegger's speculative excesses and hermeneutical brutality. His major shortcoming is that he

is neither a metaphysician nor a poet. Many will regard this as a compliment. I shall not debate the point, but simply record it as a difference between Strauss and me that did not at all interfere with my great admiration for him nor diminish all that I have learned from him. He certainly understood this difference. Also, there is no doubt that he tried to mitigate my own metaphysical and poetical excesses, just as there is no doubt that he was right to do so. What needs to be emphasized is that, whereas my contemporaries and I would not have chosen to study with Strauss had there not been unmistakable evidence of his superior gifts, this choice was never in the best cases a passport to discipleship.

And yet, in the 1950s, there was already something like a Strauss 'school.' I have already noted that this phenomenon is not at all uncommon among philosophers, and it is simply bad faith to criticize Strauss because he had many students who admired him enormously. The animus addressed toward Strauss, and, in a general sense, 'Straussians,' had to do with the substance of his teaching, not with his success in attracting students. Strauss was disliked for his critique of the sacred cows of modern social and political science, in particular, Max Weber (whom he highly admired), and because of his rediscovery of the tradition of esotericism, a tradition known to every well-educated scholar until the late nineteenth century, and one that is referred to by thinkers of the rank of Descartes, Leibniz, Condorcet, Hume, Kant, Lessing, Renan, and Nietzsche, to mention only a few of the most prominent examples from modern times. Too many professors, in a radical distortion of genuine liberalism, condemned Strauss's views on esotericism because they were ignorant of the evidence.

Leo Strauss
in Chicago

In speaking of Strauss's bad reputation, I have to come back to the question of conservatism. Strauss was widely condemned as a conservative, whereas someone like W. V. Quine, who was at least as conservative as Strauss, was not. I still remember a full-page ad in the *New York Times* shortly before the decisive outbreak of the Watergate scandal, defending then-president Nixon, and signed by a large array of well-known academics, including Strauss – and Quine. It was not self-evident then that support for Nixon was the equivalent of a declaration of fascism, as people so widely assume today. I say this as one who was at the time a New Deal Democrat who despised Nixon. Be that as it may, I never heard Quine being accused of fascism, nor, indeed, was his political position widely discussed in academic circles, although it was certainly known. The key, of course, is that Quine was a 'technical' philosopher. One could separate his logical views from his politics, just as, to move to the other end of the political spectrum, one could do in the case of Noam Chomsky's linguistics. In other words, Strauss's reserve with respect to the application of scientific models to the study and interpretation of human life struck his critics as a reactionary repudiation of modernity in a way that was not associated with conservative logicians or, say, physicists.

As a result, Strauss became an immediate target of opprobrium for the liberal academic establishment. He was challenging the theoretical and methodological soundness of modern social science, which claimed to represent the scientific Enlightenment and the progress of the human race. This challenge, incidentally, was the attenuated or surface version of Heidegger's critique of technicism. In Strauss's version, the challenge was manifestly political, whereas in Heidegger's

case, one could claim to speak as an ontologist or seeker after Being, and thereby be permitted to detach the ontological question from contingent political appropriations. This is very much like saying that the attempt to reduce the study of human nature to a branch of mathematics and physics – or, in today's idiom, neurophysiology and electrical engineering – has no political implications and is leading us to a radically extended form of Enlightenment – as if that were not itself a political position of utmost force and seriousness. By analogous reasoning, Heidegger's French followers associated his attack on modernity in general, and the Enlightenment in particular, with a doctrine of liberation and creativity, two of the favorite principles of the majority of late-modern thinkers. Thus, Heidegger was assimilated into the left-wing interpretation of Nietzsche. This camouflage could never be sustained in Strauss's case.

One more remark on this topic. Just as Quine was forgiven his conservatism because of his technical orientation in logic, so Heidegger was often forgiven his obnoxious political views on the grounds that he was an ontologist, or 'thinker,' and so naive in practical affairs. Some of his students went so far as to blame Heidegger's politics on the influence of his wife, who was the daughter of a Nazi general. Those who dispense such nonsense are nevertheless touching the surface of a serious problem, that of the relation between theory and practice. Strauss attributes to Lessing the 'concealed' view that "all practical or political life is essentially inferior to contemplative life, or that all works, and therefore also all good works, are 'superfluous' insofar as the level of theoretical life, which is self-sufficient, is reached." Speaking about Thucydides, Strauss says, apparently

in his own voice, that “wise men will always be inclined to see in political life an element of childishness.”¹ One can reply that evil works are also superfluous for theoretical life, but this does not answer the question of the ground of good works. The decency of the philosopher seems to be a contingent character trait. If morality is exoteric, could one not argue that philosophy is the most dangerous of all gifts?

Rather than develop further the tangled motives for Strauss’s great unpopularity as the rediscoverer of esotericism, let me close by raising the question of whether he used the right rhetoric for his own time and place. On balance, I prefer Hegel’s treatment of the same question in his lectures on the history of philosophy. Hegel, we recall, denies the claims, current in his own time, that Plato practiced esotericism, on the ground that the philosopher cannot philosophize with his ideas in his pockets. Immediately after, however, Hegel says that philosophy is, by its nature, esoteric. In order to show the truth of this judgment, however, one must actually philosophize, and this means with one’s ideas on the table, not concealed in one’s pockets.

This is especially true in times during which one need not employ esotericism in order to preserve one’s life or liberty. In such a time, it is incumbent upon the philosopher to present as forceful and detailed a statement of his or her doctrines as is humanly possible. Only this will attract the best young minds to a genuine philosophical encounter, as-

suming, as did Strauss, that philosophy was in radical decline. Perhaps one may suggest that Strauss, very far from practicing esotericism himself, as is widely believed today, was on all crucial points extraordinarily frank. Straussian frankness, of course, is not the same as Nietzsche’s. In Strauss’s case, frankness can itself be a form of esotericism.

*Leo Strauss
in Chicago*

¹ The first quotation is from Leo Strauss, “Exoteric Teaching,” in *The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism*, selected and introduced by Thomas L. Pangle (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 64. The second is from Leo Strauss, “Thucydides: The Meaning of Political History,” in *ibid.*, 74.