Leo Strauss

Aristotle's Ethics

A course offered in the winter and spring of 1968
at Claremont Men's College

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The Leo Strauss Transcript Project

Leo Strauss is well known as a thinker and writer, but he also had tremendous impact as a teacher. In the transcripts of his courses one can see Strauss comment on texts, including many he wrote little or nothing about, and respond generously to student questions and objections. The transcripts, amounting to more than twice the volume of Strauss's published work, add immensely to the material available to scholars and students of Strauss's work.

In the early 1950s mimeographed typescripts of student notes of Strauss's courses were distributed among his students. In winter 1954, the first recording, of his course on natural right, was transcribed and distributed to students. Strauss's colleague Herbert J. Storing obtained a grant from the Relm Foundation to support the taping and transcription, which resumed on a regular basis in the winter of 1956 with Strauss's course "Historicism and Modern Relativism." Of the 39 courses Strauss taught at the University of Chicago from 1958 until his departure in 1968, 34 were recorded and transcribed. After he retired from Chicago, recording of his courses continued at Claremont Men's College in the spring of 1968 and the fall and spring of 1969 (although the tapes for his last two courses there have not been located), and at St. John's College for the four years until his death in October 1973.

The surviving original audio recordings vary widely in quality and completeness, and after they had been transcribed, the audiotapes were sometimes reused, leaving the audio record very incomplete. Over time the audiotape deteriorated. Beginning in the late 1990s, Stephen Gregory, then administrator of the University's John M. Olin Center for Inquiry into the Theory and Practice of Democracy funded by the John M. Olin Foundation, initiated digital remastering of the surviving tapes by Craig Harding of September Media to ensure their preservation, improve their audibility, and make possible their eventual publication. This project received financial support from the Olin Center and from the Division of Preservation and Access of the National Endowment for the Humanities. The remastered audiofiles are available at the Strauss Center website: https://leostrausscenter.uchicago.edu/courses.

Strauss permitted the taping and transcribing to go forward but did not check the transcripts or otherwise participate in the project. Accordingly, Strauss's close associate and colleague Joseph Cropsey originally put the copyright in his own name, though he assigned copyright to the Estate of Leo Strauss in 2008. Beginning in 1958 a headnote was placed at the beginning of each transcript: "This transcription is a written record of essentially oral material, much of which developed spontaneously in the classroom and none of which was prepared with publication in mind. The transcription is made available to a limited number of interested persons, with the understanding that no use will be made of it that is inconsistent with the private and partly informal origin of the material. Recipients are emphatically requested not to seek to increase the circulation of the transcription. This transcription has not been checked, seen, or passed on by the lecturer." In 2008, Strauss's heir, his daughter Jenny Strauss, asked Nathan Tarcov to succeed

Joseph Cropsey as Strauss's literary executor. They agreed that because of the widespread circulation of the old, often inaccurate and incomplete transcripts and the continuing interest in Strauss's thought and teaching, it would be a service to interested scholars and students to proceed with publication of the remastered audiofiles and transcripts. They were encouraged by the fact that Strauss himself signed a contract with Bantam Books to publish four of the transcripts although in the end none were published.

The University's Leo Strauss Center, established in 2008, launched a project, presided over by its director, Nathan Tarcov, and managed by Stephen Gregory, to correct the old transcripts on the basis of the remastered audiofiles as they became available, transcribe those audiofiles not previously transcribed, and annotate and edit for readability all the transcripts including those for which no audiofiles survived. This project was supported by grants from the Winiarski Family Foundation, Mr. Richard S. Shiffrin and Mrs. Barbara Z. Schiffrin, Earhart Foundation, and the Hertog Foundation, and contributions from numerous other donors. The Strauss Center was ably assisted in its fundraising efforts by Nina Botting-Herbst and Patrick McCusker of the Office of the Dean of the Division of the Social Sciences at the University.

Senior scholars familiar with both Strauss's work and the texts he taught were commissioned as editors, with preliminary work done in most cases by student editorial assistants. The goal in editing the transcripts has been to preserve Strauss's original words as much as possible while making the transcripts easier to read. Strauss's impact (and indeed his charm) as a teacher is revealed in the sometimes informal character of his remarks. Readers should make allowance for the oral character of the transcripts. There are careless phrases, slips of the tongue, repetitions, and possible mistranscriptions. However enlightening the transcripts are, they cannot be regarded as the equivalent of works that Strauss himself wrote for publication.

Nathan Tarcov, Editor-in-Chief
Gayle McKeen, Managing Editor
August 2014

Note to the Reader
Ronna Burger, Tulane University

This is the second course Strauss offered on Aristotle's *Ethics*. The first was in spring 1963 in the Political Science Department of University of Chicago. Strauss's fundamental approach is common to both courses, although distinct issues naturally arise, especially in response to students' concerns, while the most striking difference is the material treated. In contrast with the earlier course, which covers in order the ten books of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, more than a third of the lectures in the 1968 course are devoted to the theme of happiness in book 1, a few to moral virtue in the opening chapters of book 2 and the question of responsibility in the first half of book 3, most of the rest to the examination of justice in book 5. When in the fourteenth session Strauss reaches the issue of deliberation, he remarks at the end that they won't have time to discuss the final section of book 3, but "we have no one with a whip behind us who tells us how much of the *Ethics* to read or not." For comments on central themes in Strauss's reading of Aristotle's *Ethics*, see the introduction to his 1963 course.

Editorial Headnote

This course was taught in seminar form: Strauss began class with general remarks; a student then read aloud portions of the text, followed by Strauss's comments and reponses to student questions and comments. The texts used in the course were Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Sir David Ross (London: Oxford Universitiy Press, 1954), and Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934). When the text was read aloud in class, this transcript records the words as they appear in the texts. Original spelling has been retained, and citations are included.

We do not have a class roster with the names of students who attended the class; hence the spelling of some student names may be inaccurate.

The course met for 25 sessions. Audiofiles have survived for all except sessions 1 and 24. Session 5 was only partially recorded. The transcripts of sessions 2–23 and session 25 are based upon the remastered audiofiles; the transcripts of sessions 1 and 24 are based on the original transcript, made by persons unknown to us.

This transcript was edited by Joseph A. Haydt, with assistance from Aaron Roberts, Sarah Ellison, and Jeremy Bell. The introduction was written by Ronna Burger.

Session 1: February 12, 1968[i]

Leo Strauss: The subject of this course has been called "The Ethical Foundations of Politics." The manner of treatment is that we will study together Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* in order to learn something from him about it. Now why do we choose this subject and this manner of treatment?

In the first place, this is a serious issue which is indicated by the expression "the ethical foundations of politics." Let us not take anything for granted. In the present-day discussions about the war in Vietnam, you hear arguments both for and against the war on grounds of expediency. But you hear also arguments for or against the war on grounds of morality or immorality, justice or injustice as well. This would seem to show that there is an issue here: the ethical foundations of politics. The general question of course has nothing to do with the war in Vietnam in particular but means: must politics have an ethical foundation, or not? It is by no means evident that it must[1].

In order to avoid entanglements in present-day controversy, I will read to you a few sentences about a foreign statesman (a German statesman, as a matter of fact) called Bismarck. I read from a book about him by an historian called Eyck, not to be mistaken with the former president: "certainly the most passionate advocate of Prussian ascendancy, after an interview with Bismarck in the last days before the war [of '66—LS] he confessed that he was very much impressed by Bismarck's personality, but he added: 'of the *moral powers* in the world he has *not the slightest notion*!'"[ii] Of the same Bismarck an English journal, *The Spectator*, wrote: "The man's policy is detestable, but his objects are great, his plans adequate and his ability marvelous."[iii] So I think that is an illustration among many illustrations which one could give of the questions with which we are concerned. The question applies most vividly to foreign affairs, but[2] [it applies] to domestic affairs as well.

There are two fundamental alternatives which are popularly known, the one being Machiavellianism, which can be said to be the view that there are no moral foundations of politics; and [the other], the anti-Machiavellian view. In this case, we do not have a single name as in the case of Machiavelli. There is no such classic of the good view. But Thomas Paine in this country and Kant in Germany would perhaps be the most famous representatives of the anti-Machiavellian view in modern times. Now the Machiavellians of today, which you may even find on campuses, are likely to reject anti-Machiavellianism as an ideology, to say that the only nonideological approach is of course to forget about such nonsense as morality. But this is not a very good argument, because the same would be true of Machiavellianism, namely, that it too is an ideology, the reason being that Machiavellianism asserts in fact: "Don't pay any attention to morality," which is a negative ought. But according to the view now prevailing, all oughts, positive or negative, cannot be rationally established but have the character of value judgments. So we cannot leave it at this view, that anti-Machiavellianism is an ideology.

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[i] The audio recording of this first session did not survive. The text is taken from the original transcript.

[ii] Strauss quotes from Erich Eyck, *Bismarck and the German Empire* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1950). The interviewer referred to in this passage is Heinrich von Treitschke.

[iii] Quoted in Eyck, *Bismarck*, 118.

I come to a more serious question. Why do we speak of ethical foundations of politics? The term is of Greek origin and occurs, in a way, for the first time in Aristotle. The footnotes I will give later. But it is not necessary to speak of what we have in mind as "quote ethical unquote," for that implies a certain interpretation of a phenomenon that need not be interpreted in this manner. I read to you a passage from the Old Testament, Prophet Micah, chapter 6, verse 8: "The Lord has shown thee, O man, what is good: and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justice, and love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" You see here there is no word which could possibly be translated by "ethical." The word which is most important here is the word "good," and that of course exists in all languages, including the Greek language. But between good and ethical there is a difference, and we will try to understand it.

In order to find out what is implied when we speak of ethics, we shall study the earliest work entitled "Ethics" available to us, namely, Aristotle's *Ethics*. When the Greek language migrated to Rome some centuries after Aristotle, the word "ethical" became translated by "moral." [The] Romans did not have an exact word for what the Greeks called *ethos*. Their word for *ethos* was a plural, *mores*, which as you know is still used. But ethics and morals have the same meaning. And you must not be misled by present-day American usage, by which a woman of easy manners would probably be called immoral by old-fashioned people, while a pharmacist who is not very correct would probably be called not immoral but unethical. It is worth considering how this difference between ethical and moral emerged, but it is of no interest except to say that it is uninteresting.

Now I have already implicitly answered the question with which I started: why do we treat our theme by studying Aristotle's *Ethics*? We study it not as historians or antiquarians, or merely because we would like to know something about another culture which is so famous, the Greek culture, but we do it for a serious reason, for a respectable reason. We would like to acquire some clarity, within the limits possible in such a short course, about our own premises, our own hidden presuppositions. More simply stated, inquiry of the kind which we have in mind is an attempt to replace opinion about important matters[3] [with] knowledge about them. In order to do this in a clean and clear manner, we have to know in the first place what our opinions are. It is not so simple that some pollster, by just asking [for] them could elicit them. Sometimes we have to make a genuine effort to discover our opinions. But when we are engaged in that process, we see very often that our opinions are not just our opinions or those of Mr. X or Y, and not merely of him and his peers, social or otherwise, but that they are opinions inherited from the past. So in order to clarify these opinions you would have to go back to the past epoch when these opinions were originally founded, created, or formulated, or whichever word you prefer. Therefore, as is shown by the mere words "ethical" and "moral," which are not from today or yesterday but go back to centuries ago, we cannot clear up their meaning, we cannot reach clarity about our own self without going back, for instance, to Aristotle. Especially in our case to Aristotle.

Now there was a modern philosopher who stated this view in an unusually clear manner, and that was Hegel, in the preface to his book called *The Phenomenology of the Mind*. I will read to you.

"The manner of study in ancient times is distinct from that of modern times, in that the former consisted in the veritable training and perfecting of the natural consciousness. ["Natural" means untrained here.—LS] Trying its powers at each part of its life severally, and philosophizing about everything it came across, the natural consciousness [the prephilosophic consciousness, you might say—LS] transformed itself into a universality of abstract understanding, which was active in every matter and in every respect. In

modern times, however, the individual finds the abstract form [the concept—LS] ready made."[iv]

In modern times, from the very beginning of modernity, the concepts, the fundamental concepts were ready-made. Their making, their genesis, was no longer a matter of interest. Everyone knew there was such a thing as nature, for example; why should we worry about that?[4] Aristotle, who was a great authority up to this point, made some gross blunders in this respect which must be corrected. But that there is such a thing as nature goes without saying. In other words, one of the greatest discoveries or inventions that the human mind [had] ever made, the discovery or invention of nature, was disregarded as irrelevant, and immense problems were thus swept under the rug.

Now Hegel makes here a remark, as you have seen, about the difference between modern times and ancient times, and a certain superiority of ancient times. The ancient philosophers began from scratch, at the beginning. Not at the beginning of human thought—there was[5] human thought before philosophy—but at the beginnings of philosophic thought. Modern philosophy, however technical and sophisticated it may claim to be, is the heir to the tremendous work done in the philosophy of antiquity. These modern achievements, however great they may be, have a peculiarly derivative character compared with the primary character of classical thought.

We would see in reading Aristotle's *Ethics*, and would see perhaps more clearly from reading his *Politics*, that the amount of technical terms [is smaller than that] found in any modern book. And Aristotle is already rather late in Greek philosophy, after Plato and others. I think it is necessary as a first step, if we want to understand a line of Aristotle, to have some notion (superficial, yes, but also more or less concrete) of this enormous difference between the modern and the ancients.

At the end of the seventeenth century there was a famous controversy in Western Europe, in France and England in particular, called the quarrel between the ancients and the moderns. That was partly a very silly quarrel, as all such quarrels are when they come into the wrong hands, if I may say so. But you must not forget one great book in the English language, the work of Jonathan Swift which shows that it can also fall into the right hands.[v] And the seeming issue is whether Corneille or Racine, or Dryden, for that matter, is as good a tragic poet or perhaps even a better tragic poet than Sophocles or Euripides. This is a part of the story; but the interesting part of it was of course not dramatic or epic poetry but philosophy, or what at that time was the same thing: [physics]. Is Aristotle's physics the right teaching or is the Cartesian–Newtonian physics? A radical, fundamental difference between two ways of looking at all things.

Now if we do not know of this, if we do not reflect on this from the very beginning, we will read Aristotle with our modern language, and that is inevitable, especially for those who are unable to turn from the translations to the original, because the translators are of

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[iv] See G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. J. B. Baillie, 2nd ed. (London: George Allen & Unwin; New York: Humanities Press, 1949), 94. Strauss apparently reads from but freely adapts Baillie's translation of this passage, which runs: "The manner of study in ancient times is distinct from that of the modern world, in that the former consisted in the cultivation and perfecting of the natural mind. Testing life carefully at all points, philosophizing about everything it came across, the former created an experience permeated through and through by universals. In modern times, however, an individual finds the abstract form ready made."

[v] See Jonathan Swift, "The Battle of the Books," published in the first edition of *A Tale of a Tub* (1704).

course modern men, naturally, and they think it is their first duty to make Aristotle intelligible to modern readers immediately. That is not so simple, that they should make him intelligible to modern readers. This requires some precautionary measures which they do not usually take.

Now I begin in a bureaucratic manner, which I find is sometimes very good to gain provisional clarity. We shall start by contrasting the ancient, in particular the Aristotelian division of philosophy with the one prevailing today. And then we will begin to understand what we are studying. Aristotle's division of philosophy is this: there is first a preamble or prelude, called logic. Then there are two parts: one is called theoretical sciences, and the other is called practical sciences. The theoretical sciences are divided into three, called mathematics, physics, and let us call the third theology—the more common traditional name was metaphysics. And [the] practical sciences [are] ethics, economics, and politics. Now it is [also] important to know this[6] for the reason that we are trying to understand Aristotle's *Ethics*, and we must know what precisely is the place which it occupies within the whole of Aristotle's thought. We get a notion from this: it is the first of the practical sciences. The general view of Aristotle, I would like to underline right away, is that the theoretical sciences are higher in rank than the practical sciences. This is especially true of the highest of the theoretical sciences, physics and metaphysics, that they are much higher in rank than any practical science. We will come across this again as we go on.

Now when we turn to the view now prevailing, I ventured to take the catalogues of the colleges around here: Claremont, Pomona, and so on. Permit me to read to you. That is after all objective evidence. There was no attempt made, of course, to print them in order, because there are many different courses given. I will read to you. "Ethics." We recognize that. "Metaphysics." We recognize that. "Epistemology." Not there. "Logic." There. "History of Philosophy." Not there. "Philosophy of the Mind." Not there. "Philosophic Theology." Yes. "Political and Legal Philosophy." Perhaps. "Aesthetics." Not there. "Philosophy of Art," if that is something different from aesthetics. Not there. "Philosophy of Language." Not there. "Philosophy of Religion." Not there.

I could take also other authorities regarding the division of science in modern times, but I think I will stop there. I will only mention one thing regarding Hegel since I mentioned him before. In his *Encyclopedia of Philosophic Sciences*, there exists logic, philosophy of nature, [and] philosophy of the mind, and this is subdivided into morality of the state, aesthetics, [and] philosophy of religion, which is not found in Aristotle. And in addition, Hegel gave lectures which were not part of his printed works on the philosophy of history, which is not in Aristotle, and on [the] history of philosophy, also not in Aristotle. So some very great, profound changes have taken place, and some of them we should at least mention.

One thing is most striking, and is implied in the data which I submitted to you. But I will try to address the question to you, so that we reach some communication. What is the most striking difference, overall difference, between the Aristotelian scheme and the scheme prevailing now?

Student: [. . .][vi]

[vi] In this and other cases in this session, where the transcriber indicated that that a comment was "inaudible," we have substituted ellipses in square brackets.

LS: Yes. In other words, there are quite a few things in Aristotle which are not in the modern scheme. But is not the converse also true? Where do you find mathematics as part of philosophy, unless you say symbolic logic and mathematics are the same? Where do you find physics as a part of philosophy in modern times? So the mere numerical difference is quite striking, but it is not illuminating.

Student: [. . .]

LS: That is very important. And no less a man than Hegel has said it, especially regarding ethics: only in modern times did ethics become a theoretical science, meaning that up to, say, 1700 or so, maybe a bit earlier, ethics was not a theoretical but a practical science. But that is not the most striking thing.

Student: Could it be that several of Aristotle's divisions of philosophy have become empirical? That is, there is now a mathematics of politics, physics, economics, and so on.

LS: Yes, that is probably sound, but I take issue with one of the expressions you used, and that is "empirical." That is one of these words which needs considerable explanation. But let me state it more simply: for Aristotle, there is no distinction between philosophy and science. They are identical. There are other things that Aristotle calls arts, the art of the shoemaker, the art of the carpenter, the art of the dramatic poet, but they are not sciences. The sciences are part of philosophy. Whether these sciences are "empirical" or "a priori," that is not a question which arises on Aristotelian terms. We must beware of complicating things by starting with modern terms which we have not yet understood. Now this is the key event, an event which is contemporary with us, affecting us every day in every respect, one could almost say: the distinction of philosophy and science or the separation of philosophy and science which has taken place in modern times. This can be explained very simply as follows. In premodern times, Aristotle was up to the sixteenth century in philosophy still the demigod, but he was never uncontested. There were other philosophic schools; now all these schools had a physics: there was an Aristotelian physics, a Platonic physics, a Stoic physics, and an Epicurean physics. There was not *the* physics in the way in which there is *the* art of making shoes. There were no different Aristotelian or Stoic or Epicurean ways of making shoes. It was left to the competent men to be the shoemakers. But as far as physics was concerned, to take this most important example, there was not *the* physics but always a specific physics of a specific school. Now this was vilified, not without justice, as a disgraceful state of things. The important questions, not those dealt with competently by carpenters and shoemakers but which concerned the cosmos, would be treated in such radically different ways by different philosophic schools. And therefore they said, "We must make a revolution." They didn't use that word yet, but they meant it. "We must begin from the beginning, doubt everything; especially that terrible tradition represented by Aristotle."

Now that happened in the seventeenth century, and the greatest name is that of Descartes, but also Hobbes can be mentioned. Now they made a new physics which was much more mathematical than any previous physics had been, and this physics met with an amazing success. It culminated in the work of Newton, and it deflated all other physics in the world for good, because the fate of Newtonian physics in the twentieth century is only an additional victory of Newton and not a refutation of him, because it is a victory according to Newtonian principles. Now physics became then, to use a bad word, "metaphysically neutral." Forgive me, I will never use it again, but this is the first class. And that is of course a neutrality true not only of physics but also of the other natural sciences, chemistry, and biology and so on.

Now this was a science, as distinguished from philosophy. That distinction came out only in the eighteenth century. The sciences had then a character which the rest of philosophy did not have: the sciences agreed, or at least they knew what to do in case of disagreement. There were other questions left to the philosophers, and there was of course as before a disgraceful anarchy: the philosophers could not agree, not only regarding the answers but even regarding the questions. No wonder that science became *the* authority and philosophy became disgraceful, a relic of an unenlightened past tolerated insofar as it was willing to be the handmaid of science, and quite a few of our contemporaries think that is exactly what philosophy should be. But all other parts of philosophy, all other interpretations of philosophy are as absurd as those of alchemy, astrology and so on, only they appeal a bit more to the heart than astrologers and alchemists generally do.

But this surely is the great difference: the distinction between philosophy and science. Once you have this distinction, it is the merest step, which can be made by the meanest capacity without any guidance, to say we must apply the same distinction to politics. There is a political science which fundamentally takes as its model the natural sciences, and that is solid and respectable, where you go out and ask people what they think about President Johnson and so on. And then there is political philosophy, and that deserves the fate of the other parts of philosophy: contempt and oblivion. Now this is in our age, since about eighty years [ago] but more pronounced in this country after the First World War. There is a distinction made, with which you have all been made familiar in high school, I assume: that there is a sphere of facts, and that is roughly the sphere of science; and there are other things called values. And these values, in the sense of "evaluating," are beyond the sphere of science and are left to the arbitrary decision of the individual or of society. Therefore, according to the view now prevailing, there cannot be ethical foundations of politics, for that would mean evaluating rational activity at the bottom of or indissolubly linked with the study of political science.[vii]

There are other points which one could mention to illustrate what I said. For example, aesthetics, we said, is absent from the Aristotelian scheme. Aristotle has written a *Poetics*, which is the doctrine of poetry, of how to write and perhaps also to judge drama and tragedy. But there is no "aesthetics" there. Why is that so? Well, aesthetics emerged under this name during the eighteenth century in Germany, shortly before the great flowering of philosophy in Germany, and it led very soon to the view, underlined especially by Hegel, according to which that which is by nature beautiful, such as the human body or certain breeds of dogs or birds—that all natural beauty is much lower in rank than the beauty created by art. The common ground between modern aesthetics in its earlier form at least and what Aristotle and Plato intended was the concern with the beautiful. But in Aristotle, concern with the beautiful had, so to speak, nothing to do with art. I exaggerate a bit. In the present-day view, the concern with beauty is identical or almost identical with the concern with art. What has taken place is only an illustration of the fundamental change of which I have spoken before: nature has lost the status which she had in former times. And what nature lost, man gained, and especially such men as those who produced works of art.

A similar conclusion would be arrived at if we [consider] the fact that there is no philosophy of history in Aristotle, or for that matter in any other classical writer. History became so important because of a decrease in [the] importance of nature. How these two

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[vii] For Strauss's account of this conception of values and its historical origins, see chapter 2 of Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), 35-80.

fundamental facts I mentioned [relate]—the decrease in [the] importance of nature and the emergence of science in the modern sense—that I ask you to figure out for yourself. I will only quote the remark of a very respectable classical scholar, which I occasionally will, to this effect: when the ancients spoke of natural science, the emphasis was on nature, natural. When we speak of natural science, the emphasis is on science.

Now I have hitherto argued on the basis of the premise that the quarrel between the ancients and the moderns, this fundamental change in human thought about everything that has taken place since the seventeenth century, is decisive for an understanding of anything, and in particular for the ethical foundations of politics. But is this truly the most important issue? Let me return to the beginning of this lecture. I mentioned the expression "Machiavellianism," the view that politics is incompatible with any ethical foundations, to say it very simply, which doesn't mean that a wise politician wouldn't be ethical from time to time; of course he would. But this precisely is his unethical practice, that he is moral *from time to time*. Therefore, as Machiavelli in his great clarity put it, he will use virtues and vices according to the circumstances. In some circumstances, it is very foolish to be vicious—virtue pays much better—but in other circumstances the opposite is true. And then the conclusion is so simple that I am ashamed to spell it out.

Now [are] Machiavellianism and its opposite, which I called anti-Machiavellianism, not much more important than the quarrel of the ancients and the moderns? And is this not an issue which is wholly untouched by the emergence of the modern mind in contradistinction to the ancient mind? Are there not in both epochs both Machiavellians and anti-Machiavellians? The answer on that level at which we ask it would be an emphatic yes, and you would know some examples. Do you know some Machiavellians in this broad and loose sense in classical antiquity? I really would like to establish some contact, and therefore I raise this question.

Student: Callicles.

LS: Yes, very good. And another one, perhaps the most important.

Student: The Melian dialogue.[viii]

LS: Yes. And on the other hand, we find of course anti-Machiavellians in classical antiquity, Aristotle perhaps the most outstanding of them; and in modern times, Kant and Thomas Paine, whom I mentioned before. Now this is undoubtedly true, that there are issues which are not affected by that fundamental change of which I spoke before, but nevertheless there may be a profound difference between modern Machiavellianism and premodern Machiavellianism. And similarly, correspondingly there may be a profound difference between modern anti-Machiavellianism and ancient anti-Machiavellianism. So Machiavellianism does not mean exactly the same thing when applied to Machiavelli, or when applied to the Athenians of the island of Melos, Callicles, or Thrasymachus and such people. Still, we must try to get a notion of what has not been changed regarding our great issue, in that great quarrel of the moderns with the ancients.

First, let me get rid of the proper name Machiavellianism, because that would mean identification with this particular individual, and let me also get rid of anti-Machiavellianism. I think it is possible provisionally to call the one alternative idealism and the other materialism, meaning this (because those words have many

[viii] See Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 5.84-116.

meanings): that a man who believes that there are ethical foundations of politics may be called an idealist; a man who denies them may be called a materialist.

Now what do we mean by these terms idealism and materialism in a broader context? There is one view according to which man is the only earthly being that is akin to the highest ground of everything; or, which is only a reformulation of the same thing: only the highest in man is akin to what is the highest simply. [The view was formed][7] that the highest in man is the intellect, and that the highest simply was the ruling mind. This a short time ago would have been called idealism. The alternative view is then that the highest in men or man as such is not more akin to the highest than anything else, a view which you find not only in our time but also in classical antiquity. The people who asserted that the ultimate cause of everything are atoms and the void meant—and did not merely imply, but meant—that man's superiority, his intelligence, has no more to do with these true elements of the whole, the atoms and the void, than perhaps a stone or a dog.

In more practical terms, by idealism I understand provisionally the view which tries to understand the low in the light of the high. By materialism I understand the view which tries to understand the high in the light of the low. In other words, the one school of thought, if this is not too narrow a term, tries to understand behavior in the light of the highest possible human behavior, and the other in the opposite way, because it would say [that] what is most common should be the key to what is less common. Therefore the most common, in the other meaning of the word "common," should be the key to the highest.

In classical antiquity both parties agreed as to man's being a part of the whole of nature, even if man is its most noble part. Accordingly, they said that the good life is the life in accordance with nature. Both schools said that, but the difference between the idealists and materialists is this: the materialists said [that] the good is identical with the pleasant. Morals, as we would say, or the noble and just, as they saw it, [are] only for the sake of the pleasant. For example, if you want to have sound sleep, you will not give false testimony, because then you may be disturbed by dreams of arrest, if not by knocking at your door. In other words, this view called hedonism, being the view that the good is identical with the pleasant, or reducible to the pleasant, was fundamentally and knowingly selfish and in no way public-spirited. The alternative view, the idealistic view, was definitely public-spirited. And according to that view, the moral, or the noble and just, is higher than the pleasant. The remarkable thing is that in classical antiquity only the idealistic view of the whole led to political philosophy. Only the idealistic philosophers were public-spirited. The materialistic philosophers were not public-spirited; therefore they did not develop a political philosophy in any serious sense of the term.

Now when we turn to modernity (and by this I will come to a conclusion of these introductory remarks), the peculiarity of modernity as it exists from the time of Bacon and Descartes can be reduced to this proposition: while man is obviously primarily a part of the whole, he can become the master of the whole, a thought wholly alien to the ancients. Nay, *without* human mastery of the whole, the whole is very imperfect. Think of all the diseases[ix] which are produced without such mastery.

The condition prior to any human effort at mastery was called in the practical seventeenth century the state of nature, especially by Hobbes in a beautiful formulation. We know

[ix] This word is uncertain.

how he described it: "nasty, brutish, and short."[x] That is nature, the state of nature, and we make something tolerable out of it by our efforts. The depreciation of nature is implied in the human effort to subjugate nature, to conquer nature. The good life is not the life according to nature; the life according to nature would be nasty, brutish, and short. The good life is the life in which we can preserve ourselves comfortably; if I may use this expression [as] phrased by John Locke: "comfortable self-preservation." Very well, so nature is not good; it is a stepmother rather than a mother. How shall we take our bearings, then?

Now the great event in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was this: to replace nature in its normative functions by reason, so that you get, for example, instead of a law of nature, a moral law, a law of reason, which is no longer a law of nature. The final step, which [was] taken in the nineteenth century and the dimensions of which have not been mastered by anyone, is that reason was eventually replaced by history. That is, history takes the place of nature in its quasi-normative function. It would be necessary in order to put some flesh on these bones to explain in greater detail the genesis of this modern attempt, but for this we would have to know somewhat more than we are supposed to know now: first of all, about classical political philosophy, and then about what the revolution or revolt against classical political philosophy by Machiavelli meant. There may be an occasion later on of course to go into this.

For the moment, I would like to add one remark. When we see this question of the ancient and modern, we see immediately that the quarrel was not an event that happened in the seventeenth or the early eighteenth century but is [still] with us, if it is true that what modern thought aims at is to make man the master of his fate. Then the question arises, and it arises more easily today than prior to 1945: can man be the master of his fate in any serious sense? I mean not the individual [as master] of his fate within society, but mankind, man as the species: can he be the master of his fate? That is a question for us, and when you look at the daily papers and consider the possibilities of nuclear war and other things of the same kind which are partly available and partly will be available within a very short time, it is not so obvious in every respect a sound decision to say: Let us increase man's power thousandfold, millionfold, and then he will be happy. Because power and wisdom are two different things, and while modern science and technology are wonderful in giving us power, they do not give us wisdom, and they do not claim to give us wisdom. I know that some[8] write articles in the Sunday magazines in their capacity as scientists, but their statements there are not scientific statements but simply [statements] made by men who happen to be scientists. There is no connection between their human wisdom and their science. Therefore, to repeat, the quarrel between the ancients and the moderns is at the bottom of all our problems today. None of these problems can be properly articulated, adequately articulated, without having paid due consideration to this quarrel.

Now this much in the way of an introduction. We should begin at the beginning of Aristotle's *Ethics*. I made arrangements that you should have copies today. I suppose some of you at least will have copies. Now how shall we proceed? At another place, where I taught formerly, I had an old student of mine, Mr. Reinken,[xi] whom some of you know, who acted as my reader. He had a very clear enunciation, and he read in a very medieval manner, and I think it is a practical procedure, although it is medieval. I wonder if there is not here someone who is willing to do that service for me. Well, shall I ask you

[x] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (1651), part 1, chapter 13.

[xi] Donald Reinken served as reader in many of Strauss's courses at the University of Chicago.

to do that? Good. Very slowly, and sit here. Now we forget about the introduction except occasionally to think about it, and begin literally at the beginning.

Reader:
Every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action and every pursuit, is thought to aim at some good; and for this reason the good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim. (1094a1-3)[xii]

LS: Good. Let us stop here. There are some minor corrections. "Every art and every inquiry, similarly art as well as choice, is thought to strive for some good. Therefore people have nobly"—or "rightly"—"described the good as that for which all things strive." So all specific[ally] human activities, that is what Aristotle seems to say, aim at some good. Or is there any specific[ally] human activity which Aristotle has omitted? Art, in the wide sense, where it includes also the fine arts, science, and action. What else is there specifically human which he has omitted? Could we quarrel with him on this point? We should think about that. That science, or inquiry—inquiry means "the way after" in Greek—pursues also the good I believe is not difficult to understand, the good being the truth.

You see, Aristotle is dealing with two kinds of things here. "Every art and every method," literally, "similarly [every] action as well as choice, is thought to strive for some good." He makes the distinction: on the one hand you have art, and on the other science. You must distinguish between action and choice. What does this mean? He puts it here dramatically, almost metrically: "Every art and every method, similarly action as well as choice"—avoiding "all," but meaning it. What does he mean by that? In the first place, it is an indication of this great distinction between the theoretical and practical, although it is not identical with that by any means. Why does he make a distinction between action and choice? Do you have any action without choice? The choice may be foolish, but still, must they not always be together? I believe what Aristotle has in mind is that he wants to make a kind of parallelism on both sides. Two items: art and science on the one side; on the other, the outgoing, visible action. And the inner thing, just as science is inner: choice. The Greek means preferring, preference: choosing one thing in preference to another. But one could say [that] if someone chooses blackberry pie in preference to cherry pie, it is also a choice, isn't it? One does not mean [choices like] that; therefore some translations say "moral choice." In order to avoid the word "moral" here, let us say this: Aristotle means by choice such acts with a view to which we are called noble or base. No one is called noble or base because he prefers this kind of pie to that kind of pie. But we do not have another word to use [here] except "choice."

Now when he says "is thought to be . . . all things are thought to strive toward some good": the Greek word is normally translated by "it seems to be," but it[xiii] has a great range of meanings, from mere seeming, to "it is held to be" (which would still be seeming), to a kind of expression of courtesy. You don't want to be too emphatic, don't wish to say "It is so," so "[It] seems," you say [instead]. That is not a difficulty, but the difficulty is this. Granted that all human pursuits strive for some good, does this satisfy our saying that all things strive for some good, as Aristotle seems to say? Man is obviously a being which acts, which pursues purposes. But do all things have purposes? Do stones have purposes? Well, you know surely this much, that according to Aristotle stones do have purposes. That is one of the grave errors to which he [was] given. The

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[xii] The student reads from Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Sir David Ross (London: Oxford University Press, 1954).

[xiii] Strauss proceeds to delineate several senses of the Greek verb in question (*dokei*).

stones, like everything else, are seeking their natural place. This theory of gravitation differs from the Newtonian one. Does it follow when we start from the purposes of man that all things are purposive? Surely not. Only under one condition did Aristotle make a case for this view: on the condition that man is the key to everything, so that even the form of a stone cannot be properly understood unless it is viewed in the light of human action—human mental action.

At any rate, what the first sentence suggests is this: not only all men but all beings strive for the same thing, for the good. So there are no questions. If all things strive for the good, [then] from a practical point of view there is no question. If all beings strive for the same, then this is the end of all effort. But then how does he go on? Read slowly.

Reader:
But a certain difference is found among ends.

LS: Yes, now there is a certain difference—one could almost say discord—of the ends. So this beautiful harmony that all things strive for the same [thing] is disturbed by this discord. The ends: that means the good things, of course. Surely all beings strive for the good. But the good of the cat is not the good of the dog. Aristotle does not have merely this in mind. But that is the general structure of the first chapter, that he gradually introduces us to the enormous differences and discords which exist in all the spheres of the good and the bad.

Reader:
Some are activities, others are products apart from the activities that produce them.

LS: Now it is obvious he has in mind the differences among human ends. There are activities which are ends in themselves. Dancing need not have another purpose except to dance. Think of a ballet dance. But there are others where the activity is not an end. What the shoemaker does: the end is not shoemaking (except in the case of some shoemakers), but the shoe, the thing separate from (a result of) the activity. This is easy to understand, I believe.

Reader:
Where there are ends apart from the actions, it is the nature of the products to be better than the activities. (1094a3-6)

LS: Aristotle indicates here something of the general procedure in this chapter and to some extent in the whole book. There are a variety of ends. He has given us one specimen. But at least in one sphere, when the end is different from the activity, [as in] shoemaking, in these things the products, [the] works, are by nature better than the activities. You prefer the shoe to the shoemakers, and you have interest in the shoemaking only because it is productive of shoes. That is at least what Aristotle here assumes. So in other words, it is by nature. There is a great variety of ends, a confusing variety, but there is also some natural order. The fact that shoemaking and dancing are different things is mitigated by the fact that in the sphere of shoemaking we know at least that the shoemaking is intrinsically lower, by nature worse, than the shoe. Of course, a question is not answered: what about the order of rank between the two kinds of ends? On the one hand we have the shoes, houses, or whatever it may be, and on the other hand we have dancing and other activities. Which of the two is the higher, the activities as activities or the products as products? This question Aristotle doesn't answer. So we are truly at the beginning. Now let us read.

Reader:

Now, as there are many actions, arts, and sciences, their ends also are many; the end of the medical art is health, that of shipbuilding a vessel, that of strategy victory, that of economics wealth.

LS: There are also kinds of human activities which do not lead up to works, to products, and these activities are arts and sciences. One might perhaps translate[9] [sciences] by "knowledges" to be closer to the Greek and to avoid certain connotations going with the present-day word "science."[xiv] Again we see a very great variety of ends. He gives here only examples which show the variety of arts, as you see. These are all arts: [the] medical art, the shipbuilding art, the strategic and the economic art. Not all of them are devoted to a final good. For example, a man could say: "Health is surely a very great good and I don't have to have a reason why I should be well." Some people would say that of wealth, I believe. But regarding shipbuilding, all men I think would agree that the shipbuilding art is in the service of another art, namely, the art of sailing. You build ships in order to use them. If you want a ship for a museum, that is a special case into which we do not have to go here. So this great variety of the arts to which he points by giving these four examples is a very abbreviated indication of the great variety of ends, because there is nothing said about the variety of actions and of the sciences here. Now let us go on.

Reader:
But where such arts fall under a single capacity—as bridle-making and the other arts concerned with the equipment of horses fall under the art of riding, and this and every military action under strategy, in the same way other arts fall under yet others.

LS: Here Aristotle, [having shown the bewildering variety of ends, shows the limits to this variety, proceeding fundamentally in the same way as before][10]. The variety of the ends is somehow limited by the hierarchic order of at least some of the arts. Everyone will admit that the bridle-making art is subject to riding. The horseman will tell the bridlemaker why he needs a bridle and will give him the general idea. The horseman is unable to invent the bridle, perhaps, or to make it, but nevertheless the bridlemaker is the servant of the horseman. But the horseman himself is of course in his fullest form the cavalryman, and he is as such subject to a cavalry commander. The cavalry commander, himself a big man, is still not the uppermost man; there is a man called the general, who determines what things are to be done by the cavalry.

You see Aristotle speaks here no longer of arts but of abilities. The Greek word is *dynameis*, "powers," which is broader than [the] arts. He says later on "every warlike action," and not "every warlike art," and so he has in mind the full variety of human ends of which he had spoken in the first section. Now let us read further.

Reader:
In all of these the ends of the master arts are to be preferred to all the subordinate ends; for it is for the sake of the former that the latter are pursued. (1094a6-16)

LS: Now Aristotle uses here for the first time in this work a term which has since his time become very [often] used in this peculiarly Aristotelian sense. Where he says "master art," [the Greek] is "architectonic art." Here we have one sphere of human activity, house-building, in which[11] case [it] is particularly obvious that you have all kinds of people: bricklayers, carpenters, and what have you. There is one man who decides all issues in the last resort, and that is the architect. And Aristotle uses this word, the art of the architect gives the general plan of the house and is superior to all other arts

[xiv] Strauss retranslates *epistēmē*.

dealing with housebuilding. And he enlarges the meaning of that term. He would say, for example, that the art of the general is the architectonic art regarding war. The reasoning is this: the ends of the architectonic arts are more choiceworthy than the ends of the arts subject or inferior to the architectonic arts. What we choose in the first place, what we pursue, is not that there be a wall or that there be a roof, but that there be a house; therefore we may need wood, bricks, timber, or whatever it may be, but we do not choose the house for the nails, but the nails for the house.

There is an apparent infinity of ends, and therefore also an apparent infinity of arts devoted to this infinite variety of ends. In this variety, there is order; there is not a distracting discord and confusion but harmony. Now whether Aristotle can maintain this in the face of certain difficulties we must see. But the point of view from which he looks at this is, I think, very important. Aristotle starts from the great variety of ends. And then he turns as it were from the ends to the arts, not [to] the fine arts, although they are the most noble in a way but not the most important, [but to the arts of] the shoemaker, carpenter, physician and such. Why does he do that, turn from the ends to the arts? Well, we can say that every art is a rational activity for achieving a certain end. So by turning to the rational activity he reminds us of reason and therewith of order. And then finally he will reach the point, very soon in fact, where he will assert or almost assert that this architectonic structure, which we see so easily in the case of the architect proper and the general, that this kind of subordination and superordination (let us assume there are four or five more such arts) which Aristotle now proposes will be one superarchitectonic art which ultimately controls all other arts. And what do you think is this super-art of human arts?

Student: God?

LS: Politics! Because everything that is done in a political society is directly or indirectly subject to the political society. The architect of course has to listen to what laws regarding housebuilding say. The general has of course to be subject to political authority, as we all know too well. And the one who said "God" did not say the wrong thing; she went too fast. We are speaking here of the human activity. And the roof there is the political art. But the human things are only part of the whole. And the question arises: is there not a kind of architect of the whole? And that would be—one could not but call [such an architect] God. That is perfectly sensible. There is only one objection in this case, and that is that according to Aristotle the cosmos is eternal, and since it is eternal it cannot have a maker, an architect. But within limits Aristotle can speak of that.

Now I would like to find out whether you have any questions. Protests?

Student: In your conception of the state of nature, you referred to Hobbes as an example. What would Rousseau say about that?

LS: Good point. Rousseau is so well known because he has taught the goodness of nature. Man is good; man is by nature good. Is that what you mean? Well, I give you an answer which cannot satisfy you, but a satisfactory answer would require at least a half-hour exposition, which I cannot do now. Rousseau represents in a very important part of his work an objection to Hobbes and Locke. Therefore the Hobbean solution was this: the state of nature was terrible and so let us be obedient subjects of any power that is. That is Hobbes's teaching. And protected by the king over any other sovereign, let us comfortably preserve ourselves. Now Rousseau loathed this notion; that is the view which he almost called "the view of the bourgeoisie," and he thought of the citizen as in ancient times. Therefore, to some extent Rousseau is one of the rebels, but a somewhat

closer study of Rousseau would show that while he protests against Hobbes and Locke and the others, he in fact radicalizes the modern tendency.

Student: Since Aristotle is a student of Plato, the first thing you notice upon opening this book is that it is not a dialogue. Could you comment on why it is not a dialogue?

LS: I would say—you mean, for some reason or other, you have had a course on Plato before you had a course on Aristotle?

Student: I mean, in a sense Aristotle is a pupil of Plato.

LS: Yes, but on the other hand, prior to Plato many men also didn't write dialogues. In other words, the natural way to write is to write, to use a term which is not too technical, treatises. You just put forth in your own words, without any shenanigans, what you think. That is what Aristotle does. Surely the Platonic dialogue is a great problem. The Aristotelian treatise as such is not: that is a man who has to teach something, and therefore he teaches it. And since you bring up this question of the form, let me say one point which I have made before. From Aristotle's point of view the *Ethics* is not his most important work. The *Physics* or *Metaphysics* are much more important. But I think the *Ethics* is his most beautiful book. You know the most important doesn't have to be the most beautiful, and I think at some point most of you will come to share this feeling, if you do not already now.

Student: You may think that although Aristotle saw a variety of goods in nature, that there was a harmony among the ends. But this means, for example, that if species such as human beings and bacteria are at war with each other—and until recent medical trends, bacteria won this war—there is a change in the harmony.

LS: Yes, I will answer your question, but you could have chosen a simple example which I gave: the cat and the bird. The cat wants to kill the bird, and the bird does not wish to be killed by the cat. I think we can assume this fact; you can even observe it from time to time. Is there harmony? Aristotle would say, yes, ultimate harmony—not that the bird ever likes it, but it is in a way [harmonious] that the cat eats the bird, because the cat is in a way a higher animal than the bird.

Student: If the cat is higher than the bird and he kills the bird, well, if man is higher than these bacteria, he has to kill these bacteria.

LS: Sure, he does it all the time.

Student: Yes, but until recent medical advances—

LS: But I would not give such a pessimistic picture of the situation in medicine as it was until the late century. If you think of such men as Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates, they were not killed prematurely by bacteria. The Athenians had much more to do with that. And I have also overheard occasionally that the successful fight against bacteria and other nuisances has also destroyed certain immunities which man developed somehow without medical benefits. But the simplest example is this: think of cat and bird. What Aristotle says nevertheless is [that] surely the good of the cat and the good of the bird are incompatible, and yet there is ultimate harmony which we understand when we consider the order of rank of the various things.

The most important assertion of Aristotle in this respect is [that], at least among the earthly beings, man is unquestionably the highest, a premise which has been frequently

attacked, but on which we act all the time. A simple example: President Roosevelt in the Second World War spoke of the four freedoms; for example, freedom from fear.[xv] Do you remember that? And what did he mean by that? Did he mean that the tiger and leopard should be free from fear? He meant of course only freedom from fear for human beings, and if someone says that is only abominable human pride, that man thinks he should be something special while other animals are not, then I would say: is not the fact of foolish pride for the species not something which proves in itself the reasonableness of that pride?

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[1] Deleted "have."
[2] Deleted "also."
[3] Deleted "by."
[4] Deleted "only."
[5] Deleted "they always had this."
[6] Moved "also."
[7] Deleted "there was formed the view."
[8] Deleted "of them."
[9] Deleted "it."
[10] Changed from "proceeding fundamentally in the same way as before, after having shown the variety, the bewildering variety of ends, the limits to this variety."
[11] Deleted "the."

[xv] In his State of the Union Address on January 6, 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt identified America's war aims as the four freedoms: freedom of speech; freedom of worship; freedom from want; freedom from fear.

Session 2: February 14, 1968[i]

Leo Strauss: Now I sketched to you last time two broad comprehensive considerations which we must never lose sight of when engaging in a rather detailed study of at least some sections of Aristotle's *Ethics*. Such considerations are needed to counteract a danger that is perhaps particularly great in our age of ever-increasing specialization, namely, the danger being that we exclude from sight, from consideration very important matters in the vain hope that George will take care of them—George being another specialist, maybe a sociologist, psychologist, analytical philosopher, or what have you. The classic formulation for this passing of the buck was coined about a hundred fifty years ago by Comte, Auguste Comte,[ii] one of the greatest heirs and in some ways the classic interpreter of modern science, namely, of that science which is definitely nonphilosophic: you remember what I said last time about the philosophic character of science in the old scheme, and the separation of philosophy and science which has taken place in modern times.

Now he called his position positive philosophy, *philosophie positive*. In other words, it was still philosophy, no question about that. But the peculiarity was [that] it is positive, and therefore since that time the word "positivism" has become of a general use. And the main thesis is this: that the way towards the truth is that of modern science. Modern science is an approach to all theoretical and practical questions. It was preceded by radically different approaches. The first was the theological one, where all things were traced to so-called personal powers or personal power. And the second stage he called metaphysical, and that is represented, say, by Plato and Aristotle in classical antiquity and by the great system-builders of the seventeenth century in modern times. Now both approaches, the theological and the metaphysical, are bankrupt, and the only one which is theoretically feasible and at the same time offers some hope for human practice is the positive approach, the approach peculiar to modern science.

Now what is the peculiarity of positive science, in contradistinction to theology and metaphysics? The chief answer is this: theology and metaphysics try to answer the question of *why*. This question is abandoned by science in favor of the question of the *how*. "Why do bodies fall?" "What is the secret of gravitation, that mysterious force?" This is theological or metaphysical, according to Comte, whereas the question "With what speed do bodies fall?," the how of falling is a scientific and reasonable question. Now there is this difficulty here. It may be true that men cannot answer the questions of the why and therefore one acts prudently by limiting oneself to the questions of the how. Yet the questions of the why remain. They are not *meaningless* questions; they are only perhaps *unanswerable* questions. They continue to bother man despite or because of all progresses of science, so much so that even an infinite progress of science in the future

[i] Strauss begins by discussing the requirements for receiving a grade in the course. These remarks have been omitted.

[ii] Auguste Comte (1798-1857), French philosopher and founder of positivism.

offers no hope of ever giving us an answer to the question of the why, of ever solving the enigmas with which man is confronted.

We have no right to assume, in addition, that man has infinite time at his disposal for progressing. Even granting that in an infinite progress all riddles would be solved, we don't know whether there will be an infinite time at our disposal, and not only because of the atomic bomb but also perhaps because of a certain perhaps built-in limitation of the duration of human life on earth. Hence the unsolved and insoluble questions of the why threaten the whole edifice of science. They deprive it of its ultimate importance. For example, if science can teach us a lot regarding means for any ends that we might choose but cannot tell us what ends to choose—and on this, the ends, everything depends—therefore the dignity of[1] science is greatly threatened by the fact that it cannot answer the question of the why. And this has led to a popularly known phenomenon which was called by a sociologist the flight from scientific reason, and I think that all they meant by it was that people were fundamentally dissatisfied because their deepest and most serious questions were beyond the ken of science. It is a question which I am in no position to answer but which has often been raised: how far this fact, this essential limitation of science and the dissatisfaction with what science can do, contributes to the unrest on some campuses.

So we try to counteract the narrowness of specialization by engaging in broad and comprehensive consideration. And we do this for good or evident reasons: however poor our achievement may be, our pursuit in itself is sensible. I believe I have shown that it is sensible. In doing so, I have shown that there is a rational end: clarity about the fundamental issue, a rational end, a rational ought, for we cannot help, if we understand something as evidently necessary, [doing] it unless we are prevented from doing so by some accidental fact.

It is impossible to say [where] my theoretical reflection of last time [stopped] and my moralizing, my exhortation, my preaching, began.[2] They are inseparable. [It is impossible to say] where I made the inevitable but allegedly vicious transition from factual questions to value questions. To that extent, I hope that I helped you somewhat to understand Aristotle's *Ethics*, to look at things from Aristotle's point of view: from the point of view which does not permit the fact–value distinction, as it is now said.

I would like to make a remark in passing. The fact–value distinction must not be taken too seriously or literally. It cannot be maintained in any long run, in any broad and not merely technical or academic consideration. For instance, I read in yesterday's *Los Angeles Times* the following sentence:

"We have failed to understand the implications of the new vision of man, which is accepted by an ever-growing number of social scientists, that so soon as sufficient food, clothing, and shelter are available, man is forced by profound psychological pressures to drive toward self-actualization. Individuals who are deprived of the opportunity to strive to achieve their full potential will drift into personal disorientation or drift into violence."

Here we see a reference to "the new vision of man." And let us grant to the author that it is new: man is happy and gentle, provided his comfortable self-preservation is guaranteed. That is the new vision. Man is not by nature good, for by nature he does not have the means of comfortable self-preservation, but after man has conquered nature, as he has done now, he can make himself happy and gentle. (He uses much more highfalootin' expressions, but I try to translate them into simple language.) It is of course presupposed here that to be happy and gentle is good, and to be unhappy and violent is bad. Well, I think we can grant this without being petty, and accept it at first glance, at any rate. To be at peace with oneself—to know what one wants, one can also say—and at peace with one's fellow man seems to be preferable to the alternative. But even on the most superficial level, a difficulty arises. Are food, clothing, and shelter the only ends of man? And does the nonavailability of these three items alone make men unhappy and/or violent? I think we do not need to have recourse to our private experiences. If we have read a few novels, we will know that there is such a thing called unhappy love, and also unhappy marriages, and that this has nothing to do with food, clothing, shelter, and so on. The practical conclusion, therefore, drawn by quite a few of our contemporaries, is that you must have of course a solution of the food and shelter problem, either in the utilitarian or in the Marxist spirit, but you must also have a solution to the problem of unhappy love, and that means psychoanalysis. So Marxism or utilitarianism and psychoanalysis together have a very great power, open or concealed, in present-day social science.

But without any disrespect to hunger and sex, are there no other ends or good things which a *true* vision of man, in contradistinction to the *new* vision of man, would have to consider? What about premature violent death, for example? What about death itself? Are these not important considerations? Whatever one may say against Aristotle's *Ethics*, he does not make the mistake of taking such a narrow view of the human ends or goods as the new vision of man does. This is another simple consideration [for] why we should pay some attention to Aristotle.

Now to return to the chief subject of today's lecture, I have asserted last time that we must start from the broadest possible considerations, and I sketched two such considerations. The first I indicated by the terms Machiavellianism and anti-Machiavellianism, which I then replaced by the opposition of materialism and idealism. This seems to be the most fundamental alternative, the most comprehensive alternative, an alternative coeval, if not with man, surely with philosophy. An eternal alternative, as we may provisionally say. The second consideration I considered was that of the quarrel between the ancients and the moderns: the fundamental difference between antiquity and modernity, between ancient materialism and modern materialism, and between ancient idealism and modern idealism. This alternative is not eternal but would have to be called historical, because surely the modern alternative was not available in classical times. It is not easy to say which of these two fundamental alternatives is more fundamental than the other, or even whether this question makes sense. Let us then leave this question open.

I illustrated the quarrel between the ancients and moderns by contrasting the Aristotelian division of philosophy and the one that prevails now. I suggested that the difference

between modern and ancient philosophy has something to do with the difference between the attempt at human mastery of the whole and the denial of the possibility or desirability of such mastery. Accordingly the ancient thinkers held that the good life is the life according to nature. Nature, as it were, establishes the norm, the end for our life. The end does not have its root in man's establishing or setting it. In contradistinction, the depreciation of nature in modern times: the striving for liberation from nature's apron strings—the Kantian formula—and thus to make man sovereign, replacing nature by reason and eventually by history.

Now I will fill up my sketch by speaking more particularly on the quarrel between ancients and moderns within political philosophy or political science. I say "or," political philosophy *or* political science, because in premodern times political philosophy and political science were the same thing. Now we have the separation. And it should at least be for us a question: which of the two alternatives is sound, the identification or the separation [of the two]?

I have to say therefore a few words about the general character of classical political thought. If we contrast, say, Plato or Aristotle with what is being done in political science now, what strikes us most, I think, is that in ancient times political science, political philosophy had a direct relation to political life which does no longer exist. The questions which political philosophy or political science raised were the same as those raised in the political arena. And that shows itself in the fact that in Plato's and Aristotle's political science or political philosophy there is hardly any term which did not stem from the political arena but was hatched in academies. The political philosopher or political scientist looked in the same direction as the citizen or statesman. He does not look at political life from without, like the observer of microbes, stars, or what have you, but he takes his stand within it. And this has radically changed in modern times. I think I will draw a picture. [LS writes on the blackboard.] So if this is the standpoint of the citizen or statesman, he looks at political things in this perspective. Now the political philosopher or scientist of ancient times stands also here and looks here. There is an alternative way of looking at it, namely, to stand here and to look at it from the outside. [LS taps with the chalk.] Is this clear?

Now the difference between the political philosopher or political scientist and the citizen or statesman, according to the older view, is merely this: that the political philosopher looks in the same direction but further afield. In other words, this arrow will go on, will be continued beyond the point beyond which it was continued by the citizen. And this is connected with the fact that the political philosopher is supposed to have a function which no one else could fulfill, a very high function, namely, in the first place to be the arbiter *par excellence*. Political life means political conflict, conflict of various groups. The most well known in ancient and modern times were the rich and the poor. But sensible men do not want conflict but harmony and peace. And how to establish peace? Answer: you have an impartial arbiter. This happens all the time in political life. But to do this on the highest level and regarding the permanent questions of political life would seem to be the function of the arbiter *par excellence*, and that was meant to be the political philosopher. For the same reason—I cannot now elaborate it with the necessary

clarity—[3]the political philosopher was regarded as the teacher of the political men of the highest order. The political man of the highest order is the legislator, not in the sense in which the word is now used, where we have many, many legislators, as you know, but [in the sense of] the man who elaborates a code which should last for quite some time and not a thing which would be revised every second day or so.

Now the legislator is concerned only with giving the best laws, if he is a reasonable man, for his community. But he cannot truly know what the best laws for his community are if he doesn't know what the best laws simply are, and therefore there must be men who raise the question of what [are] the best laws simply: that is the teacher of legislators. More precisely, as Plato and Aristotle teach and some other of their followers have taught, laws are not the fundamental political phenomenon. What laws are and are not possible in a given society depends on the *politeia*, as they said, which I translate by regime. The common translation is constitution. What it means primarily is the factual distribution of power within the society. And therefore the ultimate question is not "What are the best laws?" but "What is the best regime?" And of this best regime they say that it must be *possible*. In other words, it must be possible without assuming a miraculous or nonmiraculous change of human beings. [It requires only] human beings as they are by nature: bright, stupid, vicious, kind, and so on and so on. No change in this way, but with such an arrangement that the more desirable people have more to say. This is, according to their view, the best regime. So it must be possible, but the possibility does not mean that there is any probability. Both Plato and Aristotle say very emphatically that it is *improbable* that the best regime will become actual or was ever actual.

Neither Plato nor Aristotle found any example of what they regarded as the best regime anywhere at any time. This did not bother them at all, for the following reason. I use now again a word alien to Plato and Aristotle but easily intelligible to you. The best regime is an ideal. And not an ideal among many, but *the* ideal. Now an ideal does not cease to be an ideal by never being actual. This way of thinking, I think, is very well known to all of you. For you need at any rate a standard of judgment of the actual, a standard for the diagnosis of the actual: in what way it is good, [and] in what way it is bad. And therefore you must have a complete picture of the perfectly good society, of the perfectly good regime, regardless of whether it is actual. Whether it will be actual or not depends on chance. As Plato puts it in the *Republic*, it depends on coincidence; on the coincidence of philosophy and political power, on philosophy and political power coinciding.

Now this much about the classical approach. We see the origins of the modern approach by turning to Machiavelli, especially the *Prince*, chapter 15:

"It now remains to see what should be the ways and conduct of a prince in dealing with his subjects and his friends, and because I know that many have written on this topic, I fear that when I too write I shall be thought presumptuous, because in discussing it, I break away completely from the principles laid down by my predecessors. But since it is my purpose to write something useful to an attentive reader, I think it more effective to go back to the practical truth of the subject than to depend on fancies [imaginations—LS] about it, and many have imagined republics and principalities that never have been seen

or known to exist in reality. [Plato and Aristotle are obvious examples of that.—LS] For there is such a difference between the way men live and the way they ought to live, that anybody who abandons what is for what ought to be will learn something that will ruin rather than preserve him, because anyone who determines to act in all circumstances the part of a good man must come to ruin among so many who are not good."[iii]

Now this is one of the most important passages ever written. The ancients took their bearings by how men should live, by how men ought to live, and therefore they arrived at imaginary principalities. Incidentally, when he speaks of imaginary principalities, he thinks not only of Plato and Aristotle but of the Bible as well. The Kingdom of God would have the same characteristics as the kingdom of the philosophers in Plato.

So what Machiavelli tries to do, to use again a convenient slogan, is to make politics a realistic science, to take men as they are. Thus the chances of actualization of the desirable order increase enormously. If you make these high demands which Plato and Aristotle made, then there is no chance, no practical chance, but if you want to put the goal lower, as Machiavelli did—and it is still a goal, still a kind of ideal, but lower—then the chances of actualization will increase. In other words, by lowering the goal you enable yourself to conquer chance. And that is precisely what Machiavelli says in the same work, chapter 25: chance, *fortuna*, is a woman who can be forced by the right kind of man, whereas according to the older view, chance is elusive and cannot be conquered by anyone.

The ancient philosophers spoke of virtue as the most important consideration. Machiavelli uses the Italian equivalent of virtue, *virtù*, but gives it a very new meaning. It has nothing to do with moral virtue. It has something to do with patriotism or political virtue, but even that is quite dubious. Now I read to you another passage so that we get some better understanding. The true history of political philosophy cannot be written on the basis of explicit quotations alone. One has to do some thinking. If my memory doesn't deceive me, Thomas Hobbes never mentions Machiavelli; he surely never mentions him with any emphasis. And yet without Machiavelli, no Thomas Hobbes.

Now Hobbes says in the Epistle Dedicatory to his *Elements of Law*: *Natural and Politic*, the following thing: "To reduce the doctrine [of justice in policy—LS] to the rules and infallibility of reason, there is no way, but first to put such principles down for a foundation, as passion, not mistrusting, may not seek to displace."[iv] In other words, we have to start from foundations agreeable to passion. Nay, as Hobbes makes clear in the execution of his work, we have to find the principle of political life in a passion, and that passion he finds in the fear of death. It is something very low, but very common, and therefore something trustworthy. Low but solid. That was a notion guiding such men like Hobbes, but also Locke and Rousseau.

Thomas Aquinas, in his discussion of natural law, had made a distinction between three natural inclinations of man: one toward self-preservation; one toward preservation of the

[iii] Presumably Strauss's translation.
[iv] Thomas Hobbes, *The Elements of Law, Natural & Politic* (1640).

species, as shown in particular by generation of offspring; and one toward knowledge and, in particular, knowledge of God.[v] What Hobbes does is to erase the two higher inclinations—to abstract from them, because that would lead to all kinds of complications—and to stick to the lowest but strongest most of the time, namely, the fear of death, or in other words, the desire for self-preservation. Now this foundation was taken over obviously by Locke and Rousseau, although with not unimportant modifications, but the principle remains the same. Hobbes already, but more explicitly Locke put the emphasis on comfortable self-preservation, meaning, sure, if your life is at stake immediately, if you are threatened by a potential killer, then you are perfectly pleased if you can just preserve yourself. But apart from such harsh situations, you would like to preserve yourself comfortably. You have not only a bed, but a comfortable bed. You have not only food, but tasty food, and so on.

At any rate, in connection with these modern movements, starting in a way from Machiavelli but more visibly from Hobbes, you have an enormous increment in the importance of economics. Economics in the way we use the word today did not exist [in antiquity]. "Economics" meant management of the household. That there were revenues and expenditures of the city was of course always known, but there was no discipline, surely no academic discipline, dealing with that. This was done by the practitioners. But now a science of this kind of thing emerged. And under the name, the first name that later on [had] this strong baby[4] was political arithmetic: reckoning on political mathematics. That was the work of a man called Sir William Petty.[vi] Incidentally—yes, the name is funny. He was a friend of Hobbes, a younger friend of Hobbes. This is a true genealogy, I believe, of this kind of pursuit. Now I mention, not merely because it is so funny, the following fact. Sir William Petty went so far as to figure out the worth of a human being in hard cash, and he went about it in a very sensible way. He said, what does a man fetch in the slave market in Algiers? And so (I've forgotten now the precise sum) so many guineas: that is the value of a human being.

And then a wiser man, and a shrewder man, Montesquieu, [in] the next century, said: "No, Sir William is mistaken. This may be the value of an Englishman [laughter], but the value of a human being may be as a rule much lower. And it may approach zero, and it may even be less than zero."[vii] He was thinking, I suppose, of overpopulation and famine. So this kind of reflections, which you do not find in classical political philosophy, are an important ingredient of modern political philosophy.

It is understandable that some noble minds revolted against this low but solid political science of the seventeenth and eighteenth century. Such men like Shaftesbury (Locke was a kind of tutor of Shaftesbury, but Shaftesbury didn't like Locke at all), Rousseau, Kant. And one could say that this reaction to seventeenth-century political philosophy led to a restoration of the moral level and dignity of classical political philosophy. That is possible. That surely needs a very thorough investigation. But one thing remains changed

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[v] See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, First Part of the Second Part, Question 94, Article 2.
[vi] Sir William Petty (1623-1687), English political economist and scientist. His *Political Arithmetick* was published in 1690.
[vii] Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws*, book 23, chapter 17.

despite that protest, that revolt of these noble minds against the too practical minds of whom I have spoken before: the concern with the *actualization* of the right political order remains unchanged. In other words, the simple view that we need an ideal in order to see clearly as to what we regard as good and noble and independently of whether there is a prospect that this ideal in its fullness will ever become realized: this is not restored.

I read to you another passage from Kant, Kant being one of the sternest moralists that ever were, but he also had this very practical side connecting him with Sir William Petty and other people. "People were in the habit of saying that the establishment of the right social order requires a nation of angels," Kant says, "hard as it may sound, the problem of establishing the just social order is soluble even for a nation of devils, provided they have sense." Meaning, provided they are shrewd enough that it is more profitable to them to be lawabiding citizens than to be criminals. "The fundamental political problem is simply one of a good organization of the state, of which man is indeed capable."[viii] In other words, if you arrange things in such a manner that crime doesn't pay—and you don't have to be a very noble soul for wishing that and for doing that—then you have solved the political problem.

Now this concern with the actualization of the right political order shows itself in a different way in Hegel's notion of the reasonableness of the historical process. There is a convergence, we can say, of the ideal and the actual. And that is a *necessary* convergence, because the reasonable is actual, and the actual is reasonable.[ix] So there is the necessity of the actualization, and according to Hegel's view this has now been achieved. The historical process is now completed. This view of Hegel of course seemed very implausible to people after him, and today there is hardly anyone who is a Hegelian in this sense of the word. Today it is generally taken for granted that the historical process is unfinishable; that man is always in the midst of it and never at its end. This leads to great difficulties of its own, into which I cannot now go. Perhaps we will find another occasion for that.

Today I limit myself to the most massive difficulty vis-à-vis the view that now prevails, and that is a view based on the distinction between facts and values as an unbridgeable gulf. Because this view implies that all values are equal before the tribunal of reason—of course not for the evaluator: the man who values freedom will not regard the values going with tyranny or connected with tyranny as high, that goes without saying. But the scientist, the social scientist, is not supposed to be an evaluator in his capacity as a political scientist, and as such the values are equal for him.

And now we observe here a phenomenon known from economics, Gresham's Law: the bad values drive out the good ones. The unbelievable vulgarization of which we are witnesses. A few examples: culture meant originally the cultivation of the mind and especially of the highest powers of the mind. And this word, culture, could be used only

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[viii] See Immanuel Kant, *On Perpetual Peace* (1795), "Addendum: On the Assurance of Perpetual Peace."

[ix] See G.W.F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (1821), "Preface."

in the [singular][x]: culture. The human mind being of one fundamental character, there can only be one culture of it. Today everyone speaks of cultures, and the understanding is that they are all equal. When the term cultures [first] came out in the plural, people made a certain distinction between what they called high cultures and low cultures. That was done, for example, by Spengler and such people.[xi] But today that is completely abandoned: all men have cultures; all men are cultured. Now there something rebels in us, because when you say a man is cultured, you mean something slightly different from saying that he belongs to a culture. The culture may be one of juvenile delinquents, for example, and you are not likely to call them cultured human beings. A question which to my knowledge has not yet been taken up by social scientists is whether lunatics can have culture, but I think if they are really value-free, they should take up this question very soon.

Student: . . . studied a little bit, and lunatics are more . . . unacculterated people.

LS: Unacculterated.

Same Student: Although, if they all live together in a lunatics asylum, and get along with each other, then they're acculturated to the asylum.

LS: Oh, I see. Well, this is what I would expect, and I would—that must be regarded as a culture as high—

Same Student: . . . culture.

LS: Yes. So I'm glad that I am in contact with this movement. [Laughter]

Student: As a matter of fact, though, one of our leading political scientists did a study on the political interchange among inmates of a mental institution. This is regarded as quite valuable.

LS: Professor Riesman?[xii]

Same Student: Pardon?

LS: Professor Riesman, by any chance?

Same Student: I don't believe it was Riesman. I can't remember who it was.

Another Student: Professor Lasswell.[xiii]

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[x] Strauss says "plural."
[xi] Oswald Spengler (1880-1936), German historian and philosopher.
[xii] David Riesman, author, with Nathan Glazer and Reuel Denney, of *The Lonely Crowd* (1950).
[xiii] Harold D. Lasswell and Robert Rubenstein, *The Sharing of Power in a Psychiatric Hospital* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966).

LS: Pardon?

Student: Professor Lasswell. Yes.

LS: Oh, yes, that is not too surprising. I'm sorry that I made this slip.

Now another term with which we can see what is happening before our eyes is "personality." That was originally a very high term. There is a verse by a German, by Goethe: "The highest blessing of the children of the earth is their personality."[xiv] And that implies that very few people are in fact personalities. Now this is still recognized. For example, I believe that Dinah Shore[xv] is a TV personality, and a garbage collector is not a personality. Here personality however approaches almost the meaning of celebrity, which was not its original meaning. According to the original meaning, you could be a personality without being a celebrity, and you could be a celebrity without being a personality. And yet today, although personality still has this value-meaning, every man is said to have a personality structure. And it is hard to see how he can have such a personality structure without being a personality. So this difficulty illustrates again what is happening after the complete collapse of the difference between the ideal and the actual. Now this much to conclude my general introduction.

Last time we began our reading of the *Ethics*, and we have seen that Aristotle stresses, in this first page which we read, the multiplicity of human ends, and yet he made clear that there is not a mere confusion and discord, because there is a hierarchy of the arts. I trust you remember this section of our discussion. And now let us read again—no, we don't have to read that, the section we read last time 1094a14 to 16. This was where he spoke of the architectonic arts, of the ends of architectonic arts. You remember that. What he says here is this. There is this seemingly infinite variety of ends, but we observe also kinds of pyramids of the subordination of some arts to others, and therefore of the ends pursued by one kind of art to the ends pursued by another. The difficulty, however, is this: there is a kind of pyramid. Aristotle hasn't said more. And whether these pyramids will fit into a single, unitary, harmonistic scheme so that there is only one pyramid, that is the question. To leave it at the examples which Aristotle gave, it is easy to see that the art of shipbuilding is in the service of sailing, of using the ship, and [is] therefore subordinate. But health seems to be something choiceworthy for its own sake, and at least according to many, wealth is also something choiceworthy for its own sake. Do health and wealth both come together and form a part of a whole, so that the possible conflict between them is resolved? We have not yet had an answer from Aristotle to this effect.

And now let us continue. But in fairness to you, do you have any difficulty or question regarding what I stated in my exposition? Now is the time. Yes?

[xiv] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke. Briefe, Tagebücher und Gespräche*, ed. Friedmar Apel et al., Section I, vol.3/1, ed. Hendrik Birus (Frankfurt a.M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2010), 84. The poem is from the "Buch Suleika" in the 1819 publication of the West-East Divan.

[xv] Dinah Shore (1916-1994), American singer and actress.

Student: You used the word "lowering of goals" to describe what Machiavelli did. But from Machiavelli's own point of view was it a lowering of the goals in a public-spirited sense, or was it simply that there were no other goals but the goals [he identified]?

LS: Yes, that is true. From Machiavelli's point of view, one would have to say that he rejected fantastical goals, apparently high, and established in their place rational, sensible goals, which apparently are low, with this correction. Mr. Fiedler?

Student: You spoke of bad values driving out the good, and I wonder whether this isn't always the condition of human activity, one which would vary with the character of . . . one which is, in certain senses, the same.

LS: Yes, that may be so. But the question is whether the teaching on this subject is in order if it has this function. For example, the Middle Ages: the medieval universities with their scholasticism and so on. They surely had frequently the effect of mere routine rigidity, and other vices of this [sort]. But still, what they said about good and bad was of a high order, only they were not able properly to transmit it. [This was the] time of [the] decay of scholasticism. But now we have a science which is flourishing and prosperous from every worldly point of view and yet has this function. I think that is a deeper defect than mere ineffectiveness. Yes?

Student: You spoke of Kant saying that, if rational, even a society of devils can reach the good. Have we ever run across this society that is rational?

LS: No. That is very clear.

Same Student: On your basis, do you feel that a rational society is possible?

LS: Ya, that is a long question, but you ask me for my private opinion.

Same Student: You were saying that in this course we'd be working on the basis [of the assumption that] such a society is possible.

LS: No, we will investigate its possibility. And one question, for example, would be this: is moral virtue, of which we will hear quite a bit from Aristotle—and the society in which the men of moral virtue are in control: is this a rational society? That depends very much on the status of moral virtue, and we have not yet advanced to this point. The point to which we have advanced is only this: that there is an almost infinite variety of human ends, but there is some hope for order, shown by the fact of subordination and supraordination of the arts procuring those ends. And this fact of supraordination and subordination you see all the time. Mostly we don't observe it. But it was only very recently that I observed that there are two kinds of waitresses: the ones who merely clean the table, and the others who bring the food. And it is quite reasonable (I checked this by asking the chairman of this department, who knows more about that) that this is quite reasonable, because the one activity is higher than the other. There is a purely

preparatory, negative one, to clean the table, and the other is the one which leads to the fulfillment of your desire, for which you were there. Now—yes?

Student: Is it not perhaps unfair to Plato to speak of . . . the *Republic*, to speak of the ideals? Is that not identifying what Plato's talking about with the ideals, which the moderns constantly seek to realize? Would it be not better to speak of them as *paradigms*? A paradigm may be capable of realization or not.

LS: Yes. That is a very sensible assertion. The word "ideal" is not a Platonic word and therefore one should avoid it in strict language, but in an introductory presentation one may take some liberties. But the more important point which you made is that if we are easygoing and speak of ideals, the modern ideals are radically different from the Platonic–Aristotelian ideals. That is the key point. That is one major part, perhaps the most important part, of the quarrel between the ancients and moderns. And a sign of this difference is that in the classical scheme political economy plays no role. Somehow it is not seriously considered. Not even the historian Thucydides, so much admired because of his realism, says much to speak of about the connection between the Peloponnesian War and trade. That simply was not interesting. In modern times it is regarded as very interesting; some people regard it even as most interesting. So that has something to do with the status of food in the widest sense of the term, or rather, in a rather wide sense of the term with comfortable self-preservation.

Now I will ask Mr. Wedergreen to begin at a16, if you can find that. "It doesn't make any difference," it says, "whether the activities themselves."

Reader:
It does not matter whether the ends are operations themselves or something other than the operations.[xvi]

LS: "Something at the side of the operations," let us say. . . "At the side of." Yes?

Reader:
as in the skills mentioned above. (1094a16-17)

LS: Let us stop here. Now Aristotle states now explicitly that the hierarchic order exists both regarding the activities which have ends apart from the activities (say, saddle making is not for its own sake but for the production of something apart from the activity, at the side of the activity: the saddle) and of those activities which have no ends apart from the activities (say, riding). But there is a complication here: bodily exercise, of which riding is a part, does not produce a work as shoemaking produces shoes. Yet bodily exercise is subservient to the medical art, which has a work outside of the practice of medicine, that work being health. This is a point made by Thomas Aquinas.[xvii] But let us go on and read further. Yes?

[xvi] The reader apparently reads from his own translation.
[xvii] Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, §18.

Reader:
If our actions have an end that we wish for itself, and if we wish other things for that end and not each thing on account of another, for this would involve us in an infinite process making our desire useless and in vain, then obviously that would be not only a good end but a supreme end. (1094a17-22)

LS: This will be the good and the best: "good," i.e., it will be the best. Now what is here important is that this sentence begins with an "if," and we must not forget that.

There must be ends chosen for their own sake, Aristotle says here. Desire cannot be empty and useless altogether, because desire [is natural, or] at least many of our desires are natural. And what is natural is not empty and useless. That is Aristotle's assumption, which he doesn't speak about here. But of course, even granting that there must be ends chosen for their own sake, this doesn't prove that there must be a single such end. I referred to health and wealth before. It is not sufficient to say that health is a greater good than wealth. For a poor man, the breadwinner of a large family, it may be better to earn money than to get medical care for which he cannot pay, an example which Plato uses in the *Republic* in the fourth book, where he contrasts the posture of the sensible craftsman, artisan, who says "I would rather be dead than be a burden on my family," with the rich valetudinarian who invests all his efforts and all his money into living as long a time as possible.

Now let us here at this moment step back and look at the argument as a whole. The simple basis of Aristotle's pursuit in this book, the simple beginning of the *Ethics*, is the bewildering variety of ends. Aristotle views that variety from the point of view of the variety of the arts: of the rational endeavors to achieve or procure those ends. Now the arts show a hierarchy, and therefore also there is a hierarchy of the ends. But is this sufficient? There are arts directed toward health and wealth, for example. But what about arts productive of honor and pleasure? Would they not also have to be considered? Why does Aristotle not speak of that here? Perhaps we can say [that] honor is given, if it is rightly given, for services, and there is an order of rank of the services too. So would this not always come back to the point that there is a variety of ends, but also a hierarchy?

As for pleasures, some of you have read Plato's *Gorgias* and know a distinction made there by Socrates: the distinction between arts and flattery. For example, cosmetics. Medicine is an art; it makes a man healthy within the limits of the possible. But cosmetics creates only the appearance of health, and it's therefore a swindle. Socrates calls it a flattery.[xviii] So this kind of consideration would also have to come in. But let us now continue.

Reader:
Knowledge of it therefore would be a great help in human living, for like archers keeping their eye on the target, we will more likely attain our objective. This being the case, we must try to determine the general characteristics of this end and to which of the sciences or skills its study pertains.

[xviii] Plato, *Gorgias* 464b-466a.

LS: Let us stop there. It is really a question in the original. Aristotle says: would it not be eminently helpful also with regard to life, i.e., in contradistinction to mere knowledge, to have a single end, a single target, so that we can decide in all cases which of the many ends has the priority? Would this not be wonderful? But for this purpose we would have to know first what that target is, namely, the best, which is superior to all other good things. And second, which kind of human knowledge or faculty is competent to know it? Because if we don't have such a faculty or knowledge, then the existence of this end will always remain dubious. Let us assume for argument's sake that this best is known only to women's intuition. Prior to investigation, we cannot exclude that. Then it would be very hard for the male part of the human race, and gynecocracy would be established. But we would be in a difficulty, because a women's intuition implies that the lady cannot give a reason. And therefore that could be—Aristotle has not in any way decided the question, but he prepares now a decision by what he says. Yes?

Reader:
Undoubtedly it would belong to the most truly architectonic science. This to all appearances is political science. (1094a22-28)

LS: Yes. So Aristotle has given us an answer (whether it is satisfactory or not, we do not yet know) to this question: how [can] we[5] know this best thing? Aristotle answers, as you see here, not the question of what the best thing is but the question of what knowledge or faculty is competent to know the best thing. Here again we start from the side not of the goods or ends but from the side of the arts or knowledges. He qualifies this statement, as you will have seen. It could seem to be that it is a matter for the most lordly and the most architectonic art, and as such the political art, the political faculty, comes to sight, *phainetai*. This word which he uses, which I translated "comes to sight," tries to preserve the ambiguity of the Greek. It is not mere seeming. It may very well be the real stuff, comes to sight as what it is, but there is a question also whether it is not mere appearance.

Why is the political art the most lordly and the most architectonic of all the arts? Let us read the sequel.

Reader:
Domestic economy, strategy, and rhetoric fall into political science. Political science in fact makes use of other practical sciences, even legislating what is to be done and what is not to be done. Its end therefore embraces the ends of the other practical sciences. For these reasons then, this end would be the good of man. (1094b2-7)

LS: Meaning the end of political science, the political art or political ability, is the human good, [which is the end] of no other art. Let us try to understand Aristotle's argument. Today, for example, what does it mean that all arts serve the political art? Today, physicists serve the government, yes? That is one example, a very topical example. Aristotle gives two reasons: the political art determines which sciences ought to be, ought to exist in the cities. That seems to be incompatible with academic freedom, but the question arises whether some arts or sciences are not dangerous to human society.

Aristotle takes this for granted. And the second reason which he gives is that he takes the most respected of the arts and these are, according to him: the art of the general, that of the manager of the household, and the art of public speech. Now these are highly respected arts, as we learn here from Aristotle, and[6] [the practioners of all three] admit that they are subject to the political art, if only because they are subject to the law. And the law is the work of the political art. Or is there any difficulty here?

So in other words, it is thinkable that there might be arts or faculties which are not, according to their own confession, subject to the political art. But the most respected and respectable arts or faculties are subject to it. Let us assume for one moment that there is an art of sophistry. This art would deny its being subject to the political art. Think of the sophists as they appear in Plato's work. Well, are they respected people? Not among the right kind of people. [To a student]: What is your point?

Student: I was just going to ask . . . the political art . . . I was thinking of the *Ethics*, where the nature of *epistēmē* doesn't provide . . .

LS: That is one of the deepest questions, perhaps the deepest question regarding the *Ethics*. And it is of no use to give a dogmatic answer, let us see what we learn from it. But for the time being, we have learned merely this: that Aristotle asserts that the political art is the art which deals with the highest good. Whether that is unqualifably true or only qualifiably true, we do not yet know.

Now[7] if we follow the drift of the argument, [what Aristotle] does here is this: there is an art in existence called the political art or science. The very existence of that thing, as the most architectonic power of man, proves in a manner the existence of a single, highest end. You remember that you have on the one side the good things, and on the other side the arts. Now if the one side is pyramidal, culminating in the highest art, it is plausible to expect that there will be a similar pyramidality on the side of the good [things]. That is not a proof but is leading up toward some expectation, and then we must see later on whether Aristotle can make stick what he here only suggests. Now let us read the sequel.

Reader:
Even though the good be the same for one man and for the whole state, it seems—

LS: "State" means city. All right. Go on.

Reader:
for the whole—

LS: "City."

Reader:
it seems much better and more perfect to procure and preserve the good of the whole city. It is admirable indeed to preserve the good of the individual, but it is better still and more

divine to do this for a nation and for cities. With such a good as the object of our inquiry, we may call our study political science. (1094b7-11)

LS: Yes, that is not bad. "And the enterprise, the inquiry strives for these things, goes after these things; and our enterprise is *a kind of* political science." This is a grave qualification. This "kind": (in Greek, *tis*) corresponds to what Socrates does in the *Gorgias* somewhere; he says that he alone is the true politician in Athens.[xix] Now the true politician, that is the same as not being a politician, surely not an ordinary politician. And similarly, this political science which Aristotle exhibits in this work is in a sense political science. But only in one sense; in other ways, it's not. Now what the difference is we must gradually see.

Now as for the word "city" here—*polis*, in Greek—let us translate it by "city" all the time, and not by "state" nor by "city-state." And if someone is compelled to think of Wall Street or Threadneedle Street when he hears of city, then he must change his habits. That is not too much to [ask]. Otherwise we will not really understand what Aristotle is talking about. There is no state there. State is a term which arises with Machiavelli or about that time. It didn't exist then. The Romans also didn't have a word for *state*—it was *civitas*, the collective of the citizens, which is fundamentally the same as *polis*. The modern equivalent to what Aristotle or the Greeks altogether understood by *polis* is country and not the state. The country. I mean, not merely—for example, also the emotional implications which especially the country has do not belong to the state. The state is, as Nietzsche said and President de Gaulle repeated, "a cold monster."[xx] Only I think de Gaulle meant as a compliment [laughter] what Nietzsche meant as something shocking. But the country is nothing cold, and that is a *polis*. That the *polis* has something to do with the state, there is no doubt about that, but we should nevertheless get some more precise understanding of this difference.

Now the single highest *telos*, end, is the human good. But why should it be the object of the political art? That could be questioned. We have here already an indication: is the good, the best, the same for the individual and for the city? Perhaps that is not so; then the highest art would not be called the political art. Aristotle says they are identical, but there are so many qualifications, as you would see by reading the third and seventh books of the *Politics*. Here, however, Aristotle assumes that the end of the two is the same. To achieve and to preserve the human good for a nation or a city is more noble and more divine than to do it for one man alone.

Now when Aristotle says here "a kind of politics" and previously he had spoken of "politics," that is also another point to consider. Formerly, in the first case, he spoke of the art procuring and preserving the highest good, and that was the political art. But Aristotle speaks now of his work, of his political or moral teaching, or whatever you call

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[xix] See Plato, *Gorgias* 521d.

[xx] In a speech on June 18, 1949, de Gaulle cited Nietzsche's expression "*das kälteste aller kalten Ungeheuer*" from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, book 1, "On the New Idol." See "Discours d'inauguration de l'avenue et de la porte du Général Leclerc," in Charles de Gaulle, *Discours et messages II: Dans l'attente (1946-1958)* (Paris: Plon, 1970), 296-300.

it. And that is not simply political. It is political in a sense. Do you understand this difference? The legislator: take the highest case. He elaborates a code for a given political community. He is politically active to the highest degree. But the teacher of legislators, surrounded by ten or twelve young people who give promise of becoming legislators: he is not, as a teacher, politically active. He is a man in the classroom, in the study. Therefore in the Middle Ages they made a distinction between the practical sciences proper—like politics, economics, and so on—and theoretico–practical sciences, the sciences which clarify the practical sciences and therefore are at one remove away from the practical sciences. That is I think what Aristotle has in mind.

Now he mentions here nation (in Greek, *ethnos*) and *polis*. What is the relation, or order of rank of nation and *polis*? What would you say—according to Aristotle, from your knowledge, to the extent to which you have that?

Student: Now I would expect that he would think that the *polis* was higher.

LS: Yes, I think that is correct. But it is very interesting that Thomas Aquinas, in his commentary on this passage, says that the nation is higher, because it contains many cities.[xxi] I think that is one of the few interesting deviations of Thomas from his teacher, Aristotle. Aristotle and other classical writers use frequently the expression "the cities and the nations," *poleis kai ethnē*. Then in this connection this means almost the same as the Greeks and the barbarians, because the *polis* was more frequent among Greeks than among the barbarians. Most of the barbarians lived in tribes. Perhaps one should translate *ethnos* by tribe and not by nation, in order to avoid a certain modern connotations. Yes.

Now I believe we have to leave it at this point. Is there anyone who has a question or objection which I can—Mr. Findlay?

Student: I wonder whether I could ask about something you mentioned on Monday, when you spoke of—

LS: That would be a gross misuse of authority if I would say [that] what I discussed on Monday will be discussed in class only on Monday. Yes?

Same Student: Insofar as you characterized modern science as being metaphysically neutral, as compared with the ancients, is it not the case that, in a certain way, it supports materialism rather than idealism?

LS: Yes, this is a point, you see. This they deny; and that is an interesting question, because there was once a man called Lenin, of whom you must have heard, and he was a materialist, and he said so. And then there were people who were surely not spiritualistic or idealistic, but positivists. One very famous man among them was Ernst Mach,[xxii] with all the history of mechanics. And this kind of people—and the school was called empirio–criticism, but now they are called positivists. And Lenin wrote a fat book,

[xxi] Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, §30.
[xxii] Ernst Mach (1838-1916), Austrian physicist and philosopher.

although he was very active, as you know. Doing things [was] different then, writing books. And he wrote this very fat book,[xxiii] and that was the point: that these people, these modern positivists, interpreters of modern science denied the materialistic character of modern science, and Lenin asserted it. If you want to back into the prehistory, one would have to study Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* especially, in which it is shown that modern natural science is true only of the phenomenal world, not of the noumenal world, and [is] therefore radically nonmetaphysical. And the materialistic conclusions drawn from science are invalid. It is of course a question, whether Kant is right or not. But this is, one can say, the official view: that modern science is metaphysically neutral. And some of the admirers of modern science and some of its critics assert that it is *not* metaphysically neutral. There are people, for example, who say modern science originated in Scholasticism in the fourteenth and fifteenth century. You may heard of that.

Same Student: But insofar as materialism might be less than metaphysical in some cases—

LS: Yes, sure. Now then if you take metaphysical in the older sense, then materialism is of course not metaphysical because it denies that there is anything beyond nature or behind nature.

Same Student: That would seem almost—

LS: Yes, but today the meaning of metaphysics has somewhat changed, and metaphysical means, then, any assertion about the whole not supportable by scientific evidence. From this point of view, Democritus's doctrine of the atom is as metaphysical as the greatest fancies of Plato. You know, this you have to consider. Yes?

Student: So you began by explaining that the subordination of the several arts to political science means something very different today than it did for Aristotle. That the physicists serve the government today means something quite different from the art of generalship or any other art serving political science, being under political science in Aristotle. You didn't exactly conclude the explanation.

LS: I hope you forgive me if I say I am a bit tired now. Will you make a note of your question and let me have it in writing at the beginning of the next one? Thank you.

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[1] Deleted "the."
[2] Deleted "where the one stops and the other begins."
[3] Deleted "for the same reason."
[4] Deleted "had."
[5] Moved "can."
[6] Deleted "all three of their practitioners."
[7] Moved "what Aristotle."

[xxiii] Vladimir Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-criticism* (1909).

Session 3: February 19, 1968[i]

Leo Strauss: [In progress] —distinction is more important, that between materialists and antimaterialists, or that between ancients and moderns, of which we spoke. According to a very common view, the peculiarity of modernity is indicated by its origin: namely, its Christian origin. Modernity is secularized Christianity. Seemingly heretical . . . but still of Christian origin. You must have heard this quite frequently. Now regardless of whether this explanation is correct or not, we cannot disregard it when trying to understand Aristotle's *Ethics*: the teaching of the Bible concerning human conduct and the source of the Bible. The main point, which you all know: love of man. And God is a loving God; God is love itself. This we must never forget when reading Aristotle, because there we find an entirely different account from the biblical account, and if we do not try to understand this profound difference, perhaps the most important of all differences, we will unconsciously carry into Aristotle the views which are closest to us and which in a way are the ones in which we have been brought up. That is all of us, not just Christians.

Now let us turn to our text, and [I] remind you of a point which came up at the conclusion of the last meeting. And when Aristotle speaks here, in 1094b11, "our science, our pursuit strives for these things, our pursuit being a kind of politics," *politikē tis ousa*, of the highest art, highest practical art, he had said that this is the political art. The political art deals with the highest practical questions, in a sense with the highest human questions. But what Aristotle does here is not simply the political art. Aristotle is no Pericles, or Lysander, or whomever else you might take. Aristotle is a man addressing potential legislators. He is not a legislator proper, and therefore his *Ethics* is not simply a political book. And this applies also, by the way, to his *Politics*. But *politikē tis*, or to use a scholastic–medieval distinction, his work here is not simply practical but theoretically practical . . . what I said figuratively in an earlier meeting: I said that Aristotle looks in the same direction as the citizen–statesman, but he looks further afield. And that is a not-negligible difference. In ordinary life it is perfectly sufficient to say, "Be decent," or "Be courageous," whatever the subdivisions of decency may be. But Aristotle is very much concerned with finding out what precisely is courage, what precisely is justice, which may be quite good for practical purposes to know but quite a bit of decent practice gets along very well without raising this kind of question.

Were you the one who had a question at the end of the last meeting?

Student: No.

LS: But still, there is no . . .

Same Student: Would Aristotle's enterprise be more correctly termed propaedeutic or a guidebook to the political art proper?

LS: No, I think it is more than merely propaedeutic; I think it claims to have a higher dignity. In other words, [if it were merely propaedeutic], that would mean that Aristotle says: I am the humble servant of future Theseuses, Romuluses, Pericleses, or what have you. No, he claims to be more than that. We will soon find out more about it. Now let us continue where we left off last time. Incidentally, who was the other one who had a question? You were the one?

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[i] The original transcriber notes: "This lecture was taped from the audience, and as a result it is not as clear as the other lectures in this series."

Student: Yes. Well, the question was, we noticed that Aristotle says that political science is the science which orders all of the arts which are practiced in the *polis*. Thus all science is subordinated to political science. And we also noted that today (you pointed this out) that today physicists are working in increasing numbers for the government, and there is a sort of subordination of science to political science. But you noted there was a difference, and I was wondering if you could explain that.

LS: Oh, I see. Well, Aristotle has not spoken of that here. That will come up later, in book 6. The theoretical sciences are according to Aristotle not subject to the *polis*. But physics as in the service of technology, military or not, is of course not simply a theoretical science, and therefore the conclusions from the one to the other cannot so easily be drawn. But for the time being, let us leave it at this position, that the political art is the commanding art regarding all arts in contradistinction to theoretical science. The theoretical sciences belong to a higher sphere than . . . The teacher of legislators, however broadminded, could . . . prescribe what mathematicians, or physicists, or biologists should do. And for Aristotle, the theoretical sciences have a higher rank. But we have not yet reached this point. We are still sitting as good boys, or good girls, for that matter, at the feet of the master of those who learn. We are trying to learn first what we can learn from him.

Now up to this point Aristotle had spoken about the subject of his discourse. Now at 1094b11, he turns to the manner of his discourse. The distinction between subject and manner should be clear. Or is this in need of explanation?

Student: It means *method* or something like that?

LS: No, the *manner*. For example, you can treat the same subject in different manners; for example, for beginners and for advanced students. Is this is intelligible? You can treat it in a popular manner and in a very rigid academic manner. Is this clear? And other distinctions which would apply.

So he devoted about thirty-nine lines, in the edition which I use, to the subject of his discourse. He will devote about twenty-nine lines to the manner of his discourse. You see from this mere statistical fact that the manner of speaking is very important to Aristotle. Very important to Aristotle. And now let us begin at the beginning of this section. Mr. Wedergreen?

Reader:
Now our treatment of this science will be adequate, if it achieves that amount of precision which belongs to its subject matter. The same exactness must not be expected in all departments of philosophy alike, any more than in all the products of the arts and crafts. (1094b11-14)

LS: Let's stop here. "Exactness must not be expected in all speeches, as little as in all products of the manual arts." Yes. Well, take such an expression like "precision instruments." Obviously they have a higher degree of precision than nonprecision instruments. And we expect different degrees of precision in different spheres. Now this term "*precision*" or "exact," *akribes* in Greek, is called in the old Latin translation "*certo*," from which the English *certitude* is derived. In the Renaissance translation, it is translated *subtiles*, subtle. And it is very interesting that the Greek word can equally well be translated by "certain" as by "subtle," two words which for us have entirely different meanings, as one can illustrate most simply by the example of Pascal, who opposed to each other the spirit of geometry (in a way, geometry means mathematics) and on the

other hand the spirit of finesse, of subtlety.[ii] So this was a clear opposition by that time and it has remained up to the present day, hence the talk of the two cultures, the culture of exactness and the culture of subtlety. But in the original meaning of the Greek word, this distinction has not yet been as pronounced. A Greek temple is built with the greatest precision, as well-known classical hyperboles . . . This precision is not simply to be reduced to mathematical precision but has also to do with the purpose of the temple. So is the Sophoclean tragedy or an Aristophanean comedy. "Nothing haphazard" is also a principle of precision. What degree of precision is to be expected depends on the subject matter, on the *hylē*, as Aristotle says here, which is literally translated as "wood": that out of which a thing is made, and is then traditionally translated by "matter," also in the sense of subject matter. For example, different exactness would be expected of an artisan working on marble, or on clay, or on wood. And this also applies with the necessary changes to the subject matter in the somewhat metaphoric sense, as distinguished from the matter strictly and sensually perceived. Now let us go on.

Reader:
The subjects studied by political science are Moral Nobility and Justice; but these conceptions involve much difference of opinion and uncertainty, so that they are sometimes believed to be mere conventions and to have no real existence in the nature of things.

LS That I think we should translate a bit more precisely: "The noble and the just things, about which the political art makes its inquiries, have great differences of one another and confusion, so that they seem to be only by convention and in no way by nature." Yes?

Reader:
And a similar uncertainty surrounds the conception of the Good—

LS: There is no "conception," of course. The word doesn't exist here. Why make things unnecessarily complicated and create the appearance of learning by speaking all the time of conception?

Reader: I don't know.

LS: It must be beautiful when they drink a glass of beer [and] would say "conception" . . . which I believe they wouldn't say.

Reader: I don't know.

LS: Yes. One cannot know. Now?

Reader:
because it frequently occurs that good things have harmful consequences: people have before now been ruined by wealth, and in other cases courage has cost men their lives. (1094b14-19)

LS: Yes. Well, "before now some have actually come to ruin through wealth and others through courage." You see what he does with Aristotle's conciseness, unnecessarily. But let us not draw too much attention to that. What he means here, of course, in the last part of the sentence is this: everyone would say, without trying to be subtle, "Well, these are

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[ii] Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* (1670), 21-22.

good things. Courage is a good thing. Now look how many men have been ruined by their wealth." Is this not intelligible, that some people are ruined by their wealth? And some have been ruined by their courage: namely, they volunteer for all kinds of dangerous things, and they are ruined. That's popular and . . .

Now what degree of exactness is to be expected in the present inquiry, which is a kind of political inquiry? That is now the question, and therefore we must look at the subject matter of the present inquiry. And this subject matter consists of two kinds, and that is of crucial importance. The first is called "the noble and just things," and the second is called "the good things." Very much depends on your grasping this distinction. The noble and the just things correspond to what we would call today the moral things or the ethical things. The noble and the just things. And you can understand the difference between the noble and [the] just most simply as follows (this is a very provisional explanation): just things are the matters which you are obliged to do, which it is your duty to do, it is just for you to do; and the noble things are in a way beyond the call of duty. This is not literally true, but as a provisional explanation and as indicating that there is still some intelligibility of this distinction in our way of thinking . . . Now the good things are the good things. Two were mentioned here: wealth and courage. There are many more . . . But they are not in that way moral in which the noble and just things are.

Now regarding the noble and just things, Aristotle says there is a great variety, a great discord. This word occurs at the very beginning of the work, as you may recall (line 3 of the whole work): "comes to sight some variety, some difference, some discord of the ends." Here he repeats this, but with a bang: "there is a *great* discord and confusion regarding the noble and just things." Only now does Aristotle speak explicitly not merely of variety, but of the chaos in the moral world. Well, this chaos you know of course through present-day relativism, and there it becomes a matter of course about which nothing has to be said except to take it as a safe and sound starting point, which is not Aristotle's way of . . .

Now what corresponds to relativism in our age was in classical antiquity what we can call conventionalism. And that is defined here: the noble and just things are only "by convention," and in no way "by nature." The difference between conventionalism and present-day relativism is this: conventionalism is guided by the distinction between the conventional and the natural. And the old-fashioned conventionalists admitted of course that there are things by nature good: for example, to have a sane mind, a healthy body, [and] food are simple examples; and to have good friends, good children, good parents. These are of course things which are by nature good, which everyone in his senses would desire, and this is in no way conventional, whereas whether there should be polygamy or monogamy, or whether there should be community of property or not: this would be, according to the conventionalist view, a matter of convention. It depends on the society for which of the various alternatives it opts.

But there is a sphere in which no such human preference or tossing of coins is relevant, and this concerns the things good by nature. Nevertheless, Aristotle goes on to suggest, there is some such confusion also regarding the good things. But no one says, I note in passing, that the good things are good *merely* by convention. That no one would suggest. Yet we can say the good things are ambiguous: we think they are simply good, especially when we are inexperienced, and then we find out gradually that they are not always good. For example, wealth: desirable for someone poor, so that some people think, "If we had more money, everything would be fine," and they find out later on that this was a delusion. The same would be true, speaking crudely and superficially, as we do all the time now, of courage. Wasn't it wonderful to have courage and to face all kinds of dangers? Well, look: X did have this admirable quality, and then he was killed,

unnecessarily, because of it. So the same thing would seem to apply, at first glance, to *all* good things. There is a chapter in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, book 4, chapter 2, which we might read, where this is beautifully and simply explained by Socrates himself to a young man called Euthydemus, for example, that even wisdom—which was surely regarded by Socrates as a very great good—that even wisdom can be damaging. For example, Socrates uses there the example of a fellow who was kidnapped because of his wisdom. The Persian king wanted to have him . . . [laughter] so you know the good things are not as unambiguously good as inexperienced people might be inclined to think.

Now what is implied here also is that the good things, as good things, are fundamentally superior to the noble and just things. And this to begin with is very hard for us to understand. It has something to do with that comment I stated on an earlier occasion diagrammatically, and I will repeat that, because I . . . [LS writes on the blackboard.] Here is the social scientist, or whatever you call that. In the wide sense Aristotle too would be a social scientist. Here he looks toward the noble and just things. And then it is possible to look further afield, and this would still be the same perspective. That is what Aristotle would say. And then there is another possibility: to look at this whole dimension from the outside, as a spectator. These are fundamental alternatives. And now the superiority of the good to the noble and just has something to do with this shift of perspective from this to this. [LS refers to the blackboard.] This is for the time being perhaps wholly unintelligible, but I know from long experience that a teacher must sometimes throw some seeds and hope that they will sprout. Good.

Only one illustration for the time being, which is not more than an illustration and perhaps a poor one. In Plato's *Republic*, mention is made of the idea of the good, the highest thing. The good is said to be, or the idea of the good is said to be superior to the ideas of the just and of the noble. That is also Aristotle's view, although he would not express it in these terms. Now Mr Wedergreen?

Reader:
We must therefore be content if, in dealing with subjects and starting from premises thus uncertain, we succeed in presenting a broad outline of the truth: when our subjects and our premises are merely generalities, it is enough if we arrive at generally valid conclusions. (1094b19-22)

LS: Yes. "Generally" here understood in contradistinction to "universal," not in the sense of "abstract." So Aristotle begins now to raise the question, after he has made clear that the subject matter of politics is singularly chaotic, disorderly: how shall we speak about it? "Rather rudely and crudely," so we can interpret what Aristotle says. In other words, we should be satisfied with rules of thumb rather than with mathematical propositions, with quite a few if's and but's. And that means generally, not universally. No rules here without exception. Take an example. Aristotle makes clear in his *Politics* that one of the fundamental facts of the *polis* is the distinction between the rich and the poor,[iii] a distinction which is so little peculiar to Aristotle that, for example, Machiavelli makes also very much of it. [It is] elemental. But is this a precise distinction? It obviously depends very much on the total wealth of the society and on the relative distribution of wealth within the society. So that is not an exact distinction but yet a very powerful one which we must not forget.

Or take the good man: the man of integrity, as he would be called today. Now how deeply should we look into his heart before we pronounce a man "a man of perfect

[iii] This is a central theme of book 5 of the *Politics*.

integrity"? And so Aristotle says: "Not too deeply." That's briefly Aristotle's answer. We judge him from his actions, and if he has constantly behaved decently throughout his life, then we pronounce him a perfect gentleman. As for his intentions: Aristotle says they are immanifest, and therefore you can't say anything about them. But on the other hand, can we be satisfied with external correctitude, even if [it extends] throughout the whole of life? Difficult questions, if's and but's.

Now since we start in our present inquiry from premises which are true only generally, i.e., admitting exceptions, our conclusions will be only general as well, as should be clear. Take another example: generals ought to be men of great bodily vigor. Yet in one particular case there may be a very gouty old general who may have much more strategic acumen than the young generals. Naturally, a very sensible man would say, "Let us choose this gouty old general," against the rule, which is generally sound, that vigorous young men . . . So I think that is not difficult to understand. Now Aristotle goes on in this discussion.

Reader:
Accordingly we may ask the student also to accept the various views we put forward in the same spirit; for it is the mark of an educated mind to expect that amount of exactness in each kind which the nature of the particular subject admits. It is equally unreasonable to accept merely probable conclusions from a mathematician and to demand strict demonstration from an orator.

Again, each man judges correctly those matters with which he is acquainted; it is of these that he is a competent critic. To criticize—

LS: Let us try to avoid technical terms when simple terms will do. "Critic" is a deliberative term, isn't it? *Kritēs* is "judge."

Reader: "Judge"?

LS: Yes.

Reader:
To criticize or to judge a particular subject, therefore, a man must have been trained in that subject: to be a good judge[iv] generally, he must have had an all-around education. (1094b22-1095a2)

LS: Yes. Now let us stop here for a moment. So Aristotle raises now the question, not [of] how to speak about the subject matter, but [of] how to accept such speeches. First, he had spoken, as it were, of what the speaker, the teacher, should do. Now we see . . . about the hearers or the students. What the listener or reader should expect or demand in each case or kind of case [is] the exactness which the nature of the matter permits. The extremes would be the mathematician and the orator. From the mathematician, you would not be satisfied if he would say, "By God, that is so!" But in the case of the orator, it might very well be very conclusive if in a given part of the speech he says so. I think if you would make a study of political speeches, you will see that oaths or their equivalents are very persuasive, or can be very persuasive in public speech. But not in mathematics. And some of the jokes which Plato permits in his dialogues are where he makes

[iv] In Rackham's translation: "To criticize a particular subject, therefore, a man must have been trained in that subject: to be a good critic."

sometimes questions be decided by Zeus. The swearing, say, of Glaucon in the *Republic* would add an atom of truth to the disquisition. So that is clear.

Well, we could perhaps illustrate by a modern example taken from Machiavelli. Machiavelli's *Prince* begins with a chapter which is rather dry and dull. It's a kind of scholastic division, rationing sequence of divisions, and then it ends with a quotation from a patriotic Italian poem. Now perhaps one could say what Machiavelli suggests is that the proper posture of the student of politics consists in the proper mixture of academic dryness and patriotic fervor . . . You could not use such a mixture in mathematics, although maybe in biology. But in the study of human, political things, it would make sense.

Now in order to demand the right kind or degree of exactness or precision, one must know the nature of the subject matter, or one must know the genus with which the science in question deals. One does not have to be a scientist in order to do that. Aristotle uses here the term "the educated man." The educated man is a dilettante. He's not a man of science; [he has] the particular kind of second-hand familiarity with the subject matter compared with that of the true man of science. And the highest possibility on this level is the man who has an all-round education, something which we can no longer expect in our age but which in former times was of course possible when there was much less specialization and much less focus.

So Aristotle has here stated again in general terms the question: what about the spirit in which to expect or accept speeches? And now he turns again to the question at hand: how to accept or what to expect of speeches regarding our present subject matter? Will you go on, please?

Reader:
Hence the young are not fit to be students of Political Science. For they have no experience of life and conduct, and it is these that supply the premises and subject matter of this inquiry.[v] And moreover they are led by their feelings; so that they will study—

LS: "Passions." Well, you could also say "feelings," but the usual translation of *pathos* is "passion."

Reader:
so that they will study the subject to no purpose or advantage, since the end of this science is not knowledge but action. And it makes no difference whether they are young in years or immature in character: the defect is not a question of time, it is because their life and its various aims are guided by passion;[vi] for to such persons their knowledge is of no use, any more than it is to persons of defective selfish incontinence.[vii] But Moral Science may be of great value to those who guide their desires and actions by principle. (1095a2-11)

LS: Of course Aristotle doesn't say "moral science," nor does he say "political science." He says in Greek *hē politikē*, to which you can add the noun *technē*, for example: "the political art." You can also add to *hē politikē*, *dynamis*: "the political ability." It is not so hard and fast, these things in Aristotle, as the translators . . . make.

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[v] In Rackham's translation: "this branch of philosophy."
[vi] In Rackham's translation: "feeling."
[vii] In Rackham's translation: "defective self-restraint."

Now who are then the proper hearers of what we could now call "ethics"? Perhaps "ethics" is better than "ethical science," because the claim is somewhat different when you speak of "ethics" than when you speak of "ethical science." Now the proper hearers of ethics are not the young. And I do not know what I have to say here [laughter], but I can assume that part of you are graduate students, and that surely all of you are beyond high school. And "the young" means here, as Aristotle says immediately, "those who lack self-control." And he gives two reasons. First, young people lack experience, and secondly, young people generally speaking lack self-control. They will not learn, they will not listen properly, because their passions blind them. If someone has a very strong desire for something, then he doesn't listen to reasons which tell him he is wrong to desire that or to strive for that. I don't think that I have to labor this point, because all of you have read some novels and you know . . .

One may say, going a bit beyond what Aristotle here explicitly says, that the proper hearer or student must already be a perfect gentleman . . . Aristotle does not do the job which Plato or Socrates does in the *Republic* on Thrasymachus, who is not a perfect gentleman and doesn't claim to be one, and Socrates refutes him, or in the *Gorgias* on Callicles. Aristotle says, in other words, "I am not going to refute the immoralists, the people who say the just and noble things are merely conventional. I don't talk to such people." Now this seems to be a very arbitrary procedure. But nevertheless, let us see what . . .

If we take first the contemporary example: there is now much talk of freedom of love, I believe they call it, by which they mean complete sexual freedom. Now Aristotle would say: are young people competent regarding this subject? Can they know the grave consequences for the whole of life . . . Or to take a simpler case, where there would be no controversy among us: are three-year-old children competent to judge regarding matches? The application of one to the other example, I leave to you. The point which Aristotle makes here, which I must emphasize: the end which Aristotle pursues in this book is not knowledge but action. [LS raps on the table.] In other words, he is not concerned, at least not primarily concerned, with reaching an *understanding* of the moral things, the just and noble, but with *making*, within the limits of the possible,[1] men *better* men, men *more* noble andjust. That is the end. Whether one needs for this purpose an understanding of what nobility and what justice is from the point of view of the outside observer, we are not yet in a position to say.

Now let us read, then. Aristotle has drawn our attention very forcefully to the moral chaos which leads to the fact that people say the noble and just things are only conventional. One could say, being harsh on Aristotle or nasty to him, that the moral chaos disappears or ceases to be terrible by virtue of experience of life and of control of the passions. Or perhaps more simply, he will only talk to people who have fulfilled this condition. Now the other side of it, the degenerate, the sensualist side will come to sight soon enough. Now in the next sentence . . .

Reader:
Let so much suffice by way of introduction as to the student of the subject, the spirit in which our conclusions are to be received, and the object that we set before us. (1095a11-13)

LS: This is important, because it says what we have read hitherto was only an introduction, [a] prooemium. And later on we'll go on. But first, let us have a discussion before we go on. So this was an entirely provisional discussion, a prooemium, indicating the subject matter and indicating the spirit in which it will be treated and in which the treatment must be accepted by the young. There must be quite a few questions.

Student: Yes, I've got a couple. First, is this a prologue also to the *Politics*, or is it only to the *Ethics*?

LS: Well, I would say only to this work, because there is a special transition at the end of this work to the *Politics*, and then there is a new beginning made in the *Politics*.

Same Student: Yes.

LS: But since the two works belong together, you can also say that it is simply the beginning of this whole dual enterprise: *Ethics* and *Politics*, and the prooemium to that.

Same Student: But I was thinking of what you're saying about *politikē tis* being, say, the art of the teacher of legislators or something like that.

LS: "A kind of political inquiry" would be the literal translation.

Same Student: Yes. Later on, in the sixth book, when he exposes *politikē* alone, he seems to say that it is a part of prudence. Would *politikē tis* also be a kind of prudence?

LS: Yes, but at a second remove. This will become clear. First of all, we have to wait for book 6, where he speaks about prudence and the relation of prudence and politics. And one [issue] which Aristotle does not develop there, as far as I remember, but which was developed by the scholastics of the Middle Ages, was this difference: that the teacher of political prudence is not as such a political man. For example, the political man always has to consider the opposition and the present situation. The *teacher* of politics in general doesn't have to do that. There is no opposition in that way, because the scholars who contradict him are not in opposition in the political sense, or at least that's what he hopes.

Same Student: But isn't the teacher of, say, legislators in some sense a political man, let's say because he has to deal with particular legislators.

LS: That is a very difficult question. But as a teacher of legislators, he would establish the principles of legislation, which would be, rightly understood, universally valid. Not universally valid in the sense in which Bentham would have been a teacher of legislators, but in the sense that he would consider the alternative: say, this is the most desirable; this is the second [most] desirable, third [most] desirable, and so on. But he would not deal with Athens, or Sparta, or Corinth but with aristocracy, democracy, oligarchy and the different kinds of regimes. And he could in principle be nameless, whereas an actual politician of course has himself a name, a proper name and belongs to a city with a proper name and has to do with adversaries with proper names. Is this [clear]?

Same Student: Yes.

LS: So in other words, Aristotle's *Ethics* is in between a strictly practical pursuit [and a strictly theoretical pursuit]. A strictly practical pursuit is what Aristotle did in order to have the means of living for himself [and] for his friends. That's practical. But when he reasons generally about how to get money, then in that respect he is of course no longer a practical man. The economist, the teacher of management of the household, is not as such a manager of the household. Was this not intelligible?

Same Student: Yes.

LS: Today we have the other pole, where the practical sciences have completely disappeared. May I mention this in passing? We have today a distinction between the theoretical and the applied sciences, and the applied sciences are sciences which presuppose the pure or theoretical sciences. In Aristotle the applied sciences play no role. But for him what is decisive is the distinction between theoretical and practical sciences. And the practical sciences do not presuppose the theoretical sciences. How this is possible, we will try to understand. There are also difficulties here, no doubt, but *prima facie* this is simply true. Now Mr. . . .

Student: It would seem that the qualifications for the good, or only appropriate student of Aristotle's *Ethics*, are conjoined in old men, since they have had the experience and they are also by nature less susceptible to the passions.

LS: May I suggest a slight correction? Mature. [Laughter]

Same Student: Well, there's a problem there, but—

LS: If it were only for old men, it would be a pity. And little need.

Same Student: Well, that's just the question I wanted to ask, because it would seem that as men become more receptive to the teaching, their ability to improve their actions with respect to justice and nobility has correspondingly decreased.

LS: Because you can't teach an old dog new tricks.

Same Student: Among other reasons, and also that their active lives are behind them, to a large extent.

LS: No. Therefore I suggest that [you] replace old by "mature," and you will have what Aristotle says, and your objection would cease to be valid.

Same Student: Well, I'm not so sure, because in practice one can't readily imagine a mature man, who was busily engaged in practical activities, taking the time out to read Aristotle.

LS: That is not true. I have an empirical proof to demonstrate it. There was a very remarkable man, a more than remarkable man, in our age: Winston Churchill. And he had a friend, Lord Birkenhead. His name prior to his being raised to the peerage was Smith; I forgot his initials.[viii] And this Lord Birkenhead was a lawyer and a very witty man, of which Churchill gives some examples. And on one occasion or another, Birkenhead gave Churchill *this* book to read [LS raps on the table], of course in English translation. And Churchill was already at that time in[2] [his] forties. Churchill read it and said, "That is more or less as I always thought [of] these things." Churchill didn't say that he derived any benefit from it.[ix] That he didn't say, but I believe he was too busy to derive any benefit from it. But at least he saw here is that made explicit, what he and Birkenhead and some other people felt was the good man.

[viii] F. E. Smith, 1st Earl of Birkenhead (1872-1930), British politician.

[ix] See C. E. Bechhofer Roberts, *Winston Churchill, being an Account of the Life of the Right Hon. Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill, P.C., C.H., T.D., M.P*. (London: Mills & Boon, Ltd., 1927), 102.

Same Student: But it's precisely the benefit that Aristotle is concerned with, not simply the knowledge.

LS: Sure, that is true. But why don't you take people—there was an expression used in Athens, which you surely have heard: "people who mind their own business." Now by this was understood people of independent means—unfortunately, that was necessary—people of independent means or who had friends of independent means . . . and who were without political ambition. That was the meaning [of] *minding one's own business*. These people of course had plenty of time to go to the Lyceum or wherever Aristotle gave lectures or Plato gave lectures, and to listen to them. There is no difficulty in that.

If you raise now the question whether such books are not wholly valueless, the question which in a way Machiavelli raised when he said he wanted to create political science in accordance with how men actually lived, i.e., not as perfect gentlemen, then of course you could throw this book away. It's useless. But I believe you will get into theoretical troubles . . . Practical probably not, given the state of scientific powers now in the present day. But you will get into theoretical troubles.

At any rate, even if this other view, the Machiavellian view, were true, it would be absolutely necessary to understand the alternative; otherwise we simply are blind followers of Machiavelli. And we want to understand his reasoning: to what extent is this right? And therefore we have to know the position from which he retreats.

Same Student: It seems to me that precisely our view is one of seeking knowledge, whereas if we believe Aristotle, to a certain extent that view is inimical to . . .

LS: You can say that. That is a very good point. In other words, we, especially the younger ones among you, are in a situation in which we hear two kinds of sirens. On the one side there are those who repeat more or less well what Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle taught; and then there are the others, who repeat more or less what Thrasymachus, Callicles, and such people said. And therefore you cannot, or we cannot say: "We are nice people and we will simply only listen to nice men." We cannot do that. The power of the non-nice people—or as they are sometimes called, the bad guys—is so strong that we have to take this position of the observer. That is true. But we must never forget that Aristotle's primary position is not that [of the observer]. And we must be careful to see what the advantages are that go with Aristotle[']s position]. Now let us go on and read the very beginning of 1095a14. "Let us speak after having taken up the subject." Yes?

Reader:
To resume, inasmuch as all studies and undertakings are directed to the attainment of some good—

LS: Let us stop here. Now Aristotle repeats here, as you see, the very beginning of the work but simplifying it greatly, because he speaks now only of every knowledge and moral choice. He does not make this division into four, which in a way . . . We may use this occasion for noticing that in good writers repetitions are as a rule never literal repetitions, but always nonliteral. At any rate, Aristotle continues, but he continues while repeating. And now let us begin where we began now and read a few more lines.

Reader:
let us discuss what it is that we pronounce to be the aim of Politics, that is, what is the highest of all the goods that action can achieve. As far as the name goes, we may almost say that the great majority of mankind are agreed about this— (1095a14-18)

LS: Let us stop here. It is settled that the human ability dealing with the highest good is the political one, [the] political ability. But it deals only with the highest of the good things to be achieved *by action*. And here you see a distinction only between choice and knowledge. Aristotle takes now for granted that there is a single highest good, taught here partly on the basis of that parallelism between the ends and the arts. Do you remember? And there is a variety of ends, there is an infinite variety of ends, and there is an infinite variety of arts that produce ends. Yet among the arts we find a hierarchy, and therefore we have the right to assume a hierarchy also among the ends. Moreover, among the arts we find one architectonic art, one art ruling all others: the political art. And therefore we are entitled to assume that there is a good thing which is a product of this political art. That was the previous argument. Now what did you want to say?

Another Student: I want to ask you: he said before that the *spoudaios* is the only true student of *politikē*, so he only talks to the *spoudaioi*. Is it fair to say, on the other side, that he only talks *about* the *spoudaioi*? In other words, that the hierarchy of goods, the way he approaches it, can exist only if the men who seek goods are in effect sincere in seeking the highest good? Does the classification work only with *spoudaioi*?

LS: Not quite. When somebody assumes the subordination of the art of shipbuilding to the art of sailing . . . must be recognized by the greatest . . .

Same Student: That's another thing. That's a very simple example. What if we take something a little more complicated, like two men differing on a piece of legislation? One says the good is A, the other says the good is something else, perhaps even not-A. Is it fair to say that the goods—actually both have the highest good inherent in them, as Aristotle would say, if the men both sincerely aim at it. In other words, they both may be wrong, but they must aim at the highest one in order to be related to it.

LS: Aristotle, I believe, would not attach this importance to sincerity, because sincerity can go together with great blindness.

Same Student: With great blindness, yes.

LS: And great obstinacy, and so which would not—

Student: Sincerity is a simply term, but the attitude and the content of the *spoudaios* concerned—

LS: They would agree in principle, surely, on all matters of principle. But since practical matters are of this great variety, there are many cases where decent men can disagree. And that is clear: ways and means must be found, lest this disagreement leads to dissolution of the body politic. That goes without saying. But disagreements, especially concrete questions, are coeval with political life of any complexity. Now let us then continue where we left off.

Reader:
For both the multitude and persons of refinement speak of it as Happiness, and conceive 'the good life' or 'doing well' to be the same thing as 'being happy.' (1095a18-20)

LS: Yes. Now hitherto, to repeat, we knew that there is a highest good in this indirect way: because there is a highest art. But we didn't see this highest good itself, only its object. But regarding this object, we have learned in the meantime that it consists of the noble and just things on the one hand, and the good things on the other, and there is great complexity there. So that is not very helpful.

Now Aristotle makes a new beginning and, as it were, he grabs at a straw. There is a word which all men use for designating the highest good, and this word is in Greek *eudaimonia*. This is a point which is not negligible, but of course not decisive, because names may be used equivocally. *The* cleavage among men is that between the many and the men of refinement or grace, *charientes*. And there is a cleavage, but they all agree as to the name, and they agree moreover as to this: that *eudaimonia*—having a good demon or being guided by a good demon—is the same as doing well, and the ambiguity of doing well, acting well, or just faring well . . . and living well. There is no doubt that all men . . . There is no man in his senses who doesn't wish to live well, to do well, and to be happy. But unfortunately there is a great variety of opinions as to what happiness is, of which he speaks in the sequel. Now?

Reader:
But what constitutes happiness is a matter of dispute; and the popular account of it is not the same as that given by the philosophers.

LS: Oh no. "The wise men." They make it all too technical. Now he speaks of the wise men where he had spoken before of the men of refinement or grace, and the two terms are here synonymously used, the same thing. So while all men agree as to the name of it, what *is* happiness? And there you see is this profound disagreement between the many and the wisest. Yes?

Reader:
Ordinary people identify it with some obvious and visible good, such as pleasure or wealth or honour—some say one thing and some say another, indeed, very often the same man says different things at different times: when he falls sick he thinks health is happiness, when he is poor, wealth. At other times, feeling conscious of their own ignorance, men admire those who propound something grand and above their heads—

LS: Yes. So opinions of the many—well, you are all familiar with this view, that a man thinks at one time, "If I only got rid of this pneumonia!" or whatever it may be, and that is the only thing of importance to him, and then after he is well, he doesn't pay any attention to his health any more. That is very clear.

The last point may refer to something like initiations into Eleusian or other Mysteries. Now others have higher views; neither honor, nor wealth, nor health is the thing, but some grand things, high above them. Yes?

Reader:
And it has been held by some thinkers that beside the many good things we have mentioned, there exists another Good, that is good in itself, and stands to all those goods as the cause of their being good. (1095a20-28)

LS: Well, the reference . . . to Plato, or let us say to Platonists: there is one good thing which is the cause also of all these good things mentioned before, like health, wealth, and so on.

Now Aristotle—this is the sole example he gives of the opinions of wise men. And he reports here two kinds of opinions, two faulty extremes: the view of the vulgar and the false view of a wise man. The right mean is not mentioned here because he must show a cause why neither of the two views, [the] two possibilities is sufficient. Yes?

Reader:

Now perhaps it would be a somewhat fruitless task to review all the different opinions that are held. It will suffice to examine those that are most widely held[x] or that seem to have some argument in their favour.

LS: Well, in practice this means—I mean, this is of course an absolutely sound statement: you cannot discuss all opinions. In practice for Aristotle, it means that he will not try to refute Callicles, or Thrasymachus for that matter. And this is of some importance. All right, now go on.

Reader:
And we must not overlook the distinction between arguments that start from first principles and those that lead to first principles. It was a good practice—

LS: Why does he say "first"? Say "principles." There are so many principles around nowadays that you must make this distinction. It was not so in Aristotle's day. Now let us see up to the—yes, the next sentence.

Reader:
It was a good practice of Plato to raise this question, and to enquire whether the right procedure was to start from or to lead up to the principles,[xi] as in a—

LS: "Procedure"—in Greek: "the way is." "The way is to the principles or from them." Yes?

Reader:
as in a race-course one may run from the judges to the far end of the track or the other way around.[xii]

LS: Yes. Let us stop here. Aristotle now gives the reason why one cannot give a reason for everything, we can say. And that is the rest of this chapter. There are two ways in which we can say: from the principles, down (let us call this descent), and up to the principles (let us call this ascent). And let us avoid these technical terms like induction and deduction, which do more harm than good. The question is: which way will Aristotle go in his *Ethics*, from the principles down, or up to the principles? And the distinction to which he refers here was made by Plato. It does not occur as far as I know in this form in the Platonic dialogues, but it must have been a very common use of Plato in his conversations. Now go on.

Reader:
Now no doubt it is proper to start from the known. But 'the known' has two meanings—'what is known to us,' which is one thing, and 'what is knowable in itself,' which is another. Perhaps then for us at all events it is proper to start from what is known to us. (1095a28-b4)

LS: Yes, let us stop here. This is a bit of a joke. We—we humans—perhaps should start from what is known to humans . . . the context. We must start either from what is known to us or from what is known simply, absolutely. The preposition used here, *apo* in Greek, seems to indicate that he will proceed by way of descent. He seems to replace "principles" by "known," although—things known—and drawing our attention, however,

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[x] In Rackham's translation: "most widely prevalent."
[xi] In Rackham's translation: "first principles."
[xii] In Rackham's translation: "or reversely."

to [the fact] that there are two kinds of things known: known to us or known in itself, meaning tacitly presupposed by us but not yet understood, so not yet realized. But starting from what is known to us would seem to lead to what is known by itself. Starting from what is known to us would then mean starting from the facts as distinguished from the principles or highest causes. Does Aristotle then say we should start from what is known to us in order to arrive eventually at the principles? Is this the procedure? Let us read the sequel.

Reader:
This is why in order to be a competent student of the Right and Just—

LS: "Noble and just."

Reader:
and in short of the topics of Politics in general, the pupil is bound to have been well trained in his habits. For the starting-point or first principle is the fact that a thing is so; if this be satisfactorily ascertained, there will be no need also to know the reason why it is so. And the man of good moral training knows first principles already, or can easily acquire them. (1095b4-8)

LS: Yes. Now Aristotle seems here to say: No, we do not start from facts in order to arrive eventually at the principles, for the fact—the "that" in Greek—is principle itself. Hence, no need for the why. No need for the why. There is no need for the why, no need for the principles in the sense of the term previously used. For example, someone can say that . . . in Horace, "It is sweet and becoming to die for the fatherland,"[xiii] is an example of such a fact. The well brought-up man knows that, and there is no need for any reason. And he—starting from such maxims represented by the poem, and perhaps even "honesty is the best policy," if you want. Such maxims which gradually build up in a man through the course of his education and his experience, that is all that is needed. A man who sees the that—[xiv] In other words, what Aristotle seems to say is this: a man who sees the "that"—take the example from Horace, or however you want—the man who sees the "that" is and/or is not by this very fact in possession of the "why." One couldn't be more ambiguous. The well-bred man surely knows that this or that is noble or just, but he does not know *why* these things are just or noble. More precisely, even granting that he knows why they are just and noble, does he know that they are good? Because that was exactly the point of these bad guys, Thrasymachus and the others, that they said there are of course noble and just things, but they are not good.

And the real question, the first question, would be [whether] noble and just things are good or not. The question is: will the well-brought up young man, or mature man, learn[3] from Aristotle that they are good? At any rate, Aristotle addresses only decent people. That is made clear, I think, here more than before, people who admit that one ought to be decent, or that decency is good. Does Aristotle beg the decisive question by not arguing this out too? Does he argue in a circle, in other words, presupposing decency and never go out of this charming circle of decency? Perhaps this is necessary. And there is a simple reflection which can show the plausibility, at least, of his approach. A man, young or old, who raises this question which theoretically seems to be so plausible, "Why should I be decent?" has already ceased to be decent, so that to raise this question is incompatible with decency. He cannot have . . . there is at a certain place a jump from neutrality, from nondecency to decency, and a jump without which we could never enter

[xiii] Horace, *Odes* 3.2.13.
[xiv] There is a break in the tape at this point.

this dimension. The situation is a bit more complicated than that, but still it is necessary to make this point. And now let us read the conclusion of this chapter.

Reader:
As for the person who neither knows nor can learn, let him hear the words of Hesiod:

Best is the man who can himself advise,
He too his good who harkens to the wise,
But who, himself being witless ,will not heed
Another's wisdom, is worthless indeed.

LS: So there are three kinds of men: those who know through their own power, and they are the best. And the second are those who listen to or obey him who has spoken well; this would be the perfect gentlemen, listening to Aristotle. And the third are the wholly useless fellows who don't know by themselves and who don't listen to their betters. Some of you will remember the three kinds of men in the *Republic*. Do you remember them? Well, can I not make from time to time a little examination? These are the three kinds of men in the *Republic*.

Student: The guardians, and the auxiliaries, and the working class.

Another Student: The moneymakers are . . .

LS: Yes, that is the same distinction. The third class does not really listen in the way in which the auxiliaries, as they are called, listen. Now the class of those who listen to him who speaks well, these are the gentlemen. They know the noble and just things through hearing, through hearsay, and tradition. But this is not the highest form of knowledge. The highest form of knowledge is to know it through oneself. Now let us read the very beginning of the next chapter.

Reader:
But let us continue from this point where we digressed. (1095b8-14)

LS: Yes, now we learn here that this was a digression or an excursus. And as appears from the sequel, this remark about method, as people call it today so misleadingly, about the way in which Aristotle speaks and in which the hearer must hear: this is an excursus. An excursus is not necessarily something unimportant or irrelevant, it can be very important. Aristotle has three such remarks about how to speak and how to hear in the first book. This is the central one, which we have just read. And as a rule, in authors like Aristotle, what is at the center is particularly important. So this is a very important excursus, but in a way, if a hasty reader says, "Well, I don't wish to read it, because it's only an excursus," no harm—I mean, he will not be punished by any legislator, of that he can be sure. Yes. Now we leave it at this point. We have a few minutes left. Any questions, objections?

Student: I have a great misgiving about Aristotle's procedure in restricting the variety of moral opinions by restricting himself to those who have experience in some control over their passions. I don't really think that this is enough to get rid of the variety of moral opinions. I mean, if you restrict yourself to such people—

LS: All right, but still. Now let us take a simple case, an extreme case. If a man is in a state of rage, and he has just heard that another fellow has done something bad, and he is eager to kill that man. Is such a man so circumstanced in a position to listen to cool reason? Must you not use first some form of violence, until he behaves himself?

Same Student: I agree with that, but I think my question is a different question. It is: even if you disregard such people, and I think there are good reasons for doing so, isn't there still a great deal of disagreement among people who have experience and who have self-control?

LS: Yes, there is. But pick a single example, and then give . . .

Student: There are some societies where the parents are put to death when they reach a certain age when they are no longer useful. This is done, this is thought to be good; this is not thought to be wrong even by the most experienced people.

LS: Well, Aristotle does not go generally into questions of such detail, because it is a detailed question. And you rightly imply [that] it does not necessarily contradict the general notion, which Aristotle would assume all societies have, that one should honor one's parents, because of . . . saves the troubles. And then the men who would do it know that the same will be done with them when they are. Therefore it is a moral principle, a moral principle being one from whose validity you do not except yourself. Otherwise it's sheer crookedness, and only crooks do that. But if a man says, "If it is better to have the parents put to sleep, then perhaps that goes for all the miseries of old age," and says "of course I want my children and their . . . it includes the same for me," then it is at least respectable at its face.

Yes. Go on, then the question would simply be simply be—Aristotle does not discuss that. But I believe I can say it would be in the spirit to say: what then? Let us discuss it. Whether the two alternatives, the alternatives [with] which we are familiar: that there will be no killing of innocent people under any circumstances, except accidentally as in [an] air war. You see, ifs and buts come in all the time. But generally speaking, we say no one should be killed innocently, that parents are innocent people, we assume. Whether this is not a sound principle, which was . . . we have to go into details and discuss it *practically* and not merely in general assertions. "I believe that my conscience tells me what to do," that would be not worth any argument. We have to give reasons. And if one sees that, I think one would have to enter into the subject and discuss it, because these people, however primitive, who have such practices have reasons, sometimes disguised in the form of stories or myths. Well, it is our duty as scientific men to take away the disguise and state it in nonmythical [language] what the reason is, and then contrast it with the reasoning underlying our practices. And that means, among other things, to make clear to ourselves: why[4] do we object to such practices, [e.g.], to the killing of the elders? . . . say if I'm opposed to it, I'm speaking for myself and I'm therefore disqualified, I'm perfectly willing to have every one of you . . . the premises for . . . In other words, there is no . . . And all these questions are very complicated questions. But take an issue of perhaps much greater gravity within the Western tradition: incest. And I am thinking not of psychoanalysis, but I'm thinking of . . . and so this is a very difficult question, illustrated by the biblical example that the human race could not possibly have multiplied without incest, at least between brothers and sisters, because there is descent from a single human. Very difficult. There are also some novels which present this issue in a very powerful way, for example a novel by Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister*.[xv] This is not the traditional—the problem of Aristotle: the traditional natural law teachers to the extent to which they were not . . . therefore said that this prohibition against incest, at least

[xv] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1795-1796). Strauss apparently refers to the incestuous union between Augustin and Sperata described in chapters 9 and 10 of book 8.

between brothers and sisters, belongs to positive law, not to natural law. So these questions are always known. But up from a certain point it becomes indeed a question of crossing-point in all deeds. But up to a certain point it is a matter of reasonable—and we must not evade it but try to think about it . . . What is in the mind of these people who killed their aged parents? And what is in the mind of the people who say [that] under no circumstances must this be done? [LS raps on the table.] There will be some reasons. And sometimes it takes great trouble to disinter it, because the decisions were made very early, and what remained for the future was only the result of the reason. This went that way and the reasoning has to be disinterred. And this . . . function which anthropologists, intelligent anthropologists, would have when they deal with these matters, and not merely say, "There are such people who do such and other people who do other things." That will not do.

Well, we meet . . .

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[1] Deleted "with making."
[2] Deleted "the."
[3] Deleted "it."
[4] Deleted "would.

Session 4: February 21, 1968

Student: It seems that we have to know what the subject matter is first, in order to say that we're going to make such and such claims.

Leo Strauss: Well, do we not have to know what the subject matter is first under all conditions? This can hardly be avoided. I mean, there may be a circle, but it is not visible in this passage. It becomes visible later on, but in a passage we read last time,[1] not in the one which you have in mind. And it consists in this: that the goodness of decency is presupposed. You have, as it were, to leap into the region of decency; and there is no reasoning, no *compelling* reasoning which can bring even an indecent man to make that leap. There are some reasonings which make it plausible, but the decisive thing is not achieved by that. I advise you to read perhaps book 7 of the *Politics*. There is a certain section, a very simple section, in which Aristotle speaks about the reasonableness or possibility of assuming the goodness of virtue and of the various kinds of virtue in a section where he discusses happiness. That's a much more elementary and primitive discussion, but this has also some advantages. You might read that. Now you have a point? Or no? Yes. I still don't remember your name, but I know who you are. [Laughter]

Student: I'd like to ask a question about something we discussed last time, and that was your elaboration of the *Ethics* as a practical book, or theoretical book at one remove. It's a theoretical–practical book.

LS: Yes.

Same Student: And the question I have is, why can't there be or why shouldn't there be a strictly theoretical science of politics? And by that I mean, well, say, Aristotle would agree with the definition which you have given in various places, that the philosopher seeks to know the whole. Now why couldn't there be a science which seeks to know that part of the whole which is political by answering the question, say,"What is the *polis*?" or "What is political?" or defining the limits of the political in a strictly theoretical way and that would be practical only in a secondary or even in an accidental sense, in that this knowledge of the limits of the political would be practical only accidentally? In other words, once you know what it is, then it could be applied, but that would not be its primary goal.

LS: Yes. Now why does Aristotle not proceed in this way? I mean, was this wholly beyond his ken, this possibility?

Student: It seems not to have been, because he was a student of Plato.

LS: And where do you find in Plato such a theoretical ethics, or the sketch of it, at least?

Same Student: Well, at least something like it in the *Statesman*, a purely theoretical view of the political.

LS: Ya. That one could say. But more simply, in the *Republic*, when Plato discusses there the virtues, he speaks first of the soul and its parts, or of the city and its parts; that is fundamentally the same there. Therefore he is able to say there are only these four and no other virtues, because the soul has these three parts, and then there must be a virtue concerning the soul as a whole or the city as a whole: that would be justice.

Now when Aristotle discusses the virtues, as you will see later on, already by the end of this book he enumerates a number of virtues and never tries to deduce them as Plato deduced them from the parts of the soul. So it is very easy to say: Aristotle, that's quite reasonable what you say there, but which guarantee did you have that your list of virtues is complete? That, after all, is what we as theoretical men would want. No answer. Take it or leave it. Or stated a bit more politely: show me a virtue which I omitted. Or show me that I *unreasonably* introduced one human quality and called it a virtue. And then you would be hard put to find any flaw in that. This I think is truly empirical: looking around [and] seeing these kinds of virtues. Some are even nameless; that doesn't do any harm. But if the vice is named, then by implication there is a virtue there, even if it is not named. But that's easy. Yes?

Same Student: I may run the risk of asking a question you said we shouldn't ask about—

LS: Oh, no. I did not mean it so literally.

Student: —there may be some things in that list of virtues which shouldn't be, even according to Aristotle, included. That is to say, don't some of the moral virtues somehow appear to be splendid vices, say, from the point of view of the theoretical virtues at least?

LS: Ya, but when does he speak about the theoretical virtues in this book?

Same Student: He starts speaking about them in the second book.

LS: Yes, but the full clarity about the relation of the moral and theoretical [is] at the end. So in other words, the bulk of the book is written without articulating the highest human possibility. Needless to say that Aristotle could not forget that for one moment, but he thinks it is important that one should see the moral sphere as it presents itself if you are blissfully unaware of true bliss: of theoretical, contemplative, speculative bliss. And why did he do that? Why did he abstract throughout the bulk of the work[2] [from] the highest? Because it would naturally take away something of the grace and splendor of these virtues.

Same Student: Well, why does the most graceful part come at the end?

LS: Because it is of so little importance to most human beings.

Same Student: But it would not seem right to come at the end, then.

LS: Well, in the first place, it is a general procedure that you ascend from the more accessible to the less accessible. And that such a thing, say, like justice: that this is a virtue and is very important, that is admitted by most people, and even by crooks, because they have their way of justice among themselves, I was told. So one could only say that they stop too early and draw the line at the wrong place, but they have some inkling that there must be some proportion between risk and reward, for example, which is the major principle of justice, so this can be easily granted. But the theoretical life: we are of course spoiled in a way by a tradition of many centuries and take that for granted, perhaps, although in modern times that was more and more questioned. But still it is somewhere there in our background. But in earlier times, that was a very small part of the city, a very small part, and if we disregard the common people, as Aristotle unfortunately does most of the time, and limit ourselves only to the gentlemen, even the gentlemen didn't know anything of philosophy to speak of. Think of Pericles's famous saying in the

funeral speech: *philosophoumen met' euteleias*:[i] we philosophize with thrift, i.e., without abandoning ourselves to it. You see, that is of course what Aristotle opposes. One should abandon oneself to it—not all men, but not all men are fit for it anyway. This is an extreme possibility. Now that something can be extreme and yet the highest is I suppose known to students in Claremont from the famous scene in the Cow Palace some years ago. [Laughter] So I do not have to labor this point. Now are you satisfied for the time being?

Same Student: For the time being, yes.

LS: Good.

Another Student: You said that the intellectual virtues came last . . .

LS: Well, in a crude way, because he speaks really of the intellectual virtues in the widest sense in book 6. But the highest virtue, the highest perfection of man, the highest happiness, that becomes the theme only at the end of this work.

Another Student: One question is that it would seem that perhaps from one point of view, or at least from the point of those very men that he directs the book at primarily, and especially that in section about moral virtue, he leaves out something which is most important to them, in a way that, say, philosophy isn't, and this might be—

LS: What does he omit?

Student: Well, piety, for example.

LS: Yes, all right. That is a very good point. Here you have made a point of great interest, because if we take an enumeration of the virtues as ordinarily understood by the Greeks of that time, and we can see this from Plato and Xenophon and other writers, piety would be one of these things and it is absent from Aristotle's list. This is a serious objection. Very good. But we have to go into the subject matter to see what Aristotle can do. I can give you an answer, a provisional answer. What most people understood by piety at the time was to pray and to sacrifice. Read Plato's *Euthyphro*. Now for Aristotle, surely sacrifices had no importance, I mean, except as a civic affair, you know, that rich people put at the disposal of the community a couple of oxen or whatever it may be, and a fine and gracious festival.[ii] But he did not believe for one moment that the gods were pleased by that or that one could influence them. For Aristotle, piety, we can say, the truth of piety, is knowledge of god; and this knowledge of god is what he calls theology or metaphysics, or what is called by other people metaphysics. Therefore Aristotle has the reasoning, but you have to disinter that; and partly that reasoning you would find in that famous twelfth book of the *Metaphysics*, where he takes issue with the popular notion of gods and presents his theology against that. That would be an important part of the argument.

In addition, he has in the *Ethics* something which comes close to a discussion of piety, namely, sense of shame, at the end of book 4. A sense of shame—*aidōs*: sacred reverence, or however you wish to translate it—that is in a way the core of piety. And Aristotle says with an amazing bluntness: it is not a virtue. He omits the aspect of reverence; he leaves it only at sense of shame, not to say bashfulness. And he says: Well,

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[i] Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 2.40.1.

[ii] See Rackham, 42-43, note *a*.

that is a good quality in young people, because young people are bound to make mistakes, and then of course they should be ashamed of them rather than the opposite. But a mature gentleman does not make mistakes; he has nothing ever to repent. Here we are at the opposite pole of biblical morality, obviously. I mean, that there is no man who does not sin, Aristotle denies that. So. Is there any other question of a general kind? Yes?

Student: In the translations it seems that both the word science and the word art is used to refer to politics, but I believe you suggested that we use . . . to refer to politics.

LS: Yes, well he says *politikē*, and that is an adjective and therefore in need of a noun. If you wanted to quote literally, you would have to say "the political one." But which, what one? Is this an art, or is this a science? And I believe the least dangerous and the least prejudging translation would be "ability." And that is left open: Is this a science, is it an art, or is it neither? I would then translate rather [*hē politikē* as] the *political ability*, if the *political one* is too harsh as a translation, rather than make up Aristotle's mind for him, which I think a translator should not do.[iii]

Same Student: What is Aristotle's distinction between art and science?

LS: Book 6. Well, very generally, an art produces something, for example, a shoe, a statue, a drama, whereas a science does not produce anything: it only looks at, studies, and follows. The mathematician does not produce triangles or circles . . . and the ones which he produces on the blackboard are of course not the ones which he has in mind *qua* mathematician. That is very roughly said. And there is a third thing which Aristotle distinguishes from the two of them, which he calls *phronēsis* in Greek,[iv] and that is ordinarily translated by "practical wisdom." It would be simpler to translate it by "prudence," if "prudence" had not undergone such a depreciation that it means almost the same as rascality. For Aristotle, prudence is something very high and inseparable from moral virtue, as he makes clear also in book 6. Now and when he leaves it open whether politics is an art, or a science, or maybe something third, what he is playing with is the possibility that politics might be neither a science nor an art but a form of prudence. And he develops that thought in book 6.

But we cannot always run ahead. We must proceed in a somewhat more orderly manner; but on the other hand, it would of course be very bad if, as Mr. Wedergreen put it, I were acting like Thrasymachus [and] I was forbidding you to raise certain questions. I'm not forbidding any questions, but I only say it is intelligible that some men would forbid some questions. Yes? For example, the question "Why be decent?" It is intelligible, whether [or not] I am in favor that it should be raised. But it is of course a very dangerous step, because in that moment I join the association of gangsters. "Why should one be a square?," as they put it in their elegant language. [Laughter] Good.

Now let us proceed. Well, I remind you briefly of the connection. Aristotle has found that there is at least one name used by all men for the highest good, the name happiness. But that is about all, because then the disagreement starts, and the chief cleavage is that between the many and the graceful or refined ones; later he speaks even of the wise ones. And the many say happiness consists in such things as pleasure, or wealth, or honor. And[3] there is [even] a greater variety. Sometimes the same individual says, "Now health

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[iii] Conventionally, *hē politikē*, a feminine substantivized adjective, is understood to be followed by one of the following three, implicit nouns, which are mentioned above: (a) *epistēmē*: science or knowledge; (b) *technē*: art; or (c) *dynamis*: ability, power, or capacity.

[iv] Strauss spells "*phronesis*."

is the greatest good," and the next day he says wealth, because in the meantime he has been restored to health, and he forgets about how much he is in need of it. Now this is one thing. And then there is another view to which he alludes, namely, that some have thought that beside all these many things which are regarded as good by most people, there is one good, another one, by itself, which is even the cause of the goodness of all the other things. So honor, wealth, pleasure, etc., are good only by virtue of that good in itself. This is a reference to Plato, as we have seen. In the passage to which we turn now, he will refute these views, both the vulgar views and the Platonic view. And now let's begin. 95b14.

Reader:
But let us continue from the point where we digressed. To judge from men's lives, the not unreasonable conceptions[v] of the Good or Happiness that seem to prevail among them are the following. On the one hand the many[vi] and the most vulgar identify it[vii] with pleasure, and accordingly are content with the Life of Enjoyment—for there are three specially prominent Lives, the one just mentioned, the Life of Politics—

LS: "*And* the life of politics, and the third—"

Reader:
and thirdly, the theoretical life.[viii]

LS: Yes.

Reader:
The many, then,[ix] show themselves to be utterly slavish, by preferring what is only a life for cattle; but they get a hearing for their view as reasonable because many persons of high position share the tastes of Sardanapallus. (1095b14-22)

LS: Let us stop here perhaps for a moment. So the variety of opinions regarding happiness: it is limited now by a consideration not of the arts as it was before, but of the ways of life, something very different from the arts. There are three most outstanding ways of life, and the most common view gains credence because some men of very high standing chose it, like Sardanapal, of whom he speaks here. In other words, there would be no first-glance impression that pleasure would be the highest good, because of the lowness of the people who say that, but for the fact that we find some men of high standing—rulers, emperors, kings, leaders, and what have you—who *by deed* assert that pleasure is the highest good. But of course that is almost a joke. The fact that there are men of high standing in this sense who take the most vulgar view does not make the most vulgar view more respectable in the eyes of men of judgment. If this view were correct, that pleasure is the highest objective of life, then a dog who has a good master would be happier than most men,[4] which no sensible man would assert. Aristotle was not sentimental regarding dogs. But of course no one dares to say that a merely brutish life would be a happy life, no one in his senses at least. Now let us go on.

Reader:

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[v] In Rackham's translation: "the more or less reasoned conceptions."
[vi] In Rackham's translation: "the generality of men."
[vii] In Rackham's translation: "the Good."
[viii] In Rackham's translation: "the Life of Contemplation."
[ix] In Rackham's translation: "The generality of mankind then."

The graceful on the other hand and the practical think it's honour[x]—for this may be said to be the end of the Life of Politics. But honour seems to be more superficial than that which we are seeking; for[xi] it appears to depend on those who confer it more than on him upon whom it is conferred, whereas we suppose that the good things[xii] must be something proper to its possessor and not easy to be taken away from him.

LS: So in other words, the first notion of happiness which Aristotle thinks is worth serious consideration is that according to which honor is happiness; honor as distinguished from bodily pleasure. Clearly, brutes are not concerned with honor. I mean, I say it with all respect to those of you who love dogs, maybe own dogs. They like to be petted and to be much made of, but that is not the same as honor. Honor cannot be happiness, since honor depends on the honoring man rather than the honored one. A man may deserve honor to the highest degree, but if no one honors him he does not enjoy honor. Is this not obvious? And now we guess somehow, we "divine," as Aristotle says with an expression liked very much by Plato, we divine, we have some inkling that happiness is something which cannot be so easily taken away and depends on the happy man himself rather than on others, because if happiness were dependent on others, happiness would be the frailest thing in the world, much more frail than it is on any other hypothesis. So let us go on.

Reader:
Yet[xiii] men's motive in pursuing honour seems to be to assure themselves of their own—

LS: What he doesn't bring out is this "furthermore." That is a favorite word with Aristotle: "furthermore," "in addition," "besides." Sometimes he has *n* arguments without making out a systematic order of them, he just enumerates them. He says, as it were: Look here. Someone says a is b. Aristotle says: No. Look here, look here, look here, look here, look here. And there might be—and if someone says, even there you would say: Yes, why not? But Aristotle doesn't think it necessary, or perhaps he has forgotten it and thinks the other arguments which he adduces are sufficient. So in this sense, Aristotle is "unsystematic" and perhaps the most unsystematic of all philosophers. Or as I would prefer to say, he is "quote empirical." He asks us to look around in all directions. Now the second argument is there?

Reader:
At least they seek to be honored by the prudent.[xiv] (1095b22-28)

LS: No, before; you omitted that.

Reader: I'm sorry.

LS: "Furthermore they seem to pursue honor so that they will trust that they themselves are good men." Yes. Now go on.

Reader:

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[x] In Rackham's translation: "Men of refinement, on the other hand, and men of action think that the Good is honour."
[xi] In Rackham's translation: "But honour after all seems too superficial to be the Good for which we are seeking; for."
[xii] In Rackham's translation: "we instinctively feel that the Good."
[xiii] In Rackham's translation: "moreover."
[xiv] In Rackham's translation: "men of judgement."

at least they seek to be honoured by the prudent and by men who know them, and on the ground of virtue. It is clear therefore that according to them—[xv]

LS: "According to them at any rate."

Reader:
at any rate, virtue is greater;[xvi] and one might perhaps accordingly suppose that virtue rather than honour is the end of the Political Life."

LS: Yes. Now here Aristotle continues his argument against the assertion that the highest good is honor, because this would of course be particularly attractive to gentlemen, honor, and therefore it is necessary to make clear why one cannot leave it at that. The concern with honor, Aristotle says, is in the service of one's concern with one's virtue. If a man is truly ambitious, truly concerned with recognition, he wants to be recognized for his *genuine* merits and not for qualities which he doesn't have, for actions which he has not done. Otherwise he would be a ridiculous boaster. So that therefore not honor but virtue would be happiness; or more precisely, virtue would be the end of the *political* life as distinguished from the third one which he had mentioned, namely, the theoretical life. This inadequacy of honor, that it necessarily points away from itself to virtue, this is part of the criticism of Thrasymachus and Callicles. Part of it. Yes?

Student: In this light, then, how would you interpret the last sentence in book 1, when he talks about happiness being something which is in itself to be honored?

LS: Yes, but that is *timion*. Here honor has a different meaning and has almost the same meaning as "divine." But we cannot take this up now. I only mention this; it does not conflict with this here. Honor is very dubious. It is of course highly desirable, but [only] if it is true honor. And true honor means that one deserves it, and not that one has a kind of clientele, like that of Mr. . . . or so. That is of course something which people regard as honor: to be mentioned all the time in columns, you know, or in newspapers. But that is not—because the moment the man is dead or has lost his ability to charm such large masses of men, he will be completely forgotten, like a beachcomber, and of no interest. Genuine honor presupposes that one deserves the honor, and therefore the ground of honor is the deserts: virtue. Yes?

Reader:
But even virtue appears to be a more incomplete end;[xvii] since it appears possible to possess it while you are asleep, or without putting it into practice throughout the whole of your life; and also for the virtuous man to suffer the greatest misery and misfortune—but[xviii] no one would pronounce a man living a life of misery to be happy, unless for the sake of maintaining a paradox. (1095b28-1096a2)

LS: Yes. Here Aristotle goes on and says: Well, now we seem to have reached the end: happiness is virtue. But unfortunately, difficulties arise even here, and virtue is inadequate for two reasons. First, a man could have a given virtue without ever exercising

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[xv] In Rackham's translation: "at least they seek to be honoured by men of judgement and by people who know them, that is, they desire to be honoured on the ground of virtue. It is clear therefore that in the opinion at all events of men of action."
[xvi] In Rackham's translation: "virtue is a greater good than honour."
[xvii] In Rackham's translation: "But even virtue proves on examination to be too incomplete to be the End."
[xviii] In Rackham's translation: "though."

it. For example, if he is always asleep, then he cannot exercise virtue. Or, to take an Aristotelian example, a man may have a true habit of munificence, but if he is poor, he cannot be munificent; that's absolutely not given to him. That's one point. And secondly, the man possessing virtue may live in the greatest misery, i.e., in the greatest unhappiness. How can you call such a man happy?

Now these are not the last words of Aristotle on this subject . . . but this is only meant to show in a provisional way that there is a deeper question here into which we must enter. So we learn however one thing perhaps provisionally or by intimation: happiness has something to do with the exercise of virtue and not with virtue as a mere habit, which as such may be dormant. And the fact that happiness consists in the exercise of virtue excludes that one lives in the greatest misery. If you exercise your virtues, you cannot live in the greatest misery. If you are completely poor, if you are completely paralyzed bodily, then you cannot exercise [it]. Or if you are insane, you cannot exercise [virtue]. Therefore a certain amount of external goods—"equipment" is a good translation for the word Aristotle uses, *chorēgia*—is necessary for being virtuous. That's a harsh judgment, but I think you would understand it. In certain circles (as a matter of fact, in quite numerous circles), this is the view throughout the centuries. That it is not the highest view of human perfection, Aristotle does not deny. But the question is: what is that which is higher than the virtue which you cannot have except if you are healthy and well and of good parentage and so on? And it is theoretical virtue. In other words, where the Bible puts love, Aristotle puts *theōria*. But the Bible and Aristotle agree that moral virtue as such, however important it is, cannot raise the highest claim.

And coming back for one moment to an earlier question of Mr. Wedergreen [as to] why Aristotle speaks throughout the book, or almost throughout the book, of moral virtue and not of that highest virtue: well, I will use a simile. The moon, and things which appear particularly beautiful in moonlight, would never reveal their beauty and their splendor in the light of the sun. Therefore Aristotle keeps the sun in its state before rising or after setting, so that this moon landscape of moral virtue gets all the attention and all the respect which it deserves. Does this make sense? Good.

So Aristotle alludes here already [to the fact] that happiness consists in the exercise of virtue and therefore presupposes equipment. But it is interesting that Aristotle does not say it here. He prepares: first of all, he wants to shake us out of our complacency by indicating to us that there are great difficulties, and then only after we have become aware of the difficulties will we appreciate the answers. Yes?

Reader:
But we need not pursue this subject, since it has been sufficiently treated in the ordinary discussions. The third type of life is the theoretical, which we shall make in the sequel later on.[xix]

LS: No. "Which we shall consider in the sequel." Yes. So only the theoretical life seems to survive the first critical survey of the pleasure: bodily pleasure, honor, and virtue. But again, this is not said by Aristotle but is only a prelude, as it were, for those among us who have good ears to hear what will come later. Yes?

Reader:
But the materialistic life— (1096a2-6)

[xix] In Rackham's translation: "The third type of life is the Life of Contemplation, which we shall consider in the sequel."

LS: No, "the moneymaking."

Reader:
life is something forced, and clearly wealth is not the Good we are in search for,[xx] for it is only useful, a means to something else. On this score indeed one might conceive the ends before mentioned to have a better claim, for they are enjoyed for their own sake.[xxi]

LS: "Loved for their own sake."

Reader:
But even they do not really seem to be—

LS: "the desired good."

Reader:
however, many arguments have been laid down in regard to that. So we may dismiss them.[xxii] (1096a6-10)

LS: Yes. So that is the end of this provisional discussion of the common views. Now what he says here is a kind of appendix about the moneymaking art, and he rejects it as "violent." Violent means here "against nature." There is something unnatural in making money one's happiness. A man who makes pleasure his happiness, or honor, is more reasonable than the man who makes money his happiness, because money, or wealth in general, is only evidently a means for the good life and cannot be regarded as the end under any circumstances; even in the most superficial consideration [it cannot] be regarded as the end. But you can see it most simply, I believe, when you look at the miser. When you take a man of ambition, even if [his ambition is] not of the highest kind, there is a certain attractiveness about that. But the miser: there is something unnatural about that, who heaps treasures upon treasures and never uses them. Yes?

Student: How are we to regard the sequence of this discussion? First he starts with pleasure, then he ascends to honor, and then to the life of contemplation, but it seems to me—

LS: Virtue [is] in between. Don't forget that.

Same Student: Yes. Virtue, and then contemplation, and then he goes back to moneymaking, which he doesn't—

LS: Ya, that is a kind of appendix, I said. That is a kind of appendix. After all, he had spoken before at the very beginning of the work of wealth as one of these goods, and someone might say: Why did you not say a word about wealth as the highest good? And then he says: Well, that is so patently absurd that I did not speak about it. Good.

So this is the first provisional discussion of the commonly-accepted notions of the good or of happiness. And Aristotle turns next to a discussion of the alternative view, the alternative view, namely, that the good is something radically different from all these

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[xx] In Rackham's translation: "The Life of Money-making is a constrained kind of life, and clearly wealth is not the Good we are in search of."
[xxi] In Rackham's translation: "approved for their own sakes."
[xxii] In Rackham's translation: "in regard to them, so we may dismiss them."

goods and it is an absolute good, as we can provisionally say. And that is the doctrine of Plato: Plato's doctrine of the idea of the good. We know of it as the Platonic doctrine from the few passages in books 6 and 7 of the *Republic*. Aristotle had of course opportunities to talk to Plato, and Plato seems to have given some lectures on the good, lectures which Plato did not write[5] down. They have not been preserved. But surely Aristotle had access to information which we necessarily lack.

But before do that, before we turn to Aristotle's critique of Plato's notion of the idea of the good, we have to consider for one moment that Platonic doctrine of which the doctrine of the idea of the good is the peak. Very simply stated, Plato teaches that there are self-subsisting ideas, and they form a kind of order, and at the top of it, ruling all, is the idea of the good. So if we do not have some understanding of what ideas in the Platonic sense are, we will be unable to understand what the idea of the good is, and therefore we will be unable to understand Aristotle's criticism of it. Now I will try to make things as simple for you as I can, and I take here a passage from Sir David Ross's *Plato's Theory of Ideas* and the retrospect where he summarizes the argument, page 225 following. Now I have to read to you a page.

"The essence of the theory of Ideas lay in the conscious recognition of the fact that there is a class of entities, for which the best name is probably 'universals,' that are entirely different from sensible things. Any use of language involves the recognition, either conscious or unconscious, of the fact that there are such entities; for every word used, except proper names—every abstract noun, every general noun, every adjective, every verb, even every pronoun and every preposition—is the name for something of which there are or may be instances. The first step towards a conscious recognition of this class of entities was, if we may believe Aristotle, taken by Socrates when he concentrated on the search for definitions; to ask for the meaning of a general word was a step from the mere use of such a word towards the recognition of universals as a distinct class of entities. But Socrates seems to have been interested in the defining of one thing at a time, and not to have seen the general significance of what he was doing; Plato did see that what was common to all searches for definitions was the assumption that there are such things as universals. He saw, too, that the objective difference between universals and particulars answers to the subjective difference between science and sense-perception. [In other words, science deals with universals and sense perception deals with particulars.—LS]. The senses present to us a world of particular events in which qualities are present almost inextricably conjoined and confused; if we were left to the senses alone we should never be able to disentangle those qualities and reach a clear understanding of the structure of the world. But in reason we have a faculty by which we can grasp universals in their pure form and to some extent see the relations that necessarily exist between them. The best example we have of this power is to be found in mathematics, and Plato was the first thinker who clearly saw this. When we say that 2 and 2 make 4, we are implying not that we have often experienced instances in which this is so, and never found an instance to the contrary, but that we perceive that from the nature of the system of numbers this must be so; and what is true of '2 and 2 make 4' is true of the most advanced mathematical propositions. In mathematics Plato saw the clearest example of the mind's power of perceiving relations between universals; and that is why in the *Republic* he makes mathematics the necessary introduction to philosophy. But it was, for him, only the introduction. He envisaged the possibility of our similarly perceiving necessary relations between other universals than those treated of by mathematics; and in the *Phaedo* he gives us one, and in the *Sophistes* another, modest instalment of such insight. In the main this is still an unfulfilled aspiration; but we owe it to Plato that we have the aspiration at all. He expressed sometimes the aspiration too sanguinely, as when in the *Republic* he speaks of deducing the whole nature of the system of Ideas from a

single unhypothetical first principle. [He means by that the idea of the good.—LS] In that he was mistaken."[xxiii]

And so on. Do you understand that? What is a universal? One of you give me an example. Or a particular, then. Yes?

Student: The idea of a chair.

LS: Chair. Okay. Let us say a chair [laughter] or table, because that's in front of you. A table is this particular thing. And then Plato says, when we are asked: What is that? [A] table! But we say this in *n* cases and of many other things of this kind. That shows that "table" means not merely this table here, but any table. It applies to all tables. It is a universal. And these universals were in a way discovered by Socrates as such. Socrates made clear what men always did in all times and places, because there is always language, and language consists to a considerable part of nonproper names. Because when we say, for example, Tom Engeman, I don't see him here—oh, he is sitting somewhere—Tom Engeman, then this is this individual. Even if there are thirty five men of the same name in some big city, it would still not be a universal but a proper name. Or LBJ,[xxiv] this individual. Good.

Now what does this mean? This is surely a great question, these universals. There was a famous controversy of the Middle Ages, the so-called controversy about universals. But what does this mean? After all, we are not logicians here, we are political scientists, and it must mean something for us when Plato presents this doctrine in a political work like the *Republic*. I will first try to show why Sir David's view is, I think, ultimately impossible, namely, for the following reason. If he were correct that Plato meant by "ideas" universals, then there would be ideas of everything of which we have a term, a word that is not a proper name. And the ideas are, according to Plato, eternal. So there would therefore be an eternal idea of the vice-president of the farm laborers. Naturally, that's not a proper name; that is applied to *n* people who are vice-presidents of farm labor unions. And Plato said not only that there are such universals but also they are self-subsisting: there is a self-subsisting idea of the vice-president of the farm laborers union. Why should there be? What's the need of it? Is this not an absolutely ridiculous duplication of what is? In a way, that is what Aristotle means, but we have to go a bit further in order to understand that.

Now what did Plato have in mind when, according to the tradition deviating from Socrates, he said the ideas are self-subsisting and cannot possibly be sensible things? Now there are two kinds of phenomena of which he certainly thought, and the first is mathematics, as Sir David says. For example, a circle of which the mathematician speaks, or a triangle, is never the circle drawn on the blackboard, because what you draw on the blackboard is not a triangle. It is a very absurd, complicated curve, and only for the sake of our purposes [do] we regard this as a triangle. These are not lines . . . So the mathematical things as meant in mathematical discourse are radically different from all sensible things. We must use the mind's eye, as distinct from the bodily eye, in order to see triangle, circle, the number seven, or whatever it may be. But here there is a certain difficulty. In mathematics, if, for example, you take a certain kind of triangle, you can have a large number of triangles with the same angles and the same sides. There's no difficulty in that. And this is somehow what in Plato's eyes speaks against the ultimate importance of mathematics: the mathematical objects can be indefinitely multiplied. I

[xxiii] W. D. Ross, *Plato's Theory of Ideas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), 225-26.

[xxiv] That is, Lyndon Baines Johnson, American president.

mean, not that you can go on with numbers; that's all right. You don't multiply by saying "4,912, 4,913" because obviously the [second] is a different number, but you can add up 4,912 and another 4,912. So there are two of these ideal things, and that is something which led Plato to go beyond that.

Now where did Plato find some evidence for the view that there are self-subsisting things? A very old and respectable answer, which is good enough as far as it goes, says: in the moral phenomena. Say, justice: we know of just men. We know of just laws. We know of just institutions. But a little reflection will suffice in all cases [to see] that no human being, no law, no institution, is perfectly just. If the term "justice" or "just" is not to be wholly meaningless, there must be justice beyond every just phenomenon which we can see, and in the light of which idea we can diagnose any human beings, any law, any institution, and see to what extent is it just, and to what extent it is not just. Good. Now this phenomenon seems to have been of the utmost importance for Socrates and Plato. But this does not yet suffice. In the first place, because it does not answer the question: what is the relation between the mathematical objects and the moral objects, if I may call justice a moral object? After all, there are other things in the world apart from mathematical things and moral things. There are, for example, dogs and cats in the world.

Now what is then at the root of this doctrine of ideas, the simple root, and not these twofold mathematical things and ethical things, where we do not see the unity? Now the word most commonly used by Plato for ideas (*idea* in Greek) can be translated, is more frequently translated, correctly, as "*forms*": the looks, the shapes, but also the kinds of things. And this is indeed the concern of Socrates, and perhaps in a modified manner (we do not know enough to decide that question) of Plato. Let me try to explain that. I begin from difficulties which we all experience today. Today when we hear, in social science especially, of scientific procedure, of scientific statements and so on, it is always understood that the man in the street—say, the voter, for example—does not make his decision on the basis of scientific reasoning. There is such a thing as prescientific thought. And this distinction is absolutely indispensable and universally admitted. Prescientific thought. For example, if I know in my poor way that there are presidential elections every fourth year, that's not scientific knowledge. I just found this by reading the newspapers and perhaps even the text of the U.S. Constitution, but there is nothing scientific about this knowledge. And no social scientist, however sophisticated he may be, does not know this fact, that there are presidential elections every fourth year, in any way better than the simplest man in the street . . .

The question is this. The controversy is this: is it not the ideal goal of science—or, more particularly, social science—to get rid of all prescientific knowledge? In other words, people admit of course that we are bound by, we have to start always from prescientific knowledge, but some people have the notion [that] what social science does is to transform this prescientific knowledge into scientific knowledge, and only by virtue of this transformation will we arrive at genuine knowledge. Prescientific knowledge means something like "folklore," an expression used by some representatives of this view. Now I would like to make clear to you by a simple example that this is an absolutely fantastic goal. Let us assume that you are sociologists (I wish to go out of our sacred precincts), and your professor tells you to make some field study and find out, say, about alcoholism or other things with which sociologists are concerned. He should [tell you to] ask people about their opinion, and he will give you the most precise suggestions. But one thing he will not tell you: how to tell a human being from a nonhuman being. He takes it for granted that you know that, and if you [did] not know that, you would be wholly unfit to be a student of sociology, or of political science, or of any other science. Now how do you know how to tell a human being from a nonhuman being? Where did you learn it? In high school? No. In grammar school? No, but you just grew up with it. You can't know,

say, the precise day where you used for the first time the word human being with some understanding that you cannot call this a human being or a dog a human being . . . a human being. And if you tried to find out what do you mean by a human being, you will get into great troubles. And no less a man than Plato proposed, on one occasion at least, that what we mean by human being is, if spelled out, nothing but nonfeathered biped.[xxv] [Laughter] Feathered bipeds we all know, but man is a biped without feathers. And this is not quite sufficient, as we all can see. Now here we have a simple example that there is always prescientific knowledge presupposed by social science. And this prescientific knowledge is *never* transformed into scientific knowledge in social science itself.

Now this presupposition of all possible science, and this kind of presupposition, is *the* theme of Socrates and Plato and Aristotle. Now to make this a bit more clear, let us consider not just modern social science but the classical Greek alternative to Socratic–Platonic–Aristotelian philosophy. And the greatest, best known alternative to that is atomism, ancient atomism. Now what is the situation here? According to atomism, all things consist of atoms of various sizes and shapes. So to understand a cat, a dog, a lion, a man is to know of which atoms or kind of atoms he's composed. And, as it were, if you know a compound consisting of so-and-so many atoms of this kind [and] of this shape, [and another compound consisting of] so-and-so many atoms of the other shape and so on, then you would know that the formula—I'm speaking already in a modern manner—that the formula for the dog and the other one is the formula for the cat, and so on. I believe you have no difficulty in following this point.

Now what is the Socratic–Platonic objection to this kind of procedure? Must I not know *in advance* what a cat, a lion, a man is, before I can trace them to their atomic compositions? Must I not know it in advance? Otherwise I might investigate the atomic composition of a being which is neither a man, nor a cat, nor a lion. What kind of knowledge is that? This is a knowledge which we all have and which we have by virtue of having grown up: an obvious and at the same time mysterious faculty. So Socrates and his followers ask for the "What is?" of each *kind* of things. They didn't ask the "What is?" of Alcibiades or of LBJ, or whatever you might take, but the "What is?" of man, of cat, of table, of chair, what have you.

And if we can state the simple argument against atomism or anything of this kind, [it] would be to this effect: atomism would reduce the *essential* differences to differences of size or shape of atoms. But the essential differences, they are the point. Let me take an example from political science. There are people who try to present the issue between liberal democracy and its alternatives in the following manner. They say in both instances you find freedom. After all, I think a Russian citizen, even a Chinese citizen, has the freedom to walk in certain parts of the cities, the freedom to spit, and some other freedoms, without any question. But on the other hand, there is obvious coercion, even in liberal democracies. People are arrested here as well as in Soviet Russia. So the ideal task would be to describe the liberal democracy on the one hand and, say, communism on the other by saying what the percentage or range of percentages is of freedom and coercion which makes a certain system liberal democratic and another communist. As a consequence, assuming that this could be done, it would reduce the essential difference to a *quantitative* difference: we have so and so many percent of freedom in this system, and so and so many percent of coercion in the one system, and so and so many percent of freedom and coercion in the other. You would lose the essential differences. You see perhaps from this example that this is not merely an academic question but has to do with

[xxv] Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 6.40.

a crucial question with which all human beings are concerned: the essential differences, or as one could also say, the principles of importance.

Now the implication of this view, then, that there are essential differences and that the essential differences are that things which counts above everything else, this implies that the whole consists of *kinds* of beings, not of kinds of atoms. There may be atoms (this is a long question), but there are kinds of things: man, dog, cat, what have you. To understand the whole is, or is above all to understand the kinds of things in their order: for example, to know that a plant is lower than an animal, and that a dumb animal is lower than man, to mention only the most obvious examples. Philosophy is here not so much cosmogony, an explanation of how the whole cosmos came into being, say, out of atoms and the void, but cosmology: to present the *logos* of the cosmos, of the finished, completed cosmos.

You can easily see how very important for this whole approach was the emergence of evolutionism in the nineteenth century, because if one would translate Darwin's title the *Origin of Species* into Greek, I think the most reasonable translation, although not the most literal one, would be *genesis tōn eidōn*, "The Coming-to-Being of These Forms, of the Ideas," and then you see [the implications for cosmology], whereas according to Plato the ideas cannot come into being and cannot perish. But the question nevertheless, in spite of the tremendous importance which the evolutionary hypothesis has for all human thought, at least in the case of man—what is the essential difference between man and the other beings?—is as urgent as it always has been. This question cannot be disposed of by any discoveries of ever more intermediate forms between some nonman and man, because at a certain moment, the quantitative difference between the size of the brain or whatever it is turns into a qualitative difference, and you have now a being which can speak, coherently talk. Now when people talk today about the human condition, [a term] which has taken the place of "human nature" or the "essence of man" or the "nature of man," then of course this presupposes the nature of man nevertheless, because the human condition is exactly the condition of a being which has the nature of man.

Now as for the difference between Plato and Aristotle, Plato says that these ideas of dog, cat, justice, and so on and so on, are self-subsisting, or, as he says in poetic language, they are self-subsisting in a super-heavenly place. The gods are in heaven, but beyond heaven there are still more remote and more grand places, and there the ideas dwell. And things here, the sensible things, the dogs, cats, lions, and human beings we always see, are only by virtue of these ideas dwelling in the super-heavenly place. Now to repeat what I said before: the evidence which Plato has you can make most clear to yourself by thinking of the example of justice. Plato asserts, and that is implied in the doctrine of ideas, [that] no human being, no law, and no institution can be unqualifiedly just, as a consequence, because it is a particular thing. Aristotle is not so demanding. Aristotle is perfectly satisfied that there are many people who are just; perhaps not too many, but quite a few. And laws can be just, institutions can be just.

I will state the difference between Plato and Aristotle as follows, and from an Aristotelian point of view. Plato is compelled to say the true dog—the dog in itself, the dog dwelling in that super-heavenly place—doesn't run around, doesn't eat food (dog food or other), does not generate dogs, but is wholly unchangeable. And Aristotle says that's nonsense: the true dog is of course a dog which runs around, and barks, and does all the other things which dogs do. Aristotle, here as in many other cases, [defends] common sense itself against his less commonsensical, great teacher. But would Plato be reduced to silence by this powerful argument? No, for the following reason. A true dog: what does it mean, from Aristotle's point of view, which is, I think, also our ordinary point of view? When a farmer, let me say, or a sheriff says, "Bring me a dog," and the fellow brings him a puppy, then he would say, "Did I tell you to bring a puppy? No, [I told you to] bring a

dog." Or if he brings a very sick old dog about to expire, [he would say], "Is this a dog? That's a sick dog, an old dog." Good. So the dog *without qualifications*, like too young to be a dog, or too old to be a dog, is the true dog. That would be a dog in its maturity, and a healthy normal dog, normal not in the sense of the statistical average, but where the word norm still means norm. "Normal" is still derived from "norm." The true dog, and that is a being which can by itself live as a dog and do the doggish things. Good. But here Plato comes in and says: well, one of the doggish things of the utmost importance is the generation of new dogs. Now if you look at this here dog, it will always be invariably either a male or female dog, neither of which is competent to generate by itself another dog. And therefore, if you want to see the true dog, the perfect dog, you will not find it in any individual. [LS raps on the table.]

Now apply this to the human race. Let us assume that men like Socrates are the most perfect human beings: a wonderful character, and in addition he generated children. He didn't write books, but still it is perhaps more important that he generated children. And he bore his Xanthippe with all dignity and propriety, and you know the other qualities of Socrates. Good. But is he a perfect human being? Would Socrates be possible if there were not people who were paving roads, building temples, and making shoes? Socrates didn't make his shoes, and on the few occasions when he needed them, he had to have bought them. So no human being is self-sufficient. In other words—a great jump now—the whole human race, the whole humankind, the whole human species is the perfect man. And here there is a kind of—one can understand here why the *eidos*, the term for *idea* or for *form*, means at the same time, of course literally translated, the species. That is Plato's point against Aristotle. Now this complete thing, sufficient for all purposes of the species, you will not find in any individual, and you have to go beyond it, either to the idea of dog, to dogness or to the whole species. But you cannot go to the whole species if you do not know what makes a being a member of the species, and that means something beyond every individual and comprising all of them.

So this much about the background of this great struggle between Plato and Aristotle, which shows on various levels in Aristotle's criticism of Plato, not only in the theoretical works but also in the political works: the critique of Plato's *Republic* and *Laws* in the second book of the *Politics*, and here the critique of Plato's doctrine of the idea of the good in our *Nicomachean Ethics*. And we will turn to that next time. Yes.

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[1] Deleted "but."
[2] Deleted "of"
[3] Moved "even."
[4] Deleted "and."
[5] Deleted "them."

Session 5: February 22, 1968[i]

Leo Strauss: [In progress] —however, that is the intention that we make with . . . but he surely takes it for granted. Yes?

Reader:
On the other hand a limit has to be assumed in these relationships; for if the list be extended to one's ancestors and descendants and to the friends of one's friends, it will go on *ad infinitum*. But this is a point that must be considered later on; we take a self-sufficient thing to mean a thing which merely standing by itself alone renders life desirable and lacking in nothing, and such a thing we deem happiness to be. Moreover, we think happiness the most desirable of all good things without being itself reckoned as one among the rest; for if it were so reckoned, it is clear that we should consider it more desirable when even the smallest of other good things were combined with it, since this addition would result in a larger total of good, and of two goods the greater is always the more desirable.

LS: Yes. Now let us stop here. You see here this brief discussion: how far do you extend that? I mean, it is clear that if you are happy for yourself but your nearest and dearest are very miserable, your happiness will not be complete. But how far do you extend your nearest and dearest? Must cousins also come in like brothers and sisters? And if cousins, also cousins of the second degree? And where do you stop? No universal answer is possible. That is a simple illustration of the inexactness, of the lack of exactness, in moral matters. In some cases, for example, in a very closely-knit family the cousins even count as much as brothers and sisters; and in other cases, perhaps not even all brothers and sisters are important for assessing one's own happiness.

The question which Aristotle raises here by implication is this: will happiness be increased by intelligence and virtue, or does happiness necessarily include intelligence and[1] [virtue]? Aristotle's general answer, as we will see soon, is the latter. So there cannot be happiness here and the virtues there, but the virtues are as it were the core of happiness. Now this question he tries to answer, and the answer to it is his final answer to the question of what happiness is, and that comes in the next passage, of which we might perhaps read the beginning.

Reader:
Happiness, therefore, being found to be something final and self-sufficient, is the End at which all actions aim.

LS: Ya, "is the end of the practicable goods" would be perhaps more precise. Yes?

Reader:
To say however that the Supreme Good is happiness will probably appear a truism; we still require a more explicit account of what constitutes happiness. Perhaps then we may arrive at this by ascertaining what is man's function. (1097b11-25)

LS: Let us say "work," because the word "function" is now so grossly misused. And let us leave the simple word which Aristotle uses in Greek: the work of man. What is the work of man? Yes?

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[i] The original transcriber notes: "Please note that lecture 5 was not completely recorded. As a result, we are only able to reproduce here approximately 15 minutes of the total lecture."

Reader:
For the goodness or efficiency of a flute-player or sculptor or craftsman of any sort, and in general of anybody who has some work[ii] or business to perform, is thought to reside in that function—

LS: That work.

Reader:
that work; and similarly it may be held that the good of man resides in the work of man.[iii] (1097b25-28)

LS: Yes. So Aristotle tries now to reach a solution to the question of what happiness is. Now happiness is a good state of man, and not only *a* good state but *the* best state of man. And Aristotle raises here the question: where is goodness located altogether? And he takes first the example of the arts or artisans. For example, say, a carpenter: how do we distinguish a good carpenter from a bad or indifferent carpenter? By looking at the tables which the two carpenters produce: at the *work*. Now let us try this with man. Is there not also a specific work of man as man by which we can distinguish between the good man and the bad man? Now we must here note that they translate it by "function." But the Greek word "work" (and I believe also the English word "work") leaves it open whether the work is something outside, self-subsisting after it has been completed, like the table or the shoe, or whether the work is an action. Can one not say it?

Therefore Aristotle [asks]: is there a work of man as man, a specific work of man? If that is so, then human goodness, and in particular the highest form of goodness, happiness, will consist in a specific work. And if you do not like the word "work," say "activity." But the Greek word *ergon* comprises both the work in the sense of the . . . like shoe, and the work in the sense of the productive activity, the shoemaking. Aristotle tries now to find in the sequel the answer to this question. The general answer is this: that man's specific work, his specific activity, is rationality; and therefore the goodness of man will consist in the goodness of his rationality, i.e., if he uses his reason for destroying his reason (say, by becoming an alcoholic), then he is a bad man, but if he cultivates his reasoning and makes the most of it and the best of it, then he is a good man. And there are certain minor, important distinctions, secondary distinctions into which I do not have to go now.

So the answer which Aristotle arrives at, in a few more steps which we will consider next time, is this: happiness consists in virtuous or excellent activity, but specifically human activity. A man may be an excellent tightrope dancer, but this does not make him an excellent man, because tightrope dancing is not the activity characteristic of man. Maybe only men can tightrope dance (I have no opinion on this matter), but it is surely not the activity characteristic of man. To be an excellent man means to be able to do the work of man in reasoning in an excellent manner. And if this is so, we already include [the requirement] that the excellent man must have some means, means outside of his good intentions. For example, if he were completely paralyzed [and] could not even speak, then he could not do the works of man. He would be an unfortunate man, a proper object of compassion, but he could not be an excellent man. How can we know how he would act if he were not paralyzed? And also, if it is true that there are certain activities of man which require a modicum of wealth, as was the case prior to our age of affluence, then

[ii] In Rackham's translation: "function."
[iii] In Rackham's translation: "the function of man."

there will be quite a few human beings who will be unable to do the work of man, lacking the means of support. Very unfortunate, but Aristotle implies that it cannot be changed.

The main point is this. By speaking of virtuous activity, Aristotle includes the external conditions of happiness in his definition of happiness, and therefore he disposes of a difficulty with which confronted us shortly before. At the end of this section, which we just began, there is again a discussion of what I call method, meaning: what is the degree of exactness to be expected in such matters, moral matters? There are altogether three discussions. That will be the third. We will come to that next time. Now we make here a stop. Is there any question? We will retrace. Mr . . . ?

Student: When Aristotle says that the truth is to be preferred to one's friends, does this apply only to those who discuss ethics, or does it also apply to gentlemen simply?

LS: As Aristotle means it here, it does not apply to nonphilosophers. If it were understood in a different sense—for example, must a friend be a witness before a court against his friend and say the truth rather than save his friend?—then I suppose he would say in this case [that] unless it is a terribly tyrannical regime, he would have to say the truth, because he is under oath, after all. But as he means it here, the question arises only for philosophers, because the truth is theoretical or speculative truth.

Same Student: And in that sense again we see the difference between the man who addresses the audience and the nature of the audience itself, because certainly the audience itself would be more inclined to prefer their friends to the truth, as a general rule.

LS: Yes, you could almost say that is a definition of the nonphilosopher. Now any other points?

Another Student: Could I ask you a question about what you said last time?

LS: Yes. I mean, that would be a very undemocratic procedure, that in today's meeting only today's subjects would be discussed. Yes?

Same Student: I didn't quite understand what you said about Plato's view of mathematical objects. You said that they were ultimately not ideas for him.

LS: They're not ideas—the idea of the dog, or of justice, for that matter. There is one and only one idea of the dog, and only one idea of justice, and only one idea of man. But if you take five, the number five, there are many fives. I can easily prove it to you. Five plus five: the first five is not the second five. [Laughter] You can invert the order, but still there remain two fives. You cannot make additions of ideas, but you can make and must make additions of numbers; and for that matter also of magnitudes, of course. You can add one triangle to another, one circle to another, and so.

Same Student: But couldn't you say that each of those fives or each of those triangles are individuals fives [or triangles].

LS: Yes, then you would have to say that there is an idea of the triangle or [an] idea of five that is higher than the fives which occur in operation. There exists in Plato a teaching of ideal numbers. And some people understood ideal numbers to be this idea of five in contradistinction to the fives or straight lines, circles, and so on, but I do not think that they are right. Aristotle's testimony is quite clear that Plato did not admit any ideas of numbers. The ideas are intellectual or noetic, but sensible—did I say ideas? No, I want to

say numbers or other mathematical things are not sensible, but noetic, intellectual, because you can never see a straight line, you can never draw a straight line. It's always smudged somehow. The line of which the geometer talks is not the line which he sees as the table or which he draws as the table.

And the same is true of ideas. All justice we find in the world—in men, or in actions, or in institutions—is imperfect, as imperfect as the straight line drawn on the blackboard. And therefore they point to something which can no longer be seen with the bodily eye, but [can be seen] only with the eyes of the mind, and these are the noetic things. And the noetic things consist of these two branches: the mathematical things and the ideas. And I think the simplest sign of the difference between the ideas and the mathematical things is the multiplicity of the noetic things in mathematics. You see in the case of dogs a great multiplicity of dogs, one idea of dog. But the multiplicity is the multiplicity of the dogs we *see*, of sensible dogs—sensible not in the sense of housebroken [laughter] but in the sense of being visible to the eyes. Ya? Good.

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[1] Deleted "happiness."

Session 6: February 28, 1968

Leo Strauss: So may we come to order now. Aristotle starts from the premise that the highest and complete good—*both* highest *and* complete—is happiness, as appears from what he says about the subject. There was universal agreement as to the soundness of the starting point, only there were great disagreements as to the meaning of happiness. But that happiness should be the starting point, that was universally admitted. Now this starting point, this notion, is still intelligible. I mention only one example. The Declaration of Independence: the right to the pursuit of happiness. But nevertheless the word happiness as we use it now does not have the fullness which the Greek word *eudaimōn* has. And the Greek word we can say safely stands in meaning between happiness and blessed. And we—sometimes it is wiser to think of bliss than of happiness when reading the remarks of Aristotle. Aristotle starts then from the fact that all men, and therefore in particular also the good men, strive for happiness. His concern with happiness is in a way prior to his concern with virtue. Virtue proves to be the core of happiness. But the first step is happiness.

Now in modern times, this starting point has become questionable. I mentioned last time Hobbes.[i] I remind you of the main point: Hobbes denies that there is a highest good. The felicity of this life, what Aristotle understands by happiness, consists not in the repose of a mind satisfied. Felicity, as the old moral philosophers understood it, is the condition in which man's desires are at an end, because man has reached the highest and supreme good. And Hobbes says such a condition is impossible. Therefore the felicity of which we can dream is a continual progress of[l] desire, and the final conclusion is that human life is characterized by a perpetual and restless desire of power after power that ceases only in death.

Now of course the question is whether Aristotle understood by happiness the condition in which man's desires are at an end. Does a happy man not need food, drink, sleep, etc., and therefore have desires for food, drink, and sleep? So Aristotle surely does not mean that a happy man's desires are at an end in the way in which Hobbes understood it. But one could perhaps say the happy man needs these things as replenishments. It is not meant as a progress if he eats again the next day. He doesn't want to have ever more food, ever more drink, or ever better food and better drink, and so on. And furthermore, is felicity in the Aristotelian sense—does it consist in the repose of a mind satisfied? Well, a mind satisfied, yes. But repose is somewhat misleading because happiness as Aristotle understands it consists in activity, and we will see that soon.

Much more important was the criticism of the notion of happiness by Kant. According to Kant, happiness is the sum of satisfaction of all our inclinations, and therefore happiness is an undetermined concept, these inclinations differing from individual to individual and within the individual from time to time. It is, in other words, an ideal of the imagination, not of reason, and therefore it cannot be the principle of morality. The principle of morality according to Kant is duty or respect for the moral law, not happiness. The principle of *morality* as Kant understands it cannot be taken from the nature of man, whereas *happiness* is a human goal. Because the principle of morality must apply even to beings higher than man, especially to God, because if we have different moral standards, as it were, for God as we have for man, then moral chaos would follow. And secondly, if the moral standard is taken from man's nature, man's goodness, man's moral possibilities might be limited by his nature. This is a thought with which I'm sure you all are familiar

[i] The transcript of session 5 is incomplete and does not include the discussion of Hobbes.

in applications. For example, if equal rights are denied to the fairer sex on the ground that the natural differences are so important that men should have a higher status than women, then the question arises: what do we know about the possibilities of the female sex, since the sex has never been given a fair chance to rise to its highest possibilities? The consequence in Kant is that what is morally demanded does not require a proof of possibility. We do not have to go into the question [of] what the differences between men and women for example morally are; for Kant that follows from his moral principle which implies that what we are obliged to do, morally obliged to do, we can do. "Thou canst, because thou oughtst," and therefore there is no need of a proof of the possibility of what is morally demanded. So at any rate, happiness loses its central status in moral philosophy through Kant.

But nevertheless, the tradition which put [happiness][ii] at the basis of moral philosophy continued. I refer to the right to the pursuit of happiness in the Declaration of Independence. I may mention here in passing that this notion of the right to the pursuit of happiness is not, as one student of the Declaration of Independence said, a product of the frontier, of the frontier mentality. [Gilbert] Chinard, a Frenchman, mentioned the fact that in the French Declaration of the Rights of Man, the right to the pursuit of happiness is not mentioned, because the French are much too sophisticated or cynical to believe in such a thing, but the young American nation in the frontier, they still believed in happiness.[iii] That's sheer nonsense, of course. The right to the pursuit of happiness was, to the best of my knowledge, stated for the first time by a German philosopher of the eighteenth century, Christian Wolff, in his *Natural Right*.[iv] And what he understood by the right of happiness is indicated by these two examples. Man has no natural rights to vindicate the glory of God. So in other words, if a man commits a blasphemy, man does not have a natural right to kill or silence, or whatever, the blasphemer. But on the other hand, man has a natural right to cosmetics: to adorn his body. In brief, the notion of the right of happiness emerges originally rather in a continental rococo context [laughter] than in the context of the American frontier.

After Wolff, the notion of happiness played a central role in utilitarianism: the happiness of the greatest number. And this leads me to a relatively late stage in the tradition of happiness, and that is Nietzsche. Nietzsche said occasionally or had someone say occasionally: I do not strive for happiness, but for my work. And in the movement which[2] [is] now at present quite powerful, called existentialism, this critique of happiness is taken for granted, perhaps not even mentioned anymore. It is understood that happiness is not the ultimate end of man. I would like to illustrate Nietzsche's critique of happiness by a remark occurring near the beginning of his *Zarathustra*. Now Zarathustra had addressed the multitude and spoken to them of the overman or superman. And there was no reaction, no understanding. They laughed about it. And then he said, "Let me then address their pride. Let me speak to them of what is most contemptible." But that is the last man:

"The time has come for man to set himself a goal. The time has come for man to plant the seed of his highest hope. His soil is still rich enough. But one day this soil will be poor and domesticated, and no tall tree will be able to grow in it. Alas, the time is coming

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[ii] Strauss evidently misspoke in saying "morality" here, since the topic he now turns to is the role of happiness in modern moral philosophy.

[iii] Gilbert Chinard (1881-1972), French-American historian.

[iv] Christian Wolff, *Institutiones juris naturae et gentium* (1750), in *Gesammelte Werke*, edited by Jean Ecole, Hans Werner Arndt, Marcel Thomann and Joseph Ehrenfried Hofmann (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1969), section 2, vol. 26.

when man will no longer shoot the arrow of his longing beyond man, and the string of his bow will have forgotten how to whir!

"I say unto you: one must still have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star. I say unto you: you still have chaos in yourselves.

"Alas, the time is coming when man will no longer give birth to a star. Alas, the time of the most despicable man is coming, he that is no longer able to despise himself. Behold, I show you the *last man*.

"'What is love? What is creation? What is longing? What is a star?' thus asks the last man, and he blinks.

"The earth has become small, and on it hops the last man, who makes everything small. His race is as ineradicable as the flea-beetle; the last man lives longest.

"'We have invented happiness,' say the last men, and they blink. They have left the regions where it was hard to live, for one needs warmth. One still loves one's neighbor and rubs against him, for one needs warmth.

"Becoming sick and harboring suspicion are sinful to them: one proceeds carefully. A fool, whoever still stumbles over stones or human beings! A little poison now and then: that makes for agreeable dreams. And much poison in the end, for an agreeable death.

"One still works, for work is a form of entertainment. But one is careful lest the entertainment be too harrowing. One no longer becomes poor or rich: both require too much exertion. Who still wants to rule? Who obey? Both require too much exertion.

"No shepherd and one herd! Everybody wants the same, everybody is the same. Whoever feels different goes voluntarily into a madhouse.

"'Formerly, all the world was mad,' say the most refined, and they blink.

"One is clever and knows everything that has ever happened: so there is no end of derision. One still quarrels, but one is soon reconciled—else it might spoil the digestion.

"One has one's little pleasure for the day and one's little pleasure for the night: but one has a regard for health.

"'We have invented happiness,' say the last men, and they blink."[v]

So here happiness appears as the idea of the last and the most despicable men, and at the other pole there is something which Nietzsche calls creativity, creation, and in its highest form the overman, the superman. I have been asked today before class by one of you: what is underlying Nietzsche's notion of the overman or the superman. Is this not just a crazy notion? Well, for Nietzsche the situation of man is this: up to his time or shortly before it, or, say, up to the French Revolution, men were always guided by the notion of something superhuman, something to which man as man had to look up. This superhuman was called in the most powerful tradition "God." And now that is premise of

[v] Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, "Zarathustra's Prologue," chapter 5. The translation Strauss reads here is reprinted in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: *A Book for All and None*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: The Modern Library, 1995), 17-18.

the book *Zarathustra*: "quote God is dead unquote." The consequence is that man has no longer something to look up to, and therefore, the last man. It is the complete decay of human greatness, of the possibility of human greatness. And therefore man himself must strive to become superhuman. That is the meaning of superman. Man must take the place of God, not by simply denying the superhuman, but by overcoming man himself; by becoming, in a way, a divine being.

Was this of any use to you, Mr. West? What are your difficulties?

Student: I can understand that as a sort of goal toward which to look, but as a possibility, as a human possibility in fact, it still seems to me—strikes one as implausible, a man who is more than a man.

LS: Ya. Well, Nietzsche did not mean that there should be a new species which could not breed with the human species, but he meant beings in the most important respect superior to human beings hitherto. There is a formula in another writing of Nietzsche where he says the overman or the superman is "Caesar with the soul of Christ."[vi] Does this say anything? In other words, a coming-together of the two great Western traditions: the biblical and the classical, Graeco-Roman, on the highest level, but in a form which this synthesis of Jerusalem and Athens had never taken before. And such a demand is rooted in the view that anything short of that, any traditional ideal, is discredited by the discrediting of the belief in superhuman beings in the old-fashioned sense of the word, beings who are not man but are higher than man.

So after having reminded ourselves of the fact that the notion of happiness lacks today the self-evidence which it had for Aristotle and for many, many centuries after Aristotle, we return to our discussion of happiness in Aristotle in the first book, 1097b28. That is a passage where Aristotle tries to give a precise determination of what happiness is by looking at the work of man. —Mr. Pangle, come. We have a chair for you here. You might perhaps begin at the beginning of this section. Aristotle turns to the work of man, on the ground that in the case of man as man, as well as of that of the various artisans, the good which we are seeking, the highest good, is found in the work. But is there a work of man as man, a specific work of man? That is the question. Now read, please.

Reader:
To say however that the Supreme Good is happiness will probably appear a truism; we still require a more explicit account of what constitutes happiness. Perhaps then we may arrive at this by ascertaining what is man's work.[vii] For the goodness or efficiency of a flute-player or sculptor or craftsman of any sort, and in general of anybody who has some function [some work—R][viii] or business to perform, is thought to reside in that work; and similarly it may be held that the good of man resides in the work of man, if he has a work.[ix] (1097b22-28)

LS: So that is still a question, *if* he has a work. Yes?

Reader:

[vi] The phrase appears in section 568 of Max Brahn's 1917 edition of *The Will to Power*.
[vii] In Rackham's translation: "man's function.
[viii] "Some work" is the reader's interpolation.
[ix] In Rackham's translation: "reside in that function; and similarly it may be held that the good of man resides in the function of man, if he has a function."

Are we then to suppose that while the carpenter and shoemaker have definite works[x] or businesses belonging to them, man as such has none, and is not designed by nature to fulfill any function?

LS: More precisely, more simply, but is by nature workless; lazy. Why could there not be a man by nature lazy? What does Aristotle mean by that? After all, we know so many human beings who are lazy. Maybe they are according to nature beachcombers, *lassaroni*, or what have you. Now what does Aristotle mean? He is sure that man is not by nature a lazy being. "By nature" means here if man is in good order, not to say at his best. And now he gives a closer proof in the immediate sequel.

Reader:
Must we not rather assume that, just as the eye, the hand, the foot and each of the various members of the body manifestly has a certain work of its own, so a human being also has a certain work over and above all the functions of his particular members?[xi]

LS: Now he uses the example of the various parts of man, at least of the human body for . . . of the various arts, for the following reason: of the various arts one could say that they are of merely human origin. Man devised the arts of shoemaking, of carpentry, and so on, and therefore they would not throw any light on nature. But when we look at the parts of the body and its natural parts, we see that the eye works, has a specific work, the work of seeing; the hand, of grasping, and so on and so on. And then if all parts of man, of the human body in the first place do reveal, show themselves to have a work, it is plausible to assume that man as a whole has such a work. That is the argument.

This passage you might compare, if you have the time, with a section in the first book of Plato's *Republic*, 352d to 353e. Now?

Reader:
What then precisely can this work[xii] be? The mere act of living appears to be shared even by plants, whereas we are looking for the work[xiii] peculiar to man; we must therefore set aside the vital activity of nutrition and growth. (1097b28-1098a1)

LS: They are not specifically human, and therefore we cannot find in them the specifically human work and therefore not the specifically human *goodness* of work, and that specifically human goodness of work is the specifically human virtue. Yes?

Reader:
Next in the scale will come some form of sentient life; but this too appears to be shared by horses, oxen, and animals generally. There remains therefore what may be called the practical life of the rational part of man. (This part has two divisions, one rational as obedient to principle, the other as possessing principle and exercising intelligence). Rational life again has two meanings; let us assume that we are here concerned with the active exercise of the rational faculty, since this seems to be the more proper sense of the term. If then the function [the work—R][xiv] of man is the active exercise of the soul's faculties in conformity with rational principle, or at all events not in disassociation from

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[x] In Rackham's translation: "function."
[xi] In Rackham's translation: "a certain work of its own, so a human being also has a certain work."
[xii] In Rackham's translation: "function."
[xiii] In Rackham's translationi: "function."
[xiv] In this passage "some work," enclosed in brackets, is the reader's interpolation.

rational principle, and if we acknowledge the function [the work—R] of an individual and of a good individual of the same class (for instance, a harper and a good harper, and so generally with all classes) to be generically the same, the qualification of the latter's superiority in excellence being added to the function in his case (I mean that if the work[xv] of the harper is to play the harp, that of a good harper is to play the harp well): if this is so, and if we declare that the work[xvi] of man is a certain form of life, and define that form of life as the exercise of the soul's faculties and activities in association with rational principle, and say that the function of a good man is to perform these activities well and rightly, and if a function is well performed when it is performed in accordance with its own proper excellence—from these premises it follows that the Good of man is the active exercise of his soul's faculties in conformity with excellence or virtue, or if there be several human excellences or virtues, in conformity with the best and the most perfect among them. (1098a1-18)

LS: Now let us stop here for a moment. So the specific work of man must be the "actuality," what he translates as the "active exercise," "of rational activity." The word used by Aristotle is *logos*, which he translates by "principle." Not the best translation; "reason" would be better. More literally it would be speech or discourse, but discourse always presupposing thinking, reasoning.

There is one remark which is at first glance perhaps not intelligible, and that is when he says that the work of this being and of this excellent being belong to the same genus, for example, the carpenter: the indifferent carpenter and the good carpenter. Their works belong to the same genus, and therefore by knowing the one, we know in principle the other, and therefore there is no vicious transition from fact to value. If you know what the work of a carpenter is—to make chairs, tables, and so on—then you know what the work of a good carpenter is, namely, to make these things: *good* chairs, good tables, or whatever the case may be. The same would apply to man: if I know what the specific work of man is, namely, the use of reason, then I know that the good man would be a man who uses reason well, because all human activity, however low and degraded and disgusting, implies the use of reason. Man cannot help it, but he may use it ill or he may use it indifferently.

Now this remark about the good and the indifferent belonging to the same genus is underlying a passage in Plato's *Republic* which is best understood in the light of the Aristotelian passage we read. The passage is in the fourth book, 433a. Socrates says: "What we laid down in the beginning as a universal requirement when we are founding our city, this I think, or some *kind*[xvii] of this [one could also say some genus of this—LS], is justice. What we did lay down was[xviii] that each one man must perform one service[xix] in the state for which his nature was best adapted."[xx] In other words, we laid down that everyone should do his job. That's justice. Justice is doing one's job or minding one's business, as one may also translate the Greek expression. But Socrates makes this crucial qualification: this or *some kind* of this. The kind which he has in mind is of course to do one's job well, and justice means to do one's job well. Merely to do one's job

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[xv] In Rackham's translation: "function."
[xvi] In Rackham's translation: "function."
[xvii] In Shorey's translation: "form."
[xviii] In Shorey's translation: "lay down, and often said, if you recall, was."
[xix] In Shorey's translation: "one social service."
[xx] Strauss adopts the translation in *The Republic*, trans. Paul Shorey (Loeb Classical Library edition) (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1930), 367.

indifferently, sloppily, or badly, that is not justice. This is the same thing which Aristotle has in mind here.

So I made a slight mistake which I will now correct. "Or some kind of this": the genus comprises both doing well and doing in general. And the genus contains beneath it various kinds: one kind is doing well, the other kind doing non-well, meaning ill or indifferently. Mr. Wedergreen?

Student: I don't understand that. For instance, you could say that one of the works of man would be courageous. Can one be courageous well?

LS: No, here in "courageous" it is already implied that it is good.

Same Student: But, I mean—say, in the case of a carpenter . . . a lousy table—

LS: No, let us go step by step regarding the first example, courage. The quality which does not yet imply goodness is: behaving towards fear. Man always must behave toward fear, because fears arise all the time from various directions. And he can behave towards fears rightly, according to reason, or wrongly, not according to reason. So behaving towards fear is the genus consisting of the two species: behaving correctly and not behaving correctly. And courage would be the correct behavior towards fear.

Same Student: I still don't understand, because, for instance, behaving reasonably. How can you behave reasonably well . . .

LS: That is a simple ambiguity of the word "reasonably." "Reasonably" may mean, and what we ordinarily mean by it is to use one's reason properly. But even if we do not use our reason properly, we act in another sense of the word reasonably, reasonably. Because we are rational beings, we cannot help using our reason, even if we misuse it. We have as it were the choice between using or misusing our reason; we do not have the choice of acting purely instinctively, except in the lower parts of our being for which we have no responsibility. Yes?

Student: Does that mean that there is no essential difference between a man who is able to use his reason well and just a normal man who can't reason too well? I mean, you know, just the average guy?

LS: Yes, but Aristotle is here speaking also of average guys. This fine distinction—

Same Student: Yes, I know, but does that mean that there is no essential difference between a philosopher and the—

LS: No, we do not know of that in this stage of the argument.

Same Student: Yes, but we know that there are some men who reason well and some men who misuse reason.

LS: Yes, but here [by] reasoning well Aristotle thinks of, [in] the first place, the use of reason regarding conduct, for example, regarding fears, regarding desires, regarding money, and what have you. You must not anticipate these things.

Same Student: Are we to suppose that these classifications might not be valid generally . . .

LS: Oh no, they would be. I mean, that is the point. They would have to be refined probably when we rise to a higher level; they would not simply disappear. In other words, say, if you have on the simple moral level the extreme possibilities of the gentleman and the crook, the fact that the philosopher is not a gentleman doesn't mean that he is a crook. Although he might in certain respects deviate from the gentleman in a way which a crook would better understand than a gentleman [laughter], but for different reasons.

Same Student: Well, then is there an essential relationship between gentlemen and crooks? I mean, are gentlemen in any way essentially different from crooks?

LS: Yes, most definitely. Otherwise the moral distinctions wouldn't make sense.

Same Student: They might. I mean, you know, they might be both men, even though one is a bad man. I mean, it doesn't seem to me just on the face of it obvious that there's an essential difference between a man who is a murderer and a man who isn't a murderer.

LS: Well, that is something more specific, because a man might be a murderer, or at least a killer, without being a crook. Ya? So let us not take too narrow a notion. And let us, perhaps since I spoke of crooks, let us remain on the same level of expression and speak of squares. We imply that there is an essential difference between squares and crooks. Now this distinction is ordinarily used not very thoughtfully and not very precisely. In other words, we do not look too much into the heart of the two kinds of people, where we might discover in the heart of the crook somewhere a pearl and in the heart of the square a hard stone. You know, that might happen, but we cannot do this all the time. And if you think especially about the questions with which we are confronted in legal matters, where rather crude decisions must be made without indefinite appeals which would ruin jurisdiction completely, therefore these crude distinctions are meaningful and necessary. That is the point which Aristotle takes for granted. And the inexactness which goes with it, of which he had spoken, we have to accept that, otherwise we cannot live. Yes?

Student: In searching for this rational activity or the peculiar function of man now, Aristotle accepts as a reference point the cases of animals and plants, etc. to determine if these are universal functions, or just peculiar functions . . . man. However, he seems to automatically dismiss the possibility that these other plants and animals, for instance, could possibly have their own peculiar activities. Did he just assume that man has a peculiar activity?

LS: But the others also [do]. An oak is radically different from a birch or what have you. That he does not deny. He only says [that] the specifically human cannot possibly lie in what he shares with the plants. And the specifically human cannot possibly lie in what he shares with the brutes, because he is not a plant and he is not a brute. He is the only animal who possesses speech or reason.

Same Student: Yes, he's saying that, but what is specifically human can't be shared. But isn't he there assuming that if there is something specifically human—?

LS: He assumes that. Ya.

Same Student: How can he proceed to say that there is something specifically human? How can he even try to assume that without also trying to show that perhaps plants and animals also have something [. . .]

LS: Well, did you ever see plants speak to each other? Did you ever see dogs speak to each other? You could say this only in a metaphoric way. Dogs seem to communicate—

or ducks, for that matter, seem to communicate some feelings to each other, but not speakingly, and however much one may admire some of the animals (say, dogs), one cannot seriously maintain that they are strictly speaking intelligent beings. The popular phrase "dumb animals" or "our dumb friends," testifies to the truth of what Aristotle says.

Same Student: He is assuming that under nature man has something peculiar to him, whereas these other things in nature do not have something peculiar to them.

LS: Yes. I mean, well, look around. Look at stories—the true stories, I mean—ever told of men, animals, or brutes, or plants. Where do you find philosophy, or science, or religion, etc. among brutes? Some people say that elephants are pious, but I believe that was a sentimental assertion [laughter] of a man who loved elephants.

Same Student: . . . plants and animals have some capability of rational thought or anything peculiar to them in the same way that man has something peculiar to man, but rather that plants and animals could have something of a different nature peculiar to them.

LS: All right, there is an analogon of reason to some extent there, you can say. But an analogon of reason is not reason strictly speaking. Mr. . . . ?

Student: We know that the work of the carpenter is to make a chair, and the work of the good carpenter is to make a good chair; the worker of the harper, to play, and the work of the good harper, to play well. And the work of man is virtue, the work—

LS: No, not virtue. The work of man is acting according to reason.

Same Student: acting according to reason, and the best work of man is acting according to the highest reason. Now by what virtue, by what means does he think that we can know what the best chair is, what good harp-playing is, what good painting is, and what good reason is? Now how does he judge among these things?

LS: Well, did you never in your life see a blunderer in carpentry who produced a chair on which you could not sit without falling down, or a table which was bound to collapse when you put any weight on it? So you can see [that] not great experience of life is needed, and great intelligence, in order to distinguish sufficiently for practical purposes between a good carpenter and a poor carpenter. And the same applies to the other arts as well. In the case of physicians it is a bit more complicated, because bedside manners could conceivably deceive us about the quality of the physician. But still, in the long run, you can say [LS chuckles] if all people whose legs were straightened by a surgeon never had straight legs—and this happens all the time—you would say, well, I wouldn't go to him.

Same Student: On a commonsensical level, yeah.

LS: And why not the same [here]? Do we not distinguish between men who act reasonably or sensibly and those who do not act reasonably, sensibly, men whose judgment we have found invariably sound and others whose judgment we have found invariably unsound? That exists. Take the extreme case. This thing we do.
If there is no universally valid yardstick by which you can measure sensibility as you can measure temperature, that has to do with the quality of moral matters: imprecision. Imprecision. But still there is not complete chaos there.

Same Student: This doesn't provide any guide at all by which we can judge between one who acts quite reasonably and one who acts very, very reasonably.

LS: No, well, surely not in this stage. But we make distinctions. And we know that, for example, a man may be excellent in an office as a subaltern man, and another man may act excellently as the president of the United States. You know this difference. You know also the difficulty of judging in this case of the president, whereas it is much easier to reach agreement as to the subaltern officer, say, in a social security administration. So there is a kind of lower level where agreement is easily reached, just as regarding a carpenter or a shoemaker. And when things become more demanding, then it becomes more difficult to judge. In other words, there is no substitute ultimately for judgment. But judgment in certain dimensions is relatively easy and can conceivably be replaced by mechanical devices, and in other spheres which are more important, when it can never be replaced by mechanical devices.

Student: Well, when a carpenter is a bad carpenter, he nevertheless is a carpenter. When a harpist is a bad harpist, he nevertheless is a bad harpest but harpist. Now what would Aristotle do with men who are not capable of reason?

LS: Do you mean morons?

Same Student: No—well, yes.

LS: Well, what shall we do? I mean, they would not listen and would not read this book. And they are generally out of circulation, you know. [Laughter] They have no influence on human affairs; they are a great burden on the other members of their family, but—

Same Student: Are they men? Does Aristotle define man?

LS: No, they are defective. They are by nature radically defective human beings, so they cannot even acquire virtue. He speaks of that fact. That is also a fact which we have to acknowledge. Pardon?

Student: Natural slaves?

LS: No. Natural slaves would be wholly useless if they were enslaved. Natural slaves are only very dumb. Aristotle understands by natural slave a man who has some reason, because otherwise he couldn't listen to the commands of his master. But—I mean, he can listen to more specific commands than a dog whom you have trained, but he cannot take care of himself. And therefore, for example—my example is a fellow to whom you have to say, "You should now bring five tree trunks here, five: one, two, three, four, five." That is a natural slave. Yes?

Another Student: What would Aristotle say about a man reasoning and consequently not accepting morality? Say, for instance like . . . sees that in different societies morals are different. And he sees morality as a relative thing. So he says to himself: Well, I can't accept this moral point because, well, say, for instance, in this other society it isn't like this, and it's basically a relative thing that I don't accept.

LS: Yes, well, Aristotle would then say that this is a case not for moral instruction, but either for correction by noninstructional means [laughter] or else a course in theoretical philosophy, by which he would be shown that the conclusion from the variety of customs to the nonunity of morality is not valid, because the relativity—for example, [from the fact] that people have different usages regarding a great variety of things it does not

follow that all the various customs are of equal value. Why could not a single one, or two, three, or four of these cultures have the true morality, where the others deviate from it to various degrees? I mean, that was the way in which people looked at such matters in former times. And therefore this fact, the variety of customs, was always known, but men drew different conclusions from it in former times.

Well, Aristotle, you can say, starts from what he sees around himself. And that is of course primarily Greek things, that is undeniable. But he did not view morality as a Greek privilege. He would only say the Greeks were a particularly fortunate people. The climate was the right mean between too hot and too cold—say, like central California, or maybe even southern California. The Greeks had two things which he didn't find anywhere else: people living in cities *and yet* being politically free. In Babylon there was also a city, but they were subject to a despotic ruler, and the same would be true of the Persians. And the northern fellows in northern Greece and the Balkan peninsula, they had political freedom in their way, but they were not citified, and that meant the same originally as civilized. They were rustics. And therefore that would have been his argument: that the Greeks, with all their great defects, which he saw very well, were partly through merit, partly through good luck, in a better position to speak about these matters than other people. But he wouldn't deny that non-Greeks could learn that. That would be a justification for the fact that he said that, on the whole, what the Greek wise men say is taken more seriously by him than wise men of other tribes. Mr. . . .

Student: I was wondering if there was perhaps more than simply one specific difference between man and other animals or plants; for example, perhaps his ability to produce representations of what he sees might be considered unique to man.

LS: The question would be whether that does not imply or is not based upon discoursing. That's the question.

Same Student: Well, that's the question. How would Aristotle—

LS: Well, an analysis. The question is whether imitation, as he calls it—whether imitation, in the sense in which the arts imitate, does not presuppose reason. That would be his way of arguing. Other things—[for example], it was always known that laughing is a peculiarity of man. Now why did Aristotle not call man the laughing animal instead of the rational animal? But he would say that laughing and weeping are extreme things and presuppose a latitude of feelings which is possible only on the ground of rationality. You can understand laughing on the ground of rationality; you cannot understand rationality on the ground of laughing. Or to take another example, man is the animal which possesses hands: two hands and two feet, as distinguished from four feet. Let us forget about the birds. And Aristotle is confronted with this question: is man to be defined as a being with hands, or as a being characterized by reason? He would say, "I can understand the hands as essentially belonging to a rational being, and not the other way around." That it would be a complicated and an unnecessarily complicated attempt to make things intelligible.

Same Student: So if someone were to say, as I believe some people have, that man's talent for speech would result in this imitative ability, that is he's somehow—

LS: Well, linked up with it.

Same Student: But if he were to say speech were resting on imitation rather than vice versa.

LS: Aristotle would say that it is the other way around. If he were not a speaking animal, he could not make this distinction between the image and the imaged on which all imitation is based.

Same Student: But that, it seems to me, requires a more detailed—

LS: Oh, sure. There is no question. But Aristotle here can at any rate say [that] he appeals to things generally granted, i.e., not universally granted. And we all understand them from our ordinary life. And that is sufficient at least for the beginning.

So Aristotle asserts then that there is a specific work of man, and that is action with reason or according to reason. And therefore, since there is a specific work of man, there is also a specific *good* work of man. The good work is to use one's reason well, in the various forms in which reason can be used. Aristotle alludes to these differences by saying that there may be more than one kind of human goodness. And then the highest kind would be then the ultimately authoritative. What that highest kind would be he doesn't say here, but as we know from the end of this work, it is theoretical knowledge or philosophy. Now let us go on.

Reader:
Moreover this activity must occupy a complete lifetime; for one swallow does not make a spring, nor does one fine day; and similarly one day or a brief period of happiness does not make a man supremely blessed and happy.

LS: So a man who does the specific work of man well in a life of some length—let us say in a completed life only—is happy. In other words, a child which has not been able to acquire these capacities, or young men or women dying prematurely, as we say, cannot be properly called blessed or happy. Some maturity is required. Only in this way can an individual show that he possesses human excellence. Yes?

Reader:
Let this account then serve to describe the Good in outline—for no doubt the proper procedure is to begin by making a rough sketch, and to fill it in afterwards. If a work has been well laid down in outline, to carry it on and complete it in detail may be supposed to be within the capacity of anybody; and in this working out of detail Time seems to be a good inventor or at all events assistant.[xxi] This indeed is how advances in the arts have actually come about, since anyone can fill in the gaps. (1098a18-25)

LS: Good. So you see Aristotle says here now explicitly that what he has given us is only a sketch, an outline. And to fill it out: he says anybody is good enough for that, which is of course a great compliment to us which we do not probably deserve. But the sketch he nevertheless says is most important, as he says later on. The beginning is half of the whole. Now the remark about time: time is good. It is a helper in this respect. There is in the fourth book of his *Physics*, where he discusses time thematically, [a remark that] time is presented rather as bad, as a cause of forgetting and of decay. And various kinds of conclusions were drawn from this remark on time, but what Aristotle has in mind is [that] everything depends on how time is used. If you use it well, it will be helpful to you; if you do not use it [well], it will bring about decay and degeneration. Yes?

[xxi] In Rackham's translation: "coadjutor."

Student: If, as you mentioned earlier, the things like the universe, the cosmos, and the species, and things are eternal—how can then you say that something like time is good or bad . . .

LS: Aristotle doesn't say that, but Aristotle seems to say it in his analysis of time in the *Physics*. And therefore I make this remark that our passage shows that Aristotle does not regard time as bad or the cause of badness.

Same Student: No, but, I mean, time somehow makes a difference. If you have things like decay and things, a species doesn't remain the same thing, does it?

LS: Why not? I mean, every dog grows and decays. And that happens all the time, and yet this doesn't affect the species because the eternity of the species means the noneternity of the individuals. And noneternity means mortality.

Same Student: Are we to assume then that individual men are as insignificant as individual dogs?

LS: This does not follow, but [men are] as mortal as dogs.

Same Student: No, but I mean if we judge somehow by the eternity of things and by the species—whether men die or don't die, doesn't affect that—does [it follow] that men are somehow unimportant or that it is insignificant whether men die?

LS: In the light of what? Every human being, I suppose, has other human beings to whom he is attached, and their death will be very sad for him. That if some old man, or even a young man, for that matter, at the other end of the world dies, it would be hypocrisy to shed tears about his death, would it not? You can't really be sad about that, if some man wholly unknown to you dies. I do not know what you mean.

Same Student: I just wanted to know whether individuals are significant in any way.

LS: In what sense significant? I mean, you are yourself very significant to yourself, I suppose, and to your friends. But not all human beings can be significant to all human beings. Or can they?

Same Student: I think, well, from the standpoint of, say, I would imagine, although I'm not sure of it, from the standpoint of, let's say, Christian thought they could be: each individual could be . . .

LS: If the word usually translated by "neighbor," is this not an accident? In other words, can a man actively love people of whom he has never heard and whom he never sees? It is a difficult question.

Same Student: Yes, it is.

LS: Yes. For Aristotle, at any rate, there is no question here. Love of human beings (in Greek, *philanthropia*) is not a virtue according to the Greek philosophers, surely not Plato and Aristotle. That is a charming quality in most cases, but it is not a virtue. And what about you?

Student: Well, I was . . .

LS: Yes, I know.

Student: It seems that perhaps the concept of God's love of all men in Christian thought does indicate something which all men are not capable of but must aspire to, that it is a quality that is not—

LS: Yes, but this is said of God: of a superhuman being and not of man.

Student: Realizing this, realizing the common fatherhood of God . . . can't actively love every individual but can theoretically know that every individual—

LS: No, the question is whether man, confronted with any other man, regardless of ethnic origin, race, or what have you, whether man is not under certain obligations toward other human beings whom he knows—whom he meets, at least. Aristotle would say say yes. [He] does say yes. But that does not mean that he can actively love all human beings. That's beyond his power. Good. Now Mr. Pangle, let us go on where we left off.

Reader:
We should therefore proceed in the same manner in other subjects also, and not allow side issues to outweigh the main task in hand.

LS: Let us stop here. So in other words, the whole question which he has already taken up twice, now for the third time, concerning the exactness to be expected in moral matters. He had used before the term exactness, opposed to a sketch, to a general or abstract statement. But "exact" means now "the concrete and detailed elaboration." The abstract statement is to that extent inexact. That is also one meaning of "exact" in Aristotle.

Now here this statement which we began to read is the third and final statement about how to speak on moral matters, or what kind of exactness to expect. Generally speaking, we see here that Aristotle's way of speaking and thinking in this work is more like that of the carpenter than like that of the geometer, the mathematician. Is this clear? The carpenter is satisfied with a straight line which is not literally and strictly speaking straight but is perfectly sufficient for his purposes. And the same applies to moral matters: an exactness in accordance with the nature of the subject matter. Now this much is said by Aristotle here about exactness. Now he has something to add to that.

Reader:
Nor again must we in all matters alike demand an explanation of the reason why things are what they are; in some cases it is enough if the fact that they are so is satisfactorily established. This is the case with first principles; and the fact is the primary thing—it *is* a first principle. And principles are studied—some by induction, others by perception, others by some form of habituation, and also others otherwise; so we must endeavor to arrive at the principles of each kind in their natural manner, and must also be careful to define them correctly, since they are of great importance for the subsequent course of the enquiry. The beginning is admittedly more than half of the whole, and throws light at once on many of the questions under investigation. (1098a31-b8)

LS: Yes. Now after having spoken of the exactness to be expected, he comes to the question of the causes or principles. Now only this question, not the question regarding exactness, was dealt with in the second and central statement, 1095a30 following. In the first statement he had spoken only of exactness, and not of principles. Here he speaks of both. In this statement, there is no allusion to the fact, as there was in the second statement, that we might need knowledge of "the why." Here he simple leaves it at "the that." It is enough. What he alludes to is this: the highest principle is the principle of

contradiction. If you know that it is impossible to say at the same time that A is B and A is non-B, that's perfectly sufficient; you don't need a why for that. The question is whether the same can be applied to morals; more specifically, whether it is good enough to say [that] courage is a virtue. And that's our starting point: whether it doesn't make sense to say *why* is courage a virtue, or why is courage a good. [This is] the question which we have discussed earlier.

Now the principles may be found in various ways: by induction, he says, by sense perception, and by habituation. Thomas Aquinas gives these examples: that every number is odd or even is found by induction. You look at every number which occurs to you and you see that it is either odd or even. That every living thing needs nourishment is known by sense perception. And that lusts are diminished if we do not give in to them is known by habituation; for example, by ceasing to smoke. That is Thomas's example of that.[xxii] Good. Now let us begin with the next section.

Reader:
Accordingly we must examine our first principle not only as a logical conclusion deduced from certain premises but also in the light of the current opinions on the subject. (1098b9-11)

LS: What is a "logical" conclusion as distinguished from a conclusion which is not logical? I think it is a wholly redundant expression. I mean, it may be a wrong conclusion, but every conclusion is of course an act of our concluding faculty, i.e., logical. That's not necessary.

Aristotle says—in the preceding passage he had inferred what happiness is by starting from such principles as: every being has a specific work, and this work may be done by the individual well or not well. These were principles from which he started, by starting from which he arrived at the conclusion that happiness consists in excellent activity according to reason. Now he will check the result not by "opinions," as he translates, but by what people say. People who have never taken the trouble of establishing definitely what happiness is, as Aristotle has done in the preceding chapter, nevertheless have opinions about happiness. And these opinions are available to everybody through what people say, and therefore we must see what people say and whether this agrees with what Aristotle has established in a more exact manner. For Aristotle assumes, and this assumption he will make clear later on, that what people say cannot be simply absurd. That may sound strange because there is such a great variety of opinions, and some must certainly be wrong, yet Aristotle has a certain respect for what people say, given some conditions. In other words, he will make clear later on [that] if they say it for a very long time, that means it cannot be a momentary fad or whim. That can be nonsense. Or if the men who say it are wise men, then it stands to reason that it cannot be simply wrong. Now let us see what these sayings are.

Reader:
Now things good have been divided into three classes, external goods on the one hand, and goods of the soul and of the body on the other; and of these three kinds of goods, those of the soul we commonly pronounce good in the fullest sense and supreme.[xxiii]

LS: "*We* pronounce." You see, Aristotle is one of the speakers. Aristotle in his capacity as a simple man which he also has, apart from being a philosopher. Yes?

[xxii] See Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, §137.
[xxiii] In Rackham's translation: "fullest sense and highest degree."

Reader:
But it is our actions and the soul's active exercise of its functions that we posit (as being Happiness); hence so far as this opinion goes—and it is of long standing, and generally accepted by philosophers[xxiv]—it supports the correctness of our definition of Happiness. (1098b12-18)

LS: Yes, now let us see. What are then these things said by human beings? First, the tripartition of the good things: the good things of the soul at the highest; and then those of the body; and then the external goods. Now actions, activities, belong to the soul and not to the body or to external things. The body does not properly act because the body doesn't choose, and therefore it cannot act. The core of action according to Aristotle, as he will make clear later on, is preferring, choosing. And choosing is the prerogative of the soul. Now this opinion is old, of long standing, and if it had been merely a stupid view, then it would have been abandoned a long time ago, and [it is] accepted by the people who philosophize. Yes?

Student: This may be inappropriate here, but what is the ground for this assumption of a harmony between popular opinion or common opinion and, say, philosophical opinion?

LS: Under what condition does this make sense? That's a very relevant, pertinent question. No apology needed. Now if it is true that man is a rational animal, and if reason is to some extent always active in men in general, to some extent, then the results of so-to-speak uncultivated reason, but still active reason, will not completely run counter to the results of a highly cultivated reason.

Same Student: This assumption seems to be based on something beyond the scope of this treatise.

LS: No. Well, what Aristotle does is this; you can also explain it as follows. Someone presents a view which in this form was never presented before. And then, if he is not a fool who wants to be admired as an original man, you know, who said something unheard of, then he will say: What I say is after all not so strange as it seems at first glance. What we all say, you all admit this, and this, and this; if you look at more closely, implies what I said. Kant, when he sets forth his very original moral teaching claims that he only elucidates, analyzes, brings to light, what every human being, when he says, "This is right or this is wrong," always implies.

Same Student: Would, say, what is sometimes called Plato's taking refuge in speech, or Plato's doctrine of the second voyage—would Aristotle's assumption be essentially the same as that?

LS: There is something very much Platonic or Socratic in Aristotle. Plato has this notion, as you know, stated somewhat in an image: that man is the only being on earth who has seen the complete truth—and what for Plato means the same thing, the ideas—prior to his birth. Man could not be man without a divination of the truth. And therefore this divination of the truth shows itself in the opinions of men in general. And therefore it is possible, according to Plato at any rate, by starting from any opinion, however crude and half-cooked or however it may be, starting from it and seeing its effects, and thus to be led to the full truth. One can state it properly as follows. I mean, apart from people who want to be original, or want to win an argument, or try to defend a particular thesis, as

[xxiv] In Rackham's translation: "students of philosophy."

Aristotle puts it, what people say, especially in their unguarded moments about matters not directly connected with their personal interests of the moment,[3] this always contains sense. Not theories: theories are a particular matter. Theories can very well be absolutely wrong.

Student: In your first lecture, you said that Aristotle leaves it open—it seems for Aristotle that man is definitely not the highest thing in the universe—you said he seems to leave it open as to whether he is in a way a key to the universe, and—

LS: Yes. I think he says so, in a way. He says in one of his works that the soul—and he means here from the context the human soul—is open to everything, i.e., the god, as Aristotle understands that, would not perceive any beings lower than god. Yes? Man would perceive the divine as well as the human, as well as the subhuman. In this sense man is the microcosm. Although Aristotle doesn't use the term, he means that.

Same Student: Just one more—

LS: Yes.

Same Student: Is this connected with why you said the *Ethics* may be Aristotle's most beautiful book?

LS: No, that I would not say, but I think it is precisely because of its less technical character. It is least a book for classrooms, you know. It is meant for the general educated reader, but it is also written in such a way that people who want to have more than the general educated reader wants will find it. This peculiar combination I believe characterizes the *Ethics*, whereas the *Physics*, or *On the Heavens* and so, that would not for the general reader. Now let us read a bit more.

Reader:
It also shows it to be right merely in declaring the End to consist in actions or activities of some sort, for thus the End is included among goods of the soul, and not among external goods. (1098b18-20)

LS: So in other words, one could say this. Some people say happiness consists in just living well, meaning an extraordinary dinner every night and all other pleasures of life at all times, and not—in other words, in what you get, what you receive, and not in actions, and activities, and actualizations. Aristotle says that this Aristotelian view agrees with what is said, according to which the highest things are in the soul[4] and do not belong to the external goods. That will become clearer from the immediate sequel. Yes?

Reader:
Again, our definition accords with the description of the happy man as one who 'lives well' or 'does well'; for it has virtually identified happiness with the form of the good life[xxv] or doing well.

LS: Ya. Well, "doing well" is of course ambiguous, as [it is] in English, and can mean being successful whether you have deserved it or not. But doing well in the Greek can also mean "doing well," literally: "acting well," so that happiness consists in acting well. This thing, said so frequently, confirms again Aristotle's definition. Yes?

[xxv] In Rackham's translation: "a form of good life."

Reader:
And moreover all the various characteristics that are looked for in happiness are found to belong to the Good as we define it. Some people think happiness is goodness or virtue, others prudence, others a form of wisdom; others again say it is all of these things, or one of them, in combination with pleasure, or not without pleasure;[xxvi] another school include external prosperity as a concomitant factor. Some of these views have been held by many people and from ancient times, others by a few distinguished men, and neither class is likely to be altogether mistaken; the probability is that their beliefs are at least partly, or indeed mainly, correct.

LS: Now here he gives the reason for which some of you have looked [as to] why the opinions of longstanding [endurance] as well as the opinions of distinguished men are not likely to be altogether wrong. Otherwise he shows here many things said about happiness which seem to be mutually exclusive, because some people say happiness is identical with virtue, some people say happiness is identical with wisdom, and some say it must be accompanied by pleasure or at least not accompanied by pain. These are very different views, and seemingly mutually exclusive views. And Aristotle will now show that they are provided for and taken account of in his statement on happiness in the preceding chapter. Yes. Let us read one more passage. Yes?

Reader:
Now with those who pronounce happiness to be virtue, or some particular virtue, our definition is in agreement; for 'activity in conformity with virtue' involves virtue. But no doubt it makes a great difference whether we conceive the Supreme Good to depend on possessing virtue or on displaying it—on disposition, or on the manifestation of a disposition in action. For a man may possess the disposition without its producing any good result, as for instance when he is asleep, or has ceased to function from some other cause; but virtue in active exercise cannot be inoperative—it will of necessity act, and act well. And just as at the Olympic games the wreaths of victory are not bestowed upon the handsomest and strongest persons present, but on men who enter for the competitions—since it is among these that the winners are found,—so it is those who *act* rightly who carry off the prizes and good things of life. (1098b20-1099a7)

LS: Ya. Now the main point which he makes here: he agrees in a way with those who say happiness is virtue, but not entirely. He says they don't make sufficiently clear that it is the *activity* according to virtue, and not merely the possession of virtue, which may remain dormant. And he compares this difference to that between possession and use: the possession of shoes and the use of shoes, and analogously, the possession of virtue in a dormant condition (leave it at home, as it were) and the use of it. And the latter alone is what Aristotle understands by virtue: the *exercise* of virtue. The Greek word is *energeia*, from which the English word energy is ultimately derived. But the Greek word has nothing to do with energy in the modern sense. It means, literally translated, "being-at-work"; being-at-work as distinguished from a mere potency or potentiality.

Now Aristotle, in the sequel that we cannot discuss today, takes up a subject of which he had not spoken in his own statement on happiness, which is nevertheless very important. Many people say a happy man is a man who has pleasures, or at least who doesn't live in pain all the time. Now this subject [is] not considered apparently in the general definition in the preceding chapter. The word "pleasure" didn't occur there at all. This he takes up in the sequel. Must we not assert that the happy man, apart from exercising the virtues, is also a man whose life is enjoyable? After all, it is thinkable that man would fulfill his

[xxvi] In Rackham's translation: "or accompanied by pleasure as an indispensable adjunct."

duties very strictly and honestly, and yet at the same time be very miserable. And that would bring about that he is torn between two things: duty and pleasure. And what Aristotle will now show in his way is that this cannot be the case, that there is in happiness the three things which man desires: the good, the noble, and the pleasant are all three present. Or as we could say, to make this distinction a bit more intelligible: the enjoyable, the resplendent, that's the noble; and the solid, rocklike, that's the good. All three combined on the highest level possible for man: that is happiness. And that he will show in the sequel.

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[1] Deleted "the."
[2] Deleted "are."
[3] Deleted "that."
[4] Deleted "in the soul."

Session 7: March 4, 1968

Leo Strauss: So now let us continue where we left off last time. Aristotle had answered the question of what happiness or the human good is. It is the being-at-work of the soul in the mode of excellence; of course, the human soul. Now after Aristotle had answered this question by himself, he looks at what people generally say about happiness, because it is improbable that the meaning of happiness, the end of all men, has completely escaped the human race. And therefore, while the general views may be less neat, less exact, they yet must reflect the truth as stated by Aristotle. And we have read the larger part of this section, and we should continue now at 1099a7, roughly, which we read already last time. I have already mentioned at the end of the last meeting that Aristotle takes now up a subject of which he had not spoken when presenting his definition of happiness. And that theme is pleasure. Now will you begin to read again the few lines we read last time?

Reader:
And further, their life[i] is essentially pleasant. For the feeling of pleasure is an experience of the soul, and a thing gives a man pleasure in regard to which he is described as 'fond of' so-and-so: for instance a horse gives pleasure to one fond of horses, a play to one fond of the theatre, and similarly just actions are pleasant to the lover of justice, and acts conforming with virtue generally to the lover of virtue.

LS: Go on.

Reader:
But whereas for the many pleasures are in conflict with one another, because they are not pleasant by nature,[ii] things pleasant by nature are pleasant to lovers of what is noble, and so always are actions in conformity with virtue, so that they are pleasant essentially as well as pleasant to lovers of the noble. Therefore their life has no need of pleasure as a sort of ornamental appendage, but contains its pleasure in itself. (1099a7-16)

LS: Yes, let us stop here. So Aristotle has now settled this question regarding the relation between happiness and pleasure. And the question is whether this settlement is sufficient or adequate. Aristotle makes here the distinction between two kinds of pleasures: pleasures of pleasant things which are by nature pleasant, intrinsically pleasant. and those which are not. Now it is clear that the virtuous man does not necessarily have more pleasures of the vulgar kind than the vicious man. But Aristotle contends [that] the true pleasures, the pleasures according to nature, are a preserve of the virtuous man, and therefore he alone has a truly pleasant life. In other words, the pleasant life of gangsters is not truly pleasant; that is a sham pleasure. That is what Aristotle here implies. Only for the lovers of noble things are the things by nature pleasant in fact pleasant. Now granted that truly virtuous men enjoy their virtuous activity and that this enjoyment is the only true enjoyment (that is what Aristotle presupposes here), does it follow from this that

[i] In Rackham's translation: "the life of active virtue."
[ii] In Rackham's translation: "But whereas the mass of mankind take pleasure in things that conflict with one another, because they are not pleasure of their own nature."

these activities are the only ones by nature enjoyable? Why should not pleasant food, pleasant drink, and so on be by nature enjoyable, for example? Now let us see what conclusions Aristotle draws from this.

Reader:
For there is the further consideration that the man who does not enjoy doing noble actions is not a good man at all: no one would call a man just if he did not like acting justly, nor liberal if he did not like doing liberal things, and similarly with the other virtues. But if so, actions in conformity with virtue must be essentially pleasant.

LS: That makes sense, that a man who doesn't enjoy noble actions is not a noble character. But the question is: are these enjoyments the highest enjoyments, or are they the only enjoyments by nature enjoyable? This is the question.

In addition, there is the following difficulty. Let us take a man who denounces a friend who has become a traitor to the authorities. This is a just action or may be a just action. Is this an enjoyable action? Hardly. So there will be at least some virtuous actions which are not enjoyable, where one can say, "It is my damn duty to do it, but I hate it. I do not enjoy it." You see also that Aristotle has here made a qualification in the last sentence read by Mr. Pangle: "If this is so." We have to be watchful. Yes?

Reader:
But they are also of course both good and noble, and each in the highest degree, if the good man judges them well:[iii] and his judgment is as we have said. It follows therefore that happiness is at once the best, the noblest, and the pleasantest of things: these qualities are not separated as the inscription at Delos makes out—

The noblest is the most just, and the best is to be healthy,
But the most pleasant by nature is the attaining of what someone loves.[iv]

for the best activities possess them all; and it is the best activities, or one activity which is the best of all, in which according to our definition happiness consists. (1099a17-31)

LS: Yes. The virtuous activities are pleasant to the highest degree and noble to the highest degree and good to the highest degree. Or, as we may paraphrase it, not to leave it in these terms which have been so frequently used and have become stale: the virtuous activities are the most enjoyable, the most resplendent, and the most solid. So all three considerations of preference lead us to one and the same end. And of course the proper judge of what is most enjoyable and so on is the serious man, to translate the Greek word literally, which is one of the many terms Aristotle uses for the virtuous man.[v] The serious man, *un homme sérieux* in French, has sometimes this meaning: a man one must take seriously.

[iii] In Rackham's translation: "judges them rightly."
[iv] In Rackham's translation: "Justice is noblest, and health is best,/But the heart's desire is the pleasantest—"
[v] In Greek: *spoudaios*.

Now the question of course is—he has a reference to these activities or one of them, namely, the best of them, is what we assert to be happiness. This is again a reference to a distinction *within* the excellent activities, which will prove to be the distinction between moral actions and contemplative actions, and the question is whether Aristotle can make his assertion stick regarding moral virtues. Perhaps in the case of the moral virtues, the coincidence of the enjoyable, the resplendent, and the good is not as clear as in the case of contemplation. We have not yet sufficient evidence for that.

At any rate, there is a perfect harmony regarding the preferences which we human beings have. They all coincide, contrary to this inscription, where a distinction is made between what is noble—the most noble is the most just; the more solid, or good is to have good health, and obviously these are two very different things. Finally, the most pleasant is to get what one desires. Three entirely different things. And Aristotle says now [that] if you think each of them through, then you will arrive at one and only one goal: the highest human activity. Now let us continue that.

Reader:
Nevertheless it is manifest that happiness also requires external goods in addition, as we said; for it is impossible, or at least not easy, to play a noble part unless furnished with the necessary equipment. For many noble actions require instruments for their performance, in the shape of friends or wealth or political power; also there are certain external advantages, the lack of which sullies supreme felicity, such as good birth, good children,[vi] and personal beauty: a man of very ugly appearance or low birth, or alone in the world and childless,[vii] is not a happy man,[viii] and still less so perhaps is one who has children or friends that are worthless, or one who has had good ones but lost them by death. As we said therefore, happiness does seem to require the addition of external prosperity, and this is why some people identify it with good fortune (though some identify it with virtue). (1099a31-b8)

LS: So in other words, this beautiful coincidence of the three considerations is not good enough, because in order to be happy man does need external goods. And these external goods are not necessarily given with the fact of virtue or virtuous intentions, and therefore there is a difficulty again, not identical with the distinction between virtue and pleasure, but it is a distinction between virtue and the external goods—or equipment, as Aristotle calls it—without which virtuous activity is not possible. And Aristotle goes here quite far, as you see, for example, [saying] that there is a minimum need for external goods necessary in order to act virtuously. For example, a man who [is] completely paralyzed in body and mind cannot possibly act virtuously. That we understand. But that the man also who is extremely ugly, bodily ugly, is by this very fact barred from being happy seems not to coincide with what we now hold, although I think with a little effort we understand it, because we always see, when we are confronted with extreme ugliness, our simple reaction to that: we are repelled. And of course we can control it as tolerably

[vi] In Rackham's translation: "satisfactory children."
[vii] In Rackham's translation: "childless and alone in the world."
[viii] In Rackham's translation: "not our idea of a happy man."

decent people, but that we have to control it shows that that is not exactly what we understand by human perfection. The other examples are perhaps less striking. Good.

So the question is, therefore: can the highest good, can happiness consist in virtuous activity alone, if this is the case? The enjoyment of these good things is by nature good, but pleasures deriving from noble actions are not sufficient for happiness. This much Aristotle made clear. Now people have found a way out, as Aristotle indicates at the end of this passage: they say happiness is the same as having good luck. For example, to be wealthy and have good looks: these are gifts of fortune. But of course then you don't have virtue here. The alternative view is [that] happiness is virtue, but the fact that these views are radically distinguished from each other shows that the problem of happiness has not yet been solved, although what Aristotle said in the preceding chapter in his own name will remain true, with some qualifications toward which Aristotle works his way. Now is there any point you would like to raise here? Yes, Mr. Wedergreen?

Student: Why doesn't Aristotle give us any ways to, say, improve our way—our means of . . . situation, that is to say, why doesn't he give us ways of improving our life?

LS: Yes, but that is exactly the point. The *tychē*, chance, cannot be handled. The simple example which Aristotle gives when he discusses chance thematically in the second book of the *Physics* is this: you dig in your garden, and then you find a treasure.[ix] Now how can you—I mean, you can go treasure hunting, but then of course it is no longer a matter of chance if you find a treasure. But the point is that without intending it, you find it. Chance is that which is radically elusive and cannot be mastered. You mean ways to improve one's fortune? Well, there are some ways, for example, buy the right kind of stocks, but no one would say then that this is just a—

Same Student: But when you dig in the garden, you keep an eye out for treasure chests.

LS: Yes, but the point is then that this is already no longer mere chance. Two people meet "by chance": that means they did not intend to meet. The one went downtown for this reason, the other [for] an entirely different reason, no agreement whatever. And yet their ways cross: this is wholly unintended and unintendable. That is characteristic of chance. And therefore your objection is not valid. Mr. Shulsky?

Mr. Shulsky: Well, but . . . sort of survives in the sense that Aristotle attributes here this type of equipment that's necessary simply to chance. One can argue that as far as at least, you know, money is concerned, that's not simply a result of chance.

LS: Yes, but it is not strictly speaking chance. Does he ascribe it to chance?

Mr. Shulsky: Well, I thought that's what you said, that these things would result only in chance . . .

[ix] See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1025a14-19.

LS: No. I mean, they are not inherent in virtuous action. They are conditions. Chance enters somehow, but they are not simply [the result of chance], because man has some influence over some of these things, for example, on his wealth. Some men are very clever and others are less clever in acquiring money. Yes?

Student: Aristotle assumes that a man can't be called happy merely because he says he feels happy . . .

LS: Sure. No.

Same Student: You wouldn't call a man who said he's happy, happy.

LS: No. Because sometimes people say it without believing it themselves.

Same Student: Or also what if they believe it? What reason does he give? If someone actually believes he's happy, feels happy, dances around and everything else, what reason would he give for calling a man unhappy who says he's perfectly happy? Plato does the same thing, although he uses slightly different terms, but he gives what appears to be a more satisfying reason: there are certain parts of the soul, and certain parts of the soul here are fostered by this, they are not fostered by that, and so on and so forth.

LS: Aristotle does the same. But still, I think your question is a necessary one, because our word "happiness" in the present-day meaning is not identical with the meaning of the Greek word. We would not hesitate, for instance, to call children happy, or even puppies happy, and Aristotle would flatly deny that. Now one can perhaps state it as follows, trying to translate what they imply into our language: a happy man is a satisfied man. Yes. But a moron may be perfectly satisfied. You know sometimes they smile all the day. They are perfectly satisfied. And Aristotle says no one in his senses would call him happy. Why? Because by happiness we understand such a satisfaction as is enviable in the view of a sensible man. So an enviable satisfaction: this is happiness. And only in a nonliteral sense can we say we envy animals, dumb animals. We don't wish to be animals. You only have to think it through. It may seem to be very attractive to be a puppy and to have a wonderful master, but the trouble is that you do not have any control if that master dies or gets ill whether you will be sent to the pound, or God knows what. So you only have to think it through and it proves to be an unwise proposition to be a puppy. And the same applies to other considerations.

And regarding a child, well, Aristotle makes this clear: a child is at best happy by promise; and only a kind of sentimentality, to which we modern men are very much given, would induce us to say, "Oh, children, they're beautiful." The beauty of childhood, you know, with all the promises, and they do not yet know how few of them will be kept, so this is largely based on a illusion. So let us take a somewhat more manly and sober view of the situation, and then we will find happiness only among adult people who fulfill the decisive condition: that they are doers of noble things.

Same Student: But this seems to be begging the question a little bit. If happiness is such a satisfaction as is enviable by the *spoudaios*, then it appears that that only transposes the question to: what is the *spoudaios*? What is the nature of the *spoudaios*?

LS: Ya, but do we not avoid this circle by saying that the *spoudaios* is a man whose soul is at work in the mode of excellence, as Aristotle said before?

Student: . . . every man happy . . . same thing that . . . make every other man happy. Take, for instance, the example of a king . . . a virtuous king . . . and yet he does not desire the office, and a lot of the other people will envy him for holding that office and it seems as though a man can be unhappy when he is in a position where another man would be very happy and—

LS: Sure. There is no doubt about it, but we are speaking of happiness which is enviable by a sensible man. Now a sensible man would not envy kings as kings, or for that matter presidents, because there are also quite a few things in the president's life, as you will surely have seen from the daily papers, which are not enviable, [but rather are] enormous responsibilities. Yes?

Student: . . . Does he say that among sensible people there is a uniformity . . .

LS: Ultimately, yes. Aristotle is not "quote, an individualist, unquote," in the sense in which you mean it, and I would say that as long as people talked of virtue, people were not individualists in that sense. There is one and only one ultimate standard of human excellence, and individuality does not affect it. It may be [that], say, the virtue of X may be colored by his psychophysiological makeup. That is true, but this is uninteresting. The interesting thing *for him* is to be an excellent man. Whether Pericles's excellence differs from that of Aristides, that is a secondary question. The main point is that they are excellent men. And there may be differences: one may be more excellent than the other. Then it becomes interesting because of the difference of degrees but not [because of] the individuality as individuality. They simply assume that we all are individuals by nature, and our education or formation consists in our assimilating ourselves to one and the same standard. What does it mean, the formula "to assimilate oneself to God"? If that is the most important thing, obviously the preservation of individuality is a strictly tertiary consideration. That is so. Yes?

Student: May I rephrase my other question?

LS: Sure.

Same Student: The *Ethics* is to some extent a book which will show at least a certain kind of man how to be happy. If happiness requires external goods, then why doesn't Aristotle show in some way how external goods can be easily acquired?

LS: Well, that would be the matter of a special discipline, to which he refers, called economics: the management of the household or the acquisition of wealth.

Same Student: But wouldn't it be also a part of political science, part of [it] being the way to be happy?

LS: Yes, but political economy, as we call it, plays a very subordinate role in Aristotle, as in classical thought altogether. He would simply say [that] the experienced statesman will know how to raise revenue and how to spend it for the greatest benefit of the community and so. It is a very special consideration to which Aristotle has not given much place in his work. Then from the same point of view, one could say this: that since from Aristotle's point of view the most decent way of earning a livelihood is by husbandry, then Aristotle should teach the gentleman how to farm and how to raise cattle, which Aristotle never did. It so happens that Xenophon, who belonged to the same world, did write a treatise on gentlemanship, which contains a section on how to farm; for example, one must cast the seed evenly and not unevenly. You know? But it is no longer explained how you can learn that; you are only told you must learn that. Mr. Fielding?

Student: I'm struck by a difficulty, or at least apparent difficulty, with the distinction between what is pleasant by nature and what is not so.

LS: Yes.

Same Student: And Aristotle seems to imply here that most men are not truly engaged in pleasurable activities, because their activities are not pleasant by nature.

LS: Yes. That seems to be the case.

Same Student: Now the question is: how does one know what is pleasant by nature? That is to say, there are certain things that seem clearly natural in their pleasantness, but which are the cause of all sorts of disruption in that they're not properly engaged upon.

LS: Aristotle has devoted a considerable part of the *Ethics* to pleasure: the end of book 7 and the first part of book 10. Here he only is leading up to a proposition which saves perfectly his previous definition of happiness, namely, the coincidence of these three considerations: the good, the noble, and the pleasant. And now this would be not a nice thing to do, if Aristotle said: Well, now the problem of happiness is solved. But he goes on for four or five pages in taking up the same question again, because what he seems to have solved in the form of the question of the relation of the noble and the pleasant comes back in the form of the question of the relation of the intrinsically virtuous actions and the extrinsic conditions of virtuous action, the equipment. So in other words—

Student: That carries the discussion to a slightly different place, one that's more amenable to—

LS: Why is it more amenable?

Same Student: Well, if one considered the pleasant simply—I mean it's true [that] a certain amount of equipment is required to engage in pleasant activities, but it's not clear that that equipment is synonymous [with], or as extensive as the equipment necessary for virtuous activity. It seems to me that it's easier for a man to indulge himself in terms of equipment than it is for him to be virtuous in terms of equipment.

LS: Yes, but is the same not true if we take the ordinary understanding of pleasure? Is it not easier to enjoy pleasures indiscriminately than to make an effort in the highest direction? Is that not true?

Same Student: Well, that's true too. But once we grant him equipment necessary for virtue, at that point we assume that the pleasure inherent in virtuous activity is higher or better ordered according to the nature of the soul.

LS: Ya. But still, does it not detract from the self-sufficiency of happiness, if happiness depends on something outside of happiness proper? Be that as it may, let us see whether Aristotle has answered your difficulty when we have arrived at the end of the discussion of happiness. Now will you go on? Read the last sentence of the preceding section again; otherwise we will not understand the transition.

Reader:
and this is why some people identify it with good fortune (though some identify it with virtue).

LS: "It," namely, happiness. Yes?

Reader:
It is this that gives rise to the question whether it is a thing that can be learnt, or acquired by training, or cultivated in some other manner, or whether it is bestowed by some divine dispensation or even by fortune.

LS: "Fortune" is the same as "chance."

Reader:
Now if anything that men have is a gift of the gods, it is reasonable to suppose that happiness is divinely given—indeed of all man's possessions it is most likely to be so, inasmuch as it is the best of them all. (1099b7-13)

LS: Now Aristotle raises the question regarding happiness in the most radical form. Happiness is the highest human good, but is it not so high—because it is so high, can it be in any way of human origin? Is it not more reasonable to say it has been given by the gods? Or perhaps it is merely by chance, a thought which occurred to us in a different context a short while ago. Yes?

Reader:
This subject however may perhaps more properly belong to another branch of study.

LS: So in other words, the question belongs to another consideration. What consideration would this be?

Student: Theology.

LS: Yes. We see here again that Aristotle presupposes that ethics must not be based on either physics or metaphysics. Yet that is important. But still, is the question which he had just raised not of the greatest relevance for ethics: how do we become happy? Therefore—now go on.

Reader:
Still, even if happiness is not sent us from heaven, but is won by virtue and by some kind of study or practice, it seems to be one of the most divine things that exist. For the prize and end of goodness must clearly be supremely good—it must be something divine and blissful.

LS: Yes. Happiness belongs, at any rate, regardless of whether it is sent by the gods or not, to the most divine things, for even if it is a consequence of human actions, it differs essentially from these actions because it is the prize given for them and not the actions themselves. "Divine" does not necessarily mean merely caused by the gods; it may also mean resembling god or the divine. And this quality happiness has in contradistinction to the virtuous actions. Yes?

Reader:
And also on our view it will admit of being widely diffused, since it can be attained through some process of study or effort by all persons whose capacity for virtue has not been stunted or maimed. (1099b13-20)

LS: Meaning if virtue has its root in man and not in a divine gift or happiness, then all men in principle can become happy. Some exceptions are to be made: some men are by nature truncated (say, moronic men), and they can therefore not become happy. If it were not accessible to most men or to all normal men, it could be a privilege of the few elect, elected by the gods. That is the alternative. But even if it is [accessible to all men], not all men literally speaking can acquire it, because some are by nature truncated. Yes?

Student: Are there no differences among . . . normal men? Are not some normal men more *men* than others? Therefore, can all normal men be happy in the same way?

LS: Ya, that is a long question. According to what Aristotle says here, rather at the beginning of the work, happiness and virtue [are] open to all men who are not by nature truncated, because virtue is the perfection of the nature of man. All men—I mean, that is metaphoric language when we say that some men are more truly men than others. We had a passage where Aristotle referred to that, or when he criticized Plato's idea of the good. All men are equally human beings, just as all dogs are equally dogs, [and] all cats are

equally cats, but some maybe have a greater disposition toward virtue than others. That's what you mean.

Same Student: Well, not really. Even a little bit more than that. Some men are not only more disposed to be virtuous but are also stronger, more intelligent, more beautiful—

LS: Yes, sure.

Same Student: They more truly approach—

LS: Well, they have a greater prospect to be good men, and even good men in the highest sense. Aristotle does not deny [this]. To that extent, the utterance here is somewhat misleading.

Same Student: But the question that that leads to is: can all men be happy in the same way? Can all normal men be happy in the same way?

LS: Well, in one sense the question is correct, because there are two levels of happiness, generally speaking: the level of moral virtue and the level of contemplative virtue. But apart from that, some men reach either of these levels or both levels more perfectly than others. There are not different kinds of happiness apart from these two kinds.

Same Student: One last small question. How would you differentiate what Aristotle says in the following sentence from Leibniz's idea that this is the best of all possible worlds?

LS: I believe Aristotle would have agreed with that. Leibniz was indeed the first, as far I know, who made the assertion that this world is the best of all possible worlds. By the way, from Leibniz's assertion comes the expression "optimism." Optimism is originally the view of Leibniz: that the world is the best of all possible worlds. Aristotle never said it, but I think it is always implied.

Same Student: Did he mean it in the same way?

LS: Ya. Well, in Leibniz there are many implications and polemical considerations which are absent from Aristotle. For instance, Leibniz is compelled to show that even original sin and eternal damnation, things which for Aristotle didn't exist, do not do away with the bestness of the world. One of Leibniz's arguments is that, after all, the original sin took place on the earth, and the earth is a very infinitesimal part of the universe and so these defects of life on earth may even contribute to the overall beauty of the universe because it is only such a small part. To repeat, Aristotle doesn't say the world is the best possible world, but I think he would have agreed with that if Leibniz had asked him. But the question would never arise for Aristotle for the following reason: Leibniz asserts that the world is the best possible world because he assumes that the world has been created by God. And then the question arises: why did God create the world as it is and not in any other way? And then Leibniz's answer is: he preferred this world to all other possible

worlds because it is the best possible world. Now for Aristotle the question doesn't arise because there is no creation. This is probably the simplest reason. Good.

Now Aristotle, you have seen here, makes a distinction between learning and diligence, as we can say, diligence or training. He leaves this open at this time, how far learning on the one hand and practice on the other goes into the coming-into-being of virtue or happiness. Now shall we go on here?

Reader:
Again, if it is better to be happy as a result of one's own exertions than by the gift of chance,[x] it is reasonable to suppose that this is how happiness is won; if things according to nature have a natural tendency to be ordered in the noblest way,[xi] and the same is true of the products of art, and of causation of any kind, and especially the highest. Whereas that the greatest and noblest things should be left to fortune would be too contrary to the fitness of things. (1099b20-25)

LS: Ya, too . . . So happiness cannot come to men by chance given the high rank of happiness and the low rank of chance. What we get by chance proper are only external goods, and not the most important ones. I repeat again, the clearest example of chance given by Aristotle is: you dig in your garden and you find a treasure. There is no connection. If happiness came through chance, it would not have any connection with virtue. Differently stated, chance is disorderly, random. Nature and art are orderly, and happiness and virtue have more to do with nature and art than with chance.

In this passage which we just read, you find the Aristotelian equivalent of the best of all possible worlds. The world may have all kinds of defects, but it is not so stupidly contrived as some people seem to think. That is the least one would have to say that Aristotle conveys here. Yes, it is most beautiful.

Student: Is this just asserted here? Or does he take up this question in other works?

LS: In the *Metaphysics* he takes it up in a way; also in the *Physics*. In the *Physics*, book 2, he has a discussion of the alternative view, namely, atomism:[xii] the world has come into being out of the aimless and *meaningless* meetings of atoms. And for Aristotle this means that the world is a product of chance, and Aristotle tries to show that it is impossible that a whole can be of a chance character. By chance event we mean always an event occurring within a whole which does not have [a] chance character. So chance presupposes a non-chancy world, and that is the point which he makes there in book 2. Yes, now?

Reader:

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[x] In Rackham's translation: "fortune."
[xi] In Rackham's translation: "inasmuch as in the world of nature things have a natural tendency to be ordered in the best possible way."
[xii] See the discussion of chance in Aristotle, *Physics* 195b30-200b8.

Light is also thrown on the question by our definition of happiness, which said that it is a certain kind of activity of the soul according to virtue;[xiii] whereas the remaining good things are either merely indispensable conditions of happiness, or are of the nature of auxiliary means, and useful instrumentally.

LS: That happiness does not come by chance follows directly from the *logos*, as Aristotle calls it, and what he translates [as] "from the definition of happiness." But this is [in] the preceding chapter. And the reason is this: the soul, of which a certain kind of activity, a kind of being-at-work, is happiness—the soul is by nature, and therewith the possibility of the virtue of the soul. Every natural being has the possibility of being perfect in its way or imperfect. The actualization of this possibility, perfection, must follow that possibility, must be adapted to that possibility. Furthermore, the other good things without which there cannot be happiness are in a nonarbitrary relation to happiness. That we need external goods, say, some wealth, health and so on: this is not a matter of chance. You cannot replace these by other good things which are not suitable as conditions of happiness. So there is here order, intelligible order, and not chance. They do depend on chance to some extent, but they are not the core of happiness. That is the point which Aristotle will repeat time and again. Yes?

Reader:
This conclusion moreover agrees with what we laid down at the outset; for we stated that the Supreme Good was the end of political science, but the principal care of this science is to produce a certain character in the citizens, namely to make them good,[xiv] and capable of performing noble actions.

LS: Ya, "doers of noble deeds." The view that happiness does not come through chance is confirmed also by the fact that happiness, the highest end, belongs to an art, namely, the political art. And art and chance are mutually exclusive. And here, in passing, Aristotle makes this remark which he will repeat in a modified manner shortly thereafter. What is politics about? A contemporary political scientist has said: who gets what, when.[xv] Aristotle has a somewhat different view: politics is concerned with making the citizens men of a certain kind, a certain quality, namely, good and doers of noble deeds. And we all have to make up our minds sooner or later whether we will side with Aristotle or with Lasswell, in this as well as in some other matters. Yes?

Reader:
We have good reasons therefore for not speaking of an ox or horse or any other animal as being happy, because none of these is able to participate in noble activities. (1099b25-a1)

LS: Well, "in being-at-work of this kind." He refers to what he had said in the definition. Yes?

[xiii] The phrase "according to virtue" is supplied by the reader.
[xiv] In Rackham's translation: "virtuous."
[xv] Harold D. Lasswell, *Politics*: *Who Gets What, When, How* (New York: Whittlesey House, 1936).

Reader:
For this cause also children cannot be happy, for they are not old enough to be capable of noble acts; when children are spoken of as happy, it is in compliment to their promise for the future. Happiness, as we said, requires both complete goodness and a complete lifetime. For many reverses and vicissitudes of all sorts occur in the course of life, and it is possible that the most prosperous man may encounter great disasters in his declining years, as the story is told of Priam in the epics; but no one calls the man happy who meets with such misfortune[xvi] and comes to a miserable end. (1100a1-9)

LS: Here Aristotle comes up again with a difficulty regarding happiness. Let us assume that Priam was an excellent human being. And then through the fault of his good-for-nothing son Paris, Troy is eventually destroyed, and Priam is killed, and he knows that his wife and all his sons will be killed, and all his daughters will be sold into slavery. Now is this not obviously misery? Surely no one could call this excellent man in this condition a happy man. So happiness seems to depend very much—happiness seems to become *endangered* by misfortunes of a certain size. One must be an adult human being in order to be happy. One can state what Aristotle means also as follows: if any being could be happy by divine allotment, a horse could be made happy. In other words, there would be a completely topsy-turvy world. Happiness depends undoubtedly on external goods. No one would call Priam happy. Yes?

Student: I suppose that—well, couldn't one argue that if Priam had been the most excellent of men, he would not have been a king in the first place and therefore would not have been subject to the kind of unhappinesses that he [did suffer]. This may sound silly, but juxtapose it, for example, to the case of Socrates. Now supposing Xanthippe had been—oh, I don't know, taken off and sold into slavery [laughter] and leaving aside for the moment things which amuse us about Xanthippe, but at any rate, Xanthippe is sold into slavery. Now this would have been a misfortune for Socrates, but at the same time it would not have borne directly on his happiness or unhappiness as an excellent man.

LS: Well, the fact that when you read the stories about Xanthippe, you regard her as an old battleaxe [laughter], that does not prove that Socrates did not love her. The ancients were rather delicate in these matters, and we don't know. She must have had some qualities, otherwise Socrates would not have married her. And the quality cannot have been wealth [laughter], that is also clear, so she must have had what they call personal qualities. But still—incidentally, why do you say that [the life of an unhappy] king is more bearable than the life of somebody else?

Same Student: I didn't mean to say that the misery of the king is more bearable than the misery of Socrates. It's just the other way around: the king, just by nature of his being a king, is more concerned, I suppose, with what you would call tertiary objects than is Socrates, or a philosopher, or Aristotle for that matter.

LS: The king is more exposed to the vicissitudes.

[xvi] In Rackham's translation: "misfortunes like Priam's."

Same Student: And what is more, his focus is, well, at a lower level.

LS: Yes, but still, I believe you take the fate of Priam too lightly. And Aristotle finds, I think, a somewhat more subtle solution in the sequel. Let me now add only one point. This peak, as it were, when he quotes this epigram and asserts that there is a perfect coincidence of the best, the noblest, and the most pleasant: there is a perfect harmony. And this is easily called today optimism in a slightly different sense; Aristotle had too sanguine a view of the human condition. Now this you must not believe for one moment. I read to you only one passage. That is at the beginning of book 2 of the *Metaphysics*:

"The investigation of the truth is in one way hard, in another easy. An indication of this is found in the fact that no one is able to attain the truth adequately . . . The difficulties are of two kinds. The cause of the present difficulty is not in the facts but in us. For as the eyes of bats are to the blaze of day, so is the reason in our soul to the things which are by nature most evident of all."[xvii]

This is the human condition. Man's highest happiness consists in knowing the truth. But we are by nature as able to see the truth as the eyes of bats are fit to see the blaze of the day. So there cannot be any question of Aristotle having been unduly sanguine regarding the human condition. Yes. Now Aristotle begins the solution of the problem in the next chapter. Yes?

Student: Is whether or not something is a misfortune determined by the man to whom the misfortune occurs, or does Aristotle say that there are certain things which are always misfortunes?

LS: That is not a matter of mere whim. Otherwise, a man who has lost an envelope on which he made a few notes of no importance whatever might become very disturbed. I have seen such people: unhappy. Well, but only he himself would regard himself as unhappy. No, but the things which Aristotle mentions: loss of children, loss of friends, loss of good reputation, loss of all all means of support. These are terrible things. Think of one well-known example, if Priam doesn't mean so much to you: think of Job. The fate of Job is an epitome of misery. And this is not arbitrary; I mean, all human beings, except perhaps some inmates of lunatic asylums, would agree that this is great misery: all the children died, all his fortune lost, and sick in body. Yes?

Same Student: But could not a truly good man, a truly virtuous man, not be sorrowful at perhaps the loss of his reputation?

LS: Sure, that is true. You are on the right way. Aristotle will say it in his way, and I think he remains a bit closer to what one can expect of normal human beings. I mean, of course some wise men, the Stoics especially, have said that these are no goods at all, these external goods, and one can be happy under torture, and some things of this kind. But this will not impress much the large majority of men because they are understandably

[xvii] *Metaphysics* 993a30-b1, 7-11. Strauss reads from *Metaphysica* in *The Works of Aristotle*, ed. and trans. W. D. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908), vol. 8.

more attached to their children, to their friends, to their means of support, [and] to their reputation than these extreme sages are, and Aristotle wishes not to make extreme demands on them. Now let us then continue where we left off.

Reader:
for it is believed that also some evil and also some good can befall the dead, just as much as they can happen to the living without their being aware of it—for instance honours, and disgraces, and the prosperity and misfortunes of their children and their descendants in general.

LS: We will stop here. The difficulty regarding happiness comes out most clearly in the saying of Solon, the Athenian legislator, that no one is to be praised [as] happy before his death. As long as we live, our happiness is in danger. Now this saying is not quite clear, and therefore Aristotle mentions this ambiguity. It could mean, "Can only the dead can be called happy?" And this Aristotle rejects, on the grounds that we understand by happiness activity, being-at-work, which is not possible for the dead. But Solon doesn't mean that only the dead can be happy: he means that only the dead are no longer exposed to the vicissitudes of fortune. Yet, nevertheless, these vicissitudes still affect them, even if they are not aware of them. And Aristotle explains this by an example taken from the living. For example, a living man may lose his children without knowing it. But everyone who knows of the loss of his children will say he is a man in misery, although he still believes [himself] to have the children and believes [himself] to be happy. Therefore the consciousness of happiness or unhappiness is not the sole consideration [for] why we call men happy or unhappy. Now how does he go on?

Reader:
But here too there is a difficulty. For suppose a man to have lived in perfect happiness until old age, and to have come to a correspondingly happy end: he may still have many vicissitudes befall his descendants, some of whom may be good and meet with the fortune which they deserve, and others the opposite; and moreover these descendants may clearly stand in every possible degree of remoteness from the ancestors in question.

LS: In other words, grand-grandchildren, grand-grand-grandchildren, and so on. Yes?

Reader:
Now it would be a strange thing if the dead man also were to change with the fortunes of his family, and were to become a happy man at one time and then miserable at another; yet on the other hand it would also be strange if ancestors were not affected at all, even over a limited period, by the fortunes of their descendants. (1100a18-30)

LS: Yes. Well, the difficulty is this, then: either the happy man is like a chameleon and his happiness changes into unhappiness and vice versa all the time, or the dead man is thought to be altogether indifferent to the fate of his children and other descendants. Both alternatives are unbearable, and therefore he returns to the earlier difficulty. He will soon find the solution. Do you see the point? It will become clearer from what he says, and therefore I suggest we read a bit [further] in this section. Yes?

Reader:
But let us go back to our former difficulty, for perhaps it will throw light on the question we are now examining. If we are to look to the end, and congratulate a man when dead not as actually being blessed, but because he has been blessed in the past, surely it is strange that the actual time when a man is happy that fact cannot be truly predicated of him, because we are unwilling to call the living happy owing to the vicissitudes of fortune, and owing to our conception of happiness as something permanent and not readily subject to change, whereas the wheel of fortune often turns full circle in the same person's experience. For it is clear that if we are to be guided by fortune, we shall often have to call the same man first happy and then miserable; we shall make out the happy man to be a sort of 'chameleon or a house built on the sand.'

But perhaps it is quite wrong to be guided in our judgement by the changes of fortune, since true prosperity and adversity do not depend on fortune's favours, although, as we said, our life does require these in addition; but it is the active exercise of our faculties in conformity with virtue that causes happiness, and the opposite activities its opposite.

And the difficulty just discussed is a further confirmation of our definition; since none of man's functions possess the quality of permanence so fully as the activities in conformity with virtue: they appear to be more lasting even than our knowledge of particular sciences. And among these activities themselves those which are the highest in the scale of values are the more lasting, because they most fully and continuously occupy the lives of the supremely happy: for this appears to be the reason why we do not forget them.

The happy man therefore will possess the element of stability in question, and will remain happy all his life; since he will be always or at least most often employed in doing and contemplating the things according to virtue.[xviii] And he will bear changes of fortune most nobly, and with perfect propriety in every way, being as he is 'good in very truth' and 'four-square without reproach.' (1100a31-b22)

LS: Let us stop here. So what Aristotle asserts then here, that is the line of the argument from now on. Happiness consists not merely in virtuous activity but also in the equipment, as he calls it. But the core of happiness is virtuous action, not the things dependent on chance. He contrasts here the instability of fortune and misfortune with the stability of virtue. So it cannot easily be removed. On the contrary, the misfortunes do not necessarily endanger happiness, for they give opportunities for acting nobly. And therefore the case of virtue is safe. What did you want to say?

Student: I'm just curious. Isn't this a rather strange discretion for Aristotle to be undertaking, since, if I remember correctly, in the other writings he doesn't even consider the possibility, or he doesn't consider it very likely that there is an afterlife or something after death?

[xviii] In Rackham's translation: "in conformity with virtue."

LS: Yes, well, this is not a theoretical book. This is not the book *On the Soul* (*De Anima*), or what have you. But this is a book addressed to gentlemen, not theoretical men, and these gentlemen, to say the least, do not know whether there will not be a life after death. You have a good example of that at the beginning of Plato's *Republic*: old Cephalus. You remember him? His worry is that he doesn't know: will there not be punishments after death? And Socrates does not try to tell him that there are no such things. Aristotle leaves this question here open, and he gives a reason for it a little bit later, namely, for a simple human being—and I think we all are in some way simple human beings—the thought that someone to whom we were dear in his life will no longer in any way whatsoever be concerned with us [is unbearable]. Think of a child of fourteen who loses his mother. The thought is unthinkable that where there should have been the utmost concern, there will be complete indifference. Is it not more philanthropic, more humane to assume that this concern will continue beyond the death of the departed human being? In this way, Aristotle enters into this way of thinking. In this spirit, he enters into this way of thinking, without going into the—then he would have to open up the terrific theoretical issues: think of the demonstrations of the immortality of the soul given by Plato. What kind of an argument would this be? It's wholly unfit for the *Ethics*.

Same Student: Couldn't he just not talk about it at all, though, as another alternative, I mean rather than . . .

LS: Yes, but the question came up very naturally because there is a question of happiness. Happiness seems to be very frail, and this frailness was recognized by Solon in his saying, "No one can be praised happy while he is alive." And therefore the whole question of happiness, of how happiness is affected by what happens to a man's nearest and dearest after his death comes up quite naturally. Aristotle moves on a variety of levels, and he leads us up from one level to another. We are still at the beginning. Yes?

Reader:
But the accidents of fortune are many and vary in degree of magnitude; and although small pieces of good luck, as also of misfortune, clearly do not change the whole course of life, yet great and repeated successes will render life more blissful, since both of their own nature they help to embellish it, and also they can be nobly and virtuously utilized; while great and frequent reverses can crush and mar bliss, for they cause pain and they hinder many activities.[xix] Yet nevertheless even in adversity nobility shines through, when a man endures repeated and severe misfortune with patience, not owing to the insensibility but from nobility[xx] and greatness of soul. And if, as we said, a man's life is determined by his activities, none of the blessed[xxi] can ever become miserable. For he will never do hateful or base actions, since we hold that the truly good and wise man will bear all kinds of fortune in a seemly way, and will always act in the noblest manner that the circumstances allow; even as a good general makes the most effective use of the

[xix] In Rackham's translation: "mar our bliss both by the pain they cause and by the hindrance they offer to many activities."
[xx] In Rackham's translation: "generosity."
[xxi] In Rackham's translation: "no supremely happy man."

forces at his disposal, and a good shoemaker makes the finest shoe possible out of the leather supplied him—

LS: So in other words, if the general has a very poor army and there is no time for training them properly, yet his excellence will show in the use he makes of this very poor army. The same is true of the shoemaker who has very poor material for making shoes. And now Aristotle applies this to the virtuous man: if he is haunted by all kinds of misery, he can't make a big show, great show. But he can nevertheless, with this very poor material at his disposal, lead a life much more noble than that of another man who has the same kind of misfortune and lacks nobility, and even the man lacking nobility who has great good fortune. Yes?

Reader:
And this being so, the happy man can never become miserable; though it is true he will not be supremely blessed if he encounters the misfortunes of a Priam. Nor yet assuredly will he be variable and liable to change; for he will not be dislodged from his happiness easily, nor by ordinary misfortunes, but only by severe and frequent disasters, nor will he recover from such disasters and become happy again quickly, but only, if at all, after a long term of years, in which he has had time to compass great and noble things.[xxii] (1100b22-1101a13)

LS: So in other words, one presents the matter somewhat rhetorically. If you have a noble character like Priam or Job, he may be stricken with all kinds of misfortune, [but] he will never be a contemptible wretch. He will never be a wretch, Aristotle says. You cannot say he is happy if he is stricken this way. Here you have a beautiful example, incidentally, of the inexactness of Aristotle's *Ethics*. How to draw the line here? And yet in a given case, men of judgment, who have to be men of experience, will draw the line properly when confronted with this particular case and say: This is a man who is happy or who is not a contemptible wretch, and another man who isn't. Mr. Shulsky?

Mr. Shulsky: The analogy to the arts, the general who has a bad army or the shoemaker who has bad leather, would suggest that as soon as the virtuous man did have the proper materials—in other words, as soon as his luck changed, he would then be able to live the same life that he did before.

LS: Yes.

Mr. Shulsky: But Aristotle says that the recovery would be slow. And it would seem that the recovery would be immediate if he still had the virtue within him and—

LS: No, but the sufferings. Aristotle thinks of the sufferings. How long will it take until the wounds have healed? But for the other side of the matter, if we think only of loss of wealth: the virtuous man who has lost all his wealth cannot be munificent after having lost his wealth. But after he has recovered it, he will be munificent again. Now Aristotle

[xxii] In Rackham's translation: "to compass high distinctions and achievements."

would say [that] if he is a virtuous man, he will not regain his wealth in a very short time, because then—pardon?

Mr. Shulsky: Well, that depends. I mean, maybe he is a just man who . . .

LS: Well, the classics were rather distrustful, and as Plato puts it, somewhere he says if you use only just means for getting rich, and another man uses both just and unjust means, the latter will become twice as rich and twice as fast rich [laughter] as the former.

Mr. Shulsky: I was wondering if that statement didn't somehow imply that the bad fortune that this man has suffered eventually will affect him in terms of his virtuous activity as well. In other words, that being a poor man, he may get out of the habit of extreme justice because of the needs of the situation, but once he is then comfortable again, he may still have a turn of mind that leads him to the certain sorts of cunning that he wouldn't have practiced before—certain sorts of cunning with respect to money that wouldn't have exactly . . .

LS: No, I believe Aristotle has in mind the long healing of the wounds. Think of the loss of children, and of good children, that this would [lead to] a certain depression or sadness which disables [one from doing][1] as many noble deeds as he otherwise could. I think otherwise it doesn't make sense. Mr. . . .

Student: In the case of a general, or some other man who is responsible for other men, let us say he's in a situation where he can act nobly and surrender his forces in the case of a defeat, or by means of fraud or some other relatively ignoble activity—

LS: Fraud in war is not ignoble. [Laughter].

Same Student: Well, if, as a gentleman, he goes over to the other commander and says, "I give you my word as a gentleman that we will not escape," and then proceeds to do so, it is clear that he is not a gentleman. He may be a good general.

LS: That is really a question. That has been discussed by the ancient casuists: whether in order to win a battle—say, in a just war—such things [as] white lies, perhaps even including the word of a gentleman (I have never heard that) are not permissible and compatible with being a gentleman.

Same Student: But how would—I mean, Aristotle it would seem, would answer back—

LS: Well, Aristotle was blissfully unaware of all feudal notions of points of honor, and therefore there was no—

Same Student: The Greeks had, I mean—

LS: No. They did not have the feudal notions. That was observed very nicely by some modern commentators, and more than commentators: that when there was the Council of

War during the Persian Wars, Themistocles had one proposal regarding the naval battle, and the Spartan commander—I forgot his name; Eurybiades?—had another notion, and the Spartan became very angry and used his whip to whip Themistocles. And Themistocles said, "Whip me, but listen to me": *pataxon men, akoue de*.[xxiii] And these modern commentators observed that this is wholly unthinkable in modern times, where there would be a duel first. You know? This *point d'honneur* simply didn't exist and wouldn't affect the situation. Nor for Aristotle, of course.

Same Student: But that seems to imply, I mean—

LS: Therefore, also "on the word of a gentleman" wouldn't mean more than "on my word" [LS chuckles].

Same Student: That seems to imply though, I mean, that the resolution of being a gentleman—that as a private man on the one hand and being a public man on the other—is made here in two different directions. For Aristotle, the public man has a certain kind of supremacy with respect to virtue in that he can do things that otherwise a private man would not do, whereas the more feudal notion would have it the other way around: the private is in a certain sense superior to the public.

LS: I don't know that that is—

Same Student: That may not be the best formula, but there may be a difference here.

LS: Yes, I see it. At any rate, I do not see your difficulty. In other words, general who lies or cheats in order to win a battle in a just war is not blameworthy. I mean, there was never any quarrel on the part of men like Aristotle about that.

Same Student: But in a certain sense, he's not simply blameless.

LS: Oh yes, he is. If inexperienced people think he's a liar, then they have to grow up and learn that this is not a lie, at least in the sense of a blameworthy action. Yes?

Student: Sir, I'd like to ask another question about Priam. You made the point a minute ago that this was a perfect example of Aristotle's ambiguity: that it was possible to not be happy, but at the same time not to be a wretch either. So we have King Priam, who is not happy but he is not a wretch either, which is a sort of a way of stating that he is happy without knowing it, although happiness not—

LS: No, no. He is not happy, because he has suffered these terrible misfortunes. Think only of what happened to Hector. So he is not happy. And it would be somehow an insult to common sense to say Priam is happy, as the Stoics would have said. Now the Stoics were extremists whom one cannot trust in these matters. [Laughter] But on the other hand, to say he is a contemptible wretch—I add the adjective to make it somewhat more

[xxiii] See Plutarch, *Lives*, "Themistocles."

forceful—is absurd, seeing the nobility and the seemliness which he observed even in these terrible situations.

Same Student: Yes, but we're talking about nobility, and the virtue that is displayed as being a concomitant of happiness, or the one being a concomitant of the other. Maybe all I wanted to get was perhaps an expansion of the kind of happiness as Solon understood it to maybe another kind of happiness the way Aristotle is taking it to be, I—

LS: I think what Aristotle understands by happiness is not far-fetched. The trouble is only that *precisely because* he remains loyal to the ordinary understanding of happiness he gets into these conceptual difficulties. Our ordinary concept of happiness is exposed to these difficulties. I mean, on the one hand, it makes sense to say—we are compelled to say—that the core of happiness is virtuous activity. We cannot envy, as sensible men, an absolutely abominable, vicious fellow who has external fortune. That goes without saying. But if we see now this virtuous man, perhaps because of his very virtue—think of Glaucon's argument—exposed to all kinds of misery, including torture and what have you: well, what shall we say in that case? Do we cease to respect him deeply for this reason, because he has come into this misfortune? No. But on the other hand, we cannot say that he is as happy as he was before. And I think Aristotle has provided for this state of affairs by his general remarks about the lack of exactness in this study. There is no simple formula possible. Happiness equal to doing of noble deeds or [the] exercise of virtue: that is true; but, but, but. Nothing we can do changes this, because they are not brought in due to a mistake in Aristotle's reasoning but this is the character of human life. And where is it written that human life should be susceptible of being formulated in a simple formula? That is the hope of some of our more naïve fellow human beings, but it has not any ground in facts.

I think we have to leave it here. We will, if possible, finish the reading of the first book next time. I remember there were two of you who promised (although not on the word of the gentleman) that they would hand in their papers today. Oh, here's one. And you have the other? You have it also? Very good. Fine.

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[1] Changed from "to do."

Session 8: March 6, 1968[i]

Leo Strauss: First I would say a few words about the two papers I received last time. First, Mr. Allen, a few points: "Closely related to this is the relationship of virtue and *vice*," [which you call] "nonvirtue," with a question mark. Mr. Allen, why did you hesitate to speak of vice and call it only "nonvirtue"?

Student: . . . I think that . . . is that that seems to be only two things: positive virtue and two vices, hence virtue and one vice . . . in that sense . . .

LS: But still there would be vice, because nonvirtue—for example, a stone also has nonvirtue. That wouldn't—you should not hesitate. Yes, you said rightly that "being just depends not on doing just acts, but on doing just acts as the just man would do them," but you did not explain what this means. What does it mean?

Same Student: What it means is that being just, as a state of character, implies that one has acquired the manner of being just. Not that one simply does a just act in a particular situation, or that a man who accidentally does a just act is not necessarily a just man, which is like the analogy he uses with the grammarian: to accidentally do something grammatically properly does not make one a grammarian, but to do it in the manner that a grammarian would do it—

LS: But now how is this in the case of the just man? In other words, someone who speaks correct English is not necessarily a good grammarian, or for that matter any grammarian. But how does it apply in the case of the just man?

Same Student: Well, it applies in the case of the just man because it further substantiates the argument that when you become just through habituation, which is to say you acquire a manner of being just rather than simply by doing an occasional just act here and there.

LS: Though even if a man does always just acts—

Same Student: Well, even if he does always just acts, and if he always does just acts without knowing that he's doing just acts, or if in all cases it was always accidental, that does not make him a just man.

LS: Yes, but more simply, if he does the just acts for the sake of their justice, then he is a just man. But if he does it out of fear of punishment, he is not a just man. Good. All right. And there are certain vaguenesses also, which you will see on page 5. Will you pass on this to Mr. Allen?

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[i] Strauss begins by discussing writing assignments on book 1 of the text. These remarks have been omitted.

Mr. Forster, [your] paper, also a few points. "A somewhat paradoxical situation results: the legislator exists for the sake of the good, but the good exists for the sake of the legislator." Can you explain that?

Student: Well, I had a hunch you'd pick me up on that. [Laughter]

LS: Well, that is not a very polite expression. No, no no. I did not mean it as a reprimand. I only try to check on my knowledge of English.

Same Student: I tried to clarify that a little further on when I stated that the legislative function as it appears in that last chapter—well, as it appears throughout the work that I read so far—is of a largely mechanical nature, so that the function of the legislator is to legislate. That is his . . . He keeps in mind the just object or the object of justice. Nonetheless, his immediate attention is to the business of legislating, and he receives his guidance from the teachings or instructions of political science, which in turn is informed by philosophers. But the point is that his life is the legislative life, and to that end, you might say the good serves as a mean, so that in a sense his legislative life is a function of, you might say, the good. The good exists for the sake of his legislating, which is not to deny however that he keeps in mind the good as, you might say, a final end. I didn't make that clear.

LS: No, you did not. I mean, I would say that's wrong, what you said. There is one more point—no, that's all. And now let us turn to where we left off. Aristotle is discussing here in the chapter we are now reading the saying of Solon: that no one can be praised happy before his end, before his death. And this is a consequence of the fact that the relation between happiness and excellent human activity is not clear. The core of happiness is excellent human activity, but happiness requires in addition something else, what Aristotle calls equipment. Or to take another case which is not immediately related, equipment are things which are required for doing excellent things; for example, you must be in a reasonable state of health of body and mind to do excellent actions. But you do not have to be very handsome in order to do that. Now why should extreme ugliness prevent a man from becoming happy? That is not so clear. That is, non-ugliness doesn't seem to be a necessary condition, a necessary instrument for acting nobly, and yet it is so according to Aristotle's assertion.

So there is an excess of happiness beyond nobility of actions. Another illustration, and a more simple illustration, is the fate of Priam or of Job, assumedly a man of excellent character who suffers the greatest miseries which a human being can suffer. Is he still happy in this miserable state? The mere fact that we call him miserable seems to show that he cannot be happy. But Aristotle's way out is [that] the core of happiness is nobility of action, and he would presumably say that this man of extreme ugliness and repulsiveness—the way in which he bears that and does not become resentful and is not molded, as it were, in his whole being by this misfortune: that is a matter in which his nobility of character can show.

So that it remains: the core of happiness is nobility of action. Yes, but if one is dissatisfied with it, Aristotle would probably say: Well, give me a better formula. The Stoics, for example, had this formula: These other things don't count. They are not even good things, they are only preferable, as they called them, but they are not to be called good in any strict sense. This led to the famous Stoic paradoxes, whereas Aristotle's view is precisely not paradoxical but sticks to what we all would ordinarily admit, and that is not unimportant if we want to understand human things and human affairs.

Now I think we should continue at 1100a14: "What then does prevent us from holding happy the man who acts according." Should I find it for you? 1100a.

Reader:
What then prevents us from pronouncing that man happy who realizes complete goodness in action, and is adequately furnished with external goods, not for any casual period but throughout a complete lifetime in the same manner? Or should we add, that he must also be destined to go on living in the same manner,[ii] and to die accordingly, because the future is hidden from us, and we conceive happiness as an end, something utterly and absolutely final and complete?

LS: In other words, if you take him only as he is now and do not consider his future fate, and eventually his end, in the sense of his death and what happens in between, you take too narrow a view of happiness. Yes?

Reader:
If this is so, we shall pronounce those of the living who possess and are destined to go on possessing the good things we have specified to be supremely blessed, though on the human scale of bliss.

So much for a discussion of these things.[iii]

LS: Yes. So that's clear. We can call living men, men while they're still alive, happy or blessed, but with the qualification, "blessed as human beings can be blessed," with this big question mark: what will happen to them in the future? Which we do not yet know. Yes?

Reader:
That the happiness of the dead is not influenced at all by the fortunes of their descendants and their friends in general seems too heartless a doctrine, and contrary to accepted beliefs. (1101a14-24)

[ii] In Rackham's translation: "May we not then confidently pronounce that man happy who realizes complete goodness in action, and is adequately furnished with external goods? Or should we add, that he must also be destined to go on living not for any casual period but throughout a complete lifetime in the same manner"

[iii] In Rackham's translation: "a discussion of this question."

LS: "To the opinions," he says. To the opinions. The fate of the descendants and of the friends must be considered important in judging the happiness of a man, even after the man is already dead. The alternative would be "heartless," as he translates."Loveless" would perhaps be a better translation. And in addition it runs counter to the opinions. The opinions and the two reasons go together. The accepted opinions are inspired by the opposite of lovelessness. Men's desire for love, for being loved, for attachment, forms the opinions which are generally accepted, and that is the rationale of them. You want to say something?

Student: Yes, I just wanted to ask whether there is a textual reason for saying that that sentence refers only to men who are already dead? It seems that it could refer to a man who is alive, too, if you're saying that about—

LS: Yes, that goes without saying. He had spoken before of Priam: these things happened to his children during his lifetime. There is no explicit reference here. But when he says the fates of the descendants, that refers to not only the children and grandchildren but also beyond, say, great-grandchildren. Many people don't see their own great-grandchildren, and still there's the next generation. I think he means that.

Reader:
But the accidents of life are many and diverse, and vary in the degree in which they affect us. To distinguish between them in detail would clearly be a long and indeed endless undertaking, and a general treatment in outline may perhaps be enough. Even our own misfortunes, then, though in some cases they exercise considerable weight and influence upon the course of our lives, in other cases seem comparatively unimportant; and the same is true of the misfortunes of our friends of all degrees. Also it makes a great difference whether those who are connected with any occurrences are alive or dead, much more so than it does in a tragedy whether the crimes and horrors are supposed to have taken place beforehand or are enacted on the stage. We ought therefore to take this difference also into account, and still more perhaps the doubt that exists whether the dead really participate in good or evil at all. For the above considerations seem to show that even if any good or evil does penetrate to them, the effect is only small and trifling, either intrinsically or in relation to them, or if not trifling, at all events not of such magnitude and kind as to make the unhappy happy or to rob the happy of their blessedness.

It does then appear that the dead are influenced in some measure by the good fortune of their friends, and likewise by their misfortunes, but that the effect is not of such a kind or degree as to render the happy unhappy or *vice versa*. (1101a24-b9)

LS: Yes. That is a quite complicated statement. Now in two cases, in a35 and in b6, Aristotle doesn't use the ordinary word for the dead but a somewhat more solemn word, *kekmēkotes*, derived from the Greek word *kamnō*, which means to be tired, to be ill; and then also in the perfect, as here, to have become tired; and then finally the dead. I would translate it by "[the] departed," in order to indicate the reverential element which this word here has.

So Aristotle compares here the terrible things which happen to a man after death, i.e., which happen to his descendants and friends, and the terrible things which happen during one's lifetime to the difference between the terrible things which are merely told in the prologue of a drama, a tragedy, and the things which happen on the stage. Now of course we are more affected by what we see on the stage than by what, say, a messenger or someone else tells in a prologue. And the dead, the departed, are less affected by the misfortune of their descendants and of their friends than they would have been if they were still alive. What Aristotle implies is [that] they are so far away [that] it is a kind of weak rumor which reaches them and therefore cannot deeply affect them. They are preoccupied with other things, and also it takes a kind of long time until the rumor reaches them. And we know perhaps from our experience [that] if we hear of a friend whom we have not seen for a very long time that he died some years ago, that is slightly different than when we hear he died just now. So this is not simply superstition, what Aristotle gives us here, but these are very human observations. So the main point is this: one's happiness is not seriously influenced by what happens to one's nearest and dearest after one's death. It has a certain influence, but not very great. So whether Aristotle believed that there is such a life after death in which one can become aware of the fate of one's nearest and dearest, that is hard to decide on the basis of this passage. But he only says that's enough for the present purpose. Granting that this is the case, we can disregard it in our discussion of happiness.

Here we are then in a way at the end of the discussion of happiness, with one limitation, and we will see that soon. We can say [that] every normal man of good family who is not repulsively ugly, and of course not moronic, can become happy. That seems to be the net result. There is a certain awkwardness in this result because, as we have seen on an earlier occasion in 1099b18 to 20,[1] the highest good must be available for all those who are not truncated with regard to virtue and must be available to them through some learning, or teaching and assiduity. Clearly a man truncated—quite a few people are not truncated and yet are poor or lack other equipment so that they cannot be perfectly happy.

Now regarding the discussion of this chapter, I might refer to Thomas Aquinas's commentary, which shows here clearly the difference between Thomas and Aristotle. Thomas argues on the basis of the principle accepted by Aristotle that a natural desire cannot be vain, i.e., a natural desire must be fulfilled. And this leads Thomas, given the fact that the natural desire for happiness is not fully fulfilled, not unqualifiedly fulfilled, to the conclusion that our natural desire for happiness points to a bliss in another life.[iv] That is surely not what Aristotle suggests. How would Aristotle argue against Thomas?

Student: He leaves out chance. Thomas does, I mean. Such an argument seems to abstract from chance.

LS: Yes, but a natural desire is a desire which is fulfilled. You mean it is fulfilled according to Aristotle in most cases, but not in all cases?

[iv] Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, §202.

Same Student: It's not fulfilled for someone who fulfils all requirements and yet doesn't achieve happiness . . . fortune.

LS: Ya. And Thomas would of course say there is no chance in this sense but providence, and therefore that will be the difference. That's one way of saving it.

Student: Would Aristotle say that man as a natural being is both . . . and body and that there is a fitting happiness appropriate to man so he can't be appropriately blessed . . . to do with contemplation . . . that there is a fitting and adequate happiness . . .

LS: Yes, he would say that, but what is the principle implied? Aristotle would say no natural desire is in vain, but a desire for what is intrinsically impossible is not natural but proceeds from certain questionable opinions and is not a natural desire.

Same Student: . . . he thinks that to wish for immortality is an impossible or irrational wish. Is it fair to say that the most perfect or blessed life . . . insofar as we participate in that sort of life, we're a god?

LS: Yes, that he seems to say. You want to say something?

Student: Doesn't Aristotle assume that . . .

LS: Ya, but if you put it only this way, that he does in a way. He says blessed *as human beings*. But this might lead to the view that there is another form of bliss.

Same Student: What I mean to say is, wouldn't Aquinas reject . . . could be perfectly happy . . .

LS: Yes sure, he would say that, but he would say nevertheless [that] it makes sense to speak of the felicity of this life, and that's the term which he uses all the time in his commentary on the first book of the *Ethics*. It makes sense and is even necessary. Think of practical questions: the greatest happiness of the greatest number is an expression which makes some sense, doesn't it? I mean, whether it is the soundest political principle is another matter. But it makes some sense. Therefore we must make allowance for a limited and qualified kind of happiness. That's no difficulty. Yes?

Student: Aristotle would merely say: I'm not talking at all about any happiness other than the happiness that can be achieved by man here and now. So I'm not talking about the happiness of the dead.

LS: Ya, but he does. Does he not bring it up?

Same Student: Ah, but only insofar as it is connected with the happiness that they achieved on earth. He's very careful, so it appears, not to go beyond that, and not talking about whether the dead are happy or how the dead are happy as dead men. The dead are

made more happy or less happy, a little bit, not by what happens to them in the afterlife but what happens to their descendants on earth.

LS: Yes. Still, but how is their happiness affected by what happens to their descendants on earth? So the happiness after death *is* being considered. And I think Aristotle could not well avoid that. You said Aristotle is only concerned with the happiness which can be achieved by human action, but Aristotle has shown that this happiness which can be achieved by human action depends on so many things which man cannot himself procure for himself.

Same Student: No question, but yet Thomas would do something entirely different. He would say that the happiness of man after death depends not so much on what he did in life—

LS: Yes, sure.

Same Student: and what his ancestors did, but on what happens to him after he dies. On what happens to *him* after he dies.

LS: Well, to some extent I believe it depends a bit on what he did in his life.

Same Student: Somewhat.

LS: Somewhat, not completely, because divine grace comes in. But still, let us assume that he never repented [of] his evil deeds. Then it is a fair assumption that his life after death will not be too happy.

Same Student: Yet isn't there a difference, or perhaps this isn't significant, between Aristotle's discussion of happiness and not only Thomas's but also Plato's. Plato discusses what happens to a man in the afterlife in terms of what actually happens to him in the afterlife, not in terms of what happens on earth and how he is affected by it. Aristotle doesn't appear to discuss the fate of the soul in the afterlife.

LS: No, no. But still, his discussion implies some thought about it, because if the dead were absolutely dead, then the question couldn't arise. But this view that the dead are absolutely dead is a loveless view with a view to the nearest and dearest, because the thought that someone who has been greatly concerned with you will now be completely indifferent to your fate is hard to bear. It is a hard thought, a harsh thought, a loveless thought. It may be the true thought, but this is not the only consideration in human matters, whether it is true or not. Yes?

Student: I don't understand exactly the argument that Mr. Wedergreen was making about chance. It seems to me that the very fact that a natural desire for happiness can be interrupted by such a thing as chance implies the conclusion that Aristotle—I mean, that Aquinas makes. It's not that Aquinas didn't take into consideration chance, it doesn't seem to me, but rather that he rejects the possibility that natural desires could be, you

know, incomplete because of chance. I don't understand why chance is a suitable argument against Aquinas.

LS: Yes, if it is true what Aristotle says, that properly equipped and properly bred men will be happy, and we find cases in which people who are not properly equipped and not properly bred—or rather the other way around, who are properly bred but not happy—the simplest answer would be [that] these are the exceptions. Now just as people who are born with four fingers instead of five on one hand, that is against the rule, and that is also called by Aristotle chance. And in this way one could say that people like Priam or Job, these are rare cases or chance cases against the rule. This was I think what you meant.

Same Student: Yes, but how does that argue against Aquinas, who says that—what I assumed that he says—is that those instances themselves demonstrate the necessity of an afterlife in which a happiness—

LS: Sure, that is true, and Aristotle's argument would have to be, in the last analysis, that such an afterlife is impossible because of the dependence of memory, for example, on a body. I mean, Aristotle does not have the Thomistic view that the soul is a substance independent of the body, which only for certain purposes, in certain connections, needs the body, say, for sense perception. Yes?

Mr. Shulsky: Couldn't you make a stronger argument on the side of Thomas by saying that it is not only in the accidental case that a good man is made unhappy—and that we can dismiss by saying it's a chance occurrence, which doesn't render the desire vain—but rather saying that [that] possibility always somehow disturbs the happiness of the happy man, and hence it's not that in the accidental case [that] the good man is unhappy, but the good man is always less than happy because he is always worried that perhaps, you know, this chance will happen.

LS: But then would he be a good man if he were always worried, if he would pay more attention to the things not dependent on his will, on his choice, and put such a great store by the things which do not depend on his will? If someone worries too much, is this not, as it would be called today, a kind of mental disturbance in itself? And Aristotle would say it is a vice because Aristotle would say you can get rid of that if you apply your mind properly.

Mr. Shulsky: But even so, Aristotle says that we have to consider that this man is going to be happy, is going to be favored by chance or at least not completely disfavored by chance for the rest of his life before we can call him happy. And hence there's the problem that we can never know that, so that, in other words, any attempt to call someone happy is always sort of somewhat uncertain because we never know that the next minute he is not going to become quite—

LS: Yes, but he would probably say, as some Englishman said, that the world is quite crazy but not quite as crazy as that. In other words, the fate of Priam is not the normal fate of an excellent human being.

Mr. Shulsky: Yes, but even if it's only the possible fate of an excellent human being—

LS: Yes, but that means unreasonable worrying, and that is a defect of character. I mean, [it is] intelligible, and we must have compassion with people who do that, but it is still a moral defect, he would say, I'm afraid.

Mr. Shulsky: But even aside from the worrier, there's the person like Aristotle who says: well, what does it mean, or when are we allowed to call someone happy? And even from the point of view of an observer, Aristotle seems to hedge and never call himself happy.

LS: Well, but he comes down at the end with the assertion—surely, no one would call Priam in this situation in *this* situation a happy man. There would be some absurdity in that. But on the other hand, no one would call him a despicable or contemptible wretch, whereas one would do that of someone who is, say, justly condemned to death, if I may use an example no longer fit, but as people, say, in the seventeenth, eighteenth century used these methods.

Another Student: In a certain sense, though, the phenomenon of nonhappy people is more widespread in the sense, I would assume, in the argument that people—that some good, or some men have a natural inclination for contemplation or towards that type of happiness which comes from contemplation, and yet no one can ever fully achieve that type of happiness.

LS: Yes, sure.

Same Student: I mean, Aquinas's argument comes on that level, not on the level of whether there's an accident that physical attribute—

LS: Yes, but Aristotle grants that. Aristotle grants that. I read to you, I think last time, a passage from the *Metaphysics* where Aristotle compares us to bats, bats and their relation to the light: that is our relation to the truth. And yet Aristotle would say: what else can you reasonably expect? You cannot define happiness by our desires or wishes; you can only define happiness with a view to what is humanly possible.

Same Student: In this sense, then, though, isn't Aristotle himself a—I don't know what the correct word is, but at least he's different than Plato, I would assume. Is not in some way the Platonic conception of the good life or the happy man connected with the desire for a good which is in a certain sense incommensurable with the average man or perhaps all men—

LS: Yes, but that is very hard, you see, because Plato did not write a treatise as Aristotle did, and one would have to go into the whole dialogue, and that is always a long question. On the face of it, Plato seems to teach the immortality of the individual soul, especially in the *Phaedo*. That is of course true. But what that means can only be established by a

close study of the dialogue. This gentleman, the president of the student's union. I forget your name.

Another Student: My question was partly answered by your last remark. But it seemed that when you were arguing with Mr. . . . behind me, you shifted the ground of the argument to the afterlife rather than answering the question as to natural . . . But I think you answered that . . .

LS: He is compelled to take this up because there is a certain complication regarding happiness. This complication caused Solon to say no one is to be praised happy before his death. And then the issue of death and after-death comes in in this manner. Aristotle doesn't wish to shirk that.

Same Student: Is the question why is it good that the desires, whether they are natural or not, cannot be fulfilled, is that part of ethics? Or ethics?

LS: Yes, sure. We must know the human good. Is this not true? What is good for man as man. And then of course we have also to know negatively such notions of the human good as are not reasonable, because otherwise they might obfuscate both our thoughts and our actions.

Same Student: Then strictly speaking that would be a question for the science of ethics.

LS: Well, it cannot be the theme. That is a somewhat complicated relation. I will now state it in an assertoric or dogmatic manner: we must make a[2] [distinction] between the *de jure* and *de facto* situation. You know this distinction from international law; I do not have to explain that. Now *de jure*: ethics is completely independent of physics or metaphysics. Man has certain natural inclinations which culminate in the desire for happiness, and the naturalness of the inclinations means in the case of man that man is aware of these objectives. And he has also an awareness of the order of rank between them, so that to have a well-shaped soul is more important than to have a well-shaped body. That is also known to all people of any delicacy. So we know the ends of human life. Within these limits then we find the proper means to these ends, and there is an indefinite variety there: what you should do in Alaska or farther north in order to be happy, or on the equator, will be greatly different. Ya? And that applies not only regarding air conditioning and such things [LS chuckles], but it has also to do with some other things.

Now, so we don't need any further knowledge, except that knowledge supplied by our common sense, as we say. Yet there are at all times false opinions regarding the good human life. At all times. Think today of communism as an example. And these false opinions make impossible commonsensical, sound, practically wise action. And therefore it is necessary for the teacher of ethics or politics to engage in a *theoretical* criticism of those *theoretical* opinions that endanger sound practice. So *de facto*, you can therefore say, ethics is in need of a theoretical defense of its basis. And this is implied by Aristotle,

but it is not made the theme. Therefore there is very little discussion of theoretical false opinions endangering practice.

Student: In a certain sense it would be impossible to write the *Ethics*, or at least the way Aristotle writes the *Ethics*, without having previously answered the metaphysical—

LS: Yes, that one can say. It is the same Aristotle who writes the *Physics* and the *Ethics*, not only [that] it so happens, but you see the same style of thinking there, that's true. And the Aristotelian view that the true being *par excellence* is this here dog and not atoms, nor the four elements, nor the Platonic ideas, this is the same spirit which animates his *Ethics*, you know, this incarnation of common sense.

Same Student: To evaluate common opinion, you have to have a metaphysical understanding of—

LS: Ya, but that is not so simple. We use the word "metaphysical" with great ease, and it is not an Aristotelian term. I mean, a certain book of Aristotle was called by its editors the *Metaphysics*, and only because it took the place in their arrangement after the *Physics*, which is a literal translation of *meta ta physica*. And that is the origin of our word. For Aristotle there is a thing he calls the first philosophy. That is what he gives in his book called *Metaphysics*. But it is wiser to take the independence of the *Ethics* seriously than to question it. We will come across passages where we see the limitations of this independence, but it is more important, at least for the understanding of the *Ethics* as a whole, to see that this book is meant to be independent of any theoretical science. Dependence on the theoretical science becomes necessary in the first place because there are so many false theories around which obfuscate our natural understanding of the objects of human action.

Student: Precisely that natural understanding is what—somehow that only becomes significant, to speak of a natural understanding, doesn't it, if you engaged in first philosophy prior to it.

LS: Not quite. Just as dogs and cats, horses, and birds have certain desires peculiar to them, and without being taught by anyone, natural[ly], why should not man also have some objectives peculiar to his nature, fitting his nature, just as the objects of the desire of the horse are in agreement with his nature? Why should this not be so? Of course there is this complication, that man has an awareness of them *as* objectives, which the dogs, cats, and so on do not have. Yes, that is certainly true. This means that there is an essential difference between man and nonman, a difference which Aristotle brings out by saying [that] man is the animal that possesses discourse or reason. But in spite of this enormous difference, this generality—nature, end, specific end, specific nature directed at a specific end—is common to man and to all other living beings.

There was someone else? Yes. Oh, quite a few. Yes?

Student: The section on the causes of happiness. He lays out five causes—leaving aside, for a moment, chance—

LS: The section on what?

Same Student: On the causes of happiness. He lays out five causes: leaving aside chance and divine cause leaves learning, habituation, and some kind of training. Now is that some kind of training, is that the same thing as skill?

LS: Yes, for example, skill of riding. Ya? Swimming.

Same Student: It seems like, for instance, in the case of courage that courage could not depend on, say, how well a man could use a sword.

LS: No, no, therefore he speaks of habituation in that case and not of practice. *Askesis* in Greek. There is a long discussion of how virtue is acquired. That is not immediately pertinent to what we are discussing now. Yes?

Student: It seems odd for Aristotle to say that it would be unnatural for Priam and Job to desire happiness. In a way, to cease to desire to be happy, aren't they ceasing to be men?

LS: Pardon?

Same Student: Did you not claim that Aristotle's reply to Aquinas's objection would be that it is unnatural to desire that which is intrinsically impossible?

LS: Well, I did not hear you clearly. What I said was this: it is not natural to desire the impossible.

Same Student: So therefore it is not natural for people who are repulsively ugly or not of good breeding to desire to be happy.

LS: They could still desire to be happy. But the question is—well, the final solution to the difficulty comes eventually at the end: the most solid happiness and the true happiness is that of contemplative life. And there these differences are not so important. They cease to be important on that highest level. But the first sentence of the *Metaphysics*, that all men desire by nature to know,[v] that is a starting point for Aristotle's understanding of happiness. Well, eventual understanding, not the one with which he starts in the *Ethics*. And from this it follows that men desire by nature above all the highest kind of knowledge, because if you desire knowledge then you desire by implication that knowledge which is the most comprehensive and most fundamental of all knowledge: philosophy. That doesn't mean that all human beings in fact desire that knowledge, because there are so many obstructions and impediments to it that this can never fully develop in most cases, and yet it is the highest human objective. Yes?

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[v] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 980a21.

Same Student: But then what Aquinas would say about this is that there are many men who do not have the equipment to achieve this—

LS: Sure. Sure.

Same Student: He would say, I suppose, that since this desire is natural, as Aristotle . . . at this point the natural desires could not be in vain, that this points to the satisfaction of the desire in some life other than this life.

LS: Yes. That is true, and that is in a way at first glance a superior solution. But you get an equivalent of the difficulty in another form, namely, if then happiness [comes] after life—heaven or hell[3]—now the majority of men will not deserve heaven. You have the same difficulty then on another ground here, too. So in other words, a solution according to which all men can be happy in the sense that they have a very high chance of becoming happy is too sanguine according to the premodern view. And you know the view which prevailed in the last centuries (or the last century, we should perhaps say) is: since this is so, we must redefine happiness so that it can be achieved by political, communal action for everybody, and preferably even without the individual doing much about it, due to political action only. This also, I believe, is not free from difficulties.

But at any rate, Aristotle's view: I mentioned, I believe, on an earlier occasion, Aristotle makes certain tacit assumptions, such as the scarcity of natural resources which inevitably leads to the consequence that the human beings of independent means—I mean, not necessarily very wealthy—will be always a minority, or as the Bible puts it: the poor will always be with you.[vi] And they, according to Aristotle, are disqualified. But given his assumption, he acts reasonably. Now we have learned that this assumption is wrong, that this economy of scarcity can be replaced by an economy of plenty. The difficulty is only that this solution leads to difficulties of its own. And I believe we cannot diagnose properly these difficulties besetting us today if we do not bust the case wide open and consider alternative views of human happiness, like the view of Aristotle and its implications. In addition, our modern views—I mean, produced by people like Bacon and Descartes for the first time in the seventeenth century—are consciously directed against Aristotle and at least in this sense based on Aristotle, because if you oppose something and your thought comes into being through the opposition to another position, your position is in an important sense based on that. I would love to continue that, but we have to read a bit more. Or is it very urgent?

Student: You were, I thought, unfair to Aquinas in the sense that for Aquinas it's at least naturally possible for all men to achieve the end, whereas for Aristotle it is a natural impossibility for all men to achieve contemplation of the requirement's naturally impossible.

LS: Yes. But then what does this mean in practical terms given the fact, which for Thomas *is* a fact, of original sin?

[vi] Matthew 26:11.

Student: But there is another fact, of the incarnation.

LS: But is there not also a distinction between the elected and the damned? Is there not some kind of predestination, perhaps?

Student: Yeah, but not naturally.

LS: Surely not naturally, because the whole question is now on a supernatural basis. Therefore you dispose of all natural difficulties by transcending the natural towards the supernatural. But you get difficulties of their own there. That is all I [will] say.

Now we must now turn to the next chapter which concludes the discussion on happiness. The situation is this: virtuous activity is the core of happiness. Happiness is in principle available through human causation. That is what we want. Then we are the producers of our own bliss, and that is given to us. Wonderful. "But," Aristotle says. Let us read the beginning of the next chapter.

Reader: At "these questions being settled"?

LS: Yes.

Reader:
These questions being settled, let us consider whether happiness is one of the things we praise or rather one of those that we honour; for it is, at all events, clear that it is not a mere potentiality.

LS: Ya, or "ability" or so. Well, what we have to know about this distinction is only this: "abilities," or "potentialities," are things which can be used well or ill and therefore do not belong to the praiseworthy things, because what can be misused is as such not praiseworthy. I would say the other things, the interesting things, are divided into things deserving praise and things deserving reverence. I believe that is better than to translate it by "honorable," because the praiseworthy and the honorable are the same. Deserving reverence, deserving to be revered. Now?

Reader:
Now it is seen that a thing which we praise is always praised because it has a certain quality and stands in a certain relation to something. For we praise just men and brave men, in fact good men and virtue generally, because of their actions and works;[vii] and we praise the strong, the swift of foot,[viii] and the like on account of their possessing certain natural qualities, and standing in a certain relation to something good and excellent. (1101b10-18)

LS: So "praise" refers to a man's having a certain quality. *Poion tis*: a certain quality. A good runner, a just man: they're all qualities. And we have in mind that this is

[vii] In Rackham's translation: "actions and the results they produce."
[viii] In Rackham's translation: "and we praise the men who are strong of body, swift of foot."

praiseworthy because it is productive of certain actions or works: swift-running, just actions, or whatever you have. So the implication already here is that the praiseworthy is lower than the things to be revered, because it has this relativity: not in the sense in which the term is now used in relativism, but it is relative to actions. It does not have this intrinsic superiority which the other objects have. Yes?

Reader:
The point is also illustrated by our feeling about praises addressed to the gods: it is evidently ridiculous[ix] that the gods should be referred to our standards, and this is what praising them amounts to, since praise, as we said, involves a reference of its object as to something else.

LS: Let us stop here. Praise is relative, I said, namely, to human actions. And Aristotle goes here so far [as] to say [that] if we praise the gods—and that does not correspond to our usage and understanding at all—if we praise the gods, we praise them with a view to us, to the benefit they give to us or the misfortunes they keep from us, and so on. And therefore one cannot praise the gods, strictly speaking, in this sense. Yes?

Reader:
But if praise belongs to what is relative, it is clear that the best things merit not praise but something greater and better: as indeed is generally recognized, since we speak of the gods as blessed and happy, and also 'blessed' is the term that we apply to the most godlike men; and similarly with good things—no one praises happiness as one praises justice, but we call it 'a blessing,' deeming it something higher and more divine than things we praise. (1101b218-27)

LS: There must then be something higher than praise or the praiseworthy, and these things are according to the general notions the gods, but also, closer to our subject, happiness in contradistinction to virtue or virtuous action. Happiness belongs to the same sphere to which the gods belong, and virtuous action does not. That is quite surprising, after we have heard hitherto that virtue is the core of happiness. There is something in happiness which transcends virtue. That we have seen before. And Aristotle says that which transcends virtue is in a way—"in a way" is my addition—is in a way higher than what we can possibly do. We can also say [that] beings [that are] revered are not revered for being of such and such a quality. Honor *thy* father and *thy* mother: it is not said, "Honor thy father and thy mother if they are good," the meaning being that there is something in parenthood which deserves reverence independently of goodness and badness. Now the same is true, of course, of the gods: the gods cannot be measured by the standards of human virtue, but as *beings*, not because of their qualities are they to be revered.

Come to think of it, what Aristotle says is not so alien to what we mean by happiness, the word we translate (the Greek word *eudaimonia*) by "happiness." And this is of course a word which we use very frequently and therefore it has lost much of the force of the Greek word *eudaimonia*, "having a good demon." But we use other words from time to

[ix] In Rackham's translation: "it strikes us as absurd."

time, more rarely, perhaps: blessed, blessings. For example, to have many children and good children is a part of happiness, as Aristotle said. We call it also sometimes a blessing, and then a very different connotation comes in and then it seems to be [that] a blessing is something higher than what we can do for ourselves. This is a phenomenon to which Aristotle refers here. Yes?

Reader:
Indeed it seems that Eudoxus took a good line in advocating the claims of pleasure to the prize of highest excellence when he held that the fact that pleasure, though a good, is not praised, is an indication that it is superior to the things we praise, as God and the Good are, because they are the standards to which everything else is referred.

For praise belongs to virtue,[x] since it is this that makes men capable of accomplishing noble deeds—

LS: Let us stop here for a moment. Now he refers to Eudoxus, a famous mathematician of whom he speaks later on. Eudoxus was a hedonist, an adherent of the view that the good is identical with the pleasant. Aristotle disagrees with Eudoxus, as appears later. But here he uses Eudoxus's view only for illustrating what he means, not[4] [because] he subscribes to Eudoxus altogether. The distinction between the praiseworthy and the things deserving reverence can even be used for making a case in favor of pleasure, because pleasure has this peculiar character: that you cannot strictly speaking produce it. Now what Aristotle means means by that becomes clear much later on. Can you quickly look up 1174b, toward the end?

Reader:
But the pleasure perfects the activity, not as the fixed disposition does, by being already present in the agent, but as a supervening perfection, like the bloom of health in the young and vigorous. (1174b31-34)

LS: A "supervening perfection" is something which is like the bloom. This bloom is not the same as health, and yet it is something very wonderful. That is in a way Aristotle's last word on pleasure, and therefore in this sense one can say it is divine, if you mean so far as man cannot produce it, at least [not] at the higher forms of pleasure. Then there comes a brief digression, which we read.

Reader:
While encomia are for deeds accomplished, whether of the body or of the soul.[xi] However, to develop this subject is perhaps rather the business of those who have made a study of encomia. (1101b17-35)

LS: What he means here is simply that there are two kinds of speeches or writings: praises, *epainoi*—well, we know them especially in the form of eulogies—and another are encomia. The eulogies, the praises, consist of enumeration of[5] [a man's] virtues, and

[x] In Rackham's translation: "goodness."
[xi] In Rackham's translation: "whether bodily feats or achievements of the mind."

the encomia consist in the description of his deeds. This was a distinction which Aristotle obviously accepted.—[xii]

So the supremacy of happiness, in contradistinction to virtue and virtuous activity, is maintained by Aristotle. Man owes the best not to himself, although what he does is the indispensable prerequisite of his receiving the best; therefore his virtue is the indispensable condition for happiness. Now from this view, that man owes the best not to himself, it follows that the right posture toward the best, and therefore toward life in general, is gratitude, not self-reliance, and still less a posture of demanding.

Happiness is in a way (as it was said before, although there criticized by Aristotle) god-sent or god-given. The phrases occurred [in] 1099b9 to 10. That is the end of the discussion of happiness. And if this is not elegant as the mathematicians speak of elegant proofs, Aristotle had warned us in advance that we cannot expect this kind of elegance when we speak of human things, and especially of human happiness, which is a frail thing and therefore we cannot speak about it without some hemming and hawing. And this is not Aristotle's fault: it is the fault, if it can be said to be the fault, of the things themselves. And to be loyal to the things themselves, this was perhaps the ambition of Aristotle more than of anybody else.

So this is then the end of the discussion of happiness and in a way the end of book 1, because the chapter which follows is already the transition to book 2, or even to the whole rest of the work. Now this is a good moment perhaps to give a brief survey of the plan of book 1 up to this point, and which may be helpful also for reminding you of what we may have forgotten.

Now there is a first section going up to 1095a13, where Aristotle speaks of the many ends of various kinds and the corresponding manyness of arts, leading up to the suggestion that there is a highest art, the political art. And therefore there is presumably also a highest end, the object of that highest art. And Aristotle concludes his discussion by a remark on the exactness to be expected in this investigation.

The second section, up to 1095b13: the highest good, the highest end, is called by all men with the same name, namely, happiness. Therefore there is some agreement among all men that there is one and only one highest end, because it is no accident [that] they [all] use[6] the same name for it. In this brief section he discusses also what kind of principle of the investigation we can reasonably expect. He does not speak there of exactness.

The third section, leading up to 1097a14, deals with the various false opinions about happiness: (a) popular opinions, (b) opinions of wise men. In this case, only the opinions of a single wise man, namely, Plato.

The fourth section (1097a15 to b21): Aristotle gives here some general determination of what happiness is.

[xii] The tape was changed at this point.

In the next section, the fifth section (1097b22 to 1098b8), he gives his definition of happiness—his *logos* on happiness, as he calls it. And this is concluded again by a reflection on both exactness and on the kind of principles with which we may have to be concerned.

Then in the sixth part (1098b9 to 1099b9), Aristotle confronts his *logos*, his definition, with what is generally said about happiness. And here the pleasant things come to the fore for the first time, and therewith the difficulties caused by the misfortunes of the good man.

Seven (1099b10 to 1101b9): Can any man be called happy while he is still alive? The solution of the difficulties: virtuous activity is the core of happiness. And therefore Priam can never have become a wretch.

And then a kind of compensation for the seventh part in the eighth (1101b10 to 1102a4): happiness belongs to a higher sphere than virtue and virtuous activity. And I think here you see in this way the difficulties with which we are confronted. But I think the difficulties are not just due to Aristotle's special prejudices or preoccupations or what [have you], but they lie in the subject matter. And they would come out in very different forms on non-Aristotelian premises, but come out they would.

Now we should by all means read the next chapter, the transition to the sequel. And I would like to say only one word about my present plan of how we shall proceed. I think we should read book 2 and the first half of book 3, because this is a general discussion of virtue. After all, we have to know what virtue is after we have heard so many good things about her. And then, [so] that we get a somewhat more exact or concrete notion of what Aristotle understands by virtue, we should read the section on the first virtue that he discusses, namely, courage, and on the two virtues which Aristotle regards as particularly praiseworthy and high: one is called magnanimity, and the other is called justice. And so we have—magnanimity is discussed in book 4, and the whole of book 5 is devoted to justice. So that is the first half of the book; and we will cross the bridge (what we will do afterward) when we have come to it. We should read if possible also book 6 and sections of book 10. That is generally my plan. Now shall we then at least begin with the next chapter?

Reader:
But inasmuch as happiness is a certain activity of the soul in conformity with perfect virtue, it is necessary to examine virtue. For this will probably assist us in our investigation of happiness.[xiii] (1102a5-7)

LS: So Aristotle returns here then to the assertion that preponderates in his presentation. The core of happiness is virtue, and therefore we must naturally investigate virtue above

[xiii] In Rackham's translation: "But inasmuch as happiness is a certain activity of soul in conformity with perfect goodness, it is necessary to examine the nature of goodness. For this will probably assist us in our investigation of the nature of happiness."

everything else, yet "for the sake of a better understanding of happiness": to this extent the supremacy or primacy of happiness is preserved here. Do you want to say something?

Student: I wanted to know if there was possibly a political motive in that it's just to sort of assuage the sentiments of the gentlemen who are reading that virtuous activity—there is inevitably an ambiguity between the core of happiness being virtuous activity, while at the same time happiness in a kind of way is superior to virtuous activity in the sense that it subsumes virtuous activity so that virtue is in a way kind of almost shunted into the background.

LS: Not quite. I mean, I believe that has to do with the substantive difficulties, and we do not have to trace these difficulties to the defects of the hearers. It has to do with the things you have in mind only with a view to the fact that from Aristotle's ultimate point of view, the contemplative life is the happy life, and therefore the questions as they arise on the level of moral virtue are not the final form in which the question of happiness poses itself to man. But it poses itself on the level of moral virtue to most men, and therefore it is very important to understand that, especially politically. Yes?

Student: Is it reasonable to understand the relationship between virtue and true happiness in Aristotle as somewhat of a Platonic relationship between—a Platonic participation? Is it reasonable to understand it that way?

LS: You mean that the merely moral man, the perfect gentleman, participates in the true happiness to some extent? Yes, that is all right.

Same Student: Now can we understand it also this way on a slightly higher plane: that happiness being the supreme good, virtue being good, there is a relationship between the individual good and the—I won't say the idea of the good, but something like that—in much the same way that there is in Plato? In other words, does Aristotle really come back to this type of relationship . . .

LS: No, I mean the ideas in the Platonic sense are out. There is an end of man, a perfection of man, and this perfection is, strictly understood, one and the same for all men, although most men are paradoxically debarred from it. Yet all men must be judged in the light of that. I mean, we need the unity of a standard, although we do not need necessarily a unity of the actual goal for all men. There may be a variety of goals, higher and lower, and it may be necessary because of the complications. And there are all kinds of activities which are needed in society, and some require more qualities of the mind and character than others; and that is so, and therefore to expect the same, to demand the same standard of excellence from all men is unreasonable on this Platonic *and* Aristotelian view. Now let us go on.

Reader:
Also, the true statesman seems to be one who has made a special study of goodness, since his aim is to make the citizens good and law-abiding men. (1102a7-10)

LS: Let us stop here. By the way, "goodness" is a translation of the Greek word *aretē*, which is ordinarily translated by "virtue." And some people translate it now by "excellence" because they want to get rid of the unpleasant meanings of "virtue." As a witty man has said, *virtue* (*virtus* in Latin, derived from *vir*, *man*), meant originally, [and] also for the Greeks, the manliness of men, and has now come to mean the chastity of women only. And that is a very narrow part of virtue, and therefore people are dissatisfied with the term virtue. So I warn you only [so] that you don't think there is another term when he suddenly speaks of *good*. Yes?

Student: . . . the distinction between virtue and . . .

LS: I think, especially if something is very unpopular for unreasonable reasons, then one should translate very literally and not shirk the unpopularity.

Same Student: But I was thinking more in terms of the *Meno* and the question of how . . . being read. And Aristotle's tendency to sympathize with the first answer that Meno . . .

LS: Yes, but he discusses this in the *Politics* somewhere, not here. Perhaps we take it up when we come to Aristotle's discussion of virtue. Surely Aristotle does not say virtue is knowledge or science. Surely not.

Now here, this point: he gives here a further reason why we should study what virtue is. The highest good is the object of the highest art, namely, the political art. But the true political man wishes to make the citizens good and law-abiding. Now what has law-abiding to do with good? A law-abiding man is a man who obeys the laws regardless of whether they are good and bad. That is a difficulty of which no one was more aware than Aristotle. But in the best case, what the law-abiding man really is meant to be is[7] [a man who obeys] good laws. Yes. Now this remark about the desire of the true political man can be illustrated by a passage in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, book 3, chapter 2. It is too long—it is a very charming chapter, and it is only one page long, so you should read it. I can read to you only the concluding remark: "By these considerations on what constitutes the virtue of a good leader, Socrates disregarded everything else and left only this much: that it is the function of the good leader to make happy those whom he leads."[xiv]

Now Aristotle is very much concerned with happiness, as we have seen, but he does not say, interestingly enough, that it is the task of the true political man to make the citizens happy; he only says it is his task to make them good and obedient to the law. So the distinction between happiness and virtue is here effective, although not explicitly stated. Happiness and virtue belong together; they are not simply identical, as we have seen before. Now the next passage, and then we are through.

Reader:

[xiv] Strauss's translation.

As examples, we have the lawgivers of Crete and Sparta, and others, if there have ever been other such.[xv] (1102a10-12)

LS: Yes. Your amusement is not wholly unjustified. That is quite true. Now here I read to you a brief remark from the seventh book of the *Politics*, 1333b5, following:

"Even those Greeks of the present day who are reputed to best govern, and the legislators who gave them their constitutions, do not appear to have framed their government with regard to the best end, or to have given them laws and education with a view to all the virtues, but in a vulgar spirit have fallen back on those which promised to be more useful and profitable. Many modern writers have taken a similar view. They commend the Spartan constitution and praise the legislator for making conquest and war his sole aim."[xvi]

And so on. That implies (and there are other passages) that the Spartans and Cretans, of whom he speaks here so highly, and their legislators were not such wise legislators as they seem to be here. This difficulty was of course observed by the professional commentators, but they have a simple way out: this was written by Aristotle at a different time. That is invariable. And then they figure out when did he write the first book of the *Ethics*, and when did he write the seventh book of the *Politics*. The book of Werner Jaeger on Aristotle is the most well-known document of this approach.[xvii] You should perhaps read, if you have not done so before, Ernest Barker's critique of Werner Jaeger in the introduction to his translation of Aristotle's *Politics*, where he tries to show on what slippery ground these hypotheses are based.[xviii] The reason is very simple: Aristotle begins at the beginning. Now the beginning has to do with this perfect gentleman who had pro-Spartan sympathies, as we know from Thucydides and so. You know? And there is no reason why he should question them. When they are more advanced in their training by Aristotle, he will tell them that Sparta and Crete are very far from being models of political perfection.

I think we have to stop at this point, and next time we will continue that and begin with the second book.

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[1] Deleted "that."
[2] Deleted "difference."
[3] Deleted "and."
[4] Deleted "while."
[5] Deleted "his."
[6] Moved "all."
[7] Deleted "to obey."

[xv] In Rackham's translation: "witness the lawgivers of Crete and Sparta, and the other great legislators of history."
[xvi] Aristotle, *Politics* 1333b5-14. Presumably Strauss's translation.
[xvii] Werner Jaeger, *Aristoteles. Grundlegung einer Geschichte seiner Entwicklung* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1923). See Werner Jaeger, *Aristotle: Fundamentals of the History of His Development*, trans. Richard Robinson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934).
[xviii] Aristotle, *The Politics of Aristotle*, trans. Ernest Barker (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946).

Session 9: March 11, 1968

Leo Strauss: So, well, let us remind[1] [ourselves] for a moment of the title of this course: "The Moral Foundations of Politics." Well, we have been reminded of it, I think, by Aristotle himself, when he says that the true political man, the true statesman, wishes to make the citizens good and subject and obedient to the laws. The emphasis is on *good* because laws, as we know, may be bad, and therefore to make them obedient to bad laws is perhaps not a great feat of statesmanship. Now in order to see the importance of this statement of Aristotle, we have to compare it not only with Machiavelli, as we occasionally did, but I read to you a passage from Locke. Locke says, "quote, however strange it may seem, the lawmaker has nothing to do with moral virtues and vices, unquote."[i] But he is limited in his function to the preservation of property, so that in his way Locke is on the side of Machiavelli, i.e., not on the side of the angels, and Aristotle definitely is. [Laughter] This I think we should not entirely forget.

Now we began to read the last chapter of the first book of the *Ethics* last time. I remind you of the context. The highest good is happiness or bliss. And here there is this complication. The core of happiness is excellent activity of the soul, yet happiness is venerable, an object of reverence, whereas the excellent activity of the soul is only praiseworthy, as we have seen. Happiness, in other words, is a blessing, whereas moral virtue especially, but also all virtue, is not a blessing. Take the simple case: you don't say X has something to be grateful for [if] he is an honest man. That is supposed to be his own work. There are certain complications here, as we know on the basis of theology, but taking the simple commonsense view, it is just something which is expected of everyone and not something for which he is to be grateful. Now after having explained this complicated difficulty regarding happiness, Aristotle makes a natural transition to virtue, because virtue is after all the core of happiness; and we began to read this chapter, and I think we should continue where we left off, and that was 1102a12. If, Mr. Pangle, you would be so good.

Reader:
But if the study of goodness falls within the province of Political Science, it is clear that in investigating goodness we shall be keeping to the plan which we adopted at the outset.[ii] (1102a12-13)

LS: So the study of virtue does not entirely depend on the result of Aristotle's definition of happiness. It is sufficient to start from the two accepted opinions, which are accepted without discussion: first, that the political art is *the* architectonic art; and second, that[2] the work of the true statesman [is] to raise the moral level of a society to its highest pitch.

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[i] This remark is drawn from Locke's notes preserved in the Lovelace papers held at the Bodleian Library at Oxford and is reported in J. W. Gough, *John Locke's Political Philosophy: Eight Studies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950), 190. See Leo Strauss, "On Locke's Doctrine of Natural Right," *The Philosophical Review* 61 (1952): 475-502.

[ii] The student reads from Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934).

Given this, it follows that we must study virtue, even if we would not fully agree with Aristotle's analysis of happiness. Yes?

Student: May I ask a quick question?

LS: Please.

Same Student: Why does Aristotle say "*if*" here now: "if the study of goodness." Is that just a logical *if*, or is there still some doubt? "If the study of goodness falls within the boundaries—"

LS: No. What he means by that, I believe, is this. That he had said right at the beginning of the first chapter, that there is a variety of ends and a variety of arts, but we see a highest art, the political art, and therefore we can assume that there is also a highest end. That was the starting point. He did not start from the premise that there is a highest end, but deduced it at a later point. Now in a way what Aristotle means here, it seems, is this: if the investigation of virtue belongs to the political art, then our investigation is in perfect agreement with what we said right at the beginning. That, I believe, is what he means by that. Now?

Reader:
Now the virtue that we have to consider is clearly human virtue, since the good or happiness which we set out to seek was human good and human happiness. But human virtue means in our view excellence of soul, not excellence of body; also our definition of happiness is an activity of the soul.[iii]

LS: Yes. Now this seems to go without saying, but one should not take too much for granted. So the investigation concerns the virtue of the human soul. First: of the *soul*, not of the body (that would be the matter for the physician or gymnastic trainer), and the virtue of the *human* soul, because conceivably there might be virtues of the souls of animals as well as of a wasp. This would not be the subject of political science, which deals emphatically with the human things, neither subhuman nor superhuman. Yes?

Reader:
Now if this is so, clearly it behoves the statesman to have some acquaintance with things concerning the soul,[iv] just as the physician who is to heal the eye or the other parts of the body must know their anatomy. And more so, inasmuch as politics is more honorable and better than medicine;[v] but physicians of the better class devote much attention to the study of the human body. (1102a13-23)

LS: Yes. Now what does he mean? He makes the comparison first in order to make this clear: that the political man, the statesman, should be a knower of the human soul. That

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[iii] Throughout this passage, the reader substitutes "virtue" for Rackham's "goodness."
[iv] In Rackham's translation: "psychology."
[v] In Rackham's translation: "Indeed a foundation of science is even more requisite for the statesman, inasmuch as politics is a higher and more honourable art than medicine."

might seem to impose an unreasonable burden on him. Think of many famous statesmen who were very far from the theoretical vein in any way.

So he compares the political man with the physician, with the healer of the body, not with the one who builds up the strength of the body, the gymnastic trainer. So therefore, traditionally ethics and even philosophy was called the medicine of the soul, which cures the soul rather than [making][3] it healthy, strong, in the first place. Curing presupposes a previous disease. That is of some importance. It is not necessary that the untrained man is sick, but the physician has a much higher status than the gymnastic trainer. This would be a reason why he would compare him to the physician and not to the gymnastic trainer. You know, there is one reason why he should compare him to the gymnastic trainer, as I stated before, because the first thing is to build up the human soul properly, and not to cure it from the diseases which it has contracted. But the explanation is simple: the physician is a socially respected man and the gymnastic trainer is not. This is the first point. But strangely, Aristotle compares the statesman not with the physician as such, but with the opthalmologist, with a specialist. Why does he do that? Well, perhaps we can say that the statesman deals only with a part of the soul, just as the opthalmologist deals only with a part of the body and nevertheless has to have some knowledge of the whole body. I believe this interpretation is confirmed by the sequel, where Aristotle makes plain that only a very limited knowledge of the soul is required of the statesman. Yes?

Reader:
The student of politics therefore must study the soul.[vi]

LS: You see he changes all the words: "student of politics," "statesman." It is in Greek always the same word, "the political one," literally translated, meaning the man who possesses the political art.[vii] Yes?

Reader:
The statesman therefore must study the soul, though he will do so as an aid to politics, and only so far as is requisite for the objects of inquiry that he has in view: to pursue the subject in further detail would probably be more laborious than is necessary for his purpose.

LS: So in other words, according to Aristotle there is no need for scientific psychology. And you see the contrast with today immediately. But what Aristotle says, however, is in fundamental agreement with what Plato suggests. Do you remember where Plato speaks about this subject, in a rather well-known work? Yes, what does he say there?

Student: After dividing . . . soul into three parts . . .

LS: And why is this not scientific psychology?

[vi] In Rackham's translation: "The student of politics therefore as well as the psychologist must study the nature of the soul."
[vii] Strauss retranslates *ho politikos*.

Student: . . .

LS: Well, Plato speaks explicitly in the *Republic* somewhere[viii] of the fact that there is a longer way regarding the soul which will not be taken in this work, so that it is a provisional study of the soul, sufficient for that purpose. The same is true of the psychology which Aristotle is now going to use, and which would have to be rewritten very radically in order to fit perfectly with the true or scientific teaching regarding the soul. Yes?

Reader:
Now on the subject, some of the teaching current in exoteric discourses[ix] is satisfactory, and may be adopted here: namely that the soul consists of two parts, one irrational and the other capable of reason. (1102a23-28)

LS: Now the word "exoteric," what that means is controversial. It may mean "popular," "not strictly academic," "scientific"; and it may mean "external to the present study." Therefore, say, an ethical study would be exoteric to physics, and physical studies would be exoteric to ethics. It is impossible to decide in every passage what the word exoteric means. One could translate it by "external," understanding this ambiguity: external meaning for people who are not in the inside, and meaning the subject matter is not inside. Yes?

Reader:
(Whether these two parts are really distinct in the sense that the parts of the body or of any other divisible whole are distinct, or whether though distinguishable in thought as two they are inseparable by nature, like the convex and concave sides of the curve, makes no difference to the matter in hand.)[x]

LS: In other words, here we have an example. The precise meaning of parts here, a rational and an irrational part, is of no interest for our present purpose. It is sufficient that they are distinguishable from each other. Yes?

Reader:
Of the irrational part of the soul again one division appears to be common to all living things, and of a vegetative nature: I refer to the part that causes nutrition and growth; for we must assume that a vital faculty of this nature exists in all things that assimilate nourishment, including embryos—the same faculty being present also in the fully-developed organism (this is more reasonable than to assume a different nutritive faculty in the latter). The excellence of this faculty therefore appears to be common to all animate things and not peculiar to man; for it is believed that this faculty or part of the soul is most active during sleep, but when they are asleep you cannot tell a good man

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[viii] *Republic* 435c-d and 504bff.
[ix] In Rackham's translation: "Now on the subject of psychology some of the teaching current in extraneous discourses."
[x] In Rackham's translation: "inseparable in reality, like the convex and concave sides of a curve, is a question of no importance for the matter in hand."

from a bad one (whence the saying that for half their lives there is no difference between the happy and the miserable). This is a reasonable[xi] result for[xii] sleep is a cessation of the soul from the activities on which its goodness or badness depends—except that in some small degree certain of the sense-impressions may reach the soul during sleep, and consequently the dreams of the good are better than those of ordinary men. We need not however pursue this subject further, but may omit from consideration the nutritive part of the soul, since it exhibits no specifically human excellence.

LS: Yes. Now he speaks now of a part of a part, namely, the part of the nonrational soul: the nutritive part, which is irrelevant as far as human virtue and vice is concerned, because that is not specifically human and therefore specifically human goodness and badness cannot be found there. Take, say, a man is not called a good man or a bad man with a view to his digestion, obviously. And we say he has a good digestion or a bad digestion, but we do not say he is a good man or a bad man, and therefore this is of no importance to an ethical study. Yes?

Reader:
But there also appears to be another natural element in the soul, which, though irrational, yet in a manner participates in rational principle. (1102a28-b14)

LS: Now he had spoken of this before, that there was such a part of the soul which is in between the rational and the irrational. There he said this part belongs to the rational part.[xiii] But now he says that it belongs to the irrational one, but participating in reason. Now this is a certain progress of the argument. The first and roughest statement is to the effect that it is rational, because it has something to do with reason. The more refined statement is: it is not rational, but it has a certain nearness to reason, a nearness which will be explained in the sequel. The term which he uses here is quite strange at first glance. He says there is some other nature of the soul which seems to be irrational. Now "nature" has here the meaning rather of a kind of something, a kind or part of something natural. The natural being, the soul, is the natural part of a natural being. Yes?

Reader:
In self-restrained and unrestrained people we approve their principle, or the rational part of their souls, because it urges them in the right way and exhorts them to the best course; but their nature seems also to contain another element beside that of rational principle, which combats and resists that principle. Exactly the same thing may take place in the soul as occurs with the body in a case of paralysis: when the patient wills to move his limbs to the right they swerve to the left; and similarly in unrestrained persons their impulses run counter to their principle. But whereas in the body we see the erratic member, in the case of the soul we do not see it; nevertheless it cannot be doubted that in the soul also there is an element besides that of principle, which opposes and runs counter to principle (though in what sense the two are distinct does not concern us here). But this second element also seems, as we said, to participate in rational principle; at least in the

[xi] In Rackham's translation: "natural."
[xii] In Rackham's translaiton: "of the fact that."
[xiii] See 1098a3-6.

self-restrained man it obeys the behest of principle—and probably[xiv] in the moderate[xv] and brave man it is still more amenable, for all of him is in harmony with reason.[xvi] (1102b14-28)

LS: Yes. Now Aristotle gives here a third proof that such a nature exists, and the proof is the phenomenon of continence and its opposite, incontinence. Continence and incontinence are akin to moderation and its opposite, but they are different; and the difference is, as he alludes to here, that the moderate man has no bad desires, whereas the continent man has bad desires but controls them. And it is better to have no bad desires than[4] [to be] able to control them, that is at least Aristotle's premise.

Now there is something in man that is proven by the fact of continence and incontinence, because the incontinent man is also a man who knows that he should not, say, smoke and yet does. That's incontinence, whereas the man who doesn't even have the urge to smoke is moderate. So the incontinent man has this conflict in himself, and this conflict shows a dualism, of which he speaks. Reason is there, which tells him "Don't," and yet [there is] something else which rebels against reason or which may obey reason. But the fact that it *may* obey reason shows that it has a kinship [with the rational part] which the nutritive part lacks. I mean, digestion does not follow the commands [of reason], or growing does not follow the commands [of reason]; it cannot follow commands. But this part of which he speaks now, it can in principle follow commands, just as the members of the body can obey the command of reason unless they are paralyzed—then of course not, but they can in themselves.[5] This paralysis is merely a privative form of the healthy condition, and the healthy condition is obedience. The possible disobedience shows that it is not in itself rational, that it belongs to the irrational, but in the way that it can obey reason, that it can participate in reason, but it is not in itself rational.We praise even the incontinent man, that is what Aristotle implies, inasmuch as he approves of the rational principle. That is to say, he knows at least that it is[6] [right]. We blame him [in light of the fact] that he is unable in fact to obey it. Yes. Now let us first finish, and then we may have to call you into discussion. Yes?

Reader:
Thus we see that the irrational part is double. The vegetative part[xvii] does not share in rational principle at all; the other, the seat of the appetites and of desire in general, does in a sense participate in principle, as being amenable and obedient to it (in the sense in fact in which we speak of—

LS: "Obedient" is too strong: "*able* to obey it."

Reader:

[xiv] In Rackham's translation: "no doubt."
[xv] In Rackham's translation: "temperate."
[xvi] In Rackham's translation: "all parts of his nature are in harmony with principle."
[xvii] In Rackham's translation: "Thus we see that the irrational part, as well as the soul as a whole, is double. One division of it, the vegetative."

able to obey it (in the sense in fact in which we speak of 'paying heed' to one's father and friends, not in the sense of the term 'rational' in mathematics).

LS: Yes. Here now he draws a conclusion regarding the bipartition of the irrational part of the soul. That part of the irrational which listens—that is to say, which *can* listen to reason—listens to reason in the manner comparable to that in which we are said to listen to our father or our friends, as distinguished from[7] [the] way in which we listen to a teacher of mathematics. "Listening" means here listening to the father as distinguished from the mathematician. [It] means obeying, being considerate, whereas in the case of mathematics, the mathematician . . . proper reason and proper listening is *understanding* and only understanding. Here in this case, [it means] not understanding but obeying, or maybe even disobeying; but the disobeying [would not be] possible unless there were the possibility of obedience. Therefore they belong together. Yes?

Reader:
And that principle can in a manner appeal to the irrational part, is indicated by our practice of admonishing delinquents, and by our employment of rebuke and exhortation generally.

If on the other hand it be more correct to speak of the appetitive part of the soul also as rational, in that case it is the rational part which is divided[xviii] into two, the one division having rational principle in the proper sense and in itself, the other obedient to it as the child to its father. (1102b28-1103a3)

LS: So Aristotle repeats here what he says at the beginning. You see, Aristotle is in no way pedantic. He says, one may also say, that the higher kind of the irrational is the lower kind of the rational, as he had said at the beginning.

You don't understand that? You have a clearly irrational part, the vegetative (say, digestion), and then you have a clearly rational part which has a reason in itself (say, it's a scientific reason). And then there is one in between, which is capable of listening to reason but does not have the reason in itself, and therefore you can say with a view to its capability of listening to reason that it is rational. But you can also say, with a view to the fact that it does not have the reason in itself, it is irrational. Is that not clear?

Student: . . .

LS: Yes. I see. Good. And, yes?

Reader:
Now virtue also is differentiated in correspondence with this division[xix]. Some forms of virtue we call intellectual virtues, others moral virtues: Wisdom or intelligence and Prudence are intellectual, Liberality and moderation[xx] are moral virtues. When describing

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[xviii] In Rackham's translation: "the rational part which, as well as the whole soul, is divided."
[xix] In Rackham's translation: "division of the soul."
[xx] In Rackham's translation: "Temperance."

a man's moral character, we do not say that he is wise or intelligent, but gentle or moderate;[xxi] but a wise man also is praised for his disposition, and praiseworthy dispositions we term virtues. (1103a3-10)

LS: Yes. Now here he makes a crucial distinction which is based on the distinction of the parts of the soul. The distinction of the rational part of the soul into one which is rational in itself and another which is rational because it is capable of listening to reason underlies the distinction between dianoetic or intellectual virtues and ethical virtues. The dianoetic virtues are the perfections of the intellect in various respects. Aristotle discusses them at length in book 6. And then there are other virtues which are excellences of the part obeying reason but not rational itself, and these are the ethical virtues. The distinction is very obvious, although one need not know the technical terms. I remember a remark about Perry Mason, that he was sharp like a steel trap and clean like a hound's tooth. That is the distinction. A man can have a very sharp mind, and that is something admirable but it is not a guarantee of his morality, his integrity. On the other hand, he can be a man of perfect integrity, and yet he does not have to have a sharp mind for that, so these are two different considerations. Yes? What did you want to say?

Student: Would there be any distinction between the irrational part of the soul, which is able to listen to reason, and that part of an animal's soul, in a higher animal, which is likewise capable of being instructed or being trained in a certain way?

LS: Yes, but still there is all the difference in the world between an education by carrot and stick only and an education by speech. You know? I mean, the carrot and the stick means no reason is needed, no thought of consequences. But in the case of man, you can explain [to] him. Even if you explain to him, "If you act in this and this way, you will get the carrot, and if you act in the other way you will get the stick," you can *explain* it to him. He doesn't have to see it immediately. Reason. Therefore the brutes have no ethical virtues. They may have [qualities analogous][8] to ethical virtues. We speak of [a] gentle dog and a savage dog, for example, and apply other ethical terms to animals, but this is not strictly speaking correct.

Same Student: It seems in a way that this middle form of the soul, the middle part of the soul is in a certain sense most characteristic of man, rather than the rational part. I mean that, I mean it sounds kind of silly from that point. But I'm thinking of Aristotle's view of the man as the union between the . . .

LS: Yes. Yes, one can say that, and therefore the whole investigation, here and in the *Politics*, is called by Aristotle the investigation regarding human things. The purely intellectual is also in itself superhuman, but the moral virtues are specifically human. He denies at the end of the book that the gods can have moral virtues, because they do not have that part which has to be controlled and trained by reason. Yes, that is correct. Now there is another point. Yes?

Another Student: . . .

[xxi] In Rackham's translation: "temperate."

LS: Very simply, what does it mean to obey one's father? The father says something: "Do this; don't do that." That's a *logos*, and you must understand the *logos*. At least—I mean, first of all, you must understand [that] this and this is a thing which you should or should not do. And secondly, the father probably will in many cases give a reason—*logos* in the other sense—why it is good for you to do it. All these things, I mean, this too for speech, discourse, reason.

Another Student: But it's—in the sense that it admits that *logos*—the sense is decisive . . . you wouldn't say that it would be on the side of the rational instead of the irrational . . . it partakes in persuasion or takes place in speech.

LS: An example which Plato likes, one taken from some verses of Homer: how you can talk to your passion, to your anger, for example. And that means it is persuadable, and therefore it is capable of listening to reason and therefore it is not irrational simply. But on the other hand, something else in you must talk to it: the anger doesn't persuade itself to cease to be angry, but reason tells it to cease. [This] shows that it is not simply rational. Yes?

Another Student: Is it fair to say that Aristotle did not consider the possibility of a perversion of the highest part of the soul, the perversion of reason?

LS: Of course. Well, that would be very bad, if he had not done that, and that would be of no interest. I mean, there were so many great examples of people who perverted their reason, their very powerful intellectual qualities: think [of] a man like Alcibiades from Aristotle's point of view, perhaps also Philip of Macedon and Alexander the Great. So he knew that. He speaks less about it than Plato does, but he surely knew that. The sophists were in a sense such people.

Same Student: Yet how does a scheme of the soul such as he has over here, how does that take into account the possibility of perversion of reason? Because if reason speaks to the passions and persuades the passions, might not a perverted man's reason counsel the passions along quite a—

LS: Sure. There is no doubt about that, that it could.

Same Student: But then ethics has no meaning apart from right reason.

LS: Yes, but reason can of course be perverted, and it is perverted when it is in the service of something irrational. For example, someone's desire for glory, for making a splash in the world, may of course pervert his reason very easily.

Same Student: So ethics is meaningless unless understood in the context of right reason?

LS: Yes, sure. Reason can be perverted, there is no doubt about that. But what Aristotle has in mind [is] that reason in its highest form, theoretical reason, in the case of someone

who really understands it, it will not be perverted—I mean someone who has truly tasted it. Someone may have seen that it gives a man great advantages over others if certain parts of his intellectual faculties are developed, but then he would of course only think of the advantages which he derives from his theoretic training and not follow the inner demands of the theoretical man itself. No, I think Aristotle would say that the perversion is possible only in [a] more or less imperfectly theoretical man.

Plato seems to have held the same view, because such a man like Protagoras, for example, when you read the dialogue *Protagoras*, surely he had a good mind, but when you observe him in this dialogue, you see the main concern[9] is to make a very good impression. And that is of course fatal: when you cease to be "objective" and above all become concerned with yourself, that is ruinous. Even if it has a more amiable form of shyness—that a man is concerned with himself, that he might embarrass others by speaking up—even that is bad although it is amiable, whereas the other is not amiable. Does that make sense?

Same Student: Yes, sir.

LS: So the full dedication to the truth: that's the point for both Plato and Aristotle. Mr. Strunsky?

Mr. Strunsky: But Aristotle says that all men by nature desire to know, the highest part of their reason, but that's truly not a desire that stems from this middle part of the soul.

LS: Oh, no. The most simple and crude form is curiosity, ordinary curiosity. There are people, when they see something happens on the road (let's say a bicycle doesn't function),[10] they stand and stare at it and find it very interesting. And everything which is out of the ordinary attracts our attention; I mean, good or bad, high or low, it doesn't make any difference. But even that, that we we want to see: that we are interested in the novel as novel is something which distinguishes us from the brutes. And Aristotle already tries to show that if we follow the inner logic, if I may say so, of this simple curiosity, we are eventually led to the highest form of human activity, namely, to the highest form of the desire for knowledge, which has no longer anything to do with curiosity. But nevertheless, there is some kinship between the two. Yes?

Student: But in terms of this tripartite theme of the soul, would one say that the activity of the highest part simply by itself is curiosity leading to knowledge, or is it some desire as well?

LS: Yes, well, that is a very deep question, of which Aristotle says very little: what the relation of desire and knowledge altogether is. Is there not a desire presupposed or inherent in knowledge, insofar as knowledge is acquired on the basis of a previous desire for knowledge? Of course he assumed that, as the first sentence of the *Metaphysics* shows.[xxii] And in Plato the same question is raised: the relation, in Platonic language, of

[xxii] "All men by nature desire to know" (*pantes anthrōpoi tou eidenai oregontai physei*), *Metaphysics* 980a21.

erōs to knowledge or science. But that is not the theme with which Aristotle's *Ethics* is concerned.

There is one point which we must not forget. Here we have heard, I believe for the first time, the word *ēthika*[xxiii] in Aristotle's work. And this is the first ethics in existence. Now ethics is derived from *ēthos*, a word now very common in sociology, among other disciplines. *Ēthos* means character, and the primary subject of the *Ethics* is character, i.e., good and bad character, noble and base character. And since there are a variety of such characters, we should rather use the plural: noble and base characters. Now Mr Findlay?

Mr. Findlay: At the very end, Aristotle reconsiders . . . the possibility that the rational part of the soul is really divided into two parts, and I wonder what the significance of that would be, especially in comparison with Plato's scheme of the soul. Is that closer to Plato's scheme of the soul?

LS: Which one?

Mr. Findlay: The second possibility, that the appetitive part of the soul is considered to be rational, rather than simply akin to it.

LS: I could not answer your question. It is a sensible question, but I could not answer it, because the relation of the appetitive and the cognitive is very complex in Plato, for the reason I indicated.

Mr. Findlay: Well, can I ask a slightly different question, then?

LS: Yes.

Mr. Findlay: In what sense does *thymos* play a role here in this passage?

LS: None at all.

Mr. Findlay: None at all?

LS: No. He will speak later on, very shortly afterward, of the distinction between the desire, the appetitive, and the spirited parts, or the irascible part as Aristotle would call it. He speaks of it. But the distinction between these lower parts and the rational part is much more important for both Aristotle and Plato than the distinction between the irascible and the appetitive or concupiscible. Did I make myself clear? I mean, the distinction between the irascible or spirited part and the concupiscible or appetitive part is less important—I repeat that—for both Plato and Aristotle than the distinction between both on the one hand, and the rational part on the other.

[xxiii] 1103a5.

Mr. Findlay: Well, it seems that this possibility here that is just mentioned is precisely the possibility which makes the distinction altogether unclear again, insofar as the appetitive part might be considered to be rational, strictly speaking rational.

LS: It is not strictly speaking rational. I mean, if you use it in this sense, then both Plato and Aristotle would say [it is] without the light of the intellect. They both need the light of the intellect in every form, on every level. And to that extent clearly the appetitive or spirited is below the intellectual.

Mr. Findlay: But it seems here that the implication is that the two are always together in man, in any event.

LS: Yes, but the question is: how are they together on the highest level? I mean, in the case of moral virtues that has been sufficiently illustrated and will become very clear in the sequel. But the question is: how is it on the highest level? What is the relation between the *orexis*—the desire for knowledge, the *erōs* for wisdom—and the insight as insight? Do they not mutually fructify each other, as it were? That is a question which is harder to answer.

So then we have now completed our joint study of the first book, and I think without further ceremony we will turn to book 2.

Reader:
Virtue being, as we have seen, of two kinds, intellectual and moral, intellectual virtue is for the most part both produced and increased by instruction, and therefore requires experience and time; whereas moral or ethical virtue is the product of habit (*ethos*) and has indeed derived its name, with a slight variation of form, from that word.

LS: Now this is Aristotle's etymology, which seems to be correct: that *ēthos* (long e, t-h-o-s) comes from the Greek word *ethos* (short e, t-h-o-s), and *ethos* means habituation. *Ēthos* is something which comes about through habituation, and therefore of course through time. Yet Aristotle says the intellectual or dianoetic virtues need experience and time. Does ethical virtue not need these? I think what Aristotle means is this: even the intellectual virtues need experience and time in order to be acquired; all the more so, where it is quite obvious, the ethical virtues. We have read a remark to the effect that young people are not able to act perfectly because of their youth, which means time and experience are needed for acquiring ethical virtue. Does he translate "moral," or "ethical"?

Reader: Yes.

LS: I see. Then that is of course very confusing, because "moral" is simply the Latin word, the Latin translation for "ethical." There is no distinction. I think I mentioned before the present-day distinction used in this country between the unethical pharmacist and the immoral woman. That is present-day American language, not original. Both

would be called "unethical" by the Greeks and "immoral" by the Latins, and I think also by English-speaking people in former times. Yes?

Reader:
And therefore it is clear that none of the moral virtues is engendered in us by nature, for nothing existing by nature[xxiv] can be altered by habit. For instance, it is the nature of a stone to move downwards, and it cannot be trained to move upwards, even though you should try to train it to do so by throwing it up into the air ten thousand times; nor can fire be trained to move downwards, nor can anything else that naturally behaves in one way be trained into a habit of behaving in another way. The virtues therefore— (1103a14-24)

LS: Now let us first understand that, because it is not quite clear. Because ethical virtues arise through habituation, they are not in us by nature. And the reason is this: in the emergence of ethical virtue, we become habituated to act differently than we did before. But what is natural cannot be changed by habituation; therefore the ethical virtues and their bases are not simply natural. Yes?

Reader:
The virtues therefore are engendered in us neither by nature nor yet against nature;[xxv] nature gives us the capacity to receive them, and this capacity is brought to maturity by habit.

LS: "True perfection" would perhaps be a more literal translation. Now how does Aristotle know that the ethical virtues are not against nature? After all, why [is it] you cannot change the falling of the stone? There are not other natural things which can be affected by habituation. And why does Aristotle know that the ethical virtues are not against nature, that violence is done to us? There are many doctrines, especially in our time, which regard at least some of the moral virtues as against nature. And there is a book by Freud about civilization. What is the full title?

Student: *Civilization and Its Discontents*.

LS: Yes, it is almost suggested that civilization is against nature. Now how does Aristotle know that this is not the case? Answer: because he knows that the moral virtues complete man, perfect man. Against nature means against the grain, and it is not against our grain that we should be moderate, just, brave, etc. We possess by nature the ability to acquire moral virtue. We do not possess by nature the power to act virtuously; this power must be acquired. Man has a certain latitude or flexibility which is as natural to him as fixedness is, say, to the stone. You cannot transform a beagle puppy into a St. Bernard puppy, but you can make it housebroken. And that is still more true on the human level. Yes?

Reader:
Moreover, the faculties given us by nature are bestowed on us first in a potential form; we exhibit their actual exercise afterwards. This is clearly so with our senses: we did not

[xxiv] In Rackham's translation: "no natural property."
[xxv] In Rackham's translation: "in violation of nature."

acquire the faculty of sight or hearing by repeatedly seeing or repeatedly listening, but the other way about—because we had the senses we began to use them, we did not get them by using them. The virtues on the other hand we acquire by first having actually practised them, just as we do the other arts.

LS: Say "the arts." That is I think a slight misunderstanding of the Greek word.

Reader:
We learn an art or craft by doing the things that we shall have to do when we have learnt it: for instance, men become builders by building houses, harpers by playing on the harp. Similarly we become just by doing just acts, moderate by doing moderate acts,[xxvi] brave by doing brave acts. (1103a23-b2)

LS: Now stop. Here Aristotle gives a second reason. One must always watch that, and the word which he normally uses is in Greek the word *eti*, which we can translate by "furthermore" or "besides." I would translate it always in the same way in order not to create the impression that there is a variety in Aristotle which is not there. And that is characteristic of Aristotle: furthermore, furthermore, furthermore. Look around: here that proves this, here is something that proves it, here something that proves it. That is so characteristic of Aristotle, more than of him than of any other philosopher.

Now in the things which we have by nature, the potency precedes the act, if we use the highfalutin' language of metaphysics. For example, we have the capacity to see before we see; we have the capacity to hear before we actually hear. In the other things which we do not have by nature, namely, the virtues on the one hand and the arts on the other, the acts precede the potency. This is a paradoxical statement but perfectly in accordance with observed fact, as we can see. Take a simple art, shoemaking. The apprentice, in the moment he becomes an apprentice, simply cannot make shoes, and he acquires the capacity to make shoes through his apprenticeship. He acquires the potency by making shoes, of course first in a very subordinate manner: he will probably have to sweep, clean the workshop, and [do] things which are only very indirectly related to the making of shoes. But then gradually he will also do some things more closely related to the center of shoemaking, and eventually he will have learned to make shoes. But he did make shoes in different degrees. He made shoes and contributed to the making of shoes before even he had acquired the capacity.

And here is the crucial importance of the term used by Aristotle here. The "activities" as, I believe, he translates; in Greek, *energeiai*. The activities. You see, we have a certain general notion of activities or motions without making this fundamental distinction by which the Aristotelian teaching stands and falls: the completed activity, say, the actual making of shoes as distinguished from the acquisition of that capacity, which is a becoming, a coming-into-being. The actual shoemaking is not a coming-into-being; it is a coming-into-being of the shoe, but not a coming-into-being of the activity of making shoes. Is this clear? Everything depends on that. Now if we apply this to moral virtue,

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[xxvi] In Rackham's translation: "temperate by doing temperate acts."

ethical virtue, what the apprentices do, I mean young people, is not yet moral but it is an acquisition of morality, so that they later on will act morally.

There is a little point to which I should draw your attention, and that is when he speaks here: "The virtues we acquire by having practiced them previously, just as we do in the arts, as men do in the arts. What we must do after having learned this, we learn by doing it, as men become housebuilders by housebuilding, and cithara players by playing the cithara. In the same way, by doing just things, we become just."[xxvii] When he speaks of justice, he uses "we." When he speaks of housebuilding, he says "they," because Aristotle himself would never think of becoming a housebuilder but [would think] very much of becoming just. This is a little but characteristic point. Yes. Aristotle now does not give an additional reason, but he gives an additional illustration of the same thing in the sequel. Yes?

Reader:
This truth is attested by the experience of cities:[xxviii] lawgivers make the citizens good by training them in habits of right action—this is the aim of all legislation, and if it fails to do this it is a failure; this is what distinguishes a good regime[xxix] from a bad one. (1103b2-6)

LS: Yes, now that is a sign that virtue comes through habituation. Every legislator thinks in terms of such a habituation, and [Aristotle] therefore knows that it is unlikely that all legislators are radically mistaken regarding the most fundamental part of their craft. Here he makes a distinction between, or refers to a distinction between legislation and regime. This is also something crucial for Aristotle, although he does not speak of it here. That is one of the themes, in a way the most important theme of the *Politics*. For Aristotle laws, codes, are never the fundamental political fact. All codes are the work of a legislator. The legislator doesn't have to be merely an individual; it can also be a group. But the legislator, the man or body of men who can make and unmake the laws, are for this reason not subject to the laws *qua* legislators. They will be subject to the laws insofar as they are citizens. That is another matter.

Now the legislative activity, the activity which causes the laws, which is prior to the laws, is nevertheless not an undetermined sovereign power in the sense of Hobbes, but it depends on the character of the ruling part of the society. So in other words, to take the simplest examples, a legislator or legislative body will be either democratic or oligarchic or tyrannical or what have you, and therefore the laws will be either democratic or oligarchic or tyrannical. This, the character of the regime, accounts for the character of the laws which every regime sets up with a view to what it regards as most important. It does not necessarily mean that every regime sets up the laws with a view to its own interest, although it may mean that. But the most important point is that it sets up the laws with a view to what it regards as the highest and most authoritative. Aristotle refers to this point here in passing. In one sense it is easy for us to understand that, because the

[xxvii] Strauss translates 1103a31-b1.
[xxviii] In Rackham's translation: "states."
[xxix] In Rackham's translation: "form of constitution."

whole notion of rule of law has no longer the evidence which it possessed in former times, because we are more aware than the nineteenth century was that rule of laws should mean rule of good or just laws. And therefore the rule of law simply is not—one can still make a case for the rule of laws as laws, but it is unsatisfactory if it is not a case for good or just laws. I think we sense this more strongly than people did prior to the First World War. Yes, now let us now go on.

Reader:
Again, the actions from or through which any virtue—

LS: You see, what he translates here by "again" is the same Greek word: "furthermore," *eti*, and which for us, keep in mind, you see is really an enumeration of reasons. And it is of some importance to see that in order to see what is the context in which a given statement appears. A statement might be particularly evident and striking, and yet is not necessarily the purpose for which the whole thing is made but only a context. In order to establish what the context is, we must observe this partition. Now begin again, Mr. Pangle.

Reader:
Again, the actions from or through which any virtue is produced are the same as those through which it also is destroyed—just as is the case with skill in the arts, for both the good harpers and the bad ones are produced by harping, and similarly with builders and all the other craftsmen: as you will become a good builder from building well, so you will become a bad one from building badly.

LS: He uses the third person here. You see, the translator is not aware of the niceties of Aristotle's thought. Yes?

Reader:
Were this not so, there would be no need for teachers of the arts, but everybody would be born a good or bad craftsman as the case might be. The same then is true of the virtues. It is by taking part in transactions with our fellow-men that some of us become just—(1103b6-15)

LS: "*We*" now again. Yes?

Reader:
and others unjust; by acting in dangerous situations and forming a habit of fear or of confidence we become courageous or cowardly. And the same holds good of our dispositions with regard to the appetites, and anger; some men become moderate[xxx] and gentle, others profligate and irascible, by actually comporting themselves in one way or the other in relation to those passions. In a word, our moral dispositions are formed as a result of the corresponding activities.

[xxx] In Rackham's translation: "temperate."

LS: Yes. Let us stop here. Now here he gives the third reason why virtue does not arise by nature. That is still the point. If it were to arise by nature, then all men would become either good or bad, or middling, whatever the case may be. But since they become either good or bad or middling, some good, some bad, some middling, this is not simply natural.

Aristotle disregards here entirely a complication which is caused by the fact that there are what he calls later on natural virtues, meaning that some men are born with a disposition toward courage, and others with a disposition toward cowardice and so on. But that is too complicated for this still introductory consideration. Yes?

Reader:
Hence it is incumbent upon us to control the character of our activities—

LS: "To make the activities, activities of a certain kind." He means, of course, of a good kind. Yes?

Reader:
since on the quality of these depends the quality of our dispositions. It is therefore not of small moment whether we are trained from childhood in one set of habits or another; on the contrary it is of very great, or rather of supreme, importance. (1103b15-25)

LS: Everything depends on the quality of the activities we engage in from our very childhood, from our earliest childhood on. That is another final conclusion from the fact that virtue arises through habituation. Therefore let us be watchful from the very beginning how we habituate our children or ourselves. That's necessary . . . Good. Now is there any point needing discussion, in your opinion? If this is not the case, then we— oh, Mr. Phillip?

Mr. Phillip: I think there is a difficulty which Aristotle recognizes and perhaps even allows for, in that not everyone who does what appears to be the best action is necessarily just, but if you were being trained or habituated in justice, I suppose Aristotle would consider that outwardly just act to be the kind of act that would lead him to the higher or truer justice.

LS: Yes. Yes, that's what he means. That is what he will make clear to the meanest capacity in the sequel, because it is very explicit here, this matter. But he takes his time; he goes step by step. Surely, say, what a small child does cannot be described as a perfectly virtuous act, and even many acts of mature human beings cannot be described as perfectly virtuous but only as externally virtuous, but they are as it were the entrance or the antechamber of the virtuous acts proper.

Same Student: In a certain sense, then, the capacity does precede the actual exercise of it.

LS: No, at a certain moment there is a changeover from the coming-into-being to the actual practice, to the *energeia*. Let us wait, he will take some time. Mr. . . . ?

Student: When Aristotle says that none of the things that are by nature can be habituated otherwise, is that supposed to be simply true, or is that just kind of a general conclusion? I think, for example, of cases like certain religious ascetics [who] always go around on their hands and knees, and they presumably become used to this. Yet does that mean that walking upright isn't natural?

LS: But they do not deny and do not mean to deny that man is meant for upright walking. Or what precisely do you mean?

Same Student: Well, as Aristotle states it, if you took that one formulation completely seriously, that would mean that any kind of behavior which could be possibly altered through habit couldn't be natural.

LS: No, well, there are very similar examples: someone tries to reduce his food input to the barest minimum. You couldn't say that this bare minimum is the only natural thing; at least Aristotle would not say that. It *is* a general statement. And you take the most simple cases, like—from his point of view, like those of the elements: heavy stones or light ones. And they cannot be changed by habituation. Subhuman; subliving . . . Yes?

Student: . . .

LS: I did not quite understand you, and that is partly due to the fact that my hearing is not perfect. Now did you refer to the natural virtues?

Same Student: No. The moral virtues.

LS: Then I misunderstood you.

Same Student: No, to the moral virtues as opposed to the intellectual virtues. That is, the man who is intellectually virtuous need not necessarily be morally virtuous. But on the other hand, how would a man's intellectual virtues also relate to his excellence in action if he is not morally virtuous?

LS: Well, in action he has to be morally virtuous, because that is not the sphere of the intellectual activity, of the intellectual virtues. But the other way around: Aristotle does not speak explicitly about this whole question. That is also another characteristic of Aristotle. Aristotle can be, and is most of the time, very clear and very explicit. And yet you see at once, if you look at an account of the medieval discussions of which interpretation of Aristotle is correct—say, the Thomistic or the Averroistic one—and if you look up then the Aristotelian passages, there are a few pages in all his works on which everything else depends, and they are very short and very laconic. There is one example in this book of special importance which we shall discuss later, and that is one page on natural right. That's all. It is one of the most difficult passages in the whole book.

Now similarly, the question: is moral virtue a prerequisite of intellectual virtue? You do not find an unambiguous statement of Aristotle either affirming or denying it. That is the difficulty. And so we have to use our own minds in order to solve it. And when he speaks at the end of the book, where he speaks about about the superiority of the theoretical life to the practical life, he says of the gods, who are presumed by him to be of course superior to man, superhuman, they don't need moral virtues, and they are of course beings capable of contemplation. For example, they don't need justice. They are not just because they don't need justice, because they don't make any transactions, or they have no desires for goods which cannot be shared. And the same: they have no courage, not because they are cowards but because they are not concerned with self-preservation, and so on and so on. So that is a very long question, and perhaps we find some evidence while we go which permits us to decide it. Thomas Aquinas, who knew Aristotle very well, simply teaches that the intellectual virtues . . . [xxxi] moral virtues, with one exception, and that is practical wisdom. Practical wisdom, prudence; *phronēsis* in Greek. That cannot be acquired without the simultaneous acquisition of moral virtue. But this is what Aristotle himself says in the sixth book of the *Ethics*. But the other things, wisdom especially, theoretical wisdom, can be acquired without moral virtue. Well, common sense seems to speak for it up to a point. A man can be a very great thinker or scholar, it seems, without having moral virtue. But in the moment we say that, we say: is that really true? A specialist, of course—I mean, that is possible, a man may have a very sharp mathematical mind and so, and can be wholly irresponsible in his [judgment] . . . [xxxii] an intellectual virtue much lower than theoretical wisdom, which are quite strange for us, and where we have to make a certain effort to see what Aristotle means. I suggest that we postpone discussion of this question. Yes?

Student: Does Aristotle distinguish between the lawgiver, someone who promulgates—the first lawgiver, from the political man, the legislator who works day by day?

LS: . . .[xxxiii] especially by Thomas Aquinas, and by his successors. And the point is, they distinguish therefore between practical science and—I think they called them theoretically practical, meaning practically removed. The science of legislation is practiced by the actual legislator, but there is a science of legislation taught by a teacher of legislators, who is himself not necessarily a legislator. This would be on a higher level. Now here perhaps we can discuss this, for example, for one moment. The legislator must be a man of great integrity, otherwise he will be swayed by sympathies or antipathies which make him partial, and he must not be bribable and so on and so on. But what about the teacher of legislators? In his case, it is not so necessary, because he is not exposed himself to the temptations to which the legislator is exposed. This is certainly relevant to the question you raised. Now shall we read a bit more?

Reader:

[xxxi] There is a gap in the tape here of several seconds.
[xxxii] The tape was changed at this point.
[xxxiii] Several words here are inaudible.

As then our present study, is not for the sake of observing, like the others[xxxiv] (for we are not investigating virtue for the sake of knowing what it is, but in order that we may become good, without which result our investigation would be of no use), we have consequently to carry our enquiry into the region of conduct, and to ask how we are to act rightly. (1103b26-30)

LS: Now let us stop here for one moment. "The present inquiry is not for the sake of *theōria*, of contemplation, as the other pursuits are," say, of the mathematician, of the physicist and so on. "For we make our inquiry not in order to know what is virtue, but so that we will become good. For if this were not the result of our inquiry, our inquiry would be useless." Yes. Now this is directed against the Socratic view, at least against the way in which the Socratic view is frequently presented, and in particular presented by Aristotle himself. I will give you one example from another version of the *Ethics*, called the *Eudemian Ethics*, 1216b3: "Now accordingly Socrates thought that the end is to get to know virtue, and he pursued—and he investigated what is justice, and what is courage, and every other part of virtue. And this was reasonable for him, since he thought that all virtues are forms of knowledge, so that knowing justice and being just [must go together. For as soon as we have learned geometry, and architecture],[xxxv] we are architects and geometricians."[xxxvi] And correspondingly, as soon as we know what virtue is, we are virtuous. Now this is at least the way in which Socrates appeared to quite a few men, Aristotle [being] one of them. And this is what Aristotle denies. And therefore we do not become virtuous by knowing what virtue is. Here Aristotle simply says what common sense dictates, and the paradoxical statement is not Aristotle's but Socrates's. What Socrates meant by it, that's a long question for which we don't have the time here, but it is sufficient to make this observation. But since this is the case, since we study virtue not for the sake of knowledge but for the sake of becoming virtuous, therefore we must first turn above all to the actions and see how these actions have to be performed, that is the point, whereas Socrates was apparently concerned much more with the definition of justice and the other virtues than with doing the actions. Yes?

Reader:
since our actions, as we have said, determine the quality of our dispositions.

Now to act in conformity with right principle is common ground, and may be assumed as the basis of our discussion. (We shall speak about this later, and consider both what right principle is and its relation to the other virtues.)[xxxvii]

[xxxiv] In Rackham's translation: "our present study, unlike the other branches of philosophy, has a practical aim."
[xxxv] There is a gap in the tape at this point.
[xxxvi] Strauss's translation of *Eudemian Ethics* 1216b2-9.
[xxxvii] In Rackham's translation: "the formula 'to act in conformity with right principle' is common ground, and may be assumed as the basis of our discussion. (We shall speak about this formula later, and consider both the definition of right principle and its relation to the other virtues.)"

But let it be accepted to begin with that the whole discussion of conduct[xxxviii] is bound to be an outline only and not exact,[xxxix] in accordance with the rule we laid down at the beginning, that discussions[xl] must only be required to correspond to their subject matter; and matters of conduct and expediency have nothing fixed or invariable about them, any more than have matters of health. (1103b30-4a5)

LS: Let us stop here, and I think we must stop here altogether. Now he will then turn to the actions. How should we act, how must we act in order to become good or to remain good? Now he says the actions by which we become good must be *kata ton orthon logon*, "according to the right reason," if we translate it traditionally; "according to right reason," which is better than his translation. One could slightly improve on it, saying "according to right reasoning." All human actions, in order to be good, must be in accordance with some reason, with some account to be given, explicit or implicit. One can even say [that] all bad actions also have some reason. The bad actions are justified by an incorrect reasoning; the good actions are justified by a correct reasoning. But there is always some reasoning, explicit or implicit, present.

Now there is a correct reasoning of course also in other fields. For example, the reasoning which a carpenter has when he tells you why he made the chair in this manner and not in that. The characteristic of the correct account regarding objects of human action is that there is no stability possible in this sphere. There are no general rules without exceptions, as little as in the sphere of health, as Aristotle says for the time being. Therefore we must first see (this is the beginning of the argument) what kind of account can reasonably be expected of our actions. Can it be given in terms of universal rules, universally valid rules, or is the most that can be expected an account in terms of general rules which admit of exceptions? And the proof of the case for its exception is not given here now. We will take this up next time.

Aristotle continues this statement about the limited certainty we can expect in this sphere, and yet he goes on, nevertheless, we must try to spell out what can be said about how virtue is acquired in general terms. And the first thing which strikes him and which leads soon to the core of his view of virtue is that we distinguish in our actions excessive actions, deficient actions, and actions which are in the mean. And the actions in the mean are generally speaking the correct ones, and that leads then eventually to the definition of virtue as a mean between two faulty extremes.

You have some difficulty in hearing?

Student: No . . .

LS: That's fine. So then we will then continue this on Wednesday. There was someone else who wanted to hand in a paper today.

[xxxviii] In Rackham's translation: "the whole theory of conduct."
[xxxix] In Rackham's translation: "not an exact system."
[xl] In Rackham's translation: "philosophical theories."

[1] Deleted "us."
[2] Moved "is."
[3] Deleted "that which makes."
[4] Deleted "being."
[5] Deleted "but."
[6] Deleted "wrong."
[7] Deleted "our."
[8] Deleted "analogies."
[9] Moved "with him."
[10] Deleted "and."

Session 10: March 13, 1968

Leo Strauss:[i] Now I have two papers here from last time. Mr. . . . ? Is he here? . . . there are a few points. You say, "Aristotle here has established that the main concern of politics is to secure the happiness of man." That is not quite correct. To what extent is it correct, and to what extent is it incorrect?

Student: Well, he establishes that the end of politics is to secure the good of man or to foster the good of man.

LS: Yes.

Same Student: I am going one step beyond, perhaps.

LS: Yes. Exactly. What is the point where Aristotle stops and there you go beyond him?

Same Student: A man who secures his happiness by having activities according to rational principle and politics will . . . and this will bring about his own good. Politics helps, I think, I understand politics has as an end to help man toward—

LS: Toward, yes, but the precise point, I think, is this, that Aristotle says on the one hand that the political art is the highest art, and the highest art is devoted to the highest human good, and the highest human good is happiness. And from this one is entitled to conclude that it is the task of the political man (the statesman, the legislator) to make the citizens happy. But Aristotle does not say that. Aristotle says only that the task of the statesman [is] to make the citizens good citizens, good men, and doers of noble deeds, but he does not explicitly say that the statesman's function is to make the citizens happy, a statement which Xenophon makes. I read to you, I think, that passage from the *Memorabilia*, book 3, chapter 2.

Now there is one more point. "If Aristotle criticizes Plato on the grounds that Plato's idea of the absolute good is of no use to the practitioner, I do not yet know of what use the definition of the end of politics given by Aristotle as being the good of man, an activity of the soul in conformity with excellence or virtue can be for a political thinker or practitioner in search of the best regime for his *polis*." Well, what could Aristotle reply to you?

Same Student: That I have to go and keep reading.

LS: Exactly. Because he has only—but Aristotle makes here only the point, in the beginning as we have read it hitherto, that the statesman, or politician, or legislator has to do with the *human* good and not with *the* good in the Platonic sense, which you call the absolute good. And then he gives some illustrations: what would be the use for a

[i] The session begins with Strauss's remarks about the course requirements, which have been omitted.

carpenter or a shoemaker to have the idea of the good if he wants to make good shoes? He obviously needs a kind of knowledge which does not include knowledge of the idea of the good.

Same Student: Yes, I had said that only . . . That seems to be the very optimum [for] the shoemaker. The political thinker or practitioner who wants to achieve the best regime for his *polis* may be very much able [to do this] by having some kind of absolute good or the kind of ideas that Plato posited, to which he would like to approximate, which he would like to work for . . . to change the nature of the political organization, of his *polis*, to try to get closer to that.

LS: Yes, I mean, that is surely absent from Aristotle, one can say, although it is not very powerfully present in Plato. The notion of a radical change is absent from Aristotle. Aristotle thinks that no fundamental change in human conditions can reasonably be expected. Plato, by his notion of the idea of the good and by his *Republic* and his radical statement that philosophers must become kings, seems to be much more radical in the modern sense of the term. If you mean that, you are perfectly correct.

Same Student: That is what I meant . . . could . . .

LS: And therefore Plato has of course had a more direct influence on modern thinking than Aristotle did.

Same Student: . . . Perhaps this leads to a difference . . . conservative so-called philosophy or more liberal or revolutionary—

LS: Yes, it could lead to that but, as a matter of fact, it did not lead to it in premodern times. But it was, one can say, a transformation of Plato's political philosophy rather than of Aristotle's which led to the modern revolutionary movements. That one can say. Will you pass this on, please?

Is Mr. . . . here now? Well, I deplore that, his absence. His statement is very challenging, and I would like to have his help in discussing that. Very briefly, what Mr. . . . suggests is that one should replace the Aristotelian duality of virtue and happiness or of happiness and virtue by the duality of motivation and fulfillment, fulfillment taking the place of happiness and motivation taking the place of virtue. And it would be worth our while to discuss that, because there are obviously very different notions involved, very different presuppositions. It would be important to discuss that. What is striking when one speaks of fulfillment and motivation is that, at first glance at least, there seems to be no provision made for goodness. A man may find his fulfillment in quite incredible and impossible things, and yet he is motivated toward it and he finds fulfillment in getting whatever he desires. So I suppose, but I do not know, that Mr. . . . means he would not call [it] a fulfillment [if it] is a fulfillment in bad things, and he would not speak of motivation if the motivation is a motivation toward bad things. But he has not given me any certainty by what he says about that. And also, the terms which he uses, motivation and fulfillment, while they are easily intelligible today (I mean, in a vague way, because they

are so commonly used), what is implied in these terms is by no means on the surface and would have to be brought out by a proper analysis. He gives an example, I think, of what he understands by a properly motivated man. He says: could it be possible to be successfully motivated and still not be happy in Aristotle's sense? In other words, he refers here to the difficulty we observed in Aristotle that a man may be a man of great excellence and yet live in great misery: Priam.

"Experience seems to provide a positive answer to this question. Intense opposition to one's society can produce motivation of most overwhelming power. Consider for example a poet intensely striving for what he considers perfection in his work, even though society scorns or actively opposes his efforts, who is willing to suffer and endure severe deprivation or even imprisonment in the name of his motivation. In such [a] case, the individuals, although perhaps engaged in highly artificial and abstract endeavors, achieve great fulfillment through their motivation, else they would not put themselves in positions in which they must inevitably suffer hardships and unhappiness. Happiness therefore is not the only possible goal for the motivation of civilized man."

Now what shall we say about this argument? The fact that someone opposes his society and suffers for his opposition severely was not totally unknown to Aristotle, and the simple proof of course is Socrates: Socrates was condemned to death for his disagreement with the city of Athens. Was Socrates unhappy or not happy by virtue of his condemnation? How would you answer this question? He was not unhappy.

Student: He was not unhappy.

LS: How could you prove it?

Same Student: Well, I'd say first that, well, looking at the reasons that he gives for not running away or escaping exile, that actually his real obligation to Athens is—well, you look both at the *Apology* and the *Crito*.

LS: Yes. That is what I suggested. Let us look at the evidence, what we know about. But the most important evidence, I believe, is how he behaved on his last day, in the *Phaedo*, when the man who describes Socrates's last day says: "The man was happy," *eudaimōn*. You know, because he knew that he had to die but he didn't wish to spoil the last day for himself and his friends by moaning, and so they had a very exciting philosophic discussion.

Student: He kicks Xanthippe out.

LS: Yes, because Xanthippe would have moaned too much. So that is the situation. Whether he was sufficiently considerate of his nearest and dearest is a long question, but Aristotle hasn't said hitherto [that] you have to be extremely considerate. You know? That is another point.

But there is some other evidence regarding this fact, and since Mr. . . . speaks of poets: Now were poets persecuted in classical antiquity?

Student: Empedocles.

LS: Pardon?

Student: Empedocles.

LS: But he was a philosopher. Although he wrote, he presented his philosophic doctrine in hexameter; that does not make him a poet. Well, there is a discussion of this subject, a very interesting one, in Aristophanes, who presents Socrates in the *Clouds*, and there Socrates is persecuted, you know. The old fellow, Strepsiades, is burning down his think tank. I think that is a reasonable translation of the Greek word *phrontistērion*, and it is as folksy as "think tank" is in present-day language. And then he presents in at least two plays, the *Thesmophoriazusae* and the *Acharnians*, a persecution of a poet, in this case Euripides—no, not in the *Acharnians*, in the *Frogs*. And it appears that the poet, Euripides, is perfectly capable to escape persecution, because being a poet, he has a much broader appeal than a fellow like Socrates had. This I mention only in passing.

There is another example, by the way, from the *Odyssey* already. When Odysseus takes revenge on the wooers of Penelope, there are two parallel figures: one is a soothsayer, and the other is a singer. Now the soothsayer he kills, but the singer he has compassion with and lets him live. So the poets who expose themselves to persecution apparently were less frequent in antiquity than they are in our age, and it would be important to see why this has changed. That would be very important. Yes?

Student: How would this idea of fulfillment and motivation relate to the case we talked of earlier of Priam and his lover and his children? Is there any way to . . . I wasn't really clear about how Priam could be happy in the misery at the killing of all of his children.

LS: No one said that.

Same Student: Right, right. Is there any way that this could relate to this more fully by the concept of fulfillment being a little larger than happiness in this sense? He could be, although it may sound ludicrous, fulfilled in the sense, you know, in this tragic defeat.

LS: Well, I suppose that one would have to admit. I do not know whether this covers the ground of which you spoke. I think one would have to—Mr. . . . would have to admit, I believe, that there are situations in which a fulfillment is impossible. Think of a highly motivated Russian poet in the thirties or forties in Russia under Stalin. Even before he could publish a single poem, and perhaps even before he could finish it, that institution—I forgot the name it had under Stalin—would have prevented any fulfillment. But what was your precise reason why "fulfillment" seems to be a better term than happiness?

Same Student: I didn't really think it was a better term, but it just seemed in a sense larger in that it—I mean, based on the idea of motivation and not virtue, using motivation as kind of a . . . to the end of fulfillment. It seemed to fit this case somewhat more, although there was just one I thought of right offhand, namely, Priam obviously wasn't happy, but it seemed that he would be closer to fulfillment than happiness. I didn't want to set it up as better.

LS: If you say that, then he would surely be at least as close to fulfillment prior to the outbreak of the Trojan War. Then he was the highly respected and beloved ruler of the Trojans. And this suffered somewhat from the terrible blunder his son Paris made by bringing over Helen, you know, and all the consequences of this action.

That is a very sensible question to say: how come that a young man like Mr. . . . and you apparently also, is more attracted by the concept of fulfillment, motivation, than by happiness and virtue? I believe one would have to consider here Kant very much, where happiness simply takes a very secondary role compared with fulfillment of duty, and therefore the only thing which counts for the estimation of a human being is whether he fulfills or shirks his duty. And the poet, as presented by Mr. . . ., is a man who fulfills his duty and disregards completely or almost completely the harsh and unpleasant consequence of doing that. But there is of course this difference, because for Kant there are universally valid rules of goodness, of moral action: the moral law. And Mr. . . . does not have in mind *the* one moral law. I suppose what he thinks rather is there is a variety of causes, let us assume of good causes: a variety of good causes which differ from situation to situation and which have only something formal in common: that they are good causes.

Another term used frequently now is "project." One becomes an authentic human being—they do no longer speak of good or bad [but of] an authentic man in contradistinction to an inauthentic man—by dedicating oneself to a project which originates entirely in oneself and is therefore a full expression of this particular individual in what he is. These are, I believe, some of the notions behind Mr. . . . paper. Is there anyone here, by the way, who knows him, who knows Mr. . . . and who could return this to him? Pardon. Mr. . . . Oh, he's a stranger. Good. That may be a recommendation, for all we know. [Laughter] Now we have begun to read the second chapter of the second book of of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Yes?

Student: Wouldn't it eliminate a lot of misunderstanding when we speak of motivation and fulfillment if we just took the words and made them a little bit less highfalutin' and just spoke of want or desire and satisfaction?

LS: Ya, sure, but this is obvious—you are perfectly right. But why did Mr. . . . not choose these simple words?

Same Student: Because this is of course where Aristotle starts off is that lots of people want different things and then goes on to analyze it beyond that.

LS: Ya, but a desire can also mean a desire for a juicy steak. Yes?

Same Student: . . . desire.

LS: Yes, but obviously what Mr. . . . has in mind when he speaks of motivation and fulfillment is not having a good dinner, but something higher.

Same Student: Well, now—

LS: No, I'm sure his examples which he gives show that.

Same Student: Yes, but the examples which he gives you characterize as being akin to duty.

LS: No, I mean, the notion stems from that. You see, what is characteristic—I forgot perhaps one point. When Kant speaks of duty and duty to the moral law, he understands by the law a law which I myself have imposed on myself; what he calls "autonomy." And therefore the moral law is in a way my work and must originate in myself, otherwise it is not truly moral; otherwise I obey either God or nature, and therewith shirk the responsibility for my action, while if it originates entirely in me, I have the full responsibility for my action. This Kantian moral doctrine is an important ingredient of what is now known by the name of existentialism, but the difference being that for Kant it was clear that this law originating in the individual as this individual would always be the same in all cases, because man's innermost being is his reason, his rationality, and what reason says is universally valid and necessary. And this is of course dropped by existentialism. Yes, Mr. West?

Student: I have a question. At the beginning of chapter 13—

LS: In book 1?

Same Student: Yes. Aristotle says that the aim of the legislator is to make the citizens good and lawabiding. But you said that the aim of the legislator was to make the citizens good and doers of noble deeds.

LS: This the author says.

Same Student: Where does he say this?

LS: Earlier in the first part. Ya. Oh, yes.

Same Student: Is doers of noble deeds to be equated with law-abidingness?

LS: No, but that is not so simple. This will come out when he speaks of law in the fifth book. Aristotle takes here the same position as Plato. The legal and legitimate—however you translate the word; the Greek word permits both translations—is *in a manner* the just,

not *simply* the just, because there can be bad and evil laws, and in this case the just is different from the legal. But nevertheless, there is in law, in law itself something good. What people indicate when they speak of law and order is the first requirement. That is recognized by Plato and Aristotle, but with a great qualification: that is not enough; it must be good law. And therefore, if the legislator succeeds in making the citizens obedient to the law, that does not mean that he makes them the doers of noble deeds, although the law is meant to do that. But in many cases the law does not keep this promise or fulfill its purpose. You wanted to say something? Good.

Now here in this chapter Aristotle began, as you may remember, [saying] that the present inquiry is not made for the sake of contemplation, not so that we know what virtue is, as Socrates did, but rather it serves the purpose that we become good. And we become good by acting in the proper manner and not by talking, discoursing, and so on, and therefore Aristotle speaks first of how we *become* good. Now how is it possible to know how we can become good without having a previous awareness of what goodness is? How can you know how a man will become a carpenter if you don't know in the first place what a carpenter is, or how a man can become a shepherd if you do not know first what a shepherd is?

Now Aristotle knows that, of course, and he will take up the question of what goodness, what virtue is in 1105b29. But here, in order to emphasize this point that the most important thing is to become good and not to engage in a theoretical speculation about what goodness is, he discusses first how we become good. Of course he has a previous notion of what goodness is. But who has not? At least in these olden times, everyone knew what a decent man or gentleman is, and so there was no—there were different degrees of clarity, but in a general way there was agreement in that. And Aristotle takes this up then in the sequel, and the first point he makes (and that is the point at which we stopped at the end of the last meeting) [is] that what he is going to say, or what anyone might say on the subject of virtue, cannot be exact. And the simplest explanation of this would be to say that there is no rule in this field without exception, whereas regarding triangles, circles, and so on, there are rules without exception. Here in this sphere, there are not. Yes?

Student: Are the broad outlines, though, exact?

LS: Pardon?

Same Student: Are the broad outlines in science exact?

LS: Ya, the point which he wishes to make first is the *in*exactness of the whole. And that there are some things which are universally true here, that can be presumed. Yes. For example, that courage, say, is a mean between cowardice and overboldness, or however you call it, or temerity, that is surely universally valid. But he doesn't tell you what you should do, especially in a given situation, because what might be cowardice or temerity in other situations might be the proper thing in a certain situation which no one can predict in advance. I think we should go on to read in 1104a5.

Reader:
And if this is true of the general discussion[ii] of ethics—

LS: "Of the general *logos*." The general statement, the general definition, will have this inexactness. Yes? "It is still more true."

Reader:
still less is exact precision possible in dealing with particular cases of conduct—

LS: So in other words, the statement about moral matters in general is not quite exact: no general rule without exception. But it is still more so regarding the particulars, particular cases. Yes?

Reader:
for these come under no science or tradition,[iii] but the agents themselves have to consider what is suited to the circumstances on each occasion, just as is the case with the art of medicine or of navigation. (1104a5-10)

LS: Let us stop here, perhaps. So the general thesis here regarding the particulars—what is to be done under these and these circumstances—is still less susceptible of exactness. No case is the same as any other. One must play here by the ear, as we would say, and therefore we don't have a science, exact knowledge, here.

He compares to morality the arts of medicine and of sailing. These illustrations are not chosen haphazardly. They have in common one thing: they are arts which deal with dangers to life. It is highly hazardous to cross the sea; and medicine, in the more interesting cases, surely has to do with severe, critical diseases. And this leads to interesting questions which go beyond the sphere of the physician or the pilot: which man to save in a plague or in a storm at sea, if the physician or pilot cannot save all? No one can say in advance what might be reasonable in the circumstances. There are some general rules: one ought to save the man most valuable to the community. And surely that is a general rule, but there are obvious difficulties. From Aristotle's point of view, that would be the wise man, ya? Or, say, the statesman. But there might be a situation in which there is a single physician available who would be more urgently needed by the community than a statesman. And in addition, one of these men to be saved may be a very unwise man but happens to be the father of the pilot or of the physician. Would it not be reasonable to permit him to save in the first place his own father rather than the statesman? This shows the difficulties. It doesn't have to be his father; if he is the father of many children, that is an important consideration, whether he should not be saved.

One can state the difficulty involved here by making a distinction, by the following distinction. You can say in general what is the order of rank of the various activities. Say from Aristotle's point of view that thinking, philosophizing, and so on is higher than any

[ii] In Rackham's translation: "theory."
[iii] In Rackham's translation: "professional tradition."

practical activity, and then the activity of the statesman is higher than that of the garbage collectors. Ya? And quite a few others. That you can easily say. But the highest or highest in rank is not the same as the most urgent. A simple practical example: no one admires another human being for having successfully undergone an appendectomy. I mean, that is nothing grand. We can congratulate him if he survived, but we do not admire him, because it was not a virtuous action, an action of human excellence. And yet it is perfectly true that in a given situation the appendectomy is the most urgent thing for him to do, and not higher things. So the difference between rank and urgency explains ultimately why there is this uncertainty in that sphere. And everyone must ultimately decide on the basis of this situation, on the spot, what is to be preferred. There are no universal rules, because in some cases it may truly be true that it is more important that he continues, say, with his study rather than that he undergoes the operation. Such cases are thinkable. Good. So Aristotle draws this conclusion here in the next line.

Reader:
But although the discussion now proceeding is thus necessarily inexact, we must do our best to help it out.

LS: So in other words, Aristotle will try to speak about universals, although it is not a particularly promising thing to do, compared with mathematics especially. Yes?

Reader:
First of all then we have to observe, that such things[iv] are so constituted by nature as to be destroyed[v] by excess and by deficiency—as we see is the case—

LS: "Such things" means the things of importance to morality. Yes?

Reader:
as we see is the case with bodily strength and health (for one is forced to explain what is invisible by means of visible illustrations). Strength is destroyed both by excessive and by deficient exercises, and similarly health is destroyed both by too much and by too little food and drink; while they are produced, increased and preserved by suitable quantities. (1104a10-18)

LS: "By *suitable* quantities." The emphasis is on that, i.e., not too much, not too little. Yes?

Reader:
The same, therefore, is true of Moderation,[vi] Courage, and the other virtues. The man who runs away from everything in fear and never endures anything becomes a coward; the man who fears nothing whatsoever but encounters everything becomes rash. Similarly he that indulges in every pleasure and refrains from none turns out a profligate, and he that shuns all pleasure, as boorish persons do, becomes what may be called insensible.

[iv] In Rackham's translation: "moral qualities."
[v] In Rackham's translation: "are so constituted as to be destroyed."
[vi] In Rackham's translation: "Temperance."

Thus Moderation[vii] and Courage are destroyed by excess and deficiency, and preserved by the observance of the mean. (1104a18-27)

LS: Yes. Now taking the example of how virtue of the body is achieved through gymnastics, he says there is a parallel in how the virtue of the soul is achieved. Virtues come into being by actions which are neither excessive nor deficient. In the case of gymnastics, I think there is no doubt about this, and everyone will admit it. But Aristotle says it is also true of the moral things, and he takes the simple example: a man who fears everything, even a fly, and acts on it, avoids anything which could be a nuisance, will become a coward, without any doubt. And another man who braves every danger without any distinction of dangers will become rash. Yes?

Student: Aristotle seems to make the distinction in the case of the bodily and in the case of bodily health: it's not only preserved but also produced and increased by moderation, but he only says with respect to moderation and courage that it is preserved. He doesn't—

LS: Let me see. Where is that?

Same Student: I may be wrong.

LS: The man who flees from everything and fears it, and doesn't undergo any danger, becomes a coward. Is that the passage you mean?

Same Student: Well, in other words—yes, well, and also the concluding passage at 26. In other words, it's either preserved or destroyed by moderation on the one hand, or excess or deficiency on the other, but he says nothing about its coming-into-being in a case where it does not exist at all.

LS: Ya, but destruction is of course the opposite to coming-into-being. You mean that he says that it is preserved and not that it comes into being, that is the difference?

Student: He goes on to say that the fact that it's also generated by—

LS: Now, yes, well, that is a transition to what he will discuss here. The first point he makes is that the virtues or vices come into being by either following the mean or by following the excess or deficiency. And then he will say [that] not only do the virtues come into being in that way, but they also consist in preferring the mean to the excess or the deficiency, and that is in a way prepared by this "it is preserved" to which you draw our attention.

Same Student: But that's precisely the assumption. In other words, the opposite of what destroys can also bring into being, and—

LS: No, well, take the example of gymnastic exercises. That what brings into being bodily strength is the mean: not too much, not too little. What about the situation after he

[vii] In Rackham's translation: "Temperance."

has acquired bodily strength? There will be a difference. Aristotle will make this clear in the sequel. But the principle remains the same. There is also there an excess to be avoided and a deficiency to be avoided. Say, the moderate man may be able to eat more than the man who is becoming moderate (let us assume that for argument's sake), but he cannot eat everything all the time, and also he cannot fast all the time. This distinction remains. But the question is: is there not a difference between the man who is *becoming* virtuous and the man who *has become* virtuous? Aristotle will take that up in the sequel. Mr. . . . ?

Student: I wonder if this principle doesn't apply to matters of the body, as for instance, we know that, say, the fastest runners are not people who are, say, moderate in their training regimen. They push themselves as hard as they can and to the point of exhaustion. And further, it's possible—

LS: But Aristotle, does he speak here—let me see, what does he say? But could there not be an excess of training even there? Could there not be?

Same Student: Not as training, I would assume.

LS: Perhaps not of that specific training useful for this particular running. But there would be other trainings which he must avoid, other gymnastic exercises. The general answer to this will come later where Aristotle makes clear that virtue, while being a mean, is in another way an extreme, a statement which acquired some political importance in 1964, as some of you will know.[viii] [Laughter] You know?

Student: I've heard about that. [Laughter]

LS: Yes. I'm not surprised. But now let us first go on, until we have the whole evidence, and then we will continue.

Reader:
But not only are the virtues both generated and fostered on one hand— (1104a27-28)

LS: Yes, let us translate here a bit more literal[ly]: "But not only are the comings-into-being and the increases, and on the other hand the destructions, out of the same things and by the same things, or the avoidance of the means." Yes?

Reader:
but they will also find their exercise[ix] in the same actions.

[viii] In his acceptance speech at the 1964 Republican Convention, Barry Goldwater (1909-1998), the Republican presidential candidate, famously said: "I would remind you that extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice. And let me remind you also that moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue!"

[ix] In Rackham's translation: "their full exercise."

LS: But not only the coming-into-being but also the actuality: the actual exercise after the coming-into-being has reached its end and you *are* moderate, courageous, or for that matter, well-trained in your body. Yes?

Reader:
This is clearly the case with the other more visible qualities, such as bodily strength: for strength is produced by taking much food and undergoing much exertion, while also it is the strong man who will be able to do these things.[x]

LS: "To the highest degree." So in other words, you become strong by taking much food and undergoing much pain, much toil. And yet once you *have* become strong, you are *able to* take in much food and to undergo much toil. Yes?

Reader:
The same holds good with the virtues. We become moderate[xi] by abstaining from pleasures, and at the same time we are best able to abstain from pleasures when we have become moderate.[xii]

LS: This "best able" is important. There is a difference between the apprentice and the master. The master will be more moderate than the apprentice; I mean, the master of virtue will be more moderate than the apprentice. Yes?

Reader:
And so with Courage: we become brave by training ourselves to despise and endure terrors, and we shall be best able to endure terrors when we have become brave. (1104a28-b3)

LS: Yes. Let us stop here for the moment. Now what is true of the coming-into-being is true also of the full-fledged activity, what Aristotle calls *energeia*, the being-at-work. The being-at-work has not the character of a coming-into-being. We *become* good by doing what is in the mean. We *are* good by doing what is in the mean. But after we have become good it is much easier to do the mean than it was while we were still in the process of becoming. That is the first difference between becoming good and being good. Aristotle will develop this more in the sequel. Yes?

Reader:
A sign of our dispositions[xiii] is afforded by the pleasure or pain that accompanies our actions. A man is moderate[xiv] if he abstains from bodily pleasures and finds this abstinence itself enjoyable, profligate if he feels it irksome; he is brave if he faces danger with pleasure or at least without pain, cowardly if he does so with pain. (1104b3-8)

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[x] In Rackham's translation: "able to eat most food and endure most exertion."
[xi] In Rackham's translation: "temperate."
[xii] In Rackham's translation: "temperate."
[xiii] In Rackham's translation: "An index of our dispositions."
[xiv] In Rackham's translation: "temperate."

LS: Ya. So here he speaks now again . . . the difference between the *coming-into-being* of goodness and the *being* good, or between the acquiring of the potency and the act. Who has acquired the disposition (in Greek, the *hexis*) derives pleasure from the noble actions. And this is surely connected with the greater ease. The man who has acquired moderation: for him it is much easier to abstain from the wrong things, the wrong quantities, or whatever it may be, and therefore, because there is no conflict involved, he can derive pleasure from doing the virtuous things.

You note here perhaps the qualification he makes when he speaks of courage. He says the man who undergoes hardships and is pleased with undergoing the hardships, or (he makes this qualification)[1] at least not pained by them. That will be developed by Aristotle at some length in the discussion of courage in the third book, where it is made clear that in the case of courage more than of any other virtue the enjoyment of one's virtue is least great because what it means is to face death and mutilation, and so on, and this is not as enjoyable as the acts of the other virtues can be. And this is, in my opinion, the reason why Aristotle begins his discussion of the virtues with courage, or at least one reason. In other words, he ascends from the least high virtue to the highest, the highest in the moral sphere being justice, as we will see later. Yes?

Student: Doesn't it seem, though, more likely that a manly man might enjoy the thrill of facing death more than he would enjoy abstaining from pleasures and being moderate?

LS: That is not Aristotle's view, because Aristotle, as he makes clear there, says that the truly courageous man is not a bully or a hired mercenary but a man who loses very much by going to war and by dying. And therefore, because he has so much to lose—and he's speaking not so much of wealth and so on, or a nice family, but of the virtues he practiced at home and the future of that—therefore for him it is particularly hard to lose his life, perhaps prematurely. And there is no such danger involved in doing the acts of the other virtues. Ya?

Student: You say that one of the reasons he begins with courage is because it is the least pleasurable of the virtues, and the hierarchy of the virtues from that point of view would seem to be a hierarchy of pleasures. But then from another point of view it would also seem to be a hierarchy with respect to the intellectual qualities necessary for performing the particular virtues. Is there a direct correspondence between that hierarchy of pleasures and hierarchy of intellectual, or—

LS: There is perhaps some. I suppose that in the case of justice, at least the more sophisticated forms in which man can practice justice, say, as judges, [one] requires more sophistication, intellectual sophistication, than to decide the question of what to do right here in the case of the other virtues. That is, I believe, true.

Ya. Well, as regards the relation of virtuous action and pleasures, you must not forget the statement which we read in book 1: that there is an ultimate harmony between the noble and the pleasant. Now from Aristotle's point of view, this ultimate harmony is more obvious in the case of the contemplative life than in the case of the practical life or the

moral life, and therefore there will be necessarily an ascent *towards* the philosophic life *from* the moral life. Now let us read the sequel, where he will make this point somewhat clearer than he did before.

Reader:
In fact pleasures and pains are the things with which moral virtue is concerned.

For pleasures cause us to do base actions and pain causes us to abstain from doing noble actions. Hence the importance, as Plato points out, of having been definitely trained from childhood to like and dislike the proper things; this is what good education means. (1104b8-13)

LS: Ya. Let us stop here. Now here Aristotle draws a conclusion from what he had said in the preceding section. Moral virtue has to do with pleasure and pain; and that would distinguish it from the intellectual virtues, which may be accompanied by pleasures or pains, but their theme is not pleasure and pain. Now moral virtue has to do with pleasure and pain, that's to say with resisting the allurements of pleasure and of pain. But the strange fact: we must resist the allurements of pleasure in such a way that we derive pleasure from the very resisting, and only when we have reached this stage are we virtuous. Did you follow? Good.

You remember an earlier statement which was hard to follow in 1099a7 to 31, when Aristotle spoke of the things which are *by nature* pleasant, by which he did not mean the ordinary sensual pleasures. These pleasures deriving [from] or accompanying the acts of virtue are by nature pleasant because they are related to man's perfection, to his nature in its fullest perfection. But this thought is not difficult to follow, I suppose. Or would you like—we can here make a short stop, because the main point he wants to make is not established by this point. He discusses first how virtue or vice [comes] into being. And the ultimate conclusion of this discussion is that virtue and vice, or the study of virtue and vices, has to do primarily with pleasure and pain, but pleasure and pain as something to be resisted or controlled by something else in man. Yes?

Student: So this would seem to imply then that there are two sorts of pleasures: there are first pleasures that have to be resisted, and then there are, in a way, the second pleasures. But doesn't that seem to overlook the fact that there's something that seems very natural about the first pleasures too, and that would seem almost ineradicable, and—

LS: Yes, sure, but—yes?

Student: One could be as ascetic as one likes, but presumably food will always taste good.

LS: Especially if you are hungry. Yes, that would be very harsh and inhuman, to deny that. But the point is this: you make a distinction, I suppose, between reasonable or moderate eating and immoderate [eating]. There are kinds of "eating food" which are self-punitive. You know? That you get nausea and all kinds of troubles if you eat these

things. So we must make a distinction between the pleasures which are followed by immediate or not-quite immediate pain, which every sensible man would avoid, and the pleasures which are all right. In other words, pleasures are also the unreasonable pleasures as well as reasonable ones. So the distinction between preferable pleasures and nonpreferable ones does not stem from pleasure but comes from a higher sphere, say, from reason. That is at least Aristotle's view. The hedonists, the men who said that the good is identical with pleasure, tried to find a distinction within the sphere of pleasures themselves. For example, they said [that] pleasures followed by pains are less pleasures than pleasures not followed by pain. And here they claim that they did not have to introduce a higher principle. Or lasting pleasures are to be preferred to short-lived pleasures. Or *pure* pleasures, pleasures without the admixture of pain, are to be preferred to pleasures which have in themselves an admixture of pain.

These various things were tried by both predecessors, contemporaries, and successors of Aristotle. But Aristotle as well as Plato says that[2] [one] cannot derive the principle of human action [from pleasure]. And the reason can be stated as follows. After all, the brutes too have pleasures. If you observe ants, or donkeys, or whatever, how they enjoy getting their food, you see that they have pleasures, and also pains, if someone mistreats them and so on, or lets them be hungry. But men have different pleasures. For example, men enjoy the possession of gold, and a donkey would not give a damn for large amounts of gold but he likes hay or other things, and men are not particularly pleased if they are given hay. [LS chuckles] So when we speak of pleasure and pain, we mean of course pleasure and pain which are pleasures and pains for human beings, and not pleasures and pains for donkeys. Now then, in other words, when we speak of pleasure and pain we make a tacit assumption, and the philosopher is not supposed to make merely tacit assumptions, he is to make them explicit. And the explicit assumption is, then, to repeat, that the pleasures and pains are human pleasures and human pains. But then, in order to find out what the human pleasures and human pains are, you have to consider man, human nature. And then you reach the conclusion according to Aristotle that man is the animal that possesses discourse or reason, and therefore this will affect the pleasures, the human pleasures. And it will affect them, in particular, in this way: that the pleasures which are to the highest degree natural to man are those which derive from his resisting the *mere* desires, and the promise of those desires, of pleasure. That is the point which Aristotle makes.

So Aristotle does not deny that food and drink is pleasant or [say] that we should feel guilty if we eat pleasing food rather than unpleasing food. That is not the point. But in this sphere human excellence has no place. In other words, Aristotle implies that we cannot admire a man for the fact that he eats all the time very well. Of course, in ordinary language, we speak today of a gourmet as [someone possessing] a kind of virtue. Surely he must have a particularly trained taste; and there is nothing wrong with that, but one could also say that it is nothing grand. I mean, you would not vote for a presidential candidate on the ground that he has an excellently-trained palate; or for that matter, you wouldn't choose him as an administrator of your fortune, if any, on the ground that he has such a well-trained palate and so on. So it is a kind of nice social ornament to have this quality because you can be sure when you will be invited to get a good meal, but you

wouldn't call such a man an excellent human being. You would say he is a gourmet. Just like tightrope dancing is a great art; I mean, there are few of us who could tightrope dance, and yet one cannot say it is a *high* art. Yes, Mr. Wedergreen?

Student: I'm not exactly clear where I'm going, but I was thinking when you were giving the example of a well-trained palate, one couldn't help but think of the reason that the pure and healthy city goes out of existence: because there are no relishes. So it seems that a well-trained palate in the case of Plato, or at least of what Plato wrote, is very important. Now in Aristotle, we don't see the pure and healthy city going out of existence for that same reason. I think it has something to do not with the palate but with certain other pleasures, sexual pleasures. The family seems to be the root of the city rather than the well-trained palate.

LS: Well, not sexual pleasures for Aristotle, but rather the procreation. And that procreation is accompanied, as you know from the literature [laughter] by a certain pleasure. That doesn't explain the purpose of procreation.

Same Student: But what I'm trying to say is that it seems to me that Aristotle in some ways is trying to play down the body from the point of view of the body, that is to say—an example I gave earlier of the runner: the runner doesn't want to become a fast runner; he wants to become a faster runner. And after he becomes a faster runner, he would like to become a still faster runner.

LS: Sure, that Aristotle knows, and—

Same Student: Sure, I would expect he does, but why doesn't he . . . on the basis of—

LS: Because he has to consider the whole and the proportions. I mean, if a man specializes in running, you know, and so on and so on, and forgets everything else, then he may win all Olympic races and so on, but if he does this literally, he will neglect other potentialities which he may have. And if he does not have them, that is also a defect, a natural defect. And similarly the man who specializes, say, in the pleasures of the palate and becomes the first gourmet of a whole country: there is something, a disorder there, a hypertrophy of one thing and an atrophy of much more important things.

Same Student: But I mean, the disorder wouldn't in itself be an objection—

LS: It would be an objection. It would be an objection. I mean, it doesn't mean that this man should be criminally prosecuted, but it is a defect. And when you think of such a man in various relations, or just speak about him, you know, in general moral discussions, you would know this fact, that it is—his dinners are wonderful, but he is an unbearable bore. What did you want to say?

Student: You said that pleasures gained from moral virtue are by nature pleasurable.

LS: Yes.

Same student: I'm confused now by what we mean by nature regarding intellectual virtues.

LS: It is unfortunate (inevitable, although unfortunate) that we, the students of Aristotle, think all the time of the end of this work, either because we have read it before or because someone else has told us. And the end is then the contemplative life. And in the light of it—when the sun shines, the moon is invisible, and also the particular beauties of colors and what have you due to the shining of the moon must be abandoned. But we must however make this effort, and the effort is not too difficult, to see the things as they appear *before* philosophy has risen on the horizon. You know? That is at least the level on which Aristotle speaks up to almost the end of the book. And within this horizon he says, and I believe he means this also, ultimately, that the things[3] by nature pleasant for man are above all the pleasures which have to do with a specifically human perfection, so that the pleasures deriving from food and so on do not belong to those things by nature pleasant in an emphatic sense. That doesn't mean that they are not pleasant in their way, but the distinction of man, the excellence of man is not to be found in this sphere. Incidentally, I hope you all are aware of the fact that what I said about the gourmet applies equally to the specialist in sexual pleasures, although this is a richer sphere and more complicated sphere. But it is true, it is only from a sense of propriety that I did not make this explicit. Yes? [Laughter]

Student: It would seem though, in a strange sort of way, that when you speak of the gourmet, or of the tightrope walker, or any of these specialists as in a way deformed because they have only maximized, say, one potentiality and let other things go by the wayside—in a way, it would seem that you could look at the philosopher in the same way. He has actualized his fullest, the highest potentiality, nevertheless he seems deformed, in a strange way.

Another Student: We know Socrates was very strong, but we also know that he wasn't particularly handsome.

LS: No, no. And that is a serious point, as Aristotle says. And why is it so serious? First, because it is not pleasant, an ugly man. And secondly, because there is a presumption that the ugliness of the body indicates an ugliness of the soul. And therefore, once a physiognomist came to Athens and said to Socrates that he had a very bad character underneath, and Socrates said: Yes, that's true, but I corrected myself. [Laughter] But to come to another example to illustrate the point: a man may have ears—and there are limits: some have bigger ears, some have smaller ears, and they can be nice or not nice; there are all kinds of possibilities there, but as Aristotle somewhere says, if the ear becomes so very big, say, a yard long [laughter], then it would no longer fulfill the function of an ear, i.e., it would no longer be an ear. Now similarly, a man who specializes in some of these more or less far-fetched specialties, you know: he is like a man with an overgrown ear or overgrown nose, and who can no longer fulfill his function as a human being, his overall function, properly. It's not very far-fetched, what Aristotle suggests. Yes?

Student: It seems then that Aristotle has, as you've said before, a single hierarchy of virtues and vices which apply to all men—it's applicable to all men and is a standard of judgment for all men. And I wonder whether Plato, in his myth in the *Republic* regarding three different kinds of men, doesn't in some way not agree with Aristotle on that point?

LS: You mean in the tenth book, the myth?

Same Student: Well, insofar as earlier, where there were men of gold and silver, and bronze and iron.

LS: Ya. But which are these three classes of man, I mean in Plato? The first he calls the moneymaking men, ya? *Chrēmatistikoi*. The second are the soldiers; and the third, highest, are the rulers: the wise men. The philosophers, eventually. Now this whole thing in the *Republic* is based on a premise, the premise, namely, no private property, a premise which Aristotle rejects. And therefore you have to reformulate it in order to bring out its Aristotelian parallel. And then there would be the wise men—not the philosophers, that's the top—i.e., the most experienced and practically wise statesmen, and the chief support, and in a way the support of the *polis*, the city, would be the gentlemen possessing private property and supplying the core of the military force. Ya? And then the lower classes: the craftsmen and farmers, peasants. I see no difficulty. I mean, there is a difference, but the difference has nothing to do with the moral hierarchy; it's a difference is regarding the status of private property versus communism.

Same Student: But that's what I'm not so sure about it. It seems that Plato does seem more than Aristotle to imply that these men in some way have different natures, that they are different—

LS: Yes, sure. Yes, naturally. Otherwise it wouldn't be just.

Same Student: That's right.

LS: Sure. Aristotle would fully agree, but only Aristotle would say it is very difficult to build up a society according to nature because of the many borderline cases, as Plato makes clear in the *Republic* by the nuptial number—you know, this whole system would work if we could be sure that a good couple, husband and wife, will produce good children.[xv] Now that is of course what we all expect, but then among the children a very unpleasant great-granduncle, according to Mendel,[xvi] suddenly makes his appearance, to the great grief of the parents. And so therefore, if there were a nuptial number which would get us exactly which human couple would be sure to produce for all infinity excellent offspring, that would be fine, but the nuptial number is so complicated that hitherto no one has been able to say what it is. And there we have to leave it at not goodness or badness, but at the *presumption* of goodness or badness. Everyone who has any legal training has heard that legal presumptions are as good as facts in a legal

[xv] See *Republic* 546b-d.
[xvi] Gregor Johann Mendel (1822-1884), Austrian monk and founder of modern genetics.

context. Now we presume therefore that decent people will have decent offspring. And if you think how legal cases were decided in former times, and when the culprit was known to be the son of decent parents, he was treated better than if his parents were not known to be nice people. And still somewhat legally. Now this whole sphere is now in a condition of radical reversal, as you surely know, and I don't have to develop it. But generally speaking[xvii]— . . . I follow them in the closet here and there of course. You can't expect exactness in these matters. [Laughter] . . . exactness. There is always a black sheep around, but this doesn't make a family a bad family, because the son, the black sheep, may be sent to Sicily or to any other out of the way place, not to say to Australia, and then no one knows anything. So in other words, there is a certain degree of hypocrisy, to state it harshly. It's inevitable in these matters, but hypocrisy is nevertheless, as a French proverb says, a bow which vice makes to virtue. And therefore it is not simply to be rejected from a very narrow-minded concern with sincerity at all costs, because that also destroys quite a few charms and necessities of society. Yes?

Student: It still seems to be the case that theoretically, if the nuptial number could ever work out and other practical difficulties could be overcome, that Plato does think that it's better to believe that men have different natures, whereas Aristotle—

LS: Aristotle asserts this in the strongest form. I mean, there is no question that this notion of what Xenophon calls good natures, as distinguished from bad natures, has nothing to do with what we call a "good natured" and a "bad natured" man, meaning men with or without an inclination to thoughtful life and the absence of it. That these distinctions exist [is evident]. I would say even today, I mean, in the age where some people believe that IQs alone are a sufficient criterion for distinguishing between preferable and less preferable students, even today that is recognized. But indeed, what they mean by a good nature is something more, something richer than a high IQ.

Same Student: But there's difference, or is there between Aristotle's notion of a disposition to goodness or to badness and Plato's notion of truly different kinds?

LS: Well, the disposition, as we have come across here, the *hexis*, is acquired; is acquired, and to that extent not natural. But there is a difference of which he hasn't spoken yet because he cannot speak of all things at the same time: there is a difference between men who have a natural aptitude, say, to acquire courage or magnanimity, and men who lack that natural aptitude, who may still be able to acquire it, but with much greater difficulty. He speaks of it later on.

Same Student: So Plato would say that some men can't acquire certain virtues, wouldn't he?

LS: Certain men?

Same Student: For instance, a craftsman has no hope in any real sense.

[xvii] The tape was changed at this point.

LS: You must make a distinction, that the actual craftsman may be a man compelled by unfortunate circumstances to be a craftsman, but he could have become a first-rate mathematician. That happens, and vice versa. So I mean the actual social hierarchy is not identical with the natural hierarchy.

Same Student: But in Plato it is. I mean, in the ideal case.

LS: Ya. The *Republic* is based on the impossible assumption that there can be a society which is perfectly just, in which the actual hierarchy is identical with the natural hierarchy. But the *Republic*, I think, properly understood, shows that this is an impossible assumption, and one of the signs is the nuptial number. It is not enough to have it now for one moment of the founding act, but you want to have it for all the future, or at least for many generations, and that means that the upper-stratum parents generate upper-stratum children and that the lower-stratum parents generate lower-stratum children. But this doesn't function, and therefore you have a choice: either you say we will be very strict and just, and if a boy with a good nature—or a girl, for matter—will be born in the lower classes, he or she will be sent up immediately, as his or her superiority is found out, to the higher classes. Then there will be a lot of difficulty, because in the lower classes they know their parents. You know? They know their parents. And then think of this boy of two years who shows amazing signs of superiority [and] will be drawn away from his mother, and what mental sufferings you impose on that boy and his mother and father. So it will amount in practice to a caste system, i.e., the presumption that the upper-class offspring will be upper-class and the lower-class offspring will be lower-class. Either you have constant upheaval and terrible human suffering, or else you have to be satisfied with the factual difference between the actual hierarchy and the natural hierarchy.

I think that is exactly what Plato wants to show in the *Republic*: why the problem of justice does not permit of a perfect solution. And when he says somewhere, I think it is in book 4, Socrates says something to the effect that: Where in the good city, which we have founded, will we find justice *and injustice*? Shorey,[xviii] a well-known commentator and translator of Plato, says: "There is of course no injustice in Plato's republic." Well, he knows better than Socrates what Socrates meant. Of course there will be injustice in it, because no human institutions can be perfectly just, can be perfectly just because, if I may use now modern language, the injustice which nature has perpetrated by producing human beings of different kinds and by not supplying us with simple rules so that we can be sure the offspring of good parents will be good: this can *never* be corrected by man. Well, people hope now that some discoveries in genetics will make it possible for the future. Pardon? Is this not so?

Student: Yes, they think that. They *think* that, but . . .

LS: Yes. We will discuss it as soon as it has been completed. [Laughter] Otherwise we will fall into that mistake into which some scientists fell in 1828, when a German chemist produced uric acid in a test tube, and there was great enjoyment: Now the problem of life

[xviii] Paul Shorey (1857-1934), American classical scholar, author of *What Plato Said* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933).

has been solved![xix] [Laughter] And we have heard this many times since. And let us wait until they make a human being, or even a dog, in a test tube, then we will say: Yes, they succeeded.[xx] Good.

Aristotle will go on here in the sequel and show, to make it quite clear, why virtue, i.e., moral virtue, is concerned with pleasure and pain, and he dwells on it for quite some time. Yes?

Student: This passage here seems to be implying that men do what they do because of pleasure . . . Does he actually believe that?

LS: Not quite. That is not quite his opinion. But men prefer what they prefer for a variety of reasons. And there is a general tripartition made by Aristotle: the noble, the useful, and the pleasant. For example, people prefer the useful, which is not as such pleasant. Think of tooth extraction: it is not pleasant, but it may be useful. But it also has nothing intrinsically noble. But on the other hand, the highest consideration is that of the noble: what is intrinsically preferable. And what Aristotle claims is that while at first glance there seems to be a clear cleavage, not to say opposition, between the noble and the pleasant—Aristotle contends that close analysis shows that there is no such opposition and not even a cleavage, because there are pleasures deriving from resisting the low-class pleasures and undergoing the low-class pain, and fears, and dangers. That is a somewhat complicated but not far-fetched solution, because something of this kind we all know, I think, from our own experiences.

Now is there anything else you would like to bring up?[xxi]

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[1] Deleted "or."
[2] Moved "from pleasure."
[3] Deleted "by nature good for man."

[xix] See Friedrich Wöhler, "On the Artificial Production of Urea," *Annalen der Physik und Chemie* no. 88 (1828).
[xx] The first "test tube" baby was born in 1978.
[xxi] Strauss concludes with a question about who is willing to write a paper for the course.

Session 11: March 18, 1968

Leo Strauss: Is Mr. . . . here?

Student: No.

LS: No. Aha. Well, at any rate, I will read his statement. Or is it not—oh, yes, the time has come. "At the beginning of the *Republic*, the translator" (he doesn't say which) "refers to a passage in the *Magna Moralia*, traditionally ascribed to Aristotle, where Aristotle declares flute playing to be an art in itself. In book 8 of the *Politics*, flute playing is seen additionally as fostering other ends, good and bad. Could one differentiate between flute playing, flute playing as a medium for music, and flute playing expressing a music which fosters actions or attitude, or are the first two in Aristotle the same?"

Now I looked up the passage in Aristotle to which Mr. . . . referred, 1197a9 to 10. "And there is no other end for flute playing but this very thing, the activity of flute playing," i.e., flute playing is not an art which produces something else, like shoemaking, which produces shoes, but the flute playing produces flute playing. There is no product of flute playing. That is all that Aristotle says here. This does not exclude of course the possibility that flute playing might be used for another end, namely, let's say, for the end of education. Of course that is an entirely different consideration, whether there is an art which cannot be put to the use of any other art. And the other question, whether there are not two kinds of arts, arts productive of products—like shoes, chairs and so on, pills—and arts which do not produce products but activities—there should be no difficulty in that.

Now we might perhaps reflect before we begin on the difficulty of Aristotle's *Ethics* as a whole. Now Aristotle has this notion that there is an end of man, and according to him all beings have an end, not only plants and animals but also inanimate things, insofar as, say, the heavy things by nature tend toward the center of the earth. Now this notion of ends, natural ends, is very plausible if we think of the clear case of an acorn leading to an oak, and then the oak again producing acorns, leading to other oaks. But if we take on the other hand the human embryo as the beginning, corresponding to the oak, leading up to the perfect gentleman, this is not as simple as the acorn's way toward the oak. We are therefore inclined to say that man's end is not imposed on him by nature as the end of the acorn is imposed on it by nature. But the end of man is freely chosen, in the sense of freely posited. Man could as well have imposed on himself other ends, and we see as a matter of fact different human beings choosing different ends, and more generally different epochs and cultures choosing different ends. There is no definite result of the development beginning with the fertilization of the human egg, and this seems to be the unique character of man: this freedom not to have by nature an end.

Now Aristotle recognizes the uniqueness of man, in particular in a passage of his work on the soul, where he says the soul is in a manner all things, and he means by that the human

soul.[i] It would not make sense from Aristotle's point of view in the case of any other soul, divine or bestial. Man and only man is a microcosm. So Aristotle knows the uniqueness of man, and his whole reasoning regarding man's end is based on this awareness.

Now how does Aristotle argue in the *Ethics* as we have read it hitherto? In the passages in 1097b25 and thereabouts, we have seen [that] Aristotle starts from the question: is there a work of man? In the case of the arts, we see each peculiar art has a peculiar end: shoemaking, carpentry, and whatever it may be. And the same is true also of the parts of the human body: there is a work of the eyes, a work of the ears, and so on. And then he draws from this the conclusion in 1098a16 to 17, the conclusion being that the human good is the excellent activity of the soul, meaning of course of the human soul. Now what Aristotle presupposes here is that man is *the* rational animal, and therefore the activity of reason, the excellent activity of reason, is the end of man. But could one not say the same of any human work well done, for example, of the shoemaker? For there is no human work, however lowly, which does not presuppose the use of reason. Even [the] collecting of garbage is something which presupposes a minimum use of reason, but precisely this fact shows that there is a hierarchy of works which man can do. Concretely, the bridlemaker: that serves the art of the horseman; the art of the horseman serves the art of war; and the art of war serves the political or statesman's art. So the political art is then the architectonic art, and this fact proves that there is a single human end in spite of the variety of ends, insofar as all other ends serve one highest end.

But here of course questions arise. For example, is poetry too subject to the political art? If it is, censorship would be perfectly all right. And Plato and Aristotle did not refrain, did not hesitate to accept this conclusion, as you know from books 2 and 3 of the *Republic*, and as you might know from the eighth book of the *Politics*. Yet there is one activity which from Plato's and Aristotle's point of view cannot be subject to the political art, and that is philosophy. And this is proven by the very fact which seems to refute it, namely, the notion of the philosopher-king. The philosophers must be politically active. They must be kings *only if* they are the rulers. That's to say the philosophers are never rightfully subject to politics or to the political art. And therefore, from Plato's and Aristotle's point of view, poetry would acquire some immunity from this subjection to the extent to which it is akin to philosophy. Poetry as wisdom, as a kind of wisdom, could conceivably be free from subjection to the political art. And some famous poets of earlier times, such as Virgil, Dante, and Shakespeare, would seem to have agreed with this view of poetry, a view which today is of course very unpopular. Now this much to remind us of the overall context.

Now for the immediate context in book 2. Aristotle has made clear that moral or ethical virtue arises through habituation: by doing the just and noble things, we become just and noble. Yet there is of course a difference between the apprentices and the masters; between those who are still in the stage of *becoming* good and those who *are* already good. Aristotle turns to a more precise discussion of how we become good for the reason indicated in 1103b27 following, namely, the purpose of our investigation here is not to

[i] Aristotle, *On the Soul* 431b21.

know what virtue is, what goodness is, but to *become* good; and therefore let us see how do we become good. And then he finds out this general principle I stated before: that by doing the just and noble things, we become just and noble. He must therefore raise the question: what is the difference here between the apprentice and the master, between the man *becoming* good and the man who *is* good? And the first answer is: it is much easier to do the noble and just things for the master than for the apprentice; and connected with it is: it is much more pleasant for the master than for the apprentice. The apprentice has to overcome himself all the time, whereas the master has acquired this mastery.

In the passage which we read last, Aristotle suggests this: moral virtue has to do with pleasure and pain, meaning with resisting the allurements of pleasure, and the opposite regarding pain. But by resisting the allurements of pleasure, we acquire the habit by virtue of which we derive pleasure from this very resisting, and when we do that, we have reached the end of this process. So the theme becomes now, as has appeared already, that moral virtue has to do with pleasure and pain. And this theme he develops in the sequel. This is 1104b13.

Reader:
Again, if the virtues have to do with actions and emotions, and every emotion[ii] and every action is attended with pleasure or pain, this too shows that virtue has to do with pleasure and pain.

Another indication is the fact that pain is the medium of punishment; for punishment is a sort of medicine, and it is the nature of medicine to work by means of opposites. (1104b13-18)

LS: Ya. So here he gives a second reason why virtue is concerned with pleasure and pain.[l] This is confirmed by how we treat vicious actions: we treat them by inflicting pain on the doers of the vicious actions. Punishment is like a medicine: of course, *like* a medicine, otherwise vice would be the same as illness, which Aristotle never admits and he discusses at length in the third book. I don't know whether some of you have ever read Samuel Butler's *Erewhon*, where Butler experiments with the opposite view: diseases are crimes, and crimes are diseases, so that the criminals are treated by physicians, physicians of the soul, and the bodily sick are treated by judges.[iii] But today we have a position which has as much to do with that satirized by Butler rather than what Aristotle says. Yes. Now the third point which he makes in the sequel.

Reader:
Again, as we said before, every formed disposition of the soul realizes its nature[iv] in relation to and in dealing with those things[v] by which it is its nature to be corrupted or improved. But men are corrupted through pleasures and pains, that is, either by pursuing and avoiding the wrong pleasures and pains, or by pursuing and avoiding them at the

[ii] In Rackham's translation: "feelings, and every feeling."
[iii] Samuel Butler, *Erewhon; or, Over the Range* (1872), chapter 10.
[iv] In Rackham's translation: "its full nature."
[v] In Rackham's translation: "that class of objects."

wrong time, or in the wrong manner, or in one of the other wrong ways under which errors of conduct can be logically classified.

LS: "Logically" is of course an entirely redundant addition of the editor. I mean, what other classification does he mean? Like alphabetical, or what? So here he gives the third reason: the nature of virtue and vice is related to such things and is concerned with such things as are the natural causes of the coming-into-being of virtue and vice. The nature of virtue and vice is distinguished from the coming-into-being of virtue and vice. But virtue and vice come into being by the proper or improper pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain. To make this quite clear, because it is somewhat complicatedly expressed by the author: we become good or bad by pursuing pleasure and pain in the right or the wrong way. But the coming-into-being throws an important light on the result of that genetic process, on the nature of virtue and vice. Is this clear? Now?

Reader:
This is why some thinkers define the virtues as states of impassivity or tranquillity, though they make a mistake in using these terms simply,[vi] without adding 'in the right (or wrong) manner' and 'at the right (or wrong) time' and the other qualifications.

LS: So this is a corollary to what Aristotle said before. What was implied could lead to the conclusion which some people have drawn, that virtue is freedom from passions (*apatheia*; apathy, literally translated), but Aristotle says virtue is not simply freedom from affections but freedom from affections in the right kind of circumstances. For example, anger: to overcome one's anger is by no means universally a good action, because there are situations in which we *should* become angry. And the same applies to the other passions as well, or almost all other passions as well, and therefore this is not a new argument but a corollary to argument number four. Yes?

Reader:
Therefore moral virtue is held to be[vii] the quality of acting in the best way in relation to pleasures and pains, and vice is the opposite.

But the following considerations also will give us further light on the same point. (1104b18-30)

LS: That is a new argument, a fourth reason why virtue is concerned with pleasures and pains: Yes?

Reader:
There are three things that are the motives of choice and three that are the motives of avoidance; namely, the noble, the expedient, and the pleasant, and their opposites, the base, the harmful, and the painful. Now in respect of all these the good man goes right, and the bad goes wrong,[viii] but especially in respect of pleasure; for pleasure is common

[vi] In Rackham's translation: "absolutely."
[vii] In Rackham's translation: "We assume there for that moral virtue is."
[viii] In Rackham's translation: "the good man is likely to go right and the bad to go wrong."

to man with the lower animals, and also it is a concomitant of all the objects of choice, since both the noble and the expedient appear pleasant.[ix]

LS: Yes. Now here is a general statement on the three highest classes of things preferred. They are called here the noble, the useful or expedient, and the pleasant. This is underlying the division used also in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, where he devotes a chapter to each of the three kinds of things in the first book of the *Rhetoric*. You could do worse than reading these three chapters. And Aristotle tries here to show again why virtue has to do with the pleasures and pains, although there are three kinds of preferable things: not only the pleasant and painful, but also the noble and the base, and the useful and harmful.[2] The pleasant is the most universal of these things. In the first place, all living beings are concerned with pleasure and pain, whereas only man is concerned in addition with the useful and the noble and the opposites; and secondly, even the noble and the useful come to sight as pleasant, whereas not everything pleasant comes to sight as noble or useful. So pleasure is the most universal of the three considerations. [Pleasure is] most universal among all the species of beings and among the species of things preferred or desired by man. Yes?

Reader:
Again, the susceptibility to pleasure has grown up with all of us from the cradle. Hence this feeling is hard to eradicate, being ingrained in the fabric of our lives.

Again, pleasure and pain are also the standard by which we all, in a greater or less degree, regulate our actions. On this account therefore pleasure and pain are necessarily our whole concern,[x] since to feel pleasure and pain rightly or wrongly has no small effect[xi] on conduct.

LS: Here the translation is misleading. This is only a single argument. The second "again" he uses doesn't occur in the original. This is the fifth reason given by him. We sense pleasure and pain from the moment of our birth, and this is not simply identical with the fact that pleasure and pain is common to all animals and therefore also to man before he has shown in any way his peculiarly human qualities, the moment of his birth, because the point which he makes here is this: because we begin our life guided by pleasure and pain alone, this forms us throughout our lives, and the pleasures and pains we have enjoyed or avoided from our earliest childhood on. Therefore this is another reason why the moral philosopher must pay special attention to pleasure and pain. Yes?

Reader:
And again, it is harder to fight against pleasure than against anger (as Heraclitus says).[xii] (1104b30-1105a8)

[ix] In Rackham's translation: "appear to us pleasant."
[x] In Rackham's translation: "main concern."
[xi] In Rackham's translation: "a great effect."
[xii] In Rackham's translation: "(hard as that is, as Heracleitus says)."

LS: Heraclitus had said it is hard to fight against anger or spiritedness; this must be understood accordingly. And now Aristotle, correcting Heraclitus as it were, says: Heraclitus forgot that it is still harder to fight against pleasure than against anger or spiritedness. Yes?

Reader:
But virtue and art are[xiii] constantly dealing with what is harder, since the harder the task the better is success.

LS: Ya, that is the sixth argument. So since it is so hard to control pleasure, controlling pleasure belongs to this kind of thing: the kind of thing to which all arts and virtues belong. All arts and virtues have to do with the overcoming of difficulties.[3] What we can do without difficulty, for example, plucking an apple from a tree, there is no art necessary for that: we just pluck it. But whenever there is a difficulty to overcome, then we need either an art or a virtue. And therefore the fact that we have to do that, [that] in moral or political philosophy we have to deal with pleasure and pain, is another confirmation of this. Aristotle implies here that pleasure–pain rather than spiritedness, to use a Platonic interpretation, is the fundamental phenomenon. The spiritedness, as Plato calls in the *Republic thymos*, is derivative. We get angry if we do not get what we desire. The desire is first, and if the desire is thwarted, then anger arises. Yes?

Reader:
For this reason also therefore pleasure and pain are necessarily the whole concern both of virtue and of political science, since he who comports himself toward them rightly will be good, and he who does so wrongly, bad.

LS: So virtue and the political *technē*, not all arts, deal with pleasures and pains. Yes?

Reader:
We may then take it as established that virtue has to do with pleasures and pains, that the actions which produce it are those which increase it, and also, if differently performed, destroy it, and that the actions from which it was produced are also those in which it is exercised. (1105a9-16)

LS: Ya. Now this is a summary of the section that began at 1104b3. A sign of the habits, as distinguished from the coming-into-beings, are the pleasures and pains which accompany them or arise together with them. Yes. Now this chapter we have now concluded, and let us turn to the sequel. Or is there any question? Yes? I forgot your name again, I'm sorry.

Student: Does the noble feel pleasant only to the virtuous man?

LS: No, the noble—that is a qualification you make in the spirit of Aristotle. But still, more generally stated, the noble and the useful appear to be pleasant. And you add, "only to a certain kind of man." But Aristotle says: "Still, they appear pleasant, don't they?"

[xiii] In Rackham's translation: "virtue, like art, is."

And therefore, whereas the opposite is not true, the pleasant does not appear as useful—I mean, i.e., every pleasant [thing] does not appear to be useful. Every pleasure does not appear to be noble. Is this not true?

Same Student: I was thinking of the . . . for beautiful things, the difficulty of the beautiful things . . .

LS: Yes. But still, to limit ourselves to the simple and clear case to which you referred: for the noble character, these hard things would nevertheless be pleasant. So Aristotle is right. The inverse is not true, and this means the consideration of pleasure and pain is the broadest of all considerations. That does not mean that it is the authoritative consideration, for as we will soon hear straight from Aristotle's mouth, if we have not heard it already before: what is important is not to feel pleasure and pain—that doesn't require any effort—but the right posture towards pleasure and pain. That this right posture is then pleasant for those who have acquired mastery is indeed true. But the primary consideration is that it is a mastery, is an attitude or posture toward pleasures and pains, and not that it is also in itself pleasant given a certain stage of moral development. Are you satisfied or not?

Same Student: Actually, this question, I think, is . . .

LS: No, I cannot hear—

Same Student: You answered most of the question . . .

LS: Yes, but still there must be some excess of your question [laughter] beyond what I answered.

Same Student: Well, I'll hold off.

LS: All right. Perhaps it will be clearer later on. Fine. Yes?

Another Student: At the beginning of your lecture, you discussed human freedom, but in Aristotle's statement that childhood—the habits that one learns as a child make all the difference, well, supreme difference, the supreme importance: how—do these conflict?

LS: Well, the simplest answer would be to say [that] Aristotle will discuss the question of freedom in book 3, to which we will soon come. But Aristotle ascribes to man both freedom and this kind of determination coming from upbringing: both. In other words, a man who has acquired the habit of getting drunk cannot easily get rid of that. That doesn't mean that he doesn't have freedom, as is shown by the fact that if this man who has acquired the habit of drinking runs over a man with his car, he will be punished for drunken driving, and no one will say he will be excused because he is an habitual drunkard. Do you see? I mean, that is the way in which Aristotle argues. The practice of legislation is as important a clue for Aristotle to find out what good and bad is and how to think about it then in so-called abstract considerations. Does it not make sense?

Same Student: Well, yes, but it was his emphasis on the habits that men learn in youth.

LS: Ya. But is this not true? Are men not shaped to a considerable extent by their upbringing? Not completely, because you find black sheep in the best families. So two brothers who had the same upbringing: one is good, one is bad. One could say: well, one had a better nature than the other. That could very well be. It could also be a right or wrong use of freedom. That's a long question. We are not yet prepared for that. But the only thing I can say in defense of Aristotle, if such defense is necessary, [is] that no one denies the importance of upbringing for the character we finally have. Whether it is not possible for a human being to become a good man even if he had the very worst of upbringings, Aristotle doesn't speak about it, but I think he implies the possibility. But he would have to have some other influences, perhaps: just [seeing] other people [and] how they live, and to be more attracted by that than by the conduct he found at his home and so [have] success. But primarily we do not have the ability to set our ultimate goals by ourselves, but they are imposed on us by our society or family or what have you. And it requires a high degree of maturity before a man can think of choosing his own goals. So then we will go on in 1105a17. Yes?

Reader:
A difficulty may however be raised as to what we mean by saying that in order to become just men must do just actions, and in order to become moderate, they must do moderate actions. For if they do just and moderate actions, they are just and moderate[xiv] already, just as, if they spell correctly or play in tune, they are grammarians[xv] or musicians.

LS: Is this clear, this difficulty? Must you not already be a just man in order to do just actions? And that is a difficulty which has not been discussed by Aristotle in this form, and it is very necessary to discuss it. Now how does he solve it?

Reader:
But perhaps this is not the case even with the arts. It is possible to spell a word correctly by chance, or because someone else prompts you; hence you will be a grammarian only if you spell correctly in the grammarian's way, that is, in virtue of the grammarian's knowledge which you yourself possess.[xvi] (1105a17-26)

LS: Ya. "According to the grammatical knowledge *in him*." Now Aristotle solves here the difficulty first regarding the arts. There is the difference between the apprentice who still spells correctly but who does not have the principle of correct spelling in himself; that is in the teacher. But once he has learned, he has acquired the principle of right spelling, then it is in him, and then he will do not only the grammatically correct things, but he will do them also in a grammatical way, which means in the way in which a knower of the grammatical art would do them. Is this clear? The same applies to the shoemaker and to any other artist. Now Aristotle comes to the question: so this is fairly

[xiv] The reader substitutes "moderate" for Rackham's "temperate" throughout the passage.
[xv] In Rackham's translation: "scholars."
[xvi] The reader susbstitues "grammarian" for Rackham's "scholar" throughout the passage.

simple in the case of the arts, but how is it in the case of the virtues? That he discusses in the sequel.

Reader:
Moreover the case of the arts is not really analogous to that of the virtues. Works of art have their merit in themselves, so that it is enough if they are produced having a certain quality of their own; but acts done in conformity with the virtues are not done justly or moderately[xvii] if they themselves are of a certain sort, but only if the agent also is in a certain state[xviii] when he does them: first he must act with knowledge; secondly he must choose[xix] the act, and choose it for its own sake; and thirdly the act must spring from a fixed and permanent disposition of character. For the possession of an art, none of these conditions is included except the mere qualification of knowledge; but for the possession of the virtues, knowledge is of little or no avail, whereas the other conditions, so far from being of little moment, are all-important, inasmuch as virtue results from the repeated performance of just and moderate[xx] actions. (1105a26-b5)

LS: So knowing is of decisive importance in the arts: you have to *know* how to spell. And if you know how to spell completely, then you are a good speller or a good practitioner of the art of letters, grammar. But knowing is not of decisive importance in the virtues. In the case of the virtues, it is much more important that the right actions be performed in the right spirit; that is to say, for their own sake. Now let us make this clear, why is this different in the arts? A good carpenter, or even a first-rate carpenter, may be a man who sleeps or is drunk most of the time and does his work only in order to get money for buying whisky or other things of the same kind. That does not necessarily detract from his being a first-rate carpenter. The good man, as distinguished from the good artist, must do the right things for their own sake, be dedicated to them, and enjoy doing them, whereas this good carpenter of whom I spoke may not enjoy it at all. He may enjoy only the whisky, but he can nevertheless be a very competent carpenter. This is possible.

So there is a certain parallelism of the arts and the virtues, as we have seen, but there is an equally important radical difference between the two. We might perhaps consider for one moment the relation of the philosopher to the artisan on the one hand, and to the morally virtuous man on the other. The philosopher has something very important in common with the artisan on the one hand, and with the morally virtuous man, the *spoudaios*, on the other. He has in common with the artisan that his perfection consists above all in knowledge; he has in common with the morally virtuous man that the philosopher is dedicated, *dedicated* to his work, but in such a way that the dedication necessarily follows from the knowledge. Knowledge does not play that great role in the case of the morally virtuous man. We must of course never forget when speaking of philosophy in connection with Aristotle or Plato that a philosopher in their sense is not the same as what we understand frequently today by a philosopher, namely, a professor

[xvii] In Rackham's translation: "temperately."
[xviii] In Rackham's translation: "state of mind."
[xix] In Rackham's translation: "deliberately choose."
[xx] In Rackham's translation: "temperate."

of philosophy or men who "do philosophy," to use this beautiful expression. That is like you "do Italy," or whatever else it may be. That must be understood. Yes?

Reader:
Thus although actions are entitled just and moderate[xxi] when they are such acts as just and moderate men would do, the agent is just and moderate not when he does these acts merely, but when he does them in the way in which just and moderate men do them. (1105b5-9)

LS: This is clear. A man is not moderate if he is moderate regarding his food, for example. His being moderate in regard to his food may be due to his fear of pain, of an operation, or of punishment; then he is not truly moderate. His external action looks like the external action of a moderate man, but since the whole action includes not only the external action but the spirit in which it is performed as well, he is not a moderate man, strictly speaking. Yes?

Student: But you have a sculptor who is unveiling a statue. Where is the art? In the soul of the sculptor.

LS: And also in the work of art.

Same Student: It's not a work of art. It's a product.

LS: Sculpturing is in the sculptor's mind. So his sculpturing necessarily culminates in a work hence separate from the sculptor, as a shoe is from the shoemaker.

Same Student: Yes, but the shoe and the sculpture are not art. They are the works of a shape of the soul. If the shape of a soul regards merely shoes or merely statues, that's one thing. If the shape of the soul regards action with regard to other men, it's justice, and so on and so forth. So it would appear that the necessary distinction between an art and virtue is not that one is not the shape of a soul; they're both shapes of the soul but with regard to different things. Would that seem unreasonable?

LS: I do not know exactly what you are driving at. The artisan, says Aristotle, does not have to do his work for its own sake, because of its end.

Same Student: Insofar as a man is a good carpenter, or insofar as a man is a good shepherd, he will do these things for the sake of the beautiful table or of the nice fat sheep.

LS: Not according to Aristotle. That is what Aristotle denies. This is not necessary for the goodness of the [artisan]. In other words, the good carpenter is characterized by the fact that he does carpentry well, but doing carpentry well does not mean full dedication to carpentry.

[xxi] The reader substitutes "moderate" for Rackham's "temperate" throughout the passage.

Same Student: Right.

LS: That is what Aristotle said. I know that it is possible to look at artisans, and especially at artists, in a very different way, and part of this different way of looking at it appeared in what you said. But this is not the Aristotelian way in the case of the artisan, [or] even in the case of the sculptor: the sculptor may be animated by desire for fame and for money. And since you mentioned justice, there is no contradiction between being a first-rate carpenter, or for that matter a first-rate sculptor, and a man who cheats: think of the example of Phidias, who was at least accused of having stolen gold which was given to him for making a statue at the Acropolis. To repeat, the artisan can be a good artisan while being a very immoral man. Therefore Aristotle goes so far in the *Politics* [as] to say that a slave—he means of course the slave you use in your home—must have more moral virtue than an artisan, because the artisan doesn't live in your house. And therefore, if the merchandise he brings you is satisfactory, that is all you expect from him, but you don't wish to have a man in your house who is drunk most of the time and, God knows, steals and whatever.

Same Student: But both things, both arts and virtues, have to do with habitual or more or less permanent shapings of the soul, right?

LS: Yes, yes. That you can say.

Same Student: More or less directed toward different things.

LS: But there is this great difference, of which Aristotle speaks shortly after, but I can mention it now. The good artisan can make good shoes as well as bad shoes, yes, if he *wants* to. He has complete mastery of the art, and if he wants to show you a masterpiece of a shoe which doesn't fit any human being, he can do that. But the good man *cannot* act badly. You see? So there is an important difference.

Student: Now doesn't he imply here in this passage that with respect to the relationship between the arts and the virtues, the virtues are infinitely superior to the arts because the arts are always chosen, with the exception of the architectonic arts, for the sake of something else; and the virtues must be chosen for their own selves, so that within each architectonic order among the arts—for instance, various arts leading up to the warrior's art, the virtuous man would choose the warrior's art for the sake of something else or the virtue of courage; and that even when it comes to the political art, which is the ordering of the arts in the proper way, philosophy stands above the political art so that though it might be the architectonic art, it can't be the architectonic.

LS: Well, philosophy is—one should in a way not speak of philosophy in our present stage. I know that I have sinned against that rule, and therefore I shouldn't appeal to that rule in order [LS chuckles] to silence you. That is so. One point which you made that is doubtlessly correct and will be confirmed very soon by Aristotle himself, that the virtues are of a much higher rank than the arts, this is clear. I mean, this was one point which you wanted to make, and this is correct. Now as to your other point, what you have in mind, I

believe, is this question: what is the relation between the political art—the highest art, at least in the state of action—and virtue? I can give you the Aristotelian answer, given by him in book 6: there is no moral virtue possible without the copresence of practical wisdom (in Latin *prudentia* and in Greek *phronesis*). So in other words, you cannot be virtuous without being practically wise. I mean, if you do not know when to be friendly, and so on so on . . . to know when then you will not be friendly, or gentle, or whatever it may be. Good.

And now Aristotle says there are various manifestations of prudence. Prudence simply: that is the prudence of the individual regarding his actions. Then the economic action, the art (*oikonomikē* means in Greek the management of the household): the prudence you can show in your relation to your spouse, your children, your servants, and so on. And finally, the highest of them is the political art: the political prudence. So if we limit ourselves to this remark of Aristotle, the political art is the highest form of prudence and [is] therefore inseparable from moral virtue, but not identical with that because it puts the emphasis on the intellectual ingredient. Now the intellectual ingredient would be much more important, relatively speaking, in political prudence than in private prudence. As regards private prudence, Aristotle can say there is not much knowledge in it implied, as we have seen, but as regards political prudence, he could not say that. One could perhaps say, but that is not borne out by any explicit statement of Aristotle, that the percentage of knowledge and of moral virtue going into political prudence differs from the percentage of knowledge and moral virtue going into private prudence, i.e., a higher percentage of knowledge [is] needed for political prudence, and a lower percentage [is] needed for private prudence. The degree of prudence required for solving the problem of Vietnam now is greater than[4] [that required for solving any problem of prudence] likely to occur to any individual in his life, unless there are very extreme situations which are no longer a matter of prudence but of the psychiatrist, if there are such cases. Good. Yes. Now we are in 1105b5, aren't we?

Reader:
It is correct therefore to say that a man becomes just by doing just actions and moderate by doing moderate actions;[xxii] and no one can have the remotest chance of becoming good without doing them. But the many,[xxiii] instead of doing these things[xxiv]— (1105b9-13)

LS: Let us—did you hear the sentence? There is no way of becoming just or moderate except by acting justly and moderately. Would you admit that? I mean, if you have not done that for quite some time, you cannot be just. If this is a limitation on human freedom, well, it can't be helped. But it could perhaps be only a limitation on mere arbitrariness, that we cannot become good just by making a resolution to be good. We have to do something about it. Yes?

[xxii] In Rackham's translation: "moderate by doing moderate actions."
[xxiii] In Rackham's translation: "the mass of mankind."
[xxiv] In Rackham's translation: "virtuous acts."

Student: . . . the apprentice in the arts . . . becoming good by doing just acts. How does one . . .

LS: Well, in becoming—

Student: One can readily conceive of an apprentice shoemaker going and learning the shoemaking art from a teacher, but apparently there is a rational principle as far as—that can be easily transferred from . . . to doing the practice of the art. But it is more difficult on the other side . . . for the man who is becoming just.

LS: Why is it more difficult? I ask you. I admit the fact, but why is it more difficult?

Same Student: . . . in terms of practice, it is the occasion for exercizing the shoemaking art. There seems no problem about that because . . . doing just acts . . .

LS: Could we not say we must try to be good sports, as I always say? Take the simple case, the boy whom we want to be a shoemaker: we send him to a good shoemaker, don't we? And if possible, even to a good shoemaker who is a tolerably good man, because he might do some harm to our boy if he were only a good shoemaker and a bad man. But what would we do to our boy whom we want to make a good man? To whom do we send him? To a master of the art of being good. Yes? To a good man. And apparently it is less easy to find good men than good shoemakers. And the reason [is that] there is a premium in all societies on the appearance of being a good man, and you get exactly the same prize if you only appear to be good and if you are good. That is at least a possible interpretation. And you recognize a well-known Socratic question: where do we find these men, these teachers of virtue? That is true. And Aristotle disregards this here for the time being, or we can say he leaves it for the time being at a simplistic identification of the men who are thought to be good people with the truly good people.

Same Student: I was thinking of perhaps a lesser problem . . . Supposing he found a good man . . . good teacher . . . student. How—I can envisage the master shoemaker saying, "You should cut the sole in this way," or pointing to certain technical procedures, but the good man . . . ask for the students . . .

LS: Does he do what?

Same Student: Does he pick and choose certain activities for the student?

LS: The questions come up. We are always confronted with examples. For example, now almost tax time:[5] he could tell the boy how to make his tax declaration. And what he does with borderline cases, whether he will make a ruthless use of these borderline cases to his own benefit or whether he will rather say: I will act on the principle that the borderline cases have to be decided in favor of the Internal Revenue authorities. And any other questions. Or he sells a pair of shoes and he sees there is certain difference between the price of the raw material and labor and the price for the shoes. Is the price difference atrocious, or is it only moderate? Any other thing could happen at any moment. I leave it

to your imagination or to your knowledge of literature to think of all the cases which could arise in the relation between the apprentice of a shoemaker and a master shoemaker who is at the same time a good man. That is what you had in mind, was it not?

Same Student: I can conceive of . . . it appears to be beneficial to lie and cheat or it appears to be beneficial to the shoemaker to be honest at all times . . . but the opportunity for being just and the slow and right way of proceeding and bringing the soul . . . there doesn't seem to be a readily acceptable occasion . . .

LS: No, well, there are various stages; for example, the [deeds of] justice required of a man who will always remain a private citizen are less interesting than those which would confront a man in public office—a judge in particular—and so on. Surely. Or in any political question which concerns a man not merely as a private individual but as participating in legislating, if only by his vote. Surely. But therefore there are also discussions all the time. These discussions are never free from considerations of justice, and by listening to them and judging the different—looking at the men who present the various issues with perhaps equal rhetorical force, one gradually may acquire some judgment in these matters, so that one does not have to depend entirely on what one's master-shoemaker or master-human being tells us. But to begin with, we of course believe our parents, that goes without saying, and the boy who comes to the shoemaker has already some notions of right and wrong which he did not hear from the shoemaker. And his notions may even lead him to take great distrust of what the shoemaker tells him as to what it is to be a good man. Obviously. Yes?

Student: With respect to shoemaking, are there some arts that sort of form the straight line of the base of all the other arts? In other words, are there certain different orders of arts? The warrior's art: there are certain arts that are specifically concerned with leading up to the warrior's art, but we can't say that a warrior is a good warrior unless he possesses the virtue of courage. Now if a man is a shoemaker, it seems that he has a certain kind of relationship with all the other arts. In other words, shoemaking is required for a warrior. A doctor, lawyer, philosopher, or politician must wear shoes. And yet it also seems that all the carpenter—well, not the carpenter, but all the shoemaker can do is [to] be a good shoemaker. In other words, is his profession, being at the lowest level not connected with a specific virtue, but its only virtue being the thing in itself.

LS: Oh no. Very simply, every art of this kind is accompanied by an art permeating all arts, and that is the moneymaking art: the shoemaker makes shoes in order to acquire money. And this moneymaking art is most obviously subject to justice because, as you will surely know, you can make money justly and unjustly. But this does not affect him as a shoemaker but, one could say, as a human being in need of income. And this applies to all men in one way or the other.

Student: That brings up the question that if every art is related to something lower, the needs to sustain life, cannot every art be also related to something higher? For example, the shoemaker, if he is to be a good shoemaker, must follow a certain regimen during the day: get up early in the morning, work hard, and train himself according—he must know

how to train himself. So must a good sculptor, and a good sculptor must acquire certain work habits, as so must a good man.

LS: Yes, but that is not the Aristotelian point. I can easily visualize a shoemaker's shop where you find, the whole morning, at any rate, a sign, "Do not disturb," or whatever he might choose to write there. [Laughter] And yet what he does,[6] the shoes which he makes, or for that matter repairs, would be excellently done. That's possible.

Student: Yes, well it's possible, but a man who had enough moral fortitude, say, to go out, run, and train himself to be an excellent runner, would also probably have enough moral fortitude to study and to be—

LS: That is by no means necessary. I do not have the statistics. There must be statistics about the athletic students and the academic students, whether all athletic students are first-rate academic students and vice versa. I have a feeling that this is not true empirically. [Laughter]

Same Student: I was not thinking—I'm getting ahead of myself. Isn't there a kind of activity that is required for excellence in the various professions that is interchangeable? A good man in one field—this *is* empirically provable—can be transferred to another field, and he would do a very good job there. A lax man will be a lax man no matter where he is.

LS: Now that is—in order to seek with greater clarity, let us make a projection of your suggestion into the most succinct form. Then it means virtue is knowledge; what Socrates said. The case which you made can be made even more strongly for this general proposition. But also Socrates got into troubles, because we know of cases of men who had very great knowledge and were not very virtuous, and some people who were not men of great knowledge who were very decent and just. So that it is not so simple. And I think for practical purposes—and Aristotle wrote for practical purposes, as he [tells] us all the time—the distinction between the arts and the virtues is meaningful. And if it is not quite exact (that is what bothers you), Aristotle has warned you in advance. It cannot be quite exact, given the complexity and changeability of human affairs.

Now shall we read a bit more? Aristotle was discussing here, proving that one can do the just things without being just; therefore one can become just by doing the just things. The simple analogy of apprentice and master clarifies the situation. Let us read b12 now.

Reader:
But the many—[xxv]
—[xxvi]health of body.

LS: So again, I think it is something very elementary and commonsensical. If you don't do the good things, you will never become good. If you only sit in on seminars or lecture

[xxv] In Rackham's translation: "the mass of mankind."
[xxvi] The tape was changed at this point.

courses on goodness [laughter], then you won't become good by this way. This is of course directed against what Socrates explicitly says. I remind you again of a statement of Xenophon in the *Memorabilia*, book 4, chapter 6, section 6, where Socrates has the confidence to say: "The just men are those who know the laws about human beings"—as if at least the mouthpieces of the gangsters did not have as good a knowledge of the laws regarding human beings as the most honest men in the community had, which is of course a caricature of what Socrates meant. But Aristotle avoids even these caricatures. The *doing* of good things, not the *knowing* of them, makes us good.

Now Aristotle has now completed his previous discussion of how we become good. And then he says, at the beginning of the next chapter: thereafter we have to consider what virtue is. This seems to be in apparent contradiction with what he said before, namely, that we do not make our investigation in order to know what virtue is. Of course we do not make this investigation in order to know what virtue is, but nevertheless, we have to know what virtue is, otherwise we cannot know how to become virtuous in a clear and solid manner. But Aristotle has inverted that true order in order to bring out the fact that it is not the knowledge of what virtue is but the doing of what virtue is which makes us virtuous. So this is no difficulty. Yes?

Reader:
Three things come to be in the soul: emotion, capacity, and disposition. Virtue must be one of these.[xxvii] By the emotions, I mean desire, anger, fear, confidence, envy, joy, friendship, hatred, longing, jealousy, pity; and generally those states[xxviii] which are accompanied by pleasure or pain. The capacities are the faculties in virtue of which we can be said to be liable to the emotions, for example, capable of feeling anger or pain or pity. The dispositions are the formed states of character in virtue of which we are well or ill disposed in respect of the emotions; for instance, we have a bad disposition in regard to anger if we are disposed to get angry too violently or not violently enough, a good disposition if we habitually feel a moderate amount of anger; and similarly in respect of the other emotions. (1105b12-28)

LS: Yes. Now let us stop here. Virtue can be only one of these three things. Aristotle doesn't mean to say that these are the only three things which come into being in the soul, but the only three things which are of any relevance in this respect, which could conceivably be the beginnings of good or bad actions. Now the distinction is clear, I think: the affections or passions—how did he[7] [translate] "abilities," "faculties"?

Student: "Capacities."

LS: All right, *dynamis*. And the third is the *hexis*: "habit," translated. The Greek word *hexis* comes from the verb *echein*, which means "to have," "to hold," "to keep," and can therefore mean derivatively also "to keep or have a posture toward." And that is what Aristotle means here by a habit: to have and keep a posture toward the affections. So

[xxvii] In Rackham's translation: "A state of soul is either (1) an emotion, (2) a capacity, or (3) a disposition; virtue therefore must be one of these three things."
[xxviii] In Rackham's translation: "states of consciousness."

virtue and vice cannot be affections or passions but can only lie in the posture towards the passions. In modern times, some philosophers have tried to discover a passion which as such would be the root of all goodness. The most famous of these passions in modern times is of course compassion.[xxix] For Aristotle, compassion is only one of the many passions, which as such has nothing to do with virtue and vice because we have to see with whom to have compassion and under what circumstances. To be compassionate as such is not a virtue. And the same applies also here; for example, love or friendship (in Greek, the same word): of whom, under what circumstances, at what times, etc.? Yes?

Reader:
Now the virtues and vices are not emotions because we are not pronounced good or bad according to our emotions, but we are according to our virtues and vices; nor are we either praised or blamed for our emotions—a man is not praised for being frightened or angry, nor is he blamed for being angry merely, but for being angry in a certain way—but we are praised or blamed for our virtues and vices. Again—

LS: Is this clear? So the virtues and vices cannot be found in the passions, or affections, or emotions because we do not praise a man [for these]; we say he's given to anger or is perfectly free from anger. And the latter would not be a term of praise, because there are occasions, as we said before, when we ought to be angry. Yes?

Reader:
Again, we are not angry or afraid from choice, but the virtues are certain kinds[xxx] of choice, or at all events not without choice.[xxxi] Moreover, we are said to be 'moved' by the emotions, whereas in respect of the virtues and vices we are not said to be 'moved' but to be 'disposed' in a certain way.

And the same considerations also prove that the virtues and vices are not capacities; since we are not pronounced good or bad, praised or blamed, merely by reason of our capacity for emotion. Again, we possess certain capacities by nature, but we are not born good or bad by nature: of this however we spoke before.

If then the virtues are neither emotions nor capacities, it remains that they are dispositions.

Thus we have stated what virtue is generically. (1105b28-1106a13)

LS: "According to its genus." Virtue or vice are habits. Now we have to find out, as he says immediately afterward—we have to know not only the genus but also the species. And that he will show in the sequel. Virtue is a habit, but this must be rightly understood. Vice also is a habit. So if we say smoking is a habit, according to Aristotelian reasoning it is, namely, a bad habit, a vice. But we can say vice is an enslaving habit. Virtue is a

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[xxix] See especially Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Hamburg Dramaturgy* (1767-1769), §§74-80.
[xxx] In Rackham's translation: "certain modes."
[xxxi] In Rackham's translation: "involve choice."

liberating habit. Both the enslaving and the liberating habits are postures, habitual postures toward the various affections or passions. That's the main point which Aristotle makes. Aristotle gives here, as you have seen, a rather detailed discussion [of] why the virtues cannot be passions, nor faculties or powers, potencies.

Virtue is an acquired freedom, an acquired mastery. And therefore the example of the shoemaker's apprentice and the master shoemaker was not so far-fetched. It brings out something of what Aristotle says. Only an acquired mastery regarding the passions is somehow more impressive than to have acquired the mastery of the art of the shoemaker or of the carpenter, and perhaps even of that of the sculptor and painter; although in this respect there is a great difference between the ancients and the moderns: for Aristotle and the classics altogether, the so-called imitative arts, like sculpture and painting, are still arts, productive arts, lower than moral virtue and surely lower than understanding, wisdom, philosophy.

We must never forget that there is no such a thing[8] [as] aesthetics in classical antiquity. This term was coined by a German professor of philosophy in the late eighteenth century.[xxxii] This science didn't exist [in antiquity]. But originally aesthetics did not mean the philosophic understanding of arts, of the fine arts, but it meant the philosophic understanding of the beautiful. And where is it written that the beautiful exists only by virtue of the fine arts? For the ancients, beauty was found in the first place in natural beings, and not necessarily in a particularly beautiful rose or so, but in *human* beings, and compared with which the beauty created by a portrait painter or by a sculptor was very defective. After all, neither a painter nor a sculptor can make a beautiful human being, living and walking around, speaking, and having all kinds of surprises for us in store. What happened in modern times, say, in the early nineteenth century, was that what is beautiful by nature was thrown out from aesthetics and only the beautiful by art, i.e., by the fine arts, was being considered. And that is the meaning of aesthetics now. And then there was a further step taken in the nineteenth century. Some man wrote a book, *Aesthetics of the Ugly*.[xxxiii] And today one can safely say that aesthetics has nothing whatsoever to do with the beautiful anymore, but it has to do with works of art. That still remains at the end of the process. The ancients were in this respect, as well as in many others, much more "naïve" than we are or, in other words, nearer to nature.[xxxiv] But this subject we will take up from time to time.

We will begin with the next chapter [on] Wednesday.[xxxv]

[xxxii] The term acquired its modern sense in the work of Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714-1762), who first used it in his *Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus* (1735).

[xxxiii] Johann Karl Friedrich Rosenkranz, *Ästhetik des Häßlichen* (Königsberg: Gebrüder Bornträger, 1853). See Karl Rosenkranz, *Aesthetics of Ugliness: A Critical Edition*, trans. Andrei Pop and Mechtild Widrich (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015).

[xxxiv] See part 1 of Friedrich Schiller, *On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry* (1795-1796).

[xxxv] Strauss concludes with remarks about student papers. These have been omitted.

[1] Deleted "and."
[2] Deleted "for."
[3] Deleted "with."
[4] Deleted "What is likely any proper prudence likely to occur."
[5] Deleted "and."
[6] Deleted "but."
[7] Deleted "say."
[8] Deleted "like."

Session 12: March 20, 1968

Leo Strauss: [In progress] —the habitual mastery of them, and this mastery is accompanied by a specific pleasure deriving from that very mastery. Some of you will have read Plato's *Phaedrus*, in which the same subject is discussed in the following form.[i] The human soul is compared to a chariot and a charioteer, and there are two horses. The two horses are the passions, and the charioteer is reason. Reason restrains or impels the passions, whatever the case may be. But it is not the servant of the passions.

Now this statement made by Aristotle gives us only the genus of virtue: virtue is a habit. But in order to know what a thing is, we have to know not only the genus but also the specific difference. In the case of man, it's not sufficient to know that he is a living being, because dogs and cats are also living beings, but [we need to know] the specific difference of man, namely, [that he is] the living being which possesses reason. And the same specification is needed regarding virtue. And I think at this point we begin in 1106a14.

Reader:
But it is not enough merely to say that it is a disposition.[ii]

LS: "It," namely, virtue. I translate it "habit," what he translates by "disposition."

Reader:
We must also say what sort it is.[iii]

LS: "What kind of," "what sort of" a habit it is.

Reader:
It must then be said that all virtue[iv] has a twofold effect on the thing to which it belongs: it not only renders the thing itself good, but it also causes it to perform its work[v] well. For example, the virtue of the eye makes the eye good and makes its work good, since by the virtue of the eye, we see well.[vi] (1106a14-19)

LS: We see well, seeing being the work of the eye.

Reader:

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[i] Plato, *Phaedrus* 246a-256a.
[ii] In Rackham's translation: "merely to define virtue generically as a disposition."
[iii] In Rackham's translation: "we must also say what species of disposition it is."
[iv] In Rackham's translation: "It must then be premised that all excellence."
[v] In Rackham's translation: "function."
[vi] In Rackham's translation: "For example, the effect of excellence in the eye is that the eye is good *and* functions well; since having good eyes means having good sight."

Similarly virtue[vii] in a horse makes it a good horse, and also good at galloping, at carrying its rider, and at facing the enemy. If therefore this is true of all things, virtue[viii] in a man will be the habit[ix] which renders him a good man and also which will cause him to perform his work[x] well. (1106a19-24)

LS: Yes. Now the specific difference of virtue [is this]: virtue is a habit which makes men good or through which men are good, through which[1] [a man] does the work of man well. The example of the horse given here is characteristic of Aristotle. The horse is understood as an animal serving man, and we modern people would raise the question: well, is not an animal serving man, namely, a domesticated animal, inferior to the animal in its state of nature? And you know the many things which can be said about domestication. But for Aristotle that is not so, because the animal which serves man participates, if in a remote way (but in a non-negligible way), in rationality. He does certain things which are reasonable to do; I mean, assuming that waging war and the other things are reasonable, as Aristotle indeed assumes. So the animals which can be domesticated are higher from this point of view than a king of animals who cannot be domesticated.

Student: Would you say then that the horse is more natural after it is domesticated?

LS: In one sense, yes; in another, no. I mean, insofar as to live according to reason or in the service of reason is more natural than not to be in such service, one could say the domesticated animal has reached its nature and is in this sense in a state of nature. That is simply what Aristotle implies. Yes?

Reader:
We have already indicated what this means; but it will throw more light on the subject if we consider what the nature of virtue is.[xi]

Now of everything that is continuous and divisible, it is possible to take the larger part, or the smaller part, or an equal part, and these parts may be larger, smaller, and equal either with respect to the thing itself or relatively to us; the equal part being a mean between excess and deficiency. By the mean of the thing I denote a point equally distant from either extreme, which is one and the same for everybody; by the mean relative to us, that amount which is neither too much nor too little, and this is not one and the same for everybody. For example, let 10 be many and 2 few; then one takes the mean with respect to the thing if one takes 6; since 6 – 2 = 10 – 6, and this is the mean according to arithmetical proportion. But we cannot arrive by this method at the mean relative to us. Suppose that 10 pounds of food is a large ration for anybody and 2 pounds a small one: it does not follow that a trainer will prescribe 6 pounds, for perhaps even this will be a large

[vii] In Rackham's translation: "excellence."
[viii] In Rackham's translation: "excellence or virtue."
[ix] In Rackham's translation: "disposition."
[x] In Rackham's translation: "function."
[xi] In Rackham's translation: "what constitutes the specific nature of virtue."

ration, or a small one, for the particular athlete who is to receive it; it is a small ration for a Milo, but a large one for a man just beginning to go in for athletics. And similarly with the amount of running or wrestling exercise to be taken. In the same way then an expert in any art avoids excess and deficiency, and seeks and adopts the mean—the mean, that is, not of the thing but relative to us.

LS: Yes. Now what does goodness mean?, Aristotle asks now. And he says it is the equal, the equal in the sense of the mean between the too much and the too little. But "mean" can be understood in two ways. First, according to arithmetical proportion, as Aristotle says: six is the mean between ten and two. But this is not what we are concerned with in moral matters, because in moral matters we look for the mean with a view to us: what is too much *for us* and too little *for us*, and therefore also what is the right mean with a view to us. So here we have to consider not only the things but ourselves. Therefore there is a geometric proportion. Another link enters the proportion. The case is similar to that of what is sanitary or healthy for the body: that depends very much on the individual, and it depends very much on the circumstances; and therefore this complication. Yes?

Reader:
If therefore the way in which every science[xii] performs its work well is by looking to the mean and applying that as a standard to its productions (hence the common remark about a perfect work of art, that you could not take from it nor add to it—meaning that excess and deficiency destroy perfection, while adherence to the mean preserves it)—if then, as we say, good craftsmen look to the mean as they work, and if virtue, like nature, is more accurate and better than any form of art, it will follow that virtue has the quality of hitting the mean. (1106a24-b16)

LS: Yes. Now in the case of the arts, that is good from which you cannot take away or to which you cannot add without spoiling the product. Think of a shoe, or think of a perfect statue. A perfect book is a book from which you cannot take away anything and to which you cannot add anything without spoiling it. So here in this case it is clear: the perfection, the goodness, consists in a mean between too much and too little.

And now he turns from the arts to virtue. Aristotle says [that] virtue and nature are more exact than any art. What does he mean by that? A good man cannot act badly if he wills, for his goodness consists precisely in his being unable ever to will to act badly. He is inclined *only* towards the end, the proper end, just as is nature. But the artisan can do his work badly if he wills, and that is even part of his mastership, that he can deliberately blunder. The inclination to the good work is not part of the artisan; that is alien to him. As for why virtue is superior to art, one can also consider the following fact: that every art deals with a partial good (shoemaker, carpenter, physician); and virtue is concerned with a partial good and with something which is fundamentally a means for other ends. Virtue is concerned with the end and [is] in this sense more exact. Yes?

Reader:

[xii] In Rackham's translation: "art or science."

I refer to moral virtue, for this is concerned with passions[xiii] and actions, in which one can have excess or deficiency or a due mean. For example, one can be frightened or bold, feel desire or anger or pity, and experience pleasure and pain in general, either too much or too little, and in both cases wrongly; whereas to feel these passions[xiv] at the right time, on the right occasion, towards the right people, for the right purpose and in the right manner, is to feel the best amount of them, which is the mean amount—and the best amount is of course the mark of virtue. And similarly there can be excess, deficiency, and the mean in actions. Now virtue is concerned with passions and actions in which excess is in error and deficiency is blamed, while the mean is praised and prospers, and these both belong to virtue.[xv]

LS: Yes. So in other words, it is not only—we have to consider not only what is good generally speaking, because there is no answer to that question proper, but under what circumstances. Here the consideration for the circumstances are mentioned: when, and toward whom, and on what occasions, and for what purpose, and in what manner. And this action which is good in all these respects is in the mean, as distinguished from excess or defect. Yes?

Reader:
Virtue, therefore, is a mean state in the sense that it is able to hit the mean. Again, error is multiform (for evil is a form of the unlimited, as in the Pythagorean imagery,[xvi] and good of the limited), whereas success is possible in one way only (which is why it is easy to fail and difficult to succeed—easy to miss the target and difficult to hit it); so this is another reason why excess and deficiency are a mark of vice, and observance of the mean a mark of virtue:

Good men are so simply.
Bad men are so in all kinds of ways.[xvii] (1106b16-35)

LS: The latter is a verse which Aristotle quotes here. There is in each case only one way of acting rightly and innumerable ways of doing wrong or badly. That we must keep in mind. Aristotle is not a relativist. There is one and only one [way] of acting [rightly] in each situation[2], but this doesn't mean that all men would have to act in this situation in the same way, because there are different people of different characters, of different circumstances, and that has to be considered. Yes?

Student: He may not be a relativist, but in a certain way, if we compare him to Socrates in the *Republic*, he seems to be, because, I mean, one couldn't imagine, reading what we

[xiii] In Rackham's translation: "emotions."
[xiv] In Rackham's translation: "feelings."
[xv] In Rackham's translation: "Now feelings and actions are the objects with which virtue is concerned; and in feelings and actions excess and deficiency are errors, while the mean amount is praised, and constitutes success; and to be praised and to be successful are both marks of virtue."
[xvi] In Rackham's translation: "the old Pythagorean imagery."
[xvii] In Rackham's translation: "Goodness is simple, badness manifold."

are here, that Aristotle would ever make a statement that, say, the philosophic life is 729 times better than the tyrannical life.

LS: Why could he not say that?

Same Student: Do you think he would say that?

LS: He doesn't say it, but in what way is this relevant for the question of relativism and nonrelativism?

Same Student: Well, I mean, it seems that he's going to say [that] everything is relative to something, say, principles or something, but—

LS: Yes, well, that cannot be avoided, this kind of relativity.

Same Student: I understand that, but that's something different than saying—you know, one could imagine that Socrates might have said that philosophy is so-and-so many times better than apple pie or whatever it is, I mean, because of the way that—

LS: That would not make much sense [laughter] because they are really in every respect incomparable things, whereas the philosophic life and the tyrannical life, being both ways of life, are to that extent comparable. And since the one is definitely superior to the other, one could at least raise the question: how much superior? That Socrates does not mean this too literally, the number which he gives, can be assumed; but even if we took it literally, it would not be *wholly* absurd, for the reason I indicated. As for the "quote relativism" in the *Republic*, it is not smaller than that in Aristotle, because while there is a certain agreement—for example: all are supposed to be just and moderate, all members of the society, but the justice and moderation of the lower class is not identical with the justice and moderation of the higher class. So when you say they are all moderate and just, you overlook for certain reasons the profound difference between the justice which consists merely in obeying others and the justice which does not consist in obeying other human beings. And the same applies to moderation. Plato makes a distinction between genuine virtue and political virtue, and this great difference is covered up, concealed, by the single term virtue. We will find perhaps some better examples of that.

At any rate, Aristotle has now succeeded in giving a complete definition of virtue, telling us not only what the genus is to which virtue belongs, the genus being habit, but also what kind of a habit. And that he will repeat at the beginning of the next chapter. Will you read that, please?

Reader:
Virtue then is a purposive habit being in the mean relative to us; thus being determined by reason and as the prudent man would determine it.[xviii] (1106b36-1107a2)

[xviii] In Rackham's translation: "Virtue then is a settled disposition of the mind determining the choice of actions and emotions, consisting essentially in the observance of the mean relative to us, this being determined by principle, that is, as the prudent man would determine it."

LS: Yes. "Virtue is a habit of preferring" is perhaps a more literal translation and is in the middle with a view to us, meaning not an absolute mean. And this mean is determined by reason, by *logos*, and is how a reasonable man would determine it. Aristotle has mentioned all these ingredients of the final definition but not all with great emphasis. For example, there was no great emphasis on preferring or choosing, but it was mentioned in 1106a2 to 3.

Now Aristotle says here that this mean "is determined by reason." But he adds, "how the reasonable man would determine it." Why is this necessary? The reason which Aristotle has here in mind is the reason of the man on the spot. It is not a disembodied reason but it's the reasonable man, the man who considers all the circumstances. And the point which he makes here by implication is this, and this is the reason why he is not a relativist: all reasonable men, all sensible men would agree[3] that the sound action of A is a good action, regardless of whether one of them is A or not. Is this point clear? There is an indefinite variety of good actions given the indefinite variety of circumstances and so on, but there is no variety possible regarding what any sensible man would say regarding an action in these and these circumstances. Well, let us take any example. Say, we speak of a perfect hostess confronted with someone suffering from severe bodily defects yet without making him feel this defect and without drawing the company's attention to that defect. She will treat differently an eight year-old girl who has just lost her mother and a fifty year-old man who has just lost his father. Elementary. But these are the things which Aristotle has in mind.

Later on Aristotle will say that it is not so much reason but sense perception which supplies the decision. Now this must be rightly understood. Of course not mere sense perception in the sense in which we perceive a chair, but something like sense perception. You cannot tell a man who is color blind what blue or green is. That is unsayable, strictly speaking. It cannot be defined, it cannot be described. You can give the wavelength, but the wavelength wouldn't help a colorblind man to visualize the color. So there is no substitute for this kind of perception. But, as I said, Aristotle does not mean by perception here sense perception, but something *like* sense perception.

Now we have a word which Aristotle uses in this sense and which is still in general use. We speak of *taste*; taste being in the first place a sense perception. But we apply it metaphorically also to the taste which, for example, the perfect hostess has, or which any man acting well is supposed to have. Even the word *feeling*, which was so common and is perhaps still common, at least since the eighteenth century, is of course also primarily a sense perception, and then transferred to this kind of perception, which no reason can substitute for. Yes?

Student: . . . I was just wondering if . . . Aristotle . . . analogy to . . . goodness . . . aesthetic . . .

LS: The analogy to?

Same Student: The difference between taste and the two senses in which we use "taste" . . . goodness . . . perception but also what we mean—in some ways what we mean by aesthetic . . .

LS: Yes, but it does not have this peculiar distinction between the beautiful and the good. When people speak today sometimes of the aesthetic character of Aristotle's *Ethics*, they mean aesthetic in contradistinction to ethical. Therefore the term "aesthetic" is misleading for this reason. But of course Aristotle does not exclude the possibility that a man, if he has acted in a very nice manner and appropriate manner in complicated circumstances, and someone asks him, "Why did you act in this way?" he might perhaps say, "I don't know; I just felt that it was the proper thing to do." And Aristotle does not exclude the possibility that he would give it further thought. He might be able to give an explicit reason for what he did apparently "quote instinctively." But he might also say that it is rather pedantic to try to spell it out in this manner. But Aristotle does not say much about this kind of case. Yes?

Another Student: Would the same insight hold, that is, the insight that the judgment of the goodness and badness of particular actions in particular circumstances is more akin to sense perception than to reason—would that hold in cases beyond the cases that we've discussed so far? And I'm thinking of cases of, say, the gravest political questions, questions of war and peace, questions of changing the nature of a regime through revolution . . . Winston Churchill in World War II. Can that, the same insight regarding the questions of that nature, or questions of, say, way of life in a larger sense enter into decisions?

LS: Well, I believe the cases are somewhat different, because what makes decisions of this kind so difficult is that you do not know the plans and intentions of the enemy, nor his full strength, because that is of course part of his whole policy: to conceal his situation, and especially his weaknesses, from the enemy. That is a particular question here. And is it a praise of a statesman or a politician to say that his policy is delicate? I don't think so. There is a famous statement of Burke about this, that refined policy is as such not good, simply because it is not properly communicable to the large citizen body. It must be very massive for this purpose. But this delicacy, especially of the social virtues, that is something for which we would not find an equivalent, but surely there is a certain kinship. But one must consider also the material on which one works, say, in refined society on the one hand, and in politics on the other. You only have to think for a moment of this difference to see that you cannot expect the same kind of niceness in both spheres. And you only have to read the daily papers: the horrible things which one man hurls at his opponent; whether true or false, that is not the point. But they are here taken for granted. And they would be impossible in polite society, and yet in their sphere, they are all right. Yes?

Student: Can we speak of the ethical basis of politics if that's where it . . .

LS: The ethical basis of politics does not mean that the level or the sophistication of politics is the same as that of polite society. Well, Aristotle would go much further in this

respect than most people would today. To mention only one point, in the *Politics* he disapproves of the practice of running for office. Running for office was perfectly acceptable to all Greek politicians, naturally, just as it is today. In Rome, too; in Rome, it was called *ambitus*, meaning canvassing, from which the word ambition is derived. For Aristotle this is improper, that someone should display his true or alleged virtues, or conceal his vices and do other things which are unworthy of a perfect gentleman. So Aristotle would be willing to go very far in the direction which you suggest, but I think he would still admit that there is a very great difference nevertheless between the political arena and what can be done in a highly cultivated, small group of men. Yes?

Student: I would like to understand better your statement that Aristotle . . . *ambitus* . . . you said . . . also in the light of your statement that there is in each case only one way of acting rightly . . . we know of situations where—people act in different ways in similar situations. Many of us have perhaps heard of the Chinese custom of making a great deal of noise when they eat the soup, when they enjoy the soup, something that they do among Chinese . . . In the same way, there are many customs which are different in different places . . . I don't know how Aristotle would deal with this. And also this can be carried onto politics. It may be argued that the political regime may be very desirable for a country, say, for a very open, very free country. A communist would say that the communist regime in Cuba may be the most desirable way of government, a proletarian way of government, for developing that country but wouldn't be desirable in our situation. This seems to me a situation that has to be seen in a . . . way.

LS: Yes. Well, you suggested a great variety of considerations, and I'm not sure whether I understood all of them. That different regimes, regimes of different rank, of[4] [higher or lower rank], are necessary or possible for different societies, Aristotle emphasizes as strongly as any man ever did. There is no difficulty in that. But for the question you stated at the beginning of your statement, of course we act differently; I mean, different people act differently in different circumstances. But this may in the first place be due to the fact that some are good men and others are bad men, and so how the bad men act should not be a model for us. Now the good man might act differently for different reasons. First, because his circumstances are different, you know, so that the same good man would act in one way in circumstances alpha and in another way in circumstances beta. That is another point. Thirdly, there may be differences which do not cause any moral difficulty. Differences due to *mere* customs, to morally indifferent customs: left driving or right driving. The English are not inferior to the other nations because they have a different way of driving than the others have, nor are the others inferior to them. That's indifferent. These three cases would at least have to be discussed in order to give an answer to your question, which consisted of quite a few parts, and I'm not sure whether I have exhausted the parts of [your question]. Mr. Findlay?

Student: What of the case, which is perhaps too common to be used as it is, but when we suppose that we have have an honest difference of opinion between two good men on the same case?

LS: From Aristotle's point of view, that should be impossible because, for example, one may be better informed than the other. Then the worse informed would of course say that you have a better judgment and so on. You know? That is what I meant. There is an infinite variety of decisions to be made, but the sensible men confronted with the same set of circumstances would all agree as to what is right in these circumstances.

Same Student: But if the men themselves differed, would that enter into the decision?

LS: In what sense? I mean, [if] the one is more experienced, more mature, than the other, it would make an enormous difference.

Same Student: But let's say they had different natural dispositions.

LS: This difference they would have overcome by the time they are sensible men. Yes, this is surely what Aristotle means. Yes?

Student: Is it thoroughly impossible for reasonable men to have smaller irrationalities of taste, such as one reasonable man might be for blondes and another one might prefer women with red hair?

LS: Yes. Well, this is morally indifferent.

Same Student: . . . a matter taste and aesthetics. You can extend that to certain tastes in perhaps drama: one man might be for a certain style of drama, another might dislike it—both reasonable men. And you can extend this logically to things that are not just morally indifferent.

LS: Yes, but then you would have to give reasons for that.

Same Student: . . .

LS: Then?

Same Student: Psychology . . .

LS: Pardon?

Same Student: . . . Small irrationalities that cannot be overcome.

LS: This is a point where Aristotle would differ, I think. He would say—

Same Student: Would he say that that's impossible for that to happen, for reasonable men to have psychological irrationalities, with blocks?

LS: Well, he is not a sensible man if he has such blocks.

Same Student: Are there any sensible men? [Laughter]

LS: Pardon? Yes, they would say yes. And I think the simplest example which would occur to them would be Socrates. They would say look at Socrates, a man who was entirely sensible.

Same Student: . . . Aristotle—

LS: I mean, Socrates had the advantage, the additional advantage, that he had what he called his *daimonion*. So he was a privileged man. But still, whether due to his reason alone or to that divine gift, he was perfectly sensible. That is what Plato tries to show by presenting him in his dialogues. I mean nothing less than that.

Same Student: Then since Socrates, we have been pretty short on them.

LS: Pardon?

Same Student: Since Socrates, wouldn't it be reasonable to assume that we have been pretty short on sensible men?

LS: I'm sorry, I don't understand.

Same Student: There have been very few sensible men since Socrates.

LS: Well, I mean we mustn't make the highest demands. But in a general way there are of course more sensible men, I mean—

Same Student: The line is actually sort of like an arbitrary line. At what point do you become sensible? At what point do you have . . .

LS: Yes, well, I can only—did not Aristotle provide for that by saying at least three times: no exact lines can be drawn?

Same Student: . . .

LS: Yes, it is understandable that you want to have exactness, but the question is whether you—

Same Student: . . .

LS: Still, but this is a point for Plato as well as for Aristotle, and I think one can say for all premodern philosophers and quite a few modern philosophers up to a certain age: individuality goes without saying. We all have individualities, but our task consists in assimilating ourself to something universal, and so to have individual characteristics is not something to boast of.

Same Student: That was the point. At what point of universal—as we assimilate, about what point of universals do we become reasonable? What universals, in what fields does the . . . universals account for reasonability?

LS: That is what Aristotle is speaking about. Virtue is the universal. There are a variety of virtues, and he will describe each of the virtues while he goes. And then when we are through [with] that, we will have a notion of what that universal is. Yes?

Another Student: There's something here that I did not understand, perhaps because of lack of knowledge of . . . Perhaps you can explain it to me. This seems to me to contradict Aristotle's previous rejection of the absolute good, Plato's idea of the absolute good. If every reasonable man can agree on the existence of the right way of action, it would seem to me that we could get enough men in every situation, enough wise men to agree or . . . And isn't this very much the same as the idea of the existence of an absolute good, which . . . Aristotle and Plato can agree on?

LS: No. Let me state it in this perhaps somewhat exaggerated manner in order to make it quite clear. The idea of the good, as Aristotle presents it here and as most people believe it is meant, [is] an absolute. For Aristotle, goodness resides in individual actions, in individual circumstances. So if you want to see what goodness is, you have to look at individual actions in individual circumstances: there you'll see goodness. The general statement is only of some help towards seeing goodness, but it is not the goodness itself. The goodness itself consists in the concrete action, in the individual action, and therefore this is something radically different. It is even a greater difference than that between the ideal dog—the idea of the dog, you know, who doesn't bark, doesn't run around—and this here dog which does all these things and some additional things. And the difference is even greater, because here there is at least this same dog from the beginning of his life until its end, whereas here we have the actions in these and these circumstances as the true place of moral truth. Mr. . . . ?

Student: . . . accept that the gentleman . . he seems to equate sensibleness with—almost with absolute good, so . . . declare Socrates to be the sensible man. So it naturally follows that . . . sensible men after Socrates because . . . men do not approach the goodness of . . . the question I wanted to ask is . . .

LS: Sure, very well, but this means of course that the more sensible man's judgment is to be preferred to the less sensible man's judgment. So there is no relativism in this sense. Good. Now I think we should now continue where we left off. 1107a2.

Reader:
And it is a mean between two vices, one of excess and one of defect. Furthermore, it is a mean state in that whereas the vices either fall short of or exceed what is right in passions and in actions, virtue finds and chooses the mean.[xix] (1107a2-6)

[xix] In Rackham's translation: "exceed what is right in feelings and in actions, virtue ascertains and adopts the mean."

LS: "Both" is important: finding the mean and choosing it. If a man is good enough to find the mean but doesn't choose it, then he is not a reasonable man. On the other hand, he cannot choose it without having found[5] [it first]. So it is not preexisting, his choice; he has to find it. Yes. A man who chooses the right life but is not able to find it by himself is not truly good. "Virtue is a mean which finds and chooses the mean." Yes?

Reader:
Hence while in respect of its substance and the definition that states what it is, virtue is the mean. In point of excellence and rightness, it is an extreme.[xx] (1107a6-8)

LS: What does this distinction mean? According to what virtue *intends*, it is a mean; otherwise, it is a peak. Is this distinction clear? That it is in one respect, and the most important respect, a mean; but in another respect, which is by no means negligible, it is a peak. I will give you an example from Aristotle's *Politics*. In the *Politics*, Aristotle has two ways of discussing the various kinds of regimes. The two considerations: (a) number of rulers and (b) goodness or badness. He arrives at this schema: kingship, aristocracy, polity; and at the bad side, tyranny, oligarchy, and democracy. But he has another starting point which is less visible but no less important, and here he starts from the most fundamental and common political cleavage, namely, that between the rich and the poor. Now the regime in which the rich rule is oligarchy, and the regime in which the poor rule is democracy. Both are from Aristotle's point of view faulty extremes, and he has to seek a mean. And as a matter of fact, he finds at least two means on different levels. These means are in one sense—now the means owe their goodness ultimately to the fact that they are [a] mean, i.e., not the faulty extremes. If I can perhaps put it at the blackboard. [LS writes on the blackboard.] If this is democracy, and this is oligarchy . . . so there is a mean. But Aristotle does not mean this mean, the arithmetic mean, but he means the mean here, which is higher than the two extremes, by avoiding the mistakes of both extremes and combining the advantages of the two. And as a matter of fact, in the *Politics* it is this way. There are at least three such different means, and the highest would be aristocracy. Yes?

Student: Well, what relationship would this mean have to the Hegelian synthesis?

LS: Surely none [laughter] from Hegel's point of view. But if we want to be clever, we might say that what Hegel had in mind by a synthesis is indeed, has a certain kinship [with the Aristotelian mean], because the key point of the Hegelian synthesis is of course that the original level, the level of the original antithesis, is given up in favor of a higher level. To that extent you are right. But I do not know whether it is—it might be of some help, perhaps, for the understanding of Hegel to think of it. Your question is by no means unreasonable, but surely the question didn't exist for Aristotle in this form. He would never call this a dialectical process. And I do not think that it played any role in the formation of Hegel's thought regarding dialectics, especially since for Aristotle the principle of contradiction is absolutely sacred, whereas for Hegel's dialectics it is not sacred. That is a great difference, isn't it? Yes.

[xx] In Rackham's translation: "the definition that states what it really is in essence virtue is the observance of the mean, in point of excellence and rightness it is extreme."

Now there is one point which I thought we should consider for one moment. The essence of virtue is, to repeat, mean, or mediocrity: mediocrity in the sense in which Horace speaks of golden mediocrity (*aurea mediocritas*).[xxi] But the point is for Aristotle that this golden mediocrity is not mediocre but is a peak. Virtue is the mean because virtue belongs to the same genus as the vices, as we have seen before. It is the *right* habit towards the passion in question, whereas the vices are the *wrong* habits. But both have to deal with the same habits, and therefore they belong to the same genus. So the true extremes are the virtues and the vices. But the vice does not intend to be bad, the bad as bad: it intends one or the other extreme as good, say, the coward does not intend cowardly action as cowardly action but as good, namely, with a view to saving his life, whereas the virtue intends the mean explicitly as good.

Now I think we should consider at this moment a critique of Aristotle's doctrine of mediocrity given in modern times, by Thomas Hobbes. I have this passage in his book *On the Citizen*, chapter 3, section 32. He says:

"Moral philosophers have not observed that the goodness of actions consists in this, that they are directed toward peace, and badness consists in this, that they are directed toward or leading up to concord.[xxii] For this reason, they have founded a moral philosophy which is wholly alien to the moral law and not consistent with itself. For they wanted that the nature of virtue consisted in some mean between two extremes, and the vices, however, in these very extremes. And this is manifestly wrong, for daring is praised and regarded as a virtue under the name of courage, although it is extreme, provided the cause of the daring is approved. The quantity of a thing, which is used as a gift, regardless of whether the quantity is great or small or mean, does not make liberality, but the cause of the giving [meaning whether it is given ultimately with a view to peace or ultimately with a view to conduct—LS] nor is it injustice if I give to someone of my own more than is due."[xxiii]

Now the latter point is of course based on a whole misunderstanding, because for Aristotle, if you give more to a man than you owe, you are of course not unjust. In other words, justice is the only virtue which has not two faulty extremes but only one, namely, injustice. So Hobbes should have known that, but he didn't. Now in the other case, Aristotle is of course aware of that, that the cause [of daring] must be approved[6]. And then indeed the daring may be extreme if the cause is good, but other things also have to be considered. It is a very inadequate argument, but not unpopular in his century, because Hugo Grotius, in his great work *On the Right of War and Peace*, makes a similar criticism. Shall we go on at this point?

Reader:

[xxi] Horace, *Odes* 2.10.5.
[xxii] In original: "discordiam."
[xxiii] Presumably Strauss's translation. Thomas Hobbes, *De Cive* (1642), chapter 3, section 32.

Not every action or passion[xxiv] however admits of the observance of a mean.[xxv] Indeed the very names of some directly imply evil, for instance delight at evil,[xxvi] shamelessness, envy, and, of actions, adultery, theft, murder. All these and similar actions and passions[xxvii] are blamed as being bad in themselves; it is not the excess or deficiency of them that we blame. It is impossible therefore ever to go right in regard to them—one must always be wrong; nor does right or wrong in their case depend on the circumstances, for instance, whether one commits adultery with the right woman, at the right time, in the right way[xxviii] [laughter]; the mere commission of any of them is wrong. One might as well suppose there could be a mean[xxix] and an excess and deficiency in acts of injustice or cowardice or profligacy, which would imply that one could have a medium amount of excess and of deficiency, an excessive amount of excess and a deficient amount of deficiency.[xxx] But just as there can be no excess or deficiency in moderation[xxxi] and justice, because the mean is in a sense an extreme, so there can be no observance of the mean nor excess nor deficiency in the corresponding vicious acts mentioned above, but however they are committed, they are wrong; since, to put it in general terms, there is no such thing as observing a mean in excess or deficiency, nor as exceeding or falling short in the observance of a mean. (1107a8-27)

LS: Ya. Now this is a remarkable passage. There are actions and passions, Aristotle says here, that are simply bad and regarding which there cannot be a right mean, an excess or a defect. And one cannot say, for example, as a classical Greek author says of the Spartans, "They taught their boys to steal well," meaning: so that they would not be caught.[xxxii] This could be used only in a metaphoric sense, namely, insofar as you can speak of a good safecracker and of similar things. Just as there cannot be an excess or defect of the virtues themselves, one cannot be moderately virtuous or moderately vicious. Surely not moderately virtuous: either you are virtuous; then you are wholly and not moderately. The alternative would be something like Machiavelli, who spoke of a middle way, using an Aristotelian expression, *la via del mezzo*. But he understood by the middle way, sometimes at least, a middle way between virtue and vice, by which you have the best of both worlds. But here is the question; there is a difficulty of which some of you will have been aware. How does Aristotle know that these things he mentions here are base or bad? How does he know that? After all, this is meant to be a philosophic book, and therefore the question must be raised. Yes?

Student: . . .

[xxiv] In Rackham's translation: "emotion."
[xxv] In Rackham's translation: "a due mean."
[xxvi] In Rackham's translation: "malice."
[xxvii] In Rackham's translation: "feelings."
[xxviii] In Rackham's translation: "right manner."
[xxix] In Rackham's translation: "a due mean."
[xxx] In Rackham's translation: "temperance."
[xxxi] In Rackham's translation: "temperance."
[xxxii] Plutarch, *Lives*, "Lycurgus."

LS: Yes. Everyone who is not corrupted by self-interest would admit that, but if you want a reason, Aristotle would say: Yes, well, what would happen if these things were changed? Since he proves in his *Politics* later on that private property is needed and that the monogamous family is needed in order to have a good society, these prohibitions follow as a matter of course. Yes?

Student: . . . that this might be a strange example, but at beginning of the *Phaedrus* kind of argument . . . the argument that's made in favor of the non-lover, which is sort of, in a curious way, arguing for moderation in terms of *erōs* and Socrates is arguing against that but from a different claim . . .

LS: Yes, but is not the moderation regarding *erōs* exactly what people understand by moderation, *sōphrosynē*? Is this not in a way the most important part of moderation, more important than moderation regarding food and drink?

Same Student: Well, yes, but . . . I would agree but I was thinking that something . . . virtue . . . peace . . . about arguing for moderation and things that . . .

LS: Well, the only thing I can say here—and this is a very long question, the *Phaedrus*—is this: I think Socrates is working his way toward the following distinction. There is one sphere in which to be moderate is absurd, and that's philosophy. If you say of a man, "He is a moderate philosopher," that is not a true philosopher. But another thing is speech, speech as distinguished from thinking, and speech must be moderate. The whole work, the *Phaedrus*, deals with with erotic speeches, and therefore with the two ingredients: (a) *erōs*; (b) speech. Speech must be moderate, but thinking cannot be moderate if it is true thinking. But I cannot—you want to . . .

Student: I was going to say, how about "moderation in pursuit of justice is no vice"?

LS: No. Moderation in pursuit of justice is vice according to what Aristotle says. Is vice. Yes, Aristotle would say—I remind you again of this famous . . . virtue is an extreme; at the same time a peak, a high extreme. What you mean by it, whether political action should not be prudent: Aristotle will of course say yes, but that does not mean [that] this precisely is a just thing. The man who is concerned with what is feasible without violence or bloodshed and so on, he precisely is a more just man than a man who, in the name of justice . . .[xxxiii] and it leads to civil war. That is what he would say. Mr. . . .

Student: Aren't some crimes more vicious than other crimes of the same kind?

LS: Sure, sure.

Same Student: And doesn't that imply an excess and deficiency of some kind, if only analogously?

LS: No, one would safely say petty theft is less bad than murder.

[xxxiii] There is a brief gap in the tape here.

Same Student: But let's just take two murders. Couldn't one murder be worse than another?

LS: Sure, naturally. But that doesn't do away with the fact that they are in both cases murder and crimes.

Same Student: I understand, but the point here is that there is no excess and deficiency with respect to certain kinds of action.

LS: Yes, as Aristotle said: you cannot raise the question, say, murder committed under such and such circumstances is good. That you can never say. You can only say murder committed in such and such circumstances is *more excusable* than murder done under other circumstances. But what is excusable is of course in need of excuse. It is bad. This would cause no difficulty. There is a great difficulty here, to which I will come, but not—you wanted to say something?

Student: I was interested in one statement about murder being bad no matter . . . I think . . . an idea perhaps . . . brought up before in respect to theft, murder or . . . you say . . . are bad, period. I think . . . the idea, the fact that theft can—

LS: Pardon?

Same Student: Theft can be good. Murder can be good. Do you think he would deny this?

LS: Yes, absolutely, he denied it here.

Same Student: But if your neighbor is insane and has a gun in his house?

LS: Yes, but then it is not murder. Then it is not theft.

Same Student: Theft's theft, is it not?

LS: No. I'm aware of this question, but I will come to it very soon. But now let me—the difficulty in terms of Aristotle's text is this. You remember that he had spoken in an earlier passage, 1104a3 to 6, of the fact that in moral matters not even the universal statements, or the general statements, are simply exact or true. There is nothing stable in this view. Now are the things he mentioned here—murder and so on—not universal things of the greatest exactness? Do these rules not say simply: "Thou shalt not murder. Period. No ifs, no buts," as we all have heard it or as we all understand it, although such questions as you raised will come up? Now what is the difficulty? I mean, Aristotle says murder is always bad, but if we take such a case as you referred to, say, the mad man with the gun, it might be necessary to kill him or it might be necessary to take away the gun. You remember, that's the beginning of the discussion in Plato's *Republic*. You know? That is the first question coming up in the *Republic*. Now what is the answer of

Plato and Aristotle and of many men since? Well, this would not be murder, nor would it be theft, because it is always understood—take the simple case which Plato discusses: a man has borrowed from you a gun, and then in the meantime he has become insane, and then he comes to you and wants his gun. And it would seem to be only just to return the gun to him, and yet you don't do it, because why? There is another principle to which you refer, tacitly or explicitly: justice must be good, salutary. Now if the just action, the *seemingly* just action, is in the circumstances not salutary but harmful, then you must not do it. The legislator may spell this out in more precise terms, or he may fail to do so. At any rate, our judgment would be guided by the consideration that all virtues must be salutary. And therefore if the action apparently dictated by justice, or courage or whatever it may be, is patently not salutary, then you must not do it. And of course salutary does not mean merely salutary to me or to you but to the society at large.

Student: Then these activities are only bad in regard to . . .

LS: Pardon?

Same Student: These activities—murder, theft, or adultery—are just activities, then they cannot be called bad, whether—

LS: Yes. Well, then we would never call them murder. So you would have to use a different term. According to the ordinary translation of the Ten Commandments, the Ten Commandments say: "Thou shalt not kill." Now that is of course simply the wrong translation, however old the translation may be, because as you can easily see by reading the Old Testament, Moses demanded killing in not a few cases, so he cannot have contradicted himself so grossly in such a matter. So one should translate it "Thou shalt not murder." And killing comprises both good and bad killing: murder and nonmurder. And how to draw the line, that's a very great difficulty. The example with which the classics were most familiar is, of course, that of war. I mean, what is done in war, the killing of enemy soldiers, is not regarded as murder—I mean, except by some people who have the extreme view that every killing is bad, which is hard to maintain because then it might also lead to the consequence that one should not kill any other living beings, including bacilli, and then one comes into certain troubles into which Albert Schweitzer came with this notion.[xxxiv] But then the line—for some centuries, it was possible to say that the killing of enemy soldiers is not murder but killing of enemy civilians is murder. But with the progress of military technology, this distinction has become inapplicable. Or take other cases. One cannot deny the legitimacy of espionage. If a man has found immensely important information, important for his country and its preservation, and is prevented from bringing it home by a perfectly innocent bystander: if he would push him away in such a manner that he dies as a consequence of that, is this an evil action? So we find many, many cases which lead to this consequence.

But we seem to have deviated from Aristotle, but not quite. We find some Aristotelian evidence that he held this view, the view that there is nothing, no rule of this kind which is universally valid. There is a notion, known to us through the tradition, which brings out

[xxxiv] Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965), German and French minister, scholar, and physician.

this idea that there are principles of actions, rules of actions which are universally valid. That is called sometimes natural law and natural right. Now Aristotle discusses natural law and natural right both in his *Rhetoric* and in a single page of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. He gives quite a few examples, some examples of natural law and natural right. None of these examples here are mentioned there. So the Aristotelian evidence, which shows that this is not the last word of Aristotle, is supplied by his statements or nonstatements on natural right and natural law. By "nonstatements" I mean his silences, not in the sense in which they say now "a non-person," and so on. Good. Yes. Now let us read the end of this section.

Reader:
We must not however rest content with stating this in general,[xxxv] but must show that it applies to the particular virtues. In practical discussions,[xxxvi] although general statements[xxxvii] have a—[xxxviii] (1107a28-30)

LS: —action among people of decent breeding and so forth, and make other specifications. Then we may come to various universally valid statements, where all sensible men would agree. But we would not find this exactness, the truth, in the rules themselves. That is the characteristic point.

Now in order to fulfill his promise, Aristotle speaks in the sequel of the various virtues and vices, the purpose being to show that in each case a virtue is a mean flanked by two extremes: an excess or a defect. The examples are simple. For example, courage, the virtue; cowardice on the one hand and over-boldness on the other. In the case of moderation, i.e., the proper posture towards sensible pleasures, indulgence, [we have] self-indulgence on the one extreme, and on the other extreme, complete insensitivity to the pleasures of senses. The right mean is moderation. The same thing applies to other matters like anger. We have gentleness in the mean, inability to get angry, which is a defect, and on the other extreme, constant irascibility, a kind of savagery. And so on in all cases. Now this will be taken up by Aristotle in detail in books 3 and 4, where he discusses the various virtues.

Now there are a few points—we cannot read this all—but we can perhaps read a few points. Let us turn to 1108a30.

Reader:
There are also modes of observing a mean in the sphere of and in relation to the passions.[xxxix] [For though the sense of shame is not a virtue, it is praised and so is the modest man.][xl]

[xxxv] In Rackham's translation: "this general definition."
[xxxvi] In Rackham's translation: "practical philosophy."
[xxxvii] In Rackham's translation: "universal principles."
[xxxviii] The tape was changed at this point.
[xxxix] In Rackham's translation: "emotions."
[xl] The bracketed sentence occurs at the end of this paragraph in Rackham's text, which deviates from Bekker.

LS: The "bashful" man. Yes?

Reader:
For in these also, one man is spoken of as bashful[xli] and another as excessive—for example the fearful[xlii] man, whose sense of shame[xliii] takes alarm at everything; while he that is deficient in shame, or abashed at nothing whatsoever, is shameless, and the man of middle character is modest or bashful. [xliv]

Again, Righteous Indignation is the observance of a mean between Envy and delight in evil[xlv]—

LS: "Delight in evil." Some of you will have heard the German word *Schadenfreude*. The English language doesn't have such a word, but the Greek and the German language have it. Yes?

Reader:
And these qualities are concerned with pain and pleasure felt at the fortunes of one's neighbors. The righteously indignant man is pained by undeserved good fortune; the jealous man exceeds him and is pained by all the good fortune of others; while the man who delights in evil[xlvi] so far falls short of being pained that he actually feels pleasure. (1108a30-b6)

LS: That is the point which Aristotle will make clear later on. He will not discuss the case of the man of righteous indignation here in this work, at any rate. He will discuss a sense of shame, and [he] makes it clear that sense of shame is not a virtue because it presupposes that you make mistakes of which you are ashamed. Now the perfect gentleman does not make mistakes, and therefore he doesn't have a sense of shame. So the sense of shame is fitting only [for] the young, who cannot be supposed to have reached that pinnacle of propriety of the perfect gentleman. But if we see this enumeration of the three kinds of men—the men of moral indignation, and the envious man, and the man who derives pleasure from seeing man in an evil condition, a bad condition—[we might ask]: is there no one who enjoys the well-being of all men or at least of all who deserve well-being? Is this not a strange omission in Aristotle?

This is connected with another point. Aristotle discusses here altogether eleven moral virtues in this enumeration, and in an earlier enumeration of the passions, in 1105b11 to 12, he enumerates eleven passions. One of the passions is compassion or mercy, but there

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[xli] In Rackham's translation: "moderate."
[xlii] In Rackham's translation: "bashful."
[xliii] In Rackham's translation: "whose modesty."
[xliv] In Rackham's translation: "and the man of middle character modest. For though Modesty is not a virtue, it is praised, and so is the modest man."
[xlv] In Rackham's translation: "Malice."
[xlvi] In Rackham's translation: "the malicious man."

is no virtue regarding mercy, regarding the passion of mercy. That is very interesting, and that is connected with the point I raised before.

Now such a universal benevolence: there is no place for that in Aristotle. I mean, you can be benevolent only toward people you know, i.e., strictly speaking, your benevolence cannot be universal. What later on came to be called the virtue of humanity is in Greek *philanthropia*, philanthropy, and this is not a virtue. One can perhaps state the classical view about it as follows: there are some people who like birds, and there are others who like dogs, and there are also people who like human beings as human beings. That is an interesting trait, but it is not in itself a virtue, so that the other virtues, like justice, are much, much more important. You should read the end of book 2, by all means, but we cannot read it in class. Let us read a few more pages, in 1109b7.

Reader:
We must in everything be most of all on our guard against what is pleasant and against pleasure; for when pleasure is on the trial[xlvii] we are not impartial judges. The right course is therefore to feel towards pleasure as the elders of the people felt toward Helen, and to—

LS: Let me just say that we can perfectly understand that *someone* successfully abducted her. But as far as *our* city is concerned, the sooner she leaves it, the better. Yes?

Reader:
and to apply their words to her on every occasion; for if we roundly bid her to be gone, we should be less likely to err.

These then, to sum up the matter, are the precautions that will best enable us to hit the mean. But perhaps it is a difficult thing to do, and especially in particular cases: for instance it is not easy to define in what manner and with what people and on what sort of grounds and how long one ought to be angry; and in fact we sometimes praise men who err on the side of defect in this matter and call them gentle, sometimes those who are quick to anger and style them manly. However, we do not blame one who diverges a little from the right course, whether on the side of the too much or of the too little. (1109b7-20)

LS: Now this was a question which was raised by some of you: you know, this very great difficulty to draw a clear line. Yes. And now what is Aristotle's final decision? The next sentence, "We see the one who deviates considerably."

Reader:
But one who diverges more widely we blame,[xlviii] for his error is noticed.

LS: Yes. It's "noticed." That is important. It is noticed of course by other human beings. The implication here of the whole reasoning is the abstraction from an omniscient god

[xlvii] In Rackham's translation: "on her trial."
[xlviii] In Rackham's translation: "who diverges more widely, for his error."

who would see everything and judge nicely every deviation, however subtle. We have to do only with human judgment. Now one can say: well, but if this is so, if there is a certain crudeness of judgment inevitable in this sphere, how is this compatible with the exactness of virtue of which Aristotle had spoken before? The answer is given in the immediate sequel.

Reader:
Yet to what degree and how seriously a man must err to be blamed is not easy to define on principle. For in fact no—

LS: "Not easy to find by *logos*," by a universal or general statement. Yes?

Reader:
For in fact no object of perception is easy to define; and such questions of degree depend on particular circumstances, and the decision lies with perception. (1109b20-23)

LS: "*Aisthēsis*," sense perception, but now understood in an enlarged sense of the word: taste, feeling. But as I said before, Aristotle does not exclude completely the possibility that we can in many cases spell out this judgment of taste or feeling and give the precise reason why we should behave toward X in this situation in this manner and toward Y in that situation in another manner. That can be done, and that is even, I think, a good exercise to do that from time to time. Yes?

Student: How does this differ from the modern notions of the theory of moral sentiments . . .

LS: The question is ultimately this: how do we know the highest principles of conduct? Do we know them by feeling and only by feeling? That would be the question. There are two possibilities. For Aristotle, the feelings—or as he would say in this case: the desires, the longings—are only one part of the moral phenomenon. The other is reason; and reason may be theoretical or may be practical reason. That is the great difficulty here. And according to what Aristotle says most visibly in the sixth book, our moral character, our properly habituated desire, makes us perceive the end, whereas prudence or practical reason enables us to find the proper means for that end. For example, that courage is noble and that we desire to be courageous, that we owe to the proper upbringing. But that we know *this* action in *this* circumstance is brave but in *other* circumstances rash, or for that matter cowardly, that we are able to see through practical wisdom or prudence. And I would say that a doctrine of moral sentiments has no place for practical reason. That's the difference between them and Aristotle.

Same Student: It works very well in a limited situation.

LS: Yes. Well, that is probably true of every theory, because otherwise it would never have found any taker at any time. Mr. Zinman?

Mr. Zinman: Is there reason to be exact about these hierarchic virtues?

LS: Well, Aristotle doesn't raise any particular claim regarding it. He enumerates these virtues without giving a reason why he proceeds in this manner. Nor does he assert [that] it is complete. We would have to find out by studying it: is there any principle guiding the arrangement that you begin with courage and end, at least as far as the moral virtues are concerned, with justice? Is there any reason? Aristotle doesn't give them to you, at least not explicitly; you will have to put quite a few twos together to get some [reason].

But what Aristotle would say, I think, is this: well, if it is not complete, why is it not? Is anything missing? For example, we would say that we miss an equivalent of the quality of mercy. Well, in the sense in which it is meant in the *Merchant of Venice*, Aristotle would say that he has provided for it by the quality of equity in the section on justice. And in the other sense, as far as it is a mere passion, commiseration or so, he doesn't have a virtue corresponding to that. Then we would have to argue that out, of course, but he has his reasons. For example, one of the virtues well known in classical antiquity, as you know from Plato, is piety. Aristotle silently drops it. The task of the interpreter of Aristotle is to find out the reasons[7] [for] that silence, that silent dropping. Aristotle does not give them in these terms, but he gives them in a perhaps more indirect way, and one has to settle for that. That's the only procedure.

The exactness—I think there is an exactness there. On the whole, it is an ascent, the order [of the virtues], but this is qualified by other considerations. For example, magnanimity, which is a very high virtue in Aristotle and has to do with high honors, precedes in this order the right posture towards small honors, and the right posture towards small honors would simply be lower in rank than the right posture towards high honors. But the reason here is that there was no name for the latter virtue, whereas there was a name for the other: magnanimity. So otherwise, one can say there is an order; generally speaking, it is an order of ascent. As for the omissions, one has to find out the reasons by considering the character of the virtues in question.

Student: If it's an order of ascent, why are the small social virtues after greatness-of-soul? Like friendliness and—

LS: Yes, there are two ways of understanding it. In a way, they are not as important as the massive virtues of courage, moderation, proper posture toward money or wealth, proper posture toward honor. But from another point of view, one could say that they are higher because they are more refined. The virtues of private social life require a higher degree of delicacy than the more massive virtues. One could say that. Yes?

Another Student: Aristotle's notion of the mean seems to be misleading in a certain way, because it makes it sound plausible . . . question of using these passions in the right way at the right time?

LS: Yes, sure.

Same Student: So for instance, one man could have more confidence than another man but be more cowardly, because the confidence would be directed towards the wrong things.

LS: Yes, but then he is not a virtuous man. Then he is rash or bold, not courageous.

Same Student: Would we say that he is erring on the side of rashness, or erring on the side of cowardice?

LS: I haven't heard your precise definition of the case.

Same Student: The man is very confident with regard to certain things, but cowardly or afraid with regard to things that are most important.

LS: You mean—give me an example. He is cowardly in war, and where is he going with that? Toward mice? [Laughter] I don't know what you mean.

Same Student: Suppose he is very confident in his relations to his immediate friends, and in defending his own opinion he has courage in his convictions but not in the case of war.

LS: Well, the former is only in a metaphoric sense courage, Aristotle would say, because by courage we understand primarily the willingness to face death. Now no one faces death by presenting to his friends his perhaps paradoxical opinions. That has to do with, how should I say, with his vanity or the absence of vanity. Whether he is afraid to take a beating or not afraid, that is not the sphere of courage. Yes?

Same Student: Suppose a man is willing to die for his convictions—for instance, Socrates or Thomas More—but not willing to expose himself to war.

LS: If he is willing to undergo death on the scaffold, then why should he not be able to undergo death on the field of battle? That might be connected with certain opinions which he has, namely, that on the scaffold he is only suffering that, but on the field of battle, he would also dish it out. And then one would have to go into this opinion, which Aristotle would regard as a wrong opinion, that one should not kill as a universal prohibition.

Student: But the fact that he has a wrong opinion, this would influence whether or not he would be judged a virtuous man.

LS: Yes.

Same Student: Even in the sense of courage?

LS: Yes, because it consists of two elements: an element of desire, of proper desire or proper aversion, and the element of practical wisdom, of prudence. So that if men have

wrong opinions in practical matters, then to that extent they lack prudence. This is somewhat complicated. I spoke of it on earlier occasion, when I pointed out the difficulty that in one respect prudence is the queen of action, you know, and sovereign there. And yet prudence can be endangered by wrong theoretical views, and therefore prudence is in need of a theoretical defense, namely, of a theoretical refutation of the false opinions. I'm not responsible for this complication, but we have to face it.

Next time we will begin with book 3, and I hope you will read the end of book 2.

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[1] Deleted "he."
[2] Moved "rightly."
[3] Deleted "would agree."
[4] Deleted "differently higher."
[5] Deleted "out it before."
[6] Moved "of daring."
[7] Deleted "of."

Session 13: March 25, 1968

Leo Strauss: [In progress] —of book 2. Let us use this occasion for surveying the first two books, at least the points which are most important. Now the first theme is, as you remember, happiness, and we are told that virtue is the core of happiness. The virtuous man, the *spoudaios*, derives the highest kind of pleasure from resisting the more common kind of pleasures and from not ceding to pain. And from this it follows that the virtuous man can never be *simply* miserable. Take the example, Priam. So to come back to the main point, virtue is the core of happiness. Yet happiness, in contradistinction to virtue, is venerable, whereas virtue is not. Happiness has the status of blessing and belongs to a higher order. This is one great difficulty of the argument of book 1.

The second point that I would like to remind you of is this: moral knowledge is valuable only for action, as Aristotle says. Yet it is of higher rank than the knowledge implied in the arts, the various arts. It is, however—although Aristotle does not say this here yet—moral knowledge is of lower rank than theoretical knowledge. That will come into the open in book 6 only.

In 1105a26 following, Aristotle speaks most clearly about the difference between the arts and the virtues. In the case of the virtues, the choice, selection of the correct must be made for its own sake, whereas in the case of the arts, the choice—say, of the right kind of leather—is ultimately made with a view to the gain, profit or however you call it, or convenience of the artisan.

In 1107a8 and following, Aristotle speaks of universally valid rules of action (or he seems to speak of them), namely, regarding murder, adultery, and so on. But these rules would all be negative rules; they wouldn't be positive rules. [They are] prohibitive rather than commanding proper. Now this is strange: here we have something general or universal which seems to be of the utmost exactness, under no circumstances, without any ifs and buts. But in other passages, like 1107a28 and following, Aristotle says [that] in actions, the particular utterances, the particular discourses are truer than the general ones. Is this only a somewhat loose statement abstracting from the remark about not murdering and so on, or has it to be taken very strictly? I suggested that the solution to this difficulty has to be found via a consideration of Aristotle's teaching on natural right and natural law in the fifth book of the *Ethics* on the one hand, and in the *Rhetoric* on the other.

Now as for the precise definition of virtue, i.e., moral virtue: it has to do with the mean with a view to us. This causes no difficulty in the example which Aristotle discusses most clearly, namely, that of moderation, so that the amount of food which a man of three hundred pounds demands in the prime of his age is different from that which an old man of one hundred pounds demands. And the same applies to drink and so on. But what about the other virtues? Is it there so clear that the mean is always with a view to us? Now the principle to which he defers, if he does not refer, [is this]: in actions, we are

never merely observers or spectators. We are ourselves involved; therefore there is a relativity of the correct or noble to the acting human being. For example, is he healthy or weak? Is he rich or poor, whatever it may be? A simple example, or perhaps a particularly beautiful example of that is that given by Aristotle at the beginning of the discussion of magnanimity. A magnanimous man is a man who demands for himself high honors while deserving them, say, a man like Churchill, if he had demanded high honors for himself. But if he demands high honors for himself without deserving them, that is a deplorable case. But there is another case: that a man does not demand high honors for himself and he doesn't deserve high honors. Aristotle is not a vicious man; Aristotle says he's "*sōphrōn*," which in this context we could translate by "modest." The magnanimous man is not modest according to conventional notions of modesty. But if someone has no merits and knows it and acts on it, then he is a modest and sensible man. So we see here a relativity to the acting human being: is he a man of great merit or is he not?

Now this relativity to the human being does not mean that moral knowledge—that is to say, the choice of the right thing in the circumstances—is so-called personal or incommunicable knowledge, although in a sense it is so. Aristotle refers in a passage which we have read to sense perception, which we may understand to mean here something like taste and feeling in modern times, taste and feeling in contradistinction to rational discourse. But this is not Aristotle's last word on it. What Aristotle has in mind is this: every sensible man, every *phronimos*, including Mr. A, would agree that a man circumstanced like Mr. A, here and now, would have to act in this or this manner. Maybe no other man now living would ever have to act in this manner, but that a man circumstanced in this way has to act in this manner, all sensible men would equally admit. There is no relativism here. Now one could find a difficulty in the following fact. Aristotle mentions as an example of a sensible man in the sixth book Pericles. This does not mean that he was an admirer of Pericles, but he took up a popular example in order to make clear[1] [the distinction between Pericles] and his philosophic teacher, Anaxagoras, who was not sensible but wise, meaning theoretically wise. Now in Thucydides's *History*, Pericles's sensibleness is presented very powerfully, especially in the statement about the war policy: Athens is going to win the war if she does not engage in expansionism during the war, tries to keep her fleet, her navy in being, and preserves her territory to the extent to which it is fortified by the Great Wall. And this was neglected after Pericles's death, [and] in the end, Athens' defeat. But then there comes up another man called Alcibiades, a kinsman of Pericles but of very different character, and Alcibiades demands the expedition to Sicily, the conquest of Sicily. And this fails, but not because it was intrinsically impossible, according to what Thucydides says. It would have been possible but for certain follies of the Athenian *dēmos*, who drove out Alcibiades; and therefore Nicias, who was not cut out for such a thing, was in command in Sicily.

So here we have two sensible men, one saying, "No expansion during the war," and the other saying, "Expansion during the war, if properly done, is perfectly feasible." What would Aristotle say to this point? I'm sure we could find other examples, perhaps even from contemporary life. Yes?

Student: Was Alcibiades a sensible man?

LS: . . . But his policy was sensible, according to Thucydides's presentation.

Same Student: I don't think that Thucydides presents him as a sensible man.

LS: But the policy was.

Same Student: The policy could have been sensible in a certain sense, but something which succeeds by an inch is not particularly sensible.

LS: Thucydides goes beyond that. But you are quite right with your questions. Aristotle doesn't discuss this case, of course, but he lays down the principles. And behind Alcibiades's notion there is the prospect of further conquest, conquest even of the whole of Sicily, not only of Syracuse: of Carthage and so on. So indefinite expansion; and if you state it in clear theoretical terms, a universal expansion. But this policy as such is explicitly condemned by Aristotle in the seventh book of the *Politics*. So we would have to come back to say that, as you rightly said, by considering Alcibiades's other acts, that he is not a model of a sensible man; whereas in the case of Pericles, it makes some sense to say that he is. That's very true.

Now the last point I would like to mention is this. Aristotle has no doubt that a perfectly sensible man—"sensible" is the convenient English translation for the Greek word *phronimos* and for the Latin *prudentia*. So Aristotle has no doubt that the perfectly sensible, i.e., virtuous man is possible, which means a man who never sins and never has cause to repent. This question came up the last time. Here we see very clearly the fundamental difference between Aristotle and the Bible, and it would be unintelligent, not to use moral expressions, not to see this difference. A very frequent way of speaking about this matter today is: well, Aristotle was a Greek and the Bible is non-Greek. In other words, there is a difference of two *cultures*. Now this will not do under any circumstances, because the claims raised by each, by Aristotle or Greek philosophy in general and by the Bible, are "quote absolute." Aristotle does not say, "This is good for Greeks": he seeks the human good, human virtue. And similar things apply to the Bible.

Now these claims must be faced. If they are not faced, we have already decided against both whether we admit it or are aware of it or not, and we have decided against them in favor of a third alternative. Most commonly, the third alternative is what we may call pluralism, namely, all cultures are of equal respectability. And you can't blame Aristotle for being a Greek nor Josiah for being a Jew; they couldn't help that. But on the other hand, you cannot expect that what they demanded is in any way important for us living today. There are of course not only these two, but *n* cultures. Now one can call this view pluralism, but one must see, and that is decisive, that pluralism is a monism of sorts, namely, pluralism in this sense means what is good. Whether Aristotle's doctrine is right, or the biblical doctrine, or the doctrine of the Sanskrits and so on, that is wholly irrelevant. We know what is good: what is good is to be of universal tolerance and to enjoy viewing the manyness of human possibilities or cultures. Then this third alternative

has taken the place, say, of Aristotle's *Ethics*. That is the *minimum* one would have to demand. But without some moral principle, without some value system, as they call it today, it is impossible to say anything about matters of human importance. You wanted to say something? Please.

Student: No.

LS: No. I see. Well, I'm so unfortunate as always to have the impression that you want to say something. Perhaps this is an indirect way of encouraging you. Good. Yes, Mr. Wedergreen?

Student: . . . You say that we have to face the issue, but as soon we face the issue between Aristotle's *Ethics* and the Bible, haven't we also already decided, by our willingness to face that issue or by the way in which we resolve it?

LS: You mean decided in what way?

Same Student: For one or the other.

LS: No, what at least we are trying to do here is to understand this particular alternative represented by Greek philosophy, and more specifically in the form this was given by Aristotle. And we look at it and see what recommends it and perhaps also what speaks against it, and that this interpretation cannot be done without some enthusiasm and therefore creating the impression of a hundred percent identification, that is a minor flaw for which I ask your forgiveness. But I would say: does it not make sense that before you make a decision, you will listen to the teacher in question and hear what he has to say? The situation with which we are confronted today is this: that especially in the social sciences, with which we are here concerned, there is something like the denial of philosophy altogether, popularly known as positivism, and this is indeed untenable. That I think one can be shown. And also, this alternative which I called now pluralism is also a very popular view today and [is] of course underlying in fact positivism but is not openly avowed, even this, I believe, is an untenable view. And therefore I think the alternatives on the level of Aristotle and the Bible are of a quite higher dignity and a quite higher importance.

Mr. Shulsky: . . . there is the further problem that, going about the study of Aristotle in a serious way and using, you know, trying to see what the evidence is that Aristotle presumes and so forth—in a way it implies, even if it isn't explicit, a dependence on the types of methods of reason and of observation which uses the natural faculties and so forth. It would seem to be an issue, at least with respect to the Bible, and so in that sense, I think maybe that's what Mr. Wedergren meant, that we're sort of deciding the issue by going about it in terms of our own, the sort of natural faculties, Aristotle—

LS: I do not quite understand. Are you referring to the fact that the biblical teachings are meant to be believed rather than . . .

Mr. Shulsky: Well, that they're meant to have a support that wouldn't come up in a discussion of Aristotle, I mean, according to the . . .

LS: Yes, but on the other hand, are you not compelled when you are confronted—say, for example, the term "humility" is used in Aristotle only in a negative sense? And the same is true of its use by Plato and Xenophon, at least in most places, whereas in the Bible it is a term of high praise. But would it not be incumbent on the interpreter of the Bible to make clear that this is not a degrading view to say that humility (in Greek, *tapeinotēs*, "lowliness") is not simply low but something very high? Is it not incumbent on the theologian to show that we, and not only we but Aristotle and Plato themselves, have some grounds for being humble? Therefore must there not be—is it possible for a theological teaching to be presented without recourse to argument, without reference to what we can know by our unassisted reason?

Mr. Shulsky: Well, it would just seem that there's—I mean, part of the problem is that the only way you could prove, I think, the way in which a theologian would attempt to prove, that there's something good about humility, that it is not the low thing that it might strike one to be immediately, is on the basis of the type of theoretical considerations that Aristotle would consider to be somewhat out of the way with respect to a practical science.

LS: Well, the Aristotelian self-denying ordinance is not necessarily binding on the interpreter if the exclusion of theoretical knowledge would lead to a distortion of the moral facts. If this would prove to be the case, then one has to . . . Aristotle and has to say: We have a very high regard for you, Aristotle, but here you are wrong.

Mr. Shulsky: Well, wouldn't that—

LS: But I don't believe that that is necessary. If you think only of the case of humility: you do not have to become a physicist or a mathematician to argue that out, you simply have to discuss the question: is it possible for man to be so impeccable and so self-satisfied as Aristotle seems to assume? Think only of the reasons for humility which are supplied by theoretical knowledge itself. After all, however final Aristotle might have thought his account of the whole to be, even in his lifetime, but surely later on, it has become very questionable. Who dares to say today that the heavenly bodies are living beings—you know, sun, moon, and the stars—merely because when we look up to them we see that they move and we don't see anything pushing them, so they must have the principle of motion in themselves; but a being which has the principle of motion in itself is a living being, hence the stars are living beings? Genesis, the first chapter, knew already that the stars are not gods, are not living beings. So the author of the Genesis, if we take the now-prevailing view that it was not God but some human being, divined here a truth which Aristotle did not divine. So in other words, [a case for] humility can be made against Aristotle, and the same would apply to other things. For example, the chapter on magnanimity in the fourth book, which is *the* antibiblical statement in a way in the whole *Ethics*, because here pride—a noble pride, but pride nevertheless—is presented as the crown of all virtue. This would have to be considered. Indeed, if the term "faith,"

in contradistinction to understanding, has any meaning, it means that the acceptance of the biblical teaching can never be possible on rational grounds alone. But this doesn't mean that rational grounds may not be sufficient to show the limitations of, say, Aristotle. Mr. Wedergreen?

Student: I didn't quite follow you. It seems to me that there are so many things that go against what you've been saying. I'm thinking, for instance, of Thomas simply as a fine commentator who says that the highest science is not based on reason but is based on some other science.

LS: Yes, sure.

Same Student: Consequently, if one—if it was important to you, not just as a theoretical issue, but important *to you* to know those kinds of things, then one simply couldn't—I mean, how can you decide? You can't say: Well, I'll decide on the basis of reason, because the principles of the highest reason . . . accessible . . .

LS: But what is the principle of Thomas's criticism of Aristotle, I mean, [on] all points where he deviates from him? That Aristotle did not prove his point. That Aristotle did not prove his point. And Aristotle claims to have proved his point. The biblical theologian does not claim to have proved his point, and therefore what Thomas shows is merely that it is not demonstrably false, that it is not demonstrably nonsense, the unbelievable . . . And so what Thomas proves is that it is *possible* to hold the biblical beliefs. He cannot make the biblical beliefs rational and therefore compelling. That's impossible, because that contradicts their nature as beliefs.

Be this as it may, I hope you will agree with me on a very small but not negligible point that I tried to make: that it is necessary to understand the relation of, say, biblical morality and Aristotelian or philosophic morality. And there are surely striking differences between the two. Humility I mentioned, but I could as well have said mercy. Mercy has some very . . . Yes?

Student: Aristotle gives, say, many examples of philosophers, but he gives two examples of sensible men, maybe only one. I don't know . . But Plato doesn't give any, I don't think.

LS: Oh, Plato gives some. Let me see. They are there in Plato. But the point is this: in Plato we have this phenomenon of which I spoke before regarding Aristotle. In Plato the sun, of which I spoke, is always there; and therefore the things which are peculiarly visible and attractive in moonlight are not so attractive in the pages of Plato, meaning because Socrates is always present in one way or the other. But now let me see. Who is presented as a particularly sensible man in Plato? That is a good question. Help me a bit.

Student: Gorgias.

LS: Gorgias is not sensible. Gorgias is a man who is unable to continue to talk because he has talked so much already. That's the way in which he is introduced. No, that won't do. And Protagoras is presented as a man who makes one blunder after another. Socrates confronts him three times in a row with choices, and he invariably picks the wrong one. And he is a teacher of prudence! That is—no, honestly, you find nice men, I mean at first glance, at least, like Cephalus. But you have no—you would say he's a sensible man?

Student: He obeyed the law. [Laughter]

LS: But if the law is terrible—

Same Student: The laws were not terrible. The laws of Athens were reasonable laws.

LS: These laws brought Socrates to the hemlock.

Same Student: Yes, but Socrates thought them so reasonable that he drank it.

LS: Yes, well, because the alternatives were worse than to obey the Athenian laws.

Same Student: So if Socrates was justified in obeying the laws, so was Cephalus.

LS: All right. Yes, but surely not for the same reasons. But let us—I'm willing to grant you that Cephalus is a reasonable man. All right.

Another Student: . . . How about Theaetetus, who in the conversation between Euclides and Terpsion at the beginning of the *Theaetetus* is presented as a manly person but as . . .

LS: Theaetetus. Yes, he is a young, very pleasant mathematician, and very able as a mathematician.

Same Student: The conversation between Euclides and Terpsion theoretically takes place much later than the conversation—

LS: Yes.

Same Student: and Theaetetus has distinguished himself in battle—

LS: Yes.

Same Student: and been well spoken of.

LS: And was a good citizen. Yes, you could say that. So there are—let us then grant that there are some examples. But we had some difficulties, because there are so many more who are not sensible men, either because they are too young or because there is something more deeply wrong. For example, in the *Charmides*, Charmides and Critias—well, they later on became tyrants. So their sensibleness cannot have been *too* strong.

There must have been a little worm gnawing at it. So that is—yes, that is an interesting question, an interesting approach to Plato. Yes?

Another Student: I was thinking that I would like to go further and ask, well, if—I mean the way that Socrates speaks of Pericles in the *Gorgias*, for example, and compare it with Aristotle's statement in book 6 that Pericles was a sensible man. Well, that's a striking difference, but when you think about it, is there any ground for saying that there is more likely, from Aristotle's point of view, more likely to be more sensible men in the true sense of the term than there are to be—in other words, who would in his view—what sensible man and what philosopher?

LS: From which point of view?

Same Student: From Aristotle's point of view.

LS: Surely much more sensible. After all, the people who manage their households, and short of great economic crises they [not only] survive[2] but put something by for a rainy day, that is one sign of sensibleness. They are quite common. Quite common.

Same Student: Sensible on the level of Pericles.

LS: Oh, on this higher level, even there, I believe there are. Well, let us make a qualification: there may be situations in which it is so difficult to act sensibly that it is practically impossible, that people have to ultimately flip a coin, which is a kind of declaration of bankruptcy for sensibleness.

Student: I believe last week you referred to Socrates as being the most sensible man.

LS: That is true, because here sensibilility is understood in the Socratic sense of the word, and according to Socrates virtue is knowledge or *phronēsis*, prudence. But this is not the common understanding.

Same Student: Would it be Aristotle's understanding?

LS: No, of course not. He rejects that. For Aristotle, the question of what is virtue is beyond the interest and the ken of the perfect gentleman. For Socrates, the perfect gentleman is precisely the man who devotes most of his waking time to thinking about what is virtue. Surely that is very different.

Same Student: That would coincide with Plato's reflection on Theaetetus, namely, that he washed out as a theoretical man, and that he didn't fulfill the promise that he displayed in youth, in answer to Mr. . . .

LS: Do you accept that?

Another Student: . . .

LS: Well, one can of course say that Euclides and Terpsion are not Plato. And one would have to see how to translate that as to express the view of Plato himself.

Student: I think it shows not that . . . Theaetetus [is] theoretically contemptible, it shows naturally the tension between, or the possibility that one could be a perfectly good and sensible man without being . . .

LS: Yes, this is another matter. But if we speak of a decent man, a gentleman in the ordinary colloquial sense, there are of course quite a few, and therefore also in Plato's dialogues. Laches and Nicias are of course nice gentlemen, although not very successful as generals. [Laughter] Let me say not *always* successful, because Nicias was successful for quite some time, but then only when he was confronted with an insoluble difficulty in Sicily, then he failed. And Laches also failed in Sicily, that is true. But, you see, what Plato also does, if one reads him carefully, is to supply us with a kind of excellence. For example, Cephalus is the perfect grandfather, I would say. Everyone would wish to have such a nice grandfather, at first reading. And yet, if you look more closely, you see there are some indelicacies which he commits and which lead to a changed view of his being. When he is asked what use he makes of his money—you remember?—and then he says: Well, of course I pay my debts to gods and men, because any day I may die, and I want to have a good conscience.

Student: . . .

LS: Yes, that is a very respectable motive, as far as it goes. But then the question arises: What did he use his money for when he was young? And that you have to figure out for yourself. [Laughter] And then it is no longer so simple, the phenomenon of Cephalus, and similar considerations apply to all of them. Good. Now let us turn then to book 3, if Mr. Pangle will begin.

Reader:
Virtue however is concerned with passions[i] and actions, and it is only voluntary actions for which praise and blame are given; those that are involuntary are condoned, and sometimes even pitied. Hence it seems to be necessary for the student of ethics to define the difference between the Voluntary and the Involuntary; and this will also be of service to the legislator in assigning rewards and punishments. (1109b30-35)

LS: Let us stop here. "In assigning honors and punishments." Now of course he doesn't speak of "students of ethics"; he says "those who consider, make considerations regarding virtue," which is less technical. Now why does he suddenly take up this question of the voluntary and the unvoluntary? Now it will appear later that there is a connection with the problem of the voluntary and that of election or choice. And we have heard before that virtue is a habit of choosing, so Aristotle continues his analysis of virtue here. Virtue is a habit of choosing, therefore we have to know what is choice. And for some reasons not yet made clear, in order to understand choice we have to understand

[i] In Rackham's translation: "emotions."

voluntariness. There is one little difficulty: "voluntariness" reminds us of course of "*voluntas*," of the will. There is no Greek word for "will," and that is very strange. The word "will" comes from Latin, *voluntas*. There is no Greek word. The Greek word means rather "wish" than "will," as we will see very soon. Generally speaking, we can say right now that election is a species of the voluntary. Perhaps we should simply drop the word "voluntary" and speak of "spontaneous," in order to avoid any misleading suggestions. Now virtuous actions are praiseworthy and vicious actions are blameworthy. And therefore they are spontaneous. Nonspontaneous actions are not praiseworthy and blameworthy, with certain qualifications which Aristotle will speak of in the sequel.

Now this subject is necessary, first for those who make investigations about virtue, and secondly for the legislators. "Those who make investigations" (I'm speaking of observations regarding virtue): this may very well refer to people like the students of Aristotle. Involuntary actions deserve excuse and sometimes even pity. Aristotle does not elaborate on this because he assumes that everyone knows that. If you are forced to do it, literally forced—someone forces your finger to move a trigger by which to kill someone very dear to you—then we of course don't say [that] this man is a murderer of his nearest and dearest, but we have compassion with him. In other cases, we don't go so far as to have compassion, but we would at least excuse his action. We do not regard it as murder. The details will be explained in the sequel. Yes?

Reader:
It is then generally held that actions are involuntary when done under compulsion or through ignorance; and that an act is compulsory when its origin is from without, being of such a nature that the agent, who is really passive, contributes nothing to it: for example, when he is carried somewhere by stress of weather, or by people who have him in their power. (1109b35-1110a4)

LS: Yes. Now the unspontaneous actions are due either to violence or to ignorance, and Aristotle speaks first about unspontaneous actions due to violence. Yes. And the cases are quite clear: if someone is compelled, literally, by a storm, by a hurricane, to land in the midst of the house of somebody else and by his sudden falling down kills someone, he is clearly not responsible for the death of that man. And the same is true if human beings force him. Yes?

Reader:
But there is some doubt about actions done through fear of a worse alternative, or for some noble object—as for example if a tyrant having a man's parents and children in his power commands him to do something base, when if he complies their lives will be spared but if he refuses they will be put to death. It is open to question whether such actions are spontaneous or unspontaneous.[ii] A somewhat similar case is when cargo is jettisoned in a storm; apart from circumstances, no one voluntarily throws away his property, but to save his own life and that of his shipmates any sane man would do so. Acts of this kind then are 'mixed,'[iii] but

[ii] In Rackham's translation: "voluntary or involuntary."
[iii] In Rackham's translation: "'mixed' or composite."

they approximate rather to the spontaneous[iv] class. For at the actual time when they are done they are chosen or willed; and the end[v] of an act varies with the occasion, so that the terms 'spontaneous' and 'unspontaneous'[vi] should be used with reference to the time of action; now the actual deed is done spontaneously,[vii] for the origin of the movement of the parts of the body instrumental to the act lies in the agent; and when the origin of an action is in oneself, it is in one's own power to do it or not to do it.[viii] Such acts therefore are spontaneous, though perhaps unspontaneous[ix] apart from circumstances—for no one would choose to do any such thing in and for itself. (1110a4-19)

LS: What he says ("apart from circumstances," you said?) is in Greek "simply." You can even say "absolutely," but what is absolutely true is not true. It is true only by virtue of an abstraction, which for certain purposes is useful, but the truth resides in the full action, i.e., including the circumstances. I believe the examples are clear. In all these cases—I mean, the case of the tyrant with the children has acquired a new actuality in our century; for some centuries these cases were regarded as belonging to a remote past, but today these happen almost every day.

Now this gives rise to all kinds of questions. These are mixed actions, Aristotle says, yet they are voluntary. In other words, if the man, out of fear for his wife and children, betrays the most important secrets to an enemy, it is his responsibility. There are attenuating circumstances; that's another matter. But he commits high treason, that is what Aristotle seems to say. But still, this case is a mixed one. If it were merely saving his own life, there would be no question: he has to sacrifice his life. But if his nearest and dearest, especially people who cannot defend themselves, are involved, the case becomes mixed. Yes?

Student: I don't understand particularly when he says it is mixed, yes, but it falls into the sphere of voluntary action, particularly as the origins of the action are at the end in itself. Now it seems to me in two ways here that he sort of violates his own dictum set up earlier about—you might say about judging under the circumstances. Now for example, there's a great deal of difference if somebody from his own family is taken hostage and a close friend. Now by the token that a member of your family is of your own blood, I don't see how he can say that really the origin of the thing is linked up personally in him and is actually a part of him—

LS: Because he has a choice. He has a choice: he can or cannot reveal that secret.

Same Student: Well, but if the tyrant had me and he says, "Look you do this, or I'll shoot you," I have a choice.

[iv] In Rackham's translation: "voluntary."
[v] In Rackham's translation: "end or motive."
[vi] In Rackham's translation: "'voluntary' and 'involuntary'."
[vii] In Rackham's translation: "voluntarily."
[viii] In Rackham's translation: "in one's own power to do it or not."
[ix] In Rackham's translation: "voluntary, though perhaps involuntary."

LS: All right, but the mere fact that you can deliberate, if only for a minute, shows that, whereas in the case—if the tyrant's bodyguard or ten fellows compel you to pull the trigger in order thus to kill another enemy of his tyrannical regime, then you have no choice. You don't do it: your finger does it, in a way, but your finger as the instrument of the bodyguard. But in the case, in this case you decide. You may say that the decision goes without saying, but that's not quite true, because then you could also take the view of Hobbes and say [that] if you betray your country in order to save dear life, then you do not commit a crime because the greatest good which you have is your life—or at least the first good which you have is your life and on which all other goods depend, and therefore a man is even closer to himself than his nearest and dearest. And they can easily make an argument for that.

Student: Yes, but they can also make the argument, as many people have, that a person's family is really nothing more than an extension of one's self. It can come down to that, as opposed to making an argument, say, for example, that yes, I have a close friend but not to the extent that he's part of myself, really, the way my—

LS: All right, but if you are not entitled to betray your country in order to save your life, you are also not entitled to betray your country in order to save your nearest and dearest. That is Aristotle's position, it seems. He admits that there is a certain terrible pressure, but a pressure which does not do away with spontaneity, or responsibility, as we would say. Yes. Now let us go on.

Reader:
Sometimes indeed men are actually praised for deeds of this 'mixed' class, namely when they submit to some disgrace or pain as the price of some great and noble object; though if they do so without any such motive they are blamed, since it is contemptible to submit to a great disgrace with no advantage or only a trifling one in view.

LS: Now what does he have in mind here? For some mixed actions, properly done, men are even praised. For example, Socrates is compelled to be disgraced and to die, and yet he is praised for it. He didn't choose this wholly of his own, but he was confronted with this choice between the right and the wrong. He chose the disgraceful thing, because it is disgraceful to be executed. Good. These actions are voluntary. Socrates's action was voluntary, although he did not wish to be confronted with that choice. But once he was confronted with it, he was confronted with a choice. As he says, he could have run away before legal proceedings had come under way, and perhaps his accusers would have been very happy to get rid of him this way without the complications of a trial. Yes?

Reader:
In some cases again, such submission though not praised is condoned, when a man does something wrong through fear of penalties that impose too great a strain on human nature, and that no one could endure. Yet there seem to be some acts which a man cannot be compelled to do, and rather than do them he ought to submit to the most terrible death. (111019-27)

LS: Now let us stop here for one moment. Now literally translated, he says: "There are perhaps some things to which one cannot be compelled, or [to] which one ought not to be compelled, but one should rather die under the most terrible tortures than do them. For some mixed actions, there is not indeed praise, but forgiveness." According to Thomas's commentary, someone is threatened with being set on fire if he does not tell a jocular lie or if he does not commit acts that do not become his dignity. Now these are of course relatively harmless cases. Who would not tell a jocular lie—say, "I am six feet high" when I am not six feet high—under compulsion? Or who would not do something which ordinarily only a garbage collector would do, which doesn't befit his dignity, under terrible pressure by the tyrant? Which sensible man would not do it? No gentleman would blame that gentleman who is taking care of his garbage under such circumstances.[x] Yes.

But the question is: would it not also apply to a man who reveals a very important state secret to the enemy in order to prevent the torture-killing of his wife and children? We have seen that before. Could not one say that is a pressure going beyond what human nature can bear? I believe that would probably be decided differently in different ages. In ages in which martyrdom was demanded more as a matter of course than it is today, he would have probably decided differently than [he would] today. That one has to take into consideration. Yes?

Reader:
For instance, we think it ridiculous that Alcmaeon in Euripides' play is compelled by certain threats to murder his own mother![xi] (1110a27-29)

LS: Now how was he compelled? Well, his play has not been preserved. We simply know this: that he was compelled by his father's curses to kill his mother. In other words, his father cursed him: "If you don't kill her, I will do[3] terrible things [to you]." Is this the kind of pressure like that exerted by the tyrant? Aristotle says here again, before what we read, "perhaps." This creates some difficulties, because Aristotle sometimes uses "perhaps" as an elegant expression in order not to speak pedantically. Where he speaks of things which are quite sure, he says sometimes "perhaps," as we would say in an argument in order not to appear to be too crude, or to come down with a ton of bricks, you might say, "This is perhaps not so," as you say. But sometimes it is also meant more seriously, namely, it is an open question for him. Yes?

Reader:
But it is sometimes difficult to decide how far we ought to go in choosing to do a given act rather than suffer a given penalty, or in enduring a given penalty rather than commit a given action; and it is still more difficult to abide by our decision when made, since in most of such dilemmas the penalty threatened is painful and the deed forced upon us dishonourable, which is why praise and blame are bestowed according as we do or do not yield to such compulsion.

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[x] Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, §394.
[xi] In Rackham's translation: "his mother."

What kind of actions then are to be called 'compulsory'? (1110a29-b1)

LS: Let us stop here. Now the great difficulty is of course to judge properly in borderline cases, and [it is] still more difficult to act properly in borderline cases when you are exposed to the pressure of the tyrant or whatever it may be. You want to say something?

Student: I want to ask you about an example which seems . . . such items that are not involuntary . . . consider that actions . . . reason . . . voluntary seeking of knowledge . . . would help the prospects of . . .

LS: Can you—I mean, the question of ignorance will be taken up later. He speaks here only of violence. But since you brought it up, give me an example, so that I can see what you are driving at.

Same Student: . . . when, in his willingness to, for the sake of knowledge to pursue it, even when that pursuit holds the prospect of revealing . . .

LS: What kind of knowledge would he like to gain by that? Of how a human being dies? Then he should study medicine, and he will go to anatomical courses and pathological courses and see plenty of it. I do not see what you mean. You do not think of the case of Raskolnikov.[xii]

Same Student: No, I'm thinking of Oedipus.

LS: Oedipus's case is entirely different. He didn't know.

Same Student: But the question was that his action . . . involuntary. He didn't know.

LS: Sure, Oedipus would be acquitted by any civilized law court.

Same Student: Then the question becomes: what about the voluntary action to know the circumstances, when that knowledge seems to hold the promise of suffering and . . . would Aristotle say that that's . . .

LS: I still do not understand the case to which you refer. I mean, that Oedipus will be miserable despite the fact that a sensible law court would not condemn him, that is unfortunate. Therefore he is an object of compassion, as Aristotle said.

Student: . . . sends a messenger to find out about . . .

LS: I mean, if you take the situation as it is in Sophocles's *Oedipus*, he is given very good advice by an authoritative man, by Teiresias, who tells him, "Don't go into that." And if he is so obstinate, then he is severely punished for that. In difficult cases one should obey a wiser man than oneself.

[xii] Protagonist of Fyodor Dostoevsky's novel *Crime and Punishment* (1866).

Student: Yes, but . . . but it's also in one way helpful . . . and two . . .

LS: But how do you know that Teirisias would not have taken off the curse without Oedipus entering? We read this all too much from our modern point of view instead of following simple principles of common sense, commonsensical prudence. If you mean something much deeper than these things we have discussed hitherto, whether the myth does not also mean—this is never stated, at least in the part of *the* Oedipus story told us by Sophocles—that this is Oedipus's punishment for having found out *the* truth, solved *the* riddle of the Sphinx, so in other words, every theoretical man has in a manner killed his father and mated with his mother, then that is no longer a fit subject for discussion. [Laughter] But it is surely something to which Aristotle has given quite a bit of thought. Mr. Fielding?

Student: I wondered what Aristotle would say, or perhaps does say implicitly about the case of Alcibiades.

LS: He doesn't say anything. I looked [it] up yesterday, because I wasn't sure. In the *Athenian Constitution* he is not mentioned.

Same Student: But that would be a case in which a man is forced in some sense to decide—

LS: No, no, he's not forced. That is a modern view. Whether he wanted to—he was confronted with a choice between returning to Athens and [submitting] to judicial procedure there, which probably would have led to capital punishment, not certainly; and the alternative being to run away to the enemy—no, to run away to another country. That he chose Sparta and betrayed all the secrets of Athens to Sparta, that was not necessary. He could have gone to some out of the way place in Sicily and waited until the storm had blown over. But Alcibiades was driven by an infinite ambition, and that is no excuse. Then you can justify all the most horrible crimes ever committed.

Student: Would Aristotle say that he should have gone back to Athens? That's what I'm primarily interested in.

LS: That I do not know, because I don't know the circumstances in which Aristotle himself left Athens. [Laughter] I mean, he left Athens in a hurry, this much we know, and the reason which he gave is that Athens should not again commit a sin against philosophy.[xiii] Now whether he was already accused or whether he expected an accusation is a different story. There is nothing wrong to leave a city if you expect to get into trouble there.

Same Student: That's a rather fine line.

LS: Yes, well, casuistry has always to do with fine lines. Otherwise, it is not interesting. Because if you raise the question whether I should pay income tax in 1967, that's not a

[xiii] Cf. Aelian, *Varia historia*, book 3, chapter 36.

case requiring discussion, but there are other cases which deserve discussion. This young man—you wanted to say something.

Student: I was going to ask about Aristotle's leaving Athens.

LS: Yes, I do not know enough about it. I know only the story, that he left—"quote, he had to leave," which is an ambiguous expression—that he left, and that he was apparently threatened. Whether he was threatened with death, or with exile, or a fine or what, that I do not know. I don't whether it is known, but surely I do not know it at this moment. No? Yes, in 1110b.

Reader:
What kind of actions then are to be called—[xiv] (1110b1)

LS: In other words, there are no certain rules which you can give here, but the decision must be left to the judgment of of the wise man . . . who might happen to be an historian. That was formerly thought to be a function of the historian. He would supply that judgment on the actions which was perhaps not made at the time or had not come down from the time. So this is not fundamentally different from what we do in present cases, because hindsight is unfair in both cases. That is crucial. Something which could not have been known at the time, that is hindsight [. . .] There are difficult questions, like those of the Second World War: what was the greater danger in the long run, Hitler or Stalin? And the conversation in a way has gone up to the present day.[4] Churchill, who had something to do with the decision, said, "You can make only one link in the chain of destiny." At this moment in 1941 and 1942, the greater danger was Hitler. There was still some hope, however dim, that Stalin might . . . and this proved to be an error.

Reader:
To apply the term 'compulsory' to acts done for the sake of pleasure or for noble objects, on the plea that these exercise constraint on us from without, is to make every action compulsory. For pleasure and nobility between them supply the motive of all actions whatsoever. Also to act under compulsion and unwillingly is painful, but actions done for their pleasantness or nobility are done with pleasure. And it is absurd to blame external things, instead of ourselves for falling an easy prey to their attractions; or to take the credit of our noble deeds to ourselves, while putting the blame for our disgraceful ones upon the temptations of pleasure. It appears indeed that an act is compulsory when its origin is from outside, the person compelled contributing nothing to it. (1110b9-17)

LS: This is the conclusion of the first part of the discussion on spontaneous and nonspontaneous [actions]. And the point which he makes is that in the case of the nonspontaneous [action] due to compulsion or violence, the cause is outside of us. The simple case . . . pulling the trigger.

[xiv] There is no audiofile for the remainder of this session. The remainder of the transcript of this session is taken from the original transcript. Ellipses in the original transcript have been preserved. When the transcriber noted "inaudible," we have put ellipses in square brackets.

Student: [. . .]

LS: Aristotle seems to be rather tough in his judgment, and Thomas Aquinas even a bit more, if one can make that distinction. I think we would say, whether this is due to our greater humanity or to a greater softness on our part it's a rather difficult question, but we would be inclined today toward the other side. Something done under torture beyond human endurance [. . .] We would hesitate to pronounce easy judgment if we had not been ourselves in that situation, although that is not perhaps a sufficient reason for judging other men particularly tough and therefore regard as titillation what others regard as torture [. . .]

Student: [. . .]

LS: Now let me see. I am not sure whether I understood you. The point which he makes first is that violence is outside of us. And someone could say: but the pleasant and the noble are also outside of us. Take a simple case: the apple which attracts, or the wreath given to a victor in the game. And Aristotle says, of course, if these are understood to be outside things, and therefore their influence is toward violence, then all human actions would be violent and we would not have any responsibility for anything we are doing. But people would then contradict themselves, because they would say, if they are noble deeds:[5] "I did it." But if they are disgraceful deeds, then they would say: "It's not my fault; it was that outside influence." Aristotle says that noble things are done with pleasure—I'm sorry, that pleasant things are done with pleasure. This is done with pleasure and therefore spontaneously, whereas it is not [a] sufficient but a necessary criterion for the violent that it is done with pain.

Student: [. . .]

LS: But the point is: does this take away from the voluntarism of the action?

Student: [. . .]

LS: There is surely a most important difference between Aristotle and Kant, but to what extent does it come up here? Kant would of course say that if someone causes you to pull your finger to pull the trigger, that's not your action. There would be no difference between Aristotle and Kant in this respect. You cannot say that the pleasant and noble things are outside and exert a pressure on you, and therefore you have no responsibility for giving in or not giving in. The difference between Aristotle and Kant does not come in in this elementary consideration.

Student: [. . .]

LS: But Aristotle does not assume that the moral things, to use a Kantian term, are done for the sake of pleasure. They are done for the sake of the intrinsic morality. But the question is: why ought we to do the noble things for their own sake? There is the

difference. Aristotle does not refer to moral law, but *to what* Aristotle refers is one of the most difficult questions in ethics. The intrinsic nobility is in most cases there, but Kant analyzes this intrinsic nobility in terms of a moral law which is not deducible or derivable from anything we know at all. Aristotle does not do such [a thing].

Student: [. . .]

LS: Since all men do everything they do for the sake of happiness, that is no explanation. The difference is that the noble man does the noble things with a view to his happiness, and the ignoble does the ignoble things with a view to his happiness. They have different understandings of happiness.

Student: [. . .]

LS: That is not Aristotle's view of the situation. For Aristotle this intrinsic nobility of the action is the core of happiness, and therefore happiness does not appear as an independent notion. Now generally speaking (and I think I have said this before), the fundamental difference methodically between Kant and Aristotle is this. Now let us see here the man, and here is the thing at which he aims, say, the action. The good action, the noble or just action, must have no motive other than the intrinsic goodness of the action, and this is [. . .] by nobility of action. In this respect there is no difference between Aristotle and Kant. One can say that a moral teaching which denies that doesn't come up to the minimum of a moral teaching. But that is my impression.

And now there is something else. Let us call this the actor's view, and let us put here an A as a symbol for actor. But then there is another point of view, namely, the point of view of a man who looks at A and his actions from without, and let us call him the spectator. Now he will take in quite a few things here, say, the prehistory of the action. Now Aristotle, in contradistinction to Kant, has also this point of view and regards it perhaps as the superior point of view. Kant is of course familiar with the fact that you can look at an action and analyze it purely theoretically; for example, you find a certain density of divorces or murder in certain districts in certain years (this well-known theme of research), and then you try to find out the efficient and material causes of that, whether that is misery or poverty or what. For Kant, this kind of investigation, however important technically, is inferior in dignity to this, to the moral judgment, whereas for Aristotle it seems that the theoretical understanding is ultimately of higher rank than the moral understanding. That is an important difference. This is connected with the fact that in Kant's moral philosophy proper nature plays no role, while in Aristotle's moral doctrine nature does play a great role. In other words, for Kant morality must consist in a freedom from nature. Freedom from nature. For Aristotle there is no such freedom from nature, but precisely in acting well human nature comes into its own.

Student: [. . .]

LS: But as to the point with which [we] are today concerned, there is no difference between Aristotle and Kant in this.

Now I think we have now reached the part where he turns to ignorance. My wish is to discuss next time ignorance, and then the next great subject, election or choice. Now I think we should read here 1115a, which is the end of the general discussion of virtue and then make a big jump to book 5, the book on justice. However wonderful the parts which we omit are, we have to omit them. And I urge you especially to read, if not all [of] books 3 and 4, at least the book 4 section on magnanimity.

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[1] Deleted "Pericles in contradistinction from."
[2] Moved "not only."
[3] Deleted "you."
[4] Deleted "and where."
[5] Deleted "they would say."

Session 14: March 27, 1968

Leo Strauss: [In progress] —and there must be this presupposition: you cannot deduce goodness from nature because you don't know that nature is good, and even if you do, goodness is something different from nature in itself. So there must be a different principle. There is another remark of Kant which is important, and crucial, in this connection, and that is that the moral doctrine must liberate man from being tied to the apron strings of nature.[i] Now if man's goodness consists in properly satisfying his natural inclinations, then his ends are not freely posited by man but imposed on him, although agreed to by him. Therefore Kant's work is one of the great milestones in the way towards man's liberation. And all [that] we think today of a conquest of nature, or other notions connected with that, with the rule of man, with man's being radically free: all this has very much to do with Kant, and [it was] prepared by others but Kant went beyond all his predecessors in this respect.

Student: I was thinking . . . favorite passage in the appendix to the *Critique of Judgment*, where he talks about Spinoza and about that radical antithesis set up between the nature in the first part of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and nature as suggested in the antinomies and in practical reason, and man's interest in resolving that and finding hints in nature of intelligence in the beautiful of nature and also in the purposive forms of nature, so that underlying that nature might be an intelligence that agrees with what man finds internal—

LS: With what man finds?

Same Student: What man finds internal, the purposive nature of theoretical and practical reason, primarily practical.

LS: How far is this relevant to our question now?

Same Student: Well, underlying the nature that appears, which the understanding prescribes laws to, might be an understanding that has its grounds in something like intelligence. That's very important for man's morality. That passage about Spinoza—let us suppose a man like Spinoza who reveres the moral law but who doesn't believe in teleology or of any sort of purpose in nature, and what does he see? He sees corruption and immorality and his—

LS: So he must be miserable.

Same Student: Yes. He finds no agreement between the internal legislation—

[i] This metaphor appears in the preface to the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1787), although it is used there to characterize theoretical reason rather than moral doctrine.

LS: Yes, but that means only that some agreement has to be found between theoretical and practical reason. And links are supplied by teleology as well as by aesthetics. But as far teleology is concerned, which is more immediately relevant, this never takes on theoretical dignity in Kant. Never. Kant is sure that there will never be a Newton of the blade of grass, that there will never be *in fact* an explanation of living things in terms of physics and chemistry.[ii] But on the other hand, in our biological work we have to think only in terms of ultimately physical or chemical explanations. That's Kant's point. What we know is on the one side the phenomenal world, the world of modern science, and on the other hand the moral law. And everything else is—there is no knowledge beyond that. There are divinations, as it were, but no knowledge beyond that. So I think the difference between Kant and Aristotle is absolutely fundamental, and I'm sure it was not your intention to deny that.

Now let us turn to the third book of the *Ethics*. We are discussing the section on the spontaneous and nonspontaneous. Well, what Aristotle means by this, you can easily see. If you take out a dog on a leash, either he drags you or you drag him. When he drags you, he is acting spontaneously and you are under some compulsion, but if you drag him, you act spontaneously and the poor dog is under some compulsion. Is this clear? Now this is the starting point of the analysis of what would later have been called the will. But this is still subhuman in itself, although, as we will see, what Aristotle has to say about spontaneity and nonspontaneity is colored by the specifically human. Obviously, if spontaneity is rendered impossible not only by compulsion[1], as we have seen last time, but also by ignorance, then this latter kind of lack of spontaneity is a specifically human lack of spontaneity. Ignorance would not affect the spontaneity of a brute animal.

Now Mr. Pangle is absent today, to my regret. Is there anyone here who is willing to take his place? What about you Mr. Fairbanks? You have the same past, at least.

Student: Is that a prerequisite?

LS: Well, that would explain that you have the same present, to some extent. Now we continue at 1110b18 to 24.

Reader:
Everything that is done by reason of ignorance is *not* voluntary; it is only what produces pain and repentance that is *in*voluntary or non-spontaneous. For the man[iii] who has done something owing to ignorance, and feels not the least vexation at his action, has not acted voluntarily, since he did not know what he was doing, nor yet involuntarily, since he is not pained. Of people, then, who act by reason of ignorance he who repents is thought an involuntary agent, and the man who does not repent may, since he is different, be called a not voluntary agent; for, since he differs from the other, it is better that he should have a name of his own.[iv] (1110b18-24)

[ii] See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment* (1790), §75.
[iii] In Ross's translation: "that is *in*voluntary. For the man."
[iv] The student reads from Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Sir David Ross (London: Oxford University Press, 1954).

LS: Let us see. Think of Oedipus killing his father and mating with his mother: he did this in ignorance. And the sign that he did it ignorantly is that he was pained after he became aware of it and felt regret as soon as he came to know what he "quote did, unquote," because it was not truly his action. Is this reasonable? Good. Now?

Reader:
Acting by reason of ignorance seems also to be different from acting *in* ignorance; for the man who is drunk or in a rage is thought to act as a result not of ignorance but of one of the causes mentioned, yet not knowingly but in ignorance.

LS: Yes, this is a subtle distinction which is important, especially for penal law. I mean, if Oedipus had done the terrible things he did while he was drunk, one could not say he did it out of ignorance: we would say he did it because he was drunk. It's a different emphasis. The man who does something through being drunk or through being in anger does not do it through ignorance. He does not know, as Aristotle puts it, yet he is "in ignorance." And I think the penal law, the law would treat differently a man who does something from ignorance—for example, from thinking it is his car whereas it is the car of somebody else; it looks very similar—and a man who does something because . . . he is drunk. He is held responsible for his being drunk, but he cannot be held responsible for inevitable, or practically inevitable ignorance. This will become clearer as we go. Go on.

Reader:
Now every wicked man is ignorant of what he ought to do and what he ought to abstain from, and it is by reason of error of this kind that men become unjust and in general bad; but the term 'non-spontaneous'[v] tends to be used not if a man is ignorant of what is to his advantage—for it is not mistaken purpose that causes unspontaneous[vi] action (it leads rather to wickedness), nor ignorance of the universal (for *that* men are *blamed*)—but ignorance of particulars, i.e. of the circumstances of the action and the objects with which it is concerned. For it is on these that both pity and pardon depend, since the person who is ignorant of any of these acts unspontaneously. (1110b24-1111a2)

LS: What Aristotle says here, in a way: all badness is through ignorance, as Socrates had said before him without any qualification, meaning through ignorance of the things useful to him or advantageous to him, and that is here a somewhat loose expression which includes also the noble. At any rate, it means the universals involved. For example, if someone commits a murder and says, "I did not know that murder is bad," this is not an excuse. But ignorance regarding particulars in the situation—for example, he did not know that a man was standing there where he fired his pistol, or whatever it may be—this kind of ignorance may be an excuse.

The ignorance which is unexcusable is that which is due to badness or identical with badness: that one possibly does not know the most elementary distinctions between right and wrong. Morality presupposes some knowledge, although the knowledge is not the

[v] In Ross's translation: "involuntary."
[vi] In Ross's translation: "involuntary."

main point here, because knowing that murder is bad is [worth] very little if you murder nevertheless. But this knowledge, which morality presupposes, must be available to all if morality is to be expected from all, and therefore it is knowledge of universals, like [knowing that] murder, and adultery, and so on are bad. The bad man does not know this. He regards these actions as advantageous to him. That is the reason, I think, why Aristotle uses here the term "advantageous." He thinks, "That's good for me." He doesn't think that it is base; he doesn't even know that, in the classic case. But Aristotle says [that] the bad man does not know it through his [own] fault: he did not listen to what his elders and betters told him. Or more practically and crudely stated, the knowledge of these simple universals is supplied to all men by the law. In all countries, the law says something to this effect. While it is true that the law may make distinctions between the killing of a free man and the killing of a slave, that causes a complication which is not negligible, but the main point is stated by [the] law everywhere. Now let us read the sequel.

Reader:
Perhaps it is just as well, therefore, to determine their nature and number. A man may be ignorant, then, of who he is, what he is doing, what or whom he is acting on, and sometimes also what (e.g. what instrument) he is doing it with, and to what end (e.g. he may think his act will conduce to someone's safety), and how he is doing it (e.g. whether gently or violently). Now of all these no one could be ignorant unless he were mad, and evidently also he could not be ignorant of the agent; for how could he not know himself?

LS: So that is the least interesting case, that he has amnesia—a theme very important now in popular culture, as you surely know. Yes?

Reader:
But of what he is doing a man might be ignorant, as for instance, people say 'it slipped out of their mouth as they were speaking', or 'they did not know it was a secret', as Aeschylus said of the mysteries.

LS: In other words, Aeschylus claimed not to know that it was forbidden to divulge the Mysteries. And if he did not know, he was not guilty because this does not belong to the things which all men are supposed to know. Only the initiated should know that, and he was not initiated. Yes?

Reader:
Or a man might say 'he let it go off when he merely wanted to show its working', as the man did with the catapult. (1111a3-11)

LS: Today we would take a revolver, [which], I think, is a very common case. Yes?

Reader:
Again, one might think one's son was an enemy, as Merope did, or that a pointed spear had a button on it, or that a stone was pumice-stone; or one might give a man a draught to save him, and really kill him; or one might want to touch a man, as people do in sparring,

and really wound him. The ignorance may relate, then, to any of these things, i.e. of the circumstances of the action, and the man who was ignorant of any of these is thought to have acted involuntarily, and especially if he was ignorant on the most important points; and these are thought to be the circumstances of the action and its end. Further, the doing of an act that is called involuntary in virtue of ignorance of this sort must be painful and involve repentance. (1111a11-21)

LS: This he repeats again, because that is a kind of criterion [for determining] that a man did it involuntarily: whether after having become aware of what he did, he says he's sorry for it. Now circumstances are here discussed, ignorance regarding the circumstances. Circumstances are conditions of the human act. These conditions are either from the side of the causes of the act or from the side of the act itself, which is the way in which Thomas Aquinas explains that.[vii] Now from the side of the causes of the act: it could be an efficient cause or the final cause. The efficient cause could be the principal cause or an instrumental cause. For example, the error regarding the stone: that would be an error regarding the instrumental cause. And as for the end, which means ignorance of the end which follows from his actions as distinguished from the end intended by him. The physician who gives a pill intending to save the patient, but in this particular case proves to be fatal. And all his experience taught him that this pill was helpful. Now as regards the circumstances of the part of act itself, there is first to consider the genus to which the act belongs, that is to say, what the act is. For example, the case of Aeschylus: he thought it was a harmless thing to mention these goings-on in the Mysteries, and it was not so. It was something forbidden. And then the matter or the object of the act itself; for example, that he thought the woman was his wife, and it was another woman; but he was justified because the woman was found in [the] night time without light in his wife's bed. This case is also frequently discussed. And finally, the mode of the action, and that is whether it is [done] with violence or soft[ly]. For example, a man wants to push another one, and he does it a bit too strongly and the other man falls and possibly by some unfortunate coincidence dies. But this is also ignorance, because he did not have the intention of pushing him harsh[ly].

Now it is clear that the things universally bad of which Aristotle has spoken before, like murder and so on, are bad only if they are done knowingly and intentionally, and this is the difference between human actions, morally relevant actions, and other bad things like food. For example, bad food has its bad effect regardless of whether you take it knowingly or unknowingly, intentionally or nonintentionally. So now Aristotle has reached the point where he can suggest a definition of the voluntary or spontaneous, which he does in the immediate sequel.

Reader:
Since that which is done under compulsion or by reason of ignorance is not spontaneous, the spontaneous[viii] would seem to be that of which the moving principle is in the agent

[vii] See Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, §§406-424.
[viii] In Ross's translation: "involuntary, the voluntary."

itself, he being aware of the particular circumstances of the action. Presumably acts done by reason of anger or appetite are not rightly called non-spontaneous.[ix] (1111a11-25)

LS: The two terms used by Aristotle are those used by Plato in the *Republic*: *thymos* and *epithymia*; usually translated "spiritedness" and "desire." Here Aristotle speaks of an error. There are some people who say [that] actions committed from anger and from desire are nonspontaneous, because these affections themselves, spiritedness and desire, are involuntary. But Aristotle rejects this view for a number of reasons. Yes?

Reader:
For in the first place, on that showing none of the other animals will act spontaneously,[x] nor will children; and secondly, is it meant that we do not spontaneously do[xi] *any* of the acts that are due to appetite or anger, or that we do the noble acts spontaneously and the base acts unspontaneously?[xii] Is not this absurd, when one and the same thing is the cause? But it would surely be odd to describe as non-spontaneous[xiii] things one ought to desire; and we ought both to be angry at certain things and to have an appetite for certain things, e.g. for health and for learning. Also, what is non-spontaneous[xiv] is thought to be painful, but what is in accordance with appetite is thought to be pleasant. (1111a22-33)

LS: Let us make a stop here. Aristotle, I think, gives here two arguments. If what we do from anger and desire were involuntary, that would make all actions of brutes and of children involuntary, and this does not correspond to what we think and see. For example, we see the difference between what the puppy does voluntarily, spontaneously, gladly, and what he does under compulsion of some sort. Secondly, what we do from desire or anger is spontaneous. For instance, we desire the right things in the right circumstances, and then we act well, and then we demand credit for it. The argument which Aristotle rejects would lead to the consequence that we claim responsibility for our good actions and disclaim responsibility for our bad actions. If we act nicely, we say: of course I did it. But if we do something bad, we say: Well, something else did it, not me. In other words, if this view were correct, all actions prompted by desire and spiritedness would be good or at least excusable, contrary to the universal view of mankind.

And what he says at the end of this sections means, I think, [that] at most one could say that the things which are done through anger are involuntary, for the things done out of desire are pleasant and hence voluntary. But of course, even regarding anger Aristotle does not agree that they are voluntary. And he gives now a third argument.

Reader:
Again, what is the difference in respect of involuntariness between errors committed upon calculation and those committed in anger? Both are to be avoided, but the irrational

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[ix] In Ross's translation: "involuntary."
[x] In Ross's translation: "voluntarily."
[xi] In Ross's translation: "do voluntarily."
[xii] In Ross's translation: "voluntarily and the base acts involuntarily."
[xiii] In Ross's translation: "involuntary."
[xiv] In Ross's translation: "involuntary."

passions are thought not less human than reason is, and therefore also the actions which proceed from anger or appetite are the man's actions. It would be odd then to treat them as non-spontaneous.[xv] (1111a33-b3)

LS: If actions from anger or spiritedness are involuntary, why not also actions from calculation? *All* human actions which have their origin in a mature human being are voluntary. This is the point which Aristotle makes here. While all such human actions are voluntary, not all voluntary actions are human; there are also voluntary actions of beasts, as we have seen. There is here a certain obscurity to which I referred, I think, before. The voluntary or spontaneous is common to all animals, but Aristotle speaks, in fact, of the specifically human voluntary and involuntary actions, especially when he speaks of those done from ignorance. The reason why Aristotle is concerned with it is this: a human act may be spontaneous but not *deliberately* chosen. That is the practical importance of this discussion. Think of the difference between murder—premeditated murder, a homicide in anger—and wholly guiltless killing induced through ignorance. We must make these distinctions. And therefore the distinction between voluntariness on the one hand, and premeditation or what Aristotle will call in the sequel election or choice [on the other], is of crucial importance.

Incidentally, those of you who are interested in this subject should read Plato's *Laws*, 860c to 864a. This is of special importance because Plato or the Athenian Stranger argues there on the basis of the Socratic premise that all evil is due to ignorance, and therefore there cannot be the distinction which Aristotle makes. And the Athenian Stranger can accept this commonsense distinction only in a kind of adaptation to what the laws generally prescribe:[2] they make a distinction between bad actions deliberately done, and bad actions spontaneously done, and bad actions done under sheer compulsion. Yes?

Student: Does not Aristotle also agree that no man will willingly choose to harm himself?

LS: Yes, Aristotle would admit that.

Same Student: And that therefore, if a man does something which will harm his soul, that it's because he is ignorant either of the existence or of the importance of the soul?

LS: Yes. How much Aristotle is in agreement with Socrates, despite the considerable difference, you see especially from the seventh book, where the discussion of continence and incontinence [occurs]. I mean, the fact which for us is so easy, that someone says that he approves of the better course but in fact follows the worse course, that is a problem for Aristotle. How is this compatible with his knowing the better course? And Aristotle says, without some obfuscation, that's impossible.

Same Student: That's passion.

LS: Yes, but it is an obfuscation of the intellect which takes place.

[xv] In Ross's translation: "involuntary."

Same Student: Passions are an obfuscation of intellect.

LS: Yes, but the key point is that it is an obfuscation. We are inclined to think of criminals or other wicked men [as men] who have perfect clarity, are in full knowledge of what they are doing, and yet some evil in them overpowers them. And this is denied by Aristotle, too: even if they know it, there must be some obfuscation taking place, otherwise they couldn't do it.

Same Student: . . . Plato.

LS: Yes, this was for Plato. But Aristotle comes here amazingly close to Plato, as you will see from seventh book, if we have the time to read it now. Good. We have now reached the conclusion of the section on the spontaneous and nonspontaneous, and to repeat the main point: spontaneity is destroyed for the time being by compulsion and by ignorance, ignorance meaning ignorance of relevant circumstances, not of the fundamental law itself. This does not take away spontaneity. Yes. Now let's go on.

Reader:
Both the spontaneous and the unspontaneous[xvi] having been delimited, we must next discuss choice; for it is thought to be most closely bound up with virtue, and to discriminate characters better than actions do. (1111b4-6)

LS: Yes, let us stop here one moment. Now Aristotle at the beginning of this book, as you will have seen, has not given us a sufficient reason why he speaks of the spontaneous and nonspontaneous. Here he gives us a precise reason. "Choice," as he translates, is of the utmost importance. It is the core of virtue. For there may be good external actions proceeding from bad choices; for example, if someone does something good out of vainglory or [out] of calculation. And bad external actions or bad omissions may be based on good choices; for example, if someone is unable to do the right thing because he is paralyzed in his body.

In order to understand this section as well as what precedes it, we must always remember the fact that there is no Greek word, surely no Aristotelian word, for will. What we would call will is called by Aristotle "choice," and this is not a faculty of the soul, but it is always an act of choice. The faculty is something like [an] appetitive or desiring faculty, of which you will hear something very soon. Yes?

Reader:
Choice, then, seems to be spontaneous, but not the same thing as the spontaneous;[xvii] The latter extends more widely. For both children and the lower animals share in

[xvi] In Ross's translation: "the voluntary and the involuntary."
[xvii] In Ross's translation: "voluntary, but not the same thing as voluntary."

spontaneous[xviii] action, but not in choice, and acts done on the spur of the moment we describe as spontaneous,[xix] but not as chosen.

LS: Here Aristotle makes clear why he had discussed first the spontaneous. In technical language, the spontaneous is the genus of which the objects of choice are a species. Every choice is spontaneous, but not every spontaneous act is a choice. And he gives two examples: first, the animals, which have spontaneity but no choice; and secondly, the things which we do all of a sudden, which are spontaneous or may be spontaneous and yet [are] not acts of choice. He will explain in the sequel what choice is. Yes?

Reader:
Those who say it is appetite or anger or wish—

LS: "It," namely, choice. Yes?

Reader:
or a kind of opinion do not seem to be right. For choice is not common to irrational creatures as well.

LS: Now one second. So this is the theme for the discussion. In order to make clear what choice is, Aristotle shows in the sequel that it is neither desire, nor anger, nor wish, nor opinion, and by excluding these alternatives he will find out what choice truly is. Now begin again at the point, please, "for choice is not common also to the irrational animals."

Reader:
But appetite and anger are. Again, the incontinent man acts with appetite, but not with choice; while the continent man on the contrary acts with choice, but not with appetite. Again, appetite is contrary to choice, but not appetite to appetite. Again, appetite relates to the pleasant and the painful, choice neither to the painful nor to the pleasant.

Still less is it anger; for acts due to anger are thought to be less than any others objects of choice. (1111b6-19)

LS: Let us stop here. Now the first reason we have already discussed. The second is this: the case of the continent [man] and [the] incontinent man. Now the continent man differs from the moderate man in this, that the moderate man does not have the desire for excess or defect regarding sensual pleasures, whereas the continent man has desire for it but controls himself . . . And the incontinent man is a man who knows that he should not drink this other bottle of whisky: he knows it, but he is unable to control that. Otherwise the argument doesn't make sense. In this case it becomes very clear that the choice and the desire are very different things. Do you see that? In the case of the continent man, he *chooses* not to eat this additional steak, but he *desires* it. And in the case of the incontinent man, just the opposite: his *choice* is not to eat that other steak, but his *desire* is clearly for that delicious thing. Yes?

[xviii] In Ross's translation: "voluntary."
[xix] In Ross's translation: "voluntary."

Student: He says in the next sentence that sensual desire . . . opposed to choice. Yet I wonder why this is, because it doesn't appear necessarily so. After all, that other steak, though desired, may after all be good for one.

LS: Then his choice was unreasonable. He should have chosen more food.

Same Student: Passion and right reason can accidentally run together, can they not? One can, after all, be passionate for—

LS: Yes, well, that is a fortunate accident. But in the case of the good men, they agree, because they have been made to agree by proper breeding and proper principles.

Same Student: A good man has the right passions.

LS: Yes, if you call that passions, but passions are properly controlled.

Same Student: What about *erōs*?

LS: Aristotle is silent on that subject. One can say (if this is not disrespectful, but I have said it in other cities, so I may repeat it in southern California as well) that one of the great charms of Aristotle, disregarding entirely the question of truth or untruth, but what attracts some people, many people to Aristotle is something which is very attractive in a famous English writer, and that is Jane Austen. There is a very great sense of propriety in both cases, and I know that this is not in fashion today, but still I must own that I think it is a very fine thing. There are so many sentences in Miss Austen's discussions of whether A should marry B or not which, when you state it baldly, in theoretical terms can be matched by sentences from the *Ethics*. There is only one difference which I must note. For Jane Austen, [for a man] to marry a woman or for a woman to marry a man without loving him or her is plainly immoral. For Aristotle that is not true. For Aristotle, the proper relation is that the groom should be thirty-seven and the bride seventeen—do I remember that correctly? More or less. And this is to be arranged by prudent people, namely, the parents. And the love will come after marriage; it is not to be a condition of marriage. This is still more old-fashioned than Jane Austen. Good.

Same Student: I wasn't talking about that side of *erōs*. I was talking about a Platonic *erōs*.

LS: Aristotle speaks in a more pedestrian manner of a striving for knowledge, and of course also other strivings: strivings for food, and for procreation, and so on. Now this poetic quality, if only speaking speaking externally in Plato is not in the foreground in Aristotle. There is no question.

Now he seems to say something very strange in the passage which we read: desire contradicts the choice, but desire does not contradict desire. This seems to be sheer nonsense. We all know that we can have contradictory desires; say, a desire for money

and then a desire for reputation, and they can easily conflict if we cannot get the money in an honorable manner. But I think this refers still to the question of the continent [man] and [the] incontinent man. Both choose what is contrary to their desire, but there is no conflict in them between desires. The desire goes in both cases, in the case of the continent as well as of the incontinent, to the bottle of whisky, but they act differently in this respect. Yes. And now the other point he makes here is that desire goes to the pleasant, but choice as choice goes to the good or to the noble. As for spiritedness, or anger in particular, what we do from anger is different from what we do from choice. This is at any rate the accepted opinion on the subject. Remember what he said before of the suddenness of anger. And choice is not sudden but follows deliberation. So let's go on here.

Reader:
But neither is it, that is, choice, wishing,[xx] though it seems near to it; for choice cannot relate to impossible things,[xxi] and if anyone said he chose them he would be thought silly; but there may be a wish even for impossible things,[xxii] e.g. for immortality.

LS: "For immortality" is not a denial of immortality here but means simply not dying, never dying; which is admittedly absurd, even on the premise of the immortality of the soul. Yes?

Reader:
And wish may relate to things that could in no way be brought about by one's own efforts, e.g. that a particular actor or athlete should win in a competition; but no one chooses such things, but only the things that he thinks could be brought about by his own act.[xxiii] Again, wish relates rather to the end, choice to the means; for instance, we wish to be healthy, but we choose the acts which will make us healthy, and we wish to be happy and say we do, but we cannot well say we choose to be so; for, in general, choice seems to relate to the things that are in our own power. (1111b19-30)

LS: Yes. Now this, I think, is a clear statement, but I will emphasize here one thing. We have discussed the relation of happiness and virtue before, in the first book, and now we hear something which was not said before, which is very important, regarding the radical difference between happiness and virtue. Happiness is an object of *wish*, not of *choice*, because happiness does not depend on us, and therefore, we recall, Aristotle called it "worthy of reverence" because it is a blessing. And by a blessing we understand something which we have not earned or gained by our own effort. Virtue on the other hand has to do with the things *relating to* the end, not with the end itself. That is hard to see, or is it not so hard? You seem to have a thought? Yes?

[xx] In Ross's translation: "But neither is it wish."
[xxi] In Ross's translation: "impossibles."
[xxii] In Ross's translation: "impossibles."
[xxiii] In Ross's translation: "efforts."

Student: But for the man who has not yet been habituated to be virtuous, could not virtue be an end in that he wishes to be virtuous and he is in effect educating himself to be virtuous?

LS: Yes, that could be. But still, this is a more universal statement; in other words, even this virtue—generally speaking, something may be an end within a certain horizon and yet a means in a larger horizon. Say, the shoemaker in his workshop, completely dedicated to his shop: for him the shoes would be the end—perhaps also the money which he gets from them, but let us assume the shoes alone. And yet, if we take a somewhat wider perspective, then we see immediately [that] the shoes are only means for the good condition of the feet; more generally stated, for the good condition of the body. And it could be that within a certain perspective virtue [would be] the end, and it would not be the end from a larger perspective. But Aristotle does not say here that virtue is not the end. Aristotle says [that] virtue has to do with the means, and the reason is this: virtue is a habit of properly choosing, of properly preferring, and what we choose or prefer are means and not the ends. And the argument of Aristotle is very simple, as you have seen partly and will see. The physician takes the end for granted: health. He doesn't deliberate about that, but he deliberates about how he can make a given patient healthy. Generally speaking, and we have to repeat this point later on, choosing, preferring, is not limited to moral things. Preference occurs also in the arts, as you will see, and is in a way indicated by the example of the physician. Yes?

Student: If virtue is a habit of properly choosing, properly preferring, and choice is conscious preference, then what must be trained in order for the habit to occur is not just that faculty in man which can wish or prefer, but that faculty in man which can think. In other words, there appear to be two things necessary: the training of the intellect, as well as the training of the passions. So virtue has to do with—you can't separate them, the intellectual and the moral. You can't get moral virtue without intellectual virtue, otherwise you're not conscious of—

LS: Yes, well, you cannot separate [them], but you must distinguish [them].

Same Student: Yes, all right.

LS: That is one thing. Secondly, there is a difference between that intellectual virtue without which there cannot be moral virtue (and that is what Aristotle calls *phronesis*; in Latin *prudentia*, practical wisdom) and the other intellectual virtues (*sophia*, *epistēmē*; wisdom, science) not required for morality.

Same Student: You cannot have moral virtue without some intellectual virtue.

LS: Yes, but Aristotle is precise: practical wisdom. I mean, you do not need theoretical wisdom.

Same Student: Yet the thing . . . involve—I could imagine a morally significant choice having more of a strictly moral significance and one having more of an intellectual

significance. I can imagine gradations, you know. So for each one of these things, perhaps the intellectual virtue could be more or less important.

LS: But intellectual virtue is too broad a term. You should speak of practical wisdom, because that according to Aristotle is the only intellectual virtue which is essential to morality. The others are not essential, and nor is moral virtue essential to the other theoretical virtues. Mr. Wedergreen?

Student: We're speaking of practical questions and distinguishing between practical questions and, say, theoretical questions. But aren't there some questions which somehow blend these two together? I was thinking for instance of someone trying to decide what was best for them—

LS: For?

Same Student: For him, say. For a person trying to decide what is best for him.

LS: For him. Sure.

Same Student: That seems to be a question which is not only practical or theoretical.

LS: For Aristotle, that is one hundred percent practical. We come to that very soon. You are slightly impatient. In other words, if I may say it now in general terms, *practical* questions are questions which take place within a limited horizon from Aristotle's point of view, namely, as Aristotle will say later on, the Spartans do not deliberate about what institutions are good for the Scythians.[xxiv] That is their business. So you remain within your own horizon. You do not deliberate about how I will meet my tax bill on April 15; that's my business. Good. But the *theoretical* questions in Aristotle do not have in this sense a horizon.

Same Student: But then that would be radically different from the Socratic . . .

LS: Why?

Same Student: Well, I mean, you would make them . . . yourself.

LS: No, the difference is this: that Socrates, or Plato, in contradistinction to Aristotle, asserts—Socrates and Plato call philosophy itself *phronesis*: practical wisdom, prudence. So it seems to be that for Socrates–Plato, the whole, all knowledge, is—if it is not merely technical, [if it does not] belong to the arts, and the arts always [depend] on a higher tribunal, because who makes the distinction between the shoemaker and the beautician, telling us that the shoemaker is truly an artisan whereas the beautician is a flatterer, that's again done by practical wisdom. So everything is under the control of practical wisdom.

[xxiv] 1112a28-29.

But why is that? Because when we we come to such things as the universals in practice, like murder and so on mentioned by Aristotle before, or any other universals he mentions, has mentioned, or will mention, then Socrates says—well, for example, [that] courage is good, justice is good, is taken for granted here. And Socrates in the *Republic*, for example, discusses at great length the question whether justice is truly good. So for Socrates–Plato the practical questions shift insensibly into what Aristotle would call—and perhaps Plato too, let us leave that open—theoretical, whereas Aristotle says, "No, the practical sphere has a limit or a horizon of its own." And the difficulty to which I referred on an earlier occasion, that it is necessary in fact at all times to defend sound practice against wrong theories, this does not constitute a dependence of practice on theory but is extraneous to practice, although very important for practice. So a man refuting Marxist doctrines, for example, does a theoretical job, there's no doubt about it, and it has to be, because a Marxist doctrine is a theoretical doctrine, although that's a bit complicated, but it is nevertheless a theoretical doctrine. But by [doing] this he does not give guidance to action, only negatively: he takes away a delusion. The guidance for action must come from the principles of action themselves.

Student: . . . defending sound practice from right theory.

LS: Pardon? What did you say?

Same Student: I said I was thinking more of defending sound practice from *right* theory.

LS: Yes, but in Aristotle there is no right theory. You find more of theory in this sense in the *Politics* perhaps than in the *Ethics*. That would require a very complicated work of interpretation, which to my knowledge has never been done, to lay bare the theoretical premises of the *Ethics*. I mean, not those which are simply taken over from psychology and so, but those which are the theoretical principles of ethics for ethics.

Now let's go on. The difference between choice and the other things has been made, and now he will show the difference between choice and opinion in b30.

Reader:
For this reason, too, choice[xxv] cannot be opinion; for opinion is thought to relate to all kinds of things, no less to eternal things and impossible things than to things in our own power. (1111b30-33)

LS: That is clear. So opinion is by its own nature universal. We opine or can opine about everything. We cannot make choices in every respect but only in things within our reach, and so on. Yes?

Reader:
And opinion[xxvi] is distinguished by its falsity or truth, not by its badness or goodness, while choice is distinguished rather by these.

[xxv] In Ross's translation: "it."
[xxvi] In Ross's translation: "it."

Now with opinion in general, perhaps no one even says it is identical.

LS: So in other words, this is not the issue, whether choice and opinion can be identified, but the question is whether choice is not an opinion on certain subjects. And that's the question which Aristotle discusses in the sequel.

Reader:
But it is not identical even with any kind of opinion; for by choosing what is good or bad, we are men of a certain character, which we are not by holding certain opinions. And we choose to get or avoid something good or bad, but we have opinions about what a thing is or whom it is good for or how it is good for him; we can hardly be said to opine to get or avoid anything. And choice is praised for being related to the right object rather than for being rightly related to it, opinion for being truly related to its object. And we choose what we best know to be good, but we opine what we do not quite know; and it is not the same people that are thought to make the best choices and to have the best opinions, but some are thought to have fairly good opinions but, by reason of vice to choose what they should not. (1111b33-1112a11)

LS: Now let us stop here for a moment. We are called good and bad not because of our opinions on good and bad but because of our choices. Now this seems to be too sweeping, because sometimes we say a man is a bad man because of the things he says. Think of the case of Machiavelli: people usually do not refer to his actions but to his opinions, and they call him a bad man. Now let us therefore say [that] we are called good or bad *less* because of our opinions than because of our choices. For example, someone might derive pleasure from bothering people with shocking opinions and all the time act decently. No one would call him a bad man, but one would say he is perhaps an ill-mannered man, or [perhaps] not even that. Never forget that expressing one's opinion, i.e., speaking, is an action. And Aristotle doesn't speak here of speaking, but of opining.

Now choice goes towards taking or leaving. Opinion is opinion even on good or bad things [and] does not culminate in taking or leaving. What Aristotle has here in mind is not the present-day distinction between facts and values or factual and value judgments. Both fact judgments and value judgments are opinions, of course, in Aristotle's sense. For instance, "This is a beautiful painting"; "This is a desirable apple." These are all opinions because they in themselves do not mean that you give yourself, as it were, the command: Grab it. Only when you do that is it a choice. Now choice goes toward what is *correct*. Opinion goes toward what is *true*. He has already spoken of that before.

There is another point, which I repeat. We choose what we know most certainly, to the highest degree, that it is good. But we opine also about things of which we know nothing. So *proairesis*, choice, is essentially certain. Opinion is not essentially certain; most of our opinions are quite uncertain. This subject will be taken up by Aristotle later on: I refer you now to 1139b15 to 18. Choice is the core of action, and the good choice is certain, in spite of the many uncertainties regarding the event. That has nothing to do with it. I

mean, if I make a choice, a good choice, a proper choice, then I have full certainty regarding the *goodness* of the action, not regarding the event. The event may be terrible. That no one can foresee. Unless the event can be foreseen at the time, then I'm of course responsible for it. Now the fact that this moral choice should be so certain seems to be incompatible with the instability of all human things, of which Aristotle had spoken so powerfully before. The solution to this difficulty is this: the moral truth resides in the individual case. Yes. I think that is all I have to say on this point. Let us read the end of the section.

Reader:
If opinion precedes choice or accompanies it, that makes no difference; for it is not this that we are considering, but whether it[xxvii] is *identical* with some kind of opinion.

What, then, and what kind of thing is it, since it is none of the things we have mentioned? It seems to be spontaneous, but not all that is spontaneous[xxviii] can be an object of choice. Is it, then, what has been decided on by previous deliberation? At any rate choice involves a rational principle and thought. Even the name seems to suggest that it is what is chosen before other things. (1112a11-17)

LS: In Greek, *proairesis*, and *pro* means "before." And that is an etymology of Aristotle on which his doctrine does not in any way depend. But the main point he makes: the object of choice is that spontaneous thing which has been deliberated upon before. And therefore the next subject is, if you want to understand choice, deliberation, because we can choose only such things as are properly subjects of deliberation. And since deliberation is prior to the choice, the choice being the final act of deliberation, we have now to investigate deliberation.

Now as to what Aristotle says here at the beginning of the passage now read at 9 to 11 about whether opinion precedes choice or accompanies it, Thomas Aquinas makes this distinction: as such, opinion precedes election, meaning you cannot possibly elect, choose, if you don't have some opinion about the goodness or the badness of the things you choose. But accidentally, the opposite might be true. For example, when a man changes his opinion as a consequence of his affections.[xxix] Say, he falls in love with a girl (if it is a boy): this is not something deliberately induced by him, and it changes his opinions about that girl. You should know this from a long and famous literature on this subject.

Now let us then turn to the analysis of deliberation, which comes now. Again I remind you of the fact that Aristotle speaks here, of course, about choice and deliberation in order to make us understand morality. But the phenomena of choice and deliberation go beyond the sphere of morality, namely, they extend into the arts, for instance, into medicine, hardly to the shoemaker's art. Aristotle will speak about that very soon. Now go on Mr. Fairbanks.

[xxvii] In Ross's translation: "choice."
[xxviii] In Ross's translation: "voluntary, but not all that is voluntary."
[xxix] Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, §456.

Reader:
Do we deliberate about everything, and is everything a possible subject of deliberation, or is deliberation impossible about some things? We ought presumably to call not what a fool or madman would deliberate about, but what a sensible man would deliberate about—

LS: In other words, that is a commonsensical exclusion, because there may be certain kinds of madmen who deliberate, but this is not the normal case of deliberation and therefore we may dismiss it. I think if you have read the books by the English humorist, the author of *Jeeves* and the other works, I forgot his name at the moment—

Student: P. G. Wodehouse.[xxx]

LS: Wodehouse. The humor is precisely that here fools are deliberating about preposterous things. In other words, Jeeves is regarded as a very prudent man by this young nobleman—what's his name?

Student: Bertie Wooster.

LS: Bertie Wooster. Thank you very much. It's really deplorable that I didn't remember. Bertie Wooster deliberates upon all kinds of things. But Aristotle rightly relegates these things into the background. Now go on.

Reader:
Now about eternal things no one deliberates, e.g. about the material universe or the incommensurability—

LS: "Material" is a terrible word. Well, I wouldn't have translated it "about eternal things," but "about sempiternal things," "no one deliberates about the cosmos." What shall I do with the cosmos? Yes? [Laughter]

Reader:
or the incommensurability of the diagonal and the side of the square.

LS: In other words, how can I change that?

Reader:
But no more do we deliberate about the things that involve movement but always happen in the same way, whether of necessity or by nature or from any other cause, e.g. the solstices and the rising of the stars; nor about things that happen now in one way, now in another, e.g. droughts and rains; nor about chance events, like the finding of treasure. But we do not deliberate even about all human affairs. (1112a18-28)

[xxx] P. G. Wodehouse (1881-1975), English writer and humorist.

LS: "About human" should be emphasized. These things were all not strictly speaking human. Yes?

Reader:
For instance, no Spartan deliberates about the best constitution for the Scythians. For none of these things can be brought about by our own actions.

LS: Let us stop here for the moment. So we deliberate only about human things. "Human things," incidentally, means something very different from human nature, because we don't deliberate about human nature either, but about things subject to human action. We may say, in order to explain Aristotle a bit better, [that] deliberating presupposes caring. I mean, sometimes you don't care very deeply, but if you do not to some degree care, you do not deliberate. And therefore the Greek comic poets coined a term called *merimnosophistai*,[xxxi] "the wise men who worry," namely, those who worry about whether the universe has come into being out of atoms or out of something else, worriers about things about which sensible men would not worry. That's of course a comical expression. Aristotle would say [that] worry [has its] place within a certain sphere, and in this sphere we deliberate. Yes?

Reader:
We deliberate about things that are in our power and can be done; and these are in fact what is left. For nature, necessity, and chance are thought to be causes, and also reason and everything that depends on man. Now every class of men deliberate about the things that can be done by their own efforts.

LS: So what is subject to human deliberation as such is different, of course, from what is subject to deliberation by this particular man. That is the difference to which he appeals here. Now when he speaks here about nature and necessity he may mean by nature, form, and by necessity, matter. But at any rate, this is not terribly important for our present purpose. Now go on.

Reader:
And in the case of exact and self-contained sciences there is no deliberation, e.g. about the letters of the alphabet (for we have no doubt about how they should be written); but the things that are brought about by our own efforts, but not always in the same way, are the things about which we deliberate, e.g. questions of medical treatment or of money-making. And we do so more in the case of the art of navigation than in that of gymnastics, inasmuch as it has been less exactly worked out, and again about other things in the same ratio, and more also in the case of the arts than in that of the sciences; for we have more doubt about the former. (1112a28-b8)

LS: Yes. So there is then deliberation in those arts which are not exact. Now "exact" not in the sense of *mathematica*, but in the sense of giving room, and frequently room for doubt. For example, in reading and writing, we do not deliberate; either we know how to

[xxxi] See Aristophanes, *Clouds* 101. The term that appears there is *merimnophrontistai*; the word Strauss uses (*merminosophistai*) is apparently drawn from a scholiast's gloss on that passage.

write and to read, or we don't. And even the children while learning it do not strictly speaking deliberate about it: should this be an *i* or a *y*. They wonder about it, but that's not deliberation. Now he mentions here the example of of the physician, which is quite obvious up to the present time. One speaks of the physician's *concilium*, which is the Latin word for deliberation. Then they go into a huddle, to use a somewhat more popular expression.

He mentions here the art of moneymaking: surely, there great uncertainties exist—you read it in the daily papers—and therefore [there is] need for deliberation. Aristotle does not mention the economic or political art here, as you see, and one may well wonder why not, because deliberation is there. Surely it's at the center according to the political doctrine of Aristotle. The central function of the ruling body is to deliberate, of course; to deliberate so as to decide eventually. This is, by the way, of some interest, that what Aristotle calls the deliberative function would today be called decision-making. Now Aristotle means of course that the deliberation should lead to a decision. But, on the other hand, the people who speak of decision do not necessarily think of the deliberation preceding the decision. I never found out who made the term "decision" so popular in present-day political science.[xxxii] It may be Lasswell, but I do not know. Someone should look into that, if he has the time. Now let us go on where we left off.

Reader:
Deliberation is concerned with things that happen in a certain way for the most part, but in which the event is obscure, and with things in which it is indeterminate.

LS: What does that mean? Thomas gives this example: one does not deliberate as to whether a stone bridge which one has to cross will not collapse, because then it becomes infinite.[xxxiii] But of course, if the thing which has to cross a bridge is a tank, then you have to deliberate . . . experts. But one deliberates about a marriage. There are certain general rules about marriage—what kind of a woman is preferable to what kind of man—but uncertainty as to the outcome, because some people prove to be different after marriage than before the marriage. And therefore deliberation, at least in former times. [Laughter] Good. Now let us go on.

Reader:
We call in others to aid us in deliberation on important questions, distrusting ourselves, as not being equal to deciding. (1112b8-11)

LS: The implication is [that the] object of deliberation must be of a certain magnitude. A sign of it is that we drag in others. For example, we would not deliberate [about] whether we should buy this or that tie. We might hesitate for a moment, but this is not the proper subject of deliberation. Yes?

[xxxii] See Strauss's discussion of this concept in his 1940 lecture "The Living Issues of Postwar German Philosophy," reprinted in Heinrich Meier, *Leo Strauss and the Theologico-Political Problem*, trans. Marcus Brainard (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 115-39, especially 126-28.
[xxxiii] Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, §470.

Reader:
We deliberate not about ends but about means. For a doctor does not deliberate whether he should heal, nor an orator whether he shall persuade, nor a statesman whether he shall produce law and order, nor does anyone else deliberate about his end. They assume the end and consider how and by what means it is to be attained; and if it seems to be produced by several means they consider by which it is most easily and best produced, while if it is achieved by one only they consider how it will be achieved by this and by what means *this* will be achieved, till they come to the first cause, which in the order of discovery is last.

LS: Yes. Now let us stop here. So you see again that deliberation occurs of course also in the arts, and not only in action proper. So what we do is this. The act of deliberation is therefore analyzed by Aristotle, but I mention here only one point. He says that we try to find out through which instrumentality [the end] can come into being most easily and most beautifully. "Most easily" doesn't need explanation; "most beautifully" meaning without any detraction from the desired thing. There is a passage in Plato of which one cannot help thinking in this connection. That is in the *Republic* 541a, when he says how the best city will come into being: after the philosophers have taken power, they expel everyone older than ten from the city so that they are not encumbered by the power of tradition, and so they would make the city and [the] regime best in the quickest as well as easiest way. He could have said also in the finest way . . . Also in the earlier discussions in the *Republic*, in book 2, for example, in 370a and b, where he speaks of the introduction of the arts in the simple city, the city of pigs, similar terms occur: how things are to be done more beautifully and more easily. And the answer is: by the radical division of labor. The same consideration. Generally speaking, I believe it is important, in trying to understand the *Republic*, to see that we have here, at least up to books 5, 6 or so, a deliberation in the Aristotelian sense. Socrates, Glaucon, and so on deliberate on how to build up in speech the perfect city. Good. Yes. And now he develops, explains here—let us read the immediate sequel.

Reader:
For the person who deliberates seems to investigate and analyze in the way described as though he were analysing a geometrical construction (not all investigation appears to be deliberation—for instance, mathematical investigation—but all deliberation is investigation). (1112b11-22)

LS: So in other words, deliberation is one species of investigation. Yes. And what is its peculiarity in the sequel?

Reader:
And what is last in the order of analysis seems to be first in the order of becoming. And if we come on an impossibility, we give up the search, e.g. if we need money and this cannot be got; but if a thing appears possible we try to do it. By 'possible' things, I mean things that might be brought about by our own efforts; and these in a sense include things that can be brought about by the efforts of our friends, since the moving principle is in

ourselves. The subject of investigation is sometimes the instruments, sometimes the use of them; and similarly in the other cases—sometimes the means, sometimes the mode of using it or the means of bringing it about. It seems, then, as has been said, that man is a moving principle of actions. (1112b22-32)

LS: Let us stop here. Now our wish is to spend a few weeks in a Caribbean island, and then we deliberate about it. And one factor will be, at least in our time, whether we have the money, and if we find out [that] we don't have the money, then it is impossible. But there is a way out: we may have friends who have money, and they might be willing to finance this trip. Then it is feasible again. Other deliberations are more complicated and deal with graver matters. For example, the deliberation made by a captain of a ship: whom to save or not to save in the event the ship is lost.

Now in order to appreciate properly the sanity of Aristotle's analysis, you should have a look at Hobbes's *Leviathan*, chapter 6, which deals with deliberation in the following way:

"When in the mind of man, Appetites, and Aversions, Hopes and Feares, concerning one and the same thing, arise alternatively; and divers good and evill consequences of the doing, or omitting the thing propounded, come successively into our thoughts; so that sometimes we have an Appetite to it; sometimes an Aversion from it; sometimes Hope to be able to do it; sometimes Despaire, or Feare to attempt it; the whole summe of Desires, Aversions, Hopes, and Feares, continued till the thing be either done, or thought impossible, is that we call DELIBERATION."[xxxiv]

So you see, in other words, it is just a purely subhuman process. Thinking plays no role, although he uses the words "thought impossible." But he might say the rats in certain recent experiments also have thoughts, as quite a few contemporaries believe. And then he gives some examples which are Aristotelian. Therefore of things past there is no deliberation, because [they are] manifestly impossible to change, nor [about] things known to be impossible, as Aristotle said before, or thought [to be] so, because men know or think such deliberation vain. But of things impossible which we think possible, we may deliberate, not knowing it is in vain. And it is called deliberation because it is a putting an end to the liberty, *de*-liberation. [It is] the act of doing or omitting according to our own appetite or aversion. This alternate succession of appetites, aversions, hopes, and fears is no less in living creatures than man, and therefore these also deliberate. That's Hobbes, and not only Hobbes; that goes on up to the present day.

"In *Deliberation*, the last Appetite, or Aversion, immediately adhering to the action, or to the omission thereof, is that wee call the WILL [. . .] And Beasts that have *Deliberation*, must necessarily also have *Will*."[xxxv] The definition of the will given commonly by the schools (that it, is a rational appetite) is not good for if it were, then there could be no voluntary act against reason. This is one of the characteristic misunderstandings of Aristotle. Rational appetite doesn't mean of course that it's a good appetite, but it means

[xxxiv] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (1651), part 1, chapter 6.
[xxxv] *Leviathan*, chapter 6.

an appetite of a being which cannot help using or misusing reason. These very simple things are here absolutely [. . .] So in other words, it is just a series of desires and aversions. That which happens to come at the end—the last feather breaks the horse's neck, as he says occasionally: that is the will. But that this is a rational process in itself, deliberation, is not admitted. And this has had a great effect, and perhaps at no time a greater effect than in our age. Good.

I think we have to stop here, and we will go on next time. We won't be able, I believe, to finish the section of book 3 which I would like to read with you. But on the other hand, we have no one with a whip behind us who tells us how much of the *Ethics* to read or not.

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[1] Moved "not only."
[2] Deleted "that."

Session 15: April 1, 1968

Leo Strauss: [In progress] —in the meantime, there are a few points which I would like to discuss.[i] "The activities of plants and animals are determined by necessity, by nature, mechanistically." But the latter expression is not correct, because "mechanistically" is understood in contradistinction to "teleologically," and it is of course in Aristotle teleological, not mechanistic. In other words, there is a term of the growth which beckons, as it were. It is is not pushed from behind. That would be mechanistic. Good.

Seven. "The virtuous man only deliberates as to how he will be virtuous." Is this the way in which a virtuous human being deliberates? I mean, is it clear now? It would be clearer to say "as to what is the virtuous action in the circumstances."

Student: I meant in contrast to why he should be virtuous.

LS: Oh, I see. Yes, that is correct. Now: "The deliberative process analyzes the end into means and then attempts to actualize them." Well, that is somewhat loose. For example, you deliberate about whether to buy a house. Do you analyze the house into your finances as one factor, or location, or whatever might be relevant?

Same Student: I was thinking more in terms of the end, whether general or universal; for example, the idea of courage as being a virtue. But it would be analyzed into the particular situation.

LS: Ya. But we do not always start from the virtue angle. We deliberate, for example, about a house, about money, about where to study, and so on. And the consideration of virtue comes in as a limiting factor: that certain means and ways are excluded *a priori* because of their impropriety. We will speak of this on another occasion. There is one more point: "The greatest thing is to undergo death for virtuous and noble ends, in defense of one's country, for example." Now does Aristotle speak of defense of one's country?

Same Student: I don't believe so in here, but—

LS: "Country" is, in Greek, the word *patris*, fatherland. It occurs once or twice later, but it doesn't occur in the discussion of courage. The only end of which he speaks is the noble. The noble. But he does not speak of the country or the *polis*, which is quite remarkable and connected with a very great difficulty. This is Mrs. Brown's.

Mr. Peters? Well? No. Then, Mr. West, whom I espy there. "One must expect from a science that degree of exactness which is appropriate to that science." This is not the best expression one could find. "Appropriate to the subject matter of that science." Yes? Good.

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[i] Strauss begins the session by commenting on students' papers.

"He concludes by comparing himself implicitly to the rhetorician." This goes a bit too far. There is a certain similarity, one could say. Well, comparing of course can cover that, I grant you that. "In his explicit confrontation with such men, as for example, Callicles, Aristotle speaks not in his own name, rather he quotes the venerable poet, Hesiod, in his favor." Is this quite true? If you remember the discussion in book 1 of whether honor is the highest good, and where he shows that honor is dependent on virtue and so on, you know, and therefore cannot be the highest good, this is an argument which would probably not make any impression on Callicles because of his obsession but which would make an impression on listeners who are not obsessed.

Student: Yes. Well, I mean, there are also a certain class of men who aren't interested in honor—

LS: Pardon?

Same Student: There's also a class of men who, not being interested in honor, may only be interested in simple—

LS: But even there he argues that they are after the pleasures of Sardanapal. This can be stated in the form of an explicit argument: that they know only the pleasures of beasts, and a human being is not a beast. Can you pass it on? Mr. Peters? All right, then you must forget about it. Yes, Mr. Zinman.

Student: I was wondering whether I could ask for a clarification of a statement you made last time in connection with a point raised by Mr. Wedergreen, I believe, about the difference between Aristotle and Plato on the question of the distinction between practical and theoretical virtues. You said at that time, or you raised the question as to what are the theoretical principles of ethics as ethics, that is, the theorist's principles of ethics distinguishing those from the theoretical principles taken from, say, psychology or metaphysics. I don't quite understand what that means, and I was wondering if you—

LS: We must of course distinguish (that is implied in your question) between ethics, what Aristotle does, and what the perfect gentleman does. The perfect gentleman does not have at his disposal such an articulation of what virtue itself is and what the various virtues are as Aristotle [does]. That goes without saying. This we presuppose. And now in the case of Plato, Plato likes to call our good use of the understanding *phronēsis*, "practical wisdom," although this becomes very theoretical: for example, the question "What is courage?"—as distinguished from the question "What is the courageous action here and now?"—is already a theoretical question. And this goes higher and higher, and still Plato calls it practical wisdom. Why? Because he denies that the distinction between practical understanding and theoretical understanding is ultimately valid, because one shifts insensibly into the other. For Aristotle, there is a clear distinction between theoretical understanding and practical understanding: what the good man or statesman thinks is practical wisdom, what the mathematician or physicist or metaphysician thinks is theoretical wisdom. Now the question is: how are the two related? There is one medieval

tradition, represented for instance by Dante, according to which the ultimate principles of which ethics makes use are supplied by theoretical reason, namely, the knowledge of the end of man. It is as theoretical as the knowledge of the end of the horse, or of a tree, or whatever else you take.

Now the transformation of this theoretical proposition, "this and this is the end of man," into a practical proposition, "this is what we should strive for," that is the great question. That is one of the most difficult questions of Aristotle's *Ethics*, the question of the cognitive status of the practical principles, and since Aristotle knew what he was doing, I suppose that a solution can be reached if one digs deep enough and takes every relevant thing into consideration. The most important book from this point of view is book 6, which I think we should read after we have completed. We should also read book 5. But I think we must always raise these questions. It is easy not to raise them, because many things which Aristotle says are so convincing and obvious that one doesn't think about them. In what perspective is this particular thing said? Is this a theoretical statement or is this a practical statement? I advisedly overstated the case at the beginning of this course that there is no attempt on Aristotle's part to refute Callicles in the way in which Plato makes such efforts. It is a bit more complicated.

Student: I've been wanting to ask this for a bit. The difference between—well, the dichotomy it seems that Aristotle might appear to draw in the *Ethics*. In fact, while it exists on a practical level, that is, within a conventional political society, as you might say the gentlemen would see it, nonetheless is in a sense subsumed into the theoretical knowledge of the philosopher. If in fact the moral virtue can point the way to theoretical knowledge, then it would seem that in the final analysis, at any rate, that moral virtue becomes subsumed into theoretical knowledge, and that in fact the division, which at a lower level existed, on a higher level doesn't exist, that theoretical knowledge in fact becomes practical knowledge.

LS: That was a very complicated and long statement, and I do not know where to begin. But, for example, if you prove a mathematical theory: that there are certain moral qualities required in order to do that—you must be awake, you should not be intoxicated, and so on and so on—goes without saying. But that is not moral virtue proper because your sobriety and whatever is entirely in the service of knowledge [and] is not its own end as it would be in moral action proper, and this fundamental distinction is never abandoned by Aristotle. I mean, if you have to do a good job in theoretical science or, for that matter, in any art, however low, you must fulfill certain moral conditions. But this is not morality proper; this is only a requirement of some practice and it is not chosen for its own sake.

On a former occasion I gave you the example of the very first-rate carpenter who is drunk most of the time, but when he works, when he is sober, he is superior to any other carpenter. Well, the motive for his doing his excellent work is not the work itself but in order to get money so that he can buy more whisky. You know? That does not derogate from his quality as a carpenter. But in morality proper, the right action has to be done for

its own sake and not in order to get something for it. What is true of the arts applies also to the sciences.

Same Student: Well, the only reason that I brought this up was, all right, you have a gentleman, for example, who is practicing the moral virtues for the sake of the moral virtues (now I'm kind of regurgitating your article a little bit), then in effect the gentleman might ask himself: well, why moral virtue? Why is it good that I be morally virtuous?

LS: Yes, but for this you have one answer which is, I think, good enough for all practical purposes, and that is [that] a man who wants to have a reason for being decent has by this very fact ceased to be decent. That is, I think, Aristotle's view of the matter. One has to consider the fact that there are false theories around which deny the importance of morality, and which theories must be met by theoretical argument. This is true, and therefore the question is: did Aristotle sufficiently consider this fact that the moral sphere is only *de jure*, and not *de facto* self-sufficient? Mr. Shulsky?

Mr. Shulsky: It would seem that it's not only false theories that threaten this practice, but in a way, true theories too, because the whole questioning of decency puts one outside the realm of being decent oneself, [yet] that would seem to be a prerequisite of any sort of—

LS: All right, then let us discuss this example, which came up in connection with Mrs. Brown's paper. Why does a brave man face the dangers to his life? The answer given by Aristotle: because of the *nobility* of the action. And Aristotle says first that the place of courage is the field of battle; of course one can be courageous in other respects, toward pain, toward disease, toward hunger, and so on and so on, but courage *par excellence* is the courage on the field of battle. And the courageous man is the one who exposes his life because it is noble to do so. He doesn't go so far as Horace, who said, "*dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*,"[ii] "it is *sweet* and decorous to die for the fatherland," but *only* that it's decorous. But if you raise the question: but why this limitation of courage to courage on the battlefield or in war, why that? Aristotle does not give you an answer, and I think he did not do this not out of laxity but for a well-considered reason. Everyone can see the reason which Aristotle doesn't give, namely, that the defense of the country is of the utmost importance. [It] is a dedication to the common good, which as such is more noble than dedication to one's own good. And that is it. But Aristotle remarkably does not say that, although he knew it very well. So in other words, Aristotle does not trace the virtues to the ends which ultimately legitimate the virtues from a theoretical point of view, although of course he is aware of that. Is this sufficient as an answer?

Mr. Shulsky: Is that to be understood, the fact that Aristotle doesn't trace these virtues to their ultimate—

LS: Generally speaking, yes.

[ii] Horace, *Odes* 3.2.13.

Mr. Shulsky: . . . of the fact that any type of theory about—any type of theoretical reasoning about these virtues is in some sense suspect or outside the realm of virtue proper.

Another Student: Well, actually, indecent, that would seem to be the—the minute you think about the reasons for decency, you become indecent. That's kind of a repugnant thing to say.

LS: Yes, well, it has its difficulties. But on the other hand, it makes some sense. It is necessary to determine—when you have a certain custom, and people transgress it and say that it is merely conventional or a fashion, i.e., it has no intrinsic necessity, then the question arises: is this true? Does it or does it not have intrinsic necessity? And then one has to go much deeper. Mr. Wedergreen?

Student: Then what you say, I think, is that the Aristotelian distinction between practical and theoretical wisdom in fact leads to a Platonic blurring of that distinction because ultimately, at least expressed theory, that is, written down or spoken, theoretical arguments have to be only, if I understand you correctly, used to protect sound practice, that is then for the sake of practice.

LS: Well, then let us consider what speaks in favor of Aristotle, an example which I believe I mentioned on an earlier occasion: Plato's *Laches*. A fellow comes to Athens who has discovered a new kind of fighting technique, and he exhibits it. Two generals look at it, and as it happens, one says it is a very good idea, and the other says it is a ridiculous thing. And then Socrates is dragged in because, since the experts disagree, one has to go beyond the sphere of the experts and drag in a layman. Socrates says: well, let us first find out the purpose of all such techniques, and Socrates says (well, it's a bit forced, perhaps) that these things are in the service of courage, of producing the virtue of courage. Now if we want to judge of a technique which serves this purpose, we must first know what courage is. So they begin a discussion of courage, and the discussion does not lead to an end, at least in that conversation; it probably would have gone on for quite some time. Now what shall we do then? Shall we keep all practical questions in abeyance until all theoretical questions are resolved? That wouldn't work. And therefore, from this point of view Aristotle presents a sound proposal: that there is a kind of ceiling beyond which the practical man and the practical thinker as such does not have to go. That is roughly the case for Aristotle, and which Plato also recognized in his way of course; otherwise he could not have written the *Laws* in particular.

Same Student: But, I mean, he seems to set that ceiling rather high. I mean, for instance, he could have set it at the level of strictly sense perception or something like that.

LS: Sense perception would not be sufficient under any circumstances.

Same Student: No. It seems like you'd either have to set it there or else—I'm stating an extreme view, but—

LS: Why could there not be something like an unwritten law? I say advisedly unwritten law and not natural law,[iii] which is sufficiently determinate for practical purposes, although it is exposed to quite a few difficulties theoretically. And something of this kind—[1][though "unwritten law"] is not the Aristotelian expression for that, but it is only a suggestion in order to make it a bit more clear what Aristotle is doing.

I suggest that we begin now with our reading, and I remind you briefly of the context. The highest good, we have heard, is happiness. But the core of happiness is virtue. Virtue is the habit of choosing or preferring. The thing chosen is a kind of the voluntary or spontaneous; therefore Aristotle discusses first what is spontaneous and what is not spontaneous. And the specific difference of choice from voluntary and involuntary things as such is that choice is not desire, nor anger, nor wish, nor opinion. It is previously deliberated ("premeditated" would not bring out precisely what Aristotle means). Therefore he has to raise the question: what is the object of deliberation? Answer: only such things as we, i.e., I or we here, can do or bring about. We do not deliberate about things which we cannot achieve, which man as man cannot achieve, and we do not deliberate about things which are of no concern to us. The sphere of deliberation is the sphere where exact foresight is impossible; therefore there is deliberation of course not only regarding actions but also regarding the arts, [in] those arts where exact foresight is not possible. Therefore physicians deliberate, but shoemakers do not deliberate, or, to give the Aristotelian example, nor do writers in the simple sense deliberate about their writing, because the rules are strict and nothing needs to be done about that. Now I suggest then that we go on, 1112b20. This still continues the discussion of deliberation.

Reader:
(For when deliberating one seems in the procedure described to be pursuing an investigation or analysis that resembles the analysis of a figure in geometry—indeed it appears that though not all investigation is deliberation, for example, mathematical investigation is not, yet all deliberation is investigation—and the last step in the analysis seems to be the first step in the execution of the design.)[iv] (1112b20-24)

LS: Literally, "in the coming-into-being." The coming-into-being, for example, of that figure or the coming-into-being of the action.

Reader:
Then, if they have come up against an impossibility, they abandon the project—for instance, if it requires money and money cannot be procured; but if on the other hand it proves to be something possible, they begin to act. By possible, I mean able to be performed by our agency—things we do through the agency of our friends counting in a sense as done by ourselves, since the origin of their action is in us.

[iii] Here there is an extended break in the tape. The missing portion is taken from the original transcript.
[iv] The reader reads from Rackham's translation.

(In practising an art) the question is at one moment what tools to use, and at another how to use them; and similarly in other spheres, we have to consider sometimes what means to employ, and sometimes how exactly any given means are to be employed.

LS: So deliberation is a kind of investigation, but the opposite is of course not true, because an investigation may be purely theoretical. The analysis goes to the deliberation as to whether the thing is feasible for us. So deliberation concerns instruments (for example, money) and the way of getting or using them, [and] thirdly, the human beings to be persuaded, and so on. Yes, now?

Reader:
It appears therefore, as has been said, that a man is the origin of his actions, and that the province of deliberation is to discover actions within one's own power to perform; and all our actions aim at ends other than themselves. It follows that we do not deliberate about ends, but about means. Nor yet do we deliberate about particular facts, for instance, Is this object a loaf? or, Is this loaf properly baked? for these are matters of direct perception. Deliberation must stop at the particular fact, or we embark on an endless process.[v]

The object of deliberation and the object of choice are the same, except that when a thing is chosen it has already been determined, since it is the thing already selected as a result of our deliberation that is chosen. For a man stops inquiring how he shall act as soon as he has carried back the origin of action to himself, and to the dominant part of himself, for it is this part that chooses. (1112b24-1113a7)

LS: In deliberation, we end when we have found the beginning of the action within our capacity. "Within us": we are the origin. We are responsible. The actions are for the sake of something else. Is this unqualifiably true? Is this true in the case of the good actions proper? From what we know, there seems to be a clear contradiction, a solution to which we have not yet found. What Aristotle suggests in part of the passage—let the end be the noble action on the battlefield—[is that] we deliberate: should this still be held at all costs? And here the end is the noble action, but the end is given, and the noble action is determined with a view to a different end. We must have more material before we can clarify this point, but there is a general point which perhaps can be said in the following way. Aristotle says on the one hand that the core of virtue is choice. Choice deals with the means to the ends; that we have read here in this book. But later on in book 6 he will say it is virtue which makes us see the end, and another faculty, also virtue but not moral virtue, called practical wisdom, makes us see what is required for the end. This difficulty we are not yet able to dispose of.

There must be a beginning of the deliberation. The beginning is of course the end. And there must be an end to the deliberation, otherwise the deliberation would be in vain. The question is, then, what—we are going back from the end to the means until we reach the first step, and the first step is the last stage in deliberation and the first stage in the

[v] In Rackham's translation: "it will embark on a process *ad infinitum*."

execution, the coming-into-being. Is this clear? Think of any deliberation that you are engaged in and you will see that this is so.

Student: [. . .]

LS: Then what does Aristotle omit?

Same Student: [. . .]

LS: For instance, you come to another town where you have a job, let us say, and you have to raise the question and to answer it: where to live? You need to find proper living quarters. Then there are various alternatives, which you know as well as I do, and then you discuss them. And you have to consider your finances, your conveniences, and eventually you reach a point where you say: this is the only thing which is suitable. If there are two things which are equally suitable, then you flip the coin.

Student: [. . .]

LS: You mean this end or more than one end? A variety of ends and they conflict with each other, or what?

Student: Probably you would have several factors in mind.

LS: But would this not come in precisely in this process of deliberation, because [. . .] need, and therefore you have to deliberate about how to get proper living quarters, what is convenient and feasible for you. Then you see that this conflicts with another end: you obviously have other needs which have to be addressed, and this requires some deliberation about how to balance one's budget. And this is a process of deliberation. I believe the difficulty comes from an assertion frequently made: that every end can be a means and every means can be an end. This is what Aristotle absolutely denies. There are things which would be ends only for very unreasonable people or could be ends only playfully. Take stamps: stamps are obviously means for getting your letter to the receiver. These means can be made ends, in a way, by stamp collecting, but this is not something quite serious. It can be very entertaining, but not a need as great as the postal system and [. . .] Surely from Aristotle's point of view there is no simple possibility of regarding all means as ends and all ends as means. There are certain things which can only be regarded as ends, and things which can only be regarded as means. The complication arises only if we take the playful as serious, and that is a fundamental error. [. . .] A good man is a serious one, not the playful one. He can have a certain playfulness in its proper place. There is a proper place for being playful unless you have so much money, and even then you can use your money for better purposes than to just make fun.

Student: [. . .]

LS: But if this is a deliberation proper, does this not lead to a higher end, with a view to which you have settled this question: whether punishment should only be corrective or

[also] retribution? How do you go about settling this question? Must you not always refer to an end?

Student: [. . .]

LS: The well-being of the child, that seems to be rather obvious. Perhaps the good reputation of the family might come in. Will you go on where we left off in 1113a7?

Reader:
This may be illustrated by the ancient constitutions represented in Homer: the kings used to proclaim to the people the measures they had chosen to adopt.

As then the object of choice is something within our power which after deliberation we desire, Choice will be a deliberate desire of things in our power; for we first deliberate, then select, and finally fix our desire according to the result of our deliberation.

Let this serve as a description in outline of Choice, and of the nature of its objects, and the fact that it deals with means to ends. (1113a7-14)

LS: Yes, now is this clear, what deliberation and choice mean? Choice is the end of deliberation. The deliberation may be very defective, and then the choice presumably will be bad. But without deliberation, no choice.

Student: Previously I believe you spoke of will as being part of choice, and I was wondering: can a person deliberate what could be an alternative and then choose one, saying that alternative is the best, and wish to do it but not have the will to do it, and not have the control over his passions so that he could say that choice and will are not separate?

LS: I said that there is no Aristotelian word for will—or no Greek word for will. There is a word "wish" [. . .] and we translate the word [. . .][vi] by willing. But it does not have the precise meaning. What we mean by will is called by Aristotle choice. And the choice is the core of the action: you choose to help a poor man; that's an act of the will, [and] for Aristotle an act of choice. You may do it for improper reasons or you may do it for the proper reasons, so the right choice would of course be for the proper reasons. And this is brought about by being brought up properly and the formation of the character being terminated, so that it is a matter of course to do it properly for the right reasons. Where does the difficulty come in then?

Student: Could there be a case in which a man has this judgment, in other words, he could deliberate and reason by his faculties [about] which is the best alternative, but because, say, his passion overcame his reason—let's say he is fearful of actually engaging in the action—he will be held back. He will have this judgment but he will not actually act.

[vi] The ellipses here represent blank spaces in the original transcript.

LS: This would be a problematic thing of which Aristotle spoke, which in the case of sensual desires is called incontinence: the man who regards smoking as bad and cannot[vii] control his desire. So that means, according to Aristotle, that he has not been properly trained or [has] not properly trained himself so that he does not even desire the things which are bad. So the good will, if we use this non-Greek, non-Aristotelian expression, the good will has two ingredients; that Aristotle will make clear in book 6. One is virtue, the habit, the right habit, and the other is practical wisdom. The two things must come together. So what you call judgment is an ingredient of good action. How can you act properly if you don't judge properly? But that your desire is in agreement with your judgment, that is not the consequence of your judgment. That's the consequence of the training, by others or yourself, of your desires. And if these two things converge, then you have the good human being. That he chooses, that sees the right thing and naturally desires it, because it is right: that is the good man according to Aristotle.

Now the point which Aristotle makes here is this, at the end of the passage just read: desire—or "striving for" is perhaps a better translation [of] *orexis*—goes towards an end. This striving for an end precedes the deliberation; otherwise the deliberation would never start. The choice follows the deliberation. Is this clear? First you strive for something, then you deliberate, and then you make a choice after the deliberation has come to its end. But it must be understood that the "striving for" persists during this process; otherwise, the deliberation would stop because there is no longer any felt need; and that object of striving, which has been deliberated upon, this is the object of choice. [LS taps on the table.] Aristotle makes here clear at the end again that this analysis, this definition of choice is given only in outline, and we can easily see why this is so, for we have seen that deliberation is common to action and to some of the arts. And it has not been made sufficiently clear what is the difference between moral and technical deliberation, which have obviously very different character, the deliberation of physicians about whether they should make an operation, and the deliberation, say, of parents whether they should send their children, if they still have such rights left, to this college or to another college. Now let us continue that. I wish we could complete this today, this section, but we cannot. Let us see how far we can go. Unless someone wants to raise a point. Let us begin.

Reader:
Wish, on the contrary, as was said above, is for ends.[viii] But while some hold that what is wished for is the good, others think it is what appears to be good. Those however who say that what is wished for is the truly[ix] good, are faced by the conclusion, that what a man who chooses his end wrongly wishes for is not really wished for at all; since if it is to be wished for, it must on their showing be good, whereas in the case assumed it may so happen that the man wishes for something bad. And those on the other hand who say that what appears good is wished for, are forced to admit that there is no such thing as that which is by nature wished for, but that what each man thinks to be good is wished for in his case; yet different, and it may be opposite, things appear good to different people.

[vii] The recording resumes at this point.
[viii] In Rackham's translation: "Wishes, on the contrary, as was said above, are for ends."
[ix] In Rackham's translation: "really."

LS: Let us stop here. Now Aristotle raises here the question: what is the object of wish, i.e., of that which precedes every deliberation? One can say "the truly good," but then we would have to say that bad ends are never wished, [which is] contrary to experience. Hence we should say that the object of wish is "the seeming good," because whoever wishes anything wishes it as good for himself. And if the latter is true, then there is nothing by nature wished, or worthy to be wished at all, because whatever strikes the fancy of anyone at any time is then as good as anything else. Differently stated, all men strive for happiness, but there is no determinate meaning of happiness. A gangster finds his happiness in other things than a nongangster, and various kinds of nongangsters. Let us read the sequel.

Reader:
If therefore neither of these views is satisfactory, perhaps we should say that what is wished for in the true and unqualified sense is the good, but that what appears good to each person is wished for by him; and accordingly that the good man wishes for what is truly wished for, the bad man for anything as it may happen (just as in the case of our bodies, a man of sound constitution finds truly healthy food best for his health, but some other diet may be healthy for one who is delicate; and so with things bitter and sweet, hot, heavy, etc.). For the good man judges everything correctly; what things truly are, that they seem to him to be— (1113a15-31)

LS: Let us stop here. Aristotle solves the difficulty. What is by nature to be wished for is actually willed or wished *only* by the good man, while the bad one wills or wishes something which *merely seems* to be good—and there is an infinite variety of things which seem to be good. Aristotle exemplifies this by the example of the things healthy, contributing to health, of the truly healthy things, and the things which are healthy only relatively. Now what is truly healthy is what is good for the healthy man. The relatively healthy things are those which are healthy—restorative of health, let us say—for sick people. They are healthy in a secondary sense. Of course this is only an example; otherwise one would have to say the bad things chosen by the various bad people are also good in a secondary sense, which Aristotle is not prepared to say. Yes, now let us go on here, a31.

Reader:
what things truly are, that they seem to him to be, in each thing[x]—for special things are noble and pleasant corresponding to each type of character, and perhaps what chiefly distinguishes the good man is that he sees the truth in each kind, being himself as it were the standard and measure of the noble and pleasant. It appears to be pleasure that misleads the mass of men[xi]; for it seems to them to be a good, though it is not, so they choose what is pleasant as good and shun pain as evil. (1113a30-b2)

LS: Ya. So there is a certain relativity, not only of the pleasant things, but even of the noble, to the *hexis*, to the habit. If, therefore, the good man is here called the rule and measure, only to him will the good appear to be good or the truly good. To the other it

[x] In Rackham's translation: "in every department."
[xi] In Rackham's translation: "mass of mankind."

will not appear [so]. There is an intermediate case, of which we have spoken, that someone sees the good but follows the worse course because of lack of self-control. Yes?

Student: Could you please clarify for me the difference of Aristotle here with Plato? I was thinking of the *Gorgias*, where they say that one desires things, one can desire wrong, but one can't will wrong, or something like that. If you desire bad things, it's not really will or something.

LS: That is ignorance.

Same Student: Yes. What is exactly—I mean, I assume, this is in part a criticism of that viewpoint—

LS: Yes, that is correct. Also there is some agreement. The agreement is that in both cases the good does not come to sight, according to both Socrates–Plato and Aristotle. But for Aristotle, the simplistic Socratic thesis that virtue is knowledge is wrong, and therefore the twofold—the analysis of the good actions into the two in a way independent ingredients: sense or reasonableness and habit. The habit is acquired by habituation: being sensible is gained by life experience. These are two different factors, and Socrates did not make that distinction. The view that virtue is knowledge, Socrates's assertion: what that means is a very long question. Whether he meant it as literally as it seems and as Aristotle frequently takes it is an open question. Surely this other ingredient does not come out, and Plato does make a distinction between vulgar virtue and genuine virtue. Genuine virtue would be knowledge, and vulgar virtue would be based on habituation and opinion. Toward the end of the *Republic*, about 612, there is this remark that the nonphilosophic people chose their way of life prior to this life, and these are people whose virtue is acquired only by habit. For Aristotle, there is no moral virtue which is not due to habituation. This is a very crude statement. If you read, for example, the first book of Plato's *Laws*, you would see that Plato was aware of the importance of habituation for becoming virtuous. But somehow Plato *preferred* to discuss, especially in these so-called earlier dialogues, the question as if virtue could be reduced to knowledge, which, if taken literally, is surely a wrong assertion.

Student: Does Aristotle make provision for a type of virtue superior to that of habituation in any way?

LS: Well, this is not genuine virtue. There are a few discussions of this in Aristotle's *Ethics*. One is when he speaks of courage, of the first of the virtues. He distinguishes five pseudo-forms of courage that would be vulgar courage in contradistinction to true courage. And then the discussion of continence in book 7 is in a way also the discussion of a lower kind of virtue, continence being lower than temperance, the temperate man not having bad desires, and the continent man having bad desires but controlling them.

Same Student: Does that indicate then that in a certain sense the *spoudaios* is actually not, let's say, the highest type of man? If we talk about the types of chracters, Aristotle does in a certain sense—

LS: How can you draw this conclusion from what I have said?

Same Student: Well, insofar as mere habituation doesn't suffice—

LS: This "mere" is brought in by you.

Same Student: Well, I'm reading into what you're saying. If there can be types of habituation, some types of which are vulgar, and other types which aren't vulgar, habituation itself can't be the same—

LS: The question is whether these pseudo-forms are all due to habituation. For example, there can be something like a natural boldness, a daredevil posturing which is not due to habituation but the fellow is born with that. But you are of course right nevertheless, because, as I have deplored before, we have to think of the end of the *Ethics*, where the wise man, the contemplative man, appears. And in the light of him, moral virtue, *merely* moral virtue becomes debunked in a way. You know? To that extent you are right, but this subject has not yet come up in the Aristotelian text. Mr Wedegreen?[xii]

Student: I was talking about the last time you said that what's good for me is a purely practical question for Aristotle.

LS: That doesn't mean that it doesn't have certain presuppositions of a theoretical kind.

Same Student: But I was thinking, for instance, if in the light of what you've just said about the end which comes to light—it appears, for instance, if someone would ask themselves, say, "What kind of a soul I have?" And Aristotle also says that things are good in themselves, and we pray that they're good for us—

LS: These are outer things. These are external goods. For example, most men like to have all kinds of conveniences, like houses without cockroaches and other things of this kind. These are the things by nature good, and Aristotle says they are good only for the good, because others will only be corrupted by them.

Same Student: . . . good man . . . only the philosopher . . .

LS: No, you are too quick. I mean, you forget certain intermediate stages. Aristotle remains more loyal to the phenomena. You must always think of this question: there must be principles accessible to the large majority of men if there is to be a decent civil life. And therefore these principles must not be in need of a complicated theoretical deduction, although the philosopher may be interested in this question of what their theoretical foundations are.

Same Student: For instance, if one thinks of Locke's regime or of our regime, it's not transparently clear that there have to be these grand principles of ethics accessible to . . .

[xii] The tape was changed at this point.

LS: According to Locke, in the passage which I read to this class, the legislator has nothing whatever to do with virtue and vice. That is the price you pay for that: you are very pragmatic; you lay your foundation very low, but solid. That seems to be very practical, and yet then there is no place for taking care of the moral level of the community. And that is a defect of Locke's doctrine.

Same Student: Maybe, but I was just thinking that, on the other hand, I'd say we have some pretty good stuff coming out of this low, basement-level principle.

LS: Yes, sure, but the question is: is this due to the theory or is this due to a heritage antedating the theory?

Same Student: I don't know.

LS: One would have to investigate that. But, I mean, as a thesis, to say that virtue and vice are utterly irrelevant to the political society and the only thing is to protect property and freedom—but freedom is this awkward thing. It is freedom for evil as well as for good. And virtue means exactly to have lost that freedom through a habit, namely, the habit of acting well habitually. Yes?

Student: If what you say is true, then from Aristotle's point of view, to have a decent regime one must have principles which are open to a large majority and not need detailed, theoretical elaboration. But then it would seem that a man like Plato, for example—it would seem that, say, that this book, and in fact the *Politics* also, can in a way appear as an apology for philosophy, or particularly the philosophy of Plato, and in a nonapologetic form, of course. But, in other words, if a man like Plato were to write a treatise, he would write this treatise.

LS: In a way, yes. The word "apology" is not good, as you admitted. But one can say that what the Platonic discussions presuppose has been elaborated in Aristotle's *Ethics*, by which I mean this: when you have a discussion of courage, for example, in Plato's *Laches*, you learn something about courage, without any question. But you do not get a full picture of the phenomenon of courage as ordinarily understood; that you get only with Aristotle, because Plato is much too eager to transcend that ordinary understanding in the direction of the highest possible understanding. And, for example, for Aristotle the fact that courage is located or resides in the battlefield belongs to *the* definition of courage. But that courage[2] [during] an operation, that is, prior to the invention of medical help in this respect, or toward any other dangers is not fundamentally different from the courage shown in the battlefield. Say the . . . and then he finds one or two more steps, then he comes to the point where courage is identical with virtue, and the specific difference of courage is lost.

Now I think one can see both the advantages and disadvantages of the the two philosophers. On the one hand, we really should know what we primarily understand by courage—primary meaning in a political context—and why this is so. This we should

make clear to ourselves. One can perhaps say what Aristotle does is less acceptable to[3] [those who are] now called the intellectuals than what Plato does; I mean that the truly political bias of Aristotle is not the same as the bias of the intellectual, and the intellectual would be more willing to go with Plato. But on the other hand, the intellectual has got a point: that the perspective of the practical man is more limited, and some people, at any rate, must transcend it.

Student: In speaking of the differences between Plato and Aristotle, you used the term advantages of the various two. I wonder, is that a proper or a valuable way of attempting to understand them, in terms of their advantages toward—?

LS: Well, say virtues and vices.

Same Student: No, but advantages for what, perhaps is a better—

LS: There are advantages for theory, for understanding, and there are advantages for practical purposes, such as the formation of the character of a citizen body. There is no *a priori* certainty that these two things are identical.

Same Student: No. Well, I guess what I'm asking is, what is the function of advantages for—I mean, in what sense is it proper to speak of a philosophy in terms of its advantages rather instead of its correct understanding of things?

LS: But is not philosophy also frequently thought[4]—and not only now, but at all times—to be of help to men?

Same Student: Yes, perhaps so. But does one judge it primarily in terms of its advantages to men or in terms of its correct understanding of things?

LS: But why should one rush such a decision? It is perfectly sufficient for our present purposes if we see that these are two different considerations. I think it is very important to see that they are different considerations: that it is not a foregone conclusion that the quest for truth for its own sake is simply in harmony with the needs of man as a social, political being.

Same Student: No, that wasn't—

LS: Yes, but this is a question which one must raise. And therefore one must balance the two considerations, and therefore one may speak of advantages and disadvantages from these two different points of view. This is at least what I had in mind. Now let us go on here.

Reader:

If then whereas we wish for our end, the means to our end are matters of deliberation and choice, it follows that actions dealing[xiii] with these means are done by choice, and voluntary. But the activities in which the virtues are exercised deal with means. Therefore virtue also depends on ourselves. And so also does vice. For where we are free to act we are also free to refrain from acting, and where we are able to say No we are also able to say Yes; if therefore we are responsible for doing a thing when to do it is right, we are also responsible for not doing it when not to do it is wrong, and if we are responsible for rightly not doing a thing, we are also responsible for wrongly doing it. But if it is in our power to do and to refrain from doing right and wrong, and if, as we saw, being good or bad is doing right or wrong, it consequently depends on us whether we are virtuous or vicious. (1113b3-14)

LS: Ya. So here he draws the conclusion from the fact that deliberation and choice has to do with the *means* to the end. The end is natural. It does not depend on us; it is imposed on us by nature. But the *means* to the end have to be discovered by us and must be in our power, otherwise we could not achieve the end. Hence, since virtue and vice are at home in the sphere of what leads to the end, they are in our power, and we are responsible for being either virtuous or vicious, or something in-between, if that exists. The object of wish, "the wished," does not depend on us. That is because it is imposed on us by nature, as we have seen before in what we read earlier. Yes, Mr. Smith?

Student: We wish for both happiness and, say, I think, wishing is applied to the best regime: the best regime is that regime which we would wish for. But yet we have examples of happy men, but we have no examples of—

LS: Yes, but there is a question, as we have seen. Priam or Job: they are responsible for their being good men. They are *not* responsible for their being unhappy or miserable men, because that does not depend on them, but because virtue has this peculiar character which it has according to Aristotle, even in their misery they are never contemptible because their virtue will show in their misery and towards their misery. Yes?

Reader:
To say that

None are willingly wicked nor unwillingly blessed[xiv]

seems to be half false, though half true: it is true that no one is unwilling to be blessed, but not true that wickedness is unspontaneous[xv]—

LS: This reminds somewhat of the Socratic saying, but it is the saying of a poet, and one doesn't know which poet: "No one is voluntarily bad nor involuntarily happy." And Aristotle, says, "Surely the latter part is true, all men desire by nature to be happy. But

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[xiii] There is a break in the tape while the student is reading. The missing portion of the passage has been supplied from the text.
[xiv] In Rackham's translation: "None would be vile, and none would not be blest."
[xv] In Rackham's translation: "involuntary."

the first half is wrong; men are responsible for their wickedness." Hence their wickedness is voluntary. Yes?

Reader:
or else we must contradict what we just now asserted, and say that man is not the originator and begetter of his actions as he is of his children. But if it is manifest that a man is the author of his own actions, and if we are unable to trace our conduct back to any other origins than those within ourselves, then actions of which the origins are within us, themselves depend upon us, and are spontaneous.[xvi]

This conclusion seems to be attested both by men's behaviour in private life and by the practice of lawgivers; for they punish and exact redress from those who do evil (except when it is done under compulsion, or through ignorance for which the agent himself is not responsible), and honour those who do noble deeds, in order to encourage the one sort and to repress the other; but nobody tries to encourage us to do things that do not depend upon ourselves and are not voluntary, since it is no good our being persuaded not to feel heat or pain or hunger or the like, because we shall feel them all the same. (1113b14-30)

LS: So here Aristotle gives a proof of a kind for his assertion that we are responsible for our goodness or badness, namely, what is presupposed in all legislation: in punishment and also in rewards. This is a most obvious argument; whether it is sufficiently good is another matter. It was questioned in antiquity already, but in modern times perhaps with greater influence by Hobbes. I read to you a few passages from Hobbes's *Of Liberty and Necessity*. Bishop Bramhall[xvii] attacked Hobbes for his view on freedom, and he speaks of the inconvenience of the view that man's actions are predetermined. The first inconvenience, he says, is this: that the laws which prohibit any action will be unjust, especially since the prohibition is followed by punishment, and the man is not responsible. This argument I don't have to belabor because it is underlying quite a bit of present-day practice, as you know. Now Hobbes denies that. Hobbes is in favor of punishment and against freedom of will.

"Suppose the law, on pain of death, prohibit stealing, and there be a man who by the strength of temptation is necessitated to steal and is thereupon put to death; does not this punishment deter others? Is it not a cause that others steal not? Does it not frame and make their wills to justice? [So in other words, Hobbes's contention: the practice of punishment is perfectly compatible with the practice of the laws.—LS] Men are justly killed, not for that their actions are not necessitated, but because they are noxious, and they are spared and preserved whose actions are not noxious."[xviii]

In other words, one does not need the doctrine of the freedom of the will in order to justify the practice of punishment, the practice of punishment being itself a chain in the causal nexus. By punishment or by honoring, men are made good, and so on.[5] [Hobbes

[xvi] In Rackham's translation: "voluntary."
[xvii] John Bramhall (1594-1663), Archbishop of Armagh.
[xviii] Thomas Hobbes, *Of Liberty and Necessity*, section 14. See *Hobbes and Bramhall on Liberty and Necessity*, ed. Vere Chappell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 24-25.

would even go so far as to regard] his own doctrine as a part of the causal nexus. Given the state of discussion, and given the fact that Hobbes had this kind of training and this kind of nature, he couldn't help developing his doctrine and eventually writing the *Leviathan*. And then the *Leviathan* could influence British government, and Hobbes had at least the hope that it would become *the* textbook in Oxford and Cambridge, and then the gentlemen, who would later be justices of the peace, would be trained Hobbeans and would in this capacity mete out a punishment which is in Hobbes's view perfectly just, although it denies the kind of responsibility which according to Aristotle man has. Now let us read a little bit later, b30.

Reader:
Indeed, the fact that an offence was committed in ignorance is itself made a ground for punishment, in cases where the offender is held to be responsible for his ignorance; for example,[xix] the penalty is doubled if the offender was drunk, because the origin of the offence was in the man himself, as he might have avoided getting drunk, which was the cause of his not knowing what he was doing. Also men are punished for offences committed through ignorance of some provision of the law which they ought to have known, and might have known without difficulty; and so in other cases where ignorance is held to be due to negligence, on the ground that the offender need not have been ignorant, as he could have taken the trouble to ascertain the facts.

It may be objected that perhaps he is not the sort of man to take the trouble. Well, but men are themselves responsible for having become careless through living carelessly, as they are for being unjust or profligate if they do wrong or pass their time in drinking and dissipation. They acquire a particular quality by constantly acting in a particular way. This is shown by the way in which men train themselves for some contest or pursuit: they practise continually. Therefore only an utterly senseless person can fail to know that our characters are the result of our conduct— (1113b30-1114a10)

LS: So in other words, men are responsible for acts committed while they are drunk, for they are responsible for their being drunk. They are also responsible for their ignorance if this ignorance could be avoided. Surely the ignorance of the law is not an excuse. The ignorance of fact may be an excuse if in the circumstances the ignorance was for all practical purposes inevitable. Aristotle does not here even allude to the possibility that there might be men who are *by nature* incapable of taking these efforts. And the question "Who is not sensitive to these things? Can there not be by nature such a man?" is not taken up.

Thomas Aquinas explains the last sentence which we have read in the following manner. If someone wishes to take a walk in the summer's heat, knowing that he would perspire, then he wished to perspire; i.e., knowing that, this is a necessary consequence: accepting it, he wishes to perspire—although the two wishes have a somewhat different character, the wish to take the walk, and the wish to perspire, but the voluntariness is common to both.[xx] This is a noncriminal and a harmless action, but it helps a bit to understand how

[xix] In Rackham's translation: "for instance."
[xx] Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, §512.

far they extend human responsibility. Is there any point you would like to raise? We have a few more minutes. Yes?

Student: Just a minor one. I can't see how the desire to take a walk can be translated into a desire to perspire. It may be that one wants to take a walk in spite of the fact that one knows one will perspire, but that is a far cry from "I want to take a walk because I want to perspire"—

LS: But you foresaw it. You foresaw that you would perspire, and you said, I am going—

Same Student: I'll put up with it, but that doesn't mean—

LS: But it is voluntary. That doesn't mean that you desired it. Look at the action of the men who throw their merchandise or their luggage into the ocean because it's the only way to save themselves. Aristotle also says they do it voluntarily in the circumstances.

Same Student: I guess, but I—

LS: Because they are confronted with the choice: should they perish together with their luggage or should they survive while their luggage only perishes? And they made the choice, a wise choice in the circumstances. Whether this was a wise choice depends on how [much] good perspiration would do to you [laughter], which Thomas doesn't explain.

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[1] Deleted "that."
[2] Deleted "on."
[3] Deleted "what is."
[4] Deleted "to be."
[5] Changed from "even he goes so far—Hobbes regarded his."

Session 16: April 3, 1968

Leo Strauss: It's all right; there is only one little point. You say, "No one deliberates about eternal things such as the material universe." Why did you add "material"?[i]

Student: I thought that was the example that Aristotle used himself—

LS: Aristotle speaks of the cosmos, which you translate by the universe or the world. But there is no need for adding "material," because that would imply there is also a spiritual universe. But the cosmos, as Aristotle understands it, includes everything. That's all. Will you pass it on? Good.

And then I have a question for Mr. Fawcet. Here you are. Yes, well, you can read your handwriting better than I can. It is a very legible handwriting. So read it to the class, and we will discuss it.

Student: Well, it's this business of going for a walk and sweating again. I didn't know whether it was . . . [Laughter] Well, at any rate.

LS: But you proposed a different interpretation than Aristotle did.

Same Student: Well, actually your interpretation of what I thought Aristotle said was a little different from what I thought my interpretation is. "Clearly if a man takes a walk on a summer day, he will perspire, and he is aware that he will perspire. He accepts the fact of his perspiring as a result of his taking a walk, but accepting is not a synonym for wishing. Likewise, an intelligent man who is lazy and by consequence of his laziness doesn't realize his intellectual potential is not a man who wishes not to realize his intellectual potential but is a man who doesn't wish sufficiently to realize that potential, and so accepts consequences which he doesn't particularly like, but doesn't dislike sufficiently to take remedial action. Perhaps my question amounts to nothing more than a semantic quibble, but would you please clarify between wishing and accepting, understanding that responsibility for acting is present in either case?"

LS: Yes, that is the point. When you make this distinction, you seem to blur the fact that he is responsible. Then you say that he accepts it only, he doesn't wish it: his responsibility does not come out as clearly as it does when it is interpreted along Aristotle's and Thomas Aquinas's lines. Of course he does not wish to perspire. I mean, he does not wish that primarily and *per se*, but nevertheless [a] wish for that is included in what he actually and primarily wishes, therefore. And the same applies also to the case you proposed: the man who from laziness does not actualize his potentialities. It's not merely semantics but a difference of opinion. And I think one has to see whether you are right or Aristotle, by which I do not mean that we should set you up as an authority against Aristotle, but you may be right nevertheless, in spite of the fact that Aristotle is right in so many other things. Good.

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[i] Strauss begins the session by responding to students' papers and questions submitted in writing.

Now let us turn to our very summary reading of sections from book 4. I remind you again of the whole context. Aristotle suggests by his own writing that one cannot understand political things as political things if one is not able to evaluate them properly. If you know everything about socialized medicine except whether it is good or bad, you know nothing about socialized medicine, and the same is also true of other subjects. Now in order to evaluate them properly, one must have a standard, a nonarbitrary standard, and that means in Aristotle's language a *natural* standard. The natural standard is determined by the purpose of political society. The purpose of the political society, as he says not here but in the *Politics*, is the good life: not mere life, or satisfaction, or adjustment, or law and order.[ii] The good life is the life of human excellence, of virtue; and therefore, in order to judge intelligently of political matters, we must have a full articulation of this standard. What is virtue, and what are the particular virtues? If we have this goal before us with the greatest possible clarity, we are better judges of political things than without it. Now this presentation of all the virtues is given by Aristotle in books 3 to 5. This presentation does not go without saying. If we consider the various virtues praised or blamed, say, in Aristotle's time, or for that matter in any later time, we see that Aristotle makes a selection. And this is still more emphasized by the fact that there is an order, an arrangement according to which some of the virtues are lower in rank than others. And if one considers that, both the selection and the arrangement, one can discern what one may call the spirit of Aristotle by simply saying which virtues does he disconsider and what place does he assign to each of the virtues he mentions.

Now we have seen that he begins his discussion with courage, and then he speaks of moderation. Both virtues have to do with affections which we share with the brutes. That means they are lower in this respect. Then he turns to liberality, the one virtue regarding expense, i.e., money, something which is by this very fact human, because brutes don't have money. I mean, although it is possible to make a will in favor of one's favorite cat, yet this doesn't work out as if you had left it to a human being. Now I think we should consider a few more passages regarding the virtues. We turn perhaps to 1121a8.

Reader:
The prodigal on the other hand errs in his feelings with regard to money as well as in his actions; he feels neither pleasure nor pain on the right occasions nor in the right manner. This will become clearer as we proceed.

We have said then that Prodigality and Meanness are modes of excess and of deficiency, and this in two things, giving and getting—giving being taken to include spending. Prodigality exceeds in giving [without getting],[iii] and is deficient in getting; Meanness falls short in giving and goes to excess in getting, only not on the great scale. Now the two forms of Prodigality are very seldom found united in the same person, because it is not easy to give to everyone without receiving from anyone: the giver's means are soon exhausted, if he is a private citizen, and only such persons are considered prodigal. In fact, a man who is

[ii] See Aristotle, *Politics* 1252b27-30.
[iii] Brackets are Rackham's.

prodigal in both ways may be thought considerably superior to the mean man; for he is easily cured by age or by poverty, and is able to be brought to the due mean, because he possesses the essentials of the liberal character—he gives, and he refrains from taking, though he does neither in the proper way or rightly. Correct this by training, or otherwise reform him, and he will be liberal, for he will now give his money to the right objects, while he will not get it from the wrong sources. This is why he is felt to be not really bad in character; for to exceed in giving without getting is foolish rather than evil or ignoble. The prodigal of this type therefore seems to be much superior to the mean man, both for the reasons stated, and because the former benefits many people, but the latter benefits nobody, not even himself.

LS: Let us stop here. So the prodigal is to be preferred to the stingy one. I think we can still understand this despite the fact that we are subject to the puritan ethics, as it has been called, as the soul of the capitalist society.[iv] Prodigality is not base, strictly speaking, but rather foolish. The prodigals are thought to help many others, this is at least the impression, and sometimes he may really give something to a man who deserves being helped, although it is a bit accidental in his case. But the stingy ones do not help anyone, not even themselves. This is an important point here, which Aristotle makes a bit later, in 1121b12 to 16, which we might read. "The stinginess or illiberality is incurable." No, a bit later.

Reader:
Meanness on the contrary is incurable; for we see that it can be caused by old age or any form of weakness. Also it is more ingrained in man's nature than Prodigality; the mass of men[v] are avaricious rather than open-handed." (1121a8-16)

LS: Yes, let us stop here. So in other words, stinginess and greediness are in a way more liberal than liberality or prodigality. Thomas Aquinas, in his commentary on the passage, speaks here of a natural inclination in this respect.[vi] Aristotle had made an earlier remark in 1119a20 to 33 about cowardice: that cowardice is somehow more natural than over-boldness. Fear of death is an important ingredient of our make-up; similarly, to stick to what is his own and to protect it [is something] for which we have a natural inclination, and this has to be considered in the overall judgments.

Somewhat later on, in b31 following, he speaks of tyrants, a subject which we discussed briefly last time in this connection—[b]31, do we have that?

Reader:
The other sort of people are those who exceed in respect of getting, taking from every source and all they can; such are those who follow degrading trades, brothel-keepers and all people of that sort, and petty usurers who lend money in small sums at a high rate of interest; all these take from wrong sources, and more than their due. The common

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[iv] See Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904-1905).
[v] In Rackham's translation: "mankind."
[vi] Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, §698.

characteristic of all these seems to be sordid greed, since they all endure reproach for gain, and for a small gain. Those who make improper gains from improper sources on a great scale, for instance princes who sack cities and rob temples—

LS: Here he says "tyrants." In other words, he[vii] follows Machiavelli, who avoids the word "tyrant" when he speaks to tyrants, because they would not be flattered. They would want to be called "princes." We should not imitate Machiavelli, in this and in other respects.

Reader:
tyrants who sack cities and rob temples are not termed mean, but rather wicked or impious or unjust. (1121b31-1122a7)

LS: Yes, we can leave it, I think. In other words, there are distinctions, very important distinctions, even within hell. To be mean is something very low. But the tyrant is much meaner than that, because what he does the ordinary mean man would not do—the things which have been mentioned here. So meanness then is not the worst thing, the worst vice which a man can have. The extreme of injustice goes much further.

Now another point which we might mention here is this (but was already stated before): that expense must correspond to the greatness of the beings with a view to which the expenses are made. And he gives two examples of such beings: first, gods and heroes; and second, the *polis*, for the expense for temples and for the adornment of the city: they are the proper objects of liberality. And this implies, as Aristotle makes clear, that a poor or an obscure man cannot be liberal in the full sense of the word, because there is a certain lack of propriety if an obscure man makes himself the benefactor of the city by such means, say, by the building of temples or any other thing of this kind.

So all this Aristotle takes in his stride, that there are certain virtues which, at least in their highest form, are inaccessible to poor people. That is so; it cannot be helped. And Aristotle's comfort would be that there is something much higher than moral virtue, namely, intellectual perfection, which is accessible even to poor people. See Socrates. Now let us read 1123a28.

Reader:
The paltry man on the other hand will err on the side of deficiency in everything; even when he is spending a great deal, he will spoil the effect for a trifle, and by hesitating at every stage and considering how he can spend least, and even so grudging what he spends and always thinking he is doing things on a greater scale than is necessary. These dispositions then are vices, but they do not bring serious discredit, since they are not injurious to others, nor are they excessively unseemly. (1123a27-33)

LS: We have raised the question before as to the end which the virtues serve. Now that the virtuous actions are an end in themselves, we know. But nevertheless, they have ends. And here we see, for example, if a certain vice does damage to one's neighbor, this is a

[vii] That is, Rackham.

more serious vice than if it does not do such damage. So this consideration of the ends of virtue you must never forget. Aristotle does not speak of it thematically, but he always has it in mind, as can be seen. The two overall ends which Aristotle considers, we can say on the basis of this passage, are whether this habit is useful to others—and the others means, in the highest case, the city, the community—and whether it is becoming to the doer. Something may be unbecoming to the doer and yet not harm others, and vice versa.

Now we come to one of the most important sections of the *Ethics*: the discussion of magnanimity. The context is this. Aristotle has spoken first of courage and moderation, and then he has gone over to the two virtues connected with wealth, which deals with a higher—liberality and *megaloprepeia*. How do they translate that?

Student: "Magnificence."

LS: "Munificence," yes. So munificence has to do with great expenses, and liberality has to with relatively small expenses. Now he turns to the virtues which have to do with honor and honors. There is one regarding high honors and one regarding not-high honors. The virtue regarding high honors is magnanimity. And this is one of the central passages of the *Ethics*, as you will see from a few passages which we may read. Now let us read the beginning first.

Reader: Do you want me to translate this "magnanimity" or "greatness of soul"?

LS: Both are equally good. I mean, one is Latin the other is Saxon. Magnanimity—you know, *magnitudo animi* and greatness-of-the-soul is the same thing. That depends, I think, on accident, on habit or . . . "Greatness-of-soul" sounds better than "magnanimity," I admit that. Yes?

Reader:
Greatness of Soul, as the word itself implies, seems to be related to great objects; let us first ascertain what sort of objects these are. It will make no difference whether we examine the habit itself or the person that displays the habit.[viii] (1123a34-b1)

LS: "The habit itself," meaning magnanimity. The one who acts according to the habit: that is the magnanimous man. Does this make sense? This does not make such a difference. Yes? Good.

Reader:
Now a person is thought to be great-souled if he claims much and deserves much; he who claims much without deserving it is foolish, but no one of moral nobility[ix] is foolish or senseless. The great-souled man is then as we have described. He who deserves little and claims little is modest,[x] but not great-souled, since to be

[viii] In Rackham's translation: "quality itself or the person that displays the quality."
[ix] In Rackham's translation: "excellence."
[x] In Rackham's translation: "modest or temperate."

great-souled involves greatness just as beauty[xi] involves size: small people may be neat and well-made, but not beautiful.[xii] He that claims much but does not deserve much is vain; though not everybody who claims more than he deserves is vain. He that claims less than he deserves is small-souled, whether his deserts be great or only moderate, or even though he deserves little, if he claims still less. The most small-souled of all would seem to be the man who claims less than he deserves when his deserts are great; for what would he have done had he not deserved so much?

Though therefore in regard to the greatness of his claim the great-souled man is an extreme, by reason of its correctness[xiii] he stands at the mean point, for he claims what he deserves— (1123b1-15)

LS: Yes. That is a point which we have to emphasize. There is a man who is not worthy of high honors, and he knows it and he acts accordingly. This is not a vicious man. In Greek, he is *sōphrōn*, which we usually translate by "moderate," but "modest" makes good sense here. That is, modesty is a virtue, but it is a lower virtue than magnanimity itself: that a man who deserves great honor judges rightly about his subject, and acts accordingly by claiming these high honors. Do you see any other point we should take up in this connection? So there are virtues to which even most ordinarily virtuous men have no access. That's important.

Mr. Shulsky: He says that those who claim a lot, not being worthy of it, are vain, but that there are some who claim more than they [deserve], but that not everybody is vain who claims more than he deserves. In other words, there are some people who claim more but still would not be considered vain. And I was wondering whether they would sort of be almost great-souled, and that the great-souled man might even put a greater claim on it?

LS: Yes. An example would be helpful. Does one occur to you?

Mr. Shulsky: For instance, considering Alexander's claim to be a god, his desire to be a god. Now that might be considered from one point of view an obvious case of putting in a greater claim than he is worth, because he's obviously not a god. But on the other hand, it doesn't—this wouldn't be, might not necessarily—

LS: Yes, that is possible. And also considering his youth and his early death, and so it would—one wouldn't call him vain. Aristotle, at least, would not call him vain. Yes. That makes sense. But this is another complication which arises, because we are here near a peak of the whole *Ethics*, and therefore a certain ambiguity cannot be avoided. We might perhaps—yes?

Student: Aristotle would or would not call him vain?

[xi] In Rackham's translation: "handsomeness."
[xii] In Rackham's translation: "handsome."
[xiii] In Rackham's translation: "rightness."

LS: He would not call him vain. Where we left off, Mr. Pangle: "If he regards himself as worthy of great things, while being worthy." Yes?

Reader:
If then the great-souled man claims and is worthy of great things and most of all the greatest things, Greatness of Soul must be concerned with some one object especially. 'Worthy' is a term of relation: it denotes having a claim to goods external to oneself. Now the greatest external good we should assume to be the thing which we offer as a tribute to the gods, and which is most coveted by men of high station, and is the prize awarded for the noblest deeds; and such a thing is honour, for honour is clearly the greatest of external goods. Therefore the great-souled man is he who has the right disposition in relation to honours and disgraces. And even without argument it is evident that honour is the object with which the great-souled men are concerned, since it is honour above all else which great men claim and deserve.

LS: Now we can say that whereas the munificent man is the only one who honors the gods properly, because the gifts which he makes and the temples which he builds are appropriate to the gods, the magnanimous man *behaves* like the gods. To that extent the example given by Mr. Shulsky was very adequate. Yes. Now a little bit later, in 33. And if we look at the phenomena in every respect, it would appear that the magnanimous man would be altogether ridiculous if he were not good, virtuous.

Reader:
Moreover, if he were bad, he would not be worthy of honour, since honour is the prize of virtue, and the tribute that we pay to the good. Greatness of Soul seems therefore to be as it were a crowning ornament of the virtues: it enhances their greatness, and it cannot exist without them. (1123b15-1124a3)

LS: Yes. Now this is a unique statement. Aristotle does not say this of any of the other virtues, only of magnanimity. Magnanimity is the peak of the virtues. It presupposes all other virtues and gives them a splendor which, without it, they would not have. And as he says in the sequel, the virtue [of the magnanimous man] is altogether perfect. Yes.

Now I would like to mention, there is another peak in the *Ethics* apart from the section on magnanimity. That is the section on justice at the beginning of the fifth book. And one can say that the Aristotelian moral universe has two peaks: one, magnanimity; and the other, justice. And magnanimity is a peak of morality (goodness) from the point of view of the individual himself, the highest stature, whereas justice is the peak from the point of view of man's relation to other human beings. And Aristotle leaves it at this distinction, at this tension, without trying to make this more simple, less questionable. Such is life. There are these two points of view from which we can and must look at human beings. There are these two poles. There is no conflict between them, but there is a different orientation in both cases. Now let us look at a few examples. 1124b9.

Reader:

He is fond of conferring benefits, but ashamed to receive them, because the former is a mark of superiority and the latter of inferiority. He returns a service done to him with interest, since this will put the original benefactor into his debt in turn, and make him the party benefited. The great-souled are thought to have a good memory for any benefit they have conferred, but a bad memory for those which they have received (since the recipient of a benefit is the inferior of his benefactor, whereas they desire to be superior); and they are said to enjoy[xiv] being reminded of the former but to dislike being reminded of the latter: this is why the poet makes Thetis not specify her services to Zeus; nor did the Spartans treating with the Athenians recall the occasions when Sparta had aided Athens, but those on which Athens had aided Sparta.

LS: That's very different from our feelings today, but here we are. Go on.

Reader:
It is also characteristic of the great-souled man never to ask help from others, or only with reluctance, but to render aid willingly; and to be haughty towards men of position and fortune, but courteous toward those of moderate station, because it is difficult and distinguished to be superior to the great, but easy to outdo the lowly, and to adopt the high manner with the former is not ill-bred, but it is vulgar to lord it over humble people: it is like putting forth one's strength against the weak. He will not compete for the common objects of ambition, or go where other people take the first place; and he will be idle and slow to act, except when pursuing some high honour or achievement; and will not engage in many undertakings, but only in such as are important and distinguished. He must be open both in love and in hate, since concealment shows timidity; and care more for the truth than for what people will think; and speak and act openly, since as he despises other men he is outspoken and frank, except when speaking with ironical self-depreciation, as he does to the many.[xv] He will be incapable of living at the will of another, except[xvi] a friend, since to do so is slavish, and hence flatterers are always servile, and humble people flatterers. (1124b9-1125a2)

LS: Yes. I think that is intelligible and doesn't require much of a comment, except to emphasize that this runs counter to our feelings in certain points. Our feelings having been molded by the biblical tradition, and it is quite interesting to see how Thomas Aquinas discusses these matters and tries to bring them into harmony with biblical morality. In the present time you find sometimes interpreters who say that Aristotle is not simply an admirer of the magnanimous man, that there is quite a bit of irony in that. I think that is not true. In a way, the whole *Ethics*, one can say, is ironical because it does not look at the moral phenomena from the highest point of view—the bulk of the *Ethics*, at least. One has to take that as it is.

[xiv] In Rackham's translation: "and enjoy."
[xv] In Rackham's translation: "to common people."
[xvi] In Rackham's translation: "unless."

Now irony, this word which you all have heard so often, which is today so common, occurs rarely in Aristotle. But here there is one of the references, the first reference to it. The magnanimous man is the frank man, because of his great opinion of himself, and he is in no sense a coward, and not a moral coward in particular. But there are certain relations in which he is ironical. "Ironical" means dissembling. He dissembles his superiority; that is the meaning of irony. He dissembles his superiority when talking to inferior people—the many, as Aristotle says. That is because it would be too cheap a triumph to be recognized as superior to people who are manifestly his inferiors. Yes. And a little bit further on, in 1125a5 to 9, there he doesn't talk about human beings. Yes?

Mr. Zinman: I can understand why—your earlier comment certainly makes sense that, for example, it would seem that the great-souled man is a peak, and because he is a peak, he does not really use all the virtues, for example, modesty. He does not have the virtue of modesty.

LS: Yes, sure, because it is a lesser virtue.

Mr. Zinman: But what about the problem of irony later being treated as a vice?

LS: Yes, but that is another sign of the complexity. Irony as such, that is a lack of veracity, and that is a vice. But in certain circumstances, it is not a vice. Well, one can make the transition as follows, Mr. Zinman. Even in this passage, when he speaks of the irony later on thematically, he makes it clear that while it is a vice, it is a graceful vice, more graceful, at any rate, than its opposite. The boaster, that is the other faulty extreme. There is the truthful man, who doesn't say more about himself than is the case; and then there is a boaster; and on the other pole, there is the ironical man. Now the boaster is very obnoxious, and compared with him the ironical man is a graceful man, although it is not the perfectly right thing, because he understates his worth. Well, if he understates his worth in order to flatter the powerful people, then he is despicable. But if he does it in order not hurt other people's feelings, that would be a different case. A man who is walking around and trying to impress and oppress his fellows by showing off his abilities is an obnoxious man; and therefore the man who conceals his superiority in order not to hurt other people's feelings, that's in the worst case a graceful vice. But the transition from a graceful vice to an ingredient of virtue is relatively easy. Think of a man of very high superiority, as the magnanimous man doubtless is, confronted with people who are manifestly his inferiors. And then this would be proper in these circumstances. One must always consider the circumstances, Mr. Zinman, as you have learned from other teachers, like Edmund Burke. And Aristotle was perhaps the first to state this lesson so powerfully, and we should also give him the benefit of the doubt. Now let us go on: "He will not be a gossip." In Greek, the word is *anthrōpologos*, a man who talks about human beings. Yes?

Reader:
He is no gossip, for he will not talk either about himself or about another, as he neither wants to receive compliments nor to hear other people run down (nor is he lavish of praise either); and so he is not given to speaking evil himself, even of his enemies, except when he deliberately intends to give offence. (1125a5-9)

LS: "Except out of *hybris*," out of insolent pride. This is one of the passages which Thomas Aquinas also tries to explain away, because the virtuous man doesn't have insolent pride under any condition. But that is not quite Aristotle's view. For example, Thomas Aquinas explains this passage as follows. He will not speak ill of enemies, except in order to repel injuries which they have done to him, in other words, as part of the warlike action of defense.[xvii] I think that mitigates it unnecessarily. Aristotle *means* that they use insolent pride under certain conditions. For example, Achilles regarding Agamemnon: that is a case of *hybris* of a magnanimous man. Or in our age, when Churchill, in a speech in 1940 called Hitler a guttersnipe, then this was of course also such an act of *hybris*.[xviii] You know? After all, Hitler was infinitely more powerful at that time than Churchill was, and [this was] however not an unworthy action, because it stated in advance the truth, the final judgment on this opponent on this occasion. Good. Now let us see, in 29—1125a18, I'm sorry.

Reader:
Such then being the Great-souled man, the corresponding character on the side of deficiency is the Small-souled man, and on that of excess, the Vain man. These also are not thought to be actually vicious, since they do no harm, but rather mistaken. The small-souled man—

LS: So in other words, if we call "utilitarian" an ethics which deals only with harming and helping, then Aristotle would say that is much too narrow. There are qualities which are in themselves neither harmful nor helpful and yet are ugly, distortions. They are ugly to look at, like these. For example, the vain men are mostly harmless people—well, except if their vanity is hurt, then the situation becomes different. But then it's no longer the vain men but the revengeful ones. Now read on.

Reader:
The small-souled man deprives himself of the good thing that he deserves; and his failure to claim good things makes it seem that he has something bad about him [and also that he does not know himself],[xix] for (people say[xx]), if he deserved any good, he would try to obtain it. Not that such persons are considered foolish, but rather too retiring; yet this estimate of them is thought to make them still worse, for men's ambitions show what they are worth, and if they hold aloof from noble enterprises and pursuits, and forgo the good things of life, presumably they think they are not worthy of them. (1125a16-27)

LS: In other words, even shyness is a vice, but not a terrible vice. But it is a vice because it may prevent a man from doing his very best, and especially if you think of a man who would be a first-rate statesman and would be too shy to run for office, [that] would be a defect.

[xvii] Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, §779.
[xviii] In a radio broadcast on 22 June 1941.
[xix] Brackets are Rackham's.
[xx] In Rackham's translation: "argue."

Reader:
The vain on the other hand are foolish persons, who are deficient in self-knowledge and expose their defect: they undertake honourable responsibilities of which they are not worthy, and then are found out. They are ostentatious in dress, manner and so on. They want people to know how well off they are, and talk about it, imagining that this will make them respected.

Smallness of Soul is more opposed than Vanity to Greatness of Soul, being both more prevalent and worse. (1125a27-34)

LS: Worse for the reason given: because it may prevent a man from actualizing his highest potentialities. And the vain man is only a ridiculous individual, but not a harmful individual.

Student: Why does he say it's more prevalent, smallness-of-soul, than vanity?

LS: Well, that was the way in which he saw things. Where did he stand in order to see that? Most men, Aristotle asserts, are given rather to underestimating themselves; to be kind of crawling beings than boastful beings. Is this not intelligible? I mean, is this not even true today that most people do not raise a high claim? I mean, if you are literal and do not merely think of opinion leaders and such people but speak of the general mass of men. Surely it is a remarkable statement.

There are two more passages that I think we should consider. Yes, now then he speaks in the sequel of another virtue which has to do with small honors, say, not the great honors but decorations or titles. So there is also a proper attitude not totally to despise them, because that would be a contempt of the established political order; say, in France especially, but in other countries too. On the other hand, to be too eager to display innumerable decorations, that is ridiculous also. The right thing is to have few distinguished decorations and to exhibit them on the proper occasions. Good. And now Aristotle goes then over to gentleness, which is the proper posture toward anger. And—you wanted to say something?

Student: Why does he pursue it in this way? Particularly concerned with the transition from great-souled man to the virtue with respect to small honors. There is a clear . . . especially with respect to the virtues of wealth, but in that case he speaks of the virtues with respect to wealth in general at first, and then munificence.

LS: Munificence, yes. Yes, but then having spoken of the right posture towards great expenses, he goes over towards the right posture toward great honors and then goes down to smaller honors. I mean, it's not schematic, what he presents, but there is a kind of association here. Now gentleness has to do with anger. All previous virtues had to do with desire, desire or for that matter aversion, but not anger. The only virtue dealing with anger is gentleness. That is here at the end of these discussions. We can perhaps read one passage, 1126a29.

Reader:
We consider the excess to be more opposed to Gentleness than the defect, because it occurs more frequently, human nature being more prone to seek redress than to forgive; and because the harsh-tempered are worse to live with than the unduly placable. (1126a29-31)

LS: This being the case with the greater frequency again here, it follows that the men who are less given to anger than is proper are preferable to those who are more than properly given to anger. In other words, people who do not get angry, who are altogether free from anger, are very rare. And in addition, for living together they are very easy, because they are never angry, whatever you do to them. But thereafter, in the next chapter he deals then with what one now may call the social virtues in the narrow sense of the term, the virtues belonging to association of a nonbusinesslike character. The social graces he mentions. There is only one point which we must consider, 1128b3 to 4, or begin 1128b1.

Reader:
The buffoon is one who cannot resist a joke; he will not keep his tongue off himself or anyone else, if he can raise a laugh, and will say things which a man of refinement would never say, and some of which he would not even allow to be said to him. The boor is of no use in playful conversation: he contributes nothing and takes offense at everything; yet relaxation and amusement seem to be a necessary element in life. (1128a33-b4)

LS: This is one of the other none-too-frequent references to the ends of the virtues, which would have to be considered coherently if one wants to see that Aristotle's list of virtues, as he presents it, is in his view exhaustive. For example, there is desire and fear and anger; there is money, there are honors. And now then also leisure and playfulness are a part of life, and therefore there must be virtues in this respect too. So one would have to put all these considerations together in order to see whether whether Aristotle exhausts the list of virtues as he claims he does.

This is then the end of the discussion of the virtues in general, followed only by a brief discussion of sense of shame and moral indignation, to which Aristotle denies the status of virtues. Sense of shame in particular is all right with young people, who cannot yet have acquired the habit of virtue perfectly and therefore will make mistakes and then they should blush for them. It is even an adornment for them. But for a mature man to blush and to have to blush, that is deplorable. He should never make a mistake. Aristotle apparently regards it as possible that a man can live throughout his life and never make a mistake after he has sown his wild oats; that is somehow implied in what he says here about the sense of shame as becoming young people. Yes. Now someone has raised his hand in the meantime. Oh, Mr. Wedergreen?

Student: You pointed out earlier in the course that the sense of shame was the closest we came to piety. The other place where—

LS: Well, *aidōs*, the Greek word, does not have the narrow sense always in which Aristotle uses it here, where it means only blushing because of a blunder one has committed. But *aidōs* also means the posture of a kind of holy shame, reverence. It has this meaning very frequently. For example, in the myth of the *Protagoras*, Zeus is supposed to have given to all men *aidōs* (sense of shame) and *dikē* (sense of right).[xxi] There it has this high and awe-inspiring meaning. Not here in Aristotle. For Aristotle, a sense of shame is understood in the narrow sense and therefore regarded as something unbecoming [to] a grown-up man.

Same Student: The other place where he deals with that is in talking of the pseudo-courage.

LS: Yes.

Same Student: The courage of the citizen–soldier who doesn't run because he's afraid that if he does, someone might do something to him. Would that indicate also—I mean, thats a kind of virtue. It's not—

LS: But that is not genuine courage, he has a—

Same Student: That's not genuine courage, but it's a—

LS: Yes, sure. Aristotle makes allowance for all kinds of intermediate cases, but this does not however make dubious the fundamental distinctions as he lays them down. A man who acts bravely on the field of battle from sense of shame is not a brave man. He must [do this] out of a sense of the nobility of the action and not [because of] what people will say behind his back or even to his face.

Same Student: Would that be the kind of thing where piety is formed?

LS: Piety does not occur as a virtue in Aristotle's *Ethics* at all.

Same Student: I was suggesting it might be a pseudo-virtue, in the same way that—

LS: Yes, but that he does in a well-known passage of the *Metaphysics*, in book 12, when at the end of his theology he contrasts his view of the god as it is presented there with the traditional view, the ancestral view. And he says that fundamentally what the ancestral view aimed at was this notion of god as Aristotle presented it, but they added quite a few things in order to influence the many toward obedience to the laws,[xxii] and here is where that would come in. But that is something which does not belong to the gentleman; this view belongs to the many. Yes?

Student: With regard to irony, it seems that irony appears differently when it's viewed from, say, what you called the peak of magnanimity than it does from the peak of justice.

[xxi] Plato, *Protagoras* 322c-d.
[xxii] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1074a38-b14.

That is to say, you said that it was becoming to be . . . being a boaster and being ironic, but that's not strictly speaking a parallel. I mean, irony isn't parallel to boasting, because a boaster, at least as I understand it, is someone who doesn't understand himself correctly and therefore demands too much. But an ironic man would be someone who does understand himself correctly but nevertheless demands too little.

LS: And therefore what is wrong with Aristotle's judgment?

Same Student: Well, I mean it would seem that the mean of speaking would be—I mean, regarding yourself incorrectly and for that reason demanding too little.

LS: No, that is not a matter of demanding; that was discussed in the section on magnanimity. Here it is simply a matter of social meetings (say, cocktail parties) where no business is transacted or involved, no public assembly or what have you, and how you behave properly or gracefully there. And then if a man would say: "I haven't"—to take an example from our sphere here—"I have not yet published anything," while he has [in fact] published four articles, [this] would be not right. There is some impropriety there, because he should not make himself smaller, if that is a sign of smallness, than he is. Or the other way around: although if a man has published, say, five hundred articles, or five hundred twelve, to be exact, and would say in these words, "I have published five hundred twelve articles," there would also be a slight impropriety there. He would probably say, "I don't know how many articles I have written." But that is the only consideration which comes in here. And the ironical man would say, "I have not published anything," although he has published four articles, and there is then something improper, because he makes himself—he doesn't show the proper frankness and therewith the proper politeness to the people with whom he is together by understating his worth. But in other areas of society, for example, if he is in the army as a private, where there is no one in the whole regiment, maybe, who ever claims to have written anything or wishes to have written anything, then it might be much better if he would conceal the fact that he has ever published anything. It depends on the circumstance. Good. Yes?

Student: There appear to be four types of . . . naturally, I don't know what appears in the Greek—but the question is: do these four types of shame appear in Aristotle? The [first] appears as shame before one's fellow man for, say, lack of bravery or something like that?

LS: Yes, he mentions that.

Same Student: Then shame before the law, shame before the law of the city. Then there might appear to be shame, possibly shame before nature, before what is known to be right naturally. And finally, shame before the gods. Now the last two might have an element of piety within them, or what could be called piety.

LS: Yes, but Aristotle means that shame, that which makes you blush, and with reference, explicit or implicit, to other human beings. That is, I think, what he has in mind.

Same Student: There is nothing before the law?

LS: That is still surely not meant here. Now this is now the end of the discussion of all virtues, with the exception of a single one, and that is justice. And to justice the whole [of] book 5 is devoted. The discussion of justice is the second peak of the two peaks of the discussion of moral virtues in the *Ethics*, and we should read that. Perhaps we begin at the beginning. Do you have it?

Reader:
In regard to Justice and Injustice, we have to enquire what sort of actions precisely they are concerned with, in what sense Justice is the observance of a mean, and what are the extremes between which that which is just is a mean. (1129a2-5)

LS: Now this question regarding what kind of mean justice is comes up for the following reason. In all previous cases, Aristotle could find a virtue as a mean between two faulty extremes. But in the case of justice, that is not possible. What is the vice to which justice is opposed? Anyone can answer this.

Student: Injustice.

LS: Injustice. Very good. And what is the unjust man, in the broadest terms?

Student: He's an extremist. [Laughter]

LS: Yes, you can put it this way, but it is too general. The boaster is also an extremist, but he wishes to be benefited more than he deserves, and he wishes to pay less than he should. Yes? Good. And then you have the just man who says: I will pay all my taxes and [fulfill] all my other duties to society, and I do not claim any privileges to which I'm not entitled. That's all right. But what about the man who does not stand up for his rights, who takes less than he has a right to? Far from taking away from others, he gives more to the others than he is obliged to give. Is this not also a faulty extreme: the just man standing up for his rights but *only* for his rights; the unjust man standing up for his claims, right or wrong; and then this other nameless man, who does not even stand up for his rights? That is the point. This [latter] is not by Aristotle regarded as a vice. And therefore justice is not in this sense a mean between two extremes. If you demand less than is your due, that is not a vice. That's the difficulty. And yet, nevertheless, justice is in a way a mean, but not in that simple way in which the other virtues are means between two faulty extremes. That is the meaning of this somewhat seemingly cumbersome expression. Now let us go on. Do you wonder how this could be?

Student: Well, it . . .

LS: This he will explain. He will explain that later on. Now go on.

Reader:
Our enquiry may follow the same procedure as our preceding investigations.

Now we observe that everybody means by Justice the habit[xxiii] which renders men apt to do just things, and which causes them to act justly and to wish what is just; and similarly by Injustice that habit[xxiv] which makes men act unjustly and wish what is unjust. Let us then assume these things[xxv] to start with as broadly correct.

The fact is that it is not the same with habit[xxvi] as with sciences and faculties. It seems that the same faculty or science deals with opposite things; but a habit[xxvii] which produces a certain result does not also produce the opposite results; for example, health does not give rise to unhealthy actions, but only to healthy ones— (1129a5-16)

LS: Now what does this distinction between habits and abilities or powers mean? A simple example: a man who can write very quickly and yet legibly can also write very slowly and legibly, and he can also write, if he wants to, very illegibly. That is part of the *dynamis*, the power which he has. But a man who is decent—that's a habit—cannot act indecently. That is, a man who can act both decently and indecently, or can use virtue and vice as he sees fit, as Machiavelli would put it, is of course not a decent man. That is a simple explanation of the difference. The virtues are habits, and therefore the virtuous man *cannot* act viciously. In some Platonic dialogues, for example, the *Smaller Hippias*, that is the fun of the dialogue, that the distinction between habit and power, ability, is disregarded. For example, Achilles never lied and therefore is regarded as a more decent man than Odysseus, who frequently lied. But then Socrates tries to refute Hippias and says: "Well, would we not regard a man who can do both good shoes and bad shoes [as] a better shoemaker than a man who can do only bad shoes, because the man who can make good shoes can also, if he so wishes, make bad shoes?" Yes, now let us go on. Oh, no—here's someone.

Student: Isn't it in a way, though, this statement directed against Socrates?

LS: Only it is not explicit polemic, here, but yes.

Same Student: Then to say that . . . Socrates to say that, runs into that?

LS: Yes, and it is reasonable to assume that Aristotle always had in mind this Socratic–Platonic—

Same Student: What would Socrates's response be? Would he have a response to—?

[xxiii] In Rackham's translation: "that moral disposition."
[xxiv] In Rackham's translation: "disposition."
[xxv] In Rackham's translation: "this definition."
[xxvi] In Rackham's translation: "dispositions."
[xxvii] In Rackham's translation: "disposition or condition."

LS: We have taken up this subject on more than one occasion. It leads to this: it is connected with the whole notion of *phronēsis*, practical wisdom. From Aristotle's point of view, practical wisdom has principles of its own and therefore can be treated independently of wisdom, theoretical wisdom. Socrates and Plato seem to deny that, by deed as well as by speech, and therefore this leads to the consequence that the whole of thinking life, of philosophy, is *phronēsis*, is practical wisdom. By denying, as it were, the distinction between *phronēsis* and *sophia*, practical wisdom and wisdom proper, Socrates is led to all these other theses which are only the reverse side of his famous assertion that virtue is knowledge, which Aristotle accepts only in a very qualified sense, as we have partly already seen. Good. Yes?

Reader:
Hence sometimes the nature of one of two opposite habits is inferred from the other, sometimes habits[xxviii] are known from the things in which they are found; for instance, if we know what good bodily condition is, we know from this what bad condition is as well, but we also know what good condition is from bodies in good condition, and know what bodies are in good condition from knowing what good condition is. Thus supposing good condition is firmness of flesh, bad condition must be flabbiness of flesh, and a diet productive of good condition must be a diet producing firmness of flesh.

Also, if one of two correlative groups of words is used in several senses, it follows as a rule that the other is used in several senses too: for example, if 'just' has more than one meaning, so also has 'unjust' and 'Injustice.' Now it appears—

LS: This is all preparatory, and it becomes intelligible only from the conclusion, which he is just about about to draw, namely:

Reader:
Now it appears that the terms Justice and Injustice are used in several senses, but as their equivocal uses are closely connected, their equivocation is not detected; whereas in the case of widely different things called by a common name, the equivocation is comparatively obvious: for example (the difference being considerable when it is one of external form), the equivocal use of the word *kleis* (key) to denote both the bone at the base of the neck and the instrument with which we lock our doors.

Let us then ascertain in how many senses a man is said to be 'unjust.' Now the term 'unjust' is held to apply both to the man who breaks the law and the man who takes more than his due, the unfair man. Hence it is clear that the law-abiding man and the fair man will both be just. (1129a17-34)

LS: So Aristotle is leading up to the thesis that there are two different virtues, both called justice. And we see that most easily, Aristotle suggests, if we look at their opposites. In

[xxviii] In Rackham's translation: "disposition."

the one case, the man who is not just is called unjust in the other case he is called—how does he translate *pleonektēs*?

Reader: "Unfair."

LS: "Unfair." Whether that is the best English equivalent I do not know, but at any rate in the Greek language this is sufficient. Now he will make more clear these differences, and he speaks first of justice in one sense. "For the just is."

Reader:
'The just' therefore means that which is lawful and that which is equal or fair, and 'the unjust' means that which is illegal and that which is unequal or unfair.

Again, as the unjust man is one who takes the larger share, he will be unjust in respect of good things; not all good things, but those on which good and bad fortune depend. These though always good in the absolute sense, are not always good for a particular person. Yet these are the goods men pray for and pursue, although they ought not to do so; they ought, while choosing the things that are good for them, to pray that what is good simply[xxix] may also be good for them.

The unjust man does not however always choose the larger share: of things that, speaking simply,[xxx] are bad he chooses the smaller share; but nevertheless he is thought to take more than his due, because the lesser of two evils seems in a sense to be a good, and taking more than one's due means taking more than one's due of good. Let us call him 'unfair,' for that is a comprehensive term, and includes both taking too much of good things and too little of bad things.

LS: In Greek the word is "unequal," but he translates it by "unfair." Yes?

Reader:
Again, we saw that the law-breaker is unjust and the law-abiding man just. It is therefore clear that all lawful things are just, in one sense of the word— (1129a34-b12)

LS: "Just in a sense," I would translate. Just in a sense. All lawful things are just, in a sense. And what Aristotle will develop in the sequel is then that there is a kind of virtue—there is a virtue called justice, by which is meant the virtue embracing all other virtues from the point of view of our relations to other human beings, corresponding to magnanimity insofar as it presupposes all other virtues but differing from magnanimity, because magnanimity considers this all-embracing virtue from the point of view of the perfection of the individual by itself, where relations to others do not as such enter the notion.

Yes. Now all the legal things are, in a manner, just. That must be taken very seriously, because if Aristotle would omit this qualification [and say simply that] all legal things are

[xxix] In Rackham's translation: "absolutely."
[xxx] In Rackham's translation: "speaking absolutely."

just, then he would speak absurdly, would he not? That would mean there cannot be unjust laws. But why should there not be the possibility, at least, of unjust laws? Yet, in a manner, all legal or lawful things are just. That means that the most extreme injustice would not even limit itself by unjust laws. Unjust laws, very unjust laws, by the mere fact that they are laws, limit injustice. One could see an example of that in Nazi Germany, where some of the older type of judges tried to apply the Nuremberg laws to the Jews. And this was a boon for the Jews who came before this kind of judges, because there was some limit by the mere fact that there were laws. And what an arbitrary judge would do went much beyond that. So there is a virtue in law as law, but not virtue enough because laws, as we said and as is obvious, may be unjust. Yes?

Student: Is that always the case? I mean, one of the great problems now is that there are a lot of people in this country who feel that there are laws that, even in spite of the fact of their being laws, do not even limit the injustice but in fact promote it, and so their recourse is to go outside the law and to—

LS: Well, this raises very grave questions, not only of a practical but also of a theoretical nature. It has to do with the great question: is there a sphere of privacy? Is this not necessarily implied in the notion of a just order? Now if that is so, then it means that there is a sphere regarding which the law is rather powerless and regarding which you cannot expect improvement by means of laws. Could this not be? The abolition of the private sphere, that would mean what they now call totalitarianism: that there is no sphere totally exempt from the law. I think this is precisely the issue. In other words, the temptation that we would say that laws made for unjust purposes are nevertheless to be obeyed, that is not so great. But laws made for fair and just purposes may nevertheless contradict the nature of law insofar as they destroy the refuge of privacy. That is exactly what Plato presents in the *Republic*, where there is no privacy whatever—what they claim ironically for Socrates: that Socrates had no private life, he was always in public. But of course one must ask oneself: did he not at least go home in the night for sleeping a few hours? Plato shows us what happened when he was at home in bed, at the beginning of the *Protagoras*, you know, when Socrates was still asleep, so there was nothing fishy in any way about it.

Now Plato in the *Republic* tries to establish an order in which injustice is altogether impossible, and the simple device is this: there is no privacy. Injustice presupposes secrecy, because even the worst gangsters of course do not boast in public of their misdeeds. You know? They live by virtue of the secrecy of what they are doing. Now if you abolish secrecy, you abolish vice. That is what Plato proposes in the *Republic*. There is no room which cannot be entered by any man [at] any time of the day or night; not only are all rooms bugged, but they can even be entered without a search warrant at any time of the day. Abolish secrecy, abolish privacy: abolish vice. Plato experiments with this possibility in order to show its absurdity. This would of course not be sufficient, but you would have to make every man a policeman or a detective watching over every other man. Even this would not be quite sufficient, because there might be still some thoughts which a man would never express and would still contain the seeds of disloyalty or what have you.

Same Student: Just a brief question. Would it be possible though, to say, in terms of what we just read, that there is such a thing as an unjust law?

LS: Well, a very simple example. If someone would propose a law that all people whose family name begins with an A have to pay taxes, and all people whose family names begin with B to Z do not have to pay taxes, is this not manifestly an unjust law?

Same Student: Yes.

LS: You would think it is not unjust?

Same Student: I would think it's very unjust.

LS: What's the principle?

Same Student: It discriminates against all the A's.

LS: Yes. Well, maybe some kinds of discrimination are all right. I mean, for example, you discriminate against people when you send them to jail, and it will always appear on their record that they have been in jail. That is a kind of discrimination. So discrimination as such is not such a bad thing, but I would say there is no principle involved [here]. If you would say [that] those who can pay more should pay higher taxes, that makes some sense.

Same Student: Well, it's unreasonable, I guess that's the best thing to say.

LS: Yes, but here there is no rhyme and reason. There is no connection with the beginning of your family name and higher taxation, or taxation altogether. So there are unjust laws, or at least they are possible. We could easily give other examples of a more practical nature, because no one, I believe, has recently proposed such a tax legislation.

Yes, well, next time we will pursue the theme a little bit further that is not developed in the *Ethics* but in the *Politics*. Aristotle makes clear in the *Politics* [that] the laws depend on the regime. In a democracy, you have a different kind of laws than in an oligarchy, a monarchy, an aristocracy, or whatever it may be. The laws depend on the regime, and therefore the lawful, the legal, depends always on the regime. This has very far-reaching consequences, namely, a man who is a good citizen in one kind of a regime is a bad citizen in another kind of regime. A man who is a good citizen of a communist state is likely to be a bad citizen in a liberal democracy, and therefore the good man cannot be identical simply with the good citizen, because the good man as good man has no such relativity to the regime as the good citizen has. And [there are] quite a few other considerations which lead to the consequence as stated here: the legal or lawful things are *in a sense* the just things. As Plato would say, the law *wishes* to be just but it does not achieve that always, nor even most of the time perhaps, and therefore we have to combine a practical obedience to the law in all cases except the extreme cases with a

theoretical skepticism as to the claim of the law to be simply just. We will take this up next time.

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Leo Strauss: [In progress] —meaning either universal justice or particular justice. For . . . the just may be the lawful or legal and the unjust would probably be the illegal: the breach of the law. Or the just may be [the] fair or equal. In the latter case there is no reference to law; in the first case the reference to law is essential. In the latter case the unjust man is the man who takes away from others what belongs to them; or, which is only another aspect of the same thing, he tries to impose on others a heavier burden than he is willing to accept for himself. Now Aristotle speaks first of justice in the first sense, in the legal sense of universal justice, and I think we should repeat a certain passage which we began to read last time, b11.

Reader:
Since[i] the law-breaker is unjust and the law-abiding man just, it is therefore clear that all lawful things are, in a sense, just, for what is lawful is decided by legislation.

LS: "By the legislative art," let us rather say.

Reader:
And each of these decisions we say is 'just.' Now all the various pronouncements of the law aim either at the common good of all, or of the best, or of the rulers, determined either by virtue or in some other similar way, so that in one sense we say 'just things' are things that produce and preserve the happiness and the parts of the happiness of the political community. (1129b11-19)

LS: Let us stop here. Aristotle does not say that the legal things are [the] just things. Rather, he says the legal things are *in a sense* the just things. Now in which sense? Later on he speaks, in the passage which we have read, of the legislative art. Things laid down not by a random legislator or legislative body but by the legislative art could be said to be good laws; and therefore these things laid down by *the legislative art* are just things. But the things laid down *by a legislator or legislative body* are not necessarily just, because the possibility of mistake is considerable. One could also state it as follows. The laws wish to be, intend to be just, but they do not always achieve that, and therefore a simple equation of the legal with the just is not reasonable. And one can also state it as follows: the laws depend on—we can say are the function of—the regimes, so the laws fitting, proper, in a democracy would not be proper in an oligarchy, and so on and so on.

Now all laws, according to Aristotle in the *Politics*, are relative to the regime, and ought to be relative because otherwise there will be a great complication between the principle informing the regime as a whole and the law. But now some regimes are defective and others are nondefective, and therefore the laws relative to a defective regime are by their very principle not good laws. So a simple equation of the legal with the just is impossible.

[i] The reader apparently reads from his own translation.

One can give another reason why this simple equation of the legal with the just is not possible. Let us look later on in book 10, 1180a21, where Aristotle says the law has a compulsory power, being a *logos*, a discourse stemming from *some* practical wisdom and reason. "From some": he does not simply say from practical wisdom. But let us pass over that. Law has a coercive, compelling force, and this compelling force is here traced to its rational origin. But this is not the whole story, of course. In another passage in the *Politics*, in the second book, 1269a20 to 21, Aristotle says the law has *no* force toward being obeyed apart from custom or habituation, i.e., it has no force stemming from its rationality, but only from its being customary. Now this is a clear contradiction, which doesn't mean that Aristotle was not in a position to resolve the contradiction or did not in fact resolve it if we read him with sufficient clarity, but it indicates a problem. As rational, if the law is a *dictamen rectae rationis*, a dictate of right reason, then it would by right exercise a compelling force because of its rationality. But the law is not simply that. And in order to be a law it cannot be merely rational, and therefore there is an addition of something else, of an *x* which qualifies the rationality of the law but makes it in this way more compelling for the mass of the citizens. And this means, however, again, to repeat, that the law is not simply rational; the law is not simply just.

Now this is of course an embarrassing view, although one can say it is the only view in accordance with fact, because to say simply, "Every law is worthy to be obeyed regardless," cannot be maintained by any sensible man, except perhaps by someone who has adopted this particular position called legal positivism: that there is no higher standard for law except that it has been adopted by a community, and that that is all there is to it. Because if we are, say, anticommunist, as I hope we all are, then we will say that people who are very lawabiding subjects of a communist state are in a deplorable position, to put it mildly—and the communists will of course return this compliment to us.

So wherever you find any adherence to principles, we find there the admission, the recognition, of a principle higher than the positive law. And of course the questions concerning this higher principle are more complicated and more dark than the questions of positive law, however complicated, because the question of the positive law you can always eventually refer to an oracle, namely, to the view of the legislator, whose clear, explicit statement finishes all controversy. And we do not have this in the field of the higher law. But one could raise this question: is it not a dangerous principle, leading to all kinds of turmoil and civil disobedience and so on, to question the identity of the just and the legal? More particularly, did not Socrates, in a way, die for the principle that the just is the legal, namely, by giving his argument against escaping from prison in Plato's *Crito*, where he seems to say that one has to obey the laws of the city regardless? What would you say to this argument? Some of you have read the *Crito,* I take it. Does Socrates say there that one must obey every law regardless? Yes?

Student: No . . . if one has accepted the protection of the laws of the city. If one has put himself under the law's protection, then one has to obey the law. But not every law—every man must not obey every law, period. It's not as simple as all that.

LS: Yes, but is not even this argument, the contractual argument that everyone has made a contract with the law, with the city of the laws: is even this unqualifiedly stated there? Is the whole argument of the *Crito* based on the contractual view of legal obligation? Mr. Zinman, you shake your head, so you must have another opinion.

Mr. Zinman: I think that it is not, but I think that perhaps the problem of the *Crito* cannot be explained with reference simply to the question of the legal and the just, in the sense of positive justice or the justice of the laws of Athens.

LS: But is the distinction made there between the positive law—

Mr. Zinman: No.

LS: No, it's nowhere. As far the contractual argument and its limitation, the relation of the citizen to the law is compared not only to that of a man who has made a contract with another man or body of men but also to the relation of the children to the parents, which is clearly not a contractual relation. But still, do we have a broader consideration showing the limited claim of the reasoning of the *Crito*?

Student: I don't recall if this is in the *Crito* or not, but Socrates refused to abide by the laws promoted by the tyranny, by the Thirty.

LS: Yes, but one could of course say that the tyrants were illegal rulers, could one not? And therefore this is not valid in itself. There is another point in the *Apology*, which is a parallel work. Socrates discusses this possibility. The citizens of Athens as his judges might propose the following compromise: Socrates[1] [now stops doing] what he has been doing all the time to the annoyance of his fellow citizens. And he calls that philosophizing; so he stops philosophizing from now, and then they will leave him alone and will permit him to die in peace and not to be executed. What does Socrates say to this proposal, which he proposes there for argument's sake, which no one else proposes? He would not consider it.[ii] Now the proposal of the city would easily take the form of a law: whoever philosophizes will be punished with death, or maybe with a fine, or with exile, or whatever it may be. Socrates refuses to obey such a prohibition. So although this is not stated in the *Crito*,[2] it is stated in the parallel dialogue. There is one crucial qualification: Socrates reserves the right to philosophize. He has no list of rights of man. *The* right on which the whole issue turns in the case of Socrates's trial is the right of men like Socrates to philosophize.

So Socrates does not simply assert that the just is identical with the legal or vice versa, to say nothing of other considerations which come in and which permit one to say that the argument speaking in favor of Socrates dying in prison is a *prudential* argument. Why does Socrates mention the fact that he is an old man? Because it is relevant. No one can say what Socrates would have done if he had been thirty instead of seventy. He also discusses the possibility of available places of refuge, and he finds there is none. Either he goes to a nearby place where he is known, and then [he] will be known as a fugitive

[ii] *Apology of Socrates* 37e-38a.

from justice: that's a most undignified position for a man like Socrates. Or he goes to a faraway place like Thessaly in the north. There they are loose-living people and very lawless people, and it would not be nice to live there. So the question of course would be—if we are practical people, we'd say maybe there is a faraway place which is not lawless. And as a matter of fact, an allusion is made [to the possibility] that such places did exist, namely, the island of Crete, which had a reputation—well, a dubious reputation, but only one part of the reputation is considered here. The Cretans were known as great liars, but on the other side, Crete, being the mother of Sparta, as it were, was regarded as a very well-ordered community. And Crete is far away. But this line is not pursued. Be this as it may, the argument of the *Crito* is a prudential argument. And only in circumstances like Socrates's case would it be wise to obey the law unqualifiedly. But still, one thing of course is quite true. The rule of thumb, the best rule of thumb is: "Obey the law, without ifs and buts." But all rules of thumb permit exceptions, otherwise they would be strict rules. And a strict rule of law in effect would require that all laws are just, period; and this, to repeat, no sensible man can maintain. That there is a certain unevenness and a certain lack of mathematical elegance there if you have to add qualifications is quite true, but who told us that life is to be as elegant as a beautiful mathematical proof? Only people who wish that, like Thomas Hobbes and so, made this the principle of politics. Good. Mr. . . .

Student: In one way, though, the example of the *Crito* and the *Apology* does seem to be a bit more simple in the sense that the problem of the philosopher seems to be the easy problem in this case rather than the hard problem, and that if the rule is that all men but philosophers must regard the legal as the same as the just, that seems to be an insufficient rule for practical life and for any political question.

LS: Yes, you can say that, but on the other hand it is not quite so simple, because we must look for the principle: the principle on the ground of which one claims not to be bound by the law. Mere convenience is of course no ground whatever. Nor would they have regarded mere conscience [as a sufficient ground], because it would be a question, what kind of a conscience is that which opposes this or that law.

So what is the principle on the basis of which one can resist the positive law? Must it not be something higher than the positive law? Must it not be something higher than political society? Now what is there in the world from the point of view of Socrates or Plato that is higher than political society? Philosophy. Not poetry, because poetry is a matter which the *polis* is competent to regulate—you know, the tragedies and comedies were an affair of the city. Now if you say religion: religion as such did not exist. I mean, that was called piety, but piety was regarded as an affair of the *polis*. And only to the extent to which it transcended the *polis*—and that meant insofar as it was based on true knowledge—would it be beyond the competence of the city. Mr. Shulsky?

Mr. Shulsky: Would Aristotle and Plato have recognized any claims of justice in this second sense, particular justice, or fairness, or equality of one sort or another as a claim that could possibly be put against the city . . . made what would seem to be a manifestly unjust law in the sense of an unfair law?

LS: Yes, sure, for example, in the case we discussed last time, that all men whose names begin with an A pay twice as much tax as the rest. Surely. But then there would have been a very broad popular movement that would not be isolated. Or take another case: the case of the trial of the generals after the battle of Arginusae. When Socrates appealed to the law, to the positive law, that the nine generals should not be tried and condemned in the same day but [rather], I think, each on one day, the people of Athens simply disregarded their own law out of political emotion stirred up by demagogues. Well, then here it was perfectly clear that the people of Athens acted *illegally*. The question of principle does not even arise. Surely there can be unjust laws, but then the question arises: can you simply disregard the law and disobey it because you are hurt by it, or, which is a higher ground, because it is intrinsically unjust? Can you do that? You have to weigh the price to be paid. You know? The question is not frequently discussed, but it is discussed, for example, by Aristotle in the second book of the *Politics*, when he speaks of Hippodamus's proposal that laws should be changed.[iii] With the progress of enlightenment, the laws should also progress. You remember that? What does Aristotle say to the question?

Mr. Shulsky: He says in connection with Athens, that the laws tend to form habits . . .

LS: So Aristotle says one must be very cautious, and that means that even if a law is old-fashioned and still linked up with earlier views no longer shared by all members of the community, you have to consider what you do—you lose in social discipline to that extent. And I think something of this kind . . . Yes. Mr. Wedergreen?

Student: Are you saying that that's Mr. Zinman's question . . . have to look to some realm outside of the political realm. Yet Socrates's proposal, which you say he didn't really want, was not that he be simply denied to be allowed to philosophize, but that he be denied to be allowed to be philosophizing in public. And that seems—I wonder, isn't that a distinction which has to be made, because if he would have just simply lived quietly, he might have avoided the inconveniences?

LS: Yes, but this would never cause an issue, because even in Stalin's Russia, if someone like Socrates had been living there, had been a Stakhanovitic worker and had always shouted "Heil Stalin" or whatever formula they used there, nothing would ever have happened to him. The issue arises only if someone is not a Stakhanovitic worker and does not shout "Heil Stalin." You know? And that apparently is what Socrates did. So in other words, if philosophizing means only thinking by himself and not being fooled by the propaganda in one's thought, that's easy. But if he makes use of that and speaks to others, and communicates to others his observations, then and only then does it cause a political and legal issue. Surely this distinction is very important, but not in this way in which you mean it or in which you expressed it. Mr. Fawcet?

Student: Well, just returning for a moment to the problem of the unjust law: it seems that Socrates had an awfully convenient out, his being seventy and not having any place to go.

[iii] Aristotle, *Politics* 1267b22-1268a15.

But you brought up the point, well, if he had been thirty instead of seventy, the situation would have been much different. I just wondered if there is some place where we could turn to at least get some evidence that might have shown how Socrates might have acted had that been the case. I mean, that's a real confrontation against the person of Socrates and it's against the philosophizing of which he's representative, and I can't think of any kind of a similar confrontation anywhere else.

LS: No, but of course this may be partly due to the fact that Socrates died for the cause of philosophy [and] that the Athenians regretted it soon afterwards. You know, that is the tradition, at least: that they regretted it soon afterward, and it never happened in the same way again. And when Aristotle was later on forced to flee, this may [have been] due to purely political reasons.

Same Student: That speaks to the Athenians, but that doesn't speak to us.

LS: Well, how come while there were quite a few persecutions of philosophers prior to Socrates in Athens, these persecutions stopped in Athens afterwards and the school established by Plato lived on until 529? So something seems to have changed. There is a statement of Plutarch in his biography of Nicias as to what Plato has achieved: that he made philosophy acceptable to the *polis*. Socrates and Plato are not the same person, but they obviously belong together. After all, Plato dedicated his whole written work to the memory of Socrates, to say the least. And Plato brought about a reconciliation between the *polis* and philosophy and bridged the gulf to the extent to which that gulf can be bridged. Now the difficulties did not completely disappear; there were persecutions of philosophers in the Roman Empire and so on, and therefore something like Socrates's action had to be taken from time to time again. But the principles of the solution, one can say, were established by Plato, but it is not an elegant solution, because the elegant solution, as Plato himself makes clear in the *Republic*, is that the philosophers become kings. There is something improper, in Plato's view, that the philosophers, being most concerned in the highest degree with wisdom, should obey less wise people: the citizen body as legislator. If you replace the democratic citizen body by the king and his courtiers, you do not fundamentally change the situation, because the king and his courtiers are not necessarily wiser than a democratic citizen body. This difficulty will remain, and there is no universally valid solution, but [there are] compromises with different alignments, as it were, in different places and circumstances. Yes?

Student: Would the problem arise neither on the highest level nor on the lowest level, but for Aristotle on the level of the virtuous man, in the sense that the virtuous man would accord action according to rational principle, and he, as the possessor of that principle, not needing the highest wisdom? It seems like the problem could arise just as clearly on that level . . .

LS: Yes, but still let us assume that, for argument's sake. So the man of practical wisdom, the *phronimos*, has the principle of right action in himself and he doesn't need either philosophy or the civil legislator, at least as far as the principle is concerned. But

how can you be sure that the legislator, the actual legislator, will respect the opinions of the *phronimos*, of the man of practical wisdom? Can you be sure of that?

Same Student: But I don't—

LS: And then he would be in exactly the same position as the philosopher.

Same Student: That's what I'm, that's what I was—

LS: So that is not sufficient.

Same Student: No, but that's what I was saying. It seems to me the problem could arise on a lower level.

LS: Yes, sure. Sure, sure. There can be simply a decent man without any claims to philosophy and such highfalutin' things. And yet [he can] come into the same kind of conflict with the *polis* which Socrates . . . That is a problem. One can say that is the political problem: that we need the *polis* as human beings, and yet the *polis* is also a great danger. But the necessity is so overpoweringly more strong than the danger that we have to accept. And the *polis* is not quite the same thing as the modern state, but it has something to do with that. And of the state Nietzsche said—and this is a favorite word of Charles de Gaulle—[that it is] the "cold monster." Well, the ancients were not so full of fearing as Nietzsche was, and so they wouldn't say "cold" and hold this against it, but something corresponding to it. The cold monster. And of course de Gaulle, as I am inclined to believe, doesn't hold this against the state: it's rather a pet, you know, which he pets, "you sweet little cold monster." [Laughter]

Another Student: This relates, I think, indirectly to that. It has to do with the nature of a contract. Doesn't the entire symbol of a contract become much stronger when you realize, as the ancients must have, that the contracting party, the state, was not positive law, it was an organism which had grown and which could not be changed by a change of regime? So that what it took for the contract was not a positive act on the part of the legal citizens, but rather a positive act would be needed to break it. Every day that a man lived under the law, he affirmed the natural relationship. Now if the regime did something unnatural, did something improper, chances are it would be something that was contrary to the nature of something which had grown up over a long time. Doesn't a contract with this sort of being, an organic being, represent something entirely different than a contract with positive law?

LS: Well, your statement is in a way a model of a statement one should not make. One should *not* make. In the first place, the contract is not a symbol. As long as people spoke of the social contract, they meant it as a fact and not as a symbol. Secondly, organic: the state is something organic and has nothing to do with the change of regimes. Who told you that? I believe Edmund Burke.

Same Student: No.

LS: But surely not Plato or Aristotle.

Same Student: Well, Aristotle ultimately rejected the contention that a *polis* totally changes every time there's a change of regime.

LS: Oh, he asserts it: that every time the regime changes, a new *polis* emerges.

Same Student: He finally drops that, that—

LS: He does not drop that. That is the great difficulty for the modern reader. If a democracy is changed into an oligarchy, or vice versa, the democrats say in such a case the city has disappeared, because there is no longer the city, the citizen-body, but a clique, a junta. And there is no longer the *polis*. And the oligarchs would say the opposite. They would probably not say, when the oligarchy is replaced by democracy, that the city has disappeared, but they would say it has gone to pieces—you know, like the British Conservatives when the Labour people came to power. Good. But that is meant to be literally true, not merely a metaphoric and exaggerated expression. Now what Aristotle says is this. The democrats exaggerate when the oligarchy is replaced by a democracy; it is not true that the *polis* has disappeared, [that] there is no longer a *polis*. Of course there is a *polis*, but another kind of *polis*: no longer a democracy but an oligarchy. The unity of the *polis* depends on the unity of the regime, although not *alone* on that. But this is the point.

Same Student: Not as form and matter. In other words—

LS: It has very much to do with form and matter. The form is the regime, and the matter are the human beings, *including* what survives the unusual change of customs and habits and so on. That is the view which we have some difficulties to understand, or had some difficulties until the extreme and violent revolutions we witnessed in our century. Before that time it seemed to be a wholly senseless assertion, to assert that. Aristotle knows of another view. The consequence of this view, that the unity of the *polis* consists in the unity of the regime and not of the matter; in other words, the [citizens' being] the same people. Whereas we would today say, of course: who has any doubt that there is such a thing like a history of the British constitution from the days of Alfred the Great, if not before that, up to Harold Wilson? Now Aristotle seems to say these were different Britains [LS taps on the table]: the Anglo-Saxon Britain, the Norman Britain, let us say the Tudors' Britain, Oliver Cromwell's Britain, and the Britain of William of Orange, and so on. We understand it, again, because we see that what has happened in Russia owing to the Bolshevik revolution and in Germany owing to the Nazi revolution, or in Germany after the expulsion of the Nazis and the Adenauer regime, where the differences were more important than what was not changed, because the regime decides, if I may now use our jargon, on the reigning value system, than which nothing is more important. That the people still use their dialects, and potteries, and folk dances as before, that is ridiculously unimportant compared with what the whole community is dedicated to, and that depends on the regime. So Aristotle by no means talks nonsense, but it is nevertheless difficult,

and that shows itself when he speaks of the question, "Who is the good citizen?" And his official answer, given in the third book of the *Politics*, is: "What is the good citizen is relative to the regime," which today every child can understand. I mean, a good Nazi is not a good communist and neither is a good liberal democrat. So this shows clearly that a good citizen is relative to the regime, whereas a good man would be the same regardless of all changes of regime, and how the good citizen and the good man are related then becomes a great practical question.

Now in his *Constitution of Athens*, Aristotle suggests another definition of the good citizen, namely, a good citizen is a man who serves his country under *all* regimes. There was an Athenian on rather friendly terms with Socrates, as tradition has it, Theramenes, and he was a leading statesman under the democracy, a leading statesman under the oligarchy, and a leading statesman under the Thirty Tyrants. And so the Athenians called him the *kothornos*, or in English—how do you call a man who changes his position?

Student: Chameleon.

LS: No, chameleon was not the word they—but at any rate—

Student: Turncoat.

LS: Turncoat. And Aristotle suggests in this more popular writing: this is a good citizen. Well, in the more severe *Politics*, of course, not a word about this lighthearted, if popular view [LS chuckles]. You know? You can be a collaborator like Quisling;[iv] that doesn't do any harm, provided you take care of the interests of the country. It is in a way a more humane view, but it is of course also very dangerous. Yes?

Student: I was just thinking of . . . in France, during the twenties and thirties, would be the type of a man—he was able to serve the far right, the far left, and eventually the Vichy.

LS: Who?

Same Student: . . .

LS: Balfour, the British?

Same Student: No, he was a Frenchman, and he served in various positions.

LS: Laval would be a good example. Wasn't Laval his name who was a—?

Same Student: No, there was another.

[iv] Vidkun Quisling (1887-1945), head of the government of Norway during the Nazi occupation., 1940-45. Charged with cooperation with the enemy and with murder, Quislig was found guilty and executed in 1945.

LS: Well, yes, but the French didn't have the change of regimes in the twenties and thirties.

Same Student: But they were—

LS: Yes, that's different. And then you have to bring in the party system, which was wholly unknown to Aristotle. It's a new complication. Yes?

Another Student: I was under the impression that, very simply, Greek law was very closely bound up with theology and that even in matters of substance a great deal of divine interpretation [played a part]. Now isn't Aristotle ignoring some constitutional traditions here?

LS: Give an example of what he ignores.

Same Student: In the passage that was read before the questions, where he speaks of the rational and positive principles of law, which to me would seem to ignore the divine aspects of Greek law.

LS: In a way he does this, but not completely. After all, when he gives his enumeration of the parts and function which the *polis* has to fulfill, divine worship is mentioned as a matter of course.

Same Student: But not worship. I mean that the priestly function and the legislative function were very closely merged.

LS: Not quite. After all, the legislative assembly was not an assembly of priests. There were matters, for example, like the question of burial and the question of divine worship, which were of course decided, you can say, by priestly tradition. But they did not, in Athens at least, cause political troubles.

Same Student: I'm not suggesting this would be troublesome.

LS: Or were politically relevant.

Same Student: The Greeks did not have any concept of sitting down and producing a criminal code. What they would do rather would be to look back to their religious principles.

LS: Yes, well, to the law as it has come [down]—originally an oral law, but then gradually codified, long before Plato's and Aristotle's time, [by] Dracon and Solon and such people. Good. Let us reread the last point which he made, 1129b17. "So that in one sense we call justice."

Reader:

So that in one sense we say just things are things that produce and preserve the happiness, and the parts of the happiness, of the political community. (1129b17-19)

LS: That is a very important remark with a view to the question which we could not help raising all the time and to which we did not find hitherto a satisfactory answer: what is the end which the virtues serve? Now here we have an answer. The end which the moral virtues serve is the happiness of the political community. Let us say public happiness; that would seem to be a good answer, and an answer still immediately intelligible, having been raised to the status of the sole principle by utilitarianism, although there in a special interpretation . . . We have to see whether this is Aristotle's final view, whether we can make public happiness *the* end which morality is supposed to serve. Now please let us go on, Mr. Pangle.

Reader:
And[v] the law prescribes certain conduct; the conduct of a brave man, for example not to desert one's post, not to run away, not to throw down one's arms; that of a moderate[vi] man, for example not to commit adultery or outrage; that of a gentle man, for example not to strike, not to speak evil; and so with actions exemplifying the rest of the virtues and vices, commanding these and forbidding those—rightly if the law has been rightly enacted, not rightly if it has been made at random.

LS: Let us stop here. So Aristotle says here that the law commands the works of all virtues. And therefore the justice which consists in obeying the law is the universal virtue, because all virtues are in a way commanded by the law. That is the main point. But he makes here a qualification which was implied in what he said before. The law commands all actions of all the virtues, but it does this properly only if it is properly laid down. And it does it badly if it is made offhand, i.e., by apprentices or other inept people, which is of course possible. Therefore, since it could very well be done by inept apprentices, for this reason the just cannot be identical with the legal. Yes?

Reader:
Justice then in this sense is perfect Virtue—

LS: Let us stop here. "Is perfect virtue," because justice, i.e., obedience to the law in every respect; and the law commands all actions of all virtues. Therefore obedience to the law, that is to say justice, is identical with being perfectly virtuous. But then Aristotle makes a qualification.

Reader:
though not simply, but with regard to others.[vii] (1129b19-27)

[vi] In Rackham's translation: "temperate."
[vii] In Rackham's translation: "though with a qualification, namely that it is displayed toward others."

LS: Let us stop here. Here is the difference, and a crucial point. Universal justice is identical with perfect virtue, with complete virtue, only from a certain point of view, namely, the point of view of other men or, more generally stated, the *polis*, because the *polis* of course includes me too; but I am always also someone who can doubt whether the *polis* is right, who can oppose it, therefore. This means that virtue by itself does not have this reference to the *polis*, and that is a very strange implication. Let us first try to explain what this can mean. Virtue is concerned with the perfection of the individual as individual. Hence virtue as virtue has no necessary reference to the city or the fatherland. We have seen this especially in the discussion of courage. Although courage proper has its place in war, as Aristotle emphasizes, in an activity, that is, that necessarily belongs to the city, yet no reference to the city or to the fatherland occurs in Aristotle's discussion of courage. Now we must try to understand that. We must read a bit more before we can try to answer that.

Reader:
This is why Justice is often thought to be the chief of the virtues, and more marvelous[viii] than the evening or the morning star; and we have the proverb—

In Justice is all Virtue found in sum.

And Justice is perfect virtue because it is the practice of perfect virtue; and perfect in a special degree—

LS: The more literal translation would be "the use," "the use of perfect virtue." Yes?

Reader:
perfect in a special degree, because its possessor can practise his virtue towards others and not merely by himself; for there are many who can practice virtue in their own private affairs but cannot do so in their relations with another. (1129b27-1130a1)

LS: I think we need to stop here for a moment. Here he speaks of justice in this universal sense, in terms of unusually high praise. This justice is the greatest, most embracing of all the virtues. The praise reminds of the praise of magnanimity which we have seen in book 4. Aristotle seems to agree that this kind of justice, the universal justice, is superior to magnanimity. This would mean that public happiness is the end of all virtue, which is something which was in no way suggested in the analysis of magnanimity, as we have seen. Aristotle could easily have linked up magnanimity with public happiness. I used at that time the example of Montgomery as a typical magnanimous man, well-known in our age and therefore useful as an example. Civil society needs men who are born to command and who *know* that they are born to command. And Montgomery fulfills both requirements beautifully. Some might say the second [LS chuckles] perhaps more than the first, but this would be, I think, quite unfair. And therefore the link with public happiness is obvious. Aristotle does not even try to do that. Why does he not do that? And this throws decisive light, it seems to me, on the question of the end of the virtues, the end which the virtues serve.

[viii] In Rackham's translation: "sublime."

What is public happiness? If public happiness means more or less what Bentham and other Utilitarians meant by it, namely, proper care for food, housing, roads, and what have you, that is one view. But this would not be the Aristotelian view. Aristotle would say: "Well, that belongs to the sphere of mere living, but the purpose of the *polis* is to live *well*, not merely to live." That is to say, the *polis* owes its dignity not to the satisfaction of elementary needs but to the moral tone, to the moral level of the society. Of the moral tone of the society: that could mean of all of its members, or at any rate, its preponderant parts, because a preponderant part would give the character of the *polis*, even as today people speak of opinion leaders. You must have heard that expression; they are only a part of the populace, but they lead opinion and therefore they give opinion their character, and all the more if it is not merely opinion but the whole manner of living which is decisive. Now if this is so, if the *polis* cannot be understood in the light of *mere* living but only in the light of living *well*, then virtue cannot be understood in terms of public happiness, since public happiness itself must be understood in terms of virtue. And therefore this statement and its implication that universal justice is in the service of public happiness does not yet make universal justice simply the highest virtue.

And so it remains at the fact that we have in the *Ethics* two peaks: magnanimity on the one hand, and justice on the other. And even if we grant, which we may, that universal justice is a somewhat higher peak than magnanimity, yet magnanimity has a dignity of its own which cannot be absorbed completely by the dignity of universal justice. Now let us continue here. We must lead this to a conclusion.

Reader:
This is why we approve the saying of Bias, 'Rule[ix] will show a man'; for in ruling[x] one is brought into relation with others and becomes a member of a community. (1130a1-2)

LS: Does this saying of Bias and what Aristotle remarks on it remind you of a present-day or modern issue, that rule, office, magistracy will show a man?

Student: Well, Harry Truman.

LS: What did he say?

Another Student: Harry Truman. This is often said about him.

LS: I see. [Laughter] But he didn't say that. I was reminded of his saying about the difference between a statesman and a politician. You know that statement? A statesman is a dead politician. [LS chuckles; laughter.] No, I wasn't thinking of that, but of Lord Acton's famous saying that power corrupts. Aristotle suggests the opposite: not that he didn't know that power corrupted sometimes, but power does not necessarily corrupt. Power is also an opportunity to show off a man's capacities, of which he wouldn't have an opportunity without power.

[ix] In Rackham's translation: "Office."
[x] In Rackham's translation: "in office."

Student: Acton was somewhat smarter than that statement is often quoted to show. The actual statement is "power *tends* to corrupt," which is a better statement than the other.

LS: That's true, but Aristotle goes even beyond that. All right, thank you very much. [Laughter] Now let us go on.

Reader:
The same reason, namely that it involves relationship with someone else, accounts for the view that Justice alone of the virtues is 'the good of others,' because it does what is for the advantage of another, either a ruler or an associate.

LS: Is this saying known to you? Justice is the foreign good, the good of somebody else.

Student: Thrasymachus.

LS: Thrasymachus, yes. So Aristotle shows that in a way Thrasymachus is right. And that . . . implications. Yes?

Reader:
As then the worst man is he who practices vice towards his friends as well as in regard to himself, so the best is not he who practises virtue in regard to himself but he who practises it towards others; for that is a difficult task.

Justice in this sense then is not a part of Virtue, but the whole of Virtue; and its opposite Injustice is not a part of Vice but the whole of Vice (the distinction between Virtue and Justice in this sense being clear from what has been said—

LS: "In this sense belongs to justice." So it would be better to translate: "How virtue and *this* kind of justice differ is manifest from what has been said." Yes?

Reader:
they are the same but their mode of being is different;[xi] what as displayed in relation to others is Justice, as being simply a habit[xii] of a certain kind is Virtue). (1130a3-13)

LS: Yes. Now here then Aristotle makes clear why he differs from Thrasymachus. This virtue toward others is more difficult than the virtue which has to do entirely with oneself and where one is interested immediately, directly in becoming virtuous. And therefore this kind of justice is not inferior but rather superior to virtue which does not have this reference to others.

I come back to a question which I have prepared by a previous remark. The two peaks, to repeat, of Aristotle's *Ethics* are universal justice, as discussed here, and magnanimity. Is this only an interesting document showing us the moral taste of Aristotle, the trait of his

[xi] In Rackham's translation: "they are the same quality of mind, but their essence is different."
[xii] In Rackham's translation: "disposition."

character, as it were? His private value system? Or is it a problem which every philosopher worth his salt must face? Now to simplify the matter, let us limit ourselves to a comparison with Plato. Is there a parallel in Plato to this distinction between magnanimity and justice, which we find in Aristotle? Well, not in these terms, in the terms of justice and magnanimity, but in the following manner, especially in the *Republic*. There, as you know, the subject is justice. But what does Plato in the *Republic* understand by justice? Surely not what Aristotle understands here: universal justice, i.e., obeying the law which prescribes the actions of all virtues. Now in the *Republic*, you will recall, they find out first what the three other virtues are: courage, wisdom, and moderation. And they have some difficulties in finding out what justice is. But finally Socrates guides them to the answer, and what is the answer given? What is justice, according to the teaching of the *Republic*?

Student: . . .

LS: Minding its own business. Minding its own business, which is a very loose definition, which is indicated in the passage: this *or something of this kind*, it is said, is justice. I believe it means doing one's work well. That is justice. Doing one's work is not necessarily doing one's work well, but this we may here disregard. More specifically, justice according to the *Republic* regulates the duties of the parts of the *polis* toward one another. So the relation of the farmers and craftsman to the soldiers, to the philosophers, and vice versa; the relation of these parts, this is justice. But what about the relation of the city toward other cities? After all, can there not be injustice in foreign affairs? Should Plato have been such a babe in the woods that he did not know that? If he had no experience of his own, a single reading of a page in Thucydides would have shown him the problem. Now what does the *Republic* teach about justice of the city toward other cities?[xiii]

Student: A distinction is made between how you should treat Greek cities and how you should treat barbarians.

LS: Yes, that is indeed a crucial point. But what about the limitations on warfare? What are they in the case of the Greek cities? What limitations are there in the case of the Greek cities?

Student: Well, they should not destroy, because they will be friends afterwards, and in order to have justice they can't destroy the crops and the homes of the Greek cities . . .

LS: Yes, and no looting and so on. But in the case of the barbarians?

Same Student: [They] do that.

LS: Yes, but do you remember the precise context? Who proposes that?

Student: Glaucon.

[xiii] See Plato, *Republic* 470a-471b.

LS: Glaucon. In other words, that is a kind of bone which Socrates throws to Glaucon, because otherwise the asceticism that one must behave in war would be too much for this young and healthy man. And therefore there must be some reconciliation. If it's a war with the barbarians, all right, we close our eyes. We cannot understand this so easily; at least we pretend no longer to be able to understand that. And that is all. Good.

But however this may be, there is something said about the relation of the *polis* to other cities. But what about the justice of the individual or of the soul of the individual? It consists also in ordering the parts of the soul properly. This definition does not include any reference to the relation to other individuals, which means to say that even according to the *Republic* justice is rather the perfection of the individual than social virtue. This is a very long question. However this may be, the *Republic* by its whole structure forces us to make a distinction analogous to the distinction we are forced to make on the basis of Aristotle's *Ethics* between the perfection of the individual as one consideration, and the social virtue on the other. Although there are all kinds of links between the two things, the points of view are different and very importantly different. And the reason why they are important is this: if it is so that by virtue of the highest in him man transcends the city, then man cannot be fully understood in terms of the city, and therefore in terms of social virtue. And that is of course what Aristotle and Plato believe. That is, the highest in man transcends the city and is therefore no longer a social virtue properly understood. And to this extent, one may say that there is a Platonic *analogon* to the duality of the peaks in Aristotle's *Ethics*. Now is there any issue you would like to raise at this point? Yes?

Student: Are you suggesting that the peak of magnanimity in a sense transcends the city?

LS: Yes, in a way, because it does not have this reference to the others and to the city. But this [is] of course not quite so simple, because being concerned with honors, and that means in the first place honors given by the city, the magnanimous man points of course to the city. But an indirect proof of what I say you could find in the fact that there have been some interpreters of the chapter on magnanimity who say [that] Aristotle describes here the philosopher. Now this can, as a sweeping thesis, easily be refuted, but the men who made this remark smelled something. The magnanimous man is in between, say, a figure like Pericles and Socrates. And one could not say the same thing about the just man as he is defined at the beginning of book 5.

Student: In the *Republic* when Socrates . . . the city, when he asks Glaucon, I think: Well, now we have found that we have the three virtues, isn't it true then that justice . . . I mean, if we have the first three, justice really won't be necessary.

LS: Yes, this is one way of putting it; I mean, in other words, if you have the three others. But that is not the way which is pursued there, because they start from the distinction between these four virtues. That's the starting point, and therefore they must find justice and, as you know, they have great troubles. They think, as Socrates puts it, that it is lying somewhere in the ground before their feet and that's the reason why they can't find it. But they find it in this somewhat dubious way: a definition of justice is

given which is not a definition, because it leaves undetermined the particular kind of minding one's own business which is justice. After all, there can be a way of minding one's own business which is very vicious, and therefore the definition given is quite inadequate. Well, then we will continue and turn to the next chapter.

Reader:
What we are investigating, however, is the Justice which is a part of Virtue, since we hold—[xiv] (1130a14-15)

[1] Deleted "stops now to do."
[2] Deleted "but."

[xiv] The tape ends at this point.

Session 18: April 22, 1968

Leo Strauss:[i] Mr. . . . I was pleased with your paper on the whole.[ii] There are a few points. You say, referring to Aristotle's chapter on natural right in the fifth book, "Aristotle contends that among humans all is subject to change. The differentiating characteristic of human nature is *genesis*." Differentiating from what?

Student: Well, in the terms of that particular sentence, between us and natural . . . or the gods and . . . natural objects . . . their nature and so on . . .

LS: Well, it is not clear, what you say. I mean, all human things are changeable. What is not changeable?

Same Student: Well, in that . . . he says that with the gods it might not be and with natural objects . . . not changeable.

LS: But he doesn't say that. The point is any right which has to do with the gods is or may be unchangeable. But no right connected with man can be unchangeable.

There was one more point. "The *spoudaios*, that is to say the decent man, may never live in the best *politeia,* best regime. He can in every regime do the naturally just precisely because the natural right is that just act chosen by the *spoudaios*." Is this so simple? If what is by nature right is forbidden by the vicious regime, can he do the naturally right thing there? I mean, well, he can do it at the peril of his life, but that means of course also that he cannot do it.

Same Student: . . . it seems to me that . . . that would assume precisely what . . . I had understood that the naturally right or the naturally just thing is . . . it would be something that . . . it seems that whatever laws or whatever types of action a *politeia* would forbid, there would always be a naturally right way that the *spoudaios* would act.

LS: Sure, that is true. But it would not have sufficient force against the vicious regime.

Same Student: No, that isn't what I said. I mean, whatever law, whatever particular law there might not be, I wouldn't assume that that law could make impossible naturally just actions, not because whatever the law might be, let's say the *spoudaios* could act in—

LS: Yes, but that is the question: whether he could act justly in a very vicious regime. Think of the case of Socrates under the Thirty, when Socrates was commanded by the Thirty together with three other Athenians to arrest a perfectly innocent man, Leon of Salamis. Well? The three others, fearing the power of the regime, arrested Leon. Socrates did not go there. He couldn't prevent it. But as Xenophon, who reports this event, says, if

[i] The session begins with remarks about ending the next session early so that students can attend a lecture.
[ii] Strauss responds to a student's paper.

the regime had lasted somewhat longer, they would not have permitted Socrates to continue with this subversive practice.

Student: No, that's possible, but I mean, the point is that—well, to use the example that was used earlier, namely, that of Antigone, it might cost her her life, but she could act in a naturally just manner like Socrates did, even though it might cost her her life.

LS: Yes, but still there is a certain ambiguity about the word "may." If you may do something with the moral certainty that you will be killed for it, you can also say you may not do it. Good. This is what I meant. Thank you.

And now Mr. . . . if I can read it properly. I was very satisfied with your paper. There are two points which I would like to mention. "How can we say that a man who dies in battle for a bad cause is a truly courageous man? How can we possible say that dying for a bad cause is a noble action? I think that is what Aristotle means, although he does not say it in so many words. Whether the end of his fighting is truly good or not, meaning whether the cause for which he fights is a good or bad one, depends on his ruler." But this is in a way what Aristotle says, because the decision about the war will not be made by the individual soldier but by what in modern language we would call the sovereign, be it a democracy, or an oligarchy, or a monarchy. And therefore Aristotle says somewhere in the *Politics* that *phronēsis*, practical wisdom, on this high political level is the matter of the actual ruler. Those who do not actually rule can only have right opinion.[iii] Well, for example, in the case we have now in regard to Vietnam, Richard Nixon rightly said he cannot judge of the wisdom of the action because he doesn't have access to information available only to President Johnson. You know? That is a complicated [issue]. I think you understood it on the whole quite well.

Now our Greek friend, whose complicated name I have forgotten, where is he? I saw him. Oh here—you had a question.

Student: . . . Aristotle's political philosophy is teleological and . . . so Aristotle, for instance, starts with . . . in mind.

LS: Yes, one can say that.

Same Student: Hobbes's political philosophy was not teleological.

LS: Yes.

Same Student: So Hobbes starts . . . about the rights . . . argument for Socratic position . . . his argument for disagreeing with Aristotle . . . his position? What is his starting point?

LS: Well, if you start from the teleology, Aristotle was compelled or enabled by his doctrines to assert that every natural motion is teleological. Therefore the fall of a heavy

[iii] Aristotle, *Politics* 1277b25-29.

body tends to the place, toward the natural place of the heavy body, i.e., the earth. So in Aristotle everything is teleological. And this became incredible for a variety of reasons, and today no one entertains the notion that there could be a teleological physics or chemistry. The [case of] the living body is still not so easy. And in the case of man it is very hard to abstract from ends. But if we limit ourselves to the argument as it can be traced within the confines of political philosophy, then we have to go back to Machiavelli, [where] the issue of teleology and nonteleology is not explicitly discussed but it comes out in this form: if we accept the Aristotelian or maybe the Platonic view, then if we regard as the starting point of all political and moral considerations the end of man, the full duties of man, then we make very high demands on man individually and collectively, and therefore our politics becomes "quote unrealistic." And Hobbes therefore says we must begin in a different way, not with man's complete duties but rather with man's fundamental right, with that right which cannot possibly be denied without destroying civil society, any civil society, and that is according to Hobbes the right of self-preservation. And this has this advantage, according to this school: if you have a doctrine in agreement with this fundamental and massive right which every child understands, then the chances of the actualization of a civil order built up according to the right are very great, whereas if you make very high demands, the chances of actualization are very small. This is the intrapolitical argument of Hobbes and his right against Aristotle.

But your question, as you stated it to me in my office, went a bit farther than that. By the way, there is one point which you must not forget. You have in classical antiquity people who were in no way teleologically oriented—I mean the people loosely called the sophists—and yet did they have any doctrine of rights of man? Say, men like Protagoras, Gorgias, Hippias, and so: do we find any doctrines of the rights of man, the rights of man being prior to the duties of man, as we have it in Hobbes explicitly? No. Because in classical antiquity the line was very simply drawn: either you accept that there is something by nature right, [and] then this "by nature" right does not have the character of rights in contradistinctions to duties,[1] [or] you say all right is convention. This was a very common view among the intellectuals of classical antiquity. But what you find in modern times, in this epoch, especially in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with effects up to the present day, is opposition to conventionalism. There is a natural right, but the natural right does not have the character of duties but rather of rights. Therefore men can be depended upon to be interested in it. Men are not so interested, that is the notion, in fulfilling their duties, but they are greatly interested in getting their rights; and therefore, if you appeal to the rights, you seem to be much more realistic than the other way around. And I think even when you look today at the political scene, even when you hear too many people using moral language, you will see that the appeal is to a considerable extent to the rights of the people concerned rather than to their duties, although that is in practice a bit more complicated, as you all are aware. But you had a somewhat broader question.

Student: No, this . . .

LS: This was what you meant.

Now the section which we are discussing now in the *Ethics*, and which we read last time, deals with the difference between universal and particular justice. It was apparently for the Greeks somewhat difficult to see that justice means on the one hand universal justice, and on the other hand particular justice, i.e., that there was only a single word available for two very different things. And Aristotle had to go out of his way to make clear that this single word means two radically different, although kindred, phenomena. Now we do not in English or the modern languages have this difficulty. Is this then a purely Greek idiosyncrasy to have this complication regarding justice, or are we not also faced with the same kind of problem, although maybe we believe it has been solved? Yes?

Student: It would seem that our solution has been to try to replace universal justice by particular justice. In other words, whatever can't be traced to harming someone else in a very direct sense—having wars or giving them less or something—we try to separate from the notion of justice altogether. In that way . . . bring the two things together.

LS: By reducing universal to particular justice. And what becomes of the rest of universal justice?

Same Student: Well, it can sort of—I mean, to a certain extent, I mean, for practical purposes it gets lost. It's sometimes called morality, as opposed to—

LS: As opposed to what?

Same Student: Well . . .

LS: You are very hot, but you haven't used the precise words yet. What has happened, what has become in modern times of the distinction between universal and particular justice? Well, universal justice, as Aristotle says, is virtue as a whole, complete virtue, if from a peculiar point of view, from the point of the view of the other man, [of] what we owe to the other. So universal justice, in other words, is for all practical purposes the same as morality. And particular justice seems rather to be the sphere of what? Because there must be some distinction made.

Same Student: Legal justice.

LS: Yes, but I mean, what is the basis of legal justice, [of] merely positive law? We are now a bit closer now, I think. The distinction with which Aristotle is concerned is surviving, if in a hardly recognizable manner, in the distinction with which we all are familiar between law and morality. We believe somehow that there is a sphere—even if all law is positive, we have a notion that not all subjects are fit to be regulated by law, and these other subjects are given over to another province called morality. There is from Aristotle's point of view nothing moral which is not a fit subject for legislation, and this, we can say with minor modification, was the traditional view, in particular also the Thomistic view. People knew at all times that there are things which are morally wrong which the legislator does not forbid and punish, because it would be too complicated

to . . . or because too many would transgress that law and it would not be feasible. Fornication is Thomas's example, simple fornication, which means of an unmarried man and an unmarried woman. And this is morally wrong according to the Thomistic doctrine, but the legislator doesn't forbid it because it happens so often, and so on and so on.

Generally speaking, stated in full generality, in practice not all morally wrong things will be forbidden. But there is no principle which tells us how to draw the line between that part of morality which can be sanctioned by positive law and that part of morality which cannot: that depends on the circumstances. But what happened in modern times was this: that people tried to find a principle which would tell us which part of morality can be sanctioned by law and which part of morality cannot. And in this respect Hobbes is of course of very great importance with his doctrine that the natural law is exclusively or at least primarily concerned with the establishment and preservation of peace, [with ensuring] that men do not harm or provoke one another to violence or to fraud, and everything else may be still morally praised or blamed but is not a fit subject for legislation. We have in our days the well-known question of sexual freedom. Rape of course would be a crime, but sexual acts committed with the agreement of both parties, regardless of whether they belong to the same or different sex, that's their private affair. No harm or violence is done to anyone. You know this from the daily discussions, and this has become a part of modern life. Whether things can be maintained as simply as some assert is of course another question. But . . . this distinction which we have today, between law here and morality there, is wholly absent from Aristotle [and] is of course also not wholly maintained in present-day thought. Even the liberal people, as they are called, who would fully agree with this view regarding sexuality and sexual deviations, are very much concerned with making morality legally enforced in other fields; for example, the fight against the war in Vietnam as an immoral war, the fight against the relics of racial discrimination. Here morality has to take care that the morally correct is to be established by law. Although the content is different, the principle is the same: whatever is moral is in principle fit to be made the subject of legislation. This problem is somehow concealed in the Aristotelian discussion which we have read. Mr. Wedegreen?

Student: As I understand it, the distinction between private and public in Aristotle is simply a prudential thing. But isn't that, at least according to common sense, is that really a . . . the most obvious thing in the world is that there are some personal things.

LS: I don't understand you. What do you have in mind here?

Same Student: Well, I was thinking, I mean . . . he says that the difference—that no subject, nothing which has to do with morality is unfit for legislation except given certain particular circumstances?

LS: Yes, sure, and certain purely expediential grounds, like it's too complicated to bring it home, and so forth. You know? Everything morally relevant can be legally enforced. Yes. I see, what cannot legally be—that is, you identify the distinction between the moral and legal with that between the private and the public? That is surely not Aristotle.

Same Student: . . .

LS: Not quite. After all, there are many private things subject to legislation. Public things as well. This, I believe, is not helpful. Or can you support your assertion by some examples?

Same Student: Well, I mean, if you say the distinction between the legal and the moral is not simply in modern life the distinction between the public and the private, then—

LS: That I did not say.

Same Student: I think . . . to some extent, although as you point out, it's a hard distinction to maintain . . .

LS: Yes, I see, purely private things. But of course this is not unqualifiedly true; for example, what is going on between two human beings of the same or different sex is not universally left to the discretion of people according to present or coming law. There is still an age limit presupposed, you know? In other words, I would like you to make it clearer than you did hitherto.

Same Student: What about dietary laws in the ancient . . .

LS: There would be no difficulty in principle of having them.

Same Student: No, but I mean, but there were such things . . . laws which force people to eat certain foods or something like that . . .

LS: Forcing what kind of food? To partake in cannibalistic meals, or what? [Laughter]

Same Student: Well, I thought . . . example, I was just thinking of—that, you know, that some . . . might be required for . . . these kinds of . . . To me, I mean, I think there's nothing more private than eating and I'm just . . . [Laughter]

LS: Yes. But still I think with a little bit of legal experience and dialectical skill one can easily build up a case for a dietary law from the point of view of health, for example, making certain assumptions regarding what is healthy or not, which may not be agreed upon by physicians. Some physicians might agree with them; for example, you can make a case for vegetarianism, which is clearly—if you have a law establishing vegetarianism, like you had prohibition, well, you have a dietary law. That's not so difficult. Yes?

Student: I think I understood that you said that all moral matters could be legislated—

LS: In principle, yes.

Same Student: It seems that that would be only true if all religious matters were of the same nature as you mentioned last time, as they were in the ancient *polis*, namely, that

religious matters were subservient to or in some way regulated by the *polis*. But if religion in the form of Christianity is present, that doesn't seem to be true, that all moral matters can be legislated upon.

LS: No, and doubtless Christianity played a certain role in bringing about the distinctions to which we are accustomed. But yet in earlier times, at least, what does this in practice mean? Not that every Christian can simply disobey the law, except in clear cases like idolatry, or emperor worship, or this kind of thing, but it led to the fact that there was *another* body superimposed on the civil law, called either the divine law or in another aspect the canon law, and so forth. I mean, that does not necessarily mean that you have to make a distinction between morality and law in the present-day sense, and a clear proof is the fact that Thomas Aquinas does not make this distinction.

Same Student: No, but he doesn't make this distinction precisely because of the . . . *polis* and whatever has been relegated to a sort of inferior position in terms of making laws.

LS: Yes, that is true. Yes?

Another Student: . . . the distinction between public and private?

LS: Sure, sure. The distinction between private and public law, for example, comes directly to us from Roman law, but it goes back to Greek law too. And the distinction between public and private is quite clear. There is a passage in Plato's *Laws*, I think in the fifth book, when he briefly restates the main thesis of the *Republic*.[iv] Then he states [that] everything must be public, common, *koinon* (but *koinon* has also this meaning of "public"), except what is by nature private. Now what is by nature private, as explained there, is strictly speaking only the body. And this can empirically be proved very simply. You may love another man or woman as much as you like; your toothache is your toothache, and her toothache is hers. You can enter sympathetically, but you do not feel that you are there too. So in other words, this is the limit to all collectivisation, to all publication, making-public: the body. That was the Platonic–Aristotelian view.

Student: That is a very . . .

LS: No . . . But it is of some significance. Now the question of course is, granting that other things are no longer so private as the body is, can these other things not be—is it not wise to extend the sphere of privacy beyond [the body]? Now Plato makes this formulation because he had experimented with the notion of the maximum communism feasible in the *Republic*—you know, in order to make clear indirectly what the limitations of such an experiment are. Yes?

Student: . . . statement in the *Politics* that the public realm is by far the most important because that's the place where a man can fulfill . . .

[iv] Plato, *Laws* 739c-d.

LS: Yes, sure. Let me very crudely but not misleadingly state: the sphere of the political, the common, public; and the sphere of the moral, *de jure* the same, not *de facto*, because of the imperfection of man . . . But still, the same Aristotle says at the beginning of the *Politics*: a man who is not political, [who] is unable to participate in civil society, is either a brute or a god. So this means that the whole moral–political sphere is not the highest sphere for Aristotle.

Student: . . . midway between—

LS: Yes, well we have seen this from a variety of points of view in this course here, but there is—the concern with the truth, the quest for *the* truth, is the most important thing for Aristotle, and that is in one sense strictly private. Surely Aristotle does not believe that the philosophers can or should become kings. But the same most private thing is from another point of view the most public thing, because every *polis*, every city is a very large house, you can say, within which people live. And from that point of view, everything that happens within the *polis* is private: private to this particular society. There are other cities outside of it. And the only thing common is the whole, the whole of nature, the subject of philosophy. Mr. . . .

Student: May I ask a question about particular justice . . .

LS: Yes.

Same Student: Aristotle . . . has said that . . . just acts . . . other forms of . . . an inappropriate desire for gain makes an act, instead of being cowardice . . . and does that mean that justice or injustice has to do more with the end of the act than the act itself . . . Could you take that . . . as an indication that Aristotle . . .

LS: There is a connection, I believe, a close, more visible connection in Aristotle between justice, both universal and particular, and the end which they serve. But I would not infer this from the fact to which you referred, namely, that in the case of the unjust man in the particular sense, the motive is love of gain, whereas in the case of the coward, the motive is fear. I don't see how it would follow from that.

Same Student: . . . something that might be a bad example but, the mercenary that does a seemingly brave act but does it for the sake of gain.

LS: Yes, but still, if you think of such a poor devil, can you call this gain if he earns money in the only way, or at least the most convenient way, accessible to him, namely, by becoming a mercenary with a foreign potentate? I think that would be a bit harsh, to call such men lovers of gain. Do you see that point? I mean, they would use the little bit of pay which they get for having something to drink and other things now and then, and surely not to put it in a bank or in a piggy bank.

Same Student: . . . seems that a just act . . . be an unjust act or is associated with other acts, not actions by themselves. It seems that . . . have more to do with the way in which those . . .

LS: Yes, but the coward has also an end: preserve dear life by hook and by crook. The intemperate man has an end: to satisfy all desire, all sensual desire. The main thesis which you make, I think, is correct: that justice in both its forms is more visibly connected with the ends that it serves than the other virtues, according to Aristotle. That's all I can say. And this can be proven. Good. Now is there any other point you would raise before we continue? If not, Mr. Pangle will read 1130b6.

Reader:
Thus it is clear that there are more kinds of Justice than one, and that the term has another meaning besides Virtue as a whole. We have then to ascertain the nature and attributes of Justice in this special sense.

Now we have distinguished two meanings of 'the unjust,' namely the unlawful and the unfair,[v] and two meanings of 'the just,' namely the lawful and the fair.[vi] Injustice then, in the sense previously mentioned, corresponds to the meaning 'unlawful'; but since the unfair is not the same as the unlawful, but different from it, and related to it as a part to a whole (for not everything unlawful is unfair, though everything unfair is unlawful), so also the unjust and Injustice in the particular sense are not the same as the unjust and Injustice in the universal sense, but different from them, and related to them as part to whole; for Injustice in this sense is a part of universal Injustice, and similarly the Justice we are now considering is a part of universal Justice. We have therefore to discuss Justice and Injustice, and the just and unjust, in the particular sense.

We may then set aside that Justice which is coextensive with virtue in general, being the practice of virtue in general towards someone else, and that Injustice which is the practice of vice in general towards someone else. It is also clear how we should define what is just and unjust in the corresponding senses. For the actions that spring from virtue in general are in the main identical with the actions that are according to law, since the law enjoins conduct displaying the various particular virtues and forbids conduct displaying the various particular vices. Also the laws[vii] laid down for the education that fits a man for social life are the rules productive of virtue in general. As for the education— (1130b6-27)

LS: Wait a second here at this point. Now the main thesis is clear: particular justice is related to universal justice as a part to the whole. It goes without saying that what is true of particular justice is true also of the other virtues, like courage, temperance, and so on. They are related to universal justice as parts to the whole. You see only from the

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[v] In Rackham's translation: "the unequal or unfair."
[vi] In Rackham's translation: "the equal or fair."
[vii] In Rackham's translation: "regulations."

seemingly needless repetitiousness how difficult it was to see his point, concealed from the ordinary eye by the ambiguity then existing of the word "justice."

There is one point toward the end of what you read, about how the most of the legal things are the same as the things ordered by the whole of virtue. Why does he make this qualification? How was it in the English translation?

Reader:
For the actions that spring from virtue in general are in the main identical with the actions that are according to law, since the law—

LS: "In the main." They are not simply identical. Why not? Yes?

Student: . . .

LS: Surely. That is a great point which Aristotle has in mind. But he doesn't think of that here. There are many laws of a purely technical nature; for example, left or right driving is not demanded by any moral principle, and infinitely many other things. The morally interesting laws, they are that of which he speaks here. Yes. Now read again the last sentence. "The things which are productive of the whole virtue."

Reader:
For the actions that spring from virtue in general are in the main identical with the actions that are according to law, since the law enjoins conduct displaying the various particular virtues and forbids conduct displaying the various particular vices. Also the laws[viii] laid down for the education that fits a man for social life are the rules productive of virtue in general. As for the education of the individual as such, that makes a man simply a good man, the question whether this is the business of Political Science or of some other science must be determined later: for probably to be a good man[ix] is not in every case the same thing as to be a good citizen. (1130b22-29)

LS: And what does he mean by this? So all virtue which has to do with the other, and therefore with the common, with the public, belongs to the sphere of universal justice. But this is the subject of legislation. Can legislation, however good, take care of the whole of virtue? That is the question. And here Aristotle indicates, intimates the principle which he does not make clear at all. We can state this principle as follows. On the one hand it is the duty of the legislator to make men good citizens and doers of noble deeds, as we have heard, but on the other hand it is the education of the *individual* and not of platoons, or battalions, or regiments through which a man becomes a *simply* good man, so that the most important kind of education may be *regulated* by the state, but it cannot be *achieved* by the state, if we use modern language. But here Aristotle leaves this open, and he says: is this highest form of education, by which the individual is taken out of the herd, to use a Platonic expression, and brought up as an individual, is this also a subject, truly a subject of politics, of political art in the highest and most comprehensive sense?

[viii] In Rackham's translation: "regulations."
[ix] In Rackham's translation: "for it would seem that to be a good man."

Aristotle says we won't settle that here, and only that perhaps it is not the same thing to be a good man and to be a citizen in general. The good man is not simply identical with the good citizen. Some of you have read the *Politics*, in which Aristotle discusses this at great length.[x] Can you remind us of what you have learned at that occasion?

Student: To be a good citizen one must follow the laws of the *polis*, and to be a good man one must be virtuous in a fuller sense; and therefore to be a good man is more difficult than simply being a good citizen.

LS: Yes, what you say reminds of it, but it's not precise.

Student: That the regime—the citizens . . . the regime . . .

LS: Is relative to the regime. A good citizen in a democracy is for this very reason a bad citizen in an oligarchy, and so on and so on. But the good man has no relativity to the regime. And on the contrary, the regimes, their goodness and badness are determined with a view to the qualities of the good man. Yes?

Student: In this case, then, wouldn't you say virtue was aimed at being a good citizen?

LS: No, that would not—because of this relativity, it won't do.

Same Student: Well, the . . . courage.

LS: Where did he speak of the citizen's courage in the section on courage?

Same Student: I . . . the word . . . of courage is simply that dying for—

LS: Yes, but can you not answer my question: where did he speak of the citizen's courage in the section on courage?

Same Student: . . .

LS: Does anyone else know?

Another Student: It was the first of the forms of pseudo-courage.

LS: Exactly: that is not true courage. And we get now a reason for that: because a citizen is relative to the regime. And therefore, if you do not know to which regime he belongs, then it is not true courage.

Student: Then virtue again would require knowledge, to know what is [right].

LS: Then—I didn't hear you.

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[x] See Aristotle, *Politics* 1276b16-1277b32.

Same Student: Does not virtue require true knowledge to know what the right thing is?

LS: Ultimately, yes. In other words, why we will always start in such discussions from the generally accepted opinions, which we all in a way understand at once. We cannot leave it at that and we must transcend them; that is what Aristotle does all the time. Good. And if this is so, if the good man is not identical with the good citizen as such, what follows from that? That the good man has no relation to the political order, to the regime at all: is this the Aristotelian conclusion? A private gentleman sitting on his farm, minding his own business: is this what Aristotle means? Surely not immediately. What he immediately means in the context of the *Politics* is this, that the good man is a good citizen in a *particular* regime: in the best regime. Number one. And secondly, he must be the ruler or belong to the ruling body in the best regime, because if he is not actively engaged in political activity, in ruling, many of his qualities will lie dormant and that will detract from his goodness. So the good man is a good citizen in the best regime as long as he fulfills a ruling function. But this is only intimated here and not developed.

It is, however, an indication of the fact that the simple equation of morality and politics is not feasible. Because of the complication which arises on the political level, it is very easy to speak of the laws as being in perfect harmony with morality, as Aristotle has here done a few times, and especially as Socrates does in the *Crito*, as you will remember, [in] the eulogy of the laws. But this does not work out because—to take at first Socrates's *Crito* argument: Socrates is absolutely silent about the democratic laws of Athens, election by lot, of which he surely disapproved. And nevertheless he says: one must obey the laws. One must obey the laws because—and one reason given, because the laws ask him: "Did you disapprove of our laws regarding marriage, by virtue of which your father took your mother for a wife and generated you and then educated you?" Socrates says: "No, I didn't." But the laws wisely do not ask him: "Did you approve of all Athenian laws?" Because then Socrates would have to make a qualification. That is one of the intricacies of this particular dialogue. So now let us go on.

Student: Can I ask a question?

LS: Yes, by all means.

Same Student: Regarding your interpretation of 1130b21 . . .

LS: Can you repeat the passage? What does it say?

Same Student: It's 1130b21: "For practically the majority of the acts commanded by the law are those which are prescribed from the point of view of virtue taken as a whole." I mean, maybe there is a distinction there between the purely technical laws—or did I misunderstand?

LS: Yes?

Same Student: The purely technical and the nontechnical. Now is there a law by a legislator which is purely technical, or does he mean here by law all laws, including the laws of physics?,

LS: No, there are no laws of physics in Aristotle.

Same Student: Well, in the example you used, I believe you said something about driving. I'm afraid I missed it.

LS: Triangle?

Same Student: Right or left—

LS: Driving. [Laughter] In other words, things not subject to deliberation are not subject to legislation. The distinction between driving [on the] right and left cannot be legislated in or out, but driving right and driving left can be legislated.

Same Student: . . . classic distinction between . . . you can say that at least . . . a law of driving, a traffic law does have an end, which is a moral end.

LS: Yes, but in a remoter way. That is true. But Aristotle must have had a reason for making this qualifying remark: that not all laws are legislated from the point of view of virtue. Mr. Zinman?

Student: . . . in the *Politics* . . . the issue of the relationship between intellectual and moral virtue. By that I mean, if the good man is the best . . . citizen of the good regime—of the best regime—and in Aristotle's best regime the rulers are not philosophers. It would seem that—

LS: Not philosophers.

Same Student: Not philosophers. It would seem that intellectual virtue and moral virtue can be separated, in the decisive sense, for Aristotle.

LS: You mean a man can have intellectual virtue of the highest level without moral virtue? That is a complicated question. People sometimes say Aristotle says so, but there is no passage in Aristotle in which he says so. But one must assume that Aristotle had a little bit of common sense, so that even if he doesn't say a certain thing, if it is manifestly . . . in mind.

Now let us look at very clever men, whom we find from time to time. I remember, for example, a case of a man—a very well-known man, of course I would never mention his name, either in private or in public—who said quite frankly: I cannot philosophize except in luxury; in luxury, with many secretaries around, and telephones . . . and all that. Well, one can safely say that Aristotle would not agree with him. In other words, if someone is interested in the most important subject, he cannot be so interested in luxury. Also one

can say [that] if a man is in a state of fear all the time, fearing every fly or every mouse, then he's incapable[2] [of thinking] coherently because there are always possible objects of apprehension. Yes, and the man who is irascible and gets all the time into scrapes with [his] fellow man, that has to be deducted from his intellectual activity. We may go through the whole list of virtues and find that in most cases at least the moral virtues are indispensable conditions of intellectual virtue.

Same Student: But really the most important question is whether the decisive virtues for . . . and the decisive virtues seem to be magnanimity and justice.

LS: Magnanimity is not so simple, because a man of theoretical wisdom would be aware of his worth, and this would somehow show in his bearing. Aristophanes describes how Socrates[xi] goes through the streets of Athens in comic exaggeration. But one thing is clear: here went a man who had a great consciousness of his worth, which is something akin to magnanimity.

Same Student: I don't want to say . . . justice, but it would seem that it really is justice in the sense that—it would seem that the question reduces itself to the question of whether the philosopher is a perfect gentleman or not.

LS: Yes. Well, if you put it this way: in the ordinary sense he is not, because from the highest point of view, the perfect gentleman as ordinarily understood can very well look like a stuffed shirt, if I may say so. You know? And therefore this is an object of great hilarity also in the Platonic dialogues, and also in other ancient writers, although they would always fight for the perfect gentleman as the best you can have in the political arena. You know? But to speak in terms of what is provable and demonstrable or not: my attention was first drawn to this difficulty by a statement of Thomas Aquinas in his *Theological Summa*. I was also brought up, as everybody else, in the view that the moral virtues aren't simply and unqualifiedly the conditions of intellectual perfection, and then I read in St. Thomas that the theoretical virtues, the speculative virtues, do not presuppose the moral virtues, with the exception of practical wisdom, prudence.[xii] And this is clearly what Aristotle teaches in the *Ethics*: that you cannot become a man of prudence, of practical wisdom, without becoming at the same time a morally good man. Otherwise you are only clever, like Alcibiades, for example. [He] was very clever, but he was not a *phronimos*, because a sensible man would not do the kinds of things which he did. You know? When he tried to ridicule the Mysteries, or whatever went with that, he felt he could afford it and did it. That is not a sensible man. But going back to Thomas: as for theoretical wisdom, it does not presuppose moral virtue.

Then I began to study Aristotle somewhat more carefully and saw that this is what Aristotle means. The principle is this: what we call morality, what Aristotle calls the fine or noble and the just, *to kalon kai dikaion*, has two ends which it serves. The one end is the society, or the *polis*. And very much of the virtues we understand by raising the question: which purpose of society is served by that? In the case of magnanimity, I gave

[xi] Strauss says "Aristotle," apparently in error.
[xii] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, First Part of the Second Part, Question 58, Article 5.

you the answer: you need generals who have a great confidence in their judgment. And rightly so. That's the magnanimous man. And that would also be true[3] [of] non-generals, men in high office: even if they pretend that they run for office only because they've been drafted, this belongs to the necessary and sometimes charming hypocrisy. But still, if they don't have self-confidence, they would be of no great use. So in other words, we can find the social function of the various virtues without too great difficulties. But this is only one end. The virtues are also required for another end, for *the* other end, and that end is theoretical wisdom. Now what the two ends require, society on the one hand and theoretical perfection on the other, is not identical but agrees to a considerable extent, so that the two ends of man demand morality but not in the same way and in the same respect. And in this sense, one must understand Thomas's assertion that the intellectual virtues do not require any morality in the ordinarily understood sense.

So to say, the man who is dedicated to the theoretical life will practice, will lead a rather ascetic life, one can say, but not on moral grounds, but as Nietzsche once put it in his somewhat cynical language, like a jockey, who in order to win a race abstains from alcohol and so on for a certain period of time, not because he thinks this is praiseworthy in itself but [because it is] practically indispensable if he wants to achieve the result he's aiming at. This point of Nietzsche you find in his essay "What Is the Significance of Ascetic Ideals?," the third part of the *Genealogy of Morals*, which gives a brief sketch of the theoretical ideal of the classical philosophers which, in my opinion, is unsurpassed in modern times, all the more so since Nietzsche did not identify himself with [the] ancients but he understood the main point in these matters very well.[xiii] Yes?

Student: Would the moral man be required, in a regime which was less than best, to oppose that regime?

LS: Again, to quote Socrates, there is nothing like having another look at it—in this case, at the text. What does Aristotle say on this subject? Now opposing a regime means, in the sharpest and clearest case, conspiring against it, trying to depose it. What does Aristotle say about that? In the *Politics* he speaks about that occasionally, when he says the men who have the best reason for rebelling against a bad regime are not the rich, nor the noble born, nor the many, nor any other kind but the good men, and they are the least [likely] to think of rebelling. In other words, they would be entitled to do it, but they wouldn't begin to do it because—well, we can easily imagine: because they would have to enter all kinds of alliances because they are too few, and politics make strange bedfellows. And these allies might give the revolution its color, so that the new regime would perhaps be in some respects preferable to the past one, but in others it might be inferior. Or as it is put in the *Republic*: what the philosopher would do—if the philosopher lives in a bad regime, then he will behave as we all do, in a way. If there is a very severe rain and we don't have an umbrella or anything else with us, we just stay in a doorway or in another place where we are protected against the rain. This does not appeal to the feelings of many of us. And I don't say without qualification that it is a sound view, because given the changeability of human things, all kinds of courses of action may be good. Philosophers have sometimes been engaged in conspiracies against tyrants, you know? It all depends. There

[xiii] See paragraphs 8-10 in treatise 3 of Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality* (1887).

are limits to what a man can bear or what he thinks his fellow citizens would bear. That goes without saying. But in principle this was the answer they gave.

So let us now turn to 1130b30.[xiv]

[1] Deleted "then."
[2] Deleted "to think."
[3] Deleted "by."

[xiv] The tape ends at this point.

Session 19: April 24, 1968

Leo Strauss: Now this was a long interruption, and we must find our way back. We are now studying the section on justice, book 5. Justice, we may say, is the most political of the virtues, surely the most immediately political of the virtues. Justice is related to equality, as Aristotle has stated more than once. And we see this today when the question of reapportionment is up. One man, one vote: equality. But there is also another side even to our conception, of the now-prevailing conception of justice: the welfare state. We can say its principle is "to everyone according to his needs," i.e., to different people, different things: inequality. Aristotle makes a similar but not identical distinction. There is a sphere of equality pure and simple, but there is also a sphere of inequality, only this is not related to needs: to everyone according to his *merits*, according to the contribution which he makes to society. Aristotle implies, in contradistinction to the now-prevailing view, that society is not responsible for any injustices committed by nature or by the past, but [that] society must make the best possible use of the available inequalities or differences. So there is a certain kinship as well as profound antagonism between the view of justice now prevailing and the Aristotelian view.

Now for a better understanding of Aristotle's teaching on justice and its political implications, we must consider a passage in Plato's *Laws*. In 756e following, [the Athenian Stranger][i] speaks about the elections to office taking place in the best regime of the *Laws*.[ii]

"The selection of officials will form a mean between a monarchy and a democracy; and midway between these our regime should always stand.[iii] For slaves will never be friends with masters, nor bad men with good, even when they occupy equal positions—for when equality is given to unequal things, the resultant will be unequal, unless due measure is applied; and it is because of these two conditions that political organizations are filled with feuds. There is an old and true saying that 'equality produces amity,' which is right well and fitly spoken; but what the equality is which is capable of doing this is a very troublesome question, since it is very far from being clear. For there are two kinds of equality which, though identical in name, are often almost opposites in their practical results. The one of these any State or lawgiver is competent to apply in the assignment of honours—namely, the equality determined by measure, weight and number,—by simply employing the lot to give even results in the distributions; but the truest and best form of equality is not an easy thing for everyone to discern. It is the judgment of Zeus, and men it never assists save in small measure, but in so far as it does assist either cities or individuals, it produces all things good; for it dispenses more to the greater and less to the

[i] Strauss says here "Aristotle."
[ii] Plato, *Laws* 756e-758a. Strauss reads from the English translation of this passage in Plato, *Laws*, trans. R. G. Bury (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, 1961), vol. 1, 411-15.
[iii] In Bury's translation: "The selection of officials that is thus made will form a mean between a monarchic constitution and a democratic; and midway between these our constitution should always stand."

smaller, giving due measure to each according to nature [agreeing with natural inequalities—LS], and with regard to honours also, by granting the greater to those that are greater in virtue,[iv] and the less to those of the opposite character in respect of goodness and education, it assigns in proportion what is fitting to each. Indeed, it is precisely this [the second kind of equality—LS] which constitutes for us 'political justice,' which is the object we must strive for, Clinias; this equality is what we must aim at, now that we are settling the city[v] that is being planted. And whoever finds a city[vi] elsewhere at any time must make this same object the aim of his legislation,—not the advantage of a few tyrants, or of one, or of some form of democracy, but justice always; and this consists in what we have just stated, namely, the natural equality given on each occasion to things unequal. [The natural equality to things unequal is of course unequal.—LS] None the less, it is necessary for every city at times to employ even this equality in a modified degree, if it is to avoid involving itself in intestine discord, in one section or another,—for the reasonable and considerate, wherever employed, is an infringement of the perfect and exact, as being contrary to strict justice [strict justice is the one which gives unequal things to unequal people, but this must be diluted for reasons of peace, internal peace—LS]; for the same reason it is necessary to make use also of the equality of the lot, on account of the discontent of the many,[vii] and in doing so to pray, calling upon the god[viii] and Good Luck to guide for them the lot aright toward the highest justice. [In other words, although it is wholly a matter of the lot—of the lot, of whim, who will be elected, the lot might happen to be favorable to the best men, that of course can only be achieved by divine intercession and therefore on the human side by prayer.—LS] Thus it is that necessity compels us to employ both forms of equality; but that form, which needs good luck, we should employ as seldom as possible."

This is fundamentally the position of Aristotle as well, although Aristotle's analysis of justice is much more detailed. Plato is speaking only of the political functions of the two kinds of equality, and Aristotle [deals] also with the subpolitical functions, as we have partly seen and partly will see.

Now I would like to read to you another statement from a famous man and a famous book, Hobbes's *Leviathan*, chapter 15. This is a critique of Aristotle, as you will see immediately.

"Justice of Actions, is by Writers divided into *Commutative*, and *Distributive*: and the former they say consisteth in proportion Arithmeticall; the latter in proportion Geometricall. Commutative therefore, they place in the equality of value of the things contracted for; And Distributive, in the distribution of equall benefit, to men of equall merit. [And now comes Hobbes's criticism.—LS] As if it were Injustice to sell dearer than we buy; or to give more to a man than he merits. The value of all things contracted for, is measured by the Appetite of the Contractors: and therefore the just value, is that

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[iv] In Bury's translation: "greater in goodness."
[v] In Bury's translation: "State."
[vi] In Bury's translation: "State."
[vii] In Bury's translation: "of the masses."
[viii] In Bury's translation: "calling upon God."

which they be contented to give. [In other words, there is no just price, no intrinsically just price but what they happen to agree upon, and in times of the buyer's market it is different than in the times of the seller's market.—LS] And Merit (besides that which is by Covenant, where the performance on one part, meriteth the performance of the other part, and falls under Justice Commutative, not Distributive,) is not due by justice; but is rewarded of Grace only. And therefore this distinction, in the sense wherein it useth to be expounded, is not right. To speak properly, Commutative Justice, is the Justice of a Contractor; that is, a performance of Covenant, in Buying, and Selling; Hiring, and Letting to hire; Lending, and Borrowing; Exchanging, Bartering, and other acts of Contract."[ix]

So this is one milestone in the change in the notion of justice which eventually led to the view now prevailing. Now there is one more classic text which one would have to consider in this connection, and that is at the end of Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, in the last note. In the last note Rousseau attacks the notion of distributive justice, i.e., the justice which gives unequal things to unequal people, and that is of course connected with the fundamentally democratic view. What happens then to the need for unequal men, which democracy has as much as any other [regime], is then less clear. There was a time when Henry Wallace was one of the luminaries of the American political scene, and his key word, as the older ones of you may remember, was "the common man." But his biographer entitled his book, *Henry Wallace, An Uncommon Man*.[x] So, I mean, however much you may be in favor of the common man, uncommon men are needed; and therefore there is also a need for different treatment of the uncommon man on the one hand, and the common [man] on the other: in the old language, distributive justice. Good. This may suffice as a reminder.

Now we have first (here we cannot repeat this any more) Aristotle's distinction between particular and universal justice, and we limit ourselves from now on entirely to particular justice. Particular justice is distributive or commutative, and distributive justice leads to proportional equality and commutative justice to simple or arithmetical equality. Aristotle speaks of geometric proportion and arithmetic proportion. What he means is this: in an arithmetic proportion, say, 6 is the mean between 8 and 4, but 8 to 6 is not equal to 6 to 4. In other words, there are different proportions in the two cases. Properly proportional is a geometric proportion, where the proportions of the two parts are the same. The quantities are not the same. For example, 6 is the geometrical mean between 9 and 4, for 9 to 6 [is] equal to 6 to 4, but the parts are obviously unequal. We came more or less to this point last time, and we should continue in 1131b24.

Reader:
The remaining kind is Corrective Justice, which appears[xi] in private transactions, both voluntary and involuntary. This justice is of a different sort from the preceding. For justice in distributing common property always conforms with the proportion we have

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[ix] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (1651), part 1, chapter 15.
[x] Frank Kingdon, *An Uncommon Man: Henry Wallace and 60 Million Jobs* (New York: The Reader's Press, 1944).
[xi] In Rackham's translation: "operates."

described (since when a distribution is made from the common stock, it will follow the same ratio as that between the amounts which the several persons have contributed to the common stock)—

LS: In other words, this would also apply to distribution (say, of the dividends of a shareholding group), because different contributors, people who contributed different amounts, different percentages, would get different dividends, not identical. But the chief sphere of distributive justice is of course the distribution of honors. The community. Yes?

Reader:
and the injustice opposed to justice of this kind is a violation of this proportion. But the just in private transactions, although it is the equal in a sense (and the unjust the unequal), is not the equal according to geometrical but according to arithmetical proportion. For it makes no difference whether a good man has defrauded a bad man or a bad one a good one, nor whether it is a good or a bad man that has committed adultery; the law looks only at the difference of the damage,[xii] treating the parties as equal, and merely asking whether one has done and the other suffered injustice, whether one inflicted and the other has sustained damage. (1131b24-1132a6)

LS: Let us stop here perhaps for a moment. Now what do you say to this example which he gives here? It doesn't make any difference whether it was an honorable man who committed the crimes here mentioned, or a dishonorable one. Yes?

Student: Well, it is strange that he should even talk about an honorable man committing a crime.

LS: Yes, sure. After what we have heard, that he would never make a mistake, even against conventional right, how could he do such horrid things? This is indeed quite extraordinary. And to make it quite clear, let us turn to 1128b21. "It is not a matter of an honorable man—shame is not a matter of an—"

Reader:
For indeed the virtuous man does not feel shame, if shame is the feeling caused by base actions; since one ought not to do base actions (the distinction between acts really shameful and those reputed to be so is immaterial, since one ought not to do either), and so one never ought to feel shame. (1128b21-25)

LS: The clear implication is that the virtuous man never will commit any impropriety, even merely conventional impropriety, let alone improprieties of this magnitude. Now the commentator (and I suppose he is not the only one who says this)[1] [gives the following explanation]: Aristotle follows here, in the passage just read, Attic law. But what do you say to this comment? I mean, can a man like Aristotle follow Attic law? He speaks of justice as justice, and not of any local use which may be very unjust and unreasonable. At least in order to make this commentary, one would first have to show that there is a difference between, say, the moral and the legal approach. And once this difference is

[xii] In Rackham's translation: "nature of the damage."

granted, one could conceivably accept a distinction made by one particular positive law, but there is no place for that distinction in Aristotle, as we have seen. I mean, as a crude practical distinction, yes, but not as a distinction of principle. The utmost one could say is this. This fact, that in law—say, in the case of a crime—the moral qualities of the criminal are not considered is a crude abstraction. [It is] useful for certain practical purposes but [shows] at the same time how true it is, what Aristotle intimated at the beginning of the discussion of justice: that the just and the legal are not identical. The law follows certain conveniences which may be sound and which may be unsound. But these conveniences are not the same thing as considerations of justice strictly speaking.

At any rate, the difference between the two kinds of particular justice, distributive and commutative, makes clear the crudity of the simple egalitarian kind, and this crudity is precisely shown in this example. It doesn't make any difference what kind of a man committed a crime. We would say perhaps [that] the virtuous man should be punished more severely than the habitually vicious man because it is a much more disquieting thing if a pillar of society misbehaves than if some bum [does]. Or one could perhaps also say that the pillar of society should be treated less severely because the temptation in his case must have been much more than flesh and blood could bear, and therefore one should be understanding in this thing.

At any rate, we would be compelled to raise the question which Aristotle does not raise here: what is the purpose of punishment? We have seen that Aristotle in this work rarely raises the question of the *purpose* of the various virtues. For Plato, the question of the purpose of punishment is very important and frequently discussed, especially in the *Laws* but also in other works. Now we might perhaps throw a glance at the Platonic doctrine, and this may help us toward a better understanding of Aristotle. According to the Platonic view, the only sane and rational purpose of punishment is betterment: not mere retribution, tit for tat, but betterment. This is a view now of course very well known, although the term is probably rather "rehabilitation" than betterment, but I think fundamentally it means still betterment.

But this leads to difficulties to which Plato draws our attention in his way. Plato takes it for granted that there are people who cannot be bettered (which is denied more or less by the now-prevailing view), and Plato has a very simple recipe: people who are incorrigible must be exiled or destroyed, because there is nothing which can be done in their case. But here we may think of this: a man, a poor fellow and a stupid fellow who commits a petty theft. Well, he will be examined by the authorities: is he corrigible or is he not corrigible? One will perhaps wait and say: All right, he gets a year in jail, and afterwards let's see how he'll behave. Next day, after he is out of jail, he commits another act of petty theft. Now this time he will be punished more severely, I suppose. But after some years, say, after ten years, even the mildest judges will feel he cannot be bettered. Then he must be killed, according to the sensible rule: betterment or, where betterment is impossible, destruction. But then we look at another case: a man who committed murder; and the close examination of the man by the best psychologists available, say, Socrates or Plato, leads to the conclusion that this man would never again commit another murder. Think of Raskolnikov, who learned the lesson that it is absolutely impossible to commit a

murder.[xiii] Then would it not be sensible in this case to let him free after he has gone through this experience that murder is a humanly impossible action, whereas the habitual petty thief would have to be destroyed? Now we see then by thinking this through, there is obviously another consideration involved apart from betterment or non-betterment, and that is the gravity of the crime. Murder is a graver crime than petty theft; and we must have a scale then. This is an entirely different consideration and has nothing to do with the moral question taken in itself.

These difficulties, which Aristotle does not discuss, make it intelligible why Aristotle falls back eventually on something like retribution as good for its own sake without any regard to betterment or any other purpose which punishment serves. So in other words, Aristotle does answer eventually the question of the purpose of punishment, but he does not give the simple, most plausible, and seemingly most humane answer preferred apparently by Plato: that the purpose of punishment is betterment. So now let us go on, unless someone would like to discuss this point. Yes?

Student: . . . inadequate reason for revising our—for introducing the notion of retribution that in some cases we might . . . theft . . . might we not simply rethink . . . assumption.

LS: Yes, by all means. But the question is whether retribution as such, i.e., a certain harmony between punishment and crime, is not indispensable. That is the question, you see, and not merely the state of mind or character of the criminal. The starting point of Aristotle here of course is this: that in punitive justice we abstract. We have the principle (at least in earlier times we had the principle): for the same crime, the same punishment. Whether the criminal is rich or poor, noble or . . . or whatever it may be.

Student: By retribution . . . do you mean something like Plato points to in the *Gorgias* when he describes the woodsman cutting into the laws and then justice marking the soul of the criminal with the punishment? Is this what you mean by . . . I remember the . . . about the particular passage about woodsman cutting into the laws and then about the justice . . . the judge cutting into the soul with justice and implanting justice just as the mark . . . in the wood.

LS: Yes, but still this is not helpful enough, because the question is: how does the punishment make the criminal better? This is a simile which is not sufficiently clear for our purpose, for answering this question. Mr. . . . ?

Student: Does not the difference between punishment as betterment and punishment as retribution derive in turn from how one conceives . . . whether it's personal or political—if it's for the judgment of the criminal, or in some sense for the protection of the citizens.

LS: I believe this is true. That is also in itself a rational or reasonable notion, that one must protect society against a criminal. But this is not exhaustive. The key difference is the one which I stated, as will appear later from the Aristotelian text, when he takes up the question of whether justice is retribution or not or retaliation or not. Yes?

[xiii] The protagonist of Fyodor Dostoevksy's novel *Crime and Punishment* (1866).

Student: . . . any reason for it not being retributive except that retribution in itself . . . more fundamental . . .

LS: Well, we can perhaps say that in the last century or so, the simply retributive notion of punishment has lost almost all the power that it possessed in former times. So today the only reason which would be admitted would be betterment and protection, but not retribution proper. Is this not a fair statement of the present state of discussion? Aristotle seems to take the view that the core, as it were, of punishment is retribution. He devotes only one line to it, and we will come to it later. Let us go on then.

Reader:
Hence the unjust being here the unequal, the judge endeavours to equalize it: inasmuch as when one man has received and the other has inflicted a blow, or one has killed and the other been killed, the line representing the suffering and doing of the deed is divided into unequal parts, but the judge endeavours to make them equal by the penalty or loss he imposes, taking away the gain. (For the term 'gain' is used in a general way to apply to such cases, even though it is not strictly appropriate to some of them, for example to a person who strikes another, nor is 'loss' appropriate to the victim in this case; but at all events the results are called 'loss' and 'gain' respectively when the amount of the damage sustained comes to be estimated.) Thus, while the equal is a mean between more and less, gain and loss are at once both more and less in contrary ways, more good and less evil being gain and more evil and less good loss; and as the equal, which we pronounce to be just, is, as we said a mean between them, it follows that Justice in Rectification will be the mean between loss and gain. (1132a6-19)

LS: What Aristotle is here driving at is to explain why he brings commutative justice in the narrower sense, the justice in exchange of goods and services, under the same heading as punitive justice, and therefore he construes crime in the following sense. A man hits another. He has a gain—this is the superiority of A, who hit B—and therefore the judge must equalize the situation by giving B recompense for that harm he has suffered. Just as in exchange, in buying and selling and so on, there should be equality of the merchandise and the price, or in exchange, simply what is offered by A to what is offered by B. Here in both cases, in the case of exchange as well as punishment, simple equality is . . . whereas in distributive justice proportional equality. We must never forget this whole context. Yes?

Student: This is a question referring to retribution again. I was wondering if perhaps the reason why retribution might play a more important role for Aristotle at this point in the *Ethics*—would it be because the importance that he placed on honor . . . since we haven't got to the part of the contemplative life . . . in the dialogue there isn't—or at least there isn't so much attention paid to honor but if honor is so important, retribution becomes much more significant. Would that be a possible reason why . . .

LS: Yes and no. No to the particular point, but the general point: since Aristotle argues on a lower level than Plato does in the *Republic*, both honor becomes more important and the simple notions like retribution become more important. In this way, I would agree.

Student: It seems, for example, that the philosophers wouldn't mind so . . . because they are not concerned with the type of honor that—

LS: Yes, sure. And he would have no desire to give tit for tat. Sure. In this sense that is correct. Yes. Now shall we go on, then? I think we can perhaps skip a section and turn to 1132b11. Will you tell, please?

Reader: That's on page 279, the top of Loeb.
The terms lost and gained in these cases are borrowed from the operations of voluntary exchange. (1132b11-13)

LS: In other words, Aristotle knows it is somewhat inappropriate to say [that] if a man killed another man or hit him, he had a gain and the other suffered a loss and the two must be equalized. Yes?

Reader:
There, to have more than one's own is called gaining, and to have less than one had at the outset is called losing, as for instance in buying and selling, and in all other transactions sanctioned by law; while if the result of the transaction is neither an increase nor a decrease, but exactly what the parties had of themselves, they say they 'have their own,' and have neither lost nor gained. Hence Justice in involuntary transactions is a mean between gain and loss in a sense: it is to have after the transaction an amount equal to the amount one had before it. (1132b13-20)

LS: Yes. This is his general analysis of justice. There is a starting point, or starting situation. This starting situation is disturbed by some action, say, that I hand over some money to someone else, or that I hit him. The starting situation is disturbed, and what is necessary is to restore it. In the case of the money, I get merchandise, so I am as rich as I was before. In the case of my hitting, I have a gain and I must suffer a loss, namely, go to jail or pay a fine, or whatever the case may be, and then again the starting situation is restored. What Aristotle presupposes of course, although that of course doesn't mean to exclude reflection, is that the starting situation was just, and therefore the disturbance brings in an element of injustice and restoration is therefore necessary. And we can say all the criticisms of our society as a whole, especially the Marxist criticism, imply, and not only imply, that the starting situation is unjust, and therefore reflections of this kind are of no serious interest. You want to say something?

Student: In a situation of murder, how can it . . . be restored?

LS: Well, [the murderer will] either be beheaded or strangled, or whatever the procedure will be.

Student: That doesn't make it just to the man who is already murdered.

LS: Still, first we were both alive, and then I killed him: there is inequality. Now then, when I will be strangled, we are both dead: equality.

Student: But this is equality only for those who are left behind, I mean, for society . . .

LS: Still, there is equality. Do you see the point, that there is equality restored? Or take another case: I stole fifty dollars and I will be fined, and not only to restore the fifty dollars but also for the trouble and heart-burning I caused to the other man. And again: equality. Yes?

Student: I have a question concerning equity. Equity is concerned with merely . . . individual . . . Men and women demand . . . rich . . . to apply justice in the absolute sense to the individual's case that the law doesn't cover—wouldn't that demand knowledge above and beyond . . .

LS: Aristotle has a chapter on equity later, and according to him equity is the corrective of positive law. The positive law cannot in all cases be just, and equity is an attempt to correct the positive law in the direction of justice, but always on the basis of positive law. Therefore the equitable judgment is not necessarily simply just, it is only the kind of justice you can get within this particular legal system.

Student: . . .

LS: Yes, to say nothing of this, surely. This is Aristotle. Yes?

Student: When you spoke about the starting situation, did Aristotle imply that everything in the cosmos is just when it is in its proper place?

LS: Yes.

Student: What type of things are capable of disobedience, and why? In other words, are things in the natural world capable of injustice? If not . . .

LS: Aristotle would regard this as metaphoric language and reject it. But some other thinkers—for example, Plato and some pre-Socratic philosophers—did not hesitate to speak in such cases of injustice. Aristotle would not do that. But he would say of course that the heavenly bodies and their motions: perfect regularity, unchangeable; whereas all terrestrial beings: all kinds of disorder are possible there. But there is a tendency in these things, the terrestrial things, toward the state of order: the heavy things tend toward the center of the earth, the light things tend to rise. But you see Aristotle does not use this comparison, but there is a certain similarity in spirit between what he thinks about justice and what he thinks about the natural things.

Student: What it is about men that disposes them particularly towards unjust acts? Is it bad reasoning, or not performing their work properly?

LS: Man is a very complicated being, I would say. You only have to—his latitude is so much greater than that of a dog or any other animal; and therefore dogs lead more or less similar lives. Well, here of course the question of upbringing comes in too in the case of a dog, but on the whole the latitude within which dogs move is much smaller than [that] in which human beings move. Man is meant to live the life of contemplation, but on the basis of a very heavy mass (the body) and the desires (partly necessary, partly unnecessary) which originate in the body, and therefore the success is limited to a few cases. Man's nature is enslaved in many ways, as Aristotle puts it, and that makes sense. The disproportion between the highest in man and men in general is much greater than any disproportion you might find in any other species of animal, and that explains it, in his view. Yes. Now we come to the section on retaliation in the next section.

Reader:
The view is also held by some that simple Reciprocity is Justice. This was the doctrine of the Pythagoreans, who defined the just simply as 'suffering reciprocally with one another.'

LS: Yes. We can simply say: tit for tat. If there is simple agreement between what a man did and what he suffered. Yes?

Reader:
Reciprocity however does not coincide either with Distributive or with Corrective justice (although people mean to identify it with the latter, when they quote the rule of Rhadamanthys—

An a man suffer even that which he did,
Right justice will be done).

For in many cases Reciprocity is at variance with Justice: for example, if an officer strikes a man, it is wrong for the man to strike him back; and if a man strikes an officer, it is not enough for the officer to strike him, but he ought to be punished as well. Again, it makes a great difference whether the act was voluntary or involuntary.[xiv] (1132b21-31)

LS: Now let us stop here for a moment. So that this simplistic Pythagorean notion of tit for tat is inadequate is clear in the case of distributive justice, where there is proportionate equality and not simple equality, but what about corrective justice, punitive justice? Is there not a simple equality, as Aristotle puts it? Regardless of whether the man was honorable or base, he gets the same punishment. Is this not simple equality? Say, murder: execution; theft, say: two years of jail. Simple equality. But Aristotle denies it, and he proves here why this is wrong, because we must make a distinction: when the magistrate strikes, of course in his function as magistrate, then you can't hit him back, but not the

[xiv] In Rackham's translation: "whether an act was done with or without the consent of the other party."

other way around. Here you see [that] inequalities are considered by corrective justice. So where then do we find tit for tat? Let's see.

Reader:
But in the interchange of services Justice in the form of Reciprocity is the bond that maintains the association: reciprocity, that is, on the basis of proportion, not on the basis of equality. The very existence of the state depends on proportionate reciprocity—

LS: Let us consider that. So the proper sphere of retaliation, i.e., of simple equality, is the exchange of things: commutative justice, narrowly understood. Yes. And this kind of tit for tat is a bond; in a way the bond of the city. Namely, why? He gives the reason.

Reader:
for men demand that they shall be able to requite evil with evil—if they cannot, they feel they are in the position of slaves—and to repay good with good—

LS: Let us stop here. So this is the reason. This is *the* reason for retribution: men regard it as a state of slavery if they cannot inflict evil for evil. That is the only statement Aristotle makes on the subject. This is taken as something undeniable and must be accepted as the basis of criminal law. One can perhaps state it as follows, what Aristotle means: the pain of the loss suffered must be requited by the pleasure of the loss inflicted on the other fellow. This view is stated quite clearly by Hugo Grotius in his great work on the *Right of War and Peace*. I forgot to look it up, the exact reference, but you can easily find it. There is a very long chapter on punishment, and you would easily find this particular paragraph.[xv] This seems to be the Aristotelian view. Yes, and the same is also to be true of the other side: to inflict, to do good for good has the same kind of necessity, and men desire that, and they feel miserable if they cannot do it. Yes?

Reader:
and to repay good with good—failing which, no exchange takes place, and it is exchange that binds them together. This is why we set up a shrine of the Graces in a public place, to remind men to return a kindness; for that is a special characteristic of grace, since it is a duty not only to repay a service done one, but another time to take the initiative in doing a service oneself. (1132b31-1133a5)

LS: Even to begin with that. Yes. Now go on.

Reader:
Now proportionate requital is affected by diagonal conjunction. For example, let A be a builder, B a shoemaker, C a house, and D a shoe. It is required that the builder shall receive from the shoemaker a portion of the product of his labour, and give him a portion of the product of his own. Now if proportionate equality between the products be first established, and then reciprocation take place, the requirement indicated will have been achieved; but if this is not done, the bargain is not equal, and intercourse does not

[xv] See the discussion in Hugo Grotius, "On Punishments," in *De jure belli ac pacis libri tres*, book 2, chapter 20.

continue. For it may happen that the product of one of the parties is worth more than that of the other, and in that case therefore they have to be equalized.

LS: Let us stop here for a moment. What does Aristotle mean by that diagonal conjunction? It is very easy to show this at the blackboard. [LS writes on the blackboard.] That is here the housebuilder, and he builds a house. And here we have the shoemaker; he makes shoes. So the diagonal conjunction is this: the housebuilder gets the shoes, and the shoemaker gets a house, and so both parties are satisfied. The housebuilder can build a house for himself; he doesn't need anybody else for that. But he cannot make the shoes; he needs somebody else. And the same applies to the shoemaker, or for that matter, applies to the farmer. This is what he means by diagonal conjunction. Yes?

Student: May I ask a question?

LS: Yes, sure.

Same Student: Is the relationship between houses and shoes so that so many shoes are worth so many houses—

LS: Let us say one house. Let us be realistic.

Student: . . . imply a relationship between the housebuilder and the shoebuilder . . . similar things? That is to say, is the fact that a hundred pairs of shoes are worth one house not simply because a hundred pairs of shoes are worth one house, but because what the shoemaker will get for his house . . .

LS: Yes, only Aristotle doesn't start from the money angle. He starts the other way around. He brings in the money as a means to make incommensurable things commensurable. I mean, it is clear that a house is more valuable than a pair of shoes, other things being equal, because . . . a house is worth less than a certain pair of shoes. But I said other things being equal. But they are entirely different things, and there is no natural commensurability between them. How do we know how many pairs of shoes are equal to a house? And there is where money comes in. Aristotle will explain this in the immediate sequel. Yes?

Reader:
This holds good with the other arts as well; for they would have passed out of existence if the active element did not produce, and did not receive the equivalent in quantity and quality of what the passive element receives. For an association for interchange of services is not formed between two physicians, but between a physician and a farmer, and generally between persons who are different, and who may be unequal, though in that case they have to be equalized. (1133a5-18)

LS: I think one should not say merely "may be" unequal but "are" unequal. And this is the problem. There is no common denominator, primarily; and therefore how can there be

justice if there is no way to discover an equality here? This question will be answered by Aristotle in the sequel.

Reader:
Hence all commodities exchanged must be able to be compared in some way. It is to meet this requirement that men have introduced money; money constitutes in a manner a middle term, for it is a measure of all things, and so of their superior or inferior value, that is to say, how many shoes are equivalent to a house or to a given quantity of food. As therefore a builder is to a shoemaker, so must such and such a number of shoes be to a house [or to a given quantity of food][xvi]—

LS: This is the diagonal conjunction of which he spoke.

Reader:
for without this reciprocal proportion, there can be no exchange and no association; and it cannot be secured unless the commodities in question be equal in a sense.

LS: Here we have an amazingly explicit statement about the purpose of a virtue. Exchange, association, [and] community are obviously needed, but they would not be forthcoming if there were no equality available there, say, as between the physician and the farmer, the services of the physician and the goods brought to town by the farmer. And therefore this is obviously rational. We have here an end. We have seen how rarely Aristotle speaks of the end. But in this case, the most massive case of commutative justice, perhaps the most simple case, he does speak of that purpose. Yes?

Reader:
It is therefore necessary that all commodities shall be measured by some one standard, as was said before. And this standard is in truth[xvii] demand, which is what holds everything together, since if men cease to have want or if their wants alter, exchange will go on no longer, or will be on different lines.

LS: So the shoes and the house are qualitatively different; are not exchangeable. They become exchangeable on the basis of a third [thing] which is present in the two cases. And that third is "want," and that brings about equality. Now go on.

Reader:
But demand has come to be conventionally represented by money; this is why money is called *nomisma* (customary currency), because it does not exist by nature but by custom (*nomos*), and can be altered and rendered useless at will. (1133a19-31)

LS: So money is conventional, obviously: dollars, pounds, and so on. You can do it this way or that way, it doesn't make any difference. Money is *essentially* conventional. The reason for that is [that] there cannot be a natural currency; and the reason for that is that there is no natural equality: the equality must be brought about by human fiat. This fact

[xvi] Brackets are Rackham's.
[xvii] In Rackham's translation: "in reality."

that equality must be brought about is rooted in human nature, in human wants. But this does not make the product of that human action, namely, the introduction of money, in itself a natural thing. What is natural here is unequal, as he had said in a18, in the passage which we just discussed before. Yes. Now let us go on.

Reader:
There will therefore be reciprocal proportion when the products have been equated, so that as farmer is to shoemaker, so may the shoemaker's product be to the farmer's product. And when they exchange their products they must reduce them to the form of a proportion, otherwise one of the two extremes will have both the excesses; whereas when they have their own, they then are equal, and can form an association together, because equality in this sense can be established in their case (farmer A, food C, shoemaker B, shoemaker's product equalized D); whereas if it were impossible for reciprocal proportion to be effected in this way, there could be no association between them.

That it is demand which, by serving as a single standard, holds such an association together, is shown by the fact that, when there is no demand for mutual service on the part of both or at least of one of the parties, no exchange takes place between them [as when someone needs something that one has oneself, for instance, the state offering a license to export corn in exchange for wine].[xviii] (1133a31-b10)

LS: Yes, this is a somewhat dubious passage. Now only as long as the demand is actual are these men potential partners and is there therefore equality. If the demand does not exist, [there is] no possibility of exchange. Yes?

Student: At the beginning of this passage he said that there had to be a proportion, so that as the farmer is to the shoemaker, the [farmer's] product . . . the shoe. Does that imply that there is a consideration here of the men involved, and that the farmer is either higher or lower than—?

LS: No, Aristotle does not develop that, but for example, Thomas Aquinas explains it by a consideration not of the men involved but of the expense incurred and the labor, so that expense plus labor must be the same on both sides.[xix] That is not a labor theory of value because the expense is a separate fact.[2] [It is] not reduced in its turn to labor, as it is in the Marxist doctrine. Yes?

Another Student: Isn't it somewhat curious that this discussion is taking place in this political book, in that by the very nature of the discussion it seems to be eminently unpolitical, and the type of community with which it deals is held together by standards of justice . . . held together by almost . . . base . . .

LS: Well, they are low, you can say, but they are not despicable, are they?

[xviii] Brackets are Rackham's.
[xix] See Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, §980-983.

Same Student: But, I mean, in terms of the politics, for example, we would—I mean, I would expect this part of the book to be least understandable. I mean, I think it is a subject really not even worthy of politics.

LS: Oh no, I think that is somewhat—well, if I did not know you so well, I would say this is snobbish.

Same Student: No, no, I am saying that it seems from the understanding of the political community . . . that these things are somehow not really—

LS: But let us take the most aristocratic position. Do you expect the gentlemen to make their own shoes, or to have their shoes made at home by incompetent slaves rather than by very competent shoe makers in their workshops? If that is so, if there must be division of labor precisely in an aristocratic society, then there must also be ways[3] [and] means in that society as to make it worth the while of both sides in the exchange to make the exchange, meaning there must be . . . so a gentleman, say, the gentleman farmer has sold his oil or figs or whatever he produces, and with that produce . . . he will pay the shoemakers, the carpenters, and so on and so on.

Same Student: Well, I guess the reason I—my impression is that the parts of this book on justice which are, it seems that—I mean, I would think most relevant to the political community, for example, the chapters on equity and natural justice and on that type of justice which deals with the exchange of honors are actually those parts that seem to be treat [their subject matters] in a more cursory manner.

LS: But perhaps there was the greatest confusion about this lower kind of justice . . . Aristotle has to dirty his hands and go into that . . . before, Aristotle . . . after.

Same Student: But if that's true, why would he—I mean . . . that the area where the most confusion is is precisely in the areas where he writes off one sentence, for example, the part about natural justice . . . political justice.

LS: Yes, but let me then state it somewhat differently. Precisely because Aristotle regards the strictly egalitarian form of justice as the lower, he must bring out its character, its sphere, its limits. And that he does here.

Same Student: Well, again, I mean, for example—let's go back to the *Politics* again. Obviously there's an important realm in which—I mean, an important consideration for a statesman would be to . . . the relationship between the economic realm, or the household and the *polis*, and yet he does it very briefly.

LS: Yes, well he speaks about the household in the first book of the *Politics*.

Same Student: Very briefly.

LS: Yes, what is [there] to say? Because the main point each householder of normal intelligence knows well enough by himself that he must at least preserve his paternal estate, property, so that he can be available also financially for public service. I don't have the impression that he devotes an inordinately large space to this kind of justice. That is about—how much is it? One and a half pages, in my edition. Doesn't seem to be unfair, compared with the space he devoted to magnanimity or munificence and liberality and so on. Even if it is a low virtue, ordinary honesty in business dealings is of some importance and should[4] [have] two pages [devoted to it].

Same Student: . . . But it would seem that this would be a very meaningful division of . . . in modern times, where economic relationships have become so important.

LS: Yes. Well, in modern times economics means something very different from what it meant for Aristotle. In modern times it has something to do with the market, and in Aristotle's time economics means primarily the management of one's household and therefore it is strictly an affair of the individual householder. I mean, the economic man in the classical sense is the man who minds his own business; and the modern economic man is naturally a public man, because the market is something public and not only in a metaphorical sense. Yes?

Student: It seems to me that Aristotle here does have in mind the possibility at least of some sort of a political economy. I mean, he says the proper thing is for all commodities to have their prices fixed.

LS: Yes. I mean, if you call this political economy, yes. But Aristotle would have nothing to do with Adam Smith. Do you mean that? Nor with Hobbes, which is only another name. You can say Adam Smith or Hobbes; you can use the two names more or less interchangeably. It may sound strange, but I think it is only a mild exaggeration. Sure, that is clear: there is no absolute sacred right of property, and therefore there can be, for example, an upper limit to what a man may own. Both Plato and Aristotle take that for granted, and quite a few other limitations on property rights. Or it may be that there is a family farm as the backbone of the property, and this family farm may not be divided—a provision in Plato's *Laws*. And so if there is more than one son, the other son or sons must marry heiresses, you know—if there are some around, let's hope; if not, a colony must be sent out in order to prevent overpopulation. But these things do not work out in practice so smoothly, and the consequence is that the best-laid plans, [the] best-laid regime, will come into troubles which could not have been prevented by any human foresight, one reason being that people do not generate just one son and one daughter but some more, some less. And this creates some disorder, which as orderly people we might deplore, but against which not much can be done. Or you must have very severe laws, you know, but even that would not quite work out. We don't have to go into that, but you can figure that out for yourself. Yes?

Student: How can we speak at all of political economy . . . Aristotle seems to make the distinction between politics and economics so clearly . . .

LS: Yes, but there is something—what do you mean by political economy?

Same Student: Certainly not at all what Aristotle means.

LS: Yes, sure. But what would you say is political economy?

Same Student: . . .

LS: But is there no economy on the part of the *polis*?

Same Student: . . . part of the *polis*, but I mean . . .

LS: No, I mean, for example, is the *polis* not the owner of property? Is the *polis* not in need of money: income, taxes, and all these kinds of things? Well, do you think one could call this public or political economy?

Student: I would call it public, but it would seem that the political man is concerned only with things political.

LS: How can he do that? Think of Pericles: how much he had to worry about the income of the Athenian *polis* in order to be able to build ships and to send out armies. Thucydides makes clear in his critique of Homer, you know, that the Trojan War lasted so long because the Greeks had no money: there was no money economy.[xx] Cervantes put it, in a slightly different context but not fundamentally different, in his story of knight errantry—nothing is said [about] whether the knights had clean shirts with them to change into from time to time. You know, these low things, disregarded in epic poetry, were however known at all times to people who had . . . And Aristotle of course knew that. You only have to read the chapter in the *Rhetoric* on what the statesman, the political man, has to know,[xxi] and public finance is one of them, there's no doubt. But the question is interesting that it was not called political or public economy in ancient times. The word "economy" was enlarged; for example, people spoke of the economy of the universe, meaning of the gods managing the universe as their household. People spoke of the economy of the truth, which means to dole it out in the proper doses, which is also an economic action, [an] action of thrift, but they didn't speak of political economy. And even in modern times, come to think of it, the original name was not political economy. Do you remember what it was? Political arithmetic. Sir William Petty, Hobbes's younger friend—you see there are still family relations in this—he wrote a book and he called it *Arithmetic*, because statistics, as we say today, counting heads, counting the property of a community, counting the numbers of the various sects, say, in Holland: these considerations were regarded as very important for political purposes, as I think they are.[xxii] But for Aristotle this goes without saying, that that is purely instrumental, and therefore it is not his primary subject. But this chapter (I think it is *Rhetoric* book 1,

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[xx] Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 1.11.

[xxi] See Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, book 1, chapter 4, sections 8-12, 1359b23-1360a30.

[xxii] Sir William Petty (1623-1687), English political economist and scientist. His *Political Arithmetick* was published in 1690.

chapter 5 or thereabouts) [deals with] what the political man has to know, and there these things are mentioned. Yes?

Student: You said that in Aristotle, according to Aquinas, value is not traced to labor only, that there's a certain sense in which it can't be reduced—

LS: Ya, ya. Well, what does this mean? For example, say a man wants to have a golden bed. Now there is a certain amount of labor: this may not be more than for an iron bed, for all I know, but probably more. But at any rate, why is gold so much more expensive than iron? Because it is rarer. That would have been the old answer, whereas, say, the Marxist answer is that the extraction of gold is much more expensive than the extraction of iron, and therefore you can reduce the difference in value between gold and iron to the difference regarding labor, so that the value of any valuable thing can ultimately be expressed in money alone. And not only money's worth, as Aristotle has said here before, but it can be understood in terms ultimately of labor: that's the key point, not in terms of demand, as Aristotle says. Demand is the spur with a view to which the unequal things can be equalized. Marx is the clearest case where things can be equalized with a view to the labor. And here again one would have to go to the heroes of early modern times, in this case to Locke, to Locke's famous statement in chapter 5,[xxiii] if I remember well, "Of Property," where he says nature supplies only the almost worthless materials. The value comes from labor. There are no things which are in themselves valuable, but they acquire value through human labor. This is of course diametrically opposed to the Aristotelian view. Yes?

Student: . . .

LS: There were societies in which the title to full membership, to full citizenship, was limited to virtuous people—to the better people, as was still said in your parents' youth. Ya? The better people. This is regarded today as very unjust, but Aristotle finds this perfectly just. So Aristotle saw injustices; for example, if the better men must flatter worse men, he would regard that as a shocking condition, but that the better men have more power in society than the worse men he found perfectly in order. But generally stated, Aristotle found that in spite of all imperfections we see here and there and everywhere, the world is fundamentally in order and does not have to be brought into order by a revolution, be it political, social, or technological. This is undeniable. To that extent he was—I don't know how this is called, they use the term—a square? Aristotle was a square, if this is the proper term now used by a rebellious young generation. Aristotle found the world fundamentally in order. [There are] certain blemishes which can be corrected, no doubt. Others are not truly blemishes if one doesn't take a very narrow view, if one considers the whole and considers what can be reasonably expected. That was his view.

Student: So when Aristotle says the end of politics is the good of man . . .

LS: I can't understand you.

[xxiii] John Locke, "Of Property," *Second Treatise of Government* (1690), chapter 5.

Same Student: When Aristotle says then that the end of politics is the good of man, he's really saying that the end of politics is to keep things as they are.

LS: No, the good of man, but the *possible* good of man. The possible good of man. I mean, a fantastic good of man is no good of man. Possible, that he would say. And that these things strike us as harsh, quite a few things, is undeniable. For example, there are some ladies here, and I apologize to them, but Aristotle thought in a very old-fashioned way about the place of the ladies: surely not in politics. But if you think a bit—only one thing, to make it more palatable, that our present-day arrangements and our hopes for the future are based on an economy of plenty, whereas Aristotle took it for granted that there will always be an economy of scarcity, you will see that it was not just his being a vicious reactionary, or however you might call that, which is responsible for that. The notion of a vicious reactionary in the case of Aristotle is of course based on the assumption that there could be progressives, or there have been progressive thinkers in classical antiquity. There was a classical scholar, he is still alive, I am happy to report, I forgot his name.

Student: Havelock.

LS: Havelock. Now in jail. He wrote a book about the liberal temper in classical political philosophy.[xxiv] Some nasty people called it the liberal distemper. And this man asserted that there was a whole line of liberal thinkers like, say, the French *philosophes* of the eighteenth century and their English equivalents. I think that this didn't exist. Didn't exist. We cannot believe that the party lines as they [have] existed in England since the seventeenth century and in continental Europe since the eighteenth century, that anything of this kind existed in classical antiquity. To mention only one point: it was always understood until the modern seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that the common people, the *dēmos*, is on the side of the bigots and is bigoted, and only in the upper, better classes will you find people who are not bigoted. In other words, there was no popular enlightenment, which came out of the great changes that [took] place in the seventeenth century. One must take in the whole picture, and not a statement dragged out of the context, like "Aristotle asserts [that] slavery is just," and say, "Look, what a black man"—I mean [a] morally black man. Well, you have to study it in the context, and in the context it looks somewhat different. And the context means not only the context of the *Politics*: it means the context of all the premises which Aristotle regarded as established and which he shared with all his contemporaries, and not only his contemporaries in Greece, but elsewhere as well and in later times as well. The fundamental change came only in the seventeenth century.

We must stop here, unfortunately, and next time we will begin the section on natural right, I hope. I advise you to read, if you can, the section in the *Rhetoric* on natural right, and that would be what? One second please.

[xxiv] Eric A. Havelock, *The Liberal Temper in Greek Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957). Strauss reviewed the book in "The Liberalism of Classical Political Philosophy," *Review of Metaphysics* 12 (1959): 390-439.

Student: Book 1, chapter 13.

LS: Yes, you are right. And there is a parallel which we must also consider: book 1, chapter 13, and book 1, chapter 15, paragraphs 5 to 7 in the Loeb edition. These are the two chief passages which we have to consider before turning to that single page devoted to natural right by Aristotle.

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[1] Deleted "the following explanation is given."
[2] Deleted "they are."
[3] Deleted "of."
[4] Deleted "be devoted"

Session 20: May 1, 1968

Leo Strauss: And let us now begin at 1133b1.

Reader:
There will therefore be reciprocal proportion when the products have been equated, so that as farmer is to shoemaker, so may the shoemaker's product be to the farmer's product. And when they exchange their products they must reduce them to the form of a proportion, otherwise one of the two extremes will have both the excesses; whereas when they have their own, they then are equal, and can form an association together, because equality in this sense can be established in their case (farmer A, food C, shoemaker B, shoemaker's product equalized D); whereas if it were impossible for reciprocal proportion to be effected in this way, there could be no association between them.

That it is demand which, by serving as a single standard, holds such an association together, is shown by the fact that, when there is no demand for mutual service on the part of both or at least of one of the parties, no exchange takes place between them.[i] This inequality of demand has therefore to be equalized.

Now money serves us a guarantee of exchange in the future: supposing we need nothing at the moment, it ensures that exchange shall be possible when a need arises, for it meets the requirement of something we can produce in payment so as to obtain the thing we need. Money, it is true, is liable to the same fluctuation of demand as other commodities, for its purchasing power varies at different times; but it tends to be comparatively constant. Hence the proper thing is for all commodities to have their prices fixed; this will ensure that exchange, and consequently association, shall always be possible. (1133a31-b16)

LS: Now let us stop here for a moment. There is one expression which you should consider. He says, literally translated, "Money wishes to be always the same." Money "wishes to be." This term "wishing" occurs with this meaning in Aristotle and Plato, also elsewhere. In what sense can it be said of money that it wishes to be something? Aristotle also says occasionally that nature wishes that the sons of gentlemen should be gentlemen, and so on. What about money, which is after all the prototype of the nonnatural?

Student: Could it be that there is no proper English way . . . the idiom?

LS: Yes, we would probably say "meaning." Money is "meant" to be stable, always stable, whereas of other prices one cannot say that at all. Yes?

Reader:

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[i] In Rackham's translation: "no exchange takes place between them [as when someone needs something that one has oneself, for instance, the state offering a license to export corn in exchange for wine]."

Money then serves as a measure which makes things commensurable and so reduces them to equality. If there were no exchange there would be no association, and there can be no exchange without equality, and no equality without commensurability. Though therefore it is impossible for things so different to become commensurable in the strict sense, our demand furnishes a sufficiently accurate common measure for practical purposes. There must therefore be some one standard, and this accepted by agreement (which is why it is called *nomisma*—

LS: On this basis of a hypothesis, of an assumption. This is here used in opposition (this doesn't become clear from the translation) to "in truth." In truth it is impossible that there can be such a thing making things commensurable. But these things can be made commensurable on the basis of an agreement or an assumption. This opposition between assumption and truth has here the same meaning as the distinction between nature and convention, which we have found before. Yes?

Reader:
(which is why it is called *nomisma*, customary currency); for such a standard makes all things commensurable, since all things can be measured by money. Let A be a house, B ten minae and C a bedstead. Then A=B/2, supposing the house to be worth, or equal to, five minae. And C (the bedstead)=B/10; it is now clear how many bedsteads are equal to one house, namely five. It is clear that before money existed this is how the rate of exchange was actually stated—five beds for a house—since there is no real difference between that and the price of five beds for a house.

LS: Well, this house was obviously very cheap relative to beds in Greece. And this is in a way amusing, but it should not be too amusing because we would find probably some other examples from our world which would be very funny in the eyes of the Greeks.

So this is the end of the thematic discussion of particular justice as such, but now Aristotle begins with a kind of long corollary to this discussion. And part of the corollary is the page on natural right, which is a very difficult page, as we shall see; very hard to understand. But some clue to its understanding is provided by the fact that the discussion of natural right forms part of this corollary. What the meaning of this corollary is will appear from the beginning, to which we turn now unless you have a point which you would like to raise. Then all right, let's begin.

Reader:
We have now stated what Justice and Injustice are in principle. (1133b16-29)

LS: Literally, "What the just and the unjust is," but which we may say includes also justice and injustice as human habits. Yes?

Reader:
From the definition given, it is plain that just conduct is a mean between doing and suffering injustice, for the former is to have too much, and the latter to have too little.

And Justice is a mode of observing the mean, though not in the same way as the other virtues are, but because it is related to a mean, while Injustice is related to the extremes.

LS: Yes. Now this is a point which Aristotle makes and which is crucial: that justice, the just is a mean, as all other good or noble things are, but in a profoundly different way. Why? To make it quite clear, let us speak of the difference between justice and *the* virtues, a distinction which we sometimes find. In the case of the virtues, i.e., the virtues other than justice, the mean is not the same for all. For example, say, liberality differs between a very rich and a rather poor man. Socrates could be liberal by spending much less money than, say, Callias or another rich man. Or the simplest case: moderation, temperance. We will remember the example of Milo, who by eating enormous amounts of steaks was still moderate.[ii] Every other man would have been immoderate if he had taken in so many things.

Now here is the point. In the case of justice or the just, there is no such relativity to the doer. Take a simple case of buying and selling: whether you are rich or poor, strong or weak, fat or thin does not make any difference as regards the just price. This is at least the Aristotelian view. Also, if you have the misfortune of committing murder, it does not make any difference whether you are a nice man or a nasty man, as Aristotle has made clear. So in the case of the just things, [there is] no relativity to the doer, whereas in the other cases, the relativity is necessary. And this is the theme in a way for the discussion which follows. And let us see what Aristotle has to say about it. Let us go on at 1134a1.

Reader:
Also, Justice is that quality in virtue of which a man is said to be disposed to do by deliberate choice that which is just, and, when distributing things between himself and another, or between two others, not to give too much to himself and too little to his neighbour of what is desirable, and too little to himself and too much to his neighbour of what is harmful, but to each what is proportionately equal; and similarly when he is distributing between two other persons. Injustice on the contrary is similarly related to that which is unjust, which is a disproportionate excess or deficiency of something beneficial or harmful. Hence Injustice is excess and defect, in the sense that it results in excess and defect: namely, in the offender's own case, an excess of anything that is generally speaking beneficial and a deficiency of anything harmful, and in the case of others, though the result as a whole is the same, the deviation from proportion may be in either direction as the case may be.

Of the injustice done, the smaller part is the suffering and the larger part the doing of injustice.

So much may be said about the nature of Justice and Injustice, and of the Just and the Unjust regarded universally. (1133b30-1134a16)

[ii] See 1106a31-b4.

LS: Well, this seems to be largely repetitious, but it paves the way for the following discussion, which is begun by the remark that the mean in the case of justice is something very different from the mean in the case of the other virtues. Now let us first try to reach some clarity about this difference. Perhaps if we look first at the beginning of the next section.

Reader:
But seeing that a man may commit injustice without actually being unjust, what is it that distinguishes those unjust acts the commission of which renders a man actually unjust under one of the various forms of injustice, for example, a thief or an adulterer or a brigand? Or shall we rather say that the distinction does not lie in the quality of the act? For a man may have intercourse with a woman knowing who she is, yet not from the motive of deliberate choice, but under the influence of passion—

LS: Well, we have seen these examples or similar examples before. They have to do with the peculiar character of justice. In the case of justice, the character of the individual seems to be less important than in the case of the other virtues. And inversely, it is therefore possible to act unjustly without being an unjust man. Justice seems to be much less relative to the individual and is much less relative to the individual, and therefore [it is] also bound much less to the qualities of the individual than the other virtues.

Since justice is essentially toward the other, the emphasis shifts naturally on[to] the actions in contradistinction to what is in the individual's, let us say, intentions. Now this is now corrected. The man who acts unjustly is not an unjust man, and therefore we have to see what precisely makes a man unjust. In other words, how many or what kind of adulteries are needed in order to make a man who only acts unjustly into an unjust man? What is unjust? This cannot be answered without raising the question: what is just? We have therefore to consider various possibilities, some discussed before, as to what is justice. This is what the sequel is about. Yes?

Reader:
in such a case, though he has committed injustice, he is not an unjust man: for instance, he is not a thief, though guilty of theft, not an adulterer, though he has committed adultery, and so forth.

The relation of Reciprocity—

LS: So this is obviously the point which we have to try to understand: where to draw the line between the occasional evil-doer and the evil-doing man—the "simply evil man," as he puts it. Yes?

Reader:
The relation of Reciprocity to Justice has been stated already. (1134a17-24)

LS: So that is the reference to the discussion of the Pythagorean doctrine, which we have read. And this is one possibility: that the just might be the reciprocal. And here the

question of intention doesn't arise at all, because here, at least as Aristotle presents it, even voluntariness or involuntariness do not enter. A man has killed another man; the reciprocal: he will be killed. And even if voluntariness does not enter, still there is intentionality, choice, *proairesis*. Yes?

Reader:
But we must not forget that the subject of our investigation is at once Justice simply[iii] and Political Justice. Political Justice means justice—

LS: Now one second. So in other words, Aristotle defines how we seek what justice is, and that requires that we seek what is practically in the highest degree, the fullest degree just: the unqualifiedly just and the politically just. How are these two things related to each other? That is important, because Aristotle does not explain it; at least [he] does not explicitly state it. I believe the sequel will show that they are identical. The unqualifiedly just and the politically just are the same. But let us see whether this is true.

Reader:
Political Justice means justice as between free and (actually or proportionately) equal persons, living a common life for the sake of being self-sufficient.[iv] Hence between people not such[v] political justice cannot exist, but only a sort of justice in a metaphorical sense.

LS: In other words, these forms of justice, whatever they may be, say, between a master and a slave, or between two foreigners meeting in a third city, let us say: that is not fully justice, as we will later on try to explain. So it would seem that this passage shows that the unqualifiedly just and the politically just are identical. Now he explains this more fully.

Reader:
For justice can only exist between those whose mutual relations are regulated by law, and law exists among those between whom there is a possibility of injustice, for the administration of the law means the discrimination of what is just and what is unjust. Persons therefore between whom injustice can exist can act unjustly towards each other (although unjust action does not necessarily involve injustice)—

LS: That is a repetition of what we have seen before about the thief and so on. Yes?

Reader:
to act unjustly meaning to assign oneself too large a share of things generally good and too small a share of things generally evil. (1134a24-34)

LS: The argument runs as follows. The unqualifiedly just is the politically just. And now a kind of confirmation: justice in the full sense can exist only among men who are

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[iii] In Rackham's translation: "Justice in the absolute sense."
[iv] In Rackham's translation: "for the purpose of satisfying their needs."
[v] In Rackham's translation: "people not free and equal."

connected or held together by law. But law is of course political; hence unqualified justice and political justice are identical. Aristotle develops this latter point towards the end of the *Ethics* in 1180a18, which we might consult: "The paternal command does not have the strength." Yes?

Reader:
Now paternal authority has not the power to compel obedience, nor indeed, speaking generally, has the authority of any individual unless he be a king or the like; but law on the other hand is a rule, emanating from a certain wisdom and intelligence, that has compulsory force. Men are— (1180a18-22)

LS: Yes. Now that is what we need for our purposes. So the context: in order to make men good, the domestic authority, paternal authority, is insufficient. And the only thing which can fulfill this highest function of political life—to make the citizens good and doers of noble deeds—is the law, and hence the *polis*. Good. Law and justice in the full sense are coextensive. This thesis needs a long commentary. How do we know that, on the basis of what we have read in Aristotle? He said something about the relation of the just and the legal. Mr. Wedergreen?

Student: He said that they weren't necessarily the same.

LS: How did he put it, in his niceness?

Same Student: I don't remember exactly the words he used.

Another Student: "Is not simply just."

LS: "Is somehow." The legal things are "somehow" the just things. And this "somehow" is a deep ditch into which we will not try to fall now. Yes, now?

Reader:
This is why we do not permit a man to rule, but the law—

LS: We do not allow a man to rule but "the *logos*," it says here in one reading, which is as good as the law, as we have seen from the parallel passage in the tenth book. Yes?

Reader:
because a man rules in his own interest, and becomes a tyrant; but the function of a ruler is to be the guardian of justice, and if of justice, then of equality. A just ruler seems to make nothing out of his office; for he does not allot to himself a larger share of things generally good, unless it be proportionate to his merits; so that he labours for others, which accounts for the saying mentioned above, that 'Justice is the good of others.' Consequently some recompense has to be given him, in the shape of honour and dignity. It is those whom such rewards do not satisfy who make themselves tyrants. (1134a35-b8)

LS: Yes, let us stop here for a moment. So in principle there could be rule of a just man, as is stated by Aristotle in other places, even in the *Ethics* later on; in the *Politics* more emphatically. But a just man would be a man who would altogether devote himself to others; and therefore ruling has no attraction for him, and therefore he needs recompense other than ruling. You know this thought, I trust.

Student: Excuse me, earlier . . . before but it said that justice consists in not taking too much of good things and not too little of evil things.

LS: Yes.

Same Student: How can justice consist in taking evil things?

LS: Paying taxes. Taxes are a burden. [Laughter]

Same Student: But how can that be regarded as evil, when in the long run that . . .

LS: Yes. Well, but still, let us take the simple case in which all men whose second name begins with an A have to pay three times as much tax as the other citizens. Would this be in the long run desirable? So in other words, equality not only of benefits but also of burdens. And the unjust man is precisely the one who wants to have too much of the benefits and too little of the burdens.

Same Student: In the best regime, would men have to suffer these evils unjustly? Or would it be just to still suffer . . .

LS: What kind of evils? I don't hear so well.

Same Student: Would these things, such as paying taxes be—to be very clear; in other words, in the best regime there wouldn't be a law that said that every man with last name A—

LS: Of course not. I use that as an extreme example, but there are approximations to it even in actual cities, you know, where conventional distinctions are taken as if they were natural differences. In the best regime, if we assume that such a thing is possible, as we should, there would of course never be an unjust law, never an unjust judgment. That goes without saying, because the men who rule and who make the laws and are the judges are by definition perfect gentlemen, and therefore nothing [unjust] can happen. That is the premise. Now whether that is feasible in such an imperfect world, that is a long question. Yes?

Student: Can I ask a different—about whether earlier that sentence just in connection with this last point: that's why we don't permit a man to rule. But if the alternative reading there is significant, *nomon* or *logon*—

LS: Yes, well the *nomos* is the *logos*, but a *logos* of a certain kind: a *logos* who has found the . . . of the *politeia*, of the regime, be it the gentleman, be it the *dēmos*, be it a combination or what have you. Is not every law a *logos*, even in the most external sense? "He who does that will be punished in that and that way." You can only say there is an ambiguity there, because this sounds like a prophecy, like a prediction. And a prediction is not always fulfilled; therefore one should add the qualification, "if he is caught." Then it becomes the truth. But this, of course, the legislator in his solemnity refuses to do, and you can easily see why. There is a certain impropriety in making this implication clear: the kind of pointing to criminality as a way out of doing what the legislator commands. Yes?

Student: I was just curious as to—when you said that a just man would be the man who would devote himself to others . . . would it be possible then in this instance, especially in the instance if the best regime would have the just man ruling, would it be possible then for a good man to be a just man in that instance or in any regime? Namely, to rule because in devoting himself to others who would be his inferiors, he would be in a sense being unjust to himself, assigning himself an improper . . .

LS: Yes, this is a certain complication. But the question is whether that is not preferable to being ruled by inferior men. This is in a way the central political argument of the *Republic* more than of Aristotle. But Aristotle seems to allude to that when he speaks of this pay the just man or ruler has to receive, an argument which occurs in the first book of the *Republic*.[vi]

Same Student: Could a magnanimous man, for example, remain magnanimous if he was to take upon himself the burden of ruling, which would be—

LS: Yes. Well, why not? We are speaking of the magnanimous man as defined in book 4. He demands for himself high honors, and he gets them. I mean, if he were to become a dogcatcher, he would reject that honor because it is a small honor. But if he should be elected president of the United States, he would say: "I will not run, but if elected [laughter], I will accept it." Well, running is bad, you know? That is a sign of *philotimia*, or in Latin, *ambitio*.

Same Student: Yes, but I had assumed, perhaps wrongly, that the honors that these types of men would have to offer them are actually insignificant, are honors that he isn't desirous of. I mean, they are really meaningless honors, honors . . . inferior men.

LS: Yes, but on the other hand, you must not aim too high, because if you do that, this whole sphere becomes invisible, becomes gray. And that is precisely why Aristotle has written the *Ethics* in the way he did: keeping from us, from our sight, philosophy as long as possible because otherwise, if philosophy appears these things become bad.

Same Student: Well, this is a . . . from outside—

[vi] Plato, *Republic* 347b-d.

LS: And I would say it is perfectly reasonable what Aristotle does, for we are not philosophers in Aristotle's sense. You know? And therefore we have to be reasonable.

Same Student: I was thinking of the example from literature that Shakespeare presents us with: Coriolanus, who can't accept the honors—I mean, who is not desirous of accepting the type of honors which are necessary if he is to rule, namely, the honors of the plebes. I mean, that's not really a philosophical problem either; it's a problem of a man. You know, the honors . . .

LS: Well, if we take Socrates as a good example of what they meant by philosopher, Socrates was not desirous of any honors. So that is simple. But almost all men are not Socrateses, and therefore for them honors are very important. And among these men, the tremendous majority of men[1] are eager to have honors; there are some outstanding men who are willing to accept only high honors. Now this may be sheer folly on their part. There are such people who regard themselves as worthy of high honors without being [so]; we can dismiss them as fools. But then there are others who demand high honors for themselves and deserve them. It is true, one can always present such people as a bit ridiculous. I used the example of General Montgomery a few times, who can easily be held up for ridicule and yet he doubtless deserved the high honors which he received. But to the extent to which we find it slightly ridiculous, we are probably affected by the presence in our universe of philosophy or some equivalent of philosophy, something transpolitical. But within the political sphere we must take this very seriously, even if it hurts us. Did I answer your question? Good. Yes. This point has now—all these things are meant to make clear what justice *par excellence*, that's to say, political justice is. And this has been clear up to this point. Now let us read the rest of this section.

Reader:
Justice between master and slave and between father and child is not the same as absolute and political justice, but only analogous to them. For there is no such thing as injustice in the absolute sense towards what is one's own; and a chattel, or a child till he has reached[vii] a certain age and becomes independent, is, as it were, part of oneself, and no one chooses to harm himself; hence there can be no injustice towards them, and therefore nothing just or unjust in the political sense.

LS: There is therefore no justice towards oneself. Yes?

Reader:
For these, as we saw, are embodied in law, and exist between persons whose relations are naturally regulated by law, that is, persons who share equally in ruling and being ruled. Hence Justice exists in a fuller degree between husband and wife than between father and children, or master and slaves; in fact, justice between husband and wife is Domestic Justice in the real sense, though this too is different from Political Justice. (1134b8-18)

LS: These are the only specimens which Aristotle gives us [of] a justice which is not political or, as you might say, of subpolitical justice. And these are the relations of a man

[vii] In Rackham's translation: "till it reaches."

not to a fellow citizen but to what is his own, be it a slave, or a child, or a wife. The slave: that is clear, that he is simply the property. And if he takes away something from the slave, he takes away his property from his property; that is to say, there is no injustice involved. The same is true of a child: if a father takes away a toy from a child to which the child is very much addicted, that is not injustice, the toy being the father's property. It might be unkind, and one could perhaps say, and Aristotle would admit that, that in some sense it is unjust: the father had given it to the child. But Aristotle would add: "in some sense." No law would provide for that; no judge would take on this case. The case of the wife is somewhat different, because there may be some laws regarding dowries and so on, very substantial things; and therefore the wife belongs also to other citizens: her father, her brothers, and therefore she is almost a citizen, but not quite.

But the interesting case of course would be that [between], let us take two human beings, one a free man and one a slave, but belonging to different cities. Is there no relation of justice between them? They meet on a crossroad, and one begins to throw stones at the other, wholly unprovoked, and then finally the whole thing ends with killing. Is this not a place where justice, or injustice, for that matter, would occur? Aristotle says so: it would. He speaks in the *Ethics* later on that there are relations of justice among *all* human beings. There can be no friendship between a freeman and a slave *as slave*, but there can be friendship between the free man and the slave in the slave's capacity *as a human being*, for there can be friendship and justice between all beings that possess speech or reason. So surely there are relations of justice among complete strangers, free or slaves, male or female, or what have you. But what Aristotle means [is that] these relations of justice are extremely limited. Justice reaches its fullness only among fellow citizens, where all possible relations of justice can be fully actual, whereas they cannot be fully actual in the subpolitical forms of justice.

Now we have learned then this: in order to find out what the difference between an unjust man and a man who happens to commit an unjust act is, we have to find out what injustice is. Therefore we have to find out what justice is; and therefore in the first place what is emphatically just, unqualifiedly just, and that proved to be the politically just. And the politically just proved to be the justice obtaining among fellow citizens, i.e., obtaining among men united and ruled by law. This seems to lead to the consequence that the sphere of justice coincides completely with the sphere of law. Is then justice *essentially* based on law? Is *all* justice legal, conventional? And Aristotle approaches this question in the next chapter, [in] a short page, a single page on natural right.

For the better understanding of this passage, we should have a look at Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, book 1, chapter 13, which I will read to you here.

"Justice and injustice have been defined with regard to laws and human beings in a twofold manner. By law I understand the peculiar law and the common law. [Let me say universal law in order to avoid the ambiguity of the term "common law" in English. The peculiar law and the universal law.—LS] The peculiar law is the one which people have established for themselves in their relation, and this peculiar law is unwritten and also partly written. The universal law is the law according to nature. [So whereas the one kind

of law is man-made, there is a law which is not man-made—LS]. For there is, as all men divine, a justice and injustice which is by nature universal, even if there is no community nor convention among men, as Sophocles's Antigone appears to say, that it is forbidden, that it is just although forbidden to bury her brother, since this is just by nature. [And then he quotes two verses from the *Antigone*.—LS] 'For neither today nor yesterday, but always does this live, and no one knows from where it came to sight' [this law—LS]. And as Empedocles says about not killing animate beings, for this is not just for one people and unjust for others [as killing cows is for the Hindus and not for other people—LS] and as Alcidamas says in his messianic speech."

He seems to have said that god let all men be free; nature has not made a single man a slave.[viii]

So Aristotle says that all men divine that there is a universal law, *nomos*, a natural law. And he gives three examples. Let us consider the examples, starting from the last. Slavery is radically unnatural. Is this a good example of a natural law according to Aristotle? What is Aristotle's official teaching regarding slavery?

Student: He says that there are some men who are slaves.

LS: Yes. So this is not a good example from Aristotle's point of view. What about Empedocles's natural law forbidding the killing of animate beings, of animals? Was Aristotle a vegetarian or in favor of vegetarianism? Nothing is known. The case of Antigone, I do not know; we have no sufficient evidence to say whether Aristotle regarded Antigone's view of her right as a natural right, whether he agreed with that. It is an open question, then, but surely two of the three examples which Aristotle gives of the natural law, these are not good examples from Aristotle's point of view. Now why could Aristotle do such a thing? Well, this occurs in the *Rhetoric*, and the *Rhetoric* deals with what kind of arguments a man must use in order to achieve an acquittal or a condemnation before a law court. And in this connection it becomes necessary sometimes—if the positive law speaks for the defendant, let us say, and you want to have a condemnation, then you appeal to the natural law. And that is explicitly stated here, and vice versa. So in other words, natural law is an important topic of rhetoric and is treated as such. We cannot regard this passage of the *Rhetoric* as evidence proving that Aristotle believed in natural law. Yes?

Student: Isn't it even more peculiar, since natural justice here comes up as one kind of political justice, in the sense that Antigone involves . . . outside the *polis*—I mean, the conflict is one between the gods and the city, between Creon—that it would be outside the *polis*.

LS: But that is not so simple, because the *polis* has also gods, and therefore what the gods of the *polis* demand might be in disagreement with what the human ruler of the *polis* says, but the relation to the *polis* would still exist. I believe the context here in the *Ethics* is this: Aristotle has created the impression that the true right is the political right, and the

[viii] Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1373b1-18. Presumably Strauss's translation.

political right is the legal right, and therefore he must raise the question: but is then all right legal due to human establishment? Is there nothing natural in right? And that is the question to which he turns now. I only wanted to discuss, as a kind of introduction, the passage in the *Rhetoric* and show that this cannot be adduced as evidence of Aristotle's view in this matter. Yes?

Student: There was just a curiosity in that passage in the *Rhetoric* that I would like to inquire to, namely, you pointed out, for example, that the problem might be the *polis*'s gods versus the human ruler. But in the passage that Aristotle quotes from the *Antigone*, he omits the line which attributes those divine—when Antigone makes her speech, she talks about eternal laws, but Aristotle admits the line about the gods which would have seemed to me in the law court to be a very compelling evidence in favor of . . . feelings about . . .

LS: Yes, but perhaps Aristotle thought differently.

Same Student: . . .

LS: One can say this, that Aristotle's thesis regarding the *polis* is stated very clearly at the beginning of the *Politics*: the *polis* is natural. And this means in the first place, of course, it is not merely conventional. That's clear. But there is another implication which is also not unimportant: the *polis* is not sacred; or its sacredness must be understood in subordination to its naturalness, and therefore the whole sphere of the sacred things is subordinate to the *polis*: that is simply one political office, if you can call it a political office, that of the priesthood. Differently stated, the gods of the *polis* are really relative to the *polis*, and if we want to discover the true gods, we must go beyond the gods of the *polis*. So shall we then turn to the short chapter on natural right?

Reader:
Political justice is of two kinds, one natural, the other conventional.

LS: One can also say "legal"—that is not forbidden. Yes?

Reader:
Justice is natural that has the same power everywhere, and does not depend on being accepted or not. Justice is conventional that in the beginning may be settled in one way or the other indifferently,[ix] though having once been settled it is not indifferent— (1134b18-21)

LS: The simplest example is left or right driving, or anything of this kind. There is no superiority of one to the other, but once it is settled, it does make all the difference. In other words, you have to obey it. But there are things which do not in any way depend on how it seems. That was the formula for the establishment of a law: *edoxe tō demō*, it

[ix] In Rackham's translation: "A rule of justice is natural that has the same validity everywhere, and does not depend on our accepting it or not. A rule is conventional that in the first instance may be settled in one way or the other indifferently."

pleased the *dēmos*, it seemed to the *dēmos*. For the positive law, for the legal law—"right," it's better to say—for the legal right, opinion, seeming, decision, is decisive. Nothing of this kind enters natural right. This point is of course the first step in any exposition of what natural right means and has therefore been repeated very frequently. But is there any difficulty which any one of you senses? He should speak up now. Yes?

Student: Perhaps a difficulty is just in deciding whether it really is indifferent . . . The case of left and right hand driving obviously is indifferent.

LS: Well, I have not sufficiently investigated whether there is not some peculiarity, be it of the British or of the climate of Britain, which makes it desirable to have left driving. All right. But it seems, at any rate, that it is just an arbitrary but indispensable decision. But the question is, something which has everywhere the same force, that alone is natural. And of course the question would be to find something which has everywhere the same force, and what Aristotle will tell us about that. Now let us go on.

Reader:
For example, that the ransom for a prisoner shall be a mina, that a sacrifice shall consist of a goat and not of two sheep; and any regulations enacted for particular cases, for instance, the sacrifice in honor of Brasidas, and ordinances in the nature of special decrees. (1134b21-24)

LS: Yes, let us stop here for one moment. Now these are all examples of positive laws, as we would say. Do these examples give us any guidance toward natural right?

Student: These are all unnatural cases.

LS: But if something natural is hidden in them, how do we get at it? Since the natural is the same everywhere, you must abstract from the particular. You must generalize and even universalize, and perhaps we arrive then at natural right. Yes?

Student: Well, perhaps everywhere prisoners are ransomed, but it is arbitrary for how much, and everywhere sacrifices are made, but it is arbitrary what.

LS: Yes, but is there ransoming of prisoners everywhere?

Student: Both examples point to war being everywhere.

LS: Pardon?

Same Student: War seems to be everywhere.

LS: That would lead to the consequence, what, that war is an institute of international law? I believe that is a traditional teaching in modern times, but it would of course lead to grave questions regarding just and unjust wars. Yes?

Student: Well, having made an arbitrary decision, it seems the tendency is, no matter what the arbitrary decision is, to obey the decision and conforming to it, understanding that nonconformity to it would be an unjust action.

LS: That Aristotle does not even say here, although it is—

Student: . . .

LS: No, no, I meant in a different way. After all, you could say the ransom could be two minae instead of one. Generally speaking, to ransom prisoners. Now what are the prisoners? We assume that they are fellow citizens, of course, and they have fallen into a misfortune which they could not have foreseen and into which they fell, perhaps being in the service of the city. Now if we generalize accordingly, the *polis* is responsible for helping the citizens who have come into troubles in their service to the city, which makes sense as a proposition of what is everywhere just, good. And even if one could say [that] if there are people who don't do that, they are in this respect unjust people [in] that they do not recognize their obligation.

Student: Well, I don't understand why it can't go beyond that to the notion that people have an inherent understanding that unless certain decisions are obeyed—be they arbitrary—driving on one side of the street or the other, being ransomed or not, that there is a justice in obeying these decisions, without which, you know, the political state would be chaotic.

LS: Something of this kind I believe is in Aristotle's mind, but I would like that we proceed step by step. Now the other example (this was already answered by Mr. Pangle) that is a matter of positive law, whether you should sacrifice, say, on such and such an occasion a goat or two sheep, but that you *should* sacrifice, that you *should* worship the gods, that is everywhere valid. Simply if you say—monotheism is one special form of this. That is everywhere the case. Yes, so then we would have some inkling from these examples. But let us go on.

Reader:
Some people think that all just things are conventional, because whereas a thing by nature is unchangeable and has the same power everywhere, as fire burns both here and in Persia, just things are seen to differ.[x] (1134b24-27)

LS: Yes, this we have already seen in the first book, near the beginning, that there were such people who said even that all noble things are conventional and also the good things are not simply good. You remember that. Here it is said specifically about the just things, because the just things are all in motion: constant changes not only in the positive law, that is taken for granted, but even in what people consider as intrinsically just. More than that, even what *is* intrinsically just is in motion. Yes?

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[x] In Rackham's translation: "Some people think that all rules of justice are merely conventional, because whereas a law of nature is immutable and has the same validity everywhere, as fire burns both here and in Persia, rules of justice are seen to vary."

Student: Just a question. Supposing I went up and I asked Aristotle, take, for example, the notion of fairness. Now everybody has a notion of fairness; now its material application may differ from person to person or from community to community, but it is a standard—I mean it's, you know, it's an understanding which is changeless. There has always been a notion of fairness.

LS: Yes, Aristotle knows that, and his analysis of commutative and distributive justice has even tried to spell out what we mean vaguely when we speak of fairness. In some cases, it means simple equality, [as] in the case of commutative justice; and in the case of distributive justice, it means a proportional equality. He has made this clear. But let us see how he pursues his argument. It would have been so very easy for him to say: We have said before [that] the principles of commutative and distributive justice are unchangeable. But let us see what he says.

Reader:
This is not so, but it is true in a way. Among the gods indeed it is perhaps not true at all; but in our world, although there is such a thing by nature, all is changeable. But nevertheless there is something by nature just.[xi]

LS: And the other?

Reader:
as well as not ordained by nature.[xii] (1134b27-30)

LS: Yes. Now here we have the decisive remark. Thomas Aquinas has explained this whole chapter along the following terms: the highest principles of natural law are unchangeable; and for practical purposes that means the Second Table of the Ten Commandments. But when you go down to more specific cases, then natural right becomes changeable.[xiii] But Aristotle doesn't make the distinction between the unchangeable principles and the changeable consequences. He says . . .[xiv] all right, both natural and positive, is changeable. Yes?

Student: But if everything is changeable, doesn't this in some way qualify the earlier statement in chapter 6, in which he said justice exists only between those relations which can be regulated by law, because—

LS: No, justice *par excellence*. He doesn't say that justice exists *only* among fellow citizens. Justice in the fullest sense exists only—

[xi] In Rackham's translation: "That rules of justice vary is not absolutely true, but only with qualifications. Among the gods indeed it is perhaps not true at all; but in our world, although there is such a thing as Natural Justice, all rules of justice are variable."
[xii] In Rackham's translation: "Justice as well as justice not ordained by nature."
[xiii] See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, First Part of the Second Part, Question 94, Article 4.
[xiv] The tape skips at this point.

Same Student: But I mean it would seem that the highest incidence of justice, or that just act which is naturally just, in some way is antithetical to law which is everywhere nonchangeable or immutable, and, I mean, it seems a really significant confrontation here between law—

LS: And therefore, in the first place, what is—

Same Student: which I assume to remain law, it couldn't be . . . everywhere commutable, but would have to be immutable, like—[xv] I mean law, it couldn't be everywhere—

LS: Unqualifiedly just. And that proves to be the political. When we hear Aristotle speak about natural right, do we have to think of the Second Table of the Decalogue, or do we have to think of such examples as possibly implied in his examples here, namely, ransoming prisoners and sacrificing to the gods? Now I would say, let us say this: that sacrificing to the gods, or still more generally, worshiping the gods, is everywhere just. Hence one could say it is not changeable. And he seems to say that it is changeable.

Same Student: Yeah, well I'm not specifically referring to Aquinas's examples, or even to Aquinas himself, but—

LS: Aristotle, you mean.

Same Student: No, you brought in Aquinas.

LS: Yes, all right, I returned to Aristotle's examples, and I wanted—

Same Student: I'm just asking how, if justice is everywhere mutable, how it can be at the same time be said to be in some sense equivalent to law?

LS: Oh, I see now what you mean. It is not equivalent to law. I mean, it is no accident that Aristotle speaks of the natural right, or what is by nature right, and what is right by law. The natural right has nothing to do with law. In the more popular formulation of the *Rhetoric*, he speaks of the *koinos nomos*, of the common or universal law.[xvi] Not here: he speaks of right, not of law, and one reason, I believe, is that he wants to keep away altogether the notion of law. Something could be right without having the form of law. When you speak of law, you presuppose a lawgiver. Who would be the lawgiver of natural law? It could only be the gods. And of the gods Aristotle says somewhere that they rule not by issue [of] commands. So there is no place for natural law, but natural right could very well be. For example, certain relations, certain proportions, certain harmonies could be intrinsically right, like that of the just price or just wages or what have you, and without any lawgiver. So we are concerned only with natural right, not with natural law.

[xv] There are skips in the tape at several points here.
[xvi] See Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1373b4-6.

Same Student: But at the same time, I mean, the thing is that, for example, when he, at least in my translation, refers to a law of nature and then points out—

LS: No, that is—

Same Student: Would not there be this—I mean, in which way can he speak of, let's say, a law of nature if there were no promulgators but, say, some type of—

LS: Yes, but one very simple thing: you cannot hold Aristotle responsible for what the translator does.

Same Student: Well, I mean, it seems that—

LS: Who is that translator?

Same Student: It's the one that we're reading.

LS: No. Does Rackham translate, no?

Same Student: Regarding the fire in Persia, he said that—

Another Student: he speaks of . . . for justice, but . . .

Previous Student: A law he says, whereas the law of nature is immutable.

LS: That he doesn't say. "What is by nature is immutable and has everywhere the same force, just as fire burns both here and in Persia." And the just things men see being changed, undergoing change. It is only a question of right, and that is not merely a so-called semantic distinction, but the whole question of divine legislation is at stake. And that does not exist for Aristotle, but there could very well be a natural right, and he asserts that there is a natural right and we must try to find out what it is. It has everywhere the same force, but it is changeable. Now if we take the simplest example, that of worshiping the gods, how could this be changeable? One could say, for example, up to a certain point, one goat, and then a change to two sheep. But this one could rightly say is not a change of the principle, it is only a change of the determination of the universal law by the human legislator. But the true change would be simply not to sacrifice. How could this be? Well, there could be a time of famine or some other thing. So in other words, there is no human right which is not changeable, namely, because of the changeability of human situations. Yes?

Student: Would the circumstance of the famine be that it [is] necessary for the people to eat the sheep. I mean, would that be the way it was . . .

LS: Yes.

Same Student: Well, I was thinking in terms of Thucydides, where people see the just and unjust perishing alike and . . . forgotten things to write down.

LS: That is a hypothetical argument to which we find no reference here. But the key point is simply that what is in itself just [is] to worship the gods. And the same would of course be true also of the ransoming of prisoners: this might in a given case be more damaging to the *polis* than not ransoming them. There are all kinds of people who have become captives and all kinds of enemies, and there is a great variety of circumstances; therefore there is nothing which we can say which is universally valid. Even if we take the case of such a manifestly fundamental thing, and much more important in our eyes than the two examples alluded to by Aristotle: the prohibition against murder. There is a classic case of the two men on a shipwreck. Only one man can survive. And the stronger one pushes the weaker one, or the luckier one pushes the unluckier one, from the wreck. It is clear murder. [There are] attenuating circumstances, but still, can we say he acted unjustly? Can we say that? And one can argue, "Well, you say he acted unjustly." "I see." But then one has to go into some casuistry there. If one is the father and the other is the son, and the father might solve the problem by saying, "Well, you still have your life in front of you and I am old," and he commits suicide. Suicide conceivably can also be understood to be an unjust act. Is it better that they die, both, than one is saved? These are hard questions. At any rate, we come sooner or later (and let us always hope later) to a sphere of half-darkness, where the clear distinction between right and wrong which we can draw in normal times, in normal circumstances, cannot be drawn. And that would be a confirmation of what Aristotle says, that all right is changeable. Yes?

Student: I believe [that] in just about every example you've brought up of the cases of these examples being changeable, you're somehow going toward the principle of self-preservation, either of the city or of an individual. In what sense is that—

LS: Yes. I hadn't thought of it . . . but it makes sense, doesn't it? I mean, it makes sense if we take in certain other facts of which we happen to have knowledge.

Same Student: That's why I wanted to ask if it was just simply a practical matter in which the natural right became either meaningless or changed. If it was just practical consideration—

LS: Let us never forget that this is meant to be a practical book from cover to cover. So "merely practical" would not be an objection.

Same Student: No, I didn't mean it in a disparaging sense, but in the sense that there are other considerations in which the—

LS: Which other considerations can there be in practical matters like considerations of practice?

Same Student: Well, in terms of the example that you used, that it's always right or correct to worship the gods of the city, and the example was a famine, in which case food

was needed for the citizens. Well, another—the complicated example that was alluded to in Thucydides, the things upon which worshiping the gods apparently depend are lost sight of or . . .

LS: But you would not call a man [unjust] who does not worship the gods because he is very gravely ill. We wouldn't call him an unjust man from any point of view, would we? That is a different case. But you mean the way in which those who were not gravely sick were affected.

Same Student: Yes. I mean, by watching the course of human events and seeing—

LS: One fate expects the just man as well as—

Same Student: Seeing the unjust man go to bed and sleep the sleep of—

LS: But they would no longer believe in natural justice on this ground. This would not yet dispose of the fact that natural justice remains as such. Is this not a different—I mean, let us say [that] if natural justice is changeable, this means that in all these cases the distinction between justice and injustice remains in full force. Only its content changes; say, from normal circumstances to extreme, emergency situations, or however you call it.

Same Student: Yes. I might as well lay my cards on the table.

LS: And what is that?

Same Student: I was thinking of a possible consideration that would lead one to think that what was underlying natural law might bring in considerations other than purely, instead of merely practical considerations. The unchanging underlying the changed—

LS: Yes, what would that be?

Student: That would be justice that makes particular things just. Justice . . .

LS: I believe it is clearer if we use a more general expression. Justice after all is a human virtue, isn't it, as Aristotle speaks of it? Can one not say the nature of man is that unchangeable which remains in all the changes, and to that extent, the Athenians in the time of the plague and the Athenians in happier circumstances were all human beings and within the limits of man's nature? As for the one of you who said self-preservation of the *polis* or the individual—were you the one?

Same Student: No. Mr. West.

LS: Oh, Mr. West. I should know you. [Laughter] I would say this: this would seem to show how wise Hobbes was when he said self-preservation is *the* key to all justice. It wouldn't make it Aristotelian—on the contrary—but it would be a good starting point for understanding Hobbes. Miss . . .

Student: Except that in the examples in which it comes out so clearly that self-preservation is more important, they are also very extreme examples in which case you could say . . . on the ship, that these men are complicated . . . in their . . . [xvii]

LS: —there is no possibility of calling . . . society where you cannot call in the police or the judge. And in addition, they would also be—[2]well, take a specific political context. Some extremely dangerous mission: whom do you send? You send a man for all practical purposes into his death and you know it; that's also one of these questions. In brief, I think this example of the two men shipwrecked would show that Aristotle's thesis [that] there is no statement on right which is universally valid, which is unchangeable, makes sense. One cannot anticipate the situations, situations which may be caused by a particularly beastly enemy. Of course you can say we will not use his methods because we would then ourselves become utterly barbarized. But there are limits to that, how far you can go there, because the members of the *polis* have a natural interest in their living on as the *polis* and therefore they must make concessions to the vicious enemy in their procedure. I think you see it every day in foreign affairs particularly: how the more unjust or the more wicked dictates, in a way, to the less wicked. Yes?

Same Student: If then, you can say that no act is simply and intrinsically unjust, any act . . .

LS: No, no, they are intrinsically unjust. But they presuppose a certain normality of the situation.

Same Student: Well, is that the same case in the rest of the virtues, the things that seem to be intrinsically immoderate or illiberal, are they just understood in terms of . . .

LS: They are also changeable. Think of a man who is very liberal hitherto, and a model of liberality. Then he loses all his fortune without any fault of his [own]. His liberality looks very different after his failure than before.

Same Student: But it seems as though, in the case of those virtues if a man loses his ability to become liberal or he in fact doesn't know how to act liberally in this . . .

LS: But, I mean, in a wider sense of the word, he can be liberal. Two beggars: one of them can be liberal, and the other is illiberal. But of course that is not noticeable to the unarmed eye, so to speak, whereas the normal liberal cannot be a beggar. We know that. But still, there is a very great changeability there. There are certain things which can be said, as Aristotle says, which can be said in general. He is trying to say these in the *Ethics*, but they are all subject to qualifications. Aristotle had spoken in the first book about the peculiar character of the kind of knowledge which he sets forth in this book. You remember that he spoke three times of that: there is a great perplexity, confusion in these things, but not so great that one can say [that] all this is merely convention or, as they would say today, merely culture-bound: culture A dictates this, culture B dictates

[xvii] There is a break in the tape here.

that, and it doesn't make any difference. No, lines are discernible, but it is impossible that these things should be unchangeable. The distinction between justice and injustice, between a good and evil man, remains, but what he will do and how he will act will differ and may differ very deeply. Mr. Fairbanks?[xviii]

Student: Could I return to the situation of the two men on the shipwreck? Were you trying to say that in that situation, according to Aristotle, it could be called just for the one man to push the other man off? Or would you say that it is a situation in which the consideration of justice is irrelevant to what they do?

LS: Aristotle, I believe, would say it is not unjust. This is not quite the same as to say it is just.

Same Student: Unless you say it's just, then it seems that you can't say what he thinks, that the natural . . .

LS: He doesn't give that example . . .

Same Student: . . . because in that situation it seems that the naturally just doesn't really have any force, because no matter what you think about it, it doesn't really tell you . . .

LS: But you must remember that the case of the two men on the plank is an exception, and in most cases, fortunately, normality prevails. You only have to think of what happens in the case of a plague or war or so on, how many people who were tolerably decent cease to be tolerably decent in such a situation. This of course is not what Aristotle means, but only to see that the change is radical that is brought about by the transition from a normal situation. And think only of what kind of things become [. . .] to put it this way, when done against a beastly government. If one wants to have the other view, the one hundred percent moral view, then one also has to go to the length of this argument and say that [. . .] resistance against the government, rebellion against the government, is under all circumstances an unjust action. Kant is surely consistent here, and things become very simple then. The argument is characteristic: no revolution without previous conspiracy—and no conspiracy without lying, because the cop at the corner might ask you where are you going now, and if you would say truthfully that now we go to a conspiratorial session, that would be very moral but of course incompatible with your goal. Therefore no revolution without lying; and lying is under all circumstances immoral. But Aristotle would not go so far. He would preserve a certain flexibility without which human life altogether is not possible, and this has indeed these great consequences.

Student: Is the relationship between the philosopher and the city a normal or abnormal situation?

[xviii] The audio recording ends here. The remainder of the transcript of this session is taken from the original transcript. Ellipses in the original transcript have been preserved. Where the transcriber noted "inaudible," ellipses appear in square brackets.

LS: I believe for Aristotle it is rather abnormal, because when he speaks of the parts of the *polis* in the *Politics*, he does not mention the philosopher. But surely one can say that is a rather one-sided statement. One can show without too great a difficulty that the *polis* needs the philosophers. Aristotle could never have written his *Politics* if he had not believed that.

Student: Previously you dismissed the examples of the *Rhetoric* as belonging to a particular circumstance: the argument given for acquittal in front of a law court. Now in terms of this new interpretation you have given, it begins to make a little better sense.

LS: I'm sorry, because if we take the [. . .] example, it is because universal law, natural law forbids the eating of animals, i.e., only vegetarianism is in accordance with natural right. Aristotle rejects that.

Student: Is that the example?

LS: That's one of the things.

Student: The eating of animals.

LS: Yes. So these examples which we can [. . .] from this passage make sense, namely, that the city has an obligation to help those citizens who have come into misfortune by serving the city. Does it not make sense?

Student: Yes, but I can't understand the third example, even with the example given in the *Ethics* that the man who is like his god is as extraordinary as the slave [. . .]

LS: Yes, I think that's the purpose, why he speaks of that in the *Rhetoric*. I see our time is up. We will continue with this next time. I'm inclined to believe that an important ingredient of what Aristotle had in mind about natural right was brought out in a medieval tradition, rather [more] Islamic and Jewish than Christian, according to which natural right comprises the evident minimum conditions of the *polis*; therefore every *polis* must fulfill them with the qualifications as stated, and therefore from this point of view positive law would be something higher than natural right because it is more than the minimum conditions. But whether this is a feasible thought, we must see.

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[1] Deleted "who."
[2] Deleted "I do not believe that this will—they are even in."

Session 21: May 6, 1968

Leo Strauss: [In progress] . . . it's not devoted, as you find out soon, to theoretical wisdom but rather to practical wisdom, to prudence, and only in order to make clear what practical prudence is does he discuss wisdom. In other words, the rule that what is in the center is most important cannot be always applied, and surely not in the case of Aristotle. In the case of Plato, it's somewhat different.

Student: . . . have a sense . . . making a slight gesture—

LS: Yes, well, I mean, I do not blame you for it, but I only use this occasion to give you a friendly warning. There are some more things.[i] "Aristotle limits the need for political philosophy, but in a way very different from some later thinkers. The *phronēsis*-directed ethics that is the basis of Aristotle's *Politics* is hardly comparable to the a-teleological modern political sciences. Aristotle limited political questions by limiting the 'why' to the practical sphere as much as possible. Modern nonphilosophic science, or as Comte calls it, positive philosophy, eliminates the 'why' altogether and substitutes a mere 'how.'" That was at least Comte's claim. But what happens to political philosophy in Comte, as distinguished from his present-day successors? [That] might be worth considering for a moment, to see how much has changed and how rapidly things have changed in the last hundred years. Well, for Comte political philosophy is of course absolutely indispensable, and it is in no way an arbitrary matter depending on arbitrary value judgments of himself as an individual. Whether his ethics is sound or deep, that's another matter, but for him it is clear that there are principles of preference which are in no way arbitrary and which are universally valid.

Now Mr. Long . . . Long. "One does take counsel," you say, "about virtue, as it is a matter of habitation." You mean "of habituation," but how do you do that?

Student: How do you seek counsel?

LS: I mean, if you take counsel about virtue. And how far is this taking counsel connected with virtue being a matter of habituation?

Same Student: You take counsel as to the action . . . to perform . . . the right decision . . .

LS: Yes, but a concrete question: you need money, and there are virtuous and nonvirtuous means for getting money. How do you deliberate?

Same Student: You would take the virtuous [means].

LS: So you do not deliberate. In other words, virtue doesn't fall under deliberation at all. Yes, I think that is what Aristotle means, so there must be something wrong in what you

[i] Strauss responds to students' papers.

have said. Virtue guides our deliberation by, as it were, *a priori* excluding indecent means, but it is not itself an object of deliberation. I think I'll leave it at this.[1]

And now let us turn, or return after such a long interruption, to the fifth book of the *Ethics*. Now let us remind ourselves of some of the most general things.[2] Aristotle's inquiry in this book here is, as he has said right at the beginning, "a kind of" political inquiry. It deals with the foundations of politics but also with the limitations of politics. And therefore it contains an intimation of what transcends politics, and therefore it is no longer properly and strictly political. To the extent, however, that the *Ethics* is simply a political book, book 5 is its most important part, the peak, because its subject is justice. And justice, as we have learned, is the whole of virtue directed toward another human being, toward a neighbor; and virtue in this relation to the neighbor is higher than the virtue understood only as a perfection of the individual. Yet there is this difficulty: towards the other, towards the neighbor, has also another aspect, an aspect with which Aristotle deals when speaking of particular justice. You remember the passage at the end of book 4—it won't do any harm if we read it again. Do you have it? That is 1128b21. "The gentleman."

Reader: Oh, yes.
For indeed the virtuous man does not feel shame, if shame is the feeling caused by base actions; since one ought not to do base actions (the distinction between acts really shameful and those reputed to be so is immaterial, since one ought not to do either), and so one never ought to feel shame. Shame is a mark of a base man, and springs from a character capable of doing a shameful act. And it is absurd that, because a man is of such a nature that he is ashamed if he does a shameful act, he should therefore think himself virtuous, since actions to cause shame must be voluntary, but a virtuous man will never voluntarily do a base action.

LS: Yes. Now this was as it were the grand finale of the previous discussion and tacit transition to the discussion of justice in book 5, because now we hear something very different. Turn to 1131b32 following.

Reader:
But the just in private transactions, although it is the equal in a sense (and the unjust the unequal), is not the equal according to geometrical but according to arithmetical proportion. For it makes no difference whether a good man has defrauded a bad man or a bad one a good one, nor whether it is a good or a bad man that has committed adultery—(1131b21-1132a4)

LS: And so on. The word for good man here, *epieikēs*, is the same as that used at the end of book 4. 1134a17?

Reader:
But seeing that a man may commit injustice without actually being unjust, what is it that distinguishes those unjust acts the commission of which renders a man actually unjust under one of the various forms of injustice, for example, a thief or an adulterer or a

brigand? Or shall we rather say that the distinction does not lie in the quality of the act? For a man may have intercourse with a woman knowing who she is, yet not from the motive of deliberate choice, but under the influence of passion; in such a case, though he has committed injustice, he is not an unjust man: for instance, he is not a thief, though guilty of theft, not an adulterer, though he has committed adultery, and so forth. (1134a17-23)

LS: So let us stop here. So here Aristotle draws a very different conclusion from the fact that justice is toward the other. The first conclusion was: justice is toward the other, and therefore more difficult than the other virtues, and therefore higher. Now justice is toward the other and therefore more external than the other virtues, so that the difference which otherwise would be very important between the noble and the base character becomes unimportant, and we consider only the act in itself: is it a crime or not criminal? Naturally, this must be properly understood. In one sense justice is external, as we have seen. But true justice, full justice is not merely external. That is indicated by this very question. I mean, the man who is a just man and not merely a man acting justly will obey the law in the right spirit.

Now Aristotle proceeds from here generally in the following manner. He has established the fact that an unjust man and a transgressor, as we might perhaps translate—in Greek the two words are very close, *adikos*, "unjust," *adikon*, "the man who acts unjustly." Let us say "transgressor." In order to clarify[3] [this distinction], we must know what is the unjust man, and therefore what is the just man, i.e., who is the just man *par excellence*, the just man simply? And that is the same as the man who is just in the political sense of the word. The politically just. And then in a passage which we read last time, 1134a30, "for justice." Yes?

Reader:
For justice can only exist between those whose mutual relations are regulated by law. (1134a30)

LS: Ya. So the sphere of the politically just is identical with the sphere of the *nomos*, of the law. This might lead us to think that all just [things], everything just is so through *nomos*: nothing that is just is just by nature. This subject is taken up by Aristotle in the immediate sequel, where we were interrupted last time. We discussed briefly the section in the *Rhetoric*, book 1, chapter 13; I do not have to repeat that. And we turn now immediately to the next chapter, where we left off. The point where we begin again is 1134b24. Only one word of summary. What is by nature just, Aristotle says, has everywhere the same force, in Greece as well as in Persia. He says "everywhere" where we would say "always," and this shows an interesting difference between our way of looking at things and the Greek way of looking at things. Our way of looking at things is much more historical. We are much more impressed by historical change. For the Greeks, the simultaneous differences, the coexisting differences, are more impressive, the reason being that you can know this by your own observation, just by travelling. By travelling from here to Mexico, you see difference of customs, but about the difference between,

say, Maya culture and present-day Mexico, this you do not know by your own observation but through hearsay mediated by archaeologists and so on and so on.

So the natural just has everywhere—that means also always—the same force. And it has this force not owing to human fiat, whereas positive law owes its force entirely to human fiat. Now examples seem to be worshiping the gods and similar matters. More generally stated, the fundamental requirements of any political life, anywhere on earth. But Aristotle now makes this surprising remark: although there is something which is just intrinsically, by nature and independent of human fiat, everything just, natural or conventional, is changeable. Now let us read on in b24. "Some think that everything just is of this nature."

Reader:
Some people think that all just things are conventional, because whereas a thing by nature is immutable and has the same power everywhere, as fire burns both here and in Persia, just things are seen to differ.[ii]

LS: "Seen to change," "to undergo change."

Reader:
This is not so, but it is true in a way.[iii] Among the gods, indeed, it is perhaps not true at all; but in our world, although there is such a thing by nature[iv], all—

LS: Meaning something just by nature, that is understood. Yes?

Reader:
all is changeable. But nevertheless there is something by nature just, as well as not ordained by nature, and it is clear which sort of justice, though not absolute, is natural, and which is not natural but conventional and by agreement, both sorts alike being changeable.[v] (1134b24-33)

LS: Now is this clear, as Aristotle so quietly asserts? Perhaps not quite. Perhaps we can say this much: the difference between the natural and the conventionally just lies not in the unchangeability on the one side and the changeability on the other—this Aristotle has abandoned—but in the independence of human fiat in the one case, and the dependence

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[ii] In Rackham's translation: "Some people think that all rules of justice are merely conventional, because whereas a law of nature is immutable and has the same validity everywhere, as fire burns both here and in Persia, rules of justice are seen to vary."
[iii] In Rackham's translation: "That rules of justice vary is not absolutely true, but only with qualifications."
[iv] In Rackham's translation: "such a thing as Natural Justice."
[v] In Rackham's translation: "all rules of justice are variable. But nevertheless there is such a thing as Natural Justice as well as justice not ordained by nature; and it is easy to see which rules of justice, though not absolute, are natural, and which are not natural but legal and conventional, both sorts alike being variable."

on human fiat on the other. This I think we can safely say without going beyond the text. Do you have some troubles?

Student: Yes, I do not understand one word—

LS: Fiat? Do you say "fee-at"? Well, I try to make a concession to English. I never know which concessions are demanded and which not. Fiat, ya. Good. Thank you. Now perhaps the passage is truly clear and Aristotle is right, although at first glance it seems to be so difficult. Now go on.

Reader:
The same distinction will hold good in all other matters; for instance, the right hand is by nature[vi] stronger than the left, yet it is possible for any man to make himself ambidextrous.

LS: Ya. Whether this is meant to be a strict parallel or only some loose illustration is hard to say. The right hand is by nature stronger than the left. This is directed against the thesis of Plato in the *Laws*, 794d following. Plato asserts that the right hand is not by nature stronger, that it is merely a habit; just as in the *Republic* he says [that] the difference between men and women is not so important as people say, criticizing habit there too. And Aristotle [regards] habit as much more natural, at least the universal habit as much more natural, than Plato does. Now the right hand is by nature stronger, and yet men may make themselves ambidextrous. Now what does this mean, if we apply it to the question here discussed? Then it would mean ambidexterity corresponds to the legal justice as distinguished from natural justice. Should this mean that the legal justice is a deteriorating addition to what is by nature just? This seems to be impossible, because why should we make a deteriorating addition to something which is good enough in itself? So maybe the legal right or legal justice is an improving supplement of the natural right. In this case natural and positive right together (corresponding to ambidexterity) would be higher than natural right by itself (corresponding to natural right-handedness).

Do you have any suggestions regarding this? Well, I trust you will interrupt. Now let us then continue first and complete this chapter.

Reader:
The justice based upon agreement and expediency is like standard measures. Corn and wine measures are not equal in all places, but are larger in wholesale and smaller in retail markets. Similarly the justice ordained not by nature but by man is not the same in all places, because regimes are not the same. Though in all places there is only one regime that is natural, the best.[vii] (1134b33-1135a5)

[vi] In Rackham's translation: "naturally."
[vii] In Rackham's translation: "The rules of justice based on convention and expediency are like standard measures. Corn and wine measures are not equal in all places, but are larger in wholesale and smaller in retail markets. Similarly the rules of justice ordained not by nature but by man are not the same in all places, since forms of government are not the same, though in all places there is only one form of government that is natural, namely, the best form."

LS: "That is according to nature the best." So first of all, Aristotle says that the conventional or human right things differ according to convenience, and therefore there is no intrinsic principle of right involved. The example he gives is clear enough. But this does not mean that human right, the right established by men, that these things are altogether conventional, for laws depend on regimes: democratic laws differ from oligarchic laws, and so on and so on. Now the difference of regimes in its turn points to the best regime, and the best regime is everywhere *by nature* the best. Aristotle does not go here into the question whether in the best regime there would be any laws and not perhaps the absolute rule of one superior man. He doesn't open that. The point which he is eager to make is that there is a kind of ceiling higher than all positive laws, and this ceiling is natural. One could say, perhaps, with a view to the point I made last time, that there is a flooring which is natural—the minimum conditions of civilized life—and a ceiling which is natural, and in between there is a great variety of partly reasonable and partly unreasonable arrangements. You see, Aristotle doesn't say of the best regime that it is everywhere *just*: he says it is everywhere *best*. That makes a great difference.

The authentic commentary on this passage you find at the end of book 3 of the *Politics*, where Aristotle indicates which kind of regime is by nature best for which kind of society. For these different kinds of societies, different regimes are just. But it is perfectly possible to raise the question: which of these regimes, equally just in its place or time, is *simply* preferable from the point of view of human excellence? One can say that this is a difference between Aristotle and doctrinairist doctrines. The doctrinairist political doctrine is one which asserts that there is one and only one regime which is just everywhere or at all times. Aristotle would of course deny that, but this does not lead to the consequence of simple relativism, because while *justice* is of great variety in this respect, *bestness* or goodness is not.

We have not taken up a question which must have been present to more than one of you. Aristotle has spoken here in this chapter so briefly and cryptically on natural law shortly after he had discussed commutative and distributive justice. What is the relation of the principles of commutative and distributive justice to natural right? Are these principles not natural right? What else should be natural right, if not these principles? There is no explicit reference to that, perhaps because Aristotle takes it for granted that we would put two and two together. I hope he is not disappointed. But even if it is so, even if it is so that the principles of commutative and distributive justice as such are principles of natural right, they still would be changeable according to the explicit statement made in the chapter just read, for the reason that there are situations in which it is simply not feasible to do what is intrinsically right because of emergencies of one kind or another. Now—yes?

Student: For Averroes, it seems to be the floor; it doesn't seem to be the ceiling. I was wondering if you'd comment a little bit on the difference between Averroes on the one hand, Thomas on the other hand, and whether Averroes is a correct interpreter of Aristotle.

LS: That is very hard to say. One can say one point. Thomas solves the difficulty by making a distinction between the principles of natural right, the highest principles, which are unchangeable, and the secondary conclusions or determinations, whatever they may be, which are changeable. This distinction is not contradicted by Aristotle, but it does not have a basis in Aristotle. Now the Averroistic tradition accepts the changeability of all natural right. The clearest statement, in the Western tradition at least, is probably that by Marsilius of Padua in the *Defender of the Peace*. I quote from memory; what Marsilius says is this: that there are certain principles universally accepted by all societies, and divine worship is one of these. And they are however not rational principles, properly speaking, but generally accepted.[viii] In Greek it would be *endoxa*. This is, I think, the Averroistic view. And this is not natural right, because natural right proper would be rational right. And so Marsilius's argument is about this: what is rational is not universally accepted, and what is universally accepted is not rational; and therefore he turns this against the Thomistic notion of natural law without mentioning Thomas . . . This is all I can say at the moment. Mr. Wedergreen?

Student: As I understand it, you're saying that there's a sphere of politics which is somehow between the naturally right and the naturally good, or best . . . But somehow these are different things, that what's naturally just is different from what's naturally good.

LS: I didn't mean it in this way, but you could say it, yes. Go on, draw your—go on with that.

Same Student: Actually, I didn't draw any conclusion . . .

LS: I see. By the way, I spoke of a flooring beneath which you would not find any political life, and a ceiling beyond which political life cannot possibly go. And even perhaps more precisely: this ceiling is already beyond politics proper, so that all politics moves between these two limits and has a standard of its excellence or opposite in the best regime [and] can be judged accordingly.

Same Student: But it would seem to me that, say, if you're talking about good things or the bes things, that you'd have to say good for what or best for what.

LS: Yes, sure.

Same Student: And that seems to bring about a problem if you're talking about politics. I could see maybe if you're talking about something else, but if you're talking about politics and, say, mixing the minimum conditions for human political life which, say, would be something more than the city of pigs, or close to that, and the maximum conditions for some—for human life, for good. I mean, I don't see what happens, say, to justice when you get to the best because you're not—as you say, you're not talking about political life anymore.

[viii] Cf. the discussion of Marsilius in Leo Strauss, "Marsilius of Padua," in *Liberalism Ancient and Modern* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1968), 185-202.

LS: But the question is whether there is not a dialectics in politics which leads beyond politics, so that what politics is after cannot be fulfilled by political means any more; and therefore a kind of dilution of what politics primarily intends is not essential for human life.

Same Student: But how does that ceiling, as you put it, how can that participate in politics? How can it have anything to do with it?

LS: Perhaps the two thoughts belong to two different processes of the argument. We constantly are compelled to judge of political things, and not only of individuals and individual measures or individual laws but of political orders as a whole. I mean, think of the present day: who can prevent himself from trying to form a judgment about the relative merits of liberal democracy on the one hand, and communism on the other? Or alternatives which are less striking but which are at least potentially there?

So this question of what is better points to the question of what is simply good. That is one clear argument leading up to the question: what is the best regime? And now when you try to elaborate that and take the most extreme view, and the most radical, as Plato did in the *Republic*, then you arrive at these well-known conclusions about which seems to be the perfect regime, but of which one can rightly wonder, not only from Aristotle's point of view but from Plato's own point of view: is this still a *polis*? Now then of course one must say: All right, let us then correct the mistake and let us not abstract from the many things from which Plato abstracts in the *Republic* and arrive at something like the best regime of Plato's *Laws* or, for that matter, the best regime of Aristotle's *Politics*: books 7 and 8, which are not *so* enormously different from each other. This you can do. Whether this is sufficient, and whether the difference, however small, between the best regime of the *Laws* and the best regime of books 7 and 8 of the *Politics* does not lead to a further questioning of this whole notion of the best regime, that's a long question. But the *prima facie* reasonableness of the question cannot be denied, and it is in a way borne out practically by the fact that most people concerned with politics have definite views of what is the best regime. A liberal and a conservative differ greatly, but still they have each an overall view of what the best interpretation, say, of the American Constitution is.

Now we have to raise a further question, after having read the section on natural right. What is the meaning of the discussion of natural right *in our context*? Now the context is this. We are trying to understand the difference between the unjust man, the *adikos*, and the transgressor, the *adikon*. You can compare it, if you want, with the difference between a mortal and a venial sinner, to bring it somewhat closer to notions which are familiar to you. Let us assume that it belongs to the natural right to worship the gods, while sacrificing one goat or two sheep belongs to the human or conventional right. Now a man who sacrifices two sheep although it is now the law to sacrifice a single goat is a transgressor. A man who sacrifices one sheep when it is the law to sacrifice two sheep is also a transgressor, although not an unjust man because he has observed the principle of worship of the gods. But assuming that he doesn't sacrifice anything, would he then become an unjust man? That is a hard question. We do not have sufficient evidence of

how Aristotle would decide this case. We have to take a somewhat broader approach if we try to understand this section here, what we read and what we are going to read, because there are many unclear transitions and repetitions. Yes?

Student: In reference to a passage that you went over just before you went into the section about natural right, there was an example given of an adulterer and—well, of a thief and an adulterer. Now he makes the point that the origin of this act might not be deliberate, but passionate . . . won't be. The implication of it—as I understand it, there are two implications: number one, that an act that's committed out of passion may not be an unjust [one] to the extent that—in all other instances a man may be a perfectly just man or he may be—justice springs from his soul except when his passions take over. And so in a sense, you might say that he is excusable—well, not excusable; there is an excuse which can be made to the extent that he's a just man who just happens to be an unhappy . . . On the other hand, there's a parallel here too: the passionate act isn't excusable, it's one which a man needs to be held accountable for to the extent that he's either just or unjust. Now I also wanted to ask here, that there seems to be a contradiction, because, I mean, how can a man who commits an unjust act at one point, even though he is just in his, you might say, his lifestyle for the most part, be a just man altogether? I mean, there is an element of injustice there. He cannot be called a just man; he cannot be called an unjust man. So I suppose there's a mean there.

LS: Yes, that is intelligible that you have this doubt. But we are trying to understand Aristotle, and Aristotle does not agree with you there. But I do not know; the passage is too brief. We have to use our own knowledge of literature or maybe of life in order to see what Aristotle is thinking about. Now clearly, if someone is suddenly overcome by a passion for another man's wife and seduces her—because it is not a matter of rape; that is an extreme case. But there are all kinds of in-between cases.

Same Student: Well, I was thinking that simply taking this case as a kind of model, you know—could the just man in all other aspects . . .

LS: But we have to go into some details in order to see that it is not so simple as you seem to present it. Now let us assume that the woman in question is the wife of a friend. The friend is in another part of the planet. And she needs badly his help and in a business matter of grave importance which must be discussed privately, in utmost secrecy. Things may develop [laughter] . . . very hard, very hard—I mean, I don't wish to excuse anyone, but I must only say that it is very hard to condemn so strictly as in the case of a ruthless, consciousless seducer. You know? All kinds of situations are thinkable, oh yes, and we have to take them into consideration.

Same Student: . . . not to carry it on any longer than [laughter] . . . That's that's—

LS: Think of this man, think of a man circumstanced like the one I described: a loyal friend and everything else. And think of her, and can you say then he has ceased to be an honest man by this action? You take a great responsibility in making this judgment.

Same Student: What I was asking is, when there are circumstances like these, where there are various shades of gray and all that kind of thing, that's granted. But the question that I'm asking is: where does the man fall? A just man normally, who commits, say, in his own eyes an unjust act and becomes unjust after the fact, be that as it may. Nonetheless, there's the element of injustice there. Now you can't call a just man who commits an unjust act a just man.

LS: That is what Aristotle says. That is exactly what he says. He says that—

Same Student: . . . that isn't the implication of this passage here—

LS: Surely. Or if this example is somewhat indelicate, take the example of the man who has stolen and is not a thief. Now if you take it very literally in the present-day meaning of the word stealing, you will say: a man who steals is of course a thief. But in Greek, the word *klepton* has a broader meaning. Any abstraction of . . . Now if Phidias took this money, this gold, for another purpose than the purpose for which it was assigned by the Athenian assembly, was he [a thief]? I mean, he may have committed an illegal act. He has to pay it back and maybe he has to go to jail. But is he a thief for this reason? It's a difficult question. The problem raised by Aristotle cannot be avoided, and that is of course also underlying in a very general way what he says about natural right: that it is changeable because of the enormous changeability in human conditions. But as I have said on more than one occasion, for Aristotle that doesn't do away with the moral distinctions as such. On the contrary: this whole casuistry presupposes that there are very firm principles in the light of which we judge. Yes?

Student: Could the perfectly wise man . . . whether this man was just or unjust?

LS: I suppose he would have to know the circumstances in the greatest possible detail before he would judge.

Same Student: But . . . practical . . .

LS: But there are borderline cases where even the individuals immediately concerned cannot possibly know where the line was transgressed.

Same Student: This would be a practical as opposed to a theoretical problem, then?

LS: As I said on a former occasion, it is all practical. All right. Now in order to facilitate the understanding of the sequel (and partly retroactively also of what we have read before), we have to reconsider for a moment again the overall context, and that is this question: the difference between the unjust man and the transgressor or occasional transgressor. This has something to do with the externality of justice. In the case of commutative and punitive justice, we abstract altogether from the character of the doer, as Aristotle says—not necessarily in reaching judgment on him. For example, that may be very important; we don't know, did he do it or did he not? The question is: could he have done it or not? And then of course his prehistory would come up. But this is not

now the question with which we are concerned. If we know he has done it, regardless of whether he was previously a nice or non-nice man, he will be punished in the same way. One may act justly in an unjust spirit—for example, one may do the right thing merely from fear of punishment—and one may act unjustly in a just spirit, as this man with whom you find fault did, because he did not have the bad intention. Furthermore, a point which Aristotle will make in the sequel which is also connected with the peculiar problem of justice, [a] principle known from Roman law: *volenti non fit injuria*, no injustice is done to him who agrees, who wills. Now this seems to threaten the objectivity of justice. A certain bad action is committed, but then the[4] [person] to whom it is done has agreed to it, and therefore here it has ceased to be a bad action. We come to that very soon.

Now one can perhaps find parallels to this former difficulty, at least, in the case of the other virtues as well. Still, to say the least, this kind of discussion is given by Aristotle only in book 5, only in the discussion of justice. So it must be presumed that there is a particularly close connection between these difficulties and justice. Now it is very easy to say: "Well, Aristotle is speaking here about legal questions," because then the question arises: what is law? Do you know that? Then we would have to become merely tautological. The sphere in which the distinction between the external acts and the intentions is of such special importance as it is not in the case of the other virtues. That won't help. So we have to go back to the main subject: justice. What is justice? And then we get the answer, which we have to see from the beginning of this book: the virtue toward the other.

Now let us first turn to book 10, to a few passages in book 10, 1177a27. Aristotle is speaking here about the difference between the two kinds of happiness or ways of life: the theoretical and the practical. Yes?

Reader:
Also the activity of contemplation will be found to possess in the highest degree the quality that is termed self-sufficiency; for while it is true that the wise man equally with the just man and the rest requires the necessaries of life, yet, these being adequately supplied, whereas the just man needs other persons toward whom or with whose aid he may act justly, and so likewise do the temperate man and the brave man and the others, the wise man on the contrary can also contemplate by himself, and the more so the wiser he is; no doubt he will study better with the aid of fellow-workers, but still he is the most self-sufficient of men. (1177a27-b1)

LS: Yes, let us stop here. So you see Aristotle distinguishes between two kinds of men, one whom he calls the wise—wise not in the sense of practically wise, but theoretically wise (*sophos*, in Greek); and the other he calls on the first occasion the just man, although he means also the brave and the others. The just man is not self-sufficient; the just man lives essentially with a view to others. Needless to say that this has nothing to do with the notion of "other-directed" which is now in vogue. Now 1178a2 to 4. He speaks still of the same general subject.

Reader:
It may even be held that this is the true self of each, inasmuch as it is the dominant and better part; and therefore it would be a strange thing if a man should choose to live not his own life but the life of some other than himself.

LS: So the true self is the self engaged in contemplation. The moral man as moral man has chosen not his own life but the life of somebody else. Two more short passages, a little bit later, at the beginning of the next paragraph.

Reader:
The life of moral virtue, on the other hand, is happy only in a secondary degree. For the moral activities are purely human: Justice, I mean, Courage and the other virtues we display in our intercourse with our fellows— (1178a2-11)

LS: More literally, "We do these actions toward one another." This is toward: the *pros heteron*. Here, *pros allēlous*. Yes. And finally, b3 to 7.

Reader:
But the theoretical man,[ix] so far as the pursuit of his activity is concerned, needs no external apparatus: on the contrary, worldly goods may almost be said to be a hindrance to contemplation; though it is true that, being a man and living in the society of others, he chooses to engage in virtuous action, and so will need external goods to carry on his life as a human being. (1178b3-7)

LS: Yes. So justice: we see now here from this general remark at the end of the book that the fact that justice is toward the other is not limited to justice. Justice reveals the fundamental character of moral virtue *in general* as being directed towards other human beings. All moral virtue is social in a way in which theoretical virtue is not social. And we understand perhaps from here the strange feature of the discussion of courage in book 3, when Aristotle [is] presenting the truly courageous man as someone who is exposing his life. We do not know exactly for what[5]—[it is] on the battlefield—but he is surely distinguished from the citizen as citizen. Aristotle as it were conceals provisionally the social character of moral virtue in order to bring it out with all the greater force at the end of the book.

Now what I suggest, in brief, is this. The difficulties of book 5 of the *Ethics*, and to some extent also of the other books, prepare in a way that is not always lucid the final demotion of moral virtue at the end of the *Ethics*. And we would have to link up the specific discussions with which we are now concerned about the voluntariness and involuntariness of crime, for example, with this fundamental issue.

Now let us continue then where we left off, and this was where? 1135a6, I believe, or a5. This is after the—we have just completed the discussion of natural right. Now he seems to go over to something very different. Yes?

[ix] In Rackham's translation: "the student."

Reader:
Each of the just and lawful things[x] are related to the actions conforming with them as universals to particulars. For the actions done are many, while each rule or law is one, being universal.

LS: Why does he say that here? In the sequel, he has not included this. Why does he make this remark here? All just and lawful things, meaning regardless of whether they are by nature just or by convention just, have the character of universality: permitting, commanding, forbidding universally. The question we could have understood: the relation of the natural law or natural right and positive right as that of universal to the more particular, the natural law being the universal and the positive law as the particular. I believe that this question is somehow present. Aristotle says not more indeed than just this: universality applies to all law regardless of whether it is natural or positive. Yes?

Reader:
There is a difference between 'that which is unjust' and 'unjust conduct,' and between 'that which is just' and 'just conduct.' Nature or ordinance pronounces a thing unjust: when that thing is done, it is 'unjust conduct'; till it is done, it is only 'unjust.' And similarly with 'just conduct,' *dikaiōma* (or more correctly, the general term is *dikaiopragēma*, *dikaiōma* denoting the rectification of an act of injustice).

We shall have later to consider the several rules of justice and of law, and to enumerate their various kinds and describe them and the things with which they deal.

LS: Let us stop here for a moment. Now here Aristotle gives an indication of the difference between the unjust man and the mere transgressor. That difference does not lie in that between natural right and conventional right, as it could have seemed on the basis of earlier remarks, but that the injustice resides in the intention, in the will, as distinguished from the external action. How did he put it here? "After it was done, it was an unjust action. Before it was done, it was not an unjust action, but only something unjust." We do not have the same terminology, and Aristotle has to coin this terminology himself, as you see from this occasional remark here.

Reader:
Such being an account of just and unjust actions, it is their voluntary performance that constitutes just and unjust conduct. If a man does them involuntarily, he cannot be said to act justly, or unjustly, except incidentally, in the sense that he does an act which happens to be just or unjust. Whether therefore an action is or is not an act of injustice, or of justice, depends on its voluntary or involuntary character. When it is voluntary, the agent is blamed, and only in that case is the action an act of injustice; so that it is possible for an act to be unjust without being an act of injustice, if the qualification of voluntariness be absent. (1135a5-23)

LS: So the man who acts unjustly, the transgressor: [his action] must be voluntary. Needless to say, the same is of course also true of the unjust man, but even in the case of

[x] In Rackham's translation: "The several rules of justice and of law."

the transgressor, voluntariness is required. But Aristotle seems to say there may be sometimes unjust acts without [voluntariness][xi] being involved. What does he mean by that? Let us see whether the sequel throws any light on it.

Reader:
By a voluntary action, as has been said before, I mean any action within the agent's own control which he performs knowingly, that is, without being in ignorance of the person affected, the instrument employed, and the result (for example, he must know whom he strikes, and with what weapon, and the effect of the blow); and in each of these respects both accident and compulsion must be excluded. For instance, if A took hold of B's hand and with it struck C, B would not be a voluntary agent, since the act would not be in his own control. Or again, a man may strike his father without knowing that it is his father—

LS: This of course is very important because father-beating is a much more serious offense than just beating anyone. Yes?

Reader:
though aware that he is striking some person, and perhaps that it is one or other of the persons present; and ignorance may be similarly defined with reference to the result, and to the circumstances of the action generally. An involuntary act is therefore an act done in ignorance, or else one that though not done in ignorance is not in the agent's control, or is done under compulsion; since there are many natural processes too that we perform or undergo knowingly, though none of them is either voluntary or involuntary; for example, growing old, and dying.

Also an act may be either just or unjust incidentally. A man may restore a deposit unwillingly and from fear of consequences, and we must not then say that he does a just act, nor that he acts justly, except incidentally; and similarly a man who under compulsion and against his will fails to restore a deposit can only be said to act unjustly or do what is unjust incidentally.

LS: Now let us stop here. This latter example may perhaps help us. There may be sometimes unjust acts without voluntariness being involved. I think here is an example. You do not return a deposit at the fixed time and therefore have to pay a particularly high interest rate, and you were prevented from returning it by some people who kept you prisoner. Now you clearly did not voluntarily fail to keep your promise, and nevertheless, you are obliged: you have to suffer the penalty which was arranged when you made the contract. This would be a case in which a man can commit an unjust act, a punishable act, without any voluntariness. He has largely repeated, as we have seen, the long discussions of the first book on voluntariness and involuntariness. Yes?

Reader:
Again voluntary acts are divided into acts done by choice and those done not by choice, the former being those done after deliberation and the latter those done without previous deliberation. (1135a23-b11)

[xi] Strauss says "involuntariness," apparently in error.

LS: So Aristotle introduces now the somewhat higher consideration of choice or election as distinguished from mere voluntariness. You remember the distinction? Voluntariness is something which we share with the brutes, whereas election is something specifically human. Yes?

Reader:
There are then three ways in which a man may injure his fellow. An injury done in ignorance is an error, the person affected or the act or the instrument or the result being other than the agent supposed; for example, he did not think to hit, or not with this missile, or not this person, or not with this result, but it happened that either the result was other than he expected (for instance he did not mean to inflict a wound but only a prick), or the person, or the missile. When then the injury happens contrary to reasonable expectation, it is a misadventure. When, though not contrary to reasonable expectation, it is done without evil intent, it is a culpable error; for an error is culpable when the cause of one's ignorance lies in oneself, but only a misadventure when the cause lies outside oneself. When an injury is done knowingly but not deliberately, it is an act of injustice or wrong; such, for instance, are injuries done through anger, or any other unavoidable or natural passion to which men are liable; since in committing these injuries and errors a man acts unjustly, and his action is an act of injustice, but he is not *ipso facto* unjust or wicked, for the injury was not done out of wickedness. When however an injury is done from choice, the doer is unjust and wicked. Hence acts due to sudden anger are rightly held not to be done of malice aforethought, for it is the man who gave the provocation that began it, not he who does the deed in a fit of passion.

LS: Now that is a key practical decision: the man who kills from anger is a transgressor, but not an unjust man. I think we understand this all immediately. Yes. Now he will develop this a bit more in the sequel. Yes?

Reader:
And moreover the issue is not one of fact, but of justification (since it is apparent injustice that arouses anger); the fact of the injury is not disputed (as it is in cases of contract, where one or the other of the parties must be a knave, unless they dispute the fact out of forgetfulness). They agree as to the facts but dispute on which side justice lies; so that one thinks he has been unjustly treated and the other does not. On the other hand, one who does an injury intentionally is not acting in ignorance; but if a man does an injury of set purpose, he is guilty of injustice, and injustice of the sort that renders the doer an unjust man, if it be an act that violates proportion or equality. Similarly one who acts justly on purpose is a just man; but he acts justly only if he acts voluntarily. (1135b11-1136a5)

LS: Now let us stop here for a moment. You are familiar with this question from Plato's *Republic*, in which the distinction between anger, spiritedness, on the one hand, and desire on the other is such a crucial theme.[xii] And now we see here from Aristotle more clearly than perhaps from Plato's text what the solid practical basis for this fateful

[xii] See Plato, *Republic* 439e-441b.

distinction between anger and desire was. As Plato presents it, spiritedness is higher in rank than desire, because spiritedness takes the side of reason against desire. And this is a key point. Now this is an obviously wrong reasoning, as every one of you knows when you have seen a child or grown-up who became angry from thwarted desire, where anger takes the side of desire against reason. That is probably more common than the other. And the whole argument of the *Republic* is really based on this point: that while it makes sense to say that in the *polis*, the warrior, the fighting estate, is higher in rank than the mere producers and the mere consumers, and therefore in this sense spiritedness is higher than desire, of the individual it surely is not true. And the only proof which is really given is that Glaucon when asked by Socrates says, "By Zeus, it is so," which as we know is not a proof.

But now what is the basis for the view that crimes committed from anger are less terrible than crimes committed from desire? Well, proceeding quite empirically, we may proceed as follows. We may raise the question as follows. What is the worst crime committed from anger, ordinarily? Murder or homicide. And the worst crime committed from desire?

Student: Adultery.

LS: Not necessarily. You don't have to specify it: rape. Because adultery doesn't have to be rape, and so—

Student: What did you say it is?

LS: Rape.

Same Student: The worst crime committed from desire?

LS: From desire, yes, from desire as desire. Because adultery doesn't have to be—

Same Student: Oh, I know, I know . . . I'm not arguing adultery is the worst crime [laughter] . . .

LS: No, no one would suggest this.

Same Student: But rather that treason is the worst crime, that is to say—

LS: Yes, but is treason a crime essentially rooted in desire, in bodily desire? It could [be], but ordinarily not.

Student: I'm not talking about treason against the state, I'm talking about against those—doing harm to those who expect good from you: what Brutus did to Caesar, etc., etc.

LS: You could call this crass ingratitude, yes. But on the other hand, there was also the duty toward the republic, wasn't there? It's a complicated case. I was thinking of very simple cases. Now in the case if someone says, "I admit I killed that man, but I did it from anger," this is generally regarded as an attenuating circumstance. But if someone says, "I committed rape but I did it from lust," that would not be regarded as an attenuating circumstance. Now if you ascend from this simple fact to the principles involved, you see that a case can be made for Plato's and also therefore for Aristotle's view that crimes committed from anger are to be treated more mildly than crimes committed from desire. Yes. Now let us continue. Will you read the end of this section?

Reader:
Of involuntary actions some are pardonable and some are not. Errors not merely committed in ignorance but caused by ignorance are pardonable; those committed in ignorance, but caused not by that ignorance but by unnatural or inhuman passion, are unpardonable.

But it may perhaps be doubted whether our discussion of—

LS: We come to that next time. But what crimes does he have in mind? Ineffable crimes which are unpardonable. I think at the beginning of book 7 you would find, perhaps—you can read it at home, [in] 1148b19 following, terrible crimes which cause only disgust and do not permit compassion to arise at all. Good. But let us nevertheless read the very beginning, [so] that we see what we come up against now.

Reader:
But it may perhaps be doubted whether our discussion of suffering and doing injustice has been sufficiently definite; and in the first place, whether the matter really is as Euripides has put it in the strange lines—

'I killed my mother—that's the tale in brief!'
'Were you both willing, or unwilling both?' (1136a5-14)

LS: That is apparently another person in that lost tragedy, Orestes, meaning, was he, the murderer—did he willingly kill his mother? And his mother obviously willing to be killed. Now this new difficulty is this. Does not the act of committing an unjust act, or of suffering an unjust act, depend on the unwillingness of the one who suffers the unjust act, so, for example, that matricide, ordinarily regarded as one of the most terrible crimes, is not a crime at all if the mother urges the son to kill her? These cases happen perhaps more today because of the somewhat more loose notions prevailing than in former times—well, from compassion, conceivably. Now if this is so, if even the most terrible crimes cease to be crimes if they are done with the will of the sufferer, where does the famous objectivity of justice come to? That is another question which in this form was never raised regarding the other virtues, so that justice shows us the great problem of morality more massively than the other virtues do, and thus prepares Aristotle's final finding: if you want to enter a sphere of perfect order and light and clarity, you must go

beyond the sphere of human action. So we leave it—is there any point you would like to raise? We have a few minutes left. Yes?

Student: I was just curious to know if there was any difference, subtle or obvious, between the discussion of voluntary and involuntary actions at the beginning of book 3 and the discussion of voluntariness in 1135a. It seemed almost as if the—[xiii]clarification—

LS: Surely it is a clarification, it is also of course a considerable complication which here arises. And generally speaking one can say it is an ascent from the first statement to the second statement: deeper into the problems, deeper into the entanglements, deeper into the confusions. But surely Aristotle explicitly refers to the fact that he had mentioned these things before, and he refers obviously to book 3, the beginning of book 3.[6]

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[1] Deleted "So this is Mr. Long. Again, Mr. Peterson. Can you give it to Mr.—you are Mr. Peterson? Can you give it to him? Will you pass it on? And Mr. Simpson, Robert Simpson."
[2] LS: Is this a new—?
Students: He doesn't know him. He misunderstood you. He doesn't know Peterson. LS: Oh, I see."
[3] Deleted "so this distinction is clear."
[4] Deleted "action."
[5] Deleted "but."
[6] Deleted "Well, then let me repeat this, we will meet again this Wednesday and next week, and then this will be the end of this class, and those of you who have not handed in their papers by the 29th will be so good as to come here on June 9th to undergo the final examination. Who will this be? How many? You. Well, we will have a nice afternoon together. [Laughter.]"

[xiii] There is a break in the tape at this point.

Session 22: May 20, 1968

Leo Strauss: [In progress] —now begin. First, there are a few papers which I'll return today. First, those which deal with the *Ethics* in general rather than with particular sections. And I have here in front of me [a paper by] Mr. Middlestead, and there are a few points which I would like to make. Now at the beginning you quote from Reinhold Niebuhr a statement where a distinction is made between the ethical and the coercive factors of human life. Is this distinction self-evident? I mean, which would mean the ethical is in no way coercive, and the coercive is in no way ethical.

Student: I don't think so.

LS: I mean, it's not a matter of making you responsible for a statement of another man, but it is simply [that] we should be interested in this kind of question.

Same Student: I think the point I was trying to make . . . related to the ethical and coercive independent of each other . . .

LS: But still, that means of course that they are distinguished. That means the ethical as ethical is in no way coercive.

Same Student: I don't know if it means that.

LS: I suppose that Mr. Niebuhr means it that way—I haven't read the book—otherwise the coordination would not make sense. What would we have to think about this subject on the basis of Aristotle, about this radical distinction between the ethical and coercive?

Another Student: Well, Aristotle wouldn't have thought there was a . . . distinction because, after all, action according to virtue is the result of the coercion of one part of the soul over another part.

LS: Yes, at least to this extent coercion would . . . and this goes even beyond that. Because we all have to go through a stage in which we are either mildly guided or mildly coerced into the right way, and therefore—yes?

Another Student: Can you say that coercion is the same as habituation? I mean, in the *Republic*, it's more than just habituation, it's a different type, more forceful or—

LS: A deeper goal, yes. One could say that. But on the other hand, also that to which we are habituated is in many cases something which we like, and for which we long. You know? I mean, for example, submission to authority on the part of children is not merely a burden imposed on the children; it's also a kind of support for the children which they need and which they know[1] [they] need. And therefore habituation is not simply coercion.

Student: Then it's persuasion more than coercion.

LS: Ya, but if there is a felt need preceding the persuasion, then it cannot be reduced to persuasion. "Illustrative of this contention is the thought that both democratic governments such as that of the United States and more totalitarian regimes such as that in the USSR aim ultimately at the creation of the conditions of happiness and differ only as to the best methods to be employed." This is frequently asserted, of course. But what about the "only"? "Differ *only* as to the best methods to be employed." Assuming that both regimes have the same end, let us say the greatest happiness of the greatest number, but there is a difference as to the means to be employed. You say "only." Is this a negligible thing?

Student: I guess . . . results . . .

LS: Yes, well, think of such actions as the mass murder of the kulaks under Stalin.

Same Student: Isn't that a means, though?

LS: It should be a means! But the question is, what kind of a means?

Another Student: . . .

LS: Therefore the word "only" is questionable, and therefore I think one understands from this point of view somewhat better what Aristotle says when he says that we deliberate about the means, and whether we are good or bad shows itself in what *means* we choose. You know?

Student: By saying "only" I didn't mean that that wasn't an important point.

LS: Yes, but I believe the primary meaning of "only" is just this, and therefore, "prudence, which is the principal virtue in practical matters, is dependent on wisdom, which is the principal virtue in speculative matters. Aristotle makes this explicit at the point in book 6 where he classifies prudence as being the type of cleverness accompanied by virtue in contradistinction to mere smartness, which also is of the genus cleverness, but aims at a bad mark. This definition of the genus and species of practical wisdom demonstrates the necessity of a clear view of the end if the application of the best means is to constitute a prudent act." Yes, but how do we get the clear view of the end, according to Aristotle? You said, "Prudence, which is the principal virtue in practical matters, is dependent on wisdom, which is the principal virtue in speculative matters." And this would seem to imply that we get the clear view of the end through wisdom; through theoretical wisdom. Did Aristotle suggest this in the passage in book 6 to which you refer?

Student: . . . I think he . . . deliberately . . . from virtue . . .

LS: Yes, but is this not something very different from theoretical wisdom? Yes, whether that is satisfactory, this answer, for Aristotle is another matter. Finally, that is also again, if I may say so, a purely semantic point. But I have to watch that too. "All three types of practical wisdom according to Thomas's semantics are"—and so on and so on, namely, domestic prudence, private prudence, and the political prudence. What is the meaning of the word "semantics" here? If you make a distinction between cherries and strawberries, is this a semantic distinction? Why then should the distinction between the household and the city be a semantic distinction? I know there are people who would say all these distinctions are semantic, but we don't have to listen to them. [Laughter]

Now Mr. Cheener? Did I pronounce it incorrectly?

Student: In a sense, yes. [Laughter]

LS: How do you pronounce it?

Same Student: . . .

LS: Oh no, I could never do that. Is this Czech?

Same Student: Polish.

LS: Polish. Yes, well, you took a quite ambitious subject, but a reasonable one. I have a few points. Mr. Cheener, if you will allow me. Mr. Cheener reconsidered the discussion between Schaar, Wolin, and myself on behavioralism and Aristotle in the *American Political Science Review*.[i] He gives first a summary of my assertions and then a summary of the counterassertions of Schaar–Wolin. And then he takes a moderate view which is, I believe, somewhat more favorable to me than to my enemies. [Laughter] Is this—

Same Student: You think it is? [Laughter]

LS: Well, you see, I was perfectly free from all malice, and my enemies were filled with malice. You are perfectly free from malice, and so I thought we belonged together. [Laughter.] Good. And now let us come to a few details. I had asserted [that] the new political science rests on dogmatic atheism. "It is based on behavioral theories regarding religion which exclude, without considering, the possibility that religion rests ultimately on divine revelation. These theories can never be confirmed. Thus predictions of the new political science about the future of societies are questionable." I remember I said that. But what about the "thus"? Why is this a consequence of that? "These behavioralist doctrines are based on dogmatic atheism, hence their predictions about the future of societies are fundamentally dogmatic and untrustworthy." . . . on page 4.

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[i] John H. Schaar and Sheldon S. Wolin, "Essays on the Scientific Study of Politics: A Critique," *American Political Science Review* 57 (1963): 125-50; Herbert J. Storing, Leo Strauss, Walter Berns, Leo Weinstein, and Robert Horwitz, "Replies to Schaar and Wolin," *American Political Science Review* 57 (1963): 151-60.

Same Student: You're asking why they are untrustworthy?

LS: The connection between the two assertions, that is what I'm interested in. I mean, you render correctly what I said, but I wanted to see how much you understood it.

Same Student: Well, I think what you're saying is that the statements of the new political science may be valid to a certain degree or can be used tentatively, but they are not predictions, they are not . . .

LS: But they are very much concerned with making predictions, especially people like Lasswell. Now if there is a very important province, to put it mildly, which simply is not being considered by them, then what are their predictions worth? But I would like to spell this out in the case of the possibility of divine revelation. Well, obviously the future of religion in the Western world and the world in general is a matter of the utmost importance, wherever one stands. And we are confronted here with an entirely new situation, as you see from the daily papers every day. Now predictions are implied in almost every statement, I mean, however modest the statements may be phrased. But are they not all based on the assumption that there is no God who can stop the process or can begin it again in a wholly unforeseeable manner?

Same Student: I think most people assume that.

LS: These people, you believe, assume that?

Same Student: Well, these people not necessarily, but in the newspapers, say, when someone predicts something, I think it's something that just—that would be part of us and we assume it can be so.

LS: All right. Perhaps we'll leave it at that. There's one more point. In defense of my enemies, you say: "For the new political science, advising is indeed important. One only has to look at the staggering amount of consulting done." No one can question that. The question was only, what is . . . the value? And secondly, is what is done by people who are behavioristic political scientists, do they do this kind of thing in their capacity as behavioristic political scientists or in their capacity as human beings with heads on their shoulders? You know, a kind of purely accidental personal union between a man of common sense and a man who also subscribes to the creed of behavioralism.

Same Student: I wasn't making a statement on my own behalf, I was just paraphrasing what Schaar and—

LS: Yes. No, no, that is all right. Now, Mr. Claytor?

Student: Here, sir.

LS: Now this is on a realist critique of Aristotle, which means a criticism of a realist critique of Aristotle. The key point of this criticism is that Aristotle's view is

fundamentally utopian and must be replaced by a realistic approach. You quote here a French socialist: "It is an eternal dispute between those who imagine the world to suit their policy and those who arrange their policy to suit the realities of the world."[ii] Now Aristotle would, according to the view of his enemies, belong to the utopians. You refer to Marx and Hobbes, but especially (and rightly, I think) to Machiavelli. Now there are a few points which we have to take up in this connection. Aristotle is assuming a certain amount of reasonableness on the part of the listener, which must also be tempered by actual experience gained through living. It is true then that in one sense Aristotle is both theoretical and practical at the same time. But this does not make him yet as theoretical in his *Ethics* as you claim. Do you see the point?

Same Student: Yes.

LS: "The *Ethics* is a handbook describing the ways and means of becoming a good man." Is this sufficient? Is this not even misleading? If you take only the part which we have discussed more or less coherently hitherto, can this be said to be "a handbook describing the ways and means of becoming a good man"? For example, what we are reading now on justice, what we have been reading on courage or on magnanimity: does this describe how one becomes a good man?

Same Student: I don't think yet, because we haven't really made the emphasis on, I guess, the actual becoming; we just said—I don't think—perhaps I was a little misleading in using the verb "becoming" as far as—

LS: But that is very important, and it is not a minor matter. And why does Aristotle speak relatively little about the ways and means of becoming a good man? He speaks of something else. What is that something else in the first book?

Same Student: The way to be a good man. I mean—

LS: Exactly! That's what he's about all the time.

Same Student: . . . becoming good . . .

LS: Because how can you possibly say or teach anyone how to become good if you do not know in the first place what it is to be good? So that's clear. And there is no way of avoiding this thing. And secondly, granted that after we know what it is to be a good man we have to know how to become one: why is Aristotle so relatively brief about that?

Sam Student: Excuse me?

LS: Why is Aristotle so relatively brief about becoming a good man?

[ii] Albert Sorel, *L'Europe et la révolution française (huitième partie): La coalition, les traités de 1815 (1812-1815)* (Paris: Plon, 1904), 474.

Same Student: Well, I imagine because of the difficulty involved. And also, I guess, the idea that related to that, it's a long, long experience. He says at the very beginning, you know, that he's talking to people that have to gain this over a lifetime in the sense of practical living and experiencing . . .

LS: Yes, but does this cause the difficulty of speaking about it? Of writing about that? I mean, how does the whole process of becoming good start?

Same Student: By being good, I guess. By the activity of—

LS: Yes, but think of small children everywhere, I suppose by being told "Do" or "Don't," and the children in most cases won't be able to see why. They just do or don't, or maybe they transgress, and in this way certain habits are created, and on the basis of these habits things look different than they did at the beginning: things which seem to be very difficult become easy, and vice versa. And this process goes on for many years, maybe through a lifetime. But there is not very much to say about it, except that somehow we become aware [that] we ought to do this, and then we either do or do not do the right thing. [The] psychology of the various obstacles is of no great interest to Aristotle. That's a case of pathological people, who cannot understand commands and prohibitions and have therefore to be induced by very indirect means to behave. This I believe is the point. Good.

"Machiavelli realizes, then, that Aristotle's political philosophy in the *Ethics* attempted to and actually claimed to achieve benefits for mankind. But based on a profound insight *into his times*, Machiavelli saw a failure of this form of utopianism." I emphasize the expression, "into his times." Do you see why I emphasize this?

Same Student: Because—right—I mean, because in a way it was a peculiar phenomenon of what was happening around the breakup of the medieval—I mean, his times were a partial, you know, in a sense you're saying it was specific to his times, I mean, why he had this insight. I mean, it was kind of . . .

LS: Does Machiavelli refer to his times in order to justify his criticism of Aristotle?

Same Student: I'm sure he does throughout the *Prince*. Doesn't he talk about the city-states and the problem of Caesar or various people not doing this, and then doing this, and then he does go back also to earlier examples, and—

LS: Yes, well, the *Prince*, to the extent to which this is a practical book written for a prince around 1500, will of course deal with the situation around 1500 in Italy. But the work as a whole, the *Prince* and the *Discourses* together, the whole attack, explicit or implicit, of Aristotle, does this refer particularly to the times?

Another Student: The great examples he puts forth, the great founders are precisely out of his times: Romulus, Moses, Theseus.

LS: Yes.

Student: But wouldn't it be a reflection of—well, I guess I didn't really state this explicitly, but wouldn't it be a reflection of his mentality, you know, produced by his times that would lead him to do this? . . . I guess I should have said that . . .

LS: Well, if I did not know that you are a very modest man, I would say you raise a very immodest claim. I mean, you would have first to refute Machiavelli's whole work, and then you could raise the question—after having proven that Machiavelli was *altogether* mistaken, then could you raise the question: why was he mistaken? How come that he was mistaken? And then one possible answer might be: because as one born in this particularly unfortunate epoch, he could not see certain things which we are so happy to see with ease. But whatever one has to think about Machiavelli, Machiavelli did not justify his proceedings by saying, "I'm a child of the Renaissance; this is the wave of the future, now let us jump on that bandwagon," but he started from substantive problems. I mean, [for instance]: Is this a feasible moral–political teaching which is presented to us by the philosophic–theoretical tradition? And if not, why not? But the fact that there is such a thing like the Renaissance around was of no importance for Machiavelli himself. Or differently stated: to explain Machiavelli in terms of the Renaissance, then you presuppose you know what the Renaissance is. How do we know what the Renaissance is? Partly through reading Machiavelli. A very closed circle. Maybe Machiavelli lived in a period which for certain reasons of convenience we call the Renaissance and had very little to do with it except that he followed the fashions of wearing his hair or combing his hair, and so on and so on, but in no important respect.

One more passage. "Machiavelli's critique has visibly collapsed. It is apparent then that no political philosophy can be based on the singular concept of only observing what men do and in no way commenting on what they ought to do." Now this is a bit too simple. It is based on the fact that Machiavelli, while claiming that he will proceed by how men *do* live, nevertheless teaches men all the time how they *ought* to act. But this is so obvious, and Machiavelli surely was aware of that. So if Machiavelli's enterprise has visibly collapsed, one has to adduce a better reason. What would be such a reason? I mean, nothing hidden or subtle.

Student: A better reason I guess would be why what he said . . . ought to do . . . you know, act on the same, you know, what he said they ought to do was in effect wrong, you know, he said they ought to do this or that specifically—

LS: What did he say they ought to do?

Same Student: You know, a variety of different—you know, I mean, the different do's and don'ts that a prince should do in various circumstances, I mean—

LS: For example, to kill one's sole brother, like Romulus killed Remus? Or what do you mean? These kind of precepts—yes, but can one not find out the principle which is directly opposed to the Platonic–Aristotelian principle? I believe one can. Because

Machiavelli says of course he wants to teach an "ought," but an "ought" which is feasible, which is possible among men and therefore which is not utopian, if we use this expression. Now the Platonic–Aristotelian objective had this character, that it was an "ought" regarding which one didn't know whether it would ever become an "is." And its becoming an "is" depended entirely on chance, the clearest expression [being] Plato's statement in the *Republic*: the best regime will come into being if philosophy and political power will coincide. A coincidence. Whether this coincidence will take place can in no way be foreseen or predicted: it depends on chance. What does Machiavelli say about chance?

Same Student: Well, I would guess he would say that . . . you know, we're going to eliminate the idea of chance and then . . .

LS: Yes. So in other words, the question is: is this true? Has the experience since Machiavelli's time shown that chance can be conquered?

Same Student: I'm afraid not. I mean, obviously it hasn't. I mean, chance still is a factor . . .

LS: Yes, and one could perhaps use some commonsensical arguments: that it is even today impossible to predict who will be the next president of the United States, although we have these wonderful methods of prediction and a few other things of this kind . . . larger issues, like the Cold War and its future. Good.

And finally, Mr. Tangasay, who wrote a comparison of Aristotle's *Ethics* and John Dewey's *Human Nature and Conduct*.[iii] Mr. Tangasay? Yes. Well, we discussed your paper some time ago. Yes. Now Mr. Tangasay finds Aristotle and Dewey strikingly similar. That's at least what he says on some occasions, but he also sometimes uses somewhat different language. But very briefly, what is the striking similarity between these two so greatly different men? Dewey has spoken with great fervor and not without some malice against Aristotle. And yet there is something in what you say, I gladly grant that. Can you state it briefly to the class, what this—between Dewey and Aristotle.

Student: Well, it would seem to me that Dewey's protest against Aristotle was—he said Aristotle foisted a doctrine of ends upon Western intellectual history, and as a result most of . . . of Aristotle . . . emphasized that present activity was only a means to achieve a particular end. And Dewey emphasized that present activity mainly came from . . . in the present. I spoke of what seemed to me to be a rather dynamic equilibrium model of human nature there—

LS: Yes, well, this is an expression which is not quite intelligible. But what do you think of this criticism of Aristotle by Dewey: that Aristotle does not find men's happiness in present activity?

[iii] John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct: An Introduction to Social Psychology* (New York: Henry Holt, 1922).

Same Student: I think—my impression is that Dewey's not altogether right in this regard, that Aristotle emphasized present activity, certainly as a means to achieve the goal of happiness, but that one had to . . .

LS: Yes, but what is happiness according to Aristotle?

Same Student: Happiness is present activity.

LS: I see. So what's the difference?

Same Student: They were saying the same thing.

LS: So what's the difference in this respect?

Same Student: Nothing.

LS: Yes, exactly. But obviously there is a very great difference between the two, and where is this difference found if we disregard entirely the misunderstandings? According to Dewey, the concept of the good could never be considered to be "out there," or an external aim fixed and secure for all time. That is one formulation which intimates the difference. What is the true difference between the two men?

Same Student: Well, I tried—it's very difficult to get a hold of. It would seem to be a difference of emphasis between the two. Aristotle did emphasize the end, and Dewey emphasized the present, and—

LS: Yes, but the end in this sense would be death, and Aristotle does not mean of course death. He means life, and therefore present activity—not the present activity of a baby, or for that matter of another immature human being, but the present activity of a grown-up human being. This is what counts: whether he acts well or basely. And there is no end somewhere hanging in the air, as some phrases of Dewey seemed to suggest. But I said "grown-up human being." The favorite expression of Dewey, if I remember well, is "growth." Now here we have perhaps something of a difference between Dewey and Aristotle. What about growth?

Same Student: Well, I would think that Aristotle would emphasize that the child has to grow, has to . . . grow, has to . . .

LS: Yes. But after.

Same Student: And Dewey would argue the same thing—

LS: Yes, well, but we do not always remain children, and then?

Same Student: Right. I suppose that Aristotle would emphasize that perhaps a man of practical wisdom—men of reason could agree about certain standards or principles that a

man would have to live by if he were to be a mature person. But again, I would think that these principles would always be subject to some sort of scrutiny and could possibly be changing even through . . .

LS: We come to that, surely. This is what is in Dewey's mind. But it is connected also with this growth business. When Aristotle speaks of growth, to the extent to which he does at all in the *Ethics*, he thinks of course always of a process leading to a *term* of the growth: the child, the grown-up human being; the acorn, the oak tree; the egg, the hen; and so on, whereas Dewey likes to speak of growth without thinking in any way of any possible term of the growth: indefinite growth. And secondly, here there are human beings, each growing: everyone grows, and ever more, and no one takes away the sun from anybody else. In other words, no conflict; the conflicts are accidental. In a good society, everyone would grow and grow and grow, and there would never be any conflict. This is the absolutely utopian ingredient, I think, of Dewey's thought.[iv] This is—

Same Student: I don't think it was that indefinite in my reading of Dewey, but there were limitations within which any person could live. In other words, if one were to seek to grow to the extent that it hurts his brother or does something that society does not approve of, then they'd definitely place a restriction upon that growth.

LS: Yes, no doubt. I mean, that would be the minimum condition. But even that would not be quite sufficient, because other forms of hurting which can never be reached by law and which are a consequence of this indeterminate growth would nevertheless happen and have to be provided for. But because we don't have indefinite time, the key point, difference between Dewey and Aristotle seems to be this: that Dewey thinks in terms—both are concerned with virtuous activity, there's no question. But the analysis of virtuous activity differ very radically, because Aristotle thinks in terms of passion and reason; Dewey thinks in terms of habit and impulse. That is something very different. Because passion and reason are fundamentally the same in all human beings at all times. Fundamentally. Say, jealousy, envy, is not a new historical phenomenon which came up a few centuries ago: men always have these emotions, and there is also therefore in principle a way of treating them or handling them. But for Dewey, very radical changes take place, namely, their habits change; say, the habit of Neanderthal man differs radically from the habit of men in any later stage, or the habit of a Chinese coolie differs radically from that of a Western merchant, and so on.

Student: What is the difference then between impulse and passion?

LS: Impulse—well, the notion that passion must be controlled is not equally present when Dewey speaks of impulse. Dewey turns it around. He says: you must have first habit, the cake of custom, without which no society is possible. But once you have that, the stability, then it all depends that this cake of custom is leavened and leaves freedom

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[iv] John Dewey (1859–1952) argued that education had no particular goal: "growth"—intellectual, emotional, moral—was an end in itself. See especially *Democracy and Education* (1916), *Experience and Education* (1938).

for development, for impulse. Impulse raises on the basis of habit [and] transforms it. And the moral problem for Dewey is to strike a balance, not between reason and passion, or between different passions, rather, but to strike a balance between impulse and habit. And this balance will of course differ from individual to individual, from historical epoch to historical epoch, and therefore there is very little which can be said to be universally valid, unchangeable. Very little in Dewey, and very much in Aristotle.

Finally, one point which has something to do with the practical side of Dewey. From the reading of *Human Nature and Conduct*, this writer acquired the idea that Dewey would probably favor some form of loose democracy. Yes, loose—very loose, one could say. Well, and I can only remind you of the big event some years ago when people found out that Ivan learned to read better than Johnny.[v] You remember? That was the great reaction to Dewey; it began at this very moment. That is implied in his concept of democracy . . . Good. Now the other papers I will return next time, and perhaps we leave time next time for that. All right.

Now we have discussed last time the difficulty peculiar to justice: a man may be a transgressor without being unjust. We have the example which seemed to be favored by everyone: the gentleman who commits adultery without being an adulterer. In a great work of modern times, this subject has been presented in this form, namely, in Goethe's *Faust*. Faust is presented as "quote, a good man who in his dark urge [I try to translate literally—LS]—who in his dark urge preserves his consciousness of the right way, unquote."[vi] Now what is that dark urge, and how does it show itself? Well, you know that in the first place he seduces poor Gretchen, and secondly, he kills Gretchen's mother. Admittedly he gave her only a tranquilizer supplied by Mephistopheles, but that this was fatal he didn't know—but he could have known, given the source. [Laughter] And finally he kills the brother who is enraged about the loss of honor of his sister. And nevertheless, he is a good man. Irving Babbitt wrote a very tough criticism of Goethe's notion in one of his essays;[vii] I forget now in which. Aristotle, I think, did not think of a case so extreme as that of Faust. Well, there is an example of that: that would perhaps be Alcibiades. But he never says that Alcibiades was a model of a gentleman, or if you wish, of a gentleman who once or twice transgressed but otherwise was perfect. [LS chuckles.] Now this is one point.

The second related difficulty we have seen at 1135b23, and that is: someone does an unjust act, but does not do it in an unjust manner. The specific example: a man is prevented by kidnappers from restoring a deposit in time. Now he is of course in one sense perfectly just; I mean, it was not his fault. Yet that it was an unjust act is shown by the fact that he must pay the compensation due for nonpayment in time. Now these and other difficulties are due to the peculiarities of justice. Justice is *the* virtue toward the other man. And on this there is founded the difference, the possibility of a divorce of the

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[v] See Rudolf Flesch, *Why Johnny Can't Read—And What You Can Do About It* (New York: Harper, 1955).
[vi] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust*, "Prologue in Heaven," lines 328-329.
[vii] See Irving Babbitt, *Rousseau and Romanticism* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1919).

external action on the one hand, and the intention on the other. Now we were at this point and we had begun already, but let us read the beginning again in 1136a10 to 14.

Reader:
But it may perhaps be doubted whether our discussion of suffering and doing injustice has been sufficiently definite; and in the first place, whether the matter really is, as Euripides has put it in the strange lines—

'I killed my mother—that's the tale in brief!'
'Were you both willing, or unwilling both?'

LS: Let us stop here. Now this is a new difficulty. Does not doing injustice or suffering injustice depend on the unwillingness of the individual suffering injustice, so much so that matricide would cease to be a crime if the mother begs her son to kill her? Now if this were unqualifiedly so, the objectivity of justice would completely collapse, because any crime committed at the request of someone who suffers from it would cease to be a crime. Now how does he go on?

Reader:
Is it really possible to suffer injustice voluntarily, or on the contrary is suffering injustice always involuntary, just as acting unjustly is always voluntary? And again, is suffering injustice always voluntary, or always involuntary, or sometimes one and sometimes the other? And similarly with being treated justly (acting justly being always voluntary). Thus it would be reasonable to suppose that both being treated unjustly and being treated justly are similarly opposed to acting unjustly and acting justly respectively: that either both are voluntary or both involuntary. But it would be paradoxical to assert that even being treated justly is always voluntary—

LS: Yes, but the case of which he thinks here is that of punishment. This question is discussed at length in Plato's *Gorgias*.[viii] Now if you undergo punishment, then you suffer justice. Justice is done to you. But this does not necessarily mean that you like it; it does not necessarily mean that you undergo it voluntarily. So you are acted upon justly without in any way on your part being a voluntary participant in the action. So the question which Aristotle raises here altogether is: is *all* suffering injustice involuntary? Is *all* acting, doing injustice, voluntary? This is the question. Yes? Let's go on.

Reader:
for people are sometimes treated justly against their will. The fact is that the further question might be raised, must a man who has had an unjust thing done to him always be said to have been treated unjustly, or does the same thing hold good of suffering as of doing something unjust? One may be a party to a just act, whether as its agent or its object, incidentally. And the same clearly is true of an unjust act: doing what is unjust is not identical with acting unjustly, nor yet is suffering what is unjust identical with being treated unjustly, and the same is true of acting and being treated justly; for it is

[viii] See Plato, *Gorgias* 476a-481a.

impossible to be treated unjustly unless the other acts unjustly, or to be treated justly unless he acts justly. (1136a10-31)

LS: So in other words, this is the solution of this difficulty: you undergo punishment *justly*. And you are entirely an involuntary partner in this just transaction, but Aristotle says this is accidental, because the main point is of course whether the punishment inflicted upon you is just. Then the punisher acts justly, and it is irrelevant for the punishment whether you undergo it voluntarily or only under coercion. Yes?

Reader:
But if to act unjustly is simply to do harm to someone voluntarily, and voluntarily means knowing the person affected, the instrument, and the manner of injury, it will follow both that the man of defective self-restraint, inasmuch as he voluntarily harms himself, voluntarily suffers injustice, and also that it is possible for a man to act unjustly towards himself—

LS: Now Aristotle tries to clarify the matter starting from a different angle: what is doing injustice? Answer: if it means harming somebody else voluntarily, then one may do injustice to one's self, for one may harm oneself voluntarily. Think of someone taking poison, some form of poison, or a drug or whatever. And is this possible? Go on.

Reader:
(for the possibility of this is also a debated question). Moreover, lack of self-restraint may make a person voluntarily submit to being harmed by another; which again would prove that it is possible to suffer injustice voluntarily. But perhaps this definition of acting unjustly is incorrect, and we should add to the words 'to do harm knowing the person affected, the instrument and the manner' the further qualification 'against that person's wish.'

LS: So now this is then the quasi-final definition: to do injustice to a man means to harm him voluntarily against the will of the man harmed. And then the conclusion which Aristotle draws is: one cannot do injustice to oneself. If one harms oneself voluntarily, then one is not forced; it is not imposed upon you against your will. Therefore it is not strictly speaking [that] injustice is done to you. Yes?

Reader:
If so, though a man can be harmed and can have an unjust thing done to him voluntarily, no one can suffer injustice voluntarily— (1136a31-b6)

LS: Now let us look back at the case of the matricide. The mother voluntarily suffers unjust things, namely, that the son murders the mother. But she is not voluntarily wronged: *she* has no reason to complain. But, say, the public prosecutor, or anybody else taking the case of the law as law: he justly accuses her. She is as guilty—assuming that she is not killed in the process, then she is as guilty of the attempted murder as her son would be, because she is at least an accessory before the fact. Yes?

Reader:
because no one can wish to be harmed: even the unrestrained man does not, but acts contrary to his wish, since no one wishes for a thing that he does not think to be good, and the unrestrained man does what he thinks he ought not to do. One who gives away what is his own—as Homer says that Glaucus gave to Diomede

golden arms for bronze,
An hundred beeves' worth for the worth of nine—

cannot be said to suffer injustice; for giving rests with oneself, suffering injustice does not—there has to be another person who acts unjustly. (1136b6-13)

LS: Yes. So that is the end of this chapter. Now here he takes up again the case of the man lacking self-control who harms himself. But does he wrong himself? Answer: no, because he does not do the harmful thing *in order to* harm himself, but because of the supposed good. If he takes the poison, he does not do it in order to harm himself but perhaps in order to kill himself, which in the circumstances he regards as a good. So it remains then, the principle *volenti non fit injuria*: to him who wills, no injustice is done.

The case of Glaucus and Diomedes offers no difficulty, since no fraud whatever was involved. I mean, if someone is satisfied with an exchange of goods, where the goods on the one side have a thousandfold value of the goods on the other side, no one can complain. So the objective damage is not important; the important point is the intention on both sides. Yes?

Student: So this is different from the case of the matricide, if the mother wills death and she is as unjust in the objective sense as the son who kills her . . .

LS: The action could nevertheless be unjust, and she has no reason to complain. The injustice is not done to her [but] there could be injustice done to the whole *polis*. Think of the simple case, which is much clearer, of course, that if some harm is done to a minor with the consent of the minor; and yet this is not recognized by the law because the law takes the position that the minor is unable to judge. And now in the case of grown-up people, people supposed to be able to judge, there may still be a public interest involved of which the state or the *polis* takes care but which excludes every right of the participant to complain. The mother cannot complain, but the *polis* can, and maybe must, complain. Is that not intelligible?

Same Student: Yes, it is. In the case of the incontinent, the *polis* would seem to have an equal grounds for complaining.

LS: Under certain conditions, yes. Sure. For example, if by his incontinent actions, he[2] [makes himself unable] to do his military service, that would be a case, sure. But nevertheless, no harm is done to him; he does harm to the *polis* and is punished for that . . . Yes?

Another Student: If Aristotle says that all people will what they think is good for them, and no one wishes what they think is harmful, isn't it a very short step to say that virtue and justice is knowledge? If people just know what is good for them, they will do it, and if they don't do what is good for them, then they just don't know it. And so—

LS: Aristotle is indeed very close to Plato, or to Socrates, in this point in particular. We won't be able to read this year the discussion in book 7 about incontinence, where he takes that up in detail. But Aristotle shares one principle with Socrates: knowledge is something unbelievably strong. And that a man with his eyes open should do the wrong thing is as great a riddle for Aristotle as it is for Socrates, only his solution is not quite as paradoxical. We understand immediately the situation as described in a famous verse of Seneca's *Medea*: "I see the better things, and I approve of them, and yet I follow the worse courses."[ix] Daily examples from our own or other people's lives abound. And yet this was for Socrates and Plato and Aristotle the greatest riddle. And why? Because they saw the immense power of knowledge. Knowledge cannot be overrun in this way. There must be an obfuscation of knowledge in the first place before this can take place. So if someone sees very clearly that he should not do this, he sees it only up to a certain point, namely, in general. But regarding his special case now, there is obfuscation. Well, it may take on the form of sophistry, and [he might] simply say, well, once is—how do you say it? A German proverb, the expression "*einmal ist keinmal*," one time is no time, or some other form of this kind. But at any rate, an obfuscation takes place. That is Aristotle's point too.

Same Student: Isn't this a powerful argument then against the independence of the sphere of action, because if you can say "*einmal ist keinmal*," you can justify anything, you can justify any action.

LS: Yes, sure. Well, I mean, the sophistry of human passion is practically ineradicable, there is no doubt. But what has this to do with our question? That would happen in either case. On the non-Socratic as well as the Socratic basis there would always be this undeniable fact that—

Same Student: Still, still you would have a stronger argument for the sophistic if you said that, "Well, after all the sphere of action is independent, we don't have to look at the highest principles all the time and try to relate them," then you could say not perhaps "*einmal*" but "*dreimal*."[x]

LS: Well, we don't have to look at the high principles. There is a simple example. Someone is supposed not to drink whisky. And I'm sorry that I bring again an example from German literature, but it so happens that I have read it in my youth more frequently than English literature. A woman is in the unfortunate condition that she is given to the drinking of whisky, let us say, and she is opposed to that, and she prays. She prays that God gives her the power not to drink whisky, but while praying on her knees she is

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[ix] The remark comes from Ovid's Medea. See *Metamorphoses*, book 7, lines 20-21.
[x] Three times.

moving towards the whisky.[xi] [LS chuckles; laughter.] I mean, every moral doctrine has to admit that these things exist; the question is only how to interpret them. And one interpretation is that people do this with their eyes open, fully open. And here it is perfectly clear that she shouldn't drink that, and then passion coming from below crushes knowledge. And on the alternative view, the Socratic–Aristotelian view, no, the knowledge is already obfuscated when this takes place. As I say, we would have to study the section on incontinence in order to get the full benefit of Aristotle. To us modern people this is a very strange doctrine.

Same Student: But then perhaps the radical cutting off of the sphere of practical action from the sphere of ultimate truth—

LS: That has nothing to do with that, because one could say in a way that Aristotle does that, in a way. But one could surely not say this of Socrates and Plato, that the key point is the power of knowledge. The power of knowledge is—

Same Student: In a sense, knowledge is the connection between the two.

LS: Yes, the power of knowledge is so that it cannot be overcome by anything else in man.

Student: Well, can we say that in modern psychiatry . . . insight is reflected in the doctrine of rationalization as being the dominating form of self-justification, no matter what I do? This man drinks too much. I drink, but I don't drink as much, or I drink for different reasons, and therefore my case is not the same. In other words, the same kind [of] an obscuring of knowledge takes place.

LS: Yes, well, but the very term "rationalization" means that this is something which comes afterward, you know. And the true motivations are purely passionate or emotional, and the reason is a kind of servant of the passions. I think the doctrine behind it is radically different. Mr. Shulsky?

Mr. Shulsky: Yes, well, it does in a way point to the fact that somehow one simply can't act against reason, one has to—in a way, rationalization is . . .

LS: This is I believe what Miss Schroeder meant. That is true. But this is not what the men speaking of rationalization ordinarily mean by that, by their doctrines. That this is a kind of indirect proof of the fact that man is a rational animal, that they do not mean.

Mr. Shulsky: They don't mean it. . . .

LS: Yes.

Student: . . .

[xi] Wilhelm Busch, *Die fromme Helene* (Heidelberg: Basserman, 1872).

LS: Yes, sure.

Same Student: Isn't there some danger that this idea . . . totalitarian regimes indefensible claims for knowledge . . . Do you see what I'm getting at?

LS: Well, when we speak of knowledge, we mean knowledge of the truth. A pretended knowledge is not knowledge.

Same Student: What I'm getting at is this—and I'm not necessarily agreeing with . . . by some writers that Aristotle and Plato especially . . . responsible, well, not directly, for many totalitarian . . . that have taken place because of the particular doctrine of knowledge . . . truth.

LS: Yes, but give a single example of such a responsibility.

Same Student: I was thinking of Karl Popper's book.[xii] Have you read it?

LS: No, I have only heard about it. But it is notorious. From what I have heard from competent people, that a man who talks all the time about science doesn't have the slightest notion of the scientific or scholarly procedure in speaking about things like Plato, or Hegel, or other subjects. We know a bit about the genesis of the so-called totalitarian regimes in the twentieth century, but there is nowhere an influence of Plato and Aristotle. Perhaps some professors as an afterthought referred to Plato and Aristotle, but . . . For Plato and Aristotle, the mere fact that these were demagogues (shouting, vulgar demagogues) at the head of masses of men was a perfectly sufficient reason for having nothing but contempt for this. No, no link. No link. The only excuse which people like Popper could have is this: that Plato, if he wrote the Seventh Letter, which I believe, says[3] that when he was about twenty, some of his friends at that time made the revolution, let us say, of the Thirty Tyrants, you know, to restore virtue and justice in Athens, and then they behaved in an absolutely bestial manner, so much so that in retrospect the old despised democracy appeared to be the Golden Age. Now all right, so then Plato was tempted for a moment when he was twenty. But he had sixty long years to repent that, and how unfair to hold him responsible for that velleity of a moment in the life of a young boy. No, that is nothing; not to be taken seriously. Yes?

Student: Plato had students since he was twenty years old . . . he was a teacher of tyrants, and you could say the same thing about—

LS: Of whom?

Same Student: Dionysius.

LS: Well, he wanted to help the Syracusans, and in order to do that he tried to civilize Dionysius of Syracuse. He was after all a friend of Dion, the man who was the enemy of

[xii] Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies, Volume 1: The Spell of Plato* (London: G. Routledge & Sons, 1945).

Dionysius,[xiii] to say nothing of the fact that a tyrant, a word which covers a great variety of phenomena, is not the same as a *Führer*.

Same Student: Oh, no, but I'm just, for instance, Alexander was counted as . . .

LS: He was a legitimate king, after all. But you know what Aristotle thought about it: Aristotle was prepared to instruct him, to educate him, but he disapproved of his policy. And Aristotle is blamed by people like Popper because he did not approve of Alexander's integrationist policy, you know, of Greek and Persians. So in other words, where shall we begin and end once we begin with this kind of argument? Yes?

Student: You said that . . . knowledge cannot be wiped out . . . self-indulgence . . . light of reason . . .

LS: Yes, as long as the knowledge is there. As long as the knowledge is there, [but] the knowledge cannot be wiped out. The knowledge can give way; for example, a man may die, [and] then his knowledge disappears.

Student: . . . one becomes so self-indulgent, so unjust that he no longer has the knowledge—

LS: Ya, sure. Sure, a man can go and corrupt himself so that even the very recollection of what he once knew will vanish; this is clear. But the point is that once he is no longer *compos mentis*, then you cannot possibly say his mind was overcome by passion, because there was no longer a mind to overcome. The problem or phenomenon to be explained or to be clarified is precisely: can the mind *in its actuality* be overcome?

Student: Would you see any relationship between this and say the Apostle Paul's argument in Romans, chapter 1 about in the beginning men had the knowledge of God, but—

LS: Yes, sure, there is a connection: a diametrically opposite view. [Laughter] Sure. I didn't say say it in order to make it up, but obviously there is a diametrically opposite view. And the fact that we are all brought up in the biblical tradition makes it particularly difficult for us to understand the Socratic–Platonic–Aristotelian view. One can also say that in a way the Pauline view, although [it consists of] very strong statements, is closer to what we commonsensically feel not only today but to what men commonsensically thought at all times rather than the other view. Now where are we now? b15, yes.

Reader:
There still remain[xiv] two of the questions that we proposed to discuss: (1) Is it ever he who gives the unduly large share, or is it always he who receives it, that is guilty of the injustice? and (2) Can one act unjustly towards oneself?

[xiii] See Plutarch, *Lives*, "Dion."
[xiv] The tape was changed at this point. The omitted portion of the passage has been supplied from the text.

If the former alternative is possible, that is, if it may be the giver and not the receiver of too large a share who acts unjustly, then when a man knowingly and voluntarily assigns a larger share to another than to himself—as modest people are thought to do, for an equitable man is apt to take less than his due—this is a case of acting unjustly towards oneself. But perhaps this also requires qualification. For the man who gave himself the smaller share may possibly have got a larger share of some other good thing, for instance glory, or intrinsic moral nobility.

LS: So is it a case of injuring oneself, of wronging oneself, if one gives the other man more than to oneself? But Aristotle says this is precisely the case of the gentleman. He does this all the time, and he of course does not do injustice to himself. He gets something much better than money, namely, praise or the noble itself. That is what he says here. Yes?

Reader:
Also the inference may be refuted by referring to our definition of acting unjustly: in the case supposed, the distributor has nothing done to him against his wish; therefore he does not suffer injustice merely because he gets the smaller share: at most he only suffers damage.

LS: So he who gives more than he owes at worst suffers harm, loss of property or whatever, but no injury. He has not been wronged. Yes?

Reader:
And it is clear that the giver as well as the receiver of an undue share may be acting unjustly, and that the receiver is not doing so in all cases. For the charge of injustice attaches, not to a man of whom it can be said that he does what is unjust, but to one of whom it can be said that he does this voluntarily, that is to say one from whom the action originates; and the origin of the act in this case lies in the giver and not in the receiver of the share.

LS: Ya. The unjust distributor, or perhaps judge, does not make the receiver's receiving an unjust act, at least not necessarily. That's obvious. Or is there any difficulty? If you, as a *bona fide* party to a lawsuit, get more than you deserve by an unjust decision of the judge of which injustice you are unaware, then you do not act unjustly. Yes?

Reader:
Again, 'to do a thing' has more than one meaning. In a certain sense a murder is done by the inanimate instrument, or by the murderer's hand, or by a slave acting under orders. But though these do what is unjust, they cannot be said to act unjustly. (1136b15-31)

LS: This is again this distinction which does not come out so well in the English translation. Say, the hand or the knife doesn't commit an unjust act, and yet it does an unjust thing: the unjust thing, say, being murder. But it doesn't act unjustly, of course: being inanimate, it cannot act unjustly. Yes?

Reader:
Again, although if a judge has given an unfair judgement in ignorance, he is not guilty of injustice, nor is the judgement unjust, in the legal sense of justice (though the judgement is unjust in one sense, for legal justice is different from the first justice)[xv]—

LS: Let us stop here one moment. The first justice: this is the same [as] what he called formerly *to physikon dikaion*, the natural right, and the only other reference to the natural right which occurs here, although interestingly enough not under the name. Now the natural right, or rather the right in the primary and first sense, means here "the simply or unqualifiedly just." If we have an unjust decision without subjective injustice, then justice in the ordinary sense would in no way be affected, but justice in the highest sense [would be]. Yes. I mean, if the judge hands down [an] unjust decision but not guiltily, then in one sense he is perfectly just. And yet in a more important sense, not he but his action, his verdict, is unjust, and that is perhaps the most important consideration. Yes?

Reader:
yet if he knowingly gives an unjust judgement, he is himself taking more than his share, either of favour or of vengeance. Hence a judge who gives an unjust judgement for these motives takes more than his due just as much as if he shares the proceeds of the injustice; for even a judge who assigns a piece of land on that condition does not receive land but money.)

LS: Now this is a relatively simple case of the corrupt judge and his unjust gain. And Aristotle uses here very laconic language, meaning by this example of land and money (he means enlarging that): it doesn't make any difference whether he gets any material advantage from a corrupt judgment. It is perfectly sufficient if he exercises revenge on the man whom he condemns, and so on and so on. This is no difficulty. Yes. Now let us read as much as we can of the next chapter.

Reader:
Men think that it is in their power to act unjustly, and therefore that it is easy to be just. But really this is not so. It is easy to lie with one's neighbour's wife or strike a bystander or slip some money into a man's hand, and it is in one's power to do these things or not; but to do them as a result of a certain disposition of mind is not easy, and is not in one's power. Similarly men suppose it requires no special wisdom to know what is just and what is unjust, because it is not difficult to understand the things about which the law pronounces. But the actions prescribed by law are only accidentally just actions. (1136b32-1137a12)

LS: Yes. Now let us return here to 1129b12, a passage which we have discussed before, where he says: "All the legal acts, or the legal things, are *in a manner* just." You remember? That he said at the beginning. Now he uses a much more restrained statement: the legal things, the things established by the laws, are not the just things, except accidentally, meaning they mean to be, they are meant to be just, but whether they are in

[xv] In Rackham's translation: "from justice in the primary sense."

fact is a long question. The purpose of this particular chapter is very difficult to see. I for one do not see it.

Reader:
How an action must be performed, *how* a distribution must be made to be a just action or a just distribution—to know this is a harder task than to know what medical treatment will produce health. Even in medicine, though it is easy to know what honey, wine and hellebore, cautery and surgery are, to know how and to whom and when to apply them so as to effect a cure is no less an undertaking than to be a physician. And for this very reason men think that the just man may act unjustly no less than justly, because the just man is not less but rather more able than another to do any particular unjust thing: for example, he is able to lie with a woman, or strike a blow, and a brave man is able to throw away his shield and able to wheel to the right or left and run away.[xvi] But to be a coward and to be guilty of injustice consists not in doing these things (except accidentally), but in doing them from a certain disposition of mind; just as to be a physician and cure one's patients is not a matter of employing or not employing surgery or drugs, but of doing so in a certain manner.

LS: So it is at least as difficult to know the just things as to know the healthy things. I mean, in an external and superficial way, to know them is easy, but to know them properly, technically, adequately, that is very difficult in most cases. So there is here an analogy between the just man and the physician, an analogy with which you are familiar from Plato's *Republic*;[xvii] and yet the *Republic* precisely makes clear, and Aristotle too in other places, the great difference between the physician or the technical man in general and the morally good man. And that would lead us now too far. Let us now complete this chapter.

Reader:
Claims of justice exist between persons who share in things generally speaking good, and who can have too large a share or too small a share of them. There are persons who cannot have too large a share of these goods: such as probably[xviii] the gods. And there are those who can derive no benefit from any share of them: namely, the incurably vicious; to them all the things generally good are harmful. But for others they are beneficial within limits; and this is the case with human beings.[xix] (1137a12-30)

LS: Yes. Well, this is a kind of concluding remark to this effect: that the just things are located between two extremes, which are where we can no longer find them, between simple extremes. The gods, "in a way"—the word which he translates here "probably" is "perhaps"—the gods on the one hand, and men for whom nothing good can be good because of their complete corruption. The sphere in which the just things reside, are at

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[xvi] In Rackham's translation: "he *can* lie with a woman, or strike a blow, and a brave man *can* through away his shield, and *can* wheel to the right."
[xvii] This analogy is developed throughout book 1 of the *Republic* and is introduced in 332c.
[xviii] In Rackham's translation: "doubtless, for example."
[xix] In Rackham's translation: "with ordinary mortals."

home, is not simple as these two extremes limiting the sphere of the just things are simple.

Now in the sequel he then turns to the question of equity, and we will take this up next time. And I hope to be able to return the papers next time. Thank you.

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[1] Deleted "to."
[2] Deleted "disables himself."
[3] Deleted "there."

Session 23: May 22, 1968

Leo Strauss: I would like to conclude today our joint reading of the fifth book of the *Ethics*. This last section of the *Ethics*, which we began reading already last time, is difficult, not so much on account of the subject matter and what Aristotle says about it as because one doesn't know why Aristotle does speak of this particular subject here. The plan seems to be confused or disorderly, and it is very hard to believe that Aristotle ever wrote something confusedly. But of course it might not have been Aristotle but the fate of books after a man's death, and for this no human being can be held responsible.

Now we come to the section dealing with equity. Let us consider first how this is prepared, what the context is. Aristotle has said repeatedly that to be unjust and to be a transgressor, i.e., to commit an unjust action, are two different things. Now in making this distinction, it is very important whether the action is voluntary or not. Take the case of the man who does not return a deposit in time, yet it's because he is prevented by kidnappers from doing so. So in one sense he doesn't keep his part of the contract: he commits an unjust act; and yet he cannot strictly be held to have committed an unjust act, and this leads to a distinction between strict law and equitable law, the Romans' distinction. The Greeks have a similar distinction: the Greek word is *epieikeia*, of which Aristotle will speak right at the beginning of the chapter.

But let us first have another look at the *Rhetoric*, and the simplest thing would be if Mr. Pangle would read just a few paragraphs, from 11 to 14, book 1, chapter 13, sections 11 to 14 of the *Rhetoric*.

Reader:
We have said that there are two kinds of just and unjust actions (for some are written, but others are unwritten), and have spoken of those concerning which the laws are explicit; of those that are unwritten there are two kinds. One kind arises from an excess of virtue or vice, which is followed by praise or blame, honour or dishonour, and rewards; for instance, to be grateful to a benefactor, to render good for good, to help one's friends, and the like; the other kind contains what is omitted in the special written law. For that which is equitable seems to be just, and equity is justice that goes beyond the written law. These omissions are sometimes involuntary, sometimes voluntary, on the part of the legislators; involuntary when it may have escaped their notice, voluntary when, being unable to define for all cases, they are obliged to make a universal statement, which is not applicable to all, but only to most, cases; and whenever it is difficult to give a definition owing to the infinite number of cases, as, for instance, the size and kind of an iron instrument used in wounding; for life would not be long enough to reckon all the possibilities. If then no exact definition is possible, but legislation is necessary, one must have recourse to general terms; so that, if a man wearing a ring lifts up his hand to strike or actually strikes, according to the written law he is guilty of wrongdoing, but in reality he is not; and this is a case for equity.[i] (1374a18-b1)

[i] Aristotle, *The "Art" of Rhetoric* (London: William Heinemann; New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1926), 145-47.

LS: Thank you. So there are two kinds of just things that are unwritten; Aristotle does not speak here of "natural" but of "unwritten." The first are the things which are beyond, higher than, the law. Yes?

Student: Something that came up here in that passage of the *Rhetoric* that's also related to book 5 of the *Ethics* . . . confusing. He says that men commit acts for which they are either praised or blamed or rewarded, but he doesn't give any . . . for being rewarded.

LS: For example, if someone is grateful to his benefactors, he is rewarded, praised with respect, and so on.

Student: Yes, but I should think if he's offering reward as a possibility, he should also be offering punishment.

LS: No, that is the point. This doesn't work. We come to that; I will explain it. First are the things which are above the law, higher than the law. Take the first example, that of gratitude. If gratitude, reciprocation for kind actions, were made a law, there could no longer be any gratitude. The obliged man could sue for proper behavior on the part of the man who may be nice. Gratitude is voluntary, or it is nothing, and therefore, by its very nature, it cannot be legislated. And the same applies to the other thing, helping friends. This is also extremely hard to define, because friends—having friends means of course also taking the side against the enemies (not here the public enemies, but the private enemies), and this is not the business of the judge or of the legislator to take sides in these kinds of troubles.

Now the second kind, which is more important, the second kind of unwritten just things, is what is omitted in the particular law, i.e., in the law of this particular city which is as such the written law. And this is done fundamentally because of the defect of every legislation. Aristotle will speak about this in greater detail and [with] greater clarity in the coming chapter of the *Ethics*, to which we may turn now. But the latter, to repeat, is the only thing which he calls equitable. Yes?

Reader:
We have next to speak of Equity and the equitable, and of their relation to Justice and to what is just respectively. For upon examination it appears that Justice and Equity are neither absolutely identical nor generically different. Sometimes, it is true, we praise equity and the equitable man, so much so that we even apply the word 'equitable' as a term of approval to other things besides what is just, and use it as the equivalent of 'good,' denoting by 'more equitable' merely that a thing is better. Yet at other times, when we think the matter out, it seems strange that the equitable should be praiseworthy if it is something different from[ii] the just. If they are different, either the just or the equitable is not good; if both are good, they are the same thing.

[ii] In Rackham's translation: "other than."

These then are the considerations, more or less, from which the difficulty as to the equitable arises. (1137a31-b6)

LS: Let us stop here for a moment. Now what is this difficulty? Aristotle refers here to Greek usage [of] the word which we translate by "equitable," *epieikes* or *epieikeia*. This is also used in the sense of "nice," as in a nice or gentle man. You know, one of the many words the Greeks had for a gentleman was *ho epieikēs*, where it did not have the narrow meaning of the equitable man, but it included it: it is a part of man's virtue to be equitable and not merely just. But this precisely raises the difficulty. We regard what is more equitable as better than what is merely just. Hence, is then the just not good, not serious? Or is the equitable not just? The alternative would be that both are identical, the just and the equitable, but this would make [for] unintelligible usage, where one distinguishes between justice and the equitable.

Now I will read to you a passage from Plato's *Laws*, which might be of some help for the understanding of this passage, and that is 757d to e. That is a passage of crucial importance for the *Laws* as a whole; I believe I have referred to it before, but I will now take out one passage.

"Whoever founds the city at any time must make this same object the aim of his legislation, not the advantage of a few tyrants, or of one, or of some form of democracy, but justice always. And this consists in what we have just stated, namely, the natural equality given on each occasion to things unequal. [Natural equality means of course here in fact inequality, because if you treat by nature unequal things according to their nature, they will get unequal shares.—LS] Nonetheless, it is necessary for every city at times to employ even this equality in a modified equality, if it is to avoid involving itself in intestine discord in one section or another. For the equitable and considerate, wherever employed, is an infringement of the perfect and exact, as being contrary to strict justice."[iii]

And concretely, that means in the context [that] one must also introduce arithmetical equality in the form of election by lot. That is the context. But this is quite remarkable. The equitable is an infringement of the perfectly and exactly just. In other words, the equitable, we would be simply compelled to say, is an infringement of what is *by nature* just, because he had spoken before of this natural equality, i.e., natural inequality. You may remember the passage here; we can have a look at it in 1136b32 to 34. "When he judged unknowingly."

[iii] Strauss reads a modified translation of Plato, *Laws*, trans. R. G. Bury (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, 1961), vol. 1, 415. In Bury's translation: "And whoever founds a State elsewhere at any time must make this same object the aim of his legislation,—not the advantage of a few tyrants, or of one, or of some form of democracy, but justice always; and this consists in what we have just stated, namely, the natural equality given on each occasion to things unequal. None the less, it is necessary for every State at times to employ even this equality in a modified degree, if it is to avoid involving itself in intestine discord, in one section or another,—for the reasonable and considerate, wherever employed, is an infringement of the perfect and exact, as being contrary to strict justice."

Reader:
Again, although if a judge has given an unfair judgement in ignorance, he is not guilty of injustice, nor is the judgement unjust, in the legal sense of justice—

LS: According to what is legally just. Yes?

Reader:
(though the judgement is unjust in one sense, for legal justice is different from the first justice)[iv]— (1136b32-34)

LS: Yes. Here we have the same case again. The legal justice (the first justice is again, just as in the passage of Plato): the perfect and exact justice, what is by nature just. And equity, the equitable, is an infringement of that, an adaptation to what the human situation requires, and a deflection from justice pure and simple. So this would lead us to say that the equitable is different from what is by nature right according to both Plato and Aristotle. Is this clear? That is of some importance. Now let us see the solution which Aristotle suggests. 1137b7. You can read the whole sentence.

Reader:
Yet they are all in a manner correct, and not really inconsistent. For equity, while superior to one sort of justice, is itself just: it is not superior to justice as being generically different from it. Justice and equity are therefore the same thing, and both are good, though equity is the better.

LS: Ya. Now according to Thomas Aquinas's explanation of this statement, which in itself sounds very clear, that which is equitable (he uses the Greek word in Latin transcription, *epiiches*)[1] is better than legal justice but is contained under natural right.[v] That is I think just the opposite of what Plato and Aristotle say about that. But it is not so simple, as we will see from the sequel. Yes?

Reader:
The source of the difficulty is that equity, though just, is not legal justice, but a rectification of legal justice. The reason for this is— (1137b7-13)

LS: And the rectification one could of course say requires a standard, and where would we find that standard except in natural right?

Reader:
The reason for this is that law is always a general statement, yet there are cases which it is not possible to cover in a general statement. In matters therefore where, while it is necessary to speak in general terms, it is not possible to do so correctly, the law takes into consideration the majority of cases, although it is not unaware of the error this involves.

[iv] In Rackham's translation: "justice in the primary sense."
[v] Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, §1081.

And this does not make it a wrong law; for the error is not in the law nor in the lawgiver, but in the nature of the case: the matter[vi] of conduct is essentially irregular.

LS: Yes, let us [stop] here. So in other words, law is essentially defective because of its universality, which cannot be maintained in practice; and yet it must be asserted in universal terms. Law, one can say, asserts a unity comprising all cases of a certain kind, which unity proves on inspection to be a spurious unity. So it ([a *nomos*]) is just the opposite of an idea in the Platonic sense,[2] to an idea which does not have this spurious character. But the question arises here, which we have stated before: what is the standard for correcting the legislator's necessarily defective law?

Reader:
When therefore the law lays down a general rule, and thereafter a case arises which is an exception to the rule, it is then right, where the lawgiver's pronouncement because of its absoluteness is defective and erroneous, to rectify the defect by deciding as the lawgiver would himself decide if he were present on the occasion, and would have enacted if he had been cognizant of the case in question. Hence, while the equitable is just, and is superior to one sort of justice, it is not superior to justice simply,[vii] but only to the error due to its absolute statement. This is the essential nature of the equitable: it is a rectification of law where law is defective because of its generality. (1137b13-27)

LS: So how then does Aristotle avoid the necessity of having recourse to natural right or natural law for correcting the lawgiver's imperfect law? Yes?

Student: By trying to decide as the lawgiver would.

LS: I beg your pardon?

Same Student: By trying to decide as he supposes the lawgiver would.

LS: Yes, well, what would—how could this be done in the simplest case, to make quite clear that no necessary recourse to natural law is involved?

Same Student: . . . to understand the principles of the law.

LS: In other words, if the legislator has stated the *ratio legis*, the ground why he has given the law. And then this *ratio legis* acts as a standard for judging of the wisdom of applying the law in this particular circumstance. Now there may not be an explicit *ratio legis*, but then the mind of the jurist, of a trained jurist, can supply this reason and act accordingly. Yes?

Reader:
In fact this is the reason why things are not all determined by law: it is because there are some cases for which it is impossible to lay down a law, so that a special ordinance

[vi] In Rackham's translation: "material."
[vii] In Rackham's translation: "absolute justice."

becomes necessary. For what is itself indefinite can only be measured by an indefinite standard, like the leaden rule used by Lesbian builders; just as that rule is not rigid but can be bent to the shape of the stone, so a special ordinance is made to fit the circumstances of the case.

LS: Well, a case would be, for example, an ostracism. There is no universal law there, that people who are suspect or disturb the democracy because of their outstanding virtue should be ostracized. But this will be done in the circumstances not on the basis of a general law but of a decree where people will make clear that this man is a nuisance because of his superior virtue and therefore should be exiled. Yes?

Reader:
It is now clear[viii] what the equitable is, and that it is just, and that it is superior to one sort of justice. And from this it is clear what the equitable man is: he is one who by choice and habit does what is equitable, and who does not stand on his rights unduly, but is content to receive a smaller share although he has the law on his side. And the disposition described is Equity; it is a special kind of Justice, not a different quality altogether.

LS: Yes. Yes?

Student: I'm just a little confused by . . . You spoke previously about politics or the realm of politics being somehow the tension—or coming into existence because of a tension between the naturally just and the naturally good. Is that correct?

LS: One can say that, yes. I remember having used such an expression.

Same student: Now you're speaking, or at least you're saying that Aristotle is speaking of a standard called the naturally right.

LS: Well, that is the same translation: right or just. [It] is the same translation.

Student: I wondered whether it was not, the naturally right was in some sense . . . to harmonize . . .

LS: No, no. One can say that the term "right," and especially the plural, "rights," as we use it, was not so easy for the Greeks as it is for us, and we will come across a reason for that very soon in the next section. So then we will go on to the next chapter.

Reader:
The foregoing discussion has indicated the answer to the question, Is it possible or not for a man to commit injustice against himself? One class of just actions consists of those acts, in accordance with any virtue, which are ordained by law. For instance, the law does not sanction suicide (and what it does not expressly sanction, it forbids). (1137b27-1138a7)

[viii] In Rackham's translation: "plain"

LS: Let us stop here one moment. Now Aristotle returns here again to the subject which he has discussed quite extensively: whether one can do injustice to, whether one can do wrong to oneself. Why he brings it up again is very unclear. According to Thomas's explanation, the reason is [that] he has to speak of the just in a very loose sense, in a metaphorical sense, at the end of this chapter, and for this reason he brings this in.[ix] I confess I'm not convinced by this explanation. Now the question is: can one wrong oneself? There is first this reason given: one can do what the law does not command. That is to say, for example, one can commit suicide; and in doing so, you do wrong. You do what the law has forbidden, and you do it to yourself. This remark here about law is very interesting and very revealing: "What the law does not command, it forbids," contrary to our view that what the law does not forbid, it permits. This archaic view of law, as we can call it, implies that there is strictly speaking no permissive law. The law either commands or forbids; it does not permit. And if you think that through, there cannot be rights proper, because rights are of course permissions given to individuals or groups to act in this and this way. *Licet*: he *may* act in this and this manner. Yes. Now, so this would seem to prove that one can wrong oneself. It is not Aristotle's own argument, but it was obviously intelligible to him, and not altogether negligible. Yes?

Reader:
Further, when a man voluntarily (which means with knowledge of the person affected and the instrument employed) does an injury (not in retaliation) that is against the law, he commits injustice. But he who kills himself in a fit of passion, voluntarily does an injury (against the right principle) which the law does not allow. Therefore the suicide commits injustice; but against whom?

LS: Yes. Now wait here one moment. So to wrong someone is to harm him voluntarily against the law. But he who commits suicide harms himself voluntarily against the law. These are the two reasons which seem to show that a man can wrong himself. But Aristotle comes now with this counterargument.

Reader:
Against the city[x] rather than against himself; for he suffers voluntarily, and nobody suffers injustice voluntarily. This is why the city[xi] exacts a penalty; suicide is punished by certain marks of dishonour, as being an offense against the city.[xii] (1138a7-14)

LS: So that's clear. In other words, Aristotle retains his old view: no one can harm himself. But of course a certain action seemingly to be one of wronging oneself is a punishable action because it is wronging the city, as in the case of suicide. Yes?

Reader:
Moreover, it is not possible to act unjustly toward oneself in the sense in which a man is unjust who is a doer of injustice only and not universally wicked. (This case is distinct

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[ix] See Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, §1091.
[x] In Rackham's translation: "It seems to be against the state."
[xi] In Rackham's translation: "city."
[xii] In Rackham's translation: "city."

from the former, because Injustice in one sense is a special form of wickedness, like Cowardice, and does not imply universal wickedness; hence it is necessary further to show that a man cannot commit injustice against himself in this sense either.) For if it were, it would be possible for the same thing to have been taken away from and added to the same thing at the same time. But this is impossible: justice and injustice always necessarily imply more than one person.

LS: So now he takes justice in the narrower sense, in the particular sense where it is distinguished from the other virtues. And if we use justice in the particular sense, we say that a transgressor, a man committing an unjust act, is not necessarily an unjust man; and then from this it follows that one cannot wrong oneself. *Volenti non fit injuria:* for he who wills, no injustice is done if harm is done to him. Yes?

Reader:
Again an act of injustice must be voluntary and done from choice, and also unprovoked; we do not think that a man acts unjustly if having suffered he retaliates, and gives what he got. But when a man injures himself, he both does and suffers the same thing at the same time. Again—

LS: And this also proves that it is impossible to speak of wronging oneself. Yes?

Reader:
Again if a man could act unjustly towards himself, it would be possible to suffer injustice voluntarily. Furthermore no one is guilty of injustice without committing some particular unjust act; but a man cannot commit adultery with his own wife, or burglary on his own premises, or theft of his own property.

LS: These massive examples seem to show very clearly how plausible it is to say [that] a man cannot wrong himself. If a man would burglarize his own safe, no one in his senses would ever regard him as other but a fool [LS chuckles], and surely not as an unjust man. Yes?

Reader:
And generally, the question, Can a man act unjustly towards himself? is solved by our decision upon the question, Can a man suffer injustice voluntarily?

(It is further manifest that, though both to suffer and to do injustice are evils—for the former is to have less and the latter to have more than the mean, corresponding to what is health-giving in medicine and conducive to fitness in athletic training—nevertheless to do injustice is the worse evil, for it is reprehensible, implying vice in the agent, and vice utter and absolute—or nearly so, for it is true that not every wrong act voluntarily committed implies vice—, whereas to suffer injustice does not necessarily imply vice, viz. injustice, in the victim. (1138a14-35)

LS: Yes. So that is clear. Both suffering injustice and inflicting injustice are bad, but doing injustice is worse. Well, many of you have read the detailed discussion of this

subject in the *Gorgias*, where this is a major theme and on which Aristotle's argument is largely based. Now, but let us first go on.

Reader:
Thus in itself to suffer injustice is the lesser evil, though accidentally it may be the greater. With this however science is not concerned; science pronounces pleurisy a more serious disorder than a sprain, in spite of the fact that in certain circumstances a sprain may be accidentally worse than pleurisy, as for instance if it should happen that owing to a sprain you fell and in consequence were taken by the enemy and killed.)

LS: Yes. This is a very strange discussion, isn't it? I mean, justice is a rational activity. And arts are also rational activities, therefore we can illustrate justice partly through examples from the arts, as we know from the Platonic dialogues almost everywhere. And now here he takes the example of medicine: in medicine a certain disease, here pleurisy, is in itself worse than a sprain. But in a given situation pleurisy may be better than a sprain because a sprain prevents you from running away and thus brings about your death. It is very strange that Aristotle doesn't give an example from the sphere of justice, because if one takes him by his word for one moment, one would reach the conclusion that doing injustice may under certain circumstances be preferable to suffering injustice, which doesn't seem to make sense. Or are there cases? Think of a man who steals money from a Nazi office in order to escape Nazi persecution. He clearly commits an act of theft. He does injustice, and he does it in order not to suffer injustice. I mean, this is an imaginable case. Would[3] not a certain cautious application of the example from medicine to justice [therefore] be in order? Hard to say. Now let's read that.

Reader:
In a metaphorical and analogical sense however there is such a thing as justice, not towards oneself but between different parts of one's nature; not, it is true, justice in the full sense of the term, but such justice as subsists between master and slave, or between the head of a household and his wife and children. For in the discourses on this question a distinction is set up between the rational and the irrational parts of the soul; and this is what leads some people to suppose that there is such a thing as injustice towards oneself, because these parts of the self may be thwarted in their respective desires, so that there may be a sort of justice between them, such as exists between ruler and subject.

So much may be said in description of Justice and of the other Moral Virtues. (1138a35-b14)

LS: Yes. Well, that's the end of the book. Now this last passage is not particularly exciting. Strictly speaking, a man does not wrong himself when, say, he wrongs his wife, children—especially his children and slaves[4]—but in a metaphoric sense he does. So that is a clarification which people who are very exact will be grateful for, but it doesn't open such interesting possibilities as the preceding and central passage in this chapter.

So now we have completed then the section on justice. It was a first reading, necessarily superficial. I hope a few things have become clear, although there can be no doubt that

more things have remained non-clear than have become clear. Although perhaps the most important points, the practically and politically most important points, are not too difficult to grasp, but the refinements, the subtleties, this is a question. Mr. Zinman?

Mr. Zinman: In a certain sense it would seem that justice is the most—well, certainly the most problematical book that we've read to this point.

LS: Yes.

Mr. Zinman: And if the aim of the *Ethics*, or the aim of the practical findings—if the aim of the *Ethics* is primarily to make men good, and if there's a necessary limitation on making men good in the immanent nature, the nature of things, then it would seem that if this book was truly a practical book, it would not, say, raise the difficulties that it does raise in relation to justice very clearly, in relation to the other moral virtues less clearly, and perhaps would even stop with the discussion of justice—or maybe some sort of discussion of practical wisdom but certainly not on the level that it discusses it in book 6, and then go on to the discussion of friendship in the final . . . What I'm really asking is, it doesn't seem—from the point of view of practical goodness it doesn't seem that it is necessary to illuminate the limits of the political for practical purposes. But yet Aristotle seems to be concerned almost more with illuminating the limits of the political than with illuminating the—

LS: The latter is an exaggeration, I believe, and you are especially under the impression of reading the fifth book in this seminar, but otherwise you are right. But there is one simple answer. Aristotle's work is of course very practical, and precisely these discussions or intimations of the limitations of the political, practical, moral, or whatever you call it, are of immense practical importance for one simple reason. They lead to the most important practical question, or the answer to the most important practical question: how shall I live? Which way of life shall I choose? Which is an eminently practical question. In other words, one can say [that] classical political philosophy both in its Platonic and its Aristotelian form, and even in its Stoic form, culminates in the description of the wise man or the philosopher, whatever you call him, as that human individual who fulfills, within the limits of the possible, what the *polis* promises and cannot fulfill. So it is not a merely theoretical analysis of morality, but it has a very important practical message. And the point is, even so, that—let us assume, let us grant that the primary addressees are the gentlemen. If they get an *inkling* that there is something higher than gentlemanship as they understand it, that may have a good effect on them. In our abominable language, a certain anti-intellectualism—which may very well go with perfect gentlemanship in the ordinary sense of the term—is rendered questionable in their eyes, and they begin to see that these strange fellows who sit in corners and talk instead of going out fighting are necessary for the well-being of the *polis*.

Mr. Zinman: I clearly understood that, the way in which this addresses the practical question in the highest sense, but it would seem that it would almost have been better to write two different books, in a sense. For example, it's hard in a way to understand in

what way, say, the gentleman is open to philosophy and still remains a gentleman. I mean, it's certainly clear that someone like, say, Churchill could read the *Ethics* and have a fairly good understanding of the *Ethics* and still remain, say, a political man.

LS: Yes, sure. He was not for one moment tempted [laughter] . . . I'm sure of that. That is quite true. And in order to see that, one only has to read Churchill's most theoretical statements—as far as I know they occur in his *Marlborough*—and which are very interesting and very revealing. But they are of course very inadequate from any theoretical point of view but sufficient for practical purposes, especially for practical purposes in the England of Churchill's lifetime. Yes. To make proposals to Aristotle how he should have written his book—I'm sure you'll see that there is a certain impropriety [LS chuckles] in that action. [Laughter] Yes?

Student: Is the equitable simply analogous to the politically just?

LS: The equitable?

Same Student: Yes.

LS: No.

Same Student: What is the relationship between the two?

LS: Equitable and the political?

Same Student: We determined that it wasn't based on natural right and is based on standards derived from the legislator in the *Laws*, and politically just somehow similarly based, and I'm wondering what is the relationship between the equitable and the politically just.

LS: Yes, well, if you take the passage in the *Laws* which I read, you could say [that] the politically feasible is the dilution of what is by nature right by something which is not by nature right.

Same Student: Yes, but Aristotle . . .

LS: Aristotle would not put it quite this way, but I think Plato practically puts it that way. Now what is by nature right is an inegalitarian natural right; what is not by nature right is treating all men as equals regardless of whether they are equals or not. In political terms, election of officials by lot, where everyone has the same chance as everybody else to be elected, this is a dilution of natural right in order to make possible civil society. If one wants to speak in general terms, and sometimes I think one must, one could say that Aristotle's equivalent to that is rather to say that natural right is changeable; one could even say almost infinitely changeable. In other words, such a compromise would still be by nature right, but it would not be by nature right everywhere. This is in a very rough way the line between Plato and Aristotle as I think one should draw it. So between the—

the equitable is of course to begin with simply one phenomenon among a number of phenomena belonging to the political–legal sphere, and only in this Platonic passage which we read is it given such a radical importance, central importance.

Student: In light of what you just said, would you mind saying again why this idea of making natural right an infinite division does not . . . you said earlier I think that it is relative, but it is not relative in the sense of the modern—

LS: Yes. Yes, surely not in the sense of present-day social science, there is no doubt about that. And I believe the point is this: that Aristotle would be compelled to make a distinction between normal situations, say, ordinary situations, and extreme situations. And by limiting surely the extreme deviation from what is ordinarily thought to be natural right to extreme situations, he would avoid the relativism. In other words, here we reach a point, if we think that through, where we come across Hobbes's problem. If you have something like a state of nature, a state of complete anarchy where everyone lies in the trenches not only against the enemy on the other side but everywhere around there are enemies, what chances are there of any justice being practiced among men? Of course Hobbes says justice is simply a human invention to avoid this predicament and to give security of life. But some awareness of the problem—you must never forget that the classic natural law doctrine, by which I understand the Thomistic natural doctrine, presupposes the Christian doctrine of providence, of creation, and therefore of a perfect beginning of mankind: paradise. Now true original sin is crucial. But original sin is man's responsibility, that is not God's responsibility. Now for Aristotle there is no such perfect beginning. In practical terms, you have these cataclysms, say, every few millennia or whatever the periods may be, and then men begin from savage barbarism again, where you cannot reasonably expect any civility, any civilization. An example which you find in Plato of this early barbarism is the Cyclopic society, you know these Homeric one-eyed brutes: this is what you had at the beginning,[xiii] and it takes a certain considerable development until the minimum conditions of justice are fulfilled. Classic natural law, to repeat, presupposes the doctrine of providence and presupposes the doctrine of a perfect beginning. And this doctrine of the perfect beginning is not the Platonic–Aristotelian teaching, and therefore it is not so clear and simple as the doctrine would seem to be in Thomas Aquinas. Mr. Shulsky?

Mr. Shulsky: What is the relation between Aristotle's view of equity and the view you read from the *Laws*? It seems to be an opposite, Aristotle talking about equity as being something higher than the simply just because it's a correction of it, a rectification, and somewhat higher . . . Plato seems . . .

LS: Yes, but we have seen in the *Ethics*, in an earlier passage in the *Ethics*, about two pages earlier, where Aristotle makes a distinction between the just, what is legally just, and what is just in the first sense, and where the just in the first sense is also the severe, uncompromising just.

Mr. Shulsky: So that equity lies somewhere between those . . .

[xiii] See Plato, *Republic* 441b-c.

LS: Yes.

Mr. Shulsky: . . .

LS: For Aristotle, I mean, in the section on equity itself, equity is clearly an improvement on the positive law. In other words, the equitable decision is better than the mere inference from the law, from the text of the law, to the case at hand.

Mr. Shulsky: But putting those two sections together now, the question would then seem to be, What is the relation between the first justice and the lawgiver? Because if there's a certain common lower ground—

LS: The first justice is not one which is dependent on the lawgiver; that would be something like natural right, intrinsically right. I mean, this whole point, this difficulty to which you allude is the one regarding Aristotle's teaching on natural right altogether. I mean, perhaps the passage in itself is interpretable, but if you raise the question why it comes up in this context, then you see how immense the difficulties are.

So if there are no further points, I would like now to do my sworn duty and return the rest of the papers. Mr. Persons? He's not here. Well, he says here somewhere, "One might argue that the near-blind man"—this is on Aristotle's doctrine of contemplative life—"the near-blind man cannot possibly exercise the faculty of sight, so as to obtain pleasure from doing so. This point is a point that is critical to the final conclusion that Aristotle is leading to." Yes, but I do not see what the point of the critique is. Mr. Persons being absent, we will not get any explanation unless some one of you thinks along Mr. Persons's lines.

Mr. King? "By leisure it is meant that condition of having arrived at a goal, achieved an end of an activity, and having nothing further to do." Is this [the] correct Aristotelian view, if you have nothing further to do, then you have leisure? No, your true activity *begins* there. The other activities are mere business, but this activity is higher. Ya. "The intellectual part of man is without substance or complexity." Aristotle says it is without bulk. I have seen in these papers again, as I saw in quite a few others, a great propensity of the students to prefer the complicated and fundamentally nonintelligible words to the simple and intelligible words, and it is strange. Hard to explain that.

Mr. Mahoney, you refer here to a question about the translation of a passage of the *Ethics* where one translator says "law" and another translator says "convention." There is no difference; you can translate it [either way]. It concerns a passage regarding money.

Student: There isn't a difference to the Greeks, but there is to Americans.

LS: Ya, all right, but what is a contemporary phenomenon which Aristotle has in mind? That money depends on human arbitrariness. We have first the rare metals, say, gold.

And the value of gold does not depend on human arrangement; that has to do with the qualities which gold naturally possesses. Where does the convention or the law come in?

Student: Well, in the case . . . the only reason that gold can be used as money is that the people agree that it can.

LS: Yes, but where is the agreement necessary? Agreement is not necessary as to gold being a particularly valuable metal, because that is obviously so. And there might be practical reasons speaking for silver against gold; that's another matter. But think of the difference between dollar and pound sterling: is this in the nature of gold, this distinction, or is it not a manmade distinction? Or [the] French franc, or whatever else you take. I think that is what Aristotle has in mind. In other words, just as language is necessarily this or that language, and therefore conventional, in the same way money is necessarily this or that or that currency, and therefore conventional . . .

Mr. Lehman? Here in your paper I found quite a few examples where you spoke of "logical" (which seems to be a favorite expression of yours) where "reasonable" or "orderly" would perfectly do. I mean, in other words, a man presents an "orderly" argument, lucid, clear, plausible; whereas "logical" has so many different connotations that angels might be able to use it. [Laughter] "Rectificatory justice is not as high as distributive justice, because it aims at maintaining the proportions determined by distributive justice." Well, that is partly correct and partly not. In what sense is this correct?

Student: On the whole, rectificatory justice is really aimed at reestablishing the proportion, the sense of justice that existed before you had . . .

LS: Not the sense of justice, the just relationships.

Student: Yeah, the relationships between persons of certain worth and what they get and certain persons of another worth—

LS: Yes, not only worth: for example, if someone hits another man, there is no question of the worth of the two, as we have learned, but it is simply that there is a disturbance, because the beater has satisfaction in addition to his previous state, and the other has annoyance in addition to his previous state. And there must be a rectification so that the man who has satisfaction will be deprived of the satisfaction, and the man who has annoyance will be compensated for his annoyance. But nevertheless, there is something in what you say, that this kind of justice in rectification, commutative justice, is not as high as distributive justice. You remember Plato's *Republic*, book 2, a very well-known passage on the city of pigs?[xiv] They have commerce, haven't they? They exchange goods and services. Yes. Now then, therefore there is justice there. At least there should be justice there. There is justice, in fact, but this is only a very low city, and there is no place there for distributive justice, because all live on one level. And in Aristotle it's a bit more complicated to show, but similar considerations apply to Aristotle as well. I'm sorry that

[xiv] See Plato, *Republic* 372d.

you are the innocent victim of my pedantism. "Distributive justice," you say, "would seem to be the highest form of particular justice." I think that's fair to say. "No one would say it were just for a man to be forced to trade fifty diamonds for fifty stones, at least if he knows what diamonds and stones are. Likewise, most would not say that both the winner of a race and the loser should be honored equally, although a few might say so." What would be the reasoning of these few?

Student: Well, you know, it's not whether you win or lose, but that you ran a good race, or something like that. We often hear this.

LS: Oh, I see, in this sense. But still, there is of course a rationale for honoring remains, in order to encourage.

Student: There's the benefit of just running the race for your own health.

LS: Oh, I see. Yes, then it would no longer—

Student: Some people would say that just because you ran it for itself—

LS: Yes, then it would no longer be a race properly speaking. [Laughter] Now we come to Mr. Wright, who honors us by his absence, so there is nothing. Mr. Arthur: "The most important of these distinctions is the division of particular justice into the distributive component and the commutative–rectificatory component. In actual practice these components are indeed separate, as they are here in conceptualization." What does this last sentence mean? I mean, say, an act of purchase, of buying and selling, or an act of mayhem, can occur perfectly independently of an act of awarding honors.

Student: If you look at the orientation of the *polis*, you can say that . . . distributive justice . . . and the commutative has to do with these one-to-one human transactions.

LS: No, I had only in mind—I did not quite see what the term "conceptualization" meant.

Student: Oh . . . Aristotle suggests . . .

LS: Oh, I see. Mr. Reynolds? I should know you by now . . . "Within a *polis*, what is by nature right and what is legally right coincide. This is the core of Aristotle's teaching on natural right."

Student: That's taken out of the preface to the argument.

LS: I see. You would not assert that this is so?

Same Student: That is not the way it ends.

LS: Yes. You speak later on of this, Aristotle's systemized presentation, which is a kind of crossbreed of Aristotle and a certain kind of modern political science theory, I believe.

Yes? System building. But still, "what is by nature right and what is legally right coincide in a manner." That is somehow what Aristotle has to say about that.

And now we come to Mr. Laughton. Absent again.[5]

Next time we should take the most important passages from book 6 about this question: what is the cognitive status of the moral principles, according to Aristotle? How do we know that magnanimity is noble, and that this and this is a magnanimous action, and so on and so on? And we will read these; these are chiefly the passages dealing with moral virtue, the relation of moral virtue and *phronēsis*, practical wisdom. We will do that next time. Yes?

Student: I'm still confused on the point about natural justice. As I understand it, natural justice for Aristotle is literally the mean necessary for the political life, and therefore can be almost infinite.

LS: This is one possible interpretation, ya. I inferred this from these examples implied in this section, for example, the worshiping of the gods and ransoming prisoners: that there would be some conditions which a *polis* must fulfill if it is to keep together at all.

Student: Then how could that, say, be used, as you say that Aristotle said, as a standard on which equity depends?

LS: I said equity does not require such a standard. I said the standard for equity is the intention of the legislator, of the positive legislator.

Student: Oh, I see, okay. That makes sense.

LS: I mean, it is easy to bring together equity with natural law; that is what Thomas Aquinas does. But I don't think that this is justified by the Aristotelian text.

Student: But then the legislator does not look at natural justice as a standard either.

LS: In a way he must. I mean, after all, if he wants to have a workable society he must—

Same Student: But not if the laws . . .

LS: I beg your pardon?

Same Student: Not if laws are proof of natural justice.

LS: No, he will go beyond them, but he will not on the other hand constantly contradict the minimum requirement of . . . Yes?

Student: I heard a rumor that . . . intro to political philosophy . . .

LS: Is this a rumor? [Laughter] Yes, well, I think I hadn't announced it, because I announced originally something else . . . Yes, I plan to give a course, a one-year course consisting of two parts, on Socrates's trial as a kind of case study [laughter] in political philosophy. Yes, that's . . .

Student: While I was working on my paper, I couldn't come to any satisfactory conclusion on what Aristotle was trying to do with what we know today as criminal law. I mean, under commutative justice, he suggests how someone might go about getting or paying a remedy for some wrong that has been committed, but he never really speaks about punishments of persons commiting what we would call a criminal act.

Another Student: . . .

LS: Yes, well he speaks quite a few times, you only have to—well, let us see here, in the Bywater edition, which has a reasonably decent index, under the Greek word for punishing, *kolazein*, how often he speaks of it: about ten, twelve times. So he speaks of it. Surely he speaks about it. But you are interested in something else: a detailed justification of why is punishment a reasonable action. In Plato we have this developed doctrine: punishment is primarily for the purpose of betterment, or in hopeless cases for eradication. You know? I mentioned this on an earlier occasion in this course. Aristotle is perfectly satisfied with a much more "naïve" view. There is a dissatisfaction on the part of the sufferer, and the sufferer must be compensated for that dissatisfaction. One can develop that. Aristotle to my knowledge has never done it. But I know from Hugo Grotius, for example, that there is a certain pleasure which the harmed man enjoys from seeing his harmer punished.[xv] I mean, whether he is hanged, drawn and quartered, or only put into jail, that depends on taste and occasion. But, generally speaking, this was formerly taken for granted: that punishment is not merely a measure for improving the character of the criminal, but also for giving some, let us say, emotional satisfaction. Is this word acceptable to you?

Student: Yes, I would think the *polis* would also want to experience that emotional satisfaction.

LS: Yes, sure. But the *polis* also owes something to its citizens. You know? I mean, if the *polis* is emotionally satisfied as a whole and its members are all emotionally dissatisfied, this is not a good thing, as Aristotle says against Plato. You know? And then he says that if all the citizens are unhappy and yet the *polis* as a whole should be happy, this doesn't work, because happiness is not like odd numbers. Three plus five is eight, an even number, but you cannot compose happiness out of unhappy parts.

Student: But we're going to only make one or two individuals unhappy at a time; this is not a—

[xv] See the discussion in Hugo Grotius, "On Punishments," in *De jure belli ac pacis libri tres*, book 2, chapter 20.

LS: Yes, sure. But still the *polis* of course comes over the whole thing and doesn't permit the individual harmed to be *the* sole judge of what emotional satisfaction he wants. Of course not. The *polis* determines what emotional satisfaction is due to him. So let us say not drawn and quartered, but only hanged until he is dead. Or similar . . . Yes?

Student: . . . consideration of deterrence as a justification for punishment?

LS: Aristotle does not speak of that, as far as I remember particularly. It is a very obvious thought, but I don't think he emphasizes that. But that without punishment in the background, and therefore without potential punishment and therefore also from time to time actual punishment, people will be uncontrollable: that is so obvious for Aristotle, as it is for Plato. So punishment is an indispensable institution. In other words, the *polis* is necessarily a *coercive* institution. He uses very strong terms when he speaks of the defects of paternal upbringing. The paternal discipline lacks the coercive force which the *polis* with its laws with teeth in them has. And the father is of course also frequently very compassionate with his good-for-nothing son, and the *polis* is not famous for its compassion, at least in olden times. Yes?

Same Student: It seems barbaric to set up institutions where it's expected that you get enjoyment out of the harm of another man.

LS: Yes, but still, on the other hand, I mean, the harmed man is also a man.

Same Student: The harmed, the victim.

LS: Yes.

Same Student: But why should the basis of punishment be the satisfaction that he gets at seeing another man harmed? This seems to be an encouragement of this sort of phenomenon, which in itself is—as far as I am concerned, it is an ignoble aspect of human nature.

LS: Yes, you aren't the only one who says it. Plato himself says it, at least through the mouth of Protagoras in the *Protagoras*, but also elsewhere: that a reasonable man punishes only for a reasonable purpose. And the reasonable purpose would be to improve the lawbreaker. And the other [purpose], merely to get it out of your system, that is not a rational act. That is clear. But Aristotle remains closer to ordinary mankind, humanity, as he does in so many other ways, by simply saying that people would think [that] if they cannot harm those who harm them nor do well to those who did well to them, they would regard themselves as slaves. Slavish condition. This kind of satisfaction *in good or ill* is necessary for a healthy life, that is what these people would say. And Aristotle would say to Plato, probably, if he had the courage to figure out an argument . . . would say: "You aim too high, Plato. This is there, will always be there." To say nothing of other problems into which Plato comes with his doctrine of punishment. The Platonic doctrine would lead to the consequence that the incorrigible lawbreaker will be thrown out of the city, which means for all practical purposes [that] he will be killed. What will you do with

that? I mean, there were no theories available as we have them today. We say there is no man who cannot be improved. Plato took a tougher line. He saw the hardened criminals and black sheep where nothing could be done, and left it at that.

Same Student: But that is not so much a defect of Plato's theory as it is perhaps a difference in understanding of our capability—

LS: It is a defect of the theory for the following reason. Let us assume we have a murderer. I mean, not a man who killed another man in anger, but a real murder, a premeditated murder: Raskolnikov. And then Raskolnikov afterward, as you all know, as soon as he had this bit of money, he saw that it was a very foolish thing for him to do, and he would have been very grateful to get rid both of the money and of the guilt. Now why should this man be sent for ten, twenty years to Siberia, not to say to be executed, because he has learned his lesson in Moscow or wherever it was? Pardon? Or was it St. Petersburg? St. Petersburg. [It was] a long time [ago] that I read it. Now let us take the case of the petty thief, who commits one act of petty thievery after the other and never goes through this purgating experience through which Raskolnikov went. What shall we do with such a fellow? He's an incorrigible criminal. Then, according to this Platonic principle, he must be thrown out to the wolves, whereas Raskolnikov will be accepted in good graces. Now of course that is very uncommonsensical. We simply say [that] we consider, in establishing measures for crimes, not only the degree of guilt of the criminal but also the quality of the act. Is it something like murder, or is it petty theft? Petty theft is such a trivial thing, no one could think—at least no civilized man could think of having a man hanged for petty theft, even if he commits it fifty times. But still, the Platonic doctrine, as he stated it, is open to this question. For Aristotle, there would be no difficulty to say: of course we have to consider the degree of guilt as well as the degree of the damage. Mr. Pangle?

Mr. Pangle: In the Averroistic interpretation of the passage on natural right, what place in the doctrine of natural right does the best regime have? Or is it—

LS: Yes, that is hard to say. You see, there is a law which is universally observed, not of course by all individuals, but by all political societies. And this law . . . with the minimum requirements. He enumerates some of these things, and this corresponds more or less to what I sketched when we spoke of this passage. So well, generally speaking, there is no natural law in the Stoic–Thomistic sense of the word either in Plato or Aristotle, or in the Averroistic tradition. That is the peculiarity of that Latin tradition, one can say. There were Greek Stoics also, but the Stoics had a great influence on Roman thought, and in particular Roman legal thought.

Student: Well, then is Marsilius just silent about the best regime when he speaks of justice . . .

LS: Explicitly, yes. But if one reads it more carefully, I think one gets a certain notion of what he understands by the best regime: it would be a city aristocratically governed. I think one can say that. That is at least the result of my last reading.[6]

So then we meet Wednesday at 3 for the last meeting of this class.

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[1] Deleted "that which is equitable."
[2] Moved "a *nomos*."
[3] Moved "therefore."
[4] Deleted "especially."
[5] Deleted "There are also some stylistic things . . . And we still have almost half an hour which we should not waste. There are two possibilities, either we—I close class now, or else we have a discussion, a kind of free-for-all, not in preparation for examination because if I'm not mistaken there is only a single student among you who will undergo the final examination. Is this still . . .

Student: . . . reconsidering writing a paper.

LS: Pardon?

Same Student: I think it would maybe . . . had to write a paper instead of taking . . . final examination.

LS: Yes, it is possible. [Laughter.] But when would you hand it in?

Same Student: Well, when is the deadline? Have we already past it?

LS: Wednesday.

Same Student: This Wednesday.

LS: Yes.

Same Student: And when would be the final examination [inaudible]?

LS: I think I announced that: on the seventh.

Same Student: [Inaudible]

LS: No, [the] ninth is commencement. The examination was set to take place on Friday the seventh, at 2 PM. I think you'll take the [Inaudible] examination on Friday, the seventh. Well, next time I thought we should not [Inaudible] reading [inaudible] today."
[6] Deleted "Now let me return the papers- Now, let me first return the papers to those who are here. Lawton? Mr. Reynolds? Mr. Arthur? Mr. Wright? Mr. Lehman? Mr. Mahoney? Mr. King? No? And Mr. Persons also not there."

Session 24: May 28, 1968[i]

Leo Strauss: Now let us turn now to the sixth book of the *Ethics*. Now Aristotle opens this book in about this manner. We have seen that the good man is the man who chooses the mean correctly. And the mean is that what right [. . .] says it is. We can say the verdict of reason, meaning what the verdict of reason declares it to be: this is the target at which one must look in determining one's choice. But this is of course too general. One reason: because it applies to the arts as well as to the virtues. It applies as well to the carpenter or to the housebuilder: not too much, not too little, and so on. Therefore a new investigation is necessary, and that is what this book is devoted to. We will begin at the beginning, 1138b35, and in some editions, chapter 2.

Reader:
Now we have divided the Virtues of the Soul into two groups, the Virtues of the Character and the Virtues of the Intellect. The former, the Moral Virtues, we have already discussed. Our account of the latter must be prefaced by some remarks about psychology.

LS: Well, "about the soul." There is an inclination not only of students but also of professors that, if there is a choice between simple words and the technical words, they prefer the technical words. Psychology is the science or the study of the soul, but Aristotle does not speak about the study of the soul; he speaks about the soul.

Reader:
It has been said before that the soul has two parts, one rational and the other irrational. Let us now similarly divide the rational part, and let it be assumed that there are two rational faculties, one whereby we contemplate those things whose first principles are invariable, and one whereby we contemplate those things which admit of variation: since, on the assumption that knowledge is based on a likeness or affinity of some sort between subject and object, the parts of the soul adapted to the cognition of objects that are of different kinds must themselves differ in kind. (1138b35-1139a11)

LS: There is of course nothing of "subject" and "object" in Aristotle. It is convenient for the translator to use these terms and to avoid the seemingly more complicated previous questions which strictly speaking correspond to subject and object.

Reader:

[i] At the end of session 23 as it appears in this transcript, Strauss indicates that the next class meeting will be the last. What we have included here as session 24 appears as session 16 in the original transcript. It was however out of place there because the subject matter, a discussion of prudence in book 6, follows from the discussion of book 5 in session 23. Hence we have included this as a separate session and the penultimate session, though it is possible that it was part of an extended last class meeting. There is no audio recording of this session. The transcript of this session is taken from the original transcript. Ellipses in the original transcript have been preserved. Where the transcriber noted "inaudible," ellipses appear in square brackets.

These two rational faculties may be designated the Scientific Faculty and the Calculative Faculty respectively; since calculation is the same as deliberation, and deliberation is never exercised about things that are invariable, so that the Calculative Faculty is a separate part of the rational half of the soul.

We have therefore to ascertain what disposition of each of these faculties is the best, for that will be the virtue of each. (1139a11-16)

LS: Let us stop here for a moment. Aristotle must make clear to us the difference between the choice of the mean in the arts and the choice of the mean in action. But he has to put his [. . .] on a broader basis, so he begins first with a new distinction within the rational part. There is a "scientific" part, [as] we can translate it, and there is the calculating part. The scientific part deals with what is unchangeable, with what is always the same; and the calculating or deliberative part deals with what is essentially changeable. Is this distinction familiar to you? You must have heard of it. Not all of you, perhaps, but many of you. [Remember] Plato's *Republic*: there is the divided line.[ii] There is the science of what is always the same and never changeable, and then there is something else, which Plato calls opinion. Here Aristotle doesn't speak of opinion, but later on in this book [he speaks] occasionally, as it were, of what he calls here the calculating part [as] the opining part.

Student: It would seem to me that the calculating or deliberating part, at least the way it is used in the divided line image, would belong to the third level of [. . .] that faculty which is capable of making distinctions. In other words, it has the faculty of both going onwards and upwards as well as to make deduction toward the lower.

LS: But in the divided line, is it not essential to connect the reference to the changeable things? Don't you, in numbering, deal with pure numbers? Do you not have the relation to the things numbered? And the same applies naturally to geometry.

Same Student: That's true. I was just wondering how you put the calculating and deliberating part exclusively in the area of opinion.

LS: Partly based on the fact that Aristotle himself uses the word [. . .] for what he calls here *logistikon*.

Same Student: But my only observation is that Plato puts it above the half, in other words, in the third part.

LS: Sure. Both are not sense perception, that goes without saying. Neither are they here. Both are rational faculties.

Student: [. . .]

[ii] Plato, *Republic* 509d-511e.

LS: The spheres in which the stars move, they are unchangeable. But the species are [also] unchangeable. Every cat grows and decays and dies, but the species of cat is always, was always, and always will be, and therefore the biologists up to the present day speak of the species "cat" and not of this here cat. I mean, whereas the cat lover, the cat owner, is concerned with the individual cat, the biologist is not concerned with this here cat, except accidentally, because it may give him an occasion for studying something about cattishness. So the distinction still prevails in spite of the great changes which have taken place. Now this distinction between the scientific and the calculating part is not sufficient, because we want to understand the difference between the virtues and the arts. And the virtues and the arts would both have to do with the latter, with the calculating part, and therefore Aristotle introduces now a somewhat different consideration in a17.

Reader:
But the virtue of a faculty is related to the special function which that faculty performs. Now there are three elements in the soul which control action and the attainment of truth: namely perception,[iii] Intellect, and Desire.

LS: "Perception" means here sense perception.

Reader:
Of these perception never originates affairs, as is shown by the fact that animals have perception but do not participate in affairs.[iv]

LS: "Affairs" means action.

Reader:
Pursuit and avoidance in the sphere of Desire correspond to affirmation and denial in the sphere of the Intellect. Hence inasmuch as moral virtue is a disposition in the mind in regard to choice, and choice is deliberate desire, it follows that, if the choice is to be good, both the principle must be true and the desire right, and that desire must pursue the same things as principle affirms. We are here speaking of practical thinking. (1139a16-27)

LS: So Aristotle makes here, apparently without making clear why, the distinction[1] not within the rational part itself, but between reason and desire. And [he] makes here one point: in the good action reason must be active in this way and culminates in a true verdict, *and* the desire must be correct, so much so that there must be a harmony [such] that what the verdict of reason points to and what the desire aims at [must] be identical. This is a kind of prefiguration [of] what[2] the difference between the arts and the virtues is: in the arts, the desire does not play a role, as we shall see later.

[iii] In Rackham's translation: "Sensation."
[iv] In Rackham's translation: "Of these, Sensation never originates action, as is shown by the fact that animals have sensation but are not capable of action."

Student: Is it sort of the attempt which Socrates makes at the end of book 4 about spiritedness and reason [. . .] It seems to be a problematic attempt . . . of course he is going to outline it further, but it seems like kind of a shaky starting point.

LS: You say Aristotle should have given us a reason why he decides to speak of this here. But since his object is to make clear still more what moral virtue is than anything else, and moral virtue has a rational ingredient, it is impossible to be a good man without being a man of judgment. But moral virtue also has another ingredient which we would say today has to do with the will. But Aristotle says there is desire or striving. This has to be considered from every point of view. There is nothing improper in that, although the transition is [. . .] not smooth. Now let us read the sequel.

Reader:
We are here speaking of practical thinking, and of the attainment of truth in regard to action; [with speculative thought, which is not concerned with action or production, right and wrong functioning consist in the attainment of truth and falsehood respectively. The attainment of][v] truth is indeed the function of every part of the intellect, but that of the practical intelligence is the attainment of truth corresponding to right desire.

LS: Aristotle makes now explicit what he had not[3] [made explicit] before, that he is dealing with the difference between theoretical and practical; theoretical [or] scientific [and] practical; between theoretical truth and practical truth; [or], more precisely, between truth and correctness. In the theoretical reason, the good, the excellence, is the truth. In the practical, the good consists of harmony with right desire. Perhaps we can explain this as follows. I know that it is wrong to steal. I know it, but I have a desire to steal. Here the knowledge is obviously not enough. This knowledge does not make my viewing of the situation good; my viewing of the overall situation is good only if my desire is also correct. So it is then necessary for moral virtue [that there be] a cooperation of desire and reason or intellect. Aristotle will speak about this in the sequel.

Reader:
Now the cause of actions (the efficient, not the final cause) is choice, and the cause of choice is desire and reasoning directed at some end. Hence choice necessarily involves both intellect or thought and a certain disposition of character [for doing well and the reverse in the sphere of action necessarily involves thought and character].[vi] (1139a27-35)

Thought by itself however proves nothing, but only practical thought directed to an end.

LS: Now is this clear, or do we have difficulties?

Student: What do you make of that statement in the light of his later comment [. . .] It would seem that the man who is devoted to the ultimately good life is, in the light of this passage at any rate, exercising a mind in an essentially useless pursuit.

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[v] The bracketed section of this passage is omitted in the original transcription.
[vi] The punctuation is Rackham's.

LS: On the basis of what particular remark?

Student: In the passage about thought by itself not meaning anything.

LS: But he strives for knowledge first. Is there not then some striving here? And when the striving has come to its fulfillment, then there is indeed no longer any need for this striving, and there is perfect contentment and satisfaction. We discussed this question last time or the time before in a somewhat different form. Now let us go on.

Reader:
Indeed, the moving cause of productive activity is this also.[vii]

LS: Productive activity in contradistinction to practicalness.

Reader:
Since he who makes something always has some further end in view: the act of making is not an end in itself, it is only a means, and belongs to something else.

LS: We do not need that now, because Aristotle will speak of that later. The main point is this: that practical action is radically different from production. In production, something is produced which survives the production . . . In practice, the end is the action itself. The shoemaker does this work in order to bring about a shoe; and when the shoe is produced, his shoemaking becomes wholly uninteresting. But in the case of action, it is the action and the action alone which is intended. Let us turn to 1139b14.

Reader:
Let us then discuss these virtues afresh, going more deeply into the matter.

LS: So in other words, Aristotle is now again enlarging the issue, because the clarity he has given us hitherto is insufficient [regarding] the difference between moral virtue and the arts.

Reader:
Let it be assumed that there are five qualities through which the mind achieves truth in affirmation or denial, namely, Art or technical skill, Scientific Knowledge, truth,[viii] Wisdom, and Intelligence. Conception and Opinion are capable of error.

The nature of Scientific Knowledge (employing the term in its exact sense regarding its analogous uses) may be made clear as follows. We all conceive that a thing which we know scientifically cannot vary; when a thing that can vary is beyond the range of our observation, we do not know whether it exists or not. An object of Scientific Knowledge, therefore, exists of necessity. It is therefore eternal, for everything existing of absolute

[vii] In Rackham's translation: "This indeed is the moving cause of productive activity also."
[viii] In Rackham's translation: "Prudence."

necessity is eternal; and what is eternal does not come into existence or perish. (1139b1-24)

LS: Let us stop here. So there are five faculties through which the soul grasps the truth which are intrinsically truthful [in] the way in which opinion is not. Opinion can be true or false opinion equally well, but science cannot be true or false science; nor can prudence or practical wisdom be true or false practical wisdom. The science then applies to the other things mentioned here.

We naturally begin again as we did before, with science as the matter of the greatest importance. Now we skip the sequel and also the next chapter which is devoted to the difference between art and action [and proceed to the difference] between art and practical wisdom, because [that is] what we need for our understanding today and in later passages. We turn now to 1140a24.

Reader:
We may arrive at a definition of Prudence by considering who are the persons whom we call prudent. Now it is held to be the mark of a prudent man to be able to deliberate well about what is good and advantageous for himself, not in some one department, for instance what is good for his health or strength, but what is advantageous as a means to the good life in general. (1140a24-28)

LS: What is good with a view to life as a whole. So what then is the prudent man? He deliberates well about his life as a whole. For example, he would not deliberate well about the building of a house because that would be done much better by a housebuilder, or (Aristotle's example) about health; this is better done by a physician. But [he deliberates well about] his life as a whole. Needless to say that this deliberating well implies that he [acts] on it, because if a man deliberates well but acts poorly then no one would call him a sensible man. One would find him a very strange man, that he knows so very well what should be done and does in each case the opposite. So the deliberation includes the decision. Now it is what—life as a whole, in contradistinction to any partial consideration.

Student: He does not seem to arrive at a conclusion about it, except for some tentative ideas . . .

LS: Yes, you mean, namely, when he discusses about being happy and this kind of thing.

Student: There seems to be a dividing line divided in two parts: one part, the faculty all of the arts can cover, and the rest would be a principle which included that and would go beyond that.

LS: This is not practical enough. Give us an example of the kinds of questions a prudent man would settle by himself where he does not go to an expert.

Student: [. . .]

LS: There is also private life with great possibilities of acting prudently and imprudently.

Student: First of all, it would be how one lives his life.

LS: Except this is very general.

Student: Taking a bath, for example, and not putting in too much hot water and cold water, and finding a mean between the hot and the cold water.

LS: A bathmaster would do this much better. For example, the question: should he marry? And should he marry Miss A or Miss B? That would concern his life as a whole, unless you regard marriage as a strictly temporary arrangement, and then it does not matter.

Student: But what about marriage [. . .]

LS: That is a question, but Aristotle implies "no." The decision must be settled by a prudent man himself, because otherwise [a] man would declare himself bankrupt from the point of view of prudence, saying: "I am incapable of taking care of my own affairs and I have to have someone else." It could also be: should he have a country house and a house in town? This is not the question for the architect to decide. And others: what kind of education should he give to his children? There he can perhaps have expert advice. But to whom he will go as an expert? This is already the question where prudence would come in. In other words, the expertise is here not so obvious as in the case of medicine and architecture. Now . . .

Reader:
This is proved by the fact that we also speak of people as prudent or wise in some particular thing, when they calculate well with a view to attaining some particularly serious end (other than those ends which have as an object an art).[ix] (1140a28-30)

LS: Now what does he mean by this remark? That prudence comes into play where art, let alone science, is of no help. Let us speak of hunting; a good instinct, a hunting dog. Here we see the difficulty which we have and to which some of you have alluded. In our age and already for some time we have [had] the tendency to replace prudence ever more with art, even perhaps regarding matters like marriage [so] that the marriage counselor takes the place of the prudent man or woman, or many other things. But the difficulty which comes up here is this: if we think through the possibility of a complete technicization of life along the modern lines, we have then one limitation, [one] admitted limitation of the applied sciences, and that is that the value judgment cannot be settled by the technician. The technician couldn't tell you [that] you *should* you marry or not, because this would depend on certain value judgments. But if you have a desire, [he could tell you that] the chances that you will get along well with this kind of woman [are]

[ix] In Rackham's translation: "attaining some particular end of value (other than those ends which are the object of an art)."

greater than with that kind of woman. But ultimately and radically there remains a difficulty regarding the value judgment.

Student: [. . .]

LS: But Aristotle makes it so easy when he brings up the question of marriage to forget love . . .

Same Student: But how does it relate to love?

LS: I cannot help remembering the passage in the *Politics* when he speaks about marriage.[x] Thirty-five and eighteen are the respective ages, and I think the notion is that love will come after the consummation of marriage, not before, out of common experience and so, rather than [being] puppy-like.

Student: [. . .]

LS: Who would be Machiavellian in marrying? And who would want to marry to get money, power, or connections, and the happiness of the wife is of no consideration whatever? But Aristotle thinks of course of something different: it is a marriage which will have the properness as it will for children, for future citizens. And this is not a Machiavellian consideration.

Student: I don't see why a specialist in such things as marriages can't serve as well as the individual people.

LS: But the question is, where does this counselor get his value?

Student: From the analysis of the projected means, not only of the individual but of society.

LS: The means, I suppose, as they are understood by that society.

Student: Yes.

LS: And the point is: with what right can he do that as a scientific man? The American marriage counsellor will have different advice than the French marriage counsellor.

Student: [. . .]

LS: For Aristotle it is all right because it is a matter of practical wisdom. But if we speak of science, then these differences should not play such a fundamental role.

Student: But what of the importance of the prudent man's abilities seeming to be limited to his own life?

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[x] Aristotle, *Politics* 1335a24-35.

LS: Oh no, that comes in later.

Student: [. . .]

LS: But of course he will stay out of political decisions or decisions referring to the *polis*. The relation of prudence to politics will be taken up later. But, for example, he has enough money to have a [. . .] event or whatever it may be. Which of these things should he do? This decision is not a technical decision. The technical decisions will come in [. . .] But whether [he should do] this or that, that is not a technical decision. It is a decision with a view to what the city is most in need of, and what would adorn the city to the highest degree.

Student: Wouldn't the man who is best able to make this decision [be] best able to give advice to friends?

LS: But there is only this point. There are people who are better in advising others than in advising themselves. The prudent man belongs perhaps to the man advising himself, because if you do not have the burden, the responsibility, you are less bound by the responsibility, and it is from this point of view easier to advise. So the prudent man belongs perhaps to the man advising himself and not the man advising others. Now 1140a30. "So altogether the prudent man would be the man good at deliberating."

Reader:
But no one deliberates about things that cannot vary, nor about things not within his power. Hence inasmuch as scientific knowledge involves demonstration, whereas things whose fundamental principles are variable are not capable of demonstration, because everything about them is variable, and inasmuch as one cannot deliberate about things that are of necessity, it follows that Prudence is not the same as Science. Nor can it be the same as Art. It is not Science, because matters of conduct admit of variation; and not Art, because doing and making are generically different, since making aims at an end distinct from the act of making, whereas in doing the end cannot be other than the act itself: doing well is itself the end. (1140a30-b4)

LS: Let us stop here. So in practical wisdom, doing well in the sense of acting well is itself the end; whereas in art, as we have said before, the product as distinguished from the productive activity is the end. For instance, not the desirable consequences [of] courteous conduct but courteous conduct itself is the end. The consequences of courteous conduct are by no means irrelevant, but they are not the end.

Student: Is this identification of art and production Aristotle's last word? Because it would seem there could be something which could be called art and would not be strictly speaking production.

LS: If you take such an activity as poetry, for instance, is there not a product?

Student: In this case . . .

LS: The *Iliad* is something different from Homer's [activity of] making. Now is the song sung something different [from the singing of it]? Here you cannot make that distinction. The song sung is implied in the singing.

Student: I don't understand. Are you saying that there is a difference between flute playing and poetry writing? In other words, one is a thing in itself and the other produces something. Flute playing produces something.

LS: What does it produce?

Student: It produces two things. It produces in the first place music, and it produces in one way or another a music which has a result in the mind of the listener.

LS: Yes, and it is intended for this purpose. And this is probably the way in which Aristotle would argue. Aristotle would probably argue along these lines.

Student: . . . that flute playing is actually production. Doesn't he use that example at the beginning of the *Ethics*, in the few pages where he has flute playing and production . . .

LS: But this is of course a preliminary distinction.

Reader:
It remains therefore that it is a truth-attaining rational quality, concerned with action in relation to things that are good and bad for human beings.[4] Hence men like Pericles are deemed prudent because they possess a faculty of discerning what things are good for themselves and for mankind; and that is our conception of an expert in Domestic Economy or Political Science.

LS: Now what does it mean—I mean, that Pericles was a sensible man? Pericles was an emphatically sensible man; this is the impression we all get when we read [. . .]. But Aristotle gives a peculiar interpretation to this sensibility: Pericles was a man who was able to grasp what was good for him and for human beings in general. And would this not make prudence something very selfish, that he was able to discover what was good for him[self]? And is it not much more important to discern what was good for Athens? How would Aristotle explain that? His activity for Athens is the meaning of Pericles's whole life, and therefore there is nothing selfish involved in this. One can also think of the passage in the [funeral] speech: "We love wisdom with [thrift] and we love the beautiful without softness."[xi] This is the maxim to which Pericles dedicated himself and his Athens. And this end was not for the sake of something else; it was of course meant to be that having dedicated yourself to these, it was of course meant to be good for Athens, but this end in itself was no longer in need of another end or justification.

Reader:

[xi] Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 2.40.

This also accounts for the word moderation,[xii] which signifies 'preserving prudence.' (1140b4-12)

LS: This is a kind of etymological play on the part of Aristotle, [although] Aristotle probably did not think it was mere play. The Greek word *sōphrosynē*, which we ordinarily translate by "moderation," sometimes also by "temperance," is understood to be here a composite of the two words [. . .] saving, preserving [. . .] sense, practical wisdom, prudence.

Reader:
Moderation[xiii] does in fact preserve our belief as to our own good; for pleasure and pain do not destroy or pervert all beliefs, for instance, the belief that the three angles of a triangle are, or are not, together equal to two right angles, but only beliefs concerning action. The first principles of action are the end to which our acts are means; but a man corrupted by a love of pleasure or fear of pain, entirely fails to discern any first principle, and cannot see that he ought to choose and do everything in the mean to this end, and for its sake: for vice tends to destroy the sense of principle. (1140b12-21)

It therefore follows that Prudence is a truth-attaining rational quality concerned with action in relation to the things that are good.[xiv]

LS: So he goes somewhat deeper into the question of the peculiarity of moral virtue or its rational ingredient, prudence. Prudence, in contradistinction to science or art, is threatened by low desire, for prudence consists essentially in controlling desire. Therefore prudence is inseparable from moral virtue, namely, from the habitual control of low desires. This kind of danger does not exist in the case of the other intellectual virtues. And you can also make this clear in case of politics in particular, where such things like ambition necessarily enter and destroy judgment. This cannot in the same way happen or is at least not [an] essential danger in the arts[5] [or] in science. In politics, the danger is essential, therefore we look for the character of men in politics more than elsewhere.

Student: Is this accidental, or is there some reason for this? Aristotle gave us the example of a man who has the virtue of practical wisdom . . . And he doesn't give us any examples of men who have the other virtues.

LS: Which virtues?

Student: Any of the moral virtues.

LS: He doesn't have many other examples, that is true. But here the examples are particularly important, the two he gives here. But I would like to postpone it until we come to the passage.

[xii] In Rackham's translation: "Temperance."
[xiii] In Rackham's translation: "Temperance."
[xiv] In Rackham's translation: "good for human beings."

Reader:
Moreover, we can speak of excellence in Art, but not of excellence in Prudence. Also in Art voluntary error is not as bad as involuntary, whereas in the sphere of Prudence it is worse, as it is in the sphere of the virtues. It is therefore clear that Prudence is an excellence or virtue, and not an Art.

Of the two parts of the soul possessed of reason, Prudence must be the virtue of one, namely, the part that forms opinions.

LS: You see here [. . .] occurs; and this is where the connection with Plato comes in.

Reader:
For Opinion deals with that which can vary, and so does Prudence. But yet Prudence is not a rational quality merely, as shown by the fact that a purely rational faculty can be forgotten, whereas a failure in Prudence is not a mere lapse of memory.

LS: If we limit ourselves to the last point: you have learned an art, whatever that art may be, and you may forget it. But being sensible, you cannot forget. That is Aristotle's assertion. We can illustrate it in our language as follows. We can forget all kinds of things, but one thing is impossible [to forget] without losing our character completely, and that is our duty. If we forget our duty, if we forget our conscience or whatever we call it, that's impossible. [Something] similar to that is what Aristotle has here in mind. The key point: practical wisdom is not an art. And the ultimate reason for that is the inseparable connection between practical wisdom and moral virtue. No such connection consists between moral virtue and art.

Reader:
Scientific Knowledge is a mode of conception dealing with universals—

LS: We do not have to read this whole section. What he makes clear in the next chapter is: he speaks of the faculty by which the highest principles as such are perceived, and this faculty is translated by "intellect." Let us read the next chapter, 1141a9.

Reader:
The term Wisdom is employed in the arts to denote those men who are the most perfect masters of their art, for instance, it is applied to Pheidias as a sculptor and to Polycleitus as a statuary. (1140b21-1141a11)

LS: You see then that Aristotle chooses the example from what we would call the fine arts today. The fine arts are to a higher degree arts than the [. . .] arts because they are more exact, more precise. Yes?

Reader:
In this use then Wisdom merely signifies artistic excellence. But we also think that some people are wise in general and not in one department, and not 'wise in something else,' as Homer says in the *Margites*:

Neither a delver nor a ploughman him
The Gods have made, nor wise in ought decide.

Hence it is clear that Wisdom must be the most perfect of the modes of knowledge. The wise man therefore must not only know the conclusions that follow from his first principles, but also have a true conception of those principles themselves. Hence Wisdom must be a combination of Intelligence and Scientific Knowledge: it must be a knowledge possessing a head of the most exalted object.[xv]

LS: This is then the highest intellectual stage of which man is capable, called wisdom. And this consists of intellect, the grasp of the principles, and science, the ability to deduce from these principles, to demonstrate from these principles secondary truths.

Reader:
For it is strange to think that Political Science[xvi] is the loftiest kind of knowledge, inasmuch as man is not the highest thing in the world.

LS: So Aristotle reminds us here of the fact that in book 10 (the end of the work), *sophia*, theoretical wisdom, is the highest. And therefore politics, political knowledge, cannot claim its place. The supremacy of politics which Aristotle rejects is the same as the supremacy of morality. This would require that the highest known being is man. That is implied in what he says here. Since man is not the best being in the universe, politics and morality cannot be the highest. In a way, this conclusion that the highest known being is man is in the teaching of Kant, because of God we do not have any theoretical knowledge, so the highest being known to us according to Kant is man. And Kant could say in some passages of the *Critique of Pure Reason* that all the philosophic questions, or the fundamental philosophic questions point to one and the same question, and that question is: what is man? "What is man" is *the* philosophic question. [But] not so for Aristotle. This is illustrated by this Aristotelian remark here.

Reader:
And as 'wholesome' and 'good' mean one thing for men and another for fishes, whereas 'white' and 'straight' mean the same thing always, so everybody would denote the same thing by 'wise,' but not by 'prudent'; for each kind of beings will describe as prudent, and will entrust itself to, one who can discern its own particular welfare; hence even some of the lower animals are said to be prudent, namely those which display a capacity for forethought as regards their own lives. (1141a11-28)

LS: And let us stop here for one moment. So prudence, practical wisdom, and morality are essentially relative to man. The theoretical things do not have such an essential relation to man. Aristotle gives here the examples of "white" and "straight." Let us limit ourselves to the example of white. What has happened to "white" in modern times? Well, white came [to be understood in light of] the distinction between primary and secondary

[xv] In Rackham's translation: "it must be a consummated knowledge of the most exalted objects."
[xvi] In Rackham's translation: "absurd to think that Political Science or Prudence."

qualities. White colors belong of course to the secondary qualities, and they are relative to the different living beings, in particular to man, so that the theoretical qualities proper which have no relativity to man according to this Lockean view are only the primary qualities.

But for Aristotle the main point here is to bring out the relativity of prudence to man. What is true of the good of which he speaks here is also true of the noble and the just. They are not relative to this or that individual, of course not, but to man as man. And Aristotle brings this out by the strong statement that the other qualities would be the same for man as for fishes, without wondering whether the fishes actually perceive these qualities. But this was not his primary concern;[xvii] the primary concern was no relativity to man. Let us continue where we left off.

Reader:
It is also clear that Wisdom cannot be the same thing as Political Science; for if we are to call knowledge of our own interests wisdom, there will be a number of different kinds of wisdom, one for each species: there cannot be a single such wisdom dealing with the good of all living things, any more than there is one art of medicine for all existing things. (1141a28-33)

LS: So in other words, if someone would say that practical wisdom is the highest, then he would have to answer the question "Which practical wisdom, the practical wisdom for a man, for a lion, the practical wisdom for servants?" because of this relativity. In the case of theoretical wisdom, the question does not arise.

Student: How does this fit in with what Aristotle says sometimes about the fact that all human beings have as their end somehow a service to man?

LS: Where does he say that?

Student: I think at one point near the beginning of the *Politics*.

LS: In other words, you mean that in the light of this hierarchic order of all subhuman beings, the difficulty would disappear. But what about this relativity, this hierarchy: "all beings on earth in the service of man"? It makes sense for the domestic animals and a few other things, but what about the many other animals which are dysfunctional from this point of view? There is only one way out of this difficulty, and this is to say that all animals are for the sake of man, but not necessarily for his practical use but also for the use as possible objects of his understanding, i.e., of his wisdom, theoretical wisdom, which is not merely human because it does not have this concern with the specifically human.

Student: What about the remark of Aristotle that the soul is in a way all things? Wouldn't that mean that man is in a way [. . .]

[xvii] Between "not" and "his" in this sentence the transcript has a set of dashes.

LS: Yes, that is, you assume rightly that when he speaks of the soul there, he means the human soul. But if there are quite a few things which are lower—man is a microcosm, you can [6][put it like] that. This means also that the soul is in a way the inanimate thing; the inanimate things and the vegetative world, which are lower than the human soul. Now if there is a being possible which has only the intellect and not all things, would this not be a higher being than man? That would be God.

Student: Or angels.

LS: Or angels. But in Aristotle there are no angels. You could say the stars are gods. Now will you go on?

Reader:
It may be argued that man is superior to the other animals, but this makes no difference: since there exist other things far more divine in their nature than man, for instance, to mention the things most visible, the things of which the cosmos[xviii] is composed.

LS: He means the stars, and the stars understood as living beings, for the very respectable reason that when we look up we see here moved things, things which are not obviously pushed or pulled but moving from their own inner impulse: living beings. Living beings, and therefore of much finer substance than any living being here on earth, and with a certain disregard of [a] difficulty [of] which we are but too aware: gods. And this was a question discussed later on, partly on the basis of Aristotle himself, whether these heavenly bodies do not also possess, or are not related to intellects guiding them. This would then be an Aristotelian substitute for the Greek hunters.

Reader:
These considerations therefore show that Wisdom is Scientific Knowledge and Intuitive Intelligence as regards the things of the most exalted nature. This is why people say that men like Anaxagoras and Thales 'may be wise but are not prudent,' when they see them display ignorance of their own interests; and while admitting them to possess a knowledge that is rare, marvelous, difficult, and even superhuman, they yet declare this knowledge to be useless, because these sages do not seek to know the things that are good for human beings. (1141a33-b8)

LS: These are the opposite points, Pericles and Thales. Thales looked at the stars and fell into a ditch, so he was wholly unable to take care of his own affairs and [was] from this perspective a ridiculous individual, yet from Aristotle's point of view higher than Pericles.

Student: But if he discovered water when he fell into the ditch?

LS: No, but he showed to his countrymen that he could take care of himself if he wanted. This speculation regarding the all-present—do you mean that? But we must not forget

[xviii] In Rackham's translation: "celestial system."

that this indifference to the human things is always beyond *phronēsis* and means always beyond morality. In b14.

Reader:
Nor is Prudence a knowledge of general principles only: it must also take account of particular facts, since it is concerned with action, and deals with particular things.

LS: Now this is a somewhat strange remark, because we have been sufficiently trained by Aristotle to take this for granted, that practical wisdom will have to do primarily with particular cases and not with generalities. For example, is this conduct here proper conduct? That is the question to be decided by practical wisdom. But what is an example of a generality supplied by practical wisdom? Some practically important things are of a general or universal character as distinguished from the particular one, what to do here now.

Student: [. . .]

LS: It could be, but it would not be a good Aristotelian example. It would not be good because it is subject to some qualifications; for example, in war it is all right to steal.

Another Student: One should have a good upbringing. I mean, that would seem to be practical wisdom for parents.

LS: Yes. One can say that. But does this give us sufficient indication? What does "properly" mean here?

Student: The philosophic way of life is the best way of life.

LS: Yes, well, that goes beyond everything. But a more simple one—for example, we read in book 1 a brief discussion of wealth and honor as the highest objectives of life. To realize that this is not the case is surely not a matter of theoretical wisdom but of practical wisdom, and yet not of the practical wisdom concerned with the question of here and now but with the whole of life. Now let us turn to the next chapter, which is of very great importance to us, b22.

Reader:
Prudence is indeed the same quality of mind as Political Science. (1141b14-23)

LS: [The Greek for] "political science" is hard to translate—"political ability," the "political art." [It is] in Greek an adjective without a noun. The only guide you have is that the noun must be in the same gender as the adjective, but both *epistēmē* and [. . .] and [. . .] are as feminine as *politeia*. There you have a choice. Begin again, please.

Reader:

Prudence is indeed the same quality of mind as Political Science, though their essence is different. Of Prudence, as regards the city,[xix] one kind, as supreme and directive, is called Legislative Science; the other, as dealing with particular occurrences, has the name, Political Science, that really belongs to both kinds. The latter is concerned with action and deliberation (for a vote of enactment[xx] is a thing to be done, being the last step in the deliberative process), and this is why it is only those persons who deal with particular facts who are spoken of as 'taking part in politics,' because it is only those persons who perform actions, like the workmen in an industry. (1141b23-29)

LS: In other words, we do not say of the legislators that they are engaged in politics, because they are concerned with framing a code for all time, so to speak, and they are not engaged in here and now decisions. Our notion of legislator is misleading, then. Yes?—[xxi]

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[1] Deleted "the distinction."
[2] Deleted "of."
[3] Deleted "done."
[4] Deleted "LS: Now wait a moment. Yes, I'm sorry. Go on."
[5] Deleted "and also."
[6] Deleted "state it with."

[xix] In Rackham's translation: "state."
[xx] In Rackham's translation: "parliamentary enactment."
[xxi] The tape was changed at this point. Either the remainder of the session was not transcribed or the transcript of it did not survive.

Session 25: May 30, 1968

Leo Strauss:[i] Now let us turn to our subject. I repeat to you the main points made by Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics* hitherto. There is one and only one highest good, which Aristotle calls happiness, and the core of it is virtue. So this is one side of the matter. The other side is that happiness, although its core is virtue,[1] is of a higher rank than virtue. Happiness is something worthy of reverence, whereas virtue is something worthy of praise.

Now at any rate, given the close connection between happiness and virtue, it becomes necessary to find out what virtue is. And the answer given is that virtue as well as its opposite are habits of preferring or choosing, "*hexeis proairetikai*." And therefore this key question is now: what is choosing, choice, election? Election proves to be a kind of the voluntary or spontaneous, namely, that kind that is preceded by deliberation. Again, deliberation is a kind of inquiry, namely, that kind that deals with what we or I can do here and now and with things regarding which exact foresight is not possible. And from this it follows that there is no deliberation regarding letters or shoemaking, but there is deliberation regarding seafaring as well as medicine, up to the present day: the consilium of physicians. Deliberation always presupposes an end which is no longer subject to deliberation. Generals do not deliberate as to whether they want to win the battle; they deliberate on how they may win the battle. Deliberation ultimately presupposes natural ends: ends imposed on man by his nature, and ends which are in no sense subject to deliberation. And these ends can be taken together under the heading happiness. No man deliberates as to whether he wishes to be happy; that he wishes anyway. He deliberates as to the ways and means toward happiness.

So Aristotle says accordingly that choice has to do with what leads to the end, whereas wishing, *boulēsis*, is concerned with the end itself. This implies, and that is for Aristotle in a way the most important point, this implication: choice has to do with what is within our power. Whether we desire happiness or not is not within our power; we desire it naturally. But whether we seek our happiness along this way or along that way, that depends on our decision, and for that we are responsible. And that is the point which Aristotle makes: we are responsible for our action and therefore also for our virtues and vices, because our virtues and the vices are the outcomes of previous actions. And he criticizes here the view that all vice is due to ignorance, as Socrates seems to have said, for if all vice is due to ignorance, it would not be voluntary, but vice is voluntary. Because if vice were not voluntary, virtue would not be voluntary, and the same people who are perfectly willing to shift the responsibility for their vices to their environments are very unwilling to shift the responsibility for their virtues to their environment.

Now the voluntariness of vice does not mean that a man intends primarily and *per se* to be vicious, but rather in the following manner. And this is the way in which Thomas Aquinas explains it: if someone wishes to take a walk in the heat of summer knowing that he would perspire, the consequence is that he wishes to perspire.[ii] So the vicious man does not "wish" to be vicious; he only wishes to have, say, money or power. But he knows that he cannot get the power and the money in [the] easy way, or seemingly easy way in which he wants to get it, except by

[i] Strauss begins the session with a discussion about the exam and due date for papers.
[ii] Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, §512.

committing crimes. But therefore he is fully responsible for the crimes, just as a man who is perspiring in July, in the midday noon heat of July, is fully responsible for his perspiring. No one wishes to be sick, but many men wish to eat in a manner leading to sickness. They are responsible for their sickness: they wish to be sick, not *primo et per se*, primarily and by itself, but implicitly. To some extent there exists even responsibility for bodily defects. If, say, someone becomes obese because he does not take bodily exercises, then he is responsible for his being obese and he can be blamed for being obese. In the case of mere sickness, it's of course different.

Aristotle rejects the view that virtue or vice are not chosen but imposed on man by nature. According to this view, everything depends on being well-born. If you are well-born, you will be virtuous; if you are ill-born, you will be vicious and nothing can be done about it. Aristotle rejects this view as incompatible with our ordinary understanding of such matters. Now let us turn, Mr. Pangle, to 1114b25 or 26. That is the end of this discussion. Let us read it.

Reader:
We have then now discussed in outline the virtues in general, having indicated their genus [namely, that it is a mean, and a habit][iii], and having shown that they render us apt to do the same actions as those by which they are produced, and to do them in the way in which right reason may enjoin; and that they depend on ourselves and are voluntary.

But our habits[iv] are not voluntary in the same way as are our actions. Our actions we can control from beginning to end, and we are conscious of them at each stage. But our habits,[v] on the other hand, though we can control their beginnings, each separate addition to them is imperceptible, as is the case with the growth of a disease; though they are voluntary in that we were free to employ our capacities in the one way or the other.

LS: Now what Aristotle has in mind: if you have acquired the habit of drinking too much, then the mere resolve to become sober will not be very helpful because the habit is ingrained by now. And yet you are responsible for that bad habit, because you acquired it at a time when you still were not yet habituated: you *chose* the whisky bottle in preference to a wiser course of life. Good. Now this is the conclusion of this first section of book 3, and then Aristotle turns to a new subject, and we may read first the beginning. Yes?

Reader:
But to resume, let us now discuss the virtues severally, saying what they are, the class of objects to which they are related, and how they are related to them.[vi] In so doing, we shall also make it clear how many virtues there are. (1114b26-1115a5)

LS: Now let us stop here. So Aristotle has spoken *in general* about the virtues and this was, as he called it, an outline of what virtue is. But an outline is, as such, incomplete. The completion will

[iii] In Rackham's translation: "disposition." Brackets are Rackham's.
[iv] In Rackham's translation: "dispositions."
[v] In Rackham's translation: "With our dispositions."
[vi] In Rackham's translation: "let us now discuss the virtues severally, defining the nature of each, the class of objects to which it is related, and the way in which it is related to them."

be supplied by the discussion of the various particular virtues of which he will speak in the rest of book 3, book 4, and book 5. And then he says: by this discussion of the particular virtues, we will find out how many[2] particular virtues there are. Aristotle does not give a deduction of the virtues from a single unitary principle; say, he does not try to show [that] since virtues are the mean and they are habits, there must therefore be these and these and only these and these virtues. He proceeds in the directly opposite manner in the *Politics*, when he speaks of the various regimes. There he makes a general scheme of what kind of regime there can be, and from this it follows that there can be only six and these and these six regimes, namely, rule of one, rule of a few, and rule of the many, and in each case either good or bad. So you get six. There is no equivalent to that in the *Ethics*, and therefore what Aristotle does here is simply to look around and see what kinds of virtues we find, and then after we have exhausted the whole sphere, then we know how many virtues there are, if none is missing. And of course that leads to all kinds of difficulties. To mention only the most striking point: piety is not a virtue mentioned here, which implies piety is not according to Aristotle a virtue. And he does not give us any reasons here; we have to figure that out by ourselves (which is a good subject for a paper, incidentally). But one would have to have read the *Politics* also to answer this question. And I do not know how we are in this respect.

Aristotle at any rate begins now the discussion of the particular virtues with courage or manliness, *andreia*. Why does he begin with *andreia*? He doesn't tell us, so we have to find out. We get some help in this enterprise by Plato: in the first book of the *Laws*, Plato gives an order of the virtues according to rank, beginning also with courage and leading up to wisdom.[vii] So in a general way [he does] the same thing which Aristotle does in the *Ethics*, and this first book of the *Laws* would be of some use for answering the question. But of course one has to study above all the Aristotelian text. Now let us read a few passages from the discussion of courage. 1115a24.

Reader:
What then are the fearful things in respect of which Courage is displayed?

LS: Aristotle has shown that courage has to do with the right posture towards fears, but not all fears are relevant here. If someone fears ignominy, then he is not a coward on this score. And so Aristotle is from now on trying to give a positive answer. Yes, read again the sentence which you just read.

Reader:
What then are the fearful things in respect of which Courage is displayed? I suppose those which are the greatest, since there is no one more brave in enduring danger than the courageous man. Now the most terrible thing of all is death; for it is the end, and when a man is dead, nothing, we think, either good or evil can befall him any more. But even death, we can hold,[viii] does not in all circumstances give an opportunity for Courage: for instance, we do not call a man courageous for facing death by drowning or disease. What form of death then is a test of Courage? Presumably that which is the noblest. (1115a24-30)

[vii] See Plato, *Laws* 631c-d.
[viii] In Rackham's translation: "should hold."

LS: Yes, in Greek that is in the form of a question. "In which things then, or not rather in the most noble things?" Question mark. Yes?

Reader:
Now the noblest form of death is death in battle, for it is encountered in the midst of the greatest and most noble of dangers. And this conclusion is borne out by the principle on which public honours are bestowed in cities and under monarchies. (1115a30-32)

LS: Yes. Now Aristotle uses here more than once in this whole discussion the word *dokei* which we may translate: "it is thought to be." So Aristotle follows then what is generally thought to be the case. And following this line he says, "The brave man, the locus of the brave man's bravery, is war, battle, and not the sickbed, nor drowning nor the explorer on [the] Himalaya or whatever." This is not the highest kind of courage. The highest kind of courage is that on the battlefield.

And now Averroes in his commentary explains Aristotle's thought as follows, making a point somewhat clearer perhaps than it is in Aristotle himself: men have come to agree in this, that they exalt and magnify to the highest degree him who sustains death in war. There is a universal agreement among men, at least among all men competent to judge in this matter, that the brave man *par excellence* is a warrior, just as in the Red Indians the braves are of course not the men who are brave on the sickbed but the warriors. And the same is true not only of such "quote primitive" peoples but is also true of such highly civilized peoples as the Greeks. And one can draw the general conclusion from this point that the principles of morality are always generally accepted views (in Greek, *endoxa*), whereas if you look only at the posture of the soul, there is no reason why one should say the warrior is brave whereas the explorer, or even the man on the sickbed, is not brave. And that is Plato's argument [for] why he extends the sphere of courage so that it covers the whole ground, all fears and even all pleasures, and so the distinction between courage and moderation disappears. But Aristotle tries to remain loyal and faithful to the phenomena, and the phenomena are the judgments as they are made in the cities, especially by the most authoritative men in these cities; let's say the public orators. On funeral orations and other solemn occasions [they] would always take this view. Good. Let us then turn to 1115b17. "Now the man who sustains and fears what one ought."

Reader:
The courageous man then is he who endures or fears the right things and for the right purpose and in the right manner and at the right time, and who shows confidence in a similar way. (For the courageous man feels and acts as the circumstances merit, and as principle may dictate. And every activity aims at the end that corresponds to the disposition of which it is the manifestation. So it is therefore with the activity of the courageous man: his courage is noble; therefore its end is nobility, for a thing is defined by its end; therefore the courageous man endures the terrors and bears the deeds that manifest courage, for the sake of that which is noble.) (1115b17-24)

LS: Yes, let us stop here. Now what is then the "circumstances," as we would say, using a word that is not Aristotelian but which corresponds perfectly to what Aristotle means? It depends on the circumstances. For example, in some cases, to run away may be a virtuous act: think of the case of Joseph and the wife of Potiphar. In other cases, of course it all depends on the

circumstances. Now one of the most important considerations is the end. What is the end of the courageous man? What does Aristotle say here? So someone, in other words, may not run away, but the end which he has in mind is [that] he doesn't wish to be shot in the back by military police. That is not a courageous man; that is a prudent man in the vulgar sense of prudence. [Laughter] But the courageous man is the man who does it for—what is the end of the courageous man, as Aristotle says here? What is the end?

Student: Nobility.

LS: Yes, the intrinsic nobility. Because it is noble to expose one's life in this situation, therefore and for no other reason does he do it. But this end is important also for the following consideration: because in order to determine how to act here and now and act well here and now, he has to look at the end, the end being the noble. And via the noble he is then able to say: under these circumstances here it is proper to run away, whereas under those circumstances there it is proper to stay.

Now there seems to be some manifest insufficiency, inadequacy about this statement. One has to consider whether one has been commanded to hold a position at all costs; and then you must not run away. Or you have been commanded to retire after having delayed the enemy's advance; then you may retire after this has been achieved. Now if we look at these considerations—should this hill be held at all costs, or should it be abandoned after a certain time?—if we look into these deliberations or considerations, we see that they will be tactical and strategic considerations, which are in themselves not moral. I mean, this doesn't mean that they are immoral, but they are amoral. Now these tactical and strategic considerations in their turn are subject to a broader consideration which we call the political consideration: is it wise to continue that war at all? And then from this, consequences of a strategic and tactical nature will follow as a matter of course. The individual fighter has to obey, and within very narrow limits he nevertheless must make his own decisions. But the end in both cases—whether he simply obeys or whether he makes an independent decision, the end is in both cases what, if we look at the concrete situation as I tried to sketch it? At what does he ultimately look, the brave man, in order to decide whether to stay or to run away?

Mr. Shulsky: It would seem that he would look more towards victory than towards the noble as such.

LS: Yes, but behind the victory there is a broader consideration, because some victories are Pyrrhic and therefore not what you would choose. The salvation of the city: that would seem to be the end. Now Aristotle is absolutely silent about that in his analysis of bravery. The only end which he mentions is the noble as noble. One could raise the question: but if the salvation of the city is the highest consideration, is then there room left for bravery as a moral virtue? The statesman, and beneath him the generals and the lower officers, determine what is to be done on this particular hill on that particular day. Where does moral virtue come in? They determine what is the right thing to do, and where does moral virtue come in? Yes?

Mr. Shulsky: Well, that seems to make courage sound more like a form of justice, simply carrying out orders or generally speaking obeying the law, rather than [doing] anything specific—

LS: Well, I will give you an example suggested by Plato in the first or second book of the *Laws*. He discusses here something very different from the battlefield, namely, the *symposia*—in the Greek sense, not in the present American sense. And in the *symposium* there must be a leader, a ruler of the *symposium*, lest the people get out of hand, and in this connection Plato mentions the following example. A man may possess the art of the pilot and yet not be able properly to exercise it, although he has a perfect command of that art, because he gets seasick.[ix] So there are two ingredients needed: he must have the knowledge of the art, and he must have the submission of his intestines to reason, which is freedom from seasickness. Now the fighting man must know, in a manner, the art of war—I mean "in a manner" because it is different in the case of a general and the private. And he must not suffer cold feet, that is the other point, and both come somehow together. But the key point which is so important is that Aristotle does not mention the salvation of the city explicitly as the end, the *kalon*, the noble with which the brave man is concerned. Let us read a few more passages, 1116a10. "As has been said."

Reader:
As has been said then, Courage is the observance of the mean in relation to things that inspire confidence or fear, in the circumstances stated; and it is confident and endures because it is noble to do so or base not to do so. But to seek death in order to escape from poverty, or the pangs of love, or from pain or sorrow, is not the act of a courageous man, but rather of a coward— (1116a10-14)

LS: Yes, and he gives the reasons. So to choose death in order to avoid poverty or *eros* and pain is not courage but cowardice. And the reason is given in the sequel: it is softness to avoid the toilsome things, and the brave man is not soft. And secondly, the man who commits suicide for the sake of *eros*, for example: he does not do it for the sake of the noble, but in order to escape from an evil, and therefore he is a coward. Now in the immediate sequel, Aristotle discusses five kinds of pseudo-courage. There is no such discussion of pseudo-forms in the case of the other virtues. Courage seems to be a particularly ambiguous thing, because he develops these five forms. And the form mentioned in the first place is that of the citizen's courage; in other words, the ordinary citizen. And he fights of course for the city, but this is not the case of the *truly* courageous man, of whom Aristotle has spoken before. Let us perhaps read this section on the political courage.

Reader:
First, as most closely resembling true Courage, comes the citizen's courage. Citizen troops appear to endure dangers because of the legal penalties and the reproach attaching to cowardice, and the honours awarded to bravery; hence those races appear to be the bravest among which cowards are degraded and brave men held in honour. It is this citizen courage which inspires the heroes portrayed by Homer, like Diomede and Hector:

[ix] Plato, *Laws* 639b.

Polydamas will be the first to flout me;

and Diomedes says

Hector will make his boast at Troy hereafter:
"By me was Tydeus' son . . . "

This type of courage most closely resembles the one described before, because it is prompted by a virtue, namely the sense of shame, and by the desire for something noble, namely honour, and the wish to avoid the disgrace of being reproached.

The courage of troops forced into battle by their officers may be classed as of the same type, though they are inferior inasmuch as their motive is not a sense of shame but fear, and the desire to avoid not disgrace but pain. Their masters compel them to be brave, after Hector's fashion:

Let me see any skulking off the field—
he shall not save his carcass from the dogs!

The same is done by commanders who draw up their troops in front of them and beat them if they give ground, or who form them in line with a trench or some other obstacle in the rear; all these are using compulsion. A man ought not to be brave because he is compelled to be, but because courage is noble. (1116a17-b3)

LS: Yes, that is all. So you see even here, when he speaks of the citizen-soldier, either the more noble or the less noble kind, he does not speak of the end of this human activity, namely, the salvation of the city. That's very strange. There is a famous verse of Horace, "*Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*": "it is sweet and decorous to die for the fatherland."[x] Now "sweet," that is a special point, as Aristotle will make clear. But decorous, that is of course that with which Aristotle is very much concerned, but Aristotle doesn't say a thing about the *polis*. And of course the *polis* is implied, you can say, in war, because who wages war except cities or political communities? But still it is very strange. And in this connection I think it is worth mentioning that later on, in the section on friendship, Aristotle uses once or twice the word "fatherland," which to the best of my knowledge doesn't occur *ever* in the *Politics*. And I don't believe one can explain that by saying Aristotle was a stranger; you know, he came from northern Greece and he was throughout his life a stranger, and therefore he did not have the patriotic feelings proper. This would be too simple and psychological aberration, this kind of explanation. Mr. Zinman?

Mr. Zinman: Why does he call shame a virtue here when in the list of virtues [it's not]?

LS: I beg your pardon?

Mr. Zinman: Why does he call shame a virtue here when in the list of virtues in book 4 it's [not a virtue]? Is that connected with the ambiguity—

[x] Horace, *Odes* 3.2.13.

LS: Yes, that is loose language here. Speaking of a lower version of courage, he lowers his sights in order to account for it. That is not strict language. In strict language, the sense of shame is not a virtue, as he will make clear at the end of book 4. There is one explanation which I would like to suggest for why Aristotle does not speak here of the *polis*, namely (and I think someone mentioned this before, some one of you), if the emphasis in the understanding of bravery is on the salvation of the city, on the common good, then we speak in fact of justice and not of courage. Did not some one of you make this suggestion? Mr. Shulsky. And I did not properly recognize it? I do it herewith. Yes?

Student: Could I go back to the first passages?

LS: Sure.

Same Student: If there are two men with the same ends, approximately, and both as noble as each other, and one is put in circumstances to die bravely and one ends his life because of other circumstances where he wasn't put in a position to die bravely, does that mean that one is more brave than the other?

LS: Well, the man who commits suicide in order to escape poverty is not a brave man. I mean, he faces death, but he faces death in the wrong set of circumstances and for the wrong reason, and therefore he is not courageous.

Same Student: Suppose he's shot in the back unawares, whereas one person—

LS: Well, then it's not an action of his; he simply suffers some misfortune. He's not responsible for that in any way. I mean, how can it be a courageous action to be killed if you only suffer the killing and do not have the possibility of taking a stand towards imminent death? So then let us consider a few more passages. 1117a29. That is still about—the last chapter on courage. Yes?

Reader:
Courage is displayed with respect to confidence and fear, but not with respect to both equally: it is more particularly displayed in regard to objects of fear; for one who is unperturbed in the presence of terrors and comports himself rightly towards these is courageous in a fuller sense than one who does so in situations that inspire confidence. In fact, as has been said, men are sometimes called courageous for enduring pain. Hence Courage itself is attended by pain; and it is justly praised, because it is harder to endure pain than to abstain from pleasure. Not but what it would appear that the end corresponding to the virtue of Courage is really pleasant, only its pleasantness is obscured by the attendant circumstances. This is illustrated by the case of athletic contests: to boxers, for example, their end—the object they box for, the wreath and the honours of victory—is pleasant, but the blows they receive must hurt them, being men of flesh and blood, and also all the labour they undergo is painful; and these painful incidentals are so numerous that the final object, being a small thing, appears not to contain any pleasure at all. If then the same is true of Courage, the death or wounds that it may bring will be painful to the courageous man, and he will suffer them unwillingly; but he will endure them because it is noble to do so, or because it is base not to do so. And the more a man possesses all virtue, and the more happy he is, the more pain will death cause him; for to such a man life is worth most, and he stands to lose

the greatest goods, and knows that this is so, and this must be painful. But he is none the less courageous on that account, perhaps indeed he is more so, because he prefers the noble[xi] in war to the greatest prizes of life.

It is not true therefore of every virtue that its active exercise is essentially pleasant, save in so far as it attains its end.

No doubt it is possible that such men as these do not make the best professional soldiers, but men who are less courageous, and have nothing of value besides life to lose; for these face danger readily, and will barter their lives for trifling gains.

LS: Ya. So this is another point which has to be considered if we try to understand why Aristotle begins his discussion of the particular virtues with courage. The act of courage, exposing one's life on the battlefield, is not unqualifiedly pleasant, whereas in the case of the other virtues, the acts of virtue are intrinsically and unambiguously pleasant. Even to deny oneself some lower pleasures gives rise to a higher kind of pleasure. There is a pleasure deriving from the fact that one is the master of oneself, of one's desire. So at any rate, more formally stated, the case of *andreia*, of courage, is altogether a case apart. One can say that courage is one pole, and at the other pole there is wisdom and the other virtues. And you could perhaps look [this] up in Plato's *Laws* 963e, and to some extent even in the *Protagoras*: this uniqueness of courage is emphasized by Protagoras. To some extent this is accepted by Aristotle as well, as we have seen. Now let us follow Aristotle's argument then first to see what the principle underlying his ordering of the various virtues is. In 1117b, a little bit at the beginning of the next paragraph, the one which you just read.

Reader:
Let this suffice as an account of Courage: from what has been said it will not be difficult to form at all events a rough conception of its nature.

After Courage, let us speak of moderation;[xii] for these appear to be the virtues of the irrational parts of the soul. (1117a29-b24)

LS: So you see, he means moderation and courage. Aristotle deals first with the virtues of the irrational parts, of desires and aversions, of the *mere* desires and aversions. And here within these two he assigns the first place to courage because of the lower rank of courage compared with the other virtues. Later on he will call the object of these two virtues the "bodily pleasures and pains." So that is clearly then an ascent from the bodily to the less bodily, culminating in book 10 when Aristotle speaks of the contemplative life. This ascent character of the argument must be considered if one wants to understand the details. A little bit later, 1118a23. "Moderation and its opposite deals with suchlike pleasures." Do you have that?

Reader:

[xi] In Rackham's translation: "he prefers glory."
[xii] In Rackham's translation: "Temperance."

Moderation and its opposite[xiii] are therefore concerned with those pleasures which man shares with the lower animals, and which consequently appear slavish and bestial. (1118a23-25)

LS: So in other words, there is something beastly about these desires which are ordered by the virtues of courage and moderation, and that again reveals their lower rank. If we take, for example, the virtues and vices regarding wealth (of which Aristotle will speak shortly thereafter), the very desire for wealth is not bestial, because beasts have no sense of wealth, whereas a desire for food, drink and so on, this we share with the brutes and this is lower.

Student: Is there a significant difference between the kind of temperance he talks about in book 2 and this sort of temperance which is kind of prudent abstinence?

LS: It is more than prudent abstinence; other things have to be considered. For example, I mean, not only that you must not eat more than is suitable for you—that would be medical advice, not to eat too much nor eat things which would do harm to your health—but [also], for example, such things as how quick and what kind of quantities at a time you take. This is not necessarily medical anymore, but it has to do with the beautiful, with the noble. Let us turn to another passage where we can perhaps clear this up more fully. 1119a11. "The moderate man." Yes?

Reader:
The moderate[xiv] man keeps a middle course in these matters. He takes no pleasure at all in the things that the profligate enjoys most, on the contrary, he positively dislikes them; nor in general does he find pleasure in wrong things, nor excessive pleasure in anything of this sort; nor does he feel pain or desire when they are lacking, or only in a moderate degree, not more than is right, nor at the wrong time.[xv] But such pleasures as conduce to health and fitness he will try to obtain in a moderate and right degree; as also other pleasures so far as they are not detrimental to health and fitness, and not ignoble, nor beyond his means. The man who exceeds these limits cares more for such pleasures than they are worth. Not so the moderate man; he only cares for them as right principle enjoins. (1119a11-20)

LS: We have seen when we considered the section on courage [that] there was no sufficiently clear statement as to the end pursued by the courageous man. It was said that the locus of courage is the field of battle, but it was not said that the end which the brave man has in mind is the salvation of the city. Now here he speaks of moderation and has something to say about the end, the end being here such things as health and a good condition of the body. And one could rightly say this is not the virtue of moderation, because that is what any physician would prescribe, and the physician is not a moral teacher of man. But Aristotle mentions here also another point. He says one must do it in the right manner and [do] nothing against the noble or beyond what one can afford. The latter is obviously beyond the province of the physician. *You* have to know whether you can invest an extraordinary part of your income or money in food and drink; the doctor is not in a position to do that. But still, this also one of the outer worlds of moderation and not the core.

[xiii] In Rackham's translation: "Temperance and Profligacy."
[xiv] In Rackham's translation: "temperate."
[xv] In Rackham's translation: "wrong time, *et cetera*."

But there is also the noble here involved. Where does the noble come in? The noble we can say stands for the nonutilitarian. The others are all utilitarian considerations: what food is conducive to my health and the good condition of my body, and what amount of money I can spend for food without lacking it for more urgent purposes, and so on. Now what is the *kalon*, the noble here, the nonutilitarian? Well, quite externally, for example, not eating too hastily, nor too slowly or daintily, because that is in a way as grave a defect as the opposite. In other words, one must not behave like a slave of one's desire or a slave to the apparent freedom from desire—that's the case of the man who is too dainty. More generally stated, all these virtues have to do, if not always visibly, with human living together. Human living together would be impossible if one were not concerned with the decent opinion of others; otherwise you have the mere gutter. And that this is out of the question for Aristotle is of course implied when he speaks of the noble. One must not compel anyone to be an unwilling participant in one's digestive processes. This has nothing to do with utilitarianism proper, but has very much to do with the noble as far as this particular virtue is concerned. Let us turn to another passage, 1119b15 to 18. That is the end of this book.

Reader:
The aim of both moderation—[xvi]

LS: No, before.

Reader:
Hence in the moderate[xvii] man the appetitive element must be in harmony with reason.[xviii] For the aim of both moderation and reason[xix] is that which is noble; and the moderate[xx] man desires the right thing in the right way at the right time, which is what reason[xxi] ordains.

Let this then be our account of moderation.[xxii] (1119b15-18)

LS: Yes. What does this mean? The desiring faculty of the moderate man must be in harmony with the *logos*, for both the desiring faculty of the moderate man and the *logos* have the same end, namely, the noble. The *logos*, reason, aims at the noble. That's a very provisional statement. Now on the other hand, the desire of the well-bred man—in this particular case, of the moderate man—is also the noble, and this harmony makes him a truly good man. The noble is what is proper in the circumstances. That is exactly what is determined by the *logos*. For example, there are situations in which it is perfectly proper to eat hastily: especially in war, but also if there is a fire, the house is on fire, and that may be the last opportunity to have something to eat. No one would be regarded as acting improperly if in such a situation he would gulp down his food. Good. Now this—Mr. Simpson?

[xvi] In Rackham's translation: "Temperance."
[xvii] In Rackham's translation: "temperate."
[xviii] In Rackham's translation: "principle."
[xix] In Rackham's translation: "Temperance and principle."
[xx] In Rackham's translation: "temperate."
[xxi] In Rackham's translation: "principle."
[xxii] In Rackham's translation: "Temperance."

Student: The subject of courage and moderation: it would seem that perhaps he does an injustice to the phenomenon, and you said that Aristotle always does justice to the phenomena.

LS: Yes. Well, that is his earnest desire; and if we find him napping we have to say it, if with the necessary politeness and excuses.

Student: No, I find him doing justice in this case, but I'm wondering whether justice means completeness, and I don't think it does in this case. I mean, it seems that it would be possible and perhaps correct to speak of, say, the courage and moderation of the philosopher, and that would seem to have absolutely no place—

LS: Ya. That is true, but that also however is precisely a proof of Aristotle's sobriety and faithfulness to the phenomena, because when we speak of intellectual courage or of intellectual moderation, then we use the words courage and moderation metaphorically. What we think primarily of when we speak of courage is what is now called physical courage and not moral courage. And similarly, when we speak of moderation or temperance, we mean primarily the self-control regarding the sensual desires and do not mean, say, moderation regarding music. Aristotle mentions this example when he speaks of moderation: a man who is moderate in listening to music is not what we mean ordinarily by a temperate man. The mere fact that it is possible meaningfully to extend these terms shows that it is not entirely unfounded, but it is not the primary phenomenon. So I would say this criticism of Aristotle, I believe, is unjustified. But it would be a very interesting question: since when did people begin to speak of intellectual courage? First of all, what does it mean, for example, if someone exposes himself to torture or other unpleasantness because he holds certain opinions not approved of by the community? Has this something to do with courage? Formerly, people made a distinction between thinking and saying. And saying, that depends on whether under certain circumstances the community doesn't have the right to forbid certain . . . Think of Thrasymachus in the first book of the *Republic*, who forbids Socrates to give certain answers, in this way only imitating what the *polis* does or did in olden times. So the question would then be [about] the courage to face certain verities which are hard to bear. This is what we think of today, I believe, by intellectual courage—I mean, regardless of the external consequences, even if one never says a word about it in public. Does this exist for people like Plato and Aristotle? It's a difficult question. But did you ever come across a passage which clearly shows that this fear of facing an unpleasant truth is overcome by a man and who is praised on that account for his courage?

Student: I know that Xenophon . . . Socrates . . .

LS: Yes, but that would only mean that Xenophon understands courage in the strict sense: that they didn't regard Socrates as an outstanding soldier in the way in which the tranquil Alcibiades regarded him as an outstanding soldier. It doesn't have to mean more. I think it has to do with a much broader question: whether the truth was ever considered by the classical philosophers as something terrible and not fundamentally pleasing.

Student: What about that little anecdote, well, the story about Hippodamus—I don't know if I'm pronouncing it correctly—Hippodamus in Aristotle, the designer of towns who was a little like a hippie.

LS: Yes, and was a very conspicuous fellow in many respects, and a funny fellow. And the first political scientist in existence, according to Aristotle's view of what political science is. I always found that this was a fact of some usefulness for the present-day political scientist who overestimates the importance of his pursuit, that the founder of the science was such a rather ridiculous individual. But what did Hippodamus have to do with unpleasant or terrible truth?

Same Student: Well, it seems as if—well, as I understand it, Hippodamus at least was onto a truth that he successfully . . . The idea is that here is a man who is presenting something that's unpopular to the Athenian *polis*. He isn't persecuted for it, but they laugh at his dress and so forth. He goes on and presents it anyway.

LS: Yes, but this doesn't mean that the truth which he has discovered is unpleasant or hard to bear. Mr. Fairbanks?

Student: What about the case of, say, Lucretius? I mean, doesn't it seem at the beginning that the truth he reveals is probably frightening?

LS: Yes, Lucretius is the only exception which I happen to know. There may be others, I mean, where the poet, the Epicurean poet, is satisfied that the truth which he reveals is quite terrible and hard to bear, and yet it must be borne. But I think Lucretius is the exception rather than the rule. Oedipus, yes, that is something; that is true. But Oedipus: if you understand this to mean that there is a necessary connection between his solving the riddle of the Sphinx and his killing his father and mating with his mother, if this is a proper interpretation of the myth, then it is true. There are truths the discovery of which is necessarily accompanied by horrible crime. But the question is: is this a proper interpretation of the myth? I do not know. Yes?

Student: How about the case of Cephalus in the *Republic*, when Socrates breaks through his argument with the insane man with the weapon, and he finds something to do in the backyard immediately? Isn't the truth in a sense terrible to him?

LS: Yes, but do you remember the scene? In what posture does he leave the room? What does he do?

Student: He . . . the argument . . .

LS: Yes, and what does he do while he gives the argument to his heir?

Student: He laughs.

LS: He laughs! So that is not the way in which a man who is stricken by a terrible truth would act. At any rate, that is what we take for granted in the nineteenth and twentieth century. It began, I think, in the nineteenth century, terrible truth. The man who gave the strongest expression to this view I think was Nietzsche: terrible truth, and yet undeniable truth. And this created a new problem. Formerly men regarded the truth which they discovered, however unpopular it might be to the many, as highly desirable because it was the truth. Yes?

Student: Well, I was just going to ask if it couldn't be argued, by the nature of Plato's construction of the dialogue, that in a sense the truth was of such consequence . . . even terrible enough so that it had to be presented in such a way so that terrible—

LS: Yes, but what does this mean? That people who are not concerned with the truth and want to have lullabies would be shocked. But we are concerned with the question of whether men who are concerned with the truth—philosophers, as they were called formerly—whether *they* would not find the truth terrible, so that philosophy as such becomes for them a dubious thing because it is destructive of humanity.

Student: Isn't there another . . . that too, where people might be—might fear because there are no truths. In other words, the thought that there are no absolute truths to be found.

LS: What does an absolute truth mean as distinguished from a relative truth?

Student: I wasn't making a distinction between relative truth and absolute, I was thinking more with regard to . . . the scientific method . . . reject that . . . as highly relative.

LS: Provisionally, provisionally, what would follow from that?

Same Student: . . . the same, the same state of doubt or . . .

LS: Yes, but it is very interesting that the ancient skeptics—the *ancient* skeptics—were perfectly satisfied with the unavailability of what you call absolute truth. They found that the insight into the fact that such truth is not available would relax one, and it would lead to a state of *ataraxia*: of not being disturbed, and it would not lead to despair at all. The ancient skeptics were not despairing men. They would only confirm what I said.

Same Student: I wasn't disagreeing with you, I was just wondering why in modern times . . .

LS: Yes, that is a very important question, why this has changed. Now you mentioned the example, when Nietzsche speaks of these matters, he mentions the deed of Copernicus, by which man has lost his central position in the universe.[xxiii] Yes, but did Copernicus regard his insight that the earth is not the center as depressing? They all regarded it as liberation. The people who attacked everything believed in by previous men, like, say, the French materialists of the eighteenth century—such people like Helvétius and Holbach and so, they were not unhappy men, they were very happy. Good riddance to hell and all the other things which made life miserable hitherto. That this so-called liberation from prejudice, superstition, or whatever would be the most terrible thing which ever happened to men, that was Nietzsche's assertion; in other words, a liberation which leads into the greatest misery, into greater misery than that of the worst slave labor camps and slave pens of the past. That was the point which Nietzsche had in mind. It was an entirely new situation.

[xxiii] See Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality* (1887), treatise 3, section 25.

Student: When Hume, at the very end of his discourse about human understanding, makes the comment, "I have just read what I have done, and it shocked me. I am tempted to throw my papers into the fire and burn them but I cannot. I must proceed for the sake of truth."[xxiv]

LS: But does Hume strike you as a man who was very miserable? [Laughter]

Same Student: No, he sounds miserable.

LS: Pardon?

Same Student: In these passages, he sounds miserable.

LS: Yes, sounds miserable. But I think he reminds much more of the ancient skeptics who found that the nonavailability of absolute truth is a convenient situation. I think Hume was a man who was amazingly satisfied with the results of his inquiry. He did not suffer from that; at least that is my impression. Mr. Zinman?

Mr. Zinman: I . . . made this point, but it seems that there perhaps you can make the distinction between say the . . . of philosophy, the beginnings of the philosophical quest, and the quest itself, in the sense that granted the quest itself is pleasant, even granted that perhaps the quest is unfulfilled on the part of any . . . but it would seem that the effort that is necessary to begin that quest requires a certain form of courage, even for the ancients—or at least that view seems possible, in the sense that the effort that is necessary to leave the comfort of common opinion.

LS: Yes, sure. In this sense, sure. This makes sense. But that is not what we mean primarily by intellectual courage.

Student: . . . in that sense this effort . . . courage . . .

LS: Yes. And also if you consider the situation: Theaetetus here, the younger Socrates there; and Theatetus more moderate than courageous, and young Socrates more courageous rather than moderate. Yes, that is true; that shows the presence of that problem. That is true. But it is not so manifest as in Lucretius, where the truth that the visible universe will perish again is thought to be a terrible truth, almost unbearable, and bearable only for philosophers. I think there is no equivalent to that in Plato. So in other words, a kind of materialistic notion which, in Nietzsche's reaction to it in the nineteenth century, led to the phenomenon which I had in mind. Miss . . .

Student: . . . on Lucretius because he seems to show that philosophy is the only answer for all humankind . . . garden . . . some solace in knowing that this is the truth. And it then seems that . . . accept it, that only from the viewpoint of the city is this terrible, but from the viewpoint of the philosopher, it isn't terrible.

LS: Yes, but then you forget in a way what resignation is implied in the very notion of the philosopher. The philosopher is a man who has resigned the greatest hopes which all other men have. And to that extent he is already on the other side, and therefore after he has made this act

[xxiv] The student paraphrases book 1, part 4, section 7 of David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739).

of resignation, it is relatively simple for him to be happy. But at one time of his life, he had to make this terrible sacrifice of the greatest hopes.

Same Student: But in the poem itself, it doesn't seem as though he has to undergo this sort of resignation and retire from society. He seems to accept that rather gladly.

LS: Yes, but that is not the main point, the retiring from society. The main point is becoming reconciled to such things as the plague; you know, the plague described at the end, and not only as an occurrence which takes place here and there, but as a necessary end of the world. And we have today generally this posture: we are told by physics that the world has come into being, the world as we know it, and will perish again. But this has taken such a long long time, [that] the world in which human beings can live has come into being, and it will take billions of years until the human race will have perished. But one can of course say what is a matter of a billions of years is not a subject for reasonable worry. I mean, one should worry about what happens in the next few years, or during one's lifetime, and not [about] what happens billions of years after one's death. But I think that is the difference precisely between, say, a philosopher and an administrator. [Laughter] The administrator cannot worry about what happens after [his death], but the philosopher has to worry [LS chuckles] about these matters: *merimnosophistai*, the sophists who worry about things about which other humans do not worry.[xxv] And in addition, Lucretius creates the impression—and in a way he means it, of course—that what he is doing is that he liberates his reader from the greatest horrors to which man is exposed. That is only half of the story; there is also the other side to which I have referred. But we would have to study Lucretius together in order to convince you, I hope, at least.

Now after having discussed the first and primary virtues, courage and moderation, Aristotle turns to the "higher" or more sophisticated virtues. And the first which he mentions is liberality, *eleutheriotēs*. Now this follows immediately on *sōphrosynē*, on moderation, because there is a connection between moderation, dealing with the bodily desires and their satisfaction, and liberality, dealing with wealth, because wealth is the general means for getting victuals. Now let us read a few passages here. 1120a18f.—[xxvi]

Yes, a sign is that one can use it in the loose meaning of the term, the deliberative understanding—"judicial understanding" might be better, to bring out the kinship with being sensible as distinguished from possessing a science. Yes. Now what would seem to have the highest rank of these kindred phenomena? We have the being-sensible of the private man in his own affairs. We have the man who extends it beyond his self in the narrowest sense to his family; then he is an *oikonomikos*, a manager of his household. And then if it's still larger, then he is a *politikos*, a man understanding the affairs of his city, and there are various stages there. For example, a man might be good enough as a juryman, might be very sensible at that but not good enough in the assembly, the policymaking assembly; and a man may be good enough at that but would not be able to elaborate a code, say, for a colony to be sent out to Sicily or elsewhere. Now what would be the highest there, in this diversity of forms which being sensible can take? What would you say?

[xxv] See Aristophanes, *Clouds* 101. The term that appears there is *merimnophrontistai*; the word Strauss uses (*merminosophistai*) is apparently drawn from a scholiast's gloss on that passage.

[xxvi] There is a break in the tape at this point.

Student: Legislator?

LS: It would seem to be, yes. But let us see what follows.

Reader:
Now knowledge of one's own interest will certainly be one kind of Prudence; though it is very different from the other kinds, and people think that the man who knows and minds his own business is prudent, and that politicians are busybodies: thus Euripides writes—

Would that be prudent? when I might have lived
A quiet life, a cipher in the crowd,
Sharing the common fortune . . .
Restless, aspiring, busy men of action . . .

For people seek their own good, and suppose that it is right to do so. Hence this belief has caused the word 'prudent' to mean those who are wise in their own interest. Yet—

LS: Yes, in other words, here Aristotle makes a tentative case for the view that the man concerned with his own good is more sensible than the others, say, according to the popular view that the politicians are busybodies, i.e., they interfere with the affairs of other people. Yes, but how does the argument go on?

Reader:
Yet probably as a matter of fact a man cannot pursue his own welfare without Domestic Economy and without political life.[xxvii]

LS: Yes, so "probably." The Greek word is again *isōs*; literally translated, "perhaps," where one never knows what Aristotle means by it, whether he is truly dubitative or whether he is only urbane, in order to avoid a dogmatic assertion. So we have to leave it. And finally?

Reader:
Moreover, even the proper conduct of one's own affairs is a difficult problem, and requires consideration. (1141b33-1142a11)

LS: So in other words, it is not so simple then to draw the line between one's own affairs and the affairs of others. At least you must have friends; in this way another horizon must be transcended. Yes.

Now these were the main passages I thought we should read. There is a very important chapter later on at the end of the work, and 1143b18, practically until the end of the book, but I don't believe that the time at our disposal is sufficient. Perhaps we have a kind of free discussion of the fundamental difficulty concerning practical wisdom and the question: what is the status of the principles which we follow if we act sensibly? I mean, there is no such thing as a conscience in Aristotle. The word doesn't exist [for] a kind of innate faculty guiding us. It is something

[xxvii] In Rackham's translation: "and even Politics."

acquired, [and] acquired by the proper kind of breeding. But then of course we must have a standard which enables us to distinguish between the proper kind of breeding and the improper one. How do we get that? Aristotle gives an occasional—in the first book, when he gives his quasi-scientific definition of what happiness is, he says it consists in doing the work of man well. So what is implied there is this: there is man, there is a nature of man, an essence of man, and this nature points to its peculiar perfection, just as the acorn points to the oak and the kitten points to the cat. Only in the case of man, this is all much more complicated. And the human body, it is relatively simple, but regarding the human mind it is quite complicated. But still, as we see, Aristotle would say there is such a thing as respectability or decency recognized, with variations, everywhere. And even the disrespectable people recognize it, even if they refer to themselves as crooks, as the other side also does, only they don't find it wrong to be crooks but they [still] admit that they are not the square ones. There is then some awareness of these things, and this awareness Aristotle is trying to develop in this work. One can say there is a kind of unwritten law of proper conduct, and Aristotle articulates this in his *Ethics*.

But still, this will perhaps not be quite sufficient. Aristotle makes a distinction, at which he leaves matters, between happiness and moral virtue. All men want happiness, desire happiness. This is the clear starting-point of the whole reflection of Aristotle. And somehow moral virtue seems to be a means for becoming happy. But that is not quite the way in which we are to look at it. I think I'll read to you a passage which may help you when you think about these matters. I take it from Cicero's work on the ends of good and bad things, *De Finibus*, book 3, paragraph 6, sections 20 to 25. Now this is official Stoic teaching, Stoic schools. According to that teaching we must begin from the principles of nature, from the beginnings which nature has laid in us, put in us. "Man's first attraction is toward the things in accordance with nature. But as soon as he has attained to understanding and has discerned the order and, so to speak, the harmony that should govern conduct, he then esteems this harmony far more highly than all the things for which he originally felt an affection,"[xxviii] and so on. We cannot read this now; you might read it at home. Something like self-preservation, the desire for self-preservation, is the basis from which all life, all moral life, starts. But then while we pursue our self-preservation we become aware that for the sake of self-preservation we must cultivate our minds, for example, and do other things. And then at a later stage we become aware that what originally came in only as a means is higher in rank than that which it served, and this transformation of the means to an end, or something like that, is assumed also in Aristotle. The primary desire is the desire for happiness, but this desire becomes practically identical with the desire for noble conduct. And what noble conduct is we see by looking around and by observing ourselves and others, and especially people of refinement. And what this means is not too difficult to understand. Everyone, however crude and coarse, will come into situations from time to time where he will see what crudeness and coarseness is, and therefore by implication how un-nice they are, and therefore by implication what refinement is.

[xxviii] Strauss reads a modified version of Cicero, *De finibus bonorum et malorum*, ed. and trans. H. Rackham (London: W Heinemann; New York: G. P. Putnam, 1931), 239. Rackham's translation reads: "Man's first attraction is towards the things in accordance with nature; but as soon as he has understanding, or rather become capable of 'conception'—in Stoic phraseology *ennoia*—and has discerned the order and so to speak harmony that governs conduct, he thereupon esteems this harmony far more highly than all the things for which he originally felt an affection."

So I must leave it at these remarks. Well, this is now the last meeting of this course, and I wish you a nice summer and pleasant vacation.

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[1] Deleted "happiness."
[2] Deleted "of."