LEO STRAUSS

ARISTOTLE'S *NICOMACHEAN ETHICS*

A course offered in the spring quarter, 1963

Department of Political Science, The University of Chicago

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Note on 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 commenting on texts, including many he wrote little or nothing about, and responding generously to student questions and objections. The transcripts, amounting to more than twice the volume of Strauss's published work, will 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. Professor 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 Strauss retired from the University, 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 the 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 the 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 remastering received financial support from the Olin Center and a grant from the Division of Preservation and Access of the National Endowment for the Humanities. The surviving audiofiles are available at the Strauss Center website: https://leostrausscenter.uchicago.edu/courses.

Strauss permitted the taping and transcribing to go forward, but he 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, which read: "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, staff in 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. Sentence fragments that might not be appropriate in academic prose have been kept; some long and rambling sentences have been divided; some repeated clauses or words have been deleted. A clause that breaks the syntax or train of thought may have been moved elsewhere in the sentence or paragraph. In rare cases sentences within a paragraph may have been reordered. Where no audiofiles survived, attempts have been made to correct likely mistranscriptions. Brackets within the text record insertions. Ellipses in transcripts without audiofiles have been preserved. Whether they indicate deletion of something Strauss said or the trailing off of his voice or serve as a dash cannot be determined. Ellipses that have been added to transcripts with audiofiles indicate that the words are inaudible. Administrative details regarding paper or seminar topics or meeting rooms or times have been deleted without being noted, but reading assignments have been retained. Citations are provided to all passages so readers can read the transcripts with the texts in hand, and footnotes have been provided to identify persons, texts, and events to which Strauss refers.

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

Introduction

Ronna Burger, Tulane University

"Aristotle is such a great teacher as perhaps no other philosopher is because he always keeps reminding us of the character of our knowledge as an attempt to ascend from the primary given to what we can call the principles" (1963, session 5).

Strauss devoted two courses exclusively to Aristotle's *Ethics*, one in spring 1963 in the Political Science Department of the University of Chicago, the other in winter and spring 1968 at Claremont Men's College. Although Strauss's interaction with particular groups of students naturally brings out distinct concerns, the central themes are common to both courses, the most striking difference being the pace and material covered. In the later course Strauss devotes more than a third of the lectures 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 book 3, most of the rest to justice in book 5. The earlier Chicago course, on the other hand, works through the ten books of the *Ethics* in order. *The City and Man* (*CM*) would be published the following year, and the 1963 lectures spell out ideas presented in the succinct and amazingly rich discussion of Aristotle's ethical thought in that work.[i] The remarks that follow aim to highlight the core issues in this course that guide Strauss's reading of the *Ethics* and the understanding of classical political philosophy it reflects.

At the base of those core issues is what it means for the *Ethics* to be a "practical science." Most importantly, it is driven by the question, How shall I live? Or rather, as Strauss sometimes puts it for significant reasons, the *Ethics* is a "quasi-theoretical" investigation of ethical-political life.[ii] Through the careful reading we expect, Strauss finds a first clue to the status of the inquiry in Aristotle's own designation of it as "*politikē tis*": the almost inconspicuous qualification, "*some kind* of politics," indicates that the *Ethics* is not itself a matter of political activity or an extended deliberation.[iii] Yet Strauss highlights Aristotle's announcement that its aim is not (simply) to know, but to become good (1103b26-30). Of course, the *Ethics* explains how we develop good character by the repeated practice of right actions in order to internalize the desired disposition. What, then, could it mean to "become good" through our study of Aristotle? Strauss indicates his understanding by calling attention, throughout the lectures, to the intended effect of the treatise: in subtle steps Aristotle "removes a screen," as he "articulates for his addressees the unwritten *nomos* which was the limit of their vision while he himself stands above that limit" (*CM*, 28).

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[i] See especially pp. 25-29 in *The City and Man* (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1964), preface dated July 1963.

[ii] Strauss mentions, in session 12, a medieval category of "theoretical–practical science" as a helpful designation for a theoretical examination of the practical sphere.

[iii] "This inquiry," Strauss establishes in the first session, "is not politics, the art of the statesman, but *some kind* of politics, politics in a sense. The formula used here," Strauss adds, "reminds [us] of the remark of Socrates in the *Gorgias* where Socrates says that he is the true politician."

Strauss never loses sight of Aristotle's early statement about the audience Aristotle has in mind: this inquiry can speak only to those who already possess "the that" of moral virtue and such individuals do not need "the why" (1095b7-8). This assertion is in fact a paradoxical invitation: the potential reader who alone meets the necessary precondition for benefiting from Aristotle's treatise is precisely the one who does not need it. It is characteristic of Strauss that he does not jump to acknowledging that paradox. He adopts, at least initially, a more straightforward reading and confirms the benefit of the requirement to possess "the that": an understanding of what is first for us is the necessary starting point for the discovery of what is first in itself.[iv]

Strauss repeatedly states the Aristotelian point in his own words: The decent person does not ask, "Why be decent?"[v] The primary addressee of the *Ethics*, according to Strauss, is "the gentleman," the well-bred person who recognizes *that* a particular action or emotion is just or noble. Faced with the objection that Aristotle sets out, not from the most widespread human opinions about the noble and just, but from the assumptions of Greek aristocrats, Strauss responds concretely by recalling Aristotle's high praise of non-Greek persons or institutions.[vi] Strauss regularly notes how familiar we should find Aristotle's presentation of what is praiseworthy and blameworthy in human beings. The roots of our tradition in Aristotle's thought, together with illuminating disparities, make the *Ethics* a valuable source for deepening our understanding of our own time and place.[vii]

Aristotle's denial of a theoretical science of ethics shows up, Strauss observes, in his unwillingness to deduce the particular moral virtues from an analysis of the soul. (Of course the very basic distinction of moral and intellectual virtue is derived from the psychology, in the last chapter of book 1, dividing the nonrational and rational parts of

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[iv] Strauss speaks of this general Aristotelian procedure in session 5, including the citation at the outset of these remarks. One sign or starting point is the *Ethics*' narrowing of the sphere of each virtue, which, as Strauss remarks in session 7, contrasts sharply with Plato: courage is limited to facing death on the battlefield, moderation to taming the desire for the pleasures of food, drink, and "the *aphrodisia*," and likewise in other cases**.** The kind of extension of the virtues that Plato explores Aristotle considers "merely" metaphoric, as Strauss illustrates, in session 11, with regard to justice. In session 10 Strauss offers a fascinating reflection on the history of "intellectual courage," which he finds not in Plato and Aristotle but in Averroes's conception of the courage of the philosopher facing certain opinions and above all in Nietzsche.

[v] Aristotle, so construed, can be contrasted with Plato, who has Socrates conduct the whole conversation of the *Republic* in response to his young interlocutors asking: Why should I be just?

[vi] Strauss thinks of Carthage in book 2 of the *Politics*. He calls attention, in session 13, to the beginning of book 7 of the *Ethics*, where Aristotle remarks that the beastly condition is found most often among barbarians, but only after speaking of the divine man, illustrated by a Homeric citation about the "barbarian" Hector.

[vii] In session 1 Strauss chooses the virtue of the great-souled man to illustrate something foreign to us, especially from a biblical perspective, but he goes on to argue that every society recognizes the need for such a man born to rule.

Strauss seems to be fond of this anecdote (presented in sessions 1 and 13): When as a mature man Churchill was given a copy of Aristotle's *Ethics* by Lord Birkenhead, he responded to his reading of it: "That's more or less the way in which I always understood these things."

the human soul.[viii]) Strauss's recurrent contention that moral virtue neither needs nor can have any theoretical defense is not immediately accepted by the students. In the discussion of Aristotle's famous account of the human function—or as Strauss prefers, "the work" of man—one student asks if that doesn't amount to a theoretical basis.[ix] Strauss responds by observing that no connection is made from that account to Aristotle's enumeration of the particular moral virtues. (He could have acknowledged that the virtue derived from the function argument is *phronēsis*, the excellence of practical reasoning.) But this line of questioning leads Strauss to qualify his claim: there are always enemies of decency, hence one must be able to mount a defense against their attack. When asked if that isn't a theoretical defense of morality, Strauss appeals to the difference it makes who first raises the demand: what seems like a casual comment implies the need to meet a challenger with "demonstration by refutation."

Strauss opens a window on Aristotle's understanding of the ethical–political sphere as a whole by singling out in numerous lectures the two cases in which a particular virtue is said to be all-inclusive: magnanimity, on the one hand, is a "crowning ornament" of all the virtues—a "cosmos" that incorporates all the others while enhancing each—and justice, on the other hand, in its universal sense is an all-embracing whole of the moral virtues, insofar as practiced in relation to others.[x] The one peak expresses the perfection of the individual, the other the well-being of the political community. Strauss raises the question of the relation between city and man by considering whether one of these two peaks should be assigned a higher status. Insofar as leading a virtuous life for oneself might be thought inferior to guiding a whole society toward virtue, justice would appear higher. Since, however, universal justice means lawfulness, and laws can be bad, that political virtue would be simply good only in the best regime. And if the *aristē politeia* is not a reality, and hence the city is always imperfect, the potential perfection of the individual would have a higher rank.[xi]

Strauss develops that implication by commenting on the deliberate ambiguity of Aristotle's account of magnanimity. He leads students to see the virtue represented, on the one hand by Alcibiades, a man who knows and demands the honor he deserves, even though that makes him dependent on his inferiors, but at the same time he brings out

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[viii] Strauss provokes laughter in session 4 with this illustration of this basic division of virtue: "Perry Mason is described somewhere as a man who is sharp like a steel trap and clean like a hound's tooth . . . I mean, one must not be snobbish."

[ix] The argument, in *Ethics* book 1, chapter 7, is treated in the second session.

[x] A third virtue has an important unifying function in the *Ethics*: *phronesis* as the intellectual virtue of practical reason, in its linkage to moral virtue first makes "genuine virtue" possible (1144b16-18). Strauss refrains from labeling it a third peak, presumably because it does not belong within the sphere of moral virtue, and Aristotle's accomplishment as "the discoverer of moral virtue" (*CM*, 27) depends on avoiding the Socratic reduction of all virtue to prudence.

[xi] Focusing in session 10 on Aristotle's statement, "The lawful things are somehow the just things" (1120b13), Strauss indicates the limits of legal justice by showing how much is at stake in that brief qualification "somehow" (*pōs*). To express his claim about the relation of city and man, in the same session, Strauss imagines Aristotle's voice: "I have seen a number of excellent men, Plato, for example, and some others. I have not seen many excellent cities. As a matter of fact, I haven't seen a single excellent city."

Aristotle's hints of Socrates, who rises above the contradictions in the demand for honor, which makes his greatness of soul the true virtue. "Moral virtue shows that the city points beyond itself but it does not reveal clearly that toward which it points, namely, the life devoted to philosophy" (*CM*, 27). Strauss clarifies and supports this point by contrasting Aristotle with the moderns, Kant in particular.[xii] Magnanimity thus proves to be one, if not the moment that exhibits the strategy of the *Ethics* as Strauss discerns it: "When the philosopher Aristotle addresses his political science to the more or less perfect gentlemen, he shows them as far as possible that the way of life of the perfect gentleman points toward the philosophic way of life" (*CM*, 28).[xiii] Not despite, but precisely by setting out from political life and the world of opinion, which is then subject to examination, Aristotle is led to the discovery of the superiority of the theoretical life. This trajectory is an essential mark of classical political philosophy.[xiv]

The mode of ascent that starts out from the phenomena of ethical experience as given, with no theoretical deduction, leads Strauss again and again to the question: What is the cognitive status of the principles of action? Those principles should furnish, above all, the guiding light for *phronēsis*, the virtue of practical reason, which must come to a determination of the beneficial action to be chosen in an "infinite variability of circumstances," without universal rules from which particular applications could be derived.[xv] Practical reasoning involves deliberation about the means to a given end, but

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[xii] Already in the first session Strauss introduces this contrast: while Aristotle and Kant agree that moral principles cannot be deduced from anything higher, Aristotle "is infinitely more complex than in Kant," since he treats morality in its own terms while recognizing the superiority of theoretical knowledge, whereas Kant's denial of the possibility of completed theoretical knowledge entails the elevation of morality to the highest status.

[xiii] Near the very end of the course, a student asks whether the gentleman could be understood as a deficient philosopher. "Yes," Strauss replies, "or mutilated, manqué. If he would understand himself, he would be a philosopher." It is not obvious whether Strauss would seriously defend this claim made on the spot, which seems to deny different natures.

[xiv] "Classical political philosophy," Strauss explains, "is characterized by the fact that it was related to political life directly." But the political philosopher "is ultimately compelled to transcend not merely the dimension of common opinion, of political opinion, but the dimension of political life as such; for he is led to realize that the ultimate aim of the political life cannot be reached by political life, but only by a life devoted to contemplation, to philosophy." See p. 78 and p. 91 in "On Classical Political Philosophy," *What is Political Philosophy? And Other Studies* (Greenwood Press, 1959).

[xv] This challenge for prudence in the sphere of the good has a correlate in the sphere of justice, as Strauss suggests in his discussion of Aristotle's highly influential, but truncated and obscure, discussion of natural right in *Ethics* 5.7. What is by nature, in contrast with convention or law, is supposed to be the same everywhere and always; but there is something just by nature, Aristotle maintains, even if like all matters in our sphere it is not unchangeable. Strauss takes a stab at interpreting this passage in *Natural Right and History*: natural right refers not to universal rules, but to a standard of action, which is always adjusted to particular circumstances, and the possibility of the extreme situation means there is no unchangeable principle that can be applied in choosing what is by nature right. Strauss proposes another suggestion in session 11, which he ascribes to the Arabic–Jewish tradition (and Marsilius): Natural right refers to the minimum conditions every community must meet in order to survive, while anything beyond that would belong to positive right.

phronēsis is the virtue of that activity only when the end is a good one. Where, Strauss asks repeatedly, does *phronēsis* get knowledge of the good that is its end?

Aristotle offers a seemingly clear-cut answer to that question, which Strauss takes seriously: moral virtue supplies the end. As Strauss argues throughout the course, the just and the noble known to the moral man provide the goal for practical reasoning. But Strauss is of course well aware of the deep problem with this answer. The *Ethics* sets out in search of happiness as the final end in human life, defined as an activity only "in accordance with" virtue (1177a12-13). And the argument of the work leads finally to the insight that the highest human happiness must lie in the activity of that which is best in the human being, not the practice of moral virtue but *theōria*. The problem of the final end first comes to a head with the completion of the investigation of intellectual virtue in book 6. Recalling the "work of man" accomplished with prudence and moral virtue, Aristotle clarifies, "virtue makes the target correct, prudence the things conducive to that target" (1144a9). But that assertion—understandably assumed to refer to moral virtue as the final end—is incompatible with the concluding analogy in book 6: just as the art of medicine looks to health as its final end, *phronēsis* looks to *sophia*, which cannot be subordinated to any further end.

How does Strauss handle this core puzzle of Aristotle's ethical thought?[xvi] The reasonable consequence he draws is perhaps the most controversial claim in his interpretation of the *Ethics*: the two ends to which *phronēsis* is directed must belong to two human types, the moral man and the philosopher, who lead two different ways of life. For the one, moral virtue is an end in itself, and an action only counts as moral if chosen for its own sake, as an instantiation of the noble. The philosopher's behavior might look very close—he could not pursue his end if distracted by excessive desire for pleasure or held back by excessive fear of every danger, or plagued by other vices; but his action would be, in essence, the product of a different motivation. Looking to wisdom as the final end, his action, and indeed his whole way of life, could not be the embodiment of moral virtue in the strict sense.

[xvi] The problem is implicit in the movement of Strauss's account in *The City and Man*, which begins: "Insofar as moral virtue supplies the just and noble ends, recognized by the well-bred person, the sphere of prudence is closed by principles which are fully evident only to gentlemen" (25). But recognizing the potential of the gentleman, and especially the statesman, to be affected by philosophy means the "moral–political sphere is not unqualifiedly closed to theoretical science" (28). Strauss turns directly to the "legislative art" as the highest form of prudence and Aristotle as "teacher of legislators." It is not obvious how that is connected with the provocative conclusion he reaches, where Aristotle's name drops out: "Considerations like these induced Socrates and Plato to assert that virtue is knowledge and that quest for prudence is philosophy" (29). Strauss goes on to refer to the absence of Socrates from the *Laws*, Plato's "only political work proper," which implies the independence of the legislative art from philosophy. He tries out another idea in session 12: "Let us keep in mind this strange development: that in a sense prudence, being subject to the legislative art, is ultimately subject to the quasi-theoretical enterprise of men like Aristotle and Plato. So we would come back from Aristotle to the Platonic point of view."

Moral virtue would cease to be what it is if subordinated to any end beyond itself: that might be considered the ultimate "that" held by the addressee of the *Ethics*. But to move from "the that" to "the why" would be to ask: What good does moral virtue serve? Strauss addresses that question at several points in the course with a very direct and clear assertion: moral virtue serves two purposes, the good of the political community and the highest perfection of the individual in the activity of *theōria*.[xvii] There is a silent voice behind this statement: the assertion of these two purposes of moral virtue, while implicit in the argument of the *Ethics*, is explicit and thematic in Maimonides.[xviii] Strauss returns in the final session of the course to this fundamental issue of the relation between the moral virtue required by the intellect and that required by the city: "These two rivers flow into the same sea, fed by theory on the one hand, and by the *polis* on the other . . . This is in a way a somewhat spurious union because of the heterogeneity of the two sources, and yet this unity is not simply spurious." For the root of both is the nature of man as the animal that possesses *logos*. That Aristotle's *Ethics* does not deduce its account of morality from this theoretical principle is the ultimate mark of its character as a practical science, one which requires the reader's participation in his own ascent from what is first for us to what is first in itself.

[xvii] In session 5 Strauss announces "two heterogeneous ends" of moral virtue, "the *polis* and thinking." The morality required by the one is not the same as the other. But "somehow—by a strange artifice of nature, one could say—nature has so arranged things that the thinker and the *polis* require roughly the same kind of habits." And this is not really so strange, he continues, given the nature of man as the animal with *logos*, which points on the one hand to communication and society, on the other to thinking. At the end of session 12, Strauss appeals to Aquinas in support of this point: "Thomas says, in his truly Aristotelian spirit, that the ends are ultimately the natural ends, and the natural ends are of course derivative from the nature of man. And the nature of man being the rational animal, both the *polis* and *theōria* follow necessarily."

[xviii] In *Guide of the Perplexed* 3.27, Maimonides derives two aims of the Law as a whole—the welfare of the soul and the welfare of the body—from the two corresponding perfections of man. Since the welfare of the body can only be achieved by living together in political association, the Law serves that end by orders meant to abolish wrongdoing to each other, on the one hand, and promoting moral qualities useful for life in society, on the other. The highest the Law comes to serving the welfare of the soul is through the promulgation of correct opinions, although the ultimate perfection of man is possession of "an intellect in actu," which does not include in itself actions or moral qualities.

Editorial Headnote

This course was taught in a seminar form. A student usually read a paper, but the reading was not recorded. Strauss began class with a response to the paper and then general remarks; a student then read aloud portions of the text, followed by Strauss's comments and responses to student questions and comments. The texts assigned for the course were Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934) and *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. W. D. Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1925). When the text was read aloud in class, the transcript records the words as they appear in these editions of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and original spelling has been retained.

The audio recordings for this course did not survive, with the exception of part of session 7. Hence the transcript is based on the original transcript, made by persons unknown to us. Ellipses in brackets ([. . .]) mean that the transcriber wrote "inaudible" in the original transcript or left a blank space; ellipses in the transcript have been retained without brackets.

This transcript was edited by Joseph A. Haydt, with assistance from Daryl Li. The introduction was written by Ronna Burger.

Session 1: April 2, 1963
Introduction: What is the subject of ethics? (book 1.1-4)

Leo Strauss: This meeting I plan to devote to a general introduction to the *Ethics*. I believe I do not have to apologize for the fact that I give a course on the *Ethics* in a political science department, but just in case, this department is committed to the proposition that the only work which must have been read by any student who wishes to get the Ph.D. in political science—which he *must* have read—is Aristotle's *Politics*. Now the *Ethics* is the first part of Aristotle's *Politics*. One could not wish for a more powerful reason. But you will easily see that even without this subterfuge the case for studying the *Ethics* in a political science department could be made very easily. What is the subject of ethics? Let us bust the case wide open. Let us not assume that Aristotle is right and his adversaries are wrong. Let us take the broadest and least prejudicial view of the situation.

What is the subject of ethics, if people were asked today? What would they say? Do I not hear an answer? You all must have heard that, what they would say today, the most general description of the subject of ethics. I believe they would say "values." But there is, however, another discipline which deals with values, and that is psychology. Now what is the difference then between ethics, the ethical treatment of values, and the psychological treatment? I think one could say in the notion of ethics the view still lingers on that ethics deals with the true values while psychology deals with all values, whether true or not. Psychology does not raise the question regarding the difference between true and untrue values. Psychology doesn't raise the question because it could not answer it, psychology, being a science of facts culminating only in factual judgments, cannot make a valid distinction between true values and others. But can ethics answer this question? After all, ethics, to the extent to which it is still taught, is supposed to be a science. So if ethics is a science, it would seem to be unable to make a distinction between valid and invalid values.

Now if we wish to understand Aristotle, we must keep this difficulty in mind, by all means, but on the other hand we must also forget about[1] [it], because it is a question whether Aristotle's *Ethics* deals with values. I think one can say without any hesitation that Aristotle's Ethics does not deal with values. That is not an Aristotelian term. We will see later what Aristotle speaks about. The term "values" emerged in philosophy as distinguished from economics only in the nineteenth century in Germany in post-Hegelian German philosophy. And people at that time understood by the values the true, the good, and the beautiful, all norms in contradistinction to the "is" or to reality. Prior to that time no need was felt to take together all values under one and the same heading, namely, values.[i] Aristotle's *Ethics*, to repeat, does not deal with values, i.e., with *all* values. Mr. Reinken, read the first sentence of the *Ethics* to make this absolutely sure.

[i] 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.

Mr. Reinken:
Every art and every investigation, and likewise every practical pursuit or undertaking seems to aim at some good—[ii] (1094a1-2)

LS: Period. Some good. It deals only with [the] good. It does not deal with the beautiful; it does not deal with the true. Yes. But even this, the good, is too broad. The title is *Ethics*. I mean, this we know not only from the manuscripts of this work, in the title of which the term "ethics" appears, but also from the reference to this work occurring in Aristotle's *Politics*. It's called the *Ethics*. Now what does this mean? That [word] is an adjective, at least in Greek, *ēthika*, derived from a Greek word, *ēthos*, which is a favorite term in present-day behavioralistic social science—yes, this is true: "the capitalist ethos," they also say. And the plural is *ēthē*. Now this means, simply translated, sufficiently for our purpose, "characters"; of course meaning that some characters are good and others are bad. Ethics is a doctrine of good or bad characters. This notion is not entirely new to Aristotle. It is at least alluded to at the end of Plato's *Laws*, book 1; I will just read to you this passage. After he[iii] has recommended wine drinking in order to find out about the characters of human beings—you know, there is a fairly common view still today, I believe, that when people are more or less intoxicated they are less able to conceal what kind of men they are, to conceal their characters. This is the context. And then he says, "No one would dispute the fact that in wine drinking we have a fair test of one another and that for cheapness, safety, and speed it is superior to all other tests." "That certainly is true." "This then: to know the natures as well as habits of souls will prove one of the things most useful to that art whose task is to treat them, and that is, as I presume we say, the art of politics. Is it not so?" "Undoubtedly."[iv] So here you have some study of the characters, and this is politics. More precisely, the relation is: [2]first you have to know the natures and habits of the souls in order to treat the souls, and the results of these treatments are characters. Now this is the political art which deals with the characters, and we will see that the same is true in Aristotle.

But one could wonder. The treatment of characters in a purely political context: does this not unduly narrow the difficulty? Are we not accustomed to making a distinction between individual ethics and social ethics, and do we not lose sight of individual ethics if we look from the very beginning at the thing from the point of view of politics? Or is there a necessity for that? Differently stated, what then is the not-narrow question as distinguished from that narrow question, good and bad characters within the political context? What is the not-narrow question? What is the comprehensive question, more comprehensive than the question of characters, as comprehensive as the question of values and yet free from the

[ii] Mr. Reinken reads from Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1934).
[iii] That is, the Athenian Stranger.
[iv] Plato, *Laws*, trans. R. G. Bury (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1961), 86 (bk. 1, 650b). At several junctures Strauss modifies Bury's translation, which reads: "*ATH*. Neither the Cretans, I imagine, nor any other people would dispute the fact that herein we have a fair test of man by man, and that for cheapness, security and speed it is superior to all other tests. *CLIN*. That certainly is true. *ATH*. This then—the discovery of the natures and conditions of men's souls—will prove one of the things most useful to that art whose task it is to treat them; and that art is (as I presume we say) the art of politics: is it not so? *CLIN*. Undoubtedly."

peculiar assumption of this nineteenth-century concept of values? What is the broadest question with which this book must somehow deal? Now this question was formulated most simply by Socrates in Plato's *Gorgias*: How should one live? This is all-comprehensive, and Aristotle must somehow deal with this question, how should one live? And for some reasons which we will find out, he must feel that the question of how one should live becomes manageable only if it becomes a question of the good character. Now is this question of how to live truly the most comprehensive question? Does the raising of it not presuppose certain specific conditions?

Now I read to you a passage from the prophet Micah, chapter 6, verse 8. The prophet Micah says: "God has proclaimed, or announced, to you, man what is good and what he requires of you, and what does he require of you but to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk purely with thy God." Here it is said: Man has been told how he should live. The Socratic question presupposes that no such authoritative answer is available, that man must seek for it. Now we find everywhere primarily an authoritative answer. If those authoritative answers cease to be credible or cease to be evident, chaos emerges: anomie, as they say. Simply stated, an infinite variety of answers, because there is no longer *the* authoritative answer. And this infinite variety of answers includes the answer that the question does not make sense, since everyone lives of necessity as his nature and his chance compels him to live. So the case is wide open once the authoritative answers are questioned, and this is surely the beginning[3] [for] Aristotle, too. Let us read again the first sentence.

Mr. Reinken:
Every art and every investigation, and likewise every practical pursuit or undertaking, seems to aim at some good. (1094a1-2)

LS: Yes. Let us stop here. Aristotle's first sentence is advisedly chosen. Aristotle begins with the fact that there is something in common to *all* human pursuits, despite the differences, despite the doubts. There is something in common from which he starts [here]. The *Politics*, the sequel to the *Ethics*, has a similar beginning, about *all* associations.[v] All associations strive for some good. But there in the *Politics* Aristotle speaks only of associations. The *Ethics* is more comprehensive; it deals with all human activities, whether they issue in the establishment of associations or not. The *Ethics* begins with a statement regarding human life as such, not with birth and death, that is to say, with things which we merely undergo, but with everything that we "do."

Now in this sentence Aristotle distinguishes four things and divides them into two groups, and this is meant to be exhaustive. "Every art and every inquiry, similarly, action as well as election or choice, appears to aim at some good." You see, he takes together art and inquiry on the one hand, and then he takes together action and choice. Why does he do that?[4] What is the difference between these two groups, art and inquiry on the one hand, and action and choice on the other? Or let us perhaps first understand the first distinction, between art and inquiry.

[v] Aristotle, *Politics* 1252a.

Student: It sounds like the difference between art and what we would call science.

LS: Yes, it is in a way the same difference, but he does not say "science," I believe, because science could mean the possession of knowledge, which possession would then no longer aim at something. The inquiry aims at it. The Greek word, by the way, is the origin of our word "method," but which there doesn't have this particular meaning but a broader meaning: the way toward. So an art is that knowledge which is active in the bringing into being of something which would not be without our bringing it into being: chairs and other things of this kind, whereas science is concerned with what is by itself, not by virtue of human production.

Now the other pair, action and election: they are more closely connected with each other than the first two were, as is indicated by the fact that he says "action as well as election." Why does he make the distinction? Now I'm anticipating later developments: "No action possible without election,"[vi] but on the other hand there may be election[5]—election or choice, that is the same word—without issuing[6] [in] action. Why does he make the distinction? We don't know. We must see whether this distinction is so very important that he wishes to remind us from the very beginning that action and choice, although they are in a way inseparable, must nevertheless be distinguished from each other. Choice is of course not mere desire, that I say from the very beginning. And therefore one could perhaps say the list is incomplete, if we take all human desire of something insofar as only that desire of a higher level called choice is mentioned. But it is meant to be comprehensive.

Now in all these cases some good is aimed at. Now since the cases are innumerable, infinite, there is an infinite variety of good things. So we are confronted with that chaos of which I spoke before. Yes?

Student: Did you state what the reason might be for grouping together art and inquiry on the one side, action and choice—

LS: No, I did not. What would you think?

Student: [. . .]

LS: Yes, but would it not follow immediately that in the first pair no choice is involved, strictly speaking? Choice strictly understood. In other words—

Student: Can one pursue, say, an inquiry, a scientific inquiry of any kind without having some idea of where he's going? And that would presuppose choice, wouldn't it? Unless you've discovered something by accident.

LS: Yes, sure, that you choose the subject of inquiry, yes; but the question is whether that is choice strictly understood, whether you do not use the word "choice" in a looser sense. We must leave this open. Well, I mean, one can of course give an answer in the traditional terms, that only action and choice are moral phenomena, strictly speaking. Would you want

[vi] Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1139a33–34.

to have such an answer? An art is not as such a moral phenomenon. What the shoemaker does and his goodness as shoemaker are not moral goodness, as you can easily see. A man may be a very good shoemaker and a very great crook when he sells his shoes. There would be the moral goodness, but his quality as a shoemaker is not moral quality as such, and the same is of course true of the scientist. This is today easy to answer; we don't have to labor that point. Good.

Student: [. . .]

LS: Yes. I think it would be impossible to express this thought in Aristotelian terms. I mean, I think Aristotle would simply say—[vii] Now what was the question? No, Aristotle would say [that] to the extent to which a man is not honest as a scientist, he is not a scientist. For example, if someone pretends, claims that he has made this discovery where it was already made by someone else: well, *qua* doing that thing, he is not a scientist, he's just a swindler. The scientist as scientist is indifferent to this kind of thing. We must bring up this kind of question later. Let us first follow the argument. Let us read again the sentence we read, and the next.

Mr. Reinken:
Every art and every inquiry, and every practical action as well as every choice,[viii] seems to aim—

LS: Yes, well, "practical action" is a redundant expression. Every action as well as choice.

Mr. Reinken:
as well as choice, seems to aim at some good: hence it has been well said that the Good is That at which all things aim.

LS: Yes. All *things*. In other words, not only men. Since all these specifically human activities strive after some good, all beings strive after *the* good. That seems to be an awful syllogism. Now Aristotle has shown that all beings have something in common, at least all beings insofar as they strive for something; perhaps there are beings which do not strive for something. What is true of all beings is in agreement with what we have seen regarding all human activities: all beings strive for the same. Is it not wonderful? There's no chaos, there is no difficulty, because all beings strive for the good. That seems to be a solution, but, alas, that's only the beginning, because in the next sentence—how does the next sentence begin?

Mr. Reinken:
(It is true that a certain variety is to be observed among the ends— (1094a1-4)

LS: Yes. You see—well, all right, let us leave it at that: "it is true," but there is "a certain variety" of the ends. We are back where we started. The fact that one can reasonably say

[vii] The transcriber notes: "interrupted by a difficulty in the classroom."
[viii] In Rackham's translation: "Every art and every investigation, and likewise every practical pursuit or undertaking."

that all beings strive for the same is of no help, obviously not, because the dog strives for some good and human beings strive for some other good, and the cat also for something different. Now what does he say about this difference in the immediate sequel? Now he speaks of ends, using "end" synonymous[ly] with "good." What does he say about the variety?

Mr. Reinken:
in some cases the activity of practising the art is itself the end, whereas in others the end is some product over and above the mere exercise of the art—

LS: Yes. Well, this is unnecessarily complicated: "for some are activities, and in others the ends are some works different from the activities." That is extremely simple. A shoemaker: the activity of the shoemaker culminates in the shoe and is for the sake of making the shoe. The shoe is the end of the shoemaker, and the shoe is something apart from the shoemaking. There are other activities, like dancing, where no such product like a shoe is intended, but [what is] intended is the activity. This is clear. Now let us read on.

Mr. Reinken:
and in the arts whose ends are certain things beside the practice of the arts themselves, these products are essentially superior in value to the activities.)

LS: Yes, what does he say? The works, products, "are by nature better than the activities." Yes. Now let us stop here for a moment and first follow this up. Aristotle does now speak of the variety of ends, but still for the time being of a very innocuous variety of human ends: ends like shoes or houses, and ends like dancing. In the former case, the activity is by nature inferior to the work. This little thing which is[7] slipped in but about which we have to think: everyone who looks at it would have to admit that in spite of that great variety, there is some order in this variety, a natural order. It is absurd to say that the shoemaker makes shoes just for the fun of it. An individual shoemaker, more or less crazy, may do all kinds of things, but as shoemaker he aims at the finished product which is also the shoe, whereas there is no such parallel in the case of dancing, for example. There is a variety of ends but there is also some natural order. Good. And now how do we go on from here?

Mr. Reinken:
But as there are numerous pursuits and arts and sciences—

LS: No, we must translate this more literally: "many actions and arts and sciences. There are therefore also many ends."

Mr. Reinken:
for instance, the end of the science of medicine is health, that of the art of shipbuilding a vessel, that of strategic victory, that of domestic economy wealth. (1094a5-10)

LS: Yes. You see what this fellow—is this Rackham?[ix] Rackham, yes. Yes, that one shouldn't do.[8] [It] doesn't say in Greek—there is no addition of "science" and "art"; that is

[ix] The translator of the edition used here is Harris Rackham.

left open. Let us say "the end of medicine is health, the end of shipbuilding is a ship, the end of strategy is victory, the end of householding is wealth." Yes. Let us stop here. Now we know by now, if we didn't know it before, that there are many ends which men pursue. Aristotle himself had spoken of it before. But there is a difference: he had spoken up to now only of a difference of kinds of ends, ends which are activities and ends which are things apart from the activities. He shows us now that the difference of ends is much greater than was said before. The examples are taken—he speaks of three things here: actions, arts, and sciences, [and] the examples are all taken from arts without explicitly saying it. That is of some importance. These are all arts, not sciences or actions. Now let us read from here.

Mr. Reinken:
Now in cases where several such actions[x] are subordinate to some single faculty—as bridle-making and the other trades concerned with horses' harness are subordinate to horsemanship, and this and every other military action to the science of strategy—

LS: Yes. Well, "to strategy," let us say, because we don't know whether it is a science. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
to strategy, and similarly other arts to different arts again—in all these cases, I say, the ends of the master arts are things more to be desired than all those of the arts subordinate to them; since the latter ends are only pursued for the sake of the former. (1094a10-16)

LS: Yes, let us stop here. Only one thing: he never uses the word "art." He uses, as is easily possible in Greek, the adjectives, omitting the noun, and you have to think which noun would be proper. For example—what would be an English example? Horse. You cannot form, unfortunately, this simple adjective "horsic," but if you would say "the horsic one," meaning horsemanship, then you would not know, is the horsic one a science or art? You have to use some sort of [. . .]. That is of some importance for the understanding. What he tries to show here is simply this: that there is an order of the arts. An order means also always here a hierarchic order, sub- and super-orientation. The variety of these arts does not impair the fundamental unity. That is the thought. And you can easily see, bridlemaking is obviously meaningless except if the bridle is of some use, and is of some use in the case of horses and donkeys and mules, or whatever it may be; and therefore the art of bridlemaking is subordinate to the art of horsemanship. The bridlemaker must ask the horseman, "What kind of bridle do you need for bridling the horse?" And the horseman in his turn must ask the commander of cavalry, because if each soldier could have his bridle as he thinks, that might create great inconveniences in battle. And furthermore, since the general of cavalry is subject to the commander in chief, to the general proper, the strategic knowledge is more architectonic, as Aristotle calls it, than that of the horseman. Good. Let us go on here where we left off.

Mr. Reinken:

[x] In Rackham's translation: "pursuits."

(And it makes no difference whether the ends of the pursuits are the activities themselves or some other thing beside these, as in the case of the sciences mentioned.) (1094a16-18)

LS: Here he says "sciences." Yes. Now Aristotle enlarges that. He has made the observation only regarding art, but he says what has been said of the arts is true also of actions proper. The arts and their order is only an example illustrating the unity in variety, the order in seeming disorder. But one point only: he had spoken in this section before, "and every military *action*" is subordinate to the strategic art. Actions too may be subservient to an art. We must keep this in mind. Mr. Boyan, you wanted to say something?

Mr. Boyan: I'm just not clear on this argument. Take the example of dancing. What is it subordinate to? I mean, you want to be a good dancer, let's say; maybe you want the exercise.

LS: Good. Aristotle never states that all human activities or all human arts are subject to one single art. Up to now he has only said there is some order. We have, say, thirty-five different arts . . . .[xi] But he didn't say that they are all subject to one thing. You know, he only says there is an order here, not more. We come to that. That's very important.

Now let us remind ourselves of the whole argument. The simple beginning of the *Ethics* is the bewildering variety of ends, and the variety is much greater than has come to light hitherto, and, anticipating what Aristotle will say shortly, I enumerate them: pleasure, health, wealth, honor, nobility, knowledge, etc. etc. Now Aristotle, at the beginning of the work, views that variety from the point of view of the variety of arts because there is an order of the arts and of their ends. But one can rightly state the question: Is the order of the arts the order of *the* human ends? For example—that question would be a subdivision of that—the arts directed toward health and toward wealth. Aristotle has mentioned them: the medical art and the art of management of the household. But are there arts which produce honor and pleasure? That's at least a great problem. One could say, well, honors are given for services and there is an order of the sevices which is perhaps the same as the order of the arts. But as for arts aiming at pleasure, are there such arts? It would be a question. You see the question as a paradigm: Is the order of the arts sufficiently broad to cover the order of the human ends? Well, in Plato we have a clear answer, in the *Gorgias*. Does someone remember it? Well, the pursuits aiming at pleasure are not arts, are pseudo-arts. For example, cosmetics is a pseudo-art, a false, a bad imitation of the medical art or gymnastics, instead[9] making someone really strong to create an appearance of strength and health, which is flattering, as Plato calls it.

Hitherto we have seen, however, that there is an order of the ends. Now he states, and here we come to your question, that the order must culminate in a single highest end. Let us see how he proves that, and let us even see whether he actually goes so far as to say that. In the immediate sequel, Mr. Reinken.

Mr. Reinken:

[xi] The transcriber notes: "several inaudible words."

If therefore among the ends at which our actions aim there be one which we wish for its own sake, while we wish the others only for the sake of this, and if we do not choose everything for the sake of something else (which would obviously result in a process *ad infinitum*, so that all desire would be futile and vain), it is clear that this one ultimate End must be the Good, and indeed the Supreme Good. (1094a19-23)

LS: "The good and the best." Now you see, what does Aristotle say here? That there is a single end toward which all lower ends converge, so that we would have, if we take strategy, victory; and then we have wealth, and then we have, say, dancing (that is Mr. Boyan's example), and perhaps also science: they all point to one end here. Does Aristotle say here that there is such a single end?

Student: No.

LS: What does he say?

Student: He says "if."

LS: If, if, if. Yes, sure. But something, however, he says is true: if there is one, then this would be obviously the best and most preferable. But he does make however one point. There cannot be a process *ad infinitum*. This he asserts. In other words, you make bridles for the sake of the horse, for the sake of horsemanship, and you pursue horsemanship for the sake, ultimately, of victory. And you can also raise the question: Why victory? And one could raise that question, and then you get something like the well-being of the city, political community. Then you can still raise [the question]: Why the well-being of the community? Then you come[10] [to] something like my own well-being, and then you must stop. After a finite number of steps, you must stop, otherwise you become absurd. Is this intelligible? You would not know where to start actions if you do not have such an ultimate beginning. You would live wholly aimlessly, and one cannot live aimlessly. This is what he implies here. This of course runs counter to many modern views, but if you have any difficulties here, mention them. Only one thing you should not mention against Aristotle, [that] he asserts here that there is a single end, because that he does not yet do. He says "if." But what he says is there must be ultimate ends of some sort; whether they culminate in one ultimate end, that is for the time being left open. Yes, Mr. Boyan. Oh, Mr. McAtee.

Student: [. . .]

LS: Yes. Who says that? "Blessed be those," the famous religious formula in the Old and New Testament. "Blessed" is really incompatible with aimless and useless and senseless. Yes. Let us not take our bearings regarding religion from what you read in certain modern sociologists. You know whom I mean by that. I suppose you do. Pardon? Oh, Mr. Boyan, yes?

Student: I think Aristotle is clever here, because he says "if."

LS: Naturally he is clever [. . .] But he was also more than clever: he was also wise.

Student: One might evaluate many actions in terms of what could be called pragmatic ends.

LS: Yes, but what does that mean?

Same Student: I think it means everything is justified in terms of itself, and we don't look at the end far ahead, but our end changes as we go along.

LS: . . .[xii] he doesn't say more hitherto, although I admit, if I may use a vulgar expression, that he plots already here for the possibility of one and only one highest end. But he has not yet asserted it.

Student: [. . .]

LS: No, you cannot act. If you contemplate this—well, whatever it may be, to go to a drug store to buy some, say, aspirin, and then you begin to wonder, "Should I buy aspirin?" This may stop your going to the drug store, and then you go on, you desire—

Same Student: [To the effect that we may toss a coin.][xiii]

LS: Yes, but then you do not act, strictly speaking, anymore because you are then simply swayed by winds. You act absolutely by chance; you never make a decision. That is to say, you never act. The flipping of a coin can take place only within a very limited context: when you know that both alternatives are reasonably equal, and then you have to choose one of them—

Same Student: That is, if thought is the criterion of action.

LS: Why should it not be?

Same Student: Well, I don't know. I said this seems to be the—

LS: Yes, well, let us not open all the questions. Let us limit ourselves to this simple observation, that there [are] a variety of ends, but this variety is not necessarily a chaos because we see in a certain sphere at least, in the sphere of the arts, a hierarchic order. And Aristotle aims indeed at showing that there is a single end which gives an orientation to all our activities, and he will soon say what it is. But let us not take it up before we have[11] given him a hearing. This is a simple rule of judicial fairness. Now where were we now? And we go on at this point where we left off. No, I'm sorry: I would like to read you one passage from a medieval commentator on the passage we just read. "And this [this refers to the passage read before by Mr. Reinken—LS] is [this for the sake of which—LS] is one good or many goods or is the object of one art or of many arts." In other words, Averroes

[xii] The transcriber notes "several inaudible sentences."
[xiii] As noted by the transcriber.

has seen it perfectly here.[xiv] Here the question of one or many ends is not yet decided. Now let us go on from here.

Mr. Reinken: Chapter 2, section 2.
Will not then a knowledge of this Supreme Good be also of great practical importance for the conduct of life? Will it not better enable us to attain what is fitting, like archers having a target to aim at? If this be so, we ought to make an attempt to determine at all events in outline what exactly this Supreme Good is, and of which of the theoretical or practical sciences it is the object.

LS: Yes, literally, "which of the sciences, or faculties or abilities" does that. Note again the conditional character of the statement: If. If. He has not yet said it. Is it not likely—let us assume that there is one end or a small number of ultimate ends. Would it not be good if we knew what these ends were, just as in shooting, if we *know* the target we are more likely to hit it than if we do not know the target? It's absolutely conditional and undeniably not deprived of common sense. Aristotle does not assert that knowledge of the single goal is useful or necessary for human life, for we do not yet know whether there is such a single goal or,[12] [something] we must also consider, whether that single goal is accessible to the majority of men. Then knowledge of it would not be useful for the majority of men. That single goal would be the theme of a science or an ability or faculty. Apparently it could not be an art properly understood. Now what is an ability, in contradistinction to an art or a science? We all know that; we only call it by different names. For example, some people have an uncanny ability to hit the target. I mean, not literally a target that[13] exists, but in other ways: you must have heard such expressions as "a woman's intuition," or this man has an uncanny quality of guessing. He would be wholly unable to say why he believes that A will take place and not B, but you have found in ninety-nine out of a hundred cases that he was right. That's an ability of sorts. That exists. And perhaps this is a guide for human life. We must consider that too. So this as to the very wide meaning of the term *dunamis* here: ability, faculty. Good. Now let us go on. Now he will gradually come to a decision.

Mr. Reinken:
Now it would be agreed that it must be the object of the most authoritative of the sciences— (1094a23-28)

LS: Yes, the most authoritative and the most architectonic of the sciences.[xv] That [word], architectonic, is of course taken from building. The architect rules the builders. He tells, directly or indirectly,[14] every man employed in the building process what he has to do, because he shows them in advance the house they are supposed to build. And this is then used metaphorically of every commanding art: an architectonic art. So the most authoritative and the most architectonic art: if there is such a thing as one single good, that

[xiv] Strauss refers throughout this course to Averroes's paraphrase of the *Nicomachean Ethics* but does not indicate the edition from which his citations are drawn. The Hebrew translation of this text was first published in 1999; the Latin translation has yet to appear in a modern edition. Strauss may have acquired an unpublished manuscript of Averroes's commentary, or he may have utilized one of several sixteenth-century editions of the Latin text.
[xv] Strauss retranslates *architektonikēs*.

single good would be the object of the most authoritative and the most architectonic art. But we don't know whether there is such an art, and we do not even know whether there is such a single good. Let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:
But such is manifestly the science of Politics—

LS: Yes. Well, science, you can say—"politics" would be a simpler translation.[xvi] Politics: that peculiar kind of knowledge which makes a politician a politician, a statesman a statesman. Yes. "Manifestly" is a bit strong. The Greek word can have—"such like appears to be politics" appears to be in its dual meaning: [it] comes to sight and also merely appears to be.[xvii] That is not quite so clear. Yes? So in other words, we have already Aristotle's answer. This art which we seek, the master art, master knowledge, is politics—not our political science, not even Aristotle's political science, as we shall see later, but the art which the politician or statesman possesses. But he has to give us some reason for this tall order. What does he say?

Mr. Reinken:
for it is this that ordains which of the sciences are to exist in states, and what branches of knowledge the different classes of the citizens are to learn, and up to what point; and we observe that even the most highly esteemed of the faculties, such as strategy, domestic economy, oratory, are subordinate to the political science. Inasmuch then as the rest of the sciences are employed by this one, and as it moreover lays down laws as to what people shall do and what things they shall refrain from doing, the end of this science must include the ends of all the others. Therefore, the Good of man must be the end of the science of Politics. (1094a29-b8)

LS: Yes, "science of politics" is always, let us say, "of politics." Now let us stop here for just one moment. So Aristotle has in other words identified the single good, the highest good, and also the human pursuit aiming at it. How has he identified it? On the basis of things which everyone would admit, at least in Aristotle's time. Perhaps today there would be some doubts regarding some points. Now first of all, a master knowledge would be superior to all other knowledges. It would be the authority for them: tell them where to go, and where to stop, and so on. Now which is that? What should you learn in school, in high school, in college, or in the army, whatever? There is one: ultimately, the art of the statesman. Well, later on we will see Aristotle makes a distinction, but he doesn't make that here. On the first level, everyone would admit[15] that the city of Athens is perfectly entitled to[16] [say] which sciences or arts[17] are to be practiced [and to what limits], by which age groups, for example, by which professional groups, and so on. This is one thing. Secondly, the most respected abilities in the city, strategy, wealth-getting, and oratory, are obviously and admittedly subject to the political art. That is another very powerful argument. Furthermore, we are concerned also and especially with action as distinguished from sciences and arts. Which science or art tells you what to do, what actions to perform, and

[xvi] Strauss points out that "science" is not in the Greek.
[xvii] Strauss retranslates *phainetai*.

from which actions to abstain? Answer: The laws. But the laws are themselves the product of an art, the legislative art, which in its turn is only a part of the political art. Here we are. So on the basis of[18] [practically unquestioned] political opinions[19] Aristotle reaches the conclusion, perfectly legitimate, that there is one and only one master art, and therefore there can also be one master end, that end at which the master art aims. One brief comment in the immediate sequel.

Mr. Reinken:
For even though it be the case that the Good is the same for the individual and for the state—

LS: It's of course always "city."[xviii] That goes without saying. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
nevertheless, the good of the city is manifestly a greater and more perfect good, both to attain and to preserve. To secure the good of one person only is better than nothing; but to secure the good of a nation or a city is a nobler and more divine achievement.[xix] (1094b8-11)

LS: Yes. This also would be generally admitted. There may be some queer mavericks everywhere who deny it, but the ordinary man of ordinary intelligence would say, "Of course." If someone can procure the good only for himself and another man can procure it for himself and others, the latter is a richer personality, as they would say today. [20] That is something nobler and more divine than what the first does. So our question seems to be settled. Mr. Burnam?

Mr. Burnam: In the United States the subordination of oratory to the political order is not admitted; I mean, the First Amendment.

LS: What is not admitted? What do you mean?

Mr. Burnam: The subordination of political speeches, the subordination even of scientific inquiry to the political art generally—

LS: No, in a way not, surely. Yes. In a way not, but the question is whether it would not come up in other ways, namely, this: whether the true justification of the first amendment or the freedom of speech is not a purely pragmatic ground which could be very powerful. Namely, this way, that of course there is no earthly reason why malicious, obscene, degrading speech should be permitted, to say nothing of protected. There is no reason for it. And then there come certain practical difficulties. You have to forbid it, but then you have to institute censorship of sorts, however it may be called. That was the former practice, and this leads to certain difficulties. Censors are after all, as we would say, bureaucrats, and even if they are by nature men of perception and understanding the routine has a very bad effect. And therefore one can say it is a good rule of thumb to have the minimum of

[xviii] Strauss retranslates *polis*.
[xix] Mr. Reinken follows Strauss in translating *polis* as "city."

censorship: only in a case of extreme necessity like national security in war and this kind of thing, that one could say. But this assertion that there is an absolute right to freedom of speech as a natural right which overrides all other considerations is, in my view, an absurd opinion. But[21] an absolute right of speech [is one thing]; another thing is a rule of thumb, that on the whole freedom of speech is better; also to keep the rulers informed of what the ruled think about them and keep them therefore in order a bit. This is another matter, but there is no absolute right of freedom of speech. Of course not. There were some people who [22]asserted it, but no one has really been able to establish it—I mean, except on grounds of expediency, taking into consideration the absurdities of censors. Read the argument of Milton's *Areopagitica*.

Mr. Burnam: No, I agree with you. I was making a more limited point, though, that it is not, as perhaps it was in Aristotle's time,[23] generally admitted today that at least some kinds of speech or pursuit of truth, perhaps scientific pursuit of truth, is subject to the political art. I mean, it is generally admitted that obscene speech is subject to the political art—

LS: By the way, that is not simply true. Let us assume that there would be some agreement, which I believe is very unlikely, regarding all atomic powers that this kind of thing must be stopped. That would be in effect a prohibition on a certain kind of scientific inquiry. No testing; no underground testing, [no] overground testing; certain inquiries can no longer be made. I mean, there is no intrinsic impossibility. I mean, I suppose that the exploration of poison gas as a weapon has been deplorably neglected because—and there are other [such weapons]—that is not simply true. That's not simply true. I mean, ultimately the question arises there. But let us not go into this thing, because we cannot possibly solve all questions in reading one or two pages of Aristotle's *Ethics*. We only want to first see how Aristotle proceeds. Aristotle leads up to the conclusion—which is not his last word, by the way—that there is one and only one master art, the political art, which ultimately decides,[24] for example, about what is taught in schools. This is still subject to political decisions today, isn't it? I have heard that there were complaints about textbooks in this country and what they tell about—well, in Germany, you know, there were politically established textbooks not only under the Nazi regime but under the American occupation period in order to prevent that. That's also a kind of master art regulating what is taught and to what extent. Let us read the next sentence and then we have reached a certain conclusion.

Mr. Reinken:
This then being its aim, our investigation is in a sense the study of Politics. (1094b11-12)

LS: No, that's impossible. He says "the inquiry," using the same word as in the beginning, *methodos*;[xx] "the inquiry aims at these," at these things which I have indicated. "The inquiry being a kind of politics," a kind of political inquiry. That's important. What Aristotle does here is an inquiry, a scientific study. That is not an art and not an action. This is clear. Number one. This inquiry is not politics, the art of the statesman, but some kind of politics, politics in a sense. Aristotle's *Ethics* and *Politics* are not and could not have been the works of politicians or statesmen as such. It's something different. It's on another level;

[xx] Strauss retranslates *methodos* in the line just read.

theoretically on a higher level. The formula used here, "some political inquiry," "some kind of political inquiry," reminds [us] of the remark of Socrates in the *Gorgias* where Socrates says that he is the true politician. The true politician—of course, when a man says, "I am a true liberal," you can be sure he is not a liberal, or the [self-proclaimed] true conservative is not a conservative; and similarly, when someone says he is a true politician[25] he is surely not a politician, as everyone would see. At any rate, something of this kind happens here. Aristotle's *Ethics* and *Politics* are a kind of political inquiry, not simply political. Why he makes this qualification we will see gradually. Now it is not clear whether the politics, of which we have seen that it regulates all actions, is an art. If it were an art, then the highest form of knowledge would be amoral or transmoral in the same way in which the art of the shoemaker or of the blacksmith is not moral but amoral or transmoral. But one thing is clear: that Aristotle's teaching in this book is an inquiry, a scientific study. Is it intrinsically moral or not? This we don't know. We must keep this open.

Now Aristotle has identified the ability or faculty which deals with the human good and he has shown in a manner the necessity of such a faculty or ability. He turns now to determine how exact it is. There is a knowledge of these things. But is it exact and how exact? Now what does exact mean? The Greek word is *akribes*, which is still living on in *Akribie*, I suppose not used in the United States, but it's used in German, for example. Now what does this mean? It is very interesting. In the Middle Ages they translated that by [. . .] from which certain distinctions arise, but in a Renaissance translation I found the translation which is more helpful for us: *subtilis*, subtle. And that is very good because it reminds us of what the Greek word "exact" originally means. They were not thinking primarily of mathematics but, for example, of a sculptor who works very neatly and very precisely, does nothing slipshod. This was much more meant by "precisely" than mathematical certainty. When modern science emerged in the seventeenth century, Pascal opposed to the spirit of geometry mathematical spirit, the spirit of subtlety, *esprit de finesse*. For example, if someone has a wonderful understanding of what is going on in the mind of a man to whom he talks, has a perfect empathy, so to speak, this is not exactness in the sense of social science, because he couldn't prove a thing, and yet by following point by point into every corner, as it were, that is exactness. This we must rather think of. Now Aristotle wants to determine here now the character of the exactness of this pursuit. Now one thing we know: the kind of exactness depends on the matter. For example, if you take a statuary—whether he works on marble or clay or wood the exactness to be expected of him will be very different. Ethics can be only as exact as its matter permits. Now let us go on. Let us read the sequel, the immediate sequel.

Mr. Reinken:
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— (1094b12-13)

LS: Oh, God. "In all speeches."[xxi]

[xxi] Strauss retranslates "*en hapasi tois logois*." The transcriber notes, "Inaudible joke regarding departments of philosophy."

Mr. Reinken:
in all discourses alike,[xxii] any more than in all the products of the arts and crafts. 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: Yes. Let us stop here and we must first try to see. Aristotle[26] takes up the question: How exact can this study be? And he says—of course the general statement was made, the exactness must correspond to the character of the subject matter. And the exactness cannot be very high; by the standards of mathematics, let us say. For now I try to translate literally, "the noble things and the just things about which politic [political knowledge—LS] speculates possesses much variety and confusion so that it is thought they are only by convention but not by nature." Now the noble and the just things are what we would call the moral things, but [in Aristotle] there is no such word, "the moral," as we use it. Very simply, the just things are the things which you are obliged to do, and the noble things are those which go beyond the call of mere duty. Therefore they are noble; they are more highly praised. To use a simple example, paying one's debts is just. No one would call it a noble action. To go to jail because you have embezzled money is a just action, but no one would say it's a noble action. So the distinction is still immediately intelligible. You see, only now does Aristotle begin to speak of the fundamental difficulty of the immense variety of human goals, of the moral chaos. What he has spoken about hitherto, the variety of arts and the ends of the arts, this was very minor. But if all noble and just things are by convention—that means by virtue of a decision made by the community and not intrinsically—how can he find any bearing then except by mere conformism and simply following the lead given by our society? This is the first difficulty here, and let us see the next one.

Mr. Reinken:
And a similar uncertainty surrounds the conception of the Good—

LS: Yes, not the conception, "the good things." I mean, if Aristotle would talk so much about conceptions he would be a long time forgotten. He speaks about the good things: health, wealth, and so on. It's not a conception here. Yes?

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

LS: Yes. Others have perished through courage. Yes. It's very simple. Yes. So you see Aristotle makes the distinction between two classes of esteemed or esteemable things: the noble and just, of which he had spoken before, and now he turns to the good things. The good things are, if you want to use such an expression, morally neutral. Everyone would

[xxii] Mr. Reinken responds to Strauss's translation of *logos*.
[xxiii] Mr. Reinken adopts Strauss's translation for *tagatha* in the first appearance of "good things" in this passage; the second appearance corresponds to Rackham's translation .

ordinarily admit that health is a good thing and that courage is a good thing. But look, some people have been ruined by the fact that they were healthy, because they went to some place to which they would not have gone if they had been sick and in bed, and by going there they perished. Other people are courageous, undergo risks which they would not have undergone if they were not so courageous, and perished by that. These are very crude examples, but they indicate at least that what we ordinarily think are good things are perhaps not unquestionably and unqualifiedly good. Xenophon, who develops this theme at much later length, in *Memorabilia*, [book] 4, [chapter] 2, goes even so far as to say that wisdom perhaps is not altogether good because there are quite a few men who[27] because of their wisdom[28] have been kidnapped by the king of Persia, so that it is better not to be wise. Mr. Boyan?

Mr. Boyan: [Objects to last point.][xxiv]

LS: No, you have no idea how [. . .] and commonsensical Aristotle can be. Take this very literally. I mean, take such a proof: If someone is the top fighter,[29] he will be put into a crack regiment. The chances of survival are much smaller than if he were known to be a very mediocre soldier. I mean, from a very broad consideration, we have to consider even such simple things. Show the difficulty. So in other words,[30] only [now] is the case bust wide open. We have the suspicion that all specifically moral things, the noble and just, may be only conventions. And regarding the good things, where no one can say that it is convention which makes health, or wealth, or courage good, even there they are not unqualifiedly good. Where shall we take our bearings? Here, that is a crucial step in the argument. Now what follows from that? We are so familiar with that today, you know, because we have all gone to social science and have learned that there is not a single thing which is unqualifiedly good. We know this at once, whereas in classical times this was the preserve of a few people who had listened to the so-called sophists. But today millions are brought up in this way. What follows? Social science? Yes, one could say that, but Aristotle has one objection which he has already indicated. What becomes of the *polis* if you enthrone social science? So we must do better than social science, and Aristotle indicates how he plans to do better. Let us read the immediate sequel.

Mr. Reinken:
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. (1094b19-23)

LS: Yes, let us stop here for a moment. Now what does he say? We must be satisfied with certain rough and ready premises. In other words, the fact that from time to time some people perish because they are healthy is not enough to say that health is not a good. Health is a good most of the time. That's good enough for us as practical men. This of course does not yet solve the problem of the noble and just things. That we must still take into consideration. We disregard the exceptions, as we must, otherwise we would lose our bearings completely. A deliberate abandonment of exactness in the sense of mathematics.

[xxiv] As noted by the transcriber.

Deliberate. This does not go to the root of the matter by any means, but let us see how he develops that. Aristotle has now stated in a most general way what the subject of ethics is. He has now stated in the most general way how it must be treated and that we cannot expect the exactness, say, of mathematics. Now he raises the question: What about the hearer, the student, of ethics? What kind of a man must he be? Let us read that now. "In the same manner."

Mr. Reinken:
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 a particular subject, therefore, a man must have been trained in that subject: to be a good critic generally, he must have had an all-round education. (1094b23-1095a2)

LS: Yes, let us stop here. Now what does he say? He speaks now of the student of what we may call ethics or politics. He must be aware from the very beginning what degree of certainty he can possibly expect. Otherwise he behaves like a brute, like an elephant in a china shop, when he wants in ethics mathematical certainty. That cannot reasonably be expected. Aristotle briefly mentions in passing what an educated man is. An educated man is not strictly speaking the scholar in the field, but a man who has a reasonable familiarity with what the scholars in that field are doing. And an all-round educated man would be reasonably well informed about all fields of scholarship, which today is of course no longer possible, but which was possible in ancient times. Now what is the key point? That is said only in passing. Aristotle says don't expect mathematical certainty, but he mentions another kind of speaker here as an alternative to the mathematician, and who is that?

Mr. Reinken: The orator.

LS: The orator. I mean, from an orator you do not demand apodictic proofs [but] plausible proofs. Now what Aristotle does in the *Ethics* is in between mathematics and rhetoric. For example, the orator appeals to the decent feelings of his listeners. This is impossible in mathematics, but in ethics it is perfectly possible. That's one example of what he has in mind. The orators of course can preach up anything and everything, and this is of course not what Aristotle means by the ethical teacher. So we see here that Aristotle still has not told us how we can overcome the moral chaos regarding the noble, the just, and even the good things. That he will tell us in the sequel. Now let us go on. Let us conclude this chapter.

Mr. Reinken:

Hence the young are not fit to be students of politics.[xxv] For they have no experience of life and conduct, and it is these that supply the premises and subject matter of this branch of philosophy. And moreover they are led by their feelings; 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 feeling; for to such persons their knowledge is of no use, any more than it is to persons of defective self-restraint. But Moral Science may be of great value to those who guide their desires and actions by principle.

LS: Let us read the next sentence, because it is the conclusion of this introduction.

Mr. Reinken:
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. (1095a2-13)

LS: Yes. Now do you see what he says then, how Aristotle overcomes, provisionally at any rate, the moral chaos of the existence of which he has informed us? What does he do? I think one can state it very simply. The hearer of ethics must be a moral man; at least he must be a well-bred man who comes to class with the understanding of the noble and just things, and also this general clarity about what ordinarily the good things are. The pursuers of wealth and so on, of this kind of thing, would not understand what he says. Aristotle does not begin, and that is crucial, with refuting what you can call immoralism, for example, as Plato does in his way in the first book of the *Republic* when Socrates refutes Thrasymachus, or in the *Gorgias* when Socrates refutes Callicles, and similar things. He doesn't do that. He presupposes men who would know from the very beginning that Callicles and Thrasymachus cannot be right, who take decency for granted. This is the deliberate and conscious limitation. How could this be politically justified? Yes?

Student: Does he ever make clear—perhaps this is an answer to your question—that this kind of moral man, is he moral by *nomos* or is he moral by nature? He raises this question earlier.

LS: Yes, he raises it but he does not answer it in these terms. I mean, what does he take for granted? That the noble and just things are truly noble and just. That question is not answered in terms of *physis* or *nomos*. It's not a theoretical answer.

Student: [. . .]

LS: Yes, he takes it, indeed. There are no self-evident principles from which he starts. There are principles evident to well-bred men, and this is a very great difficulty. Let us face it. In other words, a gentleman called Aristotle, who is at the same time more than a gentleman, talks to gentlemen to give gentlemen the greatest possible clarity about what they, as gentlemen, are inclined to. If someone is not a gentlemen, either clever or stupid (it

[xxv] In Rackham's translation: "Political Science."

doesn't make any difference), he is not a fit hearer of Aristotle because he denies the principles.[xxvi] "Against him who denies the principles one cannot dispute."[xxvii] That seems to be the beginning of Aristotle. That will become ever more clear to us. Aristotle does not deduce the ethical principles from any higher principles. In this respect, he is very rare. In ancient times it is even unique. The predominant view is, for example, the Platonic view. You know, Plato gives a kind of deduction in the *Republic* and other places. Aristotle doesn't do it. Aristotle is very practical, and he simply says: What is the use of training in the political art in the widest sense [for] potential tyrants and other undesirables? I want to train only gentlemen of whom I can be sure that they will not even think of becoming tyrants. Is this not a very defensible position? I mean, the gentleman has to know what tyrants are after, and he has to know by what means tyrants come to power and keep themselves in power in order to get rid of them. But he does not have to become convinced that it is low to strive for tyranny. He knows that; he has been well bred. This is what you can call the Jane Austen element in Aristotle, which is however by no means a negligible and indefensible thing. Aristotle was aware of these difficulties, but the *Ethics* is not the place to discuss them. That is the great difference between him and, I would say, all other ancient philosophers. This lack of radicalism is a very great radicalism: simply to face this arouses difficulty. So the hearers must be decent men.

Student: [. . .]

LS: Yes, that it would help us very much for our lives if we knew that good so that we can use it as a target.

Student: The question is, again, how are we going to get our bearings if there wasn't something other than convention? Is that correct?

LS: Yes, we must know something, but since Aristotle is not an epistemologist he is relatively uninterested in the question of how we discover it . . .

Same Student: Yes, well, the point I am trying to make is [that] you are deriving these principles from something other than *nomos*, convention itself. This is where you get your bearings. That he does say, or does he [not]?

LS: Yes, that he does not even say, but we can assume that he somehow must aim at something more substantial than convention.

Same Student: On the other hand, the end of this subject is not knowledge, but action.

LS: Absolutely. In other words, theoretically it is of very minor interest. That's what he means by that. But practically it is of utmost interest. What does he mean by that?

[xxvi] The transcriber notes that at this point Strauss "quotes a sentence in Latin and then translates."
[xxvii] Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Part I, Q. 1, Art. 8.

Same Student: But the question is, if we are concerned with action, do we need to be concerned with these things that are derived not from *nomos*? In other words, we're going to have to work within the conventions of whatever we've got.

LS: No, no, Aristotle doesn't say that his book is based on conventions. It's by no means as simple as that.

Same Student: I'm seeing a little difficulty here.

LS: An enormous difficulty. Let us first read the parallel to that which follows almost immediately after; in the technical sense, a repetition. Now this is in the next chapter. We have only to read the end, in 1095a30, this whole section. You see, this chapter which would come now is as a whole a repetition of the preceding section of the *Ethics*, simplified in many ways, but also of course adding something. Aristotle would never say the same thing all over again, because this would make the book better and then he would have a better publication record with his department. But he has his reasons. [Laughter] It happens. It is fostered by the practice of judging people by the number and size of their publication. This wasn't so in ancient times. Now I want us to read now only this end to answer Mr. Boyan's question. "But it must not escape us that the speeches down from the principles and those toward the principles differ." Do you have that?

Mr. Reinken:
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 of Plato to raise this question, and to enquire whether the right procedure was to start from—

LS: Well, not such a very clumsy expression, a word like "procedure," but the way, he simply says, "whether the way is from the beginnings"[xxviii]—

Mr. Reinken:
or up to the beginnings,[xxix] as in a race-course one may run from the judges to the far end of the track or reversely.

LS: Is he not clear? There are two ways in the race-course and there are two ways in inquiries. Yes. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:
Now no doubt it is proper to start from the known. (1095a31-1095b1)

LS: Well, this is true generally. I mean, this is more universal than what he said before: from the beginnings or toward the beginnings. We start from the known. In every teaching and learning, one must start from something which one knows. This simple thing is, I think, clear, but it cannot be repeated often enough because all miscarriages in learning can be

[xxviii] Strauss retranslates "*poteron apo tōn archon . . . hē hodos*."
[xxix] In Rackham's translation: "or to lead up to the first principles."

said to stem from the fact that people do not begin from what they know, but begin from something which they believe to know.

Student: [. . .][xxx]

LS: You would see it in every movie on this subject. Good. Now go on. "Then we must begin from what is known to us, but this is twofold for some things are known to us and others are known simply." Now this may sound strange: known simply and not known to us, meaning what is known simply is that the nature of which would make the knowledge true knowledge, knowledge in the highest sense. We ascend, let us say, from the effects to the causes, but only the descent from the causes to the effects is genuine knowledge. I will develop this later on fully; we must first read that. I'm sorry. Now Aristotle says then, with a little joke, perhaps *we* must begin from what is known to us. Good. Now how does he go on?

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

LS: "about the noble and just." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
about the noble and just, and in short of the topics of Politics in general, the pupil is bound to have been well trained in his habits.

LS: Yes, in other words, he[31] must have had a decent upbringing. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
For the starting-point or first principle is the fact that a thing is so.

LS: The "that" he simply says. We start from the "that." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
If this be satisfactorily ascertained, there will be no need also to know the reason why it is so.

LS: Yes. The "why." If we know the "that," Aristotle says very strangely, we do not need the "why." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
And the man of good moral training knows first principles already, or can easily acquire them. (1095b5-8)

LS: Now let us stop here. Good. Now what is the point? He makes here a distinction which we can[32] [name] with traditional terms, although not necessarily [with] their present-day meaning. There is deduction and induction, deduction from the first principles and

[xxx] The transcriber notes "Inaudible question and explanation regarding the racecourse."

induction leading up to them. This is in itself simple and clear. Now here you start from the things, from the principles [the former] and where you start here is what Aristotle calls what is known simply, what is intrinsically known and not necessarily known to us, what is the principle from which all genuine knowledge seems to start. Here we start [the latter] from what is known to us, in induction. For example, an earthquake: [there is] the fact of an earthquake, and we ascend to the causes of earthquakes. We would have[33] complete knowledge if we would have here causes connected with each other by descending from which we would be able to give an account of all earthquakes, all eclipses of the sun and the moon, and whatever have you. This is a simple schema. So the starting point here is the "that" and not the "why." Here the starting point is the "why," which is a descent. Is this simple and schematic distinction clear?

Student: I think the induction and deduction is clear, but I'm still not clear on how anything can be known, knowable in itself, if it's not known, because isn't it the human mind which—there would be nothing if there were no human mind—

LS: Yes, but still, does it not make sense commonsensically to say that the highest principles of everything are not immediately accessible to us, that what we know primarily are rather dogs and cats and tables and this kind of thing, and we ascend to them? Does it not commonsensically make sense? Let me try it here. What does it mean in our case? Aristotle addresses well-bred people, and these well-bred people know *that* these and these and these things are noble, and these and these things are just, and these and these things are generally speaking good. They don't know why, but they know the "that," and that is sufficient that they can be listeners. And what will happen to them when Aristotle comes to them? What will he learn from Aristotle, this well-bred man? For example, he knows—well, let us take a crude example: when[34] [a child is] taught that he should not spit. Let us take a simple example. He will learn from Aristotle why it is decent not to spit. Now this is of course a crude example, and probably when he is twenty years old he knows already the reason why he shouldn't spit. But there are other things, perhaps, where he doesn't know it so clearly; for example, regarding the relation of the two kinds of justice: that there is a justice which consists in simple equality, another which consists in proportionate equality. We will hear about that later. Or other subtleties of the magnanimous man and of munificence, and this kind of thing. So from Aristotle he will learn the why.

Let me state it now more precisely; then I will answer your question. The doubt, the moral chaos, is caused by the fact that all moral things, all noble and just things, are believed to be merely conventional. That is to say, they are not intrinsically good. Aristotle would have to show them why the noble and just things are good. Do you see? They know only [that] one has to behave decently, i.e., nobly and justly. And they know somehow that this is good, but they cannot explain it. Aristotle will teach them why that is the case, exactly what in his way Plato is doing in such books as the *Gorgias* and the *Republic* and some other books. But here the difficulty arises—let me finish the argument and then we have a free for all. So if we take this schema: these men know the "that," that these and these things are noble and these and these just; and Aristotle will start here, then. He will lead them up.[35] [He could teach deductively] if he wanted, since he knows the principles.[36] He *could* teach deductively. In other words, Aristotle could say, "I will not make this qualification.

Hitherto I have said I will talk only to decent people. I will now address all people of sufficient intelligence, decent or not decent, and I will prove to them that decency is good"—whereas the indecent people of course say that the squares are fools, as Callicles and Thrasymachus say, in effect. He will teach that. The question is whether Aristotle does this too in his *Ethics* as a matter of fact. One thing is clear—let me say it in advance: Aristotle does not do it. Aristotle does not give what we can call a theoretical ethics, [starting] from these principles and [going][37] down at least to considerable specification. That he does not do. And why does he not do it? Some answer is given, a very provisional but by no means irrelevant answer is given in the immediate sequel, which we shall now read, discuss briefly, and then we will have our discussion. Mr. Reinken? No, excuse me. The situation was this: the hearer knows the "that" because he is well bred, and such a man will either already possess or will easily acquire the principles. The man who is not well bred will not have or [easily] acquire them[38]. And now there is however the third type of man: the one who has no upbringing and also doesn't know the principles. What shall we do with them? Aristotle gives an answer by quoting a poet. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
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 is good who hearkens to the wise— (1095b9-11)

LS: Oh no, no metric translation. "He is altogether the best who himself understands everything. The decent is also he who obeys him who has spoken well. But he who cannot think by himself nor[39] [hear] another: he is altogether a useless fellow." So now which is then the one corresponding to Aristotle's hearer in the *Ethics*? Which of these three?

Mr. Reinken: The one who partakes of good counsel.

LS: Hesiod describes him more precisely: who has heard, who has heard from others. This is the status of the man who is a merely decent man and is not a wise man like Aristotle. He has only heard it. He has been told as a child and as a young man: Do this, don't do that. And gradually, by habituation, he has become a decent human being. As a decent human being he "knows" that these and these things are just and these and these things are noble. And Aristotle will then enlighten him on the basis of this knowledge acquired primarily by hearing about that knowledge. But we shall see that this knowledge does not consist in giving a "why," answering the question why is it good to be decent, but [in] developing the full meaning of decency. For example, he knows something about courage, about temperance, about magnanimity, and whatever it may be; and he has read quite a few poets[40] which have elucidated it in various ways. Aristotle elucidates these things coherently. This we can say is—at least that the bulk of the first part is devoted to this question.

Now but [41]what is the simple justification of Aristotle's seemingly circular and unscientific procedure? You know people are decent because they have been told to be decent, and then Aristotle clarifies and sophisticates this meaning of decency without ever raising the

question, why should one be decent?, as Socrates does. There was a very famous moral philosopher in modern times who was absolutely anti-Aristotelian in these matters, but as it happens, as it may very well happen, because of the depth of the anti-Thomism [he] understood this point very well. And that was Kant. I mean, they are radically different, but one thing they have in common: there is no deduction of ethics from pre-ethical principles, and one can give an answer which both have in common, a very simple one.[xxxi] If you say to a young man or a young woman, "Do this, this and this is not decent," and you get the reply, "Why should one be decent?," what will you say about such an individual? I mean, questioning whether this is in fact decent or not, that's of course a different story. But why should one be decent? Well, a decent man never raises this question. In other words, there is no possibility of deducing decency from nondecency. This is the simple moral answer which Kant surely gives, but which in his way also Aristotle gives; only the situation in Aristotle is infinitely more complex than in Kant, because in Kant this kind of moral knowledge, if we can call it that way, is higher, theoretically higher, strange as that may sound, than all theoretical knowledge, whereas for Aristotle theoretical knowledge is higher than this kind of knowledge. So in a simple schema [LS writes on the blackboard], moral man looks here at something. That is the end, the moral end from which he starts and beyond which he cannot look and refuses to look. This is a rough structure of Kant's doctrine. All knowledge in Kant's sense ultimately is subordinated and points toward a knowledge of this kind. Most philosophers, and Aristotle is also one of them, don't stand here as philosophers, but here; they look at it from the outside. As philosophers they are not subject to the moral law, [but] in their capacity as thinking beings. That is also the case of Aristotle, but Aristotle sees also the necessity of a consideration which is limited by morality and that is what he supplies here. That is the reason why there is no deduction given. Later on, when we come to the doctrine of the virtues, you will see that Aristotle does not make the slightest attempt to deduce these virtues, [to] show that there are so and so many and only these virtues. Then he would have to go into a higher principle, say, the human soul has so and so many parts and there must be a virtue for each of these parts. That's roughly what Plato does in the *Republic*. Nothing of the kind in Aristotle. That has to do with this deliberate limitation, and the grave question of course is this, which was I think implied by Mr. Boyan: Is Aristotle not compelled to avoid this circularity? You know, that decency presupposes itself. Must there not be some higher principle through which decency is justified?

Student: May I raise a point? What is health? How is health defined?

LS: A good condition of the body.

Same Student: Yes, I think it might be possible to derive decency from nondecency.

LS: You mean good condition of the soul. Something of this kind is done surely by Plato, to some extent also by Aristotle. But the question is this: surely that would seem to be the most natural procedure, but it is[42] simply [not] the procedure of Aristotle, and we must

[xxxi] See, for instance, the concluding sentences of the *Foundation for the Metaphysics of Morals*: Immanuel Kant, *Ethical Philosophy*, trans. James W. Ellington (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett, 1983), 62.

keep this question in mind. What I wanted to emphasize at the beginning was only this point: that Aristotle is alive to the grave question posed by that moral chaos, the moral skepticism which was of course as[43] developed in classical antiquity as it was at any time in modern times. But we must see[44] the way in which he counters it. Now in this section which we did not read—well we can perhaps discuss it.[45] But there were some further questions.

Student: [. . .]

LS: No, I would say this question would become interesting only if we would come across a serious difficulty which cannot be explained from the subject matter but only by an external mishap . . . Then we would take it up. But after all, this is not a philology class, nor a philosophy class. We are political scientists. Well, I could have told you something of this, but everyone can read it, I suppose, in Rackham's introduction, that there are three books which have come down to us in the Aristotelian body which are ethics: this famous ethics called the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the *Eudemian Ethics*, and the great ethics, the *Magna Moralia*, and that there are all kinds of hypotheses about their relation. But this is polymathy. You know what that is? That is a Greek word which is quite good to remember. I do not know whether there is a simple equivalent to that in English. "Poly" means much or many and "mathy" means learning: much learning, knowing many things, and it implies an old saying. "Knowing many things does not teach wisdom."[xxxii] One must, unfortunately, know many things but for some reasons . . .[xxxiii] I think we have to say this ethics which we read has been *the* ethics throughout the Western world, especially in the Middle Ages and modern times, and is in wealth of subject matter by far superior to others, whatever the other forms may be. Surely one should also, if one has the time, study them. But most of you are I'm sure very glad if[46] [you] get some acquaintance with a single ethics of Aristotle, and then one chooses naturally the most perfect form of it, whatever the relation of it to the others. That's not interesting. Yes?

Student: In the passage that we were reading, 1095b, about line 8, where Aristotle says, "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 you explained this. The thing that I don't understand—

LS: Well, is it not true that if people know that these and these things are the noble and just things, that this is for all practical purposes the most important thing? Whether they can give an account of it is less important, for action. Does it not make sense?

Same Student: Well, except that what he is saying is that these people already knew what was good—

LS: Yes, but *that* it is good, not why. That is a key distinction.

Same Student: They knew that it is good but—

[xxxii] The transcriber notes: "Quotes it in Greek and then translates." The sentence is in fragment 40.
[xxxiii] The transcriber notes: "an inaudible sentence stressing the same point."

LS: That it is good, but they know it by hearing.

Same Student: And so supposedly Aristotle would want to teach them why it is good.

LS: Yes, to some extent. He says so. But what he does is [that] in one sense he tells them the "why," I mean, if we follow this language; namely, he gives them the formal cause. He tells them what precisely magnanimity, courage, and so is. But he does not tell them, at least not thematically, why is magnanimity good, why is justice good. He makes some passing remarks regarding justice, but this is not his theme. You understand the procedure most simply when you compare it with the discussions in the *Gorgias* and in the *Republic*, [the] first book of the *Laws*, and in other places, where the Platonic speaker, the Platonic mouthpiece, proves to others that justice is good, or let us say, decency is good. Aristotle does not prove that. He presupposes it, he says. He doesn't address Callicleses and Thrasymachuses and this kind of people; he addresses nice people, and the nice people know it from their upbringing. And this is theoretically not entirely satisfactory; that goes without saying. But the question is: Did Aristotle not indirectly meet this fundamental theoretical issue? The most urgent issue is surely the practical issue, that they be confirmed in their duties, as we would say, and enlightened about them rather than to become unnecessarily complicated as to why they should fulfill their duties. Does this not make sense?

Same Student: The reason I don't understand what's happening is because if they already know this as decent people, then what more can they expect to learn from Aristotle?

LS: Well, I wonder whether some of the—I mean, read some of the practical minds, statesmen and this kind of people, and read what they write about the highest human things, and you will be surprised how very fragmentary and incomplete that is. For example—is Mr. Emmert here? You have made a study of Churchill. You have seen that he says wonderful things, but when he tries to speak abstractly, it's very poor. Now he has of course in his case a wonderful justification, because the matrix is so rich—you know, his life experience and so on—but theoretically it is not satisfactory. When Aristotle speaks about the various virtues, very few very virtuous men, and outstanding by their virtue, would be able to write such a chapter on munificence or whatever it [may] be. Aristotle takes the broadest view. It is of some importance. I think every one of you who has tried to be virtuous and has read about a specific virtue in Aristotle has learned something because of the breadth of the consideration: things of which[47] [you have] not thought. You will see it when we go on and come to the individual virtues, which are the clearest example of that. But later on other subjects come, like pleasure and so on. Mr. Seltzer?

Mr. Seltzer: Isn't there a deduction when he talks about the specific work of a man?

LS: Yes, you anticipate. We will see later (that will come up next time), in the first book there is a kind of deduction, namely, very roughly—well, I will not answer your question. We must follow the movement. There is something of this kind; Aristotle calls it, in a way, a deduction. I know that. But if you would raise the question how this statement is related

to the enumeration of the virtues at the end of book 2, then you would see there is no connection. It's not brought up. Surely Aristotle knew that surely from Plato, if from no other place, that a theoretically satisfactory account would require something like a deduction. And don't forget that the most influential adaptation of Aristotle in the Western world, the Thomistic adaptation, is not based—in Thomas you have a deduction. But the Thomistic deduction is based directly on Cicero and such writers, Stoic tradition, which in its turn is a prolongation of the Platonic tradition, of this deducing tradition. In Aristotle that does not exist. That's his peculiarity. One can say Aristotle [is], in a proper although not now generally used meaning of the word, empirical. Aristotle is the most empirical. How do these phenomena appear to us in the life of action and not when we, as it were, withdraw from it and reflect upon it? That is Aristotle's amazing exactness and fidelity to the phenomena as they show themselves in action, when we live. Mr. Glenn?

Mr. Glenn: [Regarding Aristotle's relevance to other cultures.][xxxiv]

LS: . . . [xxxv] You only have to read with some care the story of Saul and David to see . . . but I once explained this kind of thing in the presence of a student of Chinese things, of which I know nothing, and he said that is exactly—I mean, the main points—what the Chinese gentlemen have understood. There may be certain differences . . . but as far as Winston Churchill, who is surely not a man who is "doing" philosophy, was given the *Ethics* in an English translation when he was a very mature man by Lord Birkenhead, and Churchill read it and found it absolutely convincing and said, "That's more or less the way in which I always understood these things." So there are some men, at any rate. And Churchill had not gone through Oxford and Cambridge . . . but indeed one can say this is somehow a consequence, an indirect consequence of Aristotle in Britain. I do not believe—I think one can show, by reflecting a bit one can show, and that Aristotle does not give us . . . On magnanimity, when you read that chapter, there are quite a few things which are at first glance obnoxious, and if you would read Thomas's commentary you would see that Thomas has interpreted it away,[xxxvi] in a sense, because certain things are clearly hard to take from the biblical point of view. But on the other hand, when you look around and you see—for example, I saw this for the first time only a short while ago, when I reflected a bit about Montgomery, you know, of El Alamein, and who, as you all know, has also a considerable ridiculousness.[xxxvii] He's famous for that. But on the other hand . . . But if you look at him, he is a man of whom it has been said he was born to command. Now it is obviously necessary for every society to possess such men, especially for the military [. . .] but I suppose also other things. Now but a man born to command—when you read the chapter on magnanimity from this point of view what he describes is here the type who is born to command and knows it, of course. Then quite a few things will fall into shape, and it would no longer be a specimen of a peculiarity of this particular "culture" but will be a necessity of political society which was perhaps more elaborated by the Greeks than by

[xxxiv] As noted by the transcriber.
[xxxv] The transcriber notes: "One or two inaudible sentences followed by the following."
[xxxvi] See, for example, St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, §§741, 755–758.
[xxxvii] Lieutenant-General Bernard Montgomery of the First Battle of El Alamein in World War II.

people living in other cultures. Perhaps, but not more. But the fundamental human necessity of it becomes clear and the same applies also to other things, too.[xxxviii]

Surely Aristotle doesn't simply qualify the available morality. In "qualifying" it he modifies it. The Aristotelian *Ethics* is a Greek gentleman's morality as seen and purified by a philosopher, by a man who stands above that morality, i.e., modifies it.

Student: [Regarding the distinction between the good for the individual and that of the city.][xxxix]

LS: More divine, more illustrious, more resplendent. The maximum is nations, not the cosmopolis. Regarding the divine, the word is used in the sense of very outstanding. I do not even have to refer to the American usage.

Same Student: Would this not reflect the pretty well established fact that founders are made?

LS: That is very good. But whether Aristotle would call a founder divine in the sense of a god is very doubtful. That he would use the word in this metaphorical sense is another matter.

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[1] Deleted "them."
[2] Deleted "first."
[3] Deleted "of."
[4] Deleted "How."
[5] Deleted "not issuing."
[6] Deleted "to."
[7] Deleted "not."
[8] Deleted "He."
[9] Deleted "of."
[10] Deleted "at."
[11] Deleted "not."
[12] Deleted "which."
[13] Deleted "also."
[14] Deleted "to."
[15] Deleted "it."
[16] Deleted "tell."
[17] Moved "and to what limits."
[18] Deleted "the."
[19] Moved "practically unquestioned."
[20] Deleted "He is."
[21] Moved "one thing is."
[22] Deleted "have"
[23] Deleted "it is not."
[24] Deleted "which ultimately decides."
[25] Deleted "that."
[26] Deleted "speaks here now, he."
[27] Deleted "are."

[xxxviii] The transcriber notes that the tape ends at this point. The remainder of the transcript of this session is taken from student notes.
[xxxix] As noted by the transcriber.

[28] Deleted "-- they."
[29] Deleted "hence."
[30] Moved "now."
[31] Deleted "has a decent upbringing."
[32] Deleted "call."
[33] Deleted "a."
[34] Deleted "children are."
[35] Deleted "Aristotle could."
[36] Moved "he could teach deductively."
[37] Changed from "He starts from these principles and goes down at least to considerable specification."
[38] Moved "easily."
[39] Deleted "hearing of."
[40] Deleted "and so."
[41] Deleted "but why can one say"
[42] Moved "not."
[43] Deleted "such as."
[44] Deleted "what is."
[45] Deleted "Father Vaughan, you read the first paper? Why don't you begin at 1095a14 and go on to 1099b8, and Mr. Reinken takes the rest of book 1." (administrative detail)
[46] Deleted "they."
[47] Deleted "he has."

Session 2: April 4, 1963
Happiness and the human good; the work of man; external goods
(Book 1.1-4)

Leo Strauss: [In progress] —I will naturally only mention those things where I disagree with you.[i] Now you quoted Ortega y Gasset. That quotation was very helpful, because it shows indeed the tremendous difference between the views prevailing today and the view of Aristotle. There is no history in Gasset's sense in Aristotle, nor in Plato, nor in anyone until the eighteenth century. This is one point . . . Now you raised the question at the end: why not the contemplative life toward which Aristotle is leading up at the beginning, in the first book? What was your answer? You mentioned the fact that Aristotle points, from the very beginning to [the] contemplative life, but only points to it and leaves it very vague. And what was your explanation of this?

Father Vaughan: Well, my answer was that in the final analysis it will not be simply contemplation, but we must wait until the final—

LS: Yes, this is one answer, but the simplest answer, I believe is this: that Aristotle leads from what people are more likely to know, and they are more likely to know the life of action than the life of contemplation. In other words, he ascends somehow. Not a descent, ascent. That is one point. But as for this other question which came up last time—and Mr. [. .], I believe, raised the question, Is not morality essential to theory? We speak of intellectual probity, for example. Well, this I gave a rough and provisional answer. I said there is a great difficulty. You can easily see, if you would look up in the *Summa*, first part of the second part, question 58, the last article, where Thomas raises the question: Does intellectual virtue presuppose moral virtue? And he says the intellectual virtue called prudence, practical wisdom does, but wisdom, theoretical wisdom, does not. So you see—and Thomas knew Aristotle quite well. So there is a real difficulty there. We will later on have to take up this question coherently.

Now there were certain terms which you used which did not make me very happy, Father Vaughan. "Material prosperity." Why "material"? Why not simply say wealth? The term material (you know, if it is an Aristotelian term)—as you know, matter, material, does not have this meaning of bodily. Something very intellectual may be matter. It is something else: the genus or the species, and this kind of thing. So let us leave it at the simple word, wealth, because when we speak of wealth we ordinarily do not mean by that literal wealth; we mean just a bank account and similar forms of wealth. But a more important term which you use is system, system of ethics. Now the word system is a Greek word, of course, and means something which you have put together, and is used, for example, of an army or anything put together by man. That doctrines, edifices, as it were, of this kind are called systems is rather late, and the term came in[to] common use, as far as I know, in the[1] sixteenth, seventeenth century, but the very precise meaning of the term "system" in

[i] Strauss responds to Father Vaughan's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading of the paper was not recorded.

philosophy is due to modern philosophy and reaches its full clarification in Hegel only. So I think in a more careful language one should not speak of systems when speaking of the teachings of Plato and Aristotle.

Surely the key point to consider when one touches this book is that it is the oldest ethical treatise. Whether there were earlier ones before, maybe, but we surely don't have them. And Plato's writings are not treatises, obviously, of ethics or of anything else, but all dialogues. So this we must, indeed, keep in mind. That's the oldest ethical treatise which we have.

When you raised this, induced by Northrop—and you could have been induced, as you know, by *n* other people, because there is nothing Northropian in this thesis—this we have been told[2] [for] three centuries now (it's almost nauseating) that Aristotle's ethical teaching rests on his teleology. The teleology has been refuted, if not by Descartes and Newton, [then] at least by Darwin, and therefore the whole thing is baseless. Now I would argue against Northrop in particular in a perfectly legitimate way which is called *ad hominem*: let us see how it works on the Northropian basis. I happen to have read his book on East and West.[ii] I was asked to give a report on one chapter which dealt with Islamic culture and can only say, if this is the consequence of the new science, then the methods used by some central African tribes are preferable. Yes, but this question of course is a very grave question. Does Aristotle's ethical teaching presuppose his physics and metaphysics? It's a very grave question, and the distinction between theoretical and practical wisdom which Aristotle makes, by virtue of which practical wisdom is in itself independent of theoretical wisdom, shows that there is a real difficulty here. Perhaps there are principles of practice which are not in need of any theoretical foundation. Perhaps. We do not know yet. So we must leave this open for the time being.

Now let us turn then to a coherent discussion of our assignment. I would like to remind you first of what we found out last time. Aristotle starts with an observation about the variety of ends. Ends mean here human ends, and it is perfectly open whether nonhuman beings, and in particular inanimate things, have ends. This is still left open. There is a variety of ends and yet there is some unity there, because there is an order among these ends and this is most clearly visible in the arts. But is there one single highest end or is there a variety of highest ends which are more or less equal in dignity? That is left open. Yet there is one highest pursuit, this we know, and that is politics, the quality of the statesman. This being the case, there must be *the* highest end because there is *the* highest pursuit. Now one can of course raise *n* questions against this seemingly dogmatic assertion, but most people who listen to Aristotle, surely all who listened to this lecture, would have said, "Of course." Everyone sees that whatever we may admire most: think, for example, even a physicist today is ultimately acting according to orders of Washington. There may have been a time in which physics was not subject to such governmental orders, but our age has again become very radical and political. But of course we must reconsider that much more carefully.

[ii] F.S.C. Northrop, *The Meeting of East and West: An Inquiry Concerning World Understanding* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1946).

The second point is that the variety of ends is much more radical than Aristotle stated at the beginning. We are confronted with a chaos: all noble and just things seem to be only conventional, so great is the difference. By the way, the word "noble," which I explained provisionally, it is the same word in Greek as the word for beautiful.[iii] And one could perhaps use something like "resplendent" in order to indicate the connection between the two. A beautiful horse and a noble action: in Greek it's the same word. There are languages in which you can use in both cases the same word—for example, in German; I believe also in Arabic. But you cannot do it in English. In French you can do it, of course, too: *belle action*. And so on. Good. So all noble and just things seem to be by convention only, and the good things are so dubious. The most obvious goods prove to be evils under certain conditions. Yet Aristotle's answer here [is], as we have seen: We speak only to decent people, and decent people are people who know that the noble and just things are choiceworthy because they are noble and just. And how do they know it? Ultimately by hearing. By hearing, by having been told by their betters, their parents or others. This was the main point we made last time.

Now in the immediate sequel, in 1095a14 to b13, we find a repetition: a repetition of the preceding argument. If you turn to 1095b14—do you have that?

Mr. Reinken:
Let us, however, resume our discussion from the point at which we digressed.[iv] (1095b14)

LS: Yes. Aristotle says here explicitly that we have made a digression. The preceding thing is a digression, an excursus, but an excursus of a particular kind. It is a repetition of what was said before. Now a repetition is never a simple restatement without any changes. Now what does he say at this point which he hasn't said before? I believe we see here that he takes now for granted that there is a single highest good, which he had not done before. And the reason why he takes it now for granted is because all men take it for granted, because all men speak of happiness, and by happiness everyone means the complete human good. Now the word for happiness: this is perhaps not even immediately intelligible to us because the Greek word for happiness has a fuller meaning. It is *eudaimonia*,[3] which the Greek word for god, or one word, *daimon*, is in. A man who, well, let us say has been well treated by God, by a god. *Eudaimonia*. It has also therefore some meaning like pleasant; a very rich meaning compared with what we ordinarily mean today by a happy fellow. And one can therefore very well raise the question: Is this not a particularly Greek notion, that there is such a thing as happiness which is *the* comprehensive good? Now in modern times it was questioned, even while the term happiness was still used, but it was said [that] in the way in which Aristotle, for example, understood it there is no happiness. Happiness is a state of completion; of repose, one could say, seemingly. And, well, human life is incompatible with a state of repose. Human life is constant activity, constant change. Yes, but do we not have even in our present-day simple, folksy orientation a reminding of the fact that to be really well off—that is something static, as they say now, I retract the word immediately. A repose. Sometimes one says of a man he is on the top, on the top of the

[iii] The word is *kalos*.
[iv] The transcriber notes that Mr. Reinken is reading from the Ross translation. Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. David Ross (London: Oxford University Press, 1954).

world. He *is* on the top. Or another simple expression: he is sitting pretty. *Sitting*. I mean, what can you do more than to sit pretty? So we still have a reminder that there is something where one would be perfectly satisfied with that condition and not wish to change it, because any change would be a change for the worse. However this may be, I limit myself to one point. In this section Aristotle does assert there is one highest good, but what it is is entirely controversial. So we have only the name, happiness, but that is perhaps of some help. Now let us proceed here, in 1095b14. Here we may perhaps begin at this point. Read again what you have read.

Mr. Reinken:
Let us, however, resume our discussion from the point at which we digressed. To judge from the lives that men lead, most men, and men of the most vulgar type, seem (not without some ground) to identify the good, or happiness, with pleasure; which is the reason why they love the life of enjoyment.

LS: So in other words, this would give some substance to the name "happiness." A life of constant pleasure. From one night club to a Turkish bath, and you can go on. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
For there are, we may say, three prominent types of life—that just mentioned, the political, and thirdly the contemplative life.

LS: Contemplative and theoretical is of course the same. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Now the mass of mankind—

LS: "The many," he says.[v] "Mass" is a term stemming from Newtonian physics, or thereabouts. Yes? Good.

Mr. Reinken:
Now the many are evidently quite slavish in their tastes, preferring a life suitable to beasts, but they get some ground for their view from the fact that many of those in high places share the tastes of Sardanapallus. (1095b14-22)

LS: So in other words,[4] some in high places live bestially, and therefore the many who are status seekers—there are quite a few at all times—will simply say we live like beasts because that is a chic thing to do, because a king, Sardanapallus himself, led . . .

Student: [Regarding the translation being used.][vi]

Mr. Reinken: I went into the Ross because we had so much trouble with the Rackham.

[v] Strauss retranslates "*hoi polloi*."
[vi] As noted by the transcriber.

LS: Yes, good. And now? Among the people Aristotle is addressing there is no one who is seriously considering this life of mere sensual enjoyment. I mean, that is simply—well, one can give reasons for that but they know that. They know this much: that it's impossible. Now we come to another kind of man. How does he call them?

Mr. Reinken:
A consideration of the prominent types of life shows that people of superior refinement and of active disposition identify happiness with honour—

LS: Yes, well, "the gracious men, the men of some refinement," and then "men of action": they choose honor.[vii]

Mr. Reinken:
for this is, roughly speaking, the end of the political life.

LS: Yes, of the political man, I would say. Oh no, of the political life. I'm sorry. I'm very sorry. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
But it seems too superficial to be what we are looking for, since it is thought to depend on those who bestow honour rather than on him who receives it, but the good we divine to be something proper to a man and not easily taken from him. Further, men seem to pursue honour in order that they may be assured of their goodness; at least it is by men of practical wisdom that they seek to be honoured, and among those who know them, and on the ground of their virtue; clearly, then, according to them, at any rate, virtue is better. And perhaps one might even suppose this to be, rather than honour, the end of the political life.

LS: Yes, let us stop here. So Aristotle gives here some argument why even this more respectable end of life, honor, rather than sensual enjoyment cannot possibly fill the bill: because honor is something essentially incomplete or defective, and he gives some reasons for that. A man possesses honor if he is honored by others. Therefore[5] others give the honor. They can also take it away. And this is a very precarious position if you do not possess it but others dispose of it. That makes some sense, doesn't it? Furthermore, people are honored on the ground of something, and this ground on which they are honored is of course more fundamental than the honor, and therefore this ground is some excellence, whatever that excellence may be. And therefore that excellence or virtue is much more reasonably the end. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
But even this appears somewhat incomplete— (1095b23-32)

LS: Even virtue, at which we have arrived from honor,[6] is somewhat incomplete. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

[vii] Strauss retranslates "*hoi charientes kai praktikoi*."

for possession of virtue seems actually compatible with being asleep, or with life-long inactivity, and, further, with the greatest sufferings and misfortunes; but a man who was living so no one would call happy, unless he were maintaining a thesis at all costs.

LS: Yes. You see, this phenomenon existed already in classical antiquity: that someone wants to defend a thesis by hook and by crook, and then he cannot, perhaps, be refuted, because he refuses to look at the phenomena which manifestly refute him. This can happen. But no serious man would say that a man who lives in this manner, namely, [who] possesses virtue and is in the greatest misery,[7] is a happy man. I mean that obviously, you know? Aristotle makes it in a way very simple. Think of the story of Job, the greatest example. Job was just, was virtuous, and yet lived in very great misery. Hence no one in his senses could say that Job was a happy man. So virtue cannot be identical with happiness, it is here asserted. The other case is more difficult to understand.[8] That is because Aristotle takes virtue here in the precise sense: a habit. Now a man may possess a certain habit without ever having [the] opportunity to exercise it. The extreme case would be a man who is asleep, who is asleep his whole life but somehow[9] [has] acquired the habit. Now could one call such a man happy? Good. Now the only way of life which survives this test is the contemplative life, and this is, of course, not yet here asserted, that the contemplative life is the only one which can be called happy. It is merely indirectly suggested.

Now in this whole section Aristotle again does not yet establish what happiness is. He makes only somewhat clearer what the non-vulgar views of happiness are. The vulgar views he had stated before. And now let us turn to—yes, in the next chapter Aristotle deals with a diametrically opposite view. Here we have the views which are rather well known. The view of the vulgar, what they now call having fun, having fun all the time, because that fun is invariably sensual pleasure, that's clear; or the[10] [view] of the more refined men, honor and maybe virtue. This is also not sufficient. And then he takes a diametrically opposite view, never heard[11] [in] the marketplace but only in one place, in Plato's Academy: the Platonic view that *the* good is the idea of the good. Let us read the beginning of that, 1096a11.

Mr. Reinken:
We had perhaps better consider the universal good and discuss thoroughly what is meant by it, although such an inquiry is made an uphill one by the fact that the Forms have been introduced by friends of our own.

LS: Yes, "forms" is a translation for the Greek word which is ordinarily translated by ideas, the Platonic ideas. Yes, go on.

Mr. Reinken:
Yet it would perhaps be thought to be better, indeed to be our duty, for the sake of maintaining the truth even to destroy what touches us closely, especially as we are philosophers or lovers of wisdom; for, while both are dear, piety requires us to honour truth above our friends. (1095b33-1096a17)

LS: Yes, both are friends, Plato and the truth, but truth is a greater friend. Now Aristotle criticizes Plato in all his works, but nowhere else does he bring in such an apology for criticizing him. And that is very clear, because this is a moral book, a book about human conduct, and his behavior is apparently improper, that he should blame a friend and such a friend. Therefore he makes this remark. Yes, we cannot possibly go into this discussion of the Platonic doctrine of the good, [because then we would not only have to read the Platonic statements about the idea of the good] but also to have understood them,[12] which is much too much to expect from anyone, including me. By the way, what can we know about the Platonic doctrine of the good, merely externally? How would you have to proceed if you wanted to understand that? Where does Plato speak about that?

Mr. Reinken: In the *Republic*.

LS: *Republic*. Yes?

Student: Also in the Seventh Letter.

LS: Not about the idea of the good as such.

Same Student: No, about the ideas in general.

LS: Yes, about the ideas in general he speaks in many other places, but about the idea of the good only in the *Republic* in two passages, and what that means is extremely difficult to say. Perhaps I can make it a bit clearer when we read the two passages which are immediately intelligible to everyone of you and are not so technical. Now let us turn to 1096b25. That's toward the end of this section.

Mr. Reinken:
The good, therefore, is not some common element answering to one Idea.

LS: Yes, or still more simply stated: there is no idea of the good. There is not *the* good of which Plato spoke, and therefore of course this cannot be the subject of ethics in particular. Now how does he go on here?

Mr. Reinken:
But what then do we mean by the good? It is surely not like the things that only chance to have the same name. Are goods one, then, by being derived from one good or by all contributing to one good, or are they rather one by analogy? Certainly as sight is in the body, so is reason in the soul, and so on in other cases. But perhaps these subjects had better be dismissed for the present; for perfect precision about them would be more appropriate to another branch of philosophy. (1096b25-32)

LS: Literally, "to another philosophy," because philosophy does not yet have this hard-and-fastness; "to another inquiry," an inquiry of a certain kind. Yes, now let us stop here for a moment. Now one must understand it precisely. There is not one thing which is *the* good. There are many good things, many good things of different kinds. If you say, "But

there is always a concept, good: a good horse, a good action, a good house, a good demon, a good tyrant, or whatever have you"—that there is such a concept Plato never denied, and no one can deny it, but that is not what Plato is speaking about. Plato is speaking about a self-subsisting being[13] called the good, *the* good, and that is what Aristotle denies. By the way, one point I should mention before we go on.[14] This passage is of course of very great importance, although we cannot discuss it here, because it shows one thing: that if there are doctrines in the world which make questionable the whole notion of *the* human good, then the ethical teacher must discuss them. There is a sphere of practical life and practical understanding, where we all know more or less what good means in various contexts, and we do not need a theoretical basis for that. But if this whole sphere of action and of prudence is under attack, then it becomes necessary for the theoretical man, for the philosopher, to defend that sphere. To that extent there is no simply independent practical science. It always will need a theoretical science for its protection. But the question is whether this theoretical science protecting the practical sphere will give the decisive indications within the practical sphere. That's a great question. Now let us go on where we left off, Mr. Reinken.

Mr. Reinken:
And similarly with regard to the Idea; even if there is some one good which is universally predicable of goods or is capable of separate and independent existence, clearly it could not be achieved or attained by man; but we are now seeking something attainable.

LS: So in other words, even if there were *the* good or *the* idea of the good, this is not the good we are seeking here. We are speaking of a good to be achieved by man, which Plato of course admitted. Plato wrote one dialogue about the human good, called the *Philebus*, and there he does not speak of the idea of the good. So this would seem to show that this is a perfectly sound argument of Aristotle, sound even from Plato's point of view. Now in the sequel he[15] [makes] the very simple argument: Look, what can we do in practice with the idea of the good? Look at a shoemaker. He is supposed to make a good shoe. He will not be in the slightest degree a better shoemaker if he has seen the idea of the good. So what's the use of it? Let us read a few passages from the sequel, 1097a3.

Mr. Reinken:
This argument has some plausibility, but seems to clash with the procedure of the sciences; for all of these, though they aim at some good and seek to supply the deficiency of it, leave on one side the knowledge of *the* good. Yet that all the exponents of the arts should be ignorant of, and should not even seek, so great an aid is not probable. It is hard, too, to see how a weaver or a carpenter will be benefited in regard to his own craft by knowing this 'good itself', or how the man who has viewed the Idea itself will be a better doctor or general thereby. (1096b32-1097a11)

LS: Which Plato in a way asserts. Yes. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

For a doctor seems not even to study health in this way, but the health of man, or perhaps rather the health of a particular man; it is individuals that he is healing. (1097a11-13)

LS: Yes. Now how does Plato's argument run? Well, the simplest statement, I believe, occurs in the dialogue called *Laches*. Here [there is] a conversation between generals, one of the examples mentioned. And the question is: Is a certain kind of military training good or bad? One of the generals says it's bad, and the other says [it is] good, as it happens up to the present day, as you know: the discussions around Secretary McNamara,[viii] this way or that way. Generals always disagree more or less, more than shoemakers do. [Laughter] No, obviously, because it's much more important, victory, than shoes. And now how does Plato proceed? The generals don't agree and therefore they must have an arbiter, and the arbiter in this case is, for some reason, Socrates. And Socrates says, "Well, all right." He doesn't utter any view for this or that particular kind of fighting; he only says, "Why do you want to have it?" Somehow someone suggests: "In order to make the soldiers better soldiers, surely, better fighters, braver men, more courageous men." Yes, all right. But then we must know what courage is. What is courage? Oh, we know that. The generals know that—and then they give answers which are deplorably poor, and Socrates . . . So they don't know what courage is.[16] They don't fight it out, so at the end they decide: Well, we must meet again in order to find out what courage is, and then we can decide our question. Now that is obviously a great comedy, because Plato knows at least as well as we do that this is not the way in which such questions about this or that kind of military training are decided. In the worst case people will rather toss coins than wait until some philosophers have agreed. But let us look at it one more way. We want to find out what courage is. Now courage is a virtue, an excellence of man, a good quality of man. Then we must raise a prior question, What is good?, before we can answer the question, What is a good habit? And then [we must raise] an infinite inquiry which is identical with the whole philosophic enterprise. This is a simple way to show that if one does not know *the* good one cannot answer any question, and that of course would be the end of all practice. Practice must have shorter answers, you know, where you don't have to raise all the questions all the time. And this is fundamentally what Aristotle, in this eminently practical book, says. That is not the way to go about it. We see that people know the good quite well in limited spheres, shoemakers, generals, and so on. And then what we seek is indeed broader than what the general or shoemaker or physician needs but it is akin to it. So if it is possible for the general, physician, carpenter, and so on, to know what [is] the good he is after, it should not be altogether impossible to find out for us political men, perhaps future statesmen, to know what that comprehensive good is which we try to establish in our cities.

So now we come[17] gradually to the definition, the formal definition, of happiness. You see in the sequel, 1097a15, following, that the examples are again taken from the arts. This is a favorite example here. The arts: orderly, rational procedures which have an orderly structure: subordination, superordination. Here we can find our way somewhat more easily. And here the first definitions in more general things are given. Well, it is again repeated that this end, this comprehensive human good we have in mind, is called happiness. And let us read perhaps 1097b6. I'm sorry, we should begin a bit earlier, the last line of 1097a.

[viii] Robert Strange McNamara served as the eighth Secretary of Defense under Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson from 1961-1968.

Mr. Reinken:
Now such a thing happiness, above all else, is held to be; for this we choose always for itself and never for the sake of something else—

LS: In other words, no one says, "I wish to be happy so that I can make shoes," but he might say, "I make shoes because this might contribute to my happiness." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
but honour, pleasure, reason, and every virtue we choose indeed for themselves (for if nothing resulted from them we should still choose each of them), but we choose them also for the sake of happiness, judging that by means of them we shall be happy.

LS: You see, happiness is higher than intelligence. "Reason" is not the right translation here—"intelligence" and virtue. Happiness is that good which is never chosen for any other purpose whereas all other goods are also chosen for the sake of happiness. That's the first point. Therefore happiness is the highest good. Furthermore?

Mr. Reinken:
Happiness, on the other hand, no one chooses for the sake of these, nor, in general, for anything other than itself.

From the point of view of self-sufficiency the same result seems to follow: for the final good is thought to be self-sufficient. Now by self-sufficient we do not mean that which is sufficient for a man by himself, for one who lives a solitary life, but also for parents, children, wife, and in general for his friends and fellow citizens, since man is born for citizenship.

LS: Yes, literally, "since man is by nature something political." So in other words, self-sufficiency must not be understood [to mean] that you suffice [for] yourself. That would still be a very inadequate life. You must also suffice [for] your nearest and dearest. Yes. Now there is however a difficulty here, as he points out right away.

Mr. Reinken:
But some limit must be set to this; for if we extend our requirement to ancestors and descendants and friends' friends we are in for an infinite series. (1097a35-b15)

LS: So in other words, then, you cannot possibly be self-sufficient for all your relatives, ascending and descending, even for your great-great-grandchildren, and so on. Aristotle will discuss it later, as he says. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Let us examine this question, however, on another occasion; the self-sufficient we now define as that which when isolated makes life desirable and lacking in nothing; and such we think happiness to be; and further we think it most desirable of all things, without being counted as one good thing among others—if it were so

counted it would clearly be made more desirable by the addition of even the least of goods; for that which is added becomes an excess of goods, and of goods the greater is always more desirable. Happiness, then, is something final and self-sufficient, and is the end of action.

LS: So does he mean then that happiness will be increased if you add, say, intelligence and virtue, but that intelligence and virtue are not necessary for happiness? Or does he mean that happiness must necessarily include intelligence and virtue? What would you expect? Include. Yes, so that they would be necessary ingredients of happiness, whatever happiness might be, in addition to intelligence and virtue. Now this will come out in the immediate sequel where we get Aristotle's definition of happiness. That is, of course, of the greatest importance. Yes, we cannot read everything, unfortunately. And how does he proceed? Well, let us read, at least, the beginning so that you get a notion of *how* he proceeds.

Mr. Reinken:
Happiness, therefore, being found to be something final and self-sufficient, is the End at which all actions aim.[ix]

LS: Yes, this is now repeatedly asserted. But this is not of very great help because we don't know what happiness is, and this answer is now given.

Mr. Reinken:
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 that by ascertaining what is man's function. (1097b15-25)

LS: No, "function" is such a very bad word. They [have] like[d] it so much[18] [for] about a hundred years. "Work," the work of man.[x] Now how does he proceed? We seek the human good, what is good for man as man, in such a way that it perfectly satisfies him, that he has nothing to desire beyond it, and that it cannot be taken away from him, at least not easily. That, however, cannot be something outside of man because, say, a house, even other human beings, they can all be taken away from him very easily. It must be in him. So the question "What is good for a man?" must be: "What does it mean to be a good man?" It can only be in him. Yes, and then let us see the sequel. The question which he raises here, what is the work of man, is not immediately intelligible. It becomes intelligible from what he says now.

Mr. Reinken:
For just as for a flute-player, a sculptor, or any artist, and, in general, for all things that have a work or activity, the good and the 'well' is thought to reside in the work, so would it seem to be for man, if he has a work. Have the carpenter, then, and the tanner certain works or activities, and has man none? Is he born without a work?[xi]

[ix] Mr. Reinken has resumed reading Rackham's translation.
[x] Strauss retranslates "*ergon*."
[xi] Mr. Reinken returns to the Ross translation, replacing all instances of "function(s)" with "work(s)."

LS: "Is he born for inactivity or for doing nothing?"[19] Now you see how he does this: again [he uses] the examples of the arts because these are most helpful for clarifying the situation. Now we speak of a good shoemaker. Where do we see the goodness of the shoemaker? The simplest answer is: In his work. [Do you] look at his shoes? That won't do, of course; you have to wear them. But when you wear them you can say he makes good shoes. But the goodness of the shoemaker is of course not primarily in the shoes as a finished product, it is primarily in his activity, in his productive activity. And the Greek word which Aristotle uses, work, *ergon*, has a double meaning: of the finished work and the working. Now since we know that these various kinds of men have works, and these works alone tell us something about their goodness, should the same not be true of man as man? Is there not a work of man as man as there is a work of the sitar player, the shoemaker, the carpenter, and so on? That is the question which Aristotle raises. Generally speaking, the artisans produce artifacts, of course: shoes, chairs, and so on. But man is not an artifact. Man is a natural being. Can we speak of works of natural beings? Aristotle must first show that we do speak of works of natural beings, and then he has the basis for saying it makes sense to speak of a work of man. Now let us go on where we left off.

Mr. Reinken:
Or as eye, hand, foot, and in general each of the parts evidently has a work, may one lay it down that man similarly has a work apart from all these? What then can this be?[xii]

LS: You see, an eye is not an artifact, and yet we speak of a work of the eye, an activity of the eye: seeing. And a good eye is an eye which sees well, and the same applies to ear[s], etc. Therefore, since we see also natural things having works, works which can be good or bad, we have now the basis for considering the possibility that man, the whole man, may have a work which is the work of man, which he can do badly or well. Now what is that work? Then we have to look at man. Man does all kinds of things. For example, he breathes, he grows; and he can grow well and badly, he can breathe well and poorly, and so on and so on. But these cannot be the work of man as man, because these are works also[20] of plants or of beasts. So we have to find out what the specifically human work is. Let us read where we left off.

Mr. Reinken:
Life seems to be common even to plants, but we are seeking what is peculiar to man. Let us exclude, therefore, the life of nutrition and growth. Next there would be a life of perception, but *it* also seems to be common even to the horse, the ox, and every beast.[xiii] (1097b26-1098a3)

LS: Yes. Perception means, of course, here sense perception . . . [xiv] So in other words, an ox or a horse or an eagle may have much better eyes than man, so that the specific goodness of man cannot be found in these things. Yes?

[xii] As in the previous paragraph, Mr. Reinken replaces all instances of "function" with "work."
[xiii] In Ross's translation: "shared even by the horse, the ox, and every animal."
[xiv] The transcriber notes: "about three inaudible words."

Mr. Reinken:
There remains, then, an active life of the element that has a rational principle—

LS: Yes, "which possesses speech or reason." What do we know of rational principle? Good. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
of this, one part has such a principle—

LS: No, "as one which *qua* obeying reason, the other as possessing it and thinking." For example, you cannot say that your arm possesses reason, but it can obey it. When you[21] give yourself a command, say, "Raise your right hand," it obeys. And that applies also to desires: You desire water and you forbid yourself to drink water now, and if you have your desiring faculty properly trained it obeys. Good. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
And, as 'life of the rational element' also has two meanings, we must state that life in the sense of activity is what we mean; for this seems to be the more proper sense of the term. Now if the work of man is an activity of soul which follows or implies a rational principle, and if we say 'a so-and-so'and 'a good so-and-so' have a function which is the same in kind, e.g. a lyre-player and a good lyre-player, and so without qualification in all cases, eminence in respect of goodness being added to the name of the work (for the work of a lyre-player is to play the lyre, and that of a good lyre-player is to do so well): if this is the case [and we state the work of man to be a certain kind of life, and this to be an activity or actions of the soul implying a rational principle, and the work of a good man to be the good and noble performance of these, and if any action is well performed when it is performed in accordance with the appropriate excellence: if this is the case], human good turns out to be activity of soul in accordance with virtue, and if there are more than one virtue, in accordance with the best and most complete.

But we must add 'in a complete life.' For one swallow does not make a summer, nor does one day; and so too one day, or a short time, does not make a man blessed and happy.[xv] (1098a3-20)

LS: Yes. So that is the answer to the question [of] what happiness is: a life in which the rational part of us does its work well. It always does its work because every human being is a rational animal, but then of course, if it does its work ill, that's a bad man.[22] [A] man who is[23] a rational animal and who does not use his reason all the time but mostly[24] misuses it[25] [is] therefore is a bad man. This is his simple answer. And it is based on this principle: that every being has a specific character, [a] specific nature, and a specific activity or work, and the goodness of that work is its virtue. In this sense you can of course speak of the virtue of a horse, the virtue of a hare, the virtue of a tree, the virtue of any being, understanding by virtue that the being does its specific work well. As Aristotle puts it, doing something and

[xv] Mr. Reinken again replaces all instances of "function" with "work." The brackets appear in Ross's translation.

doing it well belong to the same genus. Doing it well is one kind and doing it indeterminately is another kind. In a way, we have finished the discussion of the first book. What follows are only illustrations and confirmations.

Student: [As to what the theoretical situation would be if a being possessing speech were discovered on Mars, for example.][xvi]

LS: How do you know that? Let us assume they are quadrupeds, quadrupeds who speak. Yes, but that's the question: prior to empirical evidence, one might very well doubt whether there can be thinking quadrupeds—I mean, wherever imaginative men like Swift and so have imagined about that.[xvii] Aristotle's view is this: man is the only being which has a hand, as distinguished from paws or so, so the hand is, in a way, the specifically human organ.

Same Student: People talk about *homo faber*.

LS: Yes, but what does it mean? That is the being which has the arts. *Faber* is, say, artisan. And arts, that means reason. In other words, Aristotle's assertion is that the human body in its difference from the bodies of all other animals is so because it is a body of the rational animal. I mean, I do not know what Aristotle would say about such things as the appendix, but, for example, the main point, that man does not walk on four feet, and that his walking on two feet is different from the walking on two feet of birds, Aristotle would say that can eventually be understood only in the light of the function of the human organs. There is one modern biologist, at least one, one I have read, a Swiss, writing unfortunately not in English but in German, Portmann.[xviii] Some of you may have heard of him. And he is apparently absolute tops as a modern biologist: he has made quite remarkable studies of this subject, which[26] [disgracefully] are not accessible in English. I mean, he accepts evolution and all this kind of thing, these modern doctrines, with a very prudent reservation. He doesn't quarrel with that. And he shows precisely on this basis how absolutely necessary it is to understand, for example, the long gestation of human babies compared with those of any other beings of this kind, and the peculiarly helpless condition in which the human baby is born, how this can be only understood in the light of man's being the rational and political animal.

Same Student: What is the name?

LS: Portmann. It is really—I mean, we make so many translations in pocket books especially, which students can buy. This should be translated. When I saw it first I read the paper cover [where] they compared him to Baer, you know, the biologist who discovered the cell,[xix] and I thought that is of course one of these publisher's tricks to increase the sale, but after I had read it I was satisfied that this is a very reasonable contention. In other words, show us a quadruped which can develop Euclidean geometry, for example, then we

[xvi] As noted by the transcriber.
[xvii] Strauss is referring to the Houyhnhnms, a race of sentient horses in *Gulliver's Travels*, part 4.
[xviii] Probably Adolf Portmann (1897–1982), Swiss zoologist.
[xix] Karl Ernst von Baer (1792–1876), who discovered the egg cell.

must really reconsider the thing very profoundly. But hitherto there is no evidence. And there is of course another test: whether these beings to be found [on] I don't know[27] which planet are able to generate offspring in intercourse with a terrestrial.

Same Student: Well, this would be a fundamental presupposition: that they could not.

LS: Oh, I see. [Laughter] Then we are confronted with the interesting case of two species of rational animals.

Same Student: Then, what is the specific difference of—

LS: We would have to find out. Perhaps the difference is not greater than that between two other species of the same genus which do not breed. For example, I do not know, what about the difference between deer and cows? Do they interbreed? I doubt it. Very well. Both belong to the same genus, bovine, and yet they don't breed. That might be an interesting subject of speculation, but also not very fruitful in the absence of any empirical evidence. We [will] do that in 2015, when they have discovered them. It is one of the many subjects we must leave to this next generation.

But let us now come to what we can possibly understand, namely, Aristotle's teaching about happiness. Now what must strike us, and that has struck probably some of you, is that the statement is extremely general, but we must make clear to ourselves how general it is. For example, [the notion of] a man who uses his reason well, as this term is defined hitherto, does not merely apply to Socrates or such people but to a man like Alcibiades as well. Why was Alcibiades superior to practically all his political contemporaries? In the first place, of course, because of his fabulous capacity to use his reason. I will go a step further, which may sound shocking but absolutely necessary in order to understand Aristotle. Happiness as hitherto defined would even cover such a phenomenon like Hitler. Why was Hitler admired by the people who admired him? Not because he was stronger; he was not the strongest German. I mean, I'm sure there were boxers in Germany who could have easily have boxed him down. His qualities of will,[28] [the] quality [he] called[29] intuition, which is of course an intellectual quality. So these are all intellectual qualities. Even if we say: well, why not beauty? And the answer is clear. When we speak of beauty in a emphatic sense we don't mean the beauty of a German shepherd[30], or an Irish setter, or anything: we mean human beauty, beauty of a human being. And this beauty of a human being points to qualities of the mind, as you see in these cases which occur from time to time[31] [when] you see a particularly beautiful human being who is simply stupid. Then you are shocked because, you know, you don't expect such stupidity going together with such beauty. So we mean always qualities of the mind in *all* these cases. That's the difficulty, and this is by no means solved at this point of the argument.

So you see, one thing is clear: man's perfection, his goodness, his virtue, his happiness, can be found only in qualities of the mind . . . not in other qualities. Maybe the other qualities, of the body and so, are necessary, but they are not that thing which constitutes the happiness. Is this clear? But if this is so, then any capacities of the mind, I mean any good qualities, not stupidity, not a weak will and this kind of thing, these are sheer defects, but

the positive ones of strength of will, quickness of grasp, and other things: this would then be the happy man. Hitherto Aristotle hasn't proved more than that. This point I think he has proved: we would never be satisfied with a human being who is defective in that which is the specifically human. For example, a man may be a first-rate tightrope dancer and we may admire him, but we would never say that is a perfect human being, an outstanding human being. We would say an outstanding tight rope dancer, which is a quite different proposition because it is a very limited quality; but if it is a quality of the intellect, the mind, of the mind in the widest sense, then we admire him. That's what counts. And that all people do. The admiration of Hitler is not a refutation but a confirmation of what I say. He was admired on these grounds. The other things[32] [in] which he claimed to have superiorities were not adduced by the more rational part of his environment. You only have to read what the German generals said after the Second World War. They all came down to these amazing qualities which this impossible creature possessed, but which he did possess. Yes, Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: [Regarding use of the term "the will."][xx]

LS: Well, I used deliberately language which we would use more simply than the terms used by Aristotle, but [which] Aristotle has in mind. I mean, when he uses such words like *logos*, which is traditionally translated by "reason," [but] which[33] means also speech in Greek.[34] [It] is distinguished from *nous*, traditionally translated "intellect" or "intelligence," but they switch into each other. And then on the other hand he speaks of virtue in the sense of moral virtue. Moral virtue, he says, [as] we shall find out, [is] a quality of choosing, i.e., of willing. So we can reasonably speak of qualities of mind and will. And if you think of such people like artists, for example, [to] use a modern term which Aristotle doesn't use: what is it? That what makes an artist is obviously a quality of the mind, in the first place, although it is not the mind of a mathematician. These are always the qualities; to that extent Aristotle, I think, proved his point, but it proves too little. We do not yet recognize in that man as hitherto described what we ordinarily mean by an admirable human being. We must see how Aristotle finds his way to that.

Student: So far as the definition of the peculiar work of man, I was wondering whether Aristotle's method of approaching the subject by comparing man with other beings, non-rational beings, doesn't in a way prejudge what the answer, man's peculiar work, will be, and whether it isn't therefore somewhat of an arbitrary starting point for defining the work of man. I wonder if perhaps without thinking of other beings, but simply trying to understand the work of man by examining man and only man, I wonder whether one would necessarily come up with the same answer.

LS: Yes, perhaps not, as some examples seem to show. But the question is then whether, if you do that, what is done by modern idealistic philosophy including its existentialist appendix—no, that is really true, existentialism covers modern idealism—but then you simply forget that man is also an animal. I mean, it is so characteristic. The Greek word,

[xx] As noted by the transcriber.

[*zōon*],[xxi] which is Latin animal and [German][xxii] animal, and in English also animal; we don't like to say that. The Greeks had a word for what we now call animal, and that would be translated in English by "beast." Man is of course not a beast, but he is an animal, a living being. And you can as little think away the fact of the part of him which he has in common with the animals, need for food and so on, as the other. You get a very misleading notion of man if you forget that he is a being with a body and with bodily desires. I mean, for example, when Heidegger developed his doctrine of man in his first-rate book, then the key phenomenon somehow was death.[xxiii] Yes, but the fact that dying is something which man shares with all other living beings, surely with the animals, did not sufficiently come out, and it must come out. One cannot disregard that, and therefore you must see man as a part of that whole and where he is clearly closest to the animals rather than plants or minerals.

Student: Well, one could take this into consideration and, for example, find something like feelings. For example, I was thinking of Hume.

LS: Yes, but what are feelings? What are feelings? Are these merely these things? I mean, you touch a hard body or so? No. They are feelings somehow in the mind. They are tinged by men's—for example, if someone has a feeling, a warm feeling, for suffering people, that is something belonging to the mind, decidedly. I mean, that is a question, whether Aristotle has sufficiently provided for feelings. He calls what we call feelings *pathē*, passions. I mean, men must have thought in passions. We [will] come to that later. I think that is really provided for by Aristotle. I mean, if you say man is the feeling being, that would not be true. Look at a dog. A dog feels. He doesn't feel certain things which we feel, but he doesn't feel them because he doesn't have intellect or reason. But feeling is something common to man and all animals, as the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty against Animals will give you in writing.

Student: May I ask it a little differently? When we inquire into the work of man, is this asking what is the essence of man?

LS: Yes. This [is] because this work can only be understood as an outgrowth of the essence or nature of man. No animal can produce a mathematical book, to take a very simple example. No, I believe there has never been anything said, anything *valid* said against Aristotle's definition of man and therefore also of man's perfection. But the question is: the definition as hitherto developed is much too broad to cover what we ordinarily understand by an excellent man, because it covers, as I indicated, such people like Hitler, and somehow you don't believe that this fills the bill. And we must see how Aristotle arrives at a more close definition of happiness, which he does in the immediate sequel.

Student: Is a teleology of nature not assumed at this point?

[xxi] The transcript has a blank space here.
[xxii] The transcript has a blank space here.
[xxiii] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (1927).

LS: Well, I mean, I do not know. Well, let me put it to you: What does teleology mean? In the first place, primarily it means only that things in themselves point to their specific perfection. If that is meant by teleology, I would say it's absolutely impossible to think nonteleologically, to speak of anything nonteleologically, regardless of what Newton may say or may be said to have said. I mean, such a simple thing: a broken chair, a limping dog, a blind man. I take defects which various beings have, pointing to the perfection. Beings *are* in such a way. Therefore whatever the distinction between is and ought and so [on], reality and ideal, may mean, that so-called reality is of such a nature that it is in itself pointing toward perfection. That cannot be denied. Where it comes from and what havoc this may create in social science, these are very posterior quarrels. The primary thing is that we don't deny them. Now[35] this peculiar pointing, for example, of the broken chair, cannot be seen as broken except [as pointing] towards an entire chair. There is a simple example somewhere in Melville. Some half-theological man says to an ordinary fellow who is an unbeliever[36] [that] he should pray and worship his creator, and says: Look, this wonderful sight, sunset or whatever it is, you have been given to see it by whom? And thereupon this fellow has the nerve to say, "By an oculist in Philadelphia," because he was born half-blind and then this oculist had restored it.[xxiv] So in other words, [when] developed, it means there is no teleology: all kinds of misbegotten beings run around and very few succeed. Yes, but good Melville, as many others of the same school, forgot one thing. What did the oculist in Philadelphia do? He looked at a normal eye, which he didn't make, which somehow was available to him, and by looking at it he made the necessary operation on that defective eye to make a good eye. If there were no relatively perfect things there prior to any human art, human art would have no guidance whatever. That is the primary base of teleology. Needless to say, as Father Vaughan pointed out, teleology does not mean, as Voltaire ridiculed it[37]—how did he put it in the *Candide*?—that the noses have been created so we can put glasses on them. You know? Is it not wonderfully well done? Well, this is of course nonsense. I mean, some sentimental people said that. Or rattlesnakes are there so that they can perhaps be used for making some kinds of medicine out of them. That is not what Aristotle means. Rattlesnakes are there for being rattlesnakes, and skunks are there for being skunks, and men are there for being men.

Student: Even if there is a human nature, well, Aristotle himself proceeds by examining what is the nature of this, what is the nature of that. But man in comparison to the nonhuman, it seems to be how he gets the rational essence—

LS: Yes, sure. Yes, find something else. I mean, there were people who had said Aristotle's definition is wrong, is old-fashioned, is Greek, and what other vices a definition can have, and one must say man is a *homo faber*. That was said with great noise about fifty years ago in Germany by someone.[xxv] Well, this man simply hadn't thought, because Aristotle had included *homo faber*, that man is the artisan. What does artisan mean except a specific kind of reason? Look at Aristotle this way: all men at all times speak of good or bad, superior and inferior, everywhere, and there is surely a great variety of views. Now Aristotle makes this statement. He says, "I look for a formula which in my view covers everything. [What] men always mean, either fully or dimly, when they praise a man, and

[xxiv] Herman Melville, *The Confidence Man*, chapter 21.
[xxv] Max Scheler, *Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos* (1928).

this is my formula. Do you find it wrong? Show me a concrete reason." And that, I think, one must[38] do. I mean, this general skepticism is of no help. You must show specific cases where he does not meet the case. We must also not forget, we have not yet [seen] the evidence in Aristotle's doctrines of the virtues in particular, and[39] which virtues does he omit; and does he omit them because of his wrong or narrow definition—then we will abandon him and follow another guide. Good. Now let us see how the sequel comes, where he completes it. 1098a20.

Mr. Reinken:
Let this serve as an outline of the good; for we must presumably first sketch it roughly, and then later fill in the details.

LS: So in other words, that's a rough sketch, rough because of its great generality. It's too general. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
But it would seem that any one is capable of carrying on and articulating what has once been well outlined—

LS: So in other words, Aristotle claims that he has made a good sketch: [our understanding of the good] must fall within that, and that is indeed the most difficult job; but the next, to make it neat, that can be done, he says, by anybody. Well, he burdens us because we are all, I suppose, anybodies to do that job which he has failed to do. Now that is perhaps ironical and perhaps not. Let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:
and that time is a good discoverer or partner in such a work—

LS: In other words, the progress of the ethical science. You know,[40] [every] man adding something else finally will build a beautiful edifice. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
to which facts the advances of the arts are due; for any one can add what is lacking. And we must also remember what has been said before, and not look for precision in all things alike. (1098a20-28)

LS: So in other words, this is now concluded. Aristotle has merely said, "I admit that's a rough sketch, but I don't have to go beyond it because anybody can fill it out." That's one thing. And now he makes another statement which is also provisional. Will you read that please.

Mr. Reinken:
And we must also remember what has been said before, and not look for precision in all things alike, but in each class of things such precision as accords with the subject-matter, and so much as is appropriate to the inquiry. For a carpenter and a geometer investigate the right angle in different ways; the former does so in so far as the right angle is useful for his

work, while the latter inquires what it is or what sort of thing it is; for he is a spectator of the truth.

LS: Which the carpenter is not. Good. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
We must act in the same way, then, in all other matters as well, that our main task may not be subordinated to minor questions.

LS: No, "that the by-work may not become larger than the work itself." Commentary on that: many issues of many social science journals. Yes? Good. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Nor must we demand the cause in all matters alike; it is enough in some cases that the *fact* be well-established—

LS: The "that," the "that." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
as in the case of the first principles; the fact is the primary thing—

LS: The "that," the "that," that it is so.

Mr. Reinken:
Now of first principles we see some by induction, some by perception, some by a certain habituation, and others too in other ways. But each set of principles we must try to investigate in the natural way, and we must take pains to state them definitely, since they have a great influence on what follows. For the beginning is thought to be more than half of the whole, and many of the questions we ask are cleared up by it. (1098a26-1098b8)

LS: Yes. So this is Aristotle's third and last statement about what one may call the method of his *Ethics*. Yes?

Student: Before you said that the "that" was the starting point, and now he calls the "that" the first principle. I thought the first principle was the cause.

LS: Shall we take it up—will you remind me of the question? Yes, because I would like first to speak of something more general. Now Aristotle takes here examples from different fields, the carpenter and the geometer. The carpenter and the geometer. Well, and we all know that the carpenter is perfectly satisfied with a right angle which is not a right angle but for all practical purposes a right angle. But the geometer doesn't do that, and in addition he is not concerned with using the right angle but finding out some of its qualities and conditions and so on and so on. Now where is the ethical teacher? Who is the equivalent of the ethical teacher? Which of the two, the carpenter or the geometer? Carpenter, sure. This is one thing. We don't need a geometer here, the mathematician, because a mathematician would only make many remarks of complete irrelevance for

practice. I mean, you all know what contemporary phenomenon we cannot help thinking of. Now this is, then, regarding the exactitude.[xxvi] We cannot, we must not, try to be exact as a mathematician is exact. This would be a waste of time and foundation money, as we would have to say. But then there is something else. Aristotle speaks now of a different subject, namely, the question regarding the knowledge of the principles or causes. In the second statement about method he has spoken only of the latter, of the question of the knowledge of the principles or causes. The real question is not of exactness. That can easily be settled; we need only a rough and ready exactness. But what about the knowledge of the principles of action? That is the great question, and this is here taken up again. The "that" is the beginning, the principle. What does this mean here precisely? That these and these are the noble and just things; that's the "that." We begin with that. So this is an entirely different question, the "that," and that's different from the "why." Just as we take the carpenter as our model and not the geometrician, analogously to that we are concerned only with knowledge of the "that," that this and this is noble or just, and not with the "why." How is the "that" found? [That is] the question raised here. And he gives three examples: induction, sense perception, and some sort of habituation; and [also] other things which he doesn't mention. What had he said in the second statement about how the "that" is found by the people listening to him?

Student: By habituation.

LS: No. He quoted Hesiod, the poet. What did Hesiod say? How do these men know?

Student: [. . .]

LS: By hearing. And hearing is, as you all know, a form of sense perception. Therefore sense perception, I believe, is here in the middle. Good. This much, I believe, of the situation is perfectly clear. Aristotle addresses people who know that these and these things are the noble and just things, and the "why" is of no concern to him. But of course one cannot help—we, at least, being in a sense theoretical people, cannot help—must we not raise the question, Why? And not so much as a so-called epistemological question, but as a substantive question. You say these and these, say, honoring parents is noble. Why? Must one not raise the question and not leave it by saying that all decent men honor their parents, or [that] I have been told from my childhood on that one must honor his parents? Is this not legitimate? Now if this is a question, a why, which must be raised, then this man, the man who raised it, would be an analogon to the geometrician. He would of course not deal with mathematical subjects, but he would raise a kind of question which is not practical in importance, just as little as the geometric treatment of the right angle is of importance for carpenters but a question which the theoretician cannot help raising. In other words, in the *Ethics* there are two men present, if one may say so, two human types: one, the addressee, and that is simply the decent man, the gentleman, and for him it is sufficient that he knows the "that" and he will receive a coherent notion of the "that" which he already knows. He will become enlightened about the "that" already known. But there is also present the teacher, Aristotle, and Aristotle may have something to convey which is not identical with what the gentleman knows. In other words, what Aristotle knows about the "why" may be

[xxvi] In the transcript: "exactitude or (?)."

of no practical importance, but this would not preclude its being of eminent theoretical importance. Mr. Boyan?

Mr. Boyan: Is it admitted that the raising of the "why" may affect the "what" and have grave consequences on it?

LS: [It] may. That is not absolutely excluded, but it could be this, that just as in the case of the geometer, [who] knows lots of things about the right angle and all kinds of things which the carpenter doesn't even dream of, and it could be, as it was for many, many centuries and millennia, that this was not of any practical importance. The carpenters went on building houses as they had always done and didn't have to study geometry and listen to a geometrician, [to have him] come to them and explain to them. That might be a crude practical geometry which is good enough for carpentry, and the same might be true for ethics, so that the practical life in action would not be affected by what the geometrician of ethics, if I may use the term in that analogous sense, would know. But it might also be affected. We know nothing about it yet; we begin only.

Student: The question then would resolve as whether those who—the best men in society have an idea of the "what" in terms of ethics and perhaps they are all wrong.

LS: No, this question, you can say, is never raised. The men of whom Aristotle speaks in the *Ethics* and the *Politics* are well-bred gentlemen who know in a rough way the "that," and you don't get much information about the "why." [Only] the "that" will[41] be made more clear. It will be brought out coherently. That is all that happens. And then you say: Well, men might all be mistaken. The gentlemen everywhere, in all times and places, might have been completely mad, and the true morality is the one which was discovered, say, by Sigmund Freud. There are such people. Aristotle would say it is extremely unlikely. It is extremely unlikely that the truth relevant for human life is suddenly discovered by one individual there, or maybe two; that men, being concerned all the time with the business of living and of living well, should not somehow know it.

Student: All white men in the nineteenth century, high and low, thought the white race was superior to the Negro race—

LS: These were very special questions. But Aristotle's teaching regarding slavery doesn't leave anything to be desired, not only for Abraham Lincoln's use but for the use of the NAACP,[xxvii] and perhaps even for Mr. Baldwin's[xxviii] use, namely, that of course the people whom you can decently treat as slaves are people who would be useless to themselves if they were not slaves. And this is a proposition which I still defend. It does not necessarily require an institution of slavery; you can also put them into certain houses. You know, I told you my story of the natural slave—I met one. But the question is simply what was discovered. And this is the only discovery: the power of man is much greater than Aristotle

[xxvii] National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, an American civil rights organization founded in 1909.
[xxviii] James Baldwin (1924–1987), American writer who addressed issues of race in fiction and essays.

thought. Aristotle would never have believed that it is possible to grow wine and to make good poetry north of the Balkans, and he has empirically been disproved. Now if he was wrong, he underestimated the power of man regarding the power of northern Europe, although there would still be some people who say it shows in northern European poetry and so on that this is not Mediterranean. [Laughter] I have heard that. Well, the clouds, you know, the clouds show, as distinguished from the blue sky. But surely, let us dismiss this as a joke. So Aristotle underestimated the power of man. Man can do much more. He can have civilized life in his sense on every part of the globe, and many races of men who by their geographical location were excluded from any of these [. . .] are now capable of accepting them and then of course if it is possible, then it would be glaring injustice to deny it to them on the basis of Aristotle himself. So that is very simple.

But still, Aristotle has still one point from which we can learn something. Is man so powerful, modern man, as he believes [himself] to be? Is there not some element [of truth] in[42] [Aristotle's] "pessimism," in his apprehensiveness regarding the unlimited extension of man's power? And you have only to look at the more advanced members of the political science profession, like Professor Norton Long and his studies on municipal government and municipal areas, to see how this question of the limited community, *polis*, makes its reappearance in 1963 in Chicago, Milwaukee, Detroit, Washington, New York, and so on and so on, that here [we find] the notion that there are no limits to how men can live.[xxix] Man still has the same natural power, which is limited to caring for other people, to knowing them truly and not via TV, which is no way of knowing them, that he had in old times. So surely Aristotle—there is a point where Aristotle was refuted. And I would say the first man who grew wine north of the Alps refuted Aristotle as much as Newton, *more* than Newton, but this doesn't do away with the fact that his notion of the limited power of man is not worth considering. Especially this notion, that human nature is infinitely malleable, is a very wrong notion. Man's power—that has been proven—is much greater than Aristotle thought and even than Plato thought. I'm sure they did not believe that in the year 1963 there would be people in Atlantis, as Plato probably would have called it, reading Plato and Aristotle. I don't know what Plato thought about the length of time in which his books could possibly be read for physical reasons. Perhaps he thought of eight thousand, ten thousand years; perhaps he thought only of two thousand years. This would be over by now. But it is not difficult to take cognizance of this fact. This every child knows. But the question is: What are the conclusions? Are the conclusions that what they said is radically wrong or only that it is in need of a certain modification? That would be the question. Yes?

Student: Then if Aristotle's job is to describe systematically the good to people who already know what it is, what is his claim of the benefits of this study?

LS: Well, I believe[43]—for example, let us take a man, a lover of liberty. Take a simple present-day example: on every case which comes up he takes the right side (which I believe would be that of the ADA, yes?), let us assume, instinctively. So he knows it. Don't you think he would be benefited by reading a book by Professor Roche about what the whole position is, a coherent presentation? Would he not be clearer in his mind about the

[xxix] Norton E. Long (1910–1993), American sociologist and professor of urban politics.

position? Would he not[44] also perhaps see, in some cases where he did not see what liberty demands, [45]more clearly? I can only say: read any of the statements about any of the virtues which Aristotle names and where the gentleman[46] [recognizes them]. But which gentleman could have really put it together in this comprehensive way and not have forgotten anything? Aristotle thinks with modesty that the book might be good for gentlemen to read because they would get a clearer notion of what gentlemanship is. Well, after all, how did the gentlemen become gentlemen? By hearing. And the hearing doesn't mean merely that they were told "Don't spit!" and some other obnoxious things, but they heard stories, Homer, and poems, all this kind of thing. So they heard wise men praising gentlemanship and appealing to it, and showing it, in a way, at least; and Aristotle believes that the way in which he does it, nonpoetically, which means not only in prose but even[47] without telling any stories, that this might have an advantage which even the poetic presentations do not have. So now we must do a bit more. Let us read the immediate sequel, 1098b9 to 11.

Mr. Reinken:
We must consider it,[xxx] however, in the light not only of our conclusion and our premises, but also of what is commonly said about it— (1098b9-11)

LS: Yes, you see here Aristotle says what he is going to do in the sequel. The definition of happiness previously given was not given on the basis of hearing, of what the gentlemen knew from their upbringing and the poets. Aristotle started there, that's important. Miss Huckins comes now into her own.[xxxi] Aristotle began here with the "why," with the principles simply, and descended to that, in this part which we read before which we can call the scientific part. As follows, the goodness of a being consists in doing its specific work well, but the specific work of man is reasoning or living according to reason; hence the goodness of man consists in living according to reason. But this principle from which he started, the gentlemen haven't given any thought to that. He starts deductively in the argument here. He proceeds deductively, scientifically. He does this. But this doesn't lead far enough, because it's too general. And why—what Aristotle has deduced about the goodness of man, why should this be identical with what everyone somehow divines when he speaks of happiness? Why should that be? Who would recognize happiness in activity according to reason? Who would? Very few people; perhaps no one. So it becomes necessary to look to some other source, to what people generally say, i.e., think; and this, what people say and generally think, will complete this *a priori* argument—*a priori* in the old sense of the word, namely, starting from the cause down to the effect. Now we will add something which has an entirely different cognitive status. It is primarily only what people generally say, and we must see what we learn this way. Now what do we learn that way? By the way, we understand from this point of view[48] these strange remarks which sound so ironical: everyone can specify this universal and vague statement which Aristotle makes. Sure, because everyone has these opinions . . . Now the decisive point is in 1099a7. Will you read that? We cannot read the whole thing. 1099a7.

Mr. Reinken:

[xxx] In Ross's translation: "But we must consider happiness."
[xxxi] Here the transcriber notes: "The reference is to the question toward the middle of page 17 which was deferred."

Their life is also in itself pleasant.

LS: Yes, this is a transition. Whatever he may have said before, the life of this kind of man is pleasant. Yes. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:
For pleasure is a state of *soul*, and to each man that which he is said to be a lover of is pleasant; e.g. not only is a horse pleasant to the lover of horses, and a spectacle to the lover of sights, but also in the same way just acts are pleasant to the lover of justice and in general virtuous acts to the lover of virtue.

LS: Now do you see what he does now? The scientific definition, if I may call it, say, did not show us why we should wish to live according to reason, why we should be attracted by it. It only stated, on this general ontological basis, man's goodness consists in the life according to reason. But why would we be happy living according to reason? That's not clear. Aristotle starts now from something else: what everyone admits to be happiness. Happiness is a state where we are pleased, a state of pleasure. This is so. And people are pleased by an infinite variety of things. For example, there are dog lovers who are pleased by the sight of dogs. Now then we come to a special case of lovers. Which are they? "In the same way also the just things are pleasing to the lover of justice, and generally that which is according to virtue is pleasant to the lover of virtue." Go on.

Mr. Reinken:
Now for most men their pleasures are in conflict with one another because these are not by nature pleasant— (1099a7-13)

LS: In other words, what most pleasure lovers seek, the Turkish bath, and this kind of thing, these things are not by nature pleasant, Aristotle says here. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
but the lovers of what is noble find pleasant the things that are by nature pleasant; and virtuous actions are such, so that these are pleasant for such men as well as in their own nature. Their life, therefore, has no further need of pleasure as a sort of adventitious charm, but has its pleasure in itself. For, besides what we have said, the man who does not rejoice in noble actions is not even good; since no one would call a man just who did not enjoy acting justly, nor any man liberal who did not enjoy liberal actions; and similarly in all other cases. If this is so, virtuous actions must be in themselves pleasant. But they are also *good* and *noble*, and have each of these attributes in the highest degree, since the good man judges well about these attributes; his judgment is such as we have described. Happiness then is the best, noblest, and most pleasant thing in the world, and these attributes are not severed as in the inscription as Delos—

Most noble is that which is justest, and best is health;
But pleasantest is it to win what we love.

For all these properties belong to the best activities; and these, or one—the best—of these, we identify with happiness. (1099a13-30)

LS: Yes, let us stop here. Now in this secondary context, in this supplement to the scientific statement, as I called it, to the statement based on opinions, he adds now that pleasure is of the essence of happiness. Now if the life according to virtue is the most pleasant life, then it naturally would also be attractive to every human being, or at least to every healthy and normal human being. Happiness consists then in virtuous activity. But—now he adds that point—but virtuous activity is that which is by nature most pleasant. Here he gives us an answer, by the way, to that great question he had raised before: are the noble and just things natural or not, or are they only conventional? Now if the noble and just things are by nature the most pleasant, then they must be natural. This is an implication here; no need of external pleasures, because the pleasure deriving from virtuous activity is the greatest pleasure. Now this is of course not so simple, as you all will see, but you must also see the way in which Aristotle completes this or fills out this lacuna. He fills it out by combining the scientific definition with what is generally admitted. Now what are the difficulties here?

Aristotle starts from an undeniable fact, that the truly virtuous man enjoys virtuous activities. In other words, a man who does the just things only because he is compelled to do so is not truly just, and the sign that[49] [the virtuous man] is not merely compelled to do so is that he does them gladly. He enjoys doing them. But the fact that he enjoys them, that the truly just man enjoys just action, does of course not in itself prove that they are by nature enjoyable. They might have become enjoyable to him by virtue of breeding, so that what you are accustomed to do you enjoy doing; and therefore the question is by no means solved at this point. Now Aristotle argues indirectly in this way: who is the judge, the *spoudaios*? Now *spoudaios*, that is used synonymously with the morally virtuous man by Aristotle. *Spoudaios* means, literally translated, the serious man—you know, the man who is not a clown, [a] serious man and [one] whom you take seriously. This can of course also be used in a somewhat ironical manner, you know, like an *homme serieux* in French. But still, the serious man, the virtuous man, holds this view: for him the virtuous actions are intrinsically pleasant, the most pleasant actions. But that only raises another question: what is the relation between the serious man, the morally virtuous man, and the wise man? Or are they identical? Questions which are of course here not yet even touched.

The main point: the life of virtue is the most pleasant life in itself. No external pleasures are needed. Let us read the sequel, 1099a31.

Mr. Reinken:
Yet evidently, as we said, it needs the external goods as well; for it is impossible, or not easy, to do noble acts without the proper equipment. In many actions we use friends and riches and political power as instruments; and there are some things the lack of which takes the lustre from happiness, as good birth, goodly children, beauty; for the man who is very ugly in appearance or ill-born or solitary and childless is not very likely to be happy, and perhaps a man would be still less likely

if he had thoroughly bad children or friends or had lost good children or friends by death.

LS: You see now this is of course crucially important. Think: what does beauty, bodily beauty, have to do with virtuous activity? Apparently nothing. And yet, as Aristotle says, if a man is extremely ugly then he cannot be truly happy. He comes much closer to the ordinary views. Or if someone—what were the other examples?—comes of very low birth, he can never be truly happy. A Greek gentleman's prejudices, as people say, enter here. Now let us finish it first.

Mr. Reinken:
As we said, then, happiness seems to need this sort of prosperity in addition—

LS: Yes, "of good weather," one could translate that. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
for which reason some identify happiness with good fortune, though others identify it with virtue. (1099a31-1099b8)

LS: Yes. Now you see Aristotle had said no external pleasures are needed. Virtue is self-sufficient. But he adds now, external goods are needed: you must have friends, you must have some wealth, you must have some power, and so on. Yes, but the question is: Is not the possession of these external goods also pleasant to men? I believe experience would say it is pleasant. People enjoy if they live well, if they are wealthy, if they are of good family, and so on. So in other words, the external pleasures are necessary for happiness; a very grave question. Aristotle will try to clean it, to tidy it up a bit in the rest of the first book, but we leave it at this for the time being. The pleasures deriving from noble actions are not sufficient for happiness.

Now this is all said in this supplementary chapter based on opinions as distinguished from what I called the scientific deduction. It is quite interesting that the noble and just things, of which he speaks quite frequently in these supplementary chapters, are not mentioned at all, so to speak, in the scientific chapter. I mean, there is one passage in which one could perhaps say that they are mentioned; [the] just is never mentioned there. So here this speaks only of the good, not of the noble and just as such. In the supplementary chapter, the noble and just, that of which one thinks in the first place in an ethical context, comes in only there. This is the great difficulty, and we must see how this will resolve itself in a later book. Surely, Aristotle has made this very clear to us by his way of treating that, separating very clearly this scientific treatment of the question of the highest good for man from that supplementary treatment, what the true problem of ethics is. Throughout the tradition, *the* term is always the highest good, *summum bonum*, not the noble nor the just. The noble and the just find their justification in the fact that they are good, not the other way around. Now the noble and just, however, [that] is what we mean by moral. Morality finds its justification in something which one can call amoral or transmoral but which is not in itself moral: the nature of man. Now we must see whether this leads us to any further

understanding of the sequel. Did I answer your question which you had before? Yes. Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: [Regarding the fact that Aristotle skips over a consideration of the specific work of the beasts.][xxxii]

LS: Oh, I mean, in some cases, it's not difficult to say. Look at beavers, look at bees, look at spiders. Well, you see they produce specific works. In the case of a dog or a horse it's probably more difficult, but Aristotle would say that there is one work which all animals have—and this is the highest work of which they are capable—and that is the generation of offspring. The highest moment in the life of a horse and of a dog and of any other being is when he perpetuates the species. And this is of course also very important for man, but for man it is not the highest.

Mr. Butterworth: If I'm not mistaken, though, he doesn't state how certain species of the animals relate one to another; in other words, why various animals exist and what the relation is—

LS: Yes, but the question is—I mean, let me put it this way. The extreme notion of teleology is of course a proof that there must be carnivorous animals, herbivorous, poisonous snakes, and what have you, this species and subspecies, and so on. But this Aristotle never—I mean, Aristotle speaks of that, for example, in the first book of the *Politics*.[xxxiii] But his serious teleology is a strictly internal one. I mean, rattlesnakes are not for any other purpose except to be and to produce other snakes.

Student: Can he consistently keep away from considering what their final purpose is in relation to the rest of the species?

LS: I mean, if there is such a universal teleology, there would be only one answer: that the being for the sake of which the universe can be said to be truly alive and without which it would be dead, even if all other animals were around, is a man.

Student: [. . .]

LS: Yes, but man, he would say. Man. Of course Freud and so many others would say, well, that's human pride. We are so proud. But the answer is very obvious: the dumb animals can't even be proud. Our very pride is the proof of our excellence. Pride, admitting that it is a bad thing, is nevertheless something of which only man, [of the earthly beings], is capable[50]. By the way, as for the definition of man or the definition of happiness, the Greeks called the animals[51] [other than] man the speechless ones, *ta aloga*. Come to think of it, you still speak of the "dumb animals." Well, what does it mean to be dumb except to be speechless? And this throws light on man. Man is the animal which is not dumb but which possesses speech, and that is what Aristotle says. [Only] Aristotle[52] is not so behavioralist that he says man is the only animal which produces verbal symbols. You must

[xxxii] As noted by the transcriber.
[xxxiii] See Aristotle, *Politics* 1256a.

have heard that. Because he would say: What makes it possible for man to have verbal symbols? And then you would come back to such a thing called reason. You must have some concept of house which covers all houses and not only [LS makes cave man sounds],[xxxiv] and that's reason. I mean, I have read some of the criticisms of the Aristotelian definition. They abound in modern times, at least beginning with Rousseau, and they simply don't hold water. The Aristotelian is the best which has hitherto been propounded. I mean, if Aristotle had said all men are reasonable, he would have been the greatest fool that ever was, because we know that most men are not reasonable. But Aristotle never meant that, because an unreasonable man is unreasonable in a different way than a dog or cat is unreasonable, because a cat cannot but be irrational, or a dog. However irrational a human being may be, this is always a kind of use of the reason which he has. Yes?

Student: [Suggests that there must be some limit to the notion of man as a political animal.][xxxv]

LS: Not to his speaking of political animal. I mean, man cannot live well quite alone. In order to be self-sufficient, man must also suffice for some others. But he says for *some*: if you would draw the line too large, then no man can be self-sufficient. He takes this up later on. To what extent do we depend on our happiness for the happiness of great-grandchildren? Because that would be very awkward; we would turn in our graves all the time and this would be a very bad situation for our happiness.

Student: [. . .]

LS: Yes, but also in a different way. Then it would mean that a descendant of a miserable ancestor can never be really happy. It would also be difficult. Now we [will] come to that chapter; it is of no use to discuss it without having the text.

Student: Before, you pointed out that Aristotle and Kant agree in saying that one cannot deduce ethical matters from nonethical . . .

LS: Yes, I said this already last time, but I said that Aristotle, within the *Ethics*—I mean, I made a distinction now which I had made already last time. Aristotle is, as ethical teacher, in the first place like the carpenter: practical, not scientific. But to some extent he is also like the geometrician. You understand the difference between the carpenter and the geometrician. *Qua* carpenter, he takes the position of Kant, but *qua* geometrician he differs from Kant. Kant cannot be a geometrician. Aristotle can be both. Is this now a bit clearer? [53]I didn't deny the difference, but Aristotle has in an amazing way also seen the great point of Kant, although it was not for him the only point, and the reason is very simple. Well, I don't know what you know of Kant, but everyone knows that Kant wrote a *Critique of Pure Reason*, which is meant to be a critique of all theoretical or speculative metaphysics. So theoretical philosophy is exploded, and what you retain is only modern science, let us say, Newtonian science, and that is of course below moral philosophy. I mean, can one

[xxxiv] The transcriber notes that Strauss "makes sounds to simulate a sort of cave man pointing out individual houses, followed by a few inaudible words."
[xxxv] As noted by the transcriber.

not—I don't have to prove that to you. Good. Because it is very important, but in a way also meaningless. And therefore, since there is no theoretical life possible in Kant's point of view, the moral life is the life, is *the* life of man, and therefore theoretical philosophy itself must be integrated into a moral context, not into a theoretical context. Aristotle of course integrates moral philosophy ultimately into a theoretical context.

Now the Kantian solution did not satisfy everybody, and one can say that the great successors of Kant, especially Hegel, felt that Kant had only discovered a new dimension of theory, a new kind of theory, namely, that pure reason, theoretical or practical, which Kant laid bare in his peculiar way: this is the thing in itself. That is roughly what Hegel says. You know, Kant's formula was the thing in itself, i.e., the object of theoretical metaphysics, is not knowable and is accessible to us only via the moral conscience, and only for practical purposes, for moral purposes. And Hegel accepted, in a way, Kant and said, "Yes, but Kant, didn't you see that you discovered in what[54] [you] called the transcendental consciousness, *this* is the true subject of theoretical metaphysics?" But still, there is an important similarity between what Kant does and what Aristotle does, but no identity. And I also didn't speak of an identity; only in one key point, that Aristotle to a very large extent argues on the basis of this simple reasoning. A decent man is a man for whom the question, "Why should I be decent?" doesn't make sense. For Aristotle the question does make sense in the last resort. For Kant it does not. That's the difference. But for large stretches of the *Ethics* he agrees with Kant.

Student: Did Hegel in any sense maintain the correspondence theory of the truth, which both Kant and Aristotle did? I don't think so—

LS: Explicitly, probably not.

Same Student: Because this seems to be the one link between Aristotle and Kant, they both held this theory—

LS: Yes, yes, everyone held it. Everyone held it until certain events in modern times.

Same Student: And then it was exploded.

LS: Yes, in Hegel, one can say, in a way of course not, because if *the* truth is the totality then there is no, strictly speaking, correspondence but the comprehensiveness of the whole and the exhaustiveness of the dialectical way is the only guarantee of the truth.

Student: Now if someone were trying to—say, some figure X were trying to reinstate, even on a modified level, the Aristotelian–Thomistic position, wouldn't they have to reinstate the correspondence theory of truth which is pretty well exploded?

LS: Who says so? Who says so? I would deny it. I mean, what is called by this highfalutin' name is just the commonsense view of truth. Common sense, surely. If what I have in mind about, say, Mr. Anastaplo,[xxxvi] that is true only if it corresponds to what Mr. Anastaplo is,

[xxxvi] The transcriber notes that Mr. Anastaplo was present in the room.

does, and so on. That question cannot be settled, by the way. That is the great question of Descartes's doubt; all things after Descartes are based on that. They were all more or less sophisticated elaborations of Descartes.

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[1] Deleted "16th."
[2] Deleted "since."
[3] Deleted "in."
[4] Deleted "that's clear. In other words."
[5] Deleted "the."
[6] Deleted "even virtue."
[7] Deleted "that this."
[8] Deleted "how someone."
[9] Deleted "he."
[10] Deleted "other."
[11] Deleted "on."
[13] Deleted "self-subsisting being."
[14] Deleted "that."
[15] Deleted "shows."
[16] Deleted "and then they decide at the end—and."
[17] Deleted "now."
[18] Deleted "for."
[19] Deleted "Yes."
[20] Deleted "as."
[21] Moved "say."
[22] Deleted "no."
[23] Deleted "not."
[24] Deleted "he."
[25] Deleted "and."
[26] Deleted "is disgraceful that they."
[27] Moved "on."
[28] Deleted "his."
[29] Deleted "by him."
[30] Deleted "'s dog."
[31] Deleted "that."
[32] Deleted "on."
[33] Deleted "however."
[34] Deleted "and which."
[35] Deleted "whether."
[36] Deleted "he says."
[37] Deleted "that."
[38] Deleted "ask to."
[39] Deleted "see."
[40] Deleted "one."
[41] Moved "only."
[42] Deleted "his."
[43] Deleted "don't you think it would"
[44] Deleted "be."
[45] Deleted "would see"
[46] Deleted "recognizing such."
[47] Deleted "not."
[48] Deleted how."
[49] Deleted "he."
[50] Moved "of the earthly beings."
[51] Deleted "not."
[52] Moved "only."

[53] Deleted “So there is surely”
[54] Deleted “Kant.”

Session 3: April 9, 1963
Happiness and fortune; virtue, the arts, and reason
(Book 2.9-13)

Leo Strauss: [In progress] —very interesting and good paper.[i] Those of you who do not know Mr. Reinken should know that he is by training a mathematician. But in contradistinction to other mathematicians who have turned to political science or political theory, he is not a mathematician when he deals with political theory, as you surely have seen. He is very much concerned with theology, as I happen to know, although I'm not sure whether that theology is not slightly heretical. This I do not know but I fear. Now the remark about Henry James and Mickey Spillane[ii] I thought was very good, although I can test the truth more from the Mickey Spillane side, unfortunately, because I have read more of him than of Henry James. That is deplorable but true. Now when you began in a very emphatically theological tone you were of course perfectly right, because naturally Aristotle doesn't discuss biblical teachings. He couldn't. But at the bottom of the Greek religion there is an analogon to the biblical prophets, and this you have seen very well. But you said, at a certain point, Aristotle excludes from consideration here divine happiness, and you referred to a specific passage.

Mr. Reinken: The opening of chapter 9.

LS: Yes, now let us see. What do you call chapter 9? Oh, I know what you mean now: whether happiness is teachable or whether it comes—yes, but that is not divine happiness;[1] man's happiness must not be understood as god-sent. That's a different question. No, then you expressed yourself not quite clearly. Good. This was very fine, what you remarked—I hadn't thought about it, but surely that deserves consideration that the two key examples in the discussion are Priam and Croeseus, two barbarians. That is surely worth considering. You linked this up with a statement of the *Politics*, which Aristotle doesn't give exactly in his own name but as a general Greek statement, that the barbarians are by nature slaves. And this creates all kinds of interesting possibilities which I will not now take up. But you said [that] in his teaching regarding the slaves, Aristotle says the barbarians must be brave in order not to be slaves. That is at least how I understood you, and I wondered what your evidence for that is.

Mr. Reinken: No, I spoke of their having to be externally free.

LS: Oh. Well, what did you say then, the whole statement?

[i] Strauss responds to Mr. Reinken's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.
[ii] Mickey Spillane (1918–2006), American crime novelist.

Mr. Reinken: Barbarians are only free if outwardly free, but Hellenes are not slaves just by circumstance.

LS: I see now. That's this statement in the third book of the *Politics*,[iii] but I would draw the opposite conclusion. I would say that here if Priam is called a man who was fundamentally happy in spite of his terrible misfortunes at the end of his life, then it proves that barbarians are not necessarily natural slaves. And that is of course what he means in the *Politics* too, where he only explains his position by a provisional adaptation to a common Greek view,[2] a common Greek opinion which he does not seriously accept. All right. And then when you spoke of the problem of natural slaves, you made a dig at someone, I fear at someone present here, and I thought maybe at Mr. Boyan. Or am I totally mistaken? Because Mr. Boyan [is] the representative of the most extreme liberalism in this class, as far as I know; at least he is the only one in this room. But this is really of no importance. I did not quite follow your remarks about your being advocate of the devil. This was a somewhat involved statement. Perhaps it should be involved [. . .] Yes, I'm afraid I'm not so unfamiliar with these matters not to make sense of what you meant, but it was a bit involved, nevertheless. And the only criticism I could make of your paper is that you made a wholly "unrealistic" assumption in your paper, namely, that everyone sitting here has read the assignment carefully. Those who did not, and I'm sure there were some, could not possibly follow your statement. But you can rightly say that's their fault, not yours. Good. I thank you again, Mr. Reinken.

This question to which we have to turn now, the question which we have to take up today, was taken up implicitly and probably also unconsciously last time by Rabbi Weiss when he tried to state an objection to Aristotle's definition of happiness.[iv] Now let me state this difficulty[3] as it became clear to me afterward. Now for Aristotle the happy life is the life according to *logos*, to reason, and it makes sense to say that man is distinguished from all other animals by his *logos*. And from this point of view Aristotle's definition is unimpeachable. But is this sufficient? The *logos* may be the characteristic of man, but this doesn't mean that it is the highest in man. This is, I believe, what he meant. Now what is that highest? Aristotle himself admits that there is something higher than reason or *logos* or *ratio*, and he calls that *nous*, *intellectus*, the understanding as distinguished from reason. Now could there not be an intellect, a mental perception, without *logos*, without reason, a mental perception which as it were shatters all *logos* and all *nomos* or law? Then from this point of view, the perfection of man would not consist in any activity, in any work, as Aristotle puts it, but in a certain suffering, in a certain way of being affected: *pathos* as distinguished from [. . .] in an experience of *the* principle, of the [. . .]. So from this point of view, the highest to which man can rise cannot be achieved by an ascent, by a methodic ascent from the primary seeing to the principles, but as it were [through] a sudden interruption, a sudden appearance of—a sudden presence or a sudden call: *nous* without *logos*. Now this, what I [am trying] to describe, is generally known by the name of mysticism, but in a wide sense where it also would include the biblical revelations, something which transcends the work of the *logos*. Now still, of course,[4] the *logos* comes

[iii] Aristotle, *Politics* 1285a8–20.

[iv] The transcriber notes: "The reference is to a series of questions and answers in the second meeting beginning on page 13, bottom, and continuing through page 16."

in [here]. God speaks. He puts his seal on speaking; for example, on the Ten Commandments. Here we have a "that"—Do not kill, Do not murder—without a reason, without a "why," a mere command. Or if it is a reason—for example, prohibition against murder because man is created in the image of God—[5]then the question arises: Is creation known, knowable, by human reason? Then if it is not, if it is a teaching of revelation and not of reason, then you have fundamentally the same situation: that you are up against something where *logos* as *logos*, reason, does not lead to. To this of course one can say, following the dominant Western tradition, [that] this may be so but this transcends philosophy as philosophy, and therefore Aristotle, as a philosopher, does not have to be concerned with it. And perhaps we leave it at that and we try to understand in what way Aristotle comes across this problem of what we call in [the] Latin tradition religion. There is no Greek word for that.

Now let me first remind you of the context of what we discussed last time. We saw Aristotle's scientific definition of happiness—of course, scientific in his sense, not in the sense of present-day science. And this scientific view, this result, is then brought into argument with the common view in the next section, 1098b9 to 1099b8. And here we see something which was not mentioned in the scientific definition, namely, the happy life must be pleasant, and therefore Aristotle asserts that the life according to reason as the doing of noble and just things is intrinsically pleasant, and the noble and just things are the things by nature pleasant. The whole problem seems to be solved, but then one difficulty comes out. We still need in addition external goods. In other words, the virtuous actions, the just and noble actions, are not sufficient. But if we need external goods we cannot exclude the possibility that the possession of these external goods is in itself also pleasant. So we might need pleasure in addition to the pleasure deriving from moral actions. Now at this point we take up 1099b6 to 8. That is where we begin today. Do you have that?

Mr. Reinken:
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).

LS: You see. So since happiness is a complex thing consisting of virtue, plus, say, we call it E, equipment—that's an expression which Aristotle uses later, equipment—since this is so, well, one may say: What's more important of the two? And the nice people of course say always "virtue." But there are also people who are not nice, and they say "the equipment." Give me first wealth and other conveniences and then I will very gladly be virtuous, and it's fairly simple to do that. But since Aristotle admits V plus E, there is a difficulty, and this he discusses in the sequel. Now let us read the immediate sequel.

Mr. Reinken:
It is this that gives rise to the question whether happiness 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. (1099b6-11)

LS: Yes, well, "by chance." So in other words, because this is so, because this is this complex phenomenon, perhaps happiness cannot be achieved by man himself. Perhaps it is a gift of the gods. Or is it a consequence of virtue or of some learning or training? But the key question, which Aristotle discusses from now on, [is]: Is man[6] [able] to procure for himself and by himself his happiness? Hitherto it was taken for granted that he can do that because it is an actualization of a natural possibility. Now let us go on here, where we left off.

Mr. Reinken:
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.

LS: You see the way in which Aristotle argues: simply taking ordinary conceptions. What is[7] [it that] deserves to be called divine? Of course, the best. *Of course*, the best. Everyone knows that, because the gods are better, higher than man. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
This subject however may perhaps more properly belong to another branch of study. 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: Let us stop here first. So in other words, the divine character of happiness must not be denied, and this is of course, one can say, an easy thing for a Greek, because in the word happiness, *eudaimonia*, *daimōn*, god, is a part of that. It obviously has a relation to the divine and to the gods, but this is clear. We will soon find a different reason which has nothing to do with the Greek language, but let us leave it at this for the time being. But even if[8] [happiness] is a consequence of human activities it might still not be intelligible as such because it might differ from these activities, being the prize for them. Now the prize is something different from the activity for which the prize is given. Happiness does not cease to be divine even if it is acquired by what man does, because there would still be an X added to it. Now let us go on, the next sentence.

Mr. Reinken:
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. (1099b11-20)

LS: Let us stop here. If happiness has its root in man, as Aristotle still asserts, most men can acquire it. If it is merely god-sent it would be a privilege of a few elect. If it is common, then it must have a root in human nature. But Aristotle implies here also one point: not all men can become virtuous, only all normal men. A natural fool, a moron, cannot become happy—a great problem from every point of view, religious or philosophic. But this is clear: not all men can become happy. Now let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:
Again, if it is better to be happy as a result of one's own exertions than by the gift of fortune—

LS: In other words, it would be not distinguishable from a gift of fortune if it could be traced to a merely arbitrary will of gods and did not have some natural conditions like virtue.[9] [If] only the virtuous will be happy, then it is not a matter of chance; but if some people, say, one in a million or one in a thousand [. . .] then it would not be distinguishable from a gift of chance. Mr. Boyan?

Mr. Boyan: Doesn't Aristotle also argue that not all men can be happy because not all men can be virtuous?

LS: That's in a way the same. I mean, we are speaking now of "can" and not of "who will be." Aristotle would say very few people are in fact virtuous, but that would not preclude the possibility that[10] [others] could be virtuous if they had made the necessary effort. And here he is speaking only of the "could be," of the possibility. And he says only few human beings are deprived of it, and they are the defective human beings, and this means in this stage not more than moronic or practically moronic people. This remains. Aristotle means a bit more, as we shall see later. Now go on, Mr. Reinken.

Mr. Reinken:
it is reasonable to suppose that this is how happiness is won; inasmuch as in the world of nature things have a natural tendency to be ordered in the best possible way, 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 of all things should be left to chance would be too contrary to the fitness of things.[v] (1099b20-25)

LS: Now Aristotle asserts that happiness must have its root in man, for by denying it one would make happiness the work of chance, and this would be preposterous. Happiness must have an orderly origin and must come into being in an orderly manner, by nature. And the reason is this: happiness is the most noble, and the most noble must be orderly, according to nature. The natural is orderly, not at random. That is the premise here.

Student: Of course it's difficult for us to accept this assumption. Why does the most noble necessarily have to be natural?

LS: Yes, sure. I mean, for us today at first glance it sounds like a wholly unwarranted optimism. Is that what most modern people would say? Sure, and this[11] is the lesson enforced by modern natural science. I mean, the orderliness of the process has nothing to do with having nobility. It's a mathematical orderliness, and not another one. Whether this mathematical orderliness can be taken for granted, why should the whole be so that you can speak about it best in mathematical terms? Is it not strange? That is the difficulty in itself, but this is taken for granted somehow, that mathematics has nothing to do with beauty

[v] Mr. Reinken follows Strauss's lead in reading "chance" for "fortune."

proper, with purpose. That is now taken for granted. The only question is whether it can be maintained if you take into consideration everything and do not limit yourselves to physics and chemistry. After all, it is necessary for a natural science, for a science dealing with all beings in time and space, as they say, [to consider] whether this must not take into consideration man as well. And the Aristotelian and Platonic science, [their] natural science, started from man and found in man the key to all subhuman things; and perhaps the account of the subhuman things was not in all respects as good as the account we have now. But the modern starting point, from the subhuman, surely fails when it comes to speak of man. I mean, that's the least one must consider before one throws out Aristotle.

Well, one also has to take into consideration above all the so-called problem of knowledge. What does knowledge mean as a consequence of [the] modern understanding of nature, and what did it mean according to the old understanding of nature? In the modern point of view, knowledge has an essentially constructive character. Now what are simple—well, the classic formula [from] Kant: the human understanding prescribes [to] nature its laws. So the scientific account is a human project, *the* human project, but still the *human* project. And the implication, of which Kant of course was fully aware, is [that] then you must make a distinction between nature in itself, the thing in itself, of which we know nothing, and the phenomenal world, which is the world which science, as it were, constructs. That's a grave difficulty. The whole account given in[12] [the] way of a construction is fundamentally hypothetical. It is fundamentally relative to man, just one being among infinitely many different beings in the whole, whereas for the older point of view there is a natural harmony between the human understanding and the whole and therefore the account is not hypothetical but true. I think someone brought up this question, Mr. Erickson, about the—how did you call it?—the old conception of truth? The correspondence theory of truth, that's it, that is the point, whether man is by nature open to the whole as it is, or whether man makes the whole, as it were, open to himself by his construct. This is from the very beginning, from Bacon on at least, the difficulty in modern thought. In other words, it is not good enough to say what Aristotle says about a certain flea stemming from dirt, you know, by putrefaction, spontaneous generation, whether this is true or not. That is a very narrow view. You have to take into consideration also the whole doctrine of man, and especially the whole doctrine of knowledge, and see whether modern science stands up so well as it seems to be when it is the question of whether there can be flea emerging without any generation from dung. Maybe Aristotle was wrong with that, but this is not the most important question. Yes?

Same Student: Couldn't you here, though, avoid that bitter issue by just saying that you take the happy man as the wholly developed man? Is not [. . .] better than an acorn turning into a fully-developed oak . . .

LS: Yes, but still, you see—but when you speak of the acorn you imply a teleology, that the acorn—

Same Student: A regularity of—

LS: Yes, but a special one going from the imperfect to the perfect. That's not the kind of regularity which is supposed in the Newtonian laws, a different one. But this is a very long question. We would have to study, at the very least, the second book of the *Physics*, where Aristotle makes clear the fundamental difference between mathematical necessity and the nonmathematical necessity which is teleological necessity.[vi] We would have to take this up. Surely we cannot go into the whole issue. I only wanted to make clear that the issue is not decided by the famous triumphs of modern natural science, because these triumphs were accompanied by terrible defeats in other fields of human understanding. And one would have to strike a balance, which is more important from an overall point of view, [and determine] whether it is not possible ultimately to integrate the modern discoveries, especially in physics, into a Platonic–Aristotelian scheme otherwise. These are very long questions, and we cannot do here more than to remind you of these open things which are not finished in any way by the fact that modern natural science has been victorious and the logical positivists believe they can give a rational account of modern natural science, because this account is not as rational as it looks. Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: In this passage that we're just reading, it seems to be that there is one very subtle and tacit premise: that the divine is equated to chance.

LS: Yes and no. I mean, there is one understanding of the divine in which one cannot recognize more than chance, which Aristotle [. . .]. But what men mean by the divine is of course not chance but the super-human, the most perfect, and that cannot be chance. The vulgar understanding of the divine is, if analyzed, nothing but chance . . . [vii] Yes, but for this reason, because—I mean the crude understanding. Then only the merely irregular in the extreme sense, the random: that is what they worship as the divine and that Aristotle rejects. Now let us go on first here, Mr. Reinken. I hope you keep always your finger at the point where we left off.

Mr. Reinken:
Light is also thrown on the question by our definition of happiness—

LS: Literally, he says what we are inquiring becomes clearer from the *logos*. One can say from the definition of happiness. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
which said that it is a certain kind of activity of the soul according to the virtue; whereas the remaining good things are either merely indispensable conditions of happiness, or are of the nature of auxiliary means, and useful instrumentally.[viii] (1099b25-29)

LS: Yes. More literally, that the others are by nature helpers and useful in an instrumental way—organically, according to the original meaning of organic: instrument. *Organon*

[vi] Aristotle, *Physics*, 200a15–200b9.
[vii] The transcriber notes here: "The question is pursued further, inaudibly, regarding usage of the word *tychē* in the passage being considered."
[viii] The phrase "according to virtue" is not in Rackham's translation, but it appears in his edition of the Greek text: *kat' aretēn*.

means instrument, tools. It has nothing to do with organismic in the original meaning. Now what Aristotle says, then, the conclusion agrees with the scientific statement about happiness, namely, that it is a natural perfection of a natural being. So in other words, there is no random thing. There is a clear connection with natural processes. Secondly, happiness has necessary conditions, and if it were merely a gift of chance then it wouldn't have necessary conditions. Now these were three conditions, let us remind[13] [ourselves] of them: good birth, good children, and beauty. Let us not forget that. So these tough points are also there. And other good things are by nature instrumental to happiness: friends, wealth, and political power. In other words, say, dogs and cats would not fulfill the conditions. If it were merely a matter of chance, dogs and cats—nay, lice and rats would be [as] useful helpers for one's happiness as friends and wealth can be, which is manifestly untrue. So happiness is bound to specific conditions, which it would not be if it were merely a gift of chance. Yes, go on.

Mr. Reinken:
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—

LS: Yes, political science is "of the political."[ix] That can be science; that can be art; that can be concern. You know, it's only the adjective; the noun is not given. Say, of politics. Leave it open. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
but the principal care of this science—or of this—is to produce a certain character in the citizens, namely to make them virtuous, and capable of performing noble actions.[x]

LS: Noble deeds. Yes, to make them good and doers of noble deeds. So here, what is the point? We are concerned with happiness, the highest human good. The highest human good appears to be the object of the highest human pursuit: politics. Now what does a politician in the highest sense do? He is trying to make men virtuous. He has a specific concern. All this proves that happiness is not a matter of chance; otherwise it could not be related to a regular human procedure, the procedure of the political man. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
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. (1099b29-1100a1)

LS: Yes, we must also understand this properly. If happiness were an unqualified, unconditioned gift of god or chance, of course a horse could be happy—why not?—as well as a man. The mere fact that happiness is bound to the condition that the human being is made happy shows that it is not a random affair. Yes. Now the sequel we don't have to read—well, we might still read it. Yes, the immediate sequel.

[ix] Strauss retranslates *tēs politikēs*.
[x] The phrase "or of this" does not appear in Rackham.

Mr. Reinken:
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.

LS: In other words, we do call certain beings happy although they are unable to be happy; but they are unable to be happy not simply, but only for the time being. A child cannot be happy, and of course we talk all the time of happy children, but this is a somewhat imprecise expression, Aristotle says. They are happy by promise. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
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 a man happy who meets with misfortunes like Priam's, and comes to a miserable end. (1100a2-9)

LS: So Aristotle has completely excluded in the preceding argument that happiness can be a gift of chance. And yet chance raises again its ugly head. In a way, happiness does depend on chance, on good luck or bad luck, as proven by the case of men of supposed great virtue, like Priam who had such a miserable end. Now in discussing this whole section we must never forget one notion to which Aristotle doesn't refer in his *Ethics* but in his *Metaphysics*, in the first book, 982b. When he speaks of understanding, of a life of understanding, he says—and after having shown that it is superior to any other human life:

"Hence also the possession of it might justly be regarded as beyond human power, for in many ways human nature is in bondage so that, according to Simonides, 'God alone can have this privilege' [namely, of a theoretical life—LS] and it is unfitting that man should not be content to seek the knowledge that is suited to him [i.e. not the highest knowledge—LS]. If then there is something in what the poets say, and envy is natural to the divine it would probably occur in this case above all, and all who excel in this knowledge would be unfortunate [namely, because the gods would be envious of this happy man—LS]. But the divine cannot be envious (nay, according to the proverb, 'poets tell many a lie'), nor should any other science be thought more honorable than one of this sort."[xi]

And so on. So this—that's the only reference of Aristotle to this, *Metaphysics* 982b28, following. The rarity of the Aristotelian reference to this does not prove its irrelevance; and secondly, that Aristotle says the poets say that must not deceive you about the fact that these were not only the poets who said that, who could of course easily be dismissed. Plato does the same thing when he attacks the popular notions in the *Republic*: the poets, the poets! But he makes clear only occasionally that the poets of course get these notions from much more authoritative people, from the official cult of Athens and other places. So this notion that happiness is a treacherous thing because of the gods' envy is of course somehow here discussed.

[xi] Strauss reads from volume 8 of *The Works of Aristotle*, trans. W. D. Ross (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1908). He substitutes throughout "envy" and "the divine" for Ross's "jealousy" and "the divine power."

Now let us turn to the sequel. I mean, we cannot read all [of] that. I [will] try to give a brief survey of the immediate sequel. Now this fact, that happiness is a treacherous thing, that the gods are envious of happy men, is underlying the view that one should not praise anyone [as] happy as long as he lives, because this would only increase the envy. So keep quiet if you are happy. Of course, this is a special saying of Solon in the story of Herodotus.[xii] One cannot praise oneself as happy as long as one lives. That would be the greatest folly, because it would be provocative; nor can one praise as happy anyone else except after they are dead or when they die [or are] at the point of dying. But this cannot be said by people like Aristotle, as he makes clear, by people who say that happiness is some being-at-work, some activity, and the premise is that the dead cannot do anything. Aristotle and his like must say of a man who is engaged in such work—the right work of man, for a reasonable length of time—they must say of such a man that he is happy, even if the end is terrible.

But someone could say: Well, Priam was presumably a perfectly virtuous man, and this is, after all, terrible. You cannot possibly call Priam, after the capture of Troy—or after the death of Hector, at any rate—a happy man. Then let us call a man happy or praise him as happy who is wholly outside of any misfortunes. Then Aristotle says: then of course we cannot praise anyone as happy—anyone—because as long as we live we are exposed to fate. But then you cannot praise as happy the dead either—he turns this around—for the following reason: either they have no activity whatsoever, [and] then they cannot be happy; but even granting that the dead[14] are somehow affected by what happens to the living to whom they are attached, their descendants, their friends, and so on—now if you say, "But the dead don't have any sense perception," as Aristotle is willing to admit, and then he says this doesn't dispose of the difficulty, because when we speak of the happiness of the living we also consider facts of which the living in question have no awareness. Take a simple case. There is a happy couple, [they] have wonderful children, and everyone praises them as happy because of these children. These children are, let us say, now in Central America, perhaps with the Peace Corps or in any other function, and then they are killed. The parents hear of it only years later. In the moment in which these children are killed, the parents are objectively unhappy although they don't know it. So our happiness or unhappiness does not depend on our knowing, and this is important. Well, I think you can all understand it: they live in a fool's paradise; they don't know that the major support of their happiness has disappeared. Now what is the context in which he makes this point? So we must consider what happens to the friends of the dead after their death. We must consider that, and the dead are affected by it, and therefore we must consider what happens after the death. The overall context: we cannot praise as happy the dead, even the dead, because even the dead are still exposed to fortune. Is this point clear? I mean, the argument is alien to our ordinary way of thinking, but we should understand him. What is the difficulty?

Mr. Reinken: It's really incomprehensible to me.

LS: Really? Well, let us perhaps finish this part and then it may become clear, because Aristotle will go somewhat deeper into the analysis. So one point is clear. Now another consideration: whatever might have to be said about the happy man, he cannot be

[xii] Herodotus, *The Histories*, 1.32.

understood as changing from happiness to unhappiness or back all the time. I mean, being happy cannot be something like a chameleon which changes its colors every moment. Happiness is something lasting. This is a statement of the problem. So happiness must be lasting in spite of the fact that there is some dependence of happiness on chance. That's the overall problem. Now in 1100b11 he gives the solution to the problem. We can only read the chief passages. 1100b22—let us begin there.

Mr. Reinken:
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 our bliss—

LS: Well, the thought is very simple. I mean, there are minor misfortunes which would not destroy happiness, and one must make this commonsensical distinction. There are major blows. Yes, go on.

Mr. Reinken:
both by the pain they cause and by the hindrance they offer to many activities. Yet nevertheless even in adversity nobility shines through, when a man endures repeated and severe misfortune with patience, not owing to insensibility but from generosity and greatness of soul. And if, as we said, a man's life is determined by his activities, no supremely happy man can ever become miserable. For he will never do hateful or base actions—

LS: Priam, in other words. Think always of him. He can never become miserable.

Mr. Reinken:
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 forces at his disposal, and a good shoemaker make the finest shoe possible out of the leather supplied him, and so on with all the other crafts and professions. (1100b22-1101a6)

LS: Let us stop here for one moment. You see, again Aristotle reaches a solution by looking at the arts. Shoemaker and general are taken as arts. They are the model. Good and bad luck are as it were the matter for the art of the virtuous man, just as the shoemaker here is given poor leather. Now the good shoemaker will of course excel in making a tolerably good shoe from very poor material. The shoe is by far inferior to the one made by a not-so-good shoemaker from excellent material, but the art, the understanding of what he has to do, is of course much greater. So the man like Priam, who behaves nobly in this great misfortune, this virtue is higher in a way than that of a man who lives always in misery and has different material to work on. And of course the question is the danger of good luck: you become inflated and all this kind of thing. There is also such a danger, and the other

danger is to be so cowed down and made so paralytic, as it were, as Aristotle will say later. Which is the greatest one?

Student: If happiness is an activity and not just an art, then if the material is too bad, the shoemaker can't make the shoe and he's going to be quite likely unhappy. That is, he's not made happy just from having a supreme art; he's happy from being able to make shoes—

LS: All right. Yes, but Aristotle would say: Look, let us assume there is no leather and it is absolutely necessary, given the condition of the ground, that there should be some protection for the feet. Well, then of course wooden shoes are a perfectly legitimate thing, as you know if you have been to Holland, Michigan and not to Holland itself, where you see them. But then God knows what he would do with grass, with leaves.

Same Student: Supposing he's hiding in prison—

LS: Sure. This is not still settled, true. But it is only made clear that a considerable amount of misfortune does not take away the possibility of virtue.

Same Student: But doesn't he kind of make it true just by definition, by saying that the only man he counts miserable is the man who does base things? The man who is unable to act at all he—

LS: Yes, that is what he tries to avoid. This was the famous Stoic solution to the problem, not Plato's and Aristotle's. The formula is happiness equal to V, to virtue, and therefore if you are in a concentration camp and exposed to the most malicious S.S. man and so on, then you can be perfectly happy. Stoic solution. This is of course wholly unreasonable, and Aristotle, in his great practical wisdom, rejects that.

Same Student: But except on that Stoic basis—on Aristotle's own basis then a man with great strokes of bad luck can be not just not happy but miserable, by any sensible meaning of the word miserable.

LS: Yes, well, Aristotle will find a much more commonsensical and convincing answer. We come to that. Let us go on, Mr. Reinken, where we left off.

Mr. Reinken:
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— (1101a6-8)

LS: No, not supremely. He will not be blessed, blissful.[xiii] Yes. Well, as he would say, it is a considerably diminished happiness, but he is still more to be admired than a man who lives affluently as a master of a criminal racket.

[xiii] Strauss indicates there is no adverb modifying "blessed" or *makarios*.

Student: Then this seems to attack his definition of happiness as activity, because we admire a man who is unable to act at all, even unable to think if he has been brainwashed, if he has virtue—

LS: No. What Aristotle has in mind is of course that he will show in his posture, say, towards his fellow prisoners, toward his torturers, that will show still his virtue. Let us first finish that; a few more lines.

Mr. Reinken:
Nor yet assuredly will he be variable and liable to change—

LS: Multicolored. Changing his colors all the time. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
for he will not be dislodged from his happiness easily—

LS: *Easily*. There is a point. You see how he uses this unscientific, but by no means meaningless, term. Good. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
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 high distinctions and achievements.

May not we then confidently pronounce 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?[xiv] Or must we add 'and who is destined to live thus and die as befits his life'? Certainly the future is obscure to us, while happiness, we claim, is an end and something in every way final. If so, we shall call happy those among living men in whom these conditions are, and are to be, fulfilled—but happy *men*. (1101a8-22)

LS: Yes, happy as human beings. In other words, perfect happiness, perfect immunity to chance, to misfortune, cannot be expected. Now before we go on I would like to tell you a few points which I found in the medieval commentaries. As a rule, I read only medieval commentators because they are serious men, philosophers, whereas the modern commentators are as a rule classical scholars by definition, not philosophers. And in especially the most recent commentary, which I bought for an enormous price, they discussed wholly uninteresting questions: When did Aristotle write that? When he had not yet severed the umbilical cord connecting him with Plato? Of course questions which can never be answered, and yet the arguments are pitiable, because if Aristotle makes a very sweeping remark, unqualified, which reminds of certain passages in Plato,[15] [the commentator] says he's still with Plato; as if Aristotle did not have the right from time to time, when he mentions a subject in passing,[16] not to leave it at the loose statement. This is

[xiv] The transcriber notes that here Mr. Reinken reads from the W. D. Ross translation.

disgraceful. But[17] Thomas Aquinas, for example,[18] makes this point which is very interesting: What about insanity? And here he gives the judgment which I'm sure is in the spirit of Aristotle: insanity is to be judged like death.[xv] That is to say, [just] as little as you can say a man became miserable by dying [can] you say he became miserable by [becoming insane]. From the point of view of the survivors you can say that, but it has nothing to do with his[xvi] own happiness. In another passage, on the basis of a probably wrong translation which was available to Thomas—but it is nevertheless interesting, because if someone understands Aristotle he will, even if he has a wrong translation, bring out a thought which is Aristotelian in kind, in style, you know, even if Aristotle didn't state it. And he says (well, Aristotle does not say) the happy man will never fall into the misfortunes of Priam (which Aristotle does not say) because he will prevent them by his prudence. In other words, he would have made peace. Much earlier he would have thrown out this abomination, Paris, and said: "You Greeks can do with him what you like, this good-for-nothing." So he was not truly prudent. But one point is of course true, and I'm sure that corresponds with the sobriety of Aristotle. He would say many misfortunes which we pity could have been prevented if people had been sufficiently cautious and prudent. We should not be so sluggish and disregard this simple homely verity. Averroes, the great Islamic commentator, refers very interestingly in his discussion to Job, you know, which would seem to be *the* refutation of Aristotle.[xvii] But what does Aristotle say? Job behaved nobly in his misfortunes and therefore remained happy in spite of the famous losses of his fortune and his children which occurred. I believe it is not a biblical interpretation, but it shows how an Aristotelian can find his way in the biblical data. Yes. Mr. Kirwan?

Mr. Kirwan: I don't understand the point about Thomas's insanity.

LS: Thomas says insanity which just hits a man and[19] [puts an end to] any virtuous actions has to be judged like death. This man is no longer—just as a man cannot be said to have lost his happiness or virtue by his death, you cannot say that a man has lost his happiness or virtue by insanity. That's the simple end of his life as a human being capable of happiness or virtue.

Mr. Boyan: This does raise a whole series of questions, though.

LS: Yes, sure. Modern novelists wouldn't like it, by which I do not mean to say that you plan to be a novelist, Mr. Boyan.

Mr. Boyan: It raises some difficult questions about the whole approach. What is insanity? What degrees at which can we say that a man has certain psychological misfortunes and so on, and which he cannot—

LS: What do you mean by a psychological misfortune? What do you mean by that, psychological misfortune?

[xv] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, §197.
[xvi] That is, the deceased.
[xvii] A few lines later the transcriber notes: "Aristotle," four lines above, is probably a slip of the tongue for "Averroes."

Mr. Boyan: Okay. Let's take the extreme case of a man who has paranoia—modern term—

LS: In other words, it is technical insanity. I mean, something which is not due to the fact, for example, that he has unreasonable expectations which were disappointed, and then he becomes, how shall I say, irrational. Because Aristotle would, and Thomas of course would also say these were unreasonable expectations. To that extent, it is simply a kind of natural punishment for his original folly. That you do not mean. You mean something that just hits a man without any fault or folly of this kind. Yes. That's insanity. Yes, I mean, in other words, Thomas does not discuss the question whether the insanity is of this kind that he must be locked up with a straitjacket or whether he can still run around for some time. This is an unnecessary subtlety, is it not? From this point of view he is a pitiable human being who cannot be held responsible anymore, whether it is one of these long-range diseases, or whether he has to be locked up immediately.

Mr. Boyan: Yes, this isn't like total irresponsibility. Then there are all these questions of degree which I'd like to put into the discussion.

LS: Yes, that stems from the whole question of freedom, human freedom, which will be discussed later by Aristotle. But here I think Thomas is perfectly justified in leaving it at the general statement about insanity without going into the question that there are borderline cases where you can say he's rather insane but not quite insane, this kind of thing. Then you can take whichever way you choose. That is not a fundamentally interesting question, because the main point is clear. To the extent to which it is insanity he has given—

Mr. Boyan: Unless you believe the statistics that come out now and then.

LS: Which statistics? You must tell us.

Mr. Boyan: I think there was one in the *New York Times* before it went out of business and came back.

LS: Maybe that was the reason for the strike.[xviii]

Mr. Boyan: I believe a study done in New York or some area (I've forgotten the exact area), seven out of ten people had been under treatment for some time for various neurotic—

LS: Yes, then one would have to go into the question—many people undergo treatment because they have nothing better to do, you know, and all this kind of thing. Or perhaps—

Mr. Boyan: No, these were all poor people.

[xviii] A typographers' strike shut down New York City's daily newspapers for 114 days in 1962–63.

LS: Even poor people may do it because they have been told there are certain insurances which pay for that. That's luck. I mean, I know nothing of statistics, but this is not sufficient, the mere bald data; we have to go over it with a fine comb. It's very simple. If it should be true that the incidence of insanity is much greater today in the big cities, highly industrial cities, then one really would have to raise the question whether the life people lead under this condition is not so abnormal. Sure. Aristotle would be the first. He said Babylon is no longer a *polis*, and Babylon was not as big as New York.[xix]

Student: What is the problem that you raised in saying that Aquinas maybe had a misreading of the text here?

LS: Oh that's trivial, because Aristotle doesn't say that the happy man, the blessed man, will never fall into the misfortune of Priam. Moerbeke mistranslates that, William of Moerbeke.[xx]

Same Student: No, but I mean, is that true though, that Aristotle doesn't say it and that Aquinas . . .

LS: But I have never studied William of Moerbeke; because it might be true that he had a text, the Greek text, which was different, because Moerbeke has ordinary competence in these matters. I simply don't know what the chances are that he would simply mistranslate. I do not know. Then he must have had a different text, and then maybe Aristotle did say it, and then it would be still simpler for Thomas Aquinas. But I believe he did not say it, and yet Thomas went into it and tried to see how to interpret this strange sentence from the Aristotelian point of view. And that he did. Now go on where we left off, 1101a22 to 24.

Mr. Reinken:
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.[xxi] (1101a22-24)

LS: Yes, let us stop here. Aristotle states here why one cannot neglect the fate of the descendants and the friends after the death of the happy man.[20] First, neglect of that would be loveless, literally translated. Loveless, feelingless. And second, neglect would go against the opinions, against what people generally believe. People generally believe that the dead are affected by what happens to their nearest and dearest after their death. Good. Now to anticipate: Aristotle will come to the conclusion that the dead have, from every point of view, hardly any awareness of what happens after their death, and therefore we can dismiss it. But what does his mean? Is he not then loveless—he, Aristotle himself, by in fact dismissing that possibility?

Student: That seems to go against the point that you made about objective happiness. Whether the dead are aware of it or not, they can be said to be unlucky—

[xix] Aristotle, *Politics*, 1276a27–29.
[xx] William of Moerbeke, thirteenth-century translator of Greek texts.
[xxi] Mr. Reinken returns to Rackham's translation.

LS: Yes, but if they simply are not, then there can also be no objective happiness or unhappiness for them.

Same Student: We still would call them unlucky. There is the same evidence for saying that they are unlucky as for saying that this person who didn't know his children were dead—

LS: No, but you see even objective happiness, as I called it for convenience's sake, presupposes that he *is*.

Same Student: I'm denying that. I'm saying that the way we use this—we call people unlucky, and I'm saying it neither presupposes that they're aware that they're unhappy nor does it presuppose that they exist.

LS: No, if they do not exist then you cannot possibly—I mean, a nonexistent being, yes, but then we are inexact, and I think Aristotle—[21]now, say the Hohenzollern family or the Hapsburg family were once very famous, and all kinds of things happened to their descendants. There may be some who have to earn their livings as waiters, as far as I know, and so on, or they have to marry commoners. And so this kind of thing happens. Now would you say that, say, Frederick the Great's happiness is in any way affected by the fact that his descendant has married some oilman in Texas? Well, you could say an oilman in Texas is something very good. It's almost as good as an old sovereign.

Same Student: You dribbled it[xxii] off by mentioning his remote descendants. Let's take his immediate descendants. He's just as unaware of his immediate descendants.

LS: No, but the point is this: but he still *is*.

Same Student: No, he's dead, but his immediate descendants—

LS: Yes, but it depends very much—Aristotle denies that he is—please, let us wait a moment. Do me the favor. I can make it clearer later on. Now I wanted to discuss only one question. Now let us assume that Aristotle comes to the conclusion: The fate of the descendants is of practically no importance for the happiness of the dead man. Then Aristotle is loveless according to his own teaching. Now in Greek, love, the term we use, *aphilon*, is the same as the word for friendship, *philia*. We have an Aristotelian reply to that. What about love or friendship? That is a very high consideration, but the fact is there are various kinds of friendships. Mr. Anastaplo, you smell it. Aristotle had spoken about friendship before and what a friendship, his friendship with Plato, and what did he say about that?

Mr. Anastaplo: It takes second place to the love of truth.

[xxii] In the transcript: "You dribbled (?) it."

LS: Ah ha. So in other words, if our attachment to human beings is incompatible with the truth, then it must give way to that and cannot be called, strictly speaking, lovelessness. That is the point I thought we should bring out. Now let us read the sequel in 1101a31 to 34. That is the conclusion.

Mr. Reinken:
Also it makes a great difference whether those who are connected with any occurrence 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. (1101a31-34)

LS: Yes, let us stop here. So [there are] the terrible things which are merely told in the prologue, let us say, of a tragedy, and then there are terrible things which take place before our eyes on the scene. Now the former, the things merely told in the prologue, correspond to the terrible things happening to the dead, and the others which take place on the scene before our eyes correspond to the terrible things happening to them while they were still alive. The happy dead do not become miserable through the misery of their descendants, and vice versa, because it touches them. I mean, Aristotle makes here a concession to the popular views: it touches them barely. They are, as it were, in a state of dormancy where you barely hear anything. In this context Aristotle uses a pious Greek word for the dead, which he uses perhaps once more elsewhere,[xxiii] but in the *Ethics* only here: *kekmēkotas*, which we would translate "the departed," or something which indicates the origin of the whole problem. Now this word comes from a Greek word meaning to be tired, to get tired, to get fatigued; in other words, a state of diminished capacity to hear, to perceive things. So the dead, the sick—it may also mean sick. Now we all know when men are very sick they are unable to be concerned with the fate of their nearest and dearest. In other words, a state of dormancy. So it would not reach them, or if it [did] reach them, [it would do so] in a very diminished state so it can barely affect them. This is surely a concession to popular notions, that he presents it this way. So in brief, we may forget about this grave problem of the fate of the descendants as far as the happiness of the man in question is concerned. Mr. Boyan?

Mr. Boyan: Are we to say then that we'll be commonsensical about it and interpret this discussion about the dead metaphorically, in terms of the dormancy of certain alive people?

LS: That is not the point he has in mind. Aristotle has somehow to face the issue as understood on the basis of common Greek beliefs, which he does not simply dismiss but with which he has somehow to live and to make concessions to that.

Mr. Boyan: [. . .]

LS: Yes, well that is another—Aristotle's doctrine of the mind. But surely in this sense I don't believe that Aristotle would have thought that the dead can have any memory of things going on on earth. This kind of memory he surely did not mean.

[xxiii] Perhaps Strauss is referring to the contested treatise *On the Universe*, where the word appears at 400b22.

Student: The curious thing is why he would discuss this issue at all, why he would give this so much discussion. Why does he find that necessary? If Aristotle's own views may not be in accordance with popular notions, why does he just not omit the issue entirely?

LS: Well, a very simple answer: he did not live in a liberal society. In other words, really this simple thing which is so grossly underestimated: there was no liberal society before the modern era. There were easygoing societies; an easygoing society is a society which does not enforce the laws regarding beliefs. That existed. Athens was to some extent such a society. To some extent: don't forget Socrates. But there was no legal protection. And Aristotle had to flee Athens, and he said—that[22] also [involved] political reasons connected with Alexander the Great—but the official charge was again impiety, and Aristotle is said to have said he fled Athens[23] lest Athens sin again against philosophers.[xxiv] So this existed. But more specifically, the men addressed are gentlemen. Now what is a gentleman? A gentleman is in a general way an educated man. He has read the poets, and he enjoys reading the poets, listening to the plays and songs, and so on. But one gentleman we know in a way best, thanks to Thucydides, is Nicias, and Nicias was a very pious man in the sense of ordinary Athenian beliefs. So the gentleman may very well be a man who will take these things seriously, and Aristotle has to argue that out.

Same Student: I guess what I really wanted to know is why this is relevant[xxv] here. What's the connection of this—

LS: I mean, to state it stupidly but simply: because *eudaimonia*, happiness, reminds [us] of the whole question of the gods. Everyone is reminded by it. But there is a deeper reason: this was really an accident of the Greek language. This will become clear from the sequel. By the way, I would like to know the time, because so many people left.

Mr. Reinken: Five minutes after five.

LS: Oh, only as early as that, so we have plenty of time. Good. One must never take one's bearings by public opinion. So Aristotle has not yet settled the issue. It comes up in the sequel. The question which he discusses now can be stated as follows: is there not, after all, something in happiness which goes beyond what man can bring about by the use of his own power? This part of the religious assertion is still there, and we will see that is not denied by Aristotle. Is there not something in happiness which is merely given and not acquired, god-given, as the common expression is? Now this he discusses in this otherwise strange chapter, namely, beginning 1101b10, chapter 12 in both countings, and the formula is this—let us read the first sentence.

Mr. Reinken:
These questions being settled, let us consider whether happiness is one of the things we praise or rather one of those that we honor; for it is at all events clear that it is not a mere potentiality. (1101b10-12)

[xxiv] Cf. Aelian, *Varia historia*, book 3, chapter 36.
[xxv] In the transcript: relevant (?)."

LS: "A mere faculty," ability. Well, now let us see what he means by that. This distinction is now crucial for this chapter, between the praiseworthy things and the things worthy of honor—but honor in a full sense, in the sense in which you honor the gods. Let us say "reverence," to make it quite clear. Does happiness belong to the praiseworthy things, or the things which deserve reverence? Well, we all know. We have a very good word available from the biblical tradition, but not only from there, because this is something which people know everywhere: blessing. Is not happiness a blessing? And if it is a blessing then it is not something for which men can be wholly responsible. A grace: you will see that this is not a far-fetched thing here. Yes?

Student: Could it be that the things that we praise can be understood more easily than the things that we honor?

LS: Surely, because they are more within the realm of power, [the] realm of man. Yes, sure. When he says not an ability or, how do you say, potentiality, he means by this such things. It appears from a parallel passage in the *Magna Moralia* like rule, wealth, strength, beauty, which as such are neither praiseworthy in the strict sense nor worthy of reverence, but somehow good without the [. . .]. In the case of wealth, you all see it: a reasonable amount of wealth is good, but no serious man praises another man because he is wealthy. We can say he is a lucky fellow, but we do not praise him. We still less will bow down, revere him, unless he is a flatterer of a low character.[xxvi] Good. Now let us go on from here.

Mr. Reinken:
Now it appears 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 the results they produce; and we praise the men who are strong of body, swift of foot and the like on account of their possessing certain natural qualities, and standing in a certain relation to something good and excellent. (1101b12-18)

LS: We can roughly say praise always refers to something to which the praised quality is related. It is good *for* something. That is true of all objects of praise. Even if we say only with a view to the deeds following from it, we praise the courageous man with a view to the courageous deeds, with a view to something else. Praise is always with a view to something else, not of what is simply for its own sake. That would do only [for] the things which we revere, where we are not concerned with its consequence, utility, etc. Now we may skip the sequel and turn to line 25, where he says no one praises happiness as he praises what is just.

Mr. Reinken:
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.

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

[xxvi] Aristotle, *Magna Moralia* 1212a27–1212b8.

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. (1101b25-31)

LS: Yes. Now that is an extremely important statement pointing toward the detailed discussion of pleasure in book 7 and beyond. Now Eudoxus: this was a most respectable hedonist, a mathematician; and his hedonism was respectable, Aristotle says later, because he lived a perfectly decent life so no one could say he was a hedonist merely because he wanted to have what advertisers call lots of fun. So Aristotle does not contradict Eudoxus's view that pleasure is something worthy of reverence, as distinguished from praise. But I think, lest you are completely misled by this remark, let us read the final statement of Aristotle about pleasure. It occurs in the tenth book, 1174b, toward the end. 1174b31 to 33.

Mr. Reinken:
But the pleasure perfects the activity—

LS: Yes, pleasure perfects the activity—

Mr. Reinken: Page 597, section[24] 8.
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. (1174b31-33)

LS: I think that's a wonderful explanation of what Aristotle means. It is something which supervenes, which you have not bargained for, like the bloom of youth, something which would not strictly be necessary for young people: a grace. To the extent to which pleasure is that [sort of thing], pleasure has a quality which the virtuous activity lacks. And in that sense Aristotle accepts the hedonistic teaching, which has nothing to do with vulgar hedonism.

Student: [Regarding the distinction between happiness and blessedness.][xxvii]

LS: There is no distinction. They are two different words; one word, *eudaimon*, reminds of *daimon*, naturally, of god, a god. And the other word, *makarios*, which we ordinarily translate by blessed, reminds of *makares*. That is also something—well, the heroes after death—the island of the blessed, that is Makares. I mean, these religious notions are[25] obviously present [here], but Aristotle tries to state them in a nonreligious way. We can state it as follows: the very best man does not owe to himself, although what he does may be and is the prerequisite of his receiving that best. Only at the end, as it were, at the peak of a virtuous life would it come, but it is not something which is as it were simply automatic. And the indication of that is pleasure, because you may do something very competent, wherever it may be, and still not derive pleasure from it. That happens. And whether that pleasure comes or not, that is not guaranteed by the activity. That's an empirical fact. The human consequence of all this is this: the right posture toward the best is gratitude—and that remains unimpaired in Aristotle—not self-reliance, not demanding, "I

[xxvii] As noted by the transcriber.

have a right to demand that for what I did." That is so. In this sense, Aristotle still preserves the Greek piety. Yes?

Student: Doesn't the introduction of pleasure bring in the question as to whether or not, it's so often said, you know, that in order to comprehend one opposite one must know the other, and doesn't this introduce the idea, or bring it in tacitly, that in order to really derive pleasure from virtue one must know vice, in order to really enjoy good food one must have starved or have seen others starve? You know, the notion is quite familiar, and I just wondered where Aristotle treats it, because I'm sure it's in Aristotle.

LS: No, that is also in Plato, because these pleasures which are merely, as it were, the compensation for previous pain are the lowest. Plato uses occasionally an example, and Aristotle also alludes to that somewhere in the second book of the *Politics*, if I remember well. A simple example: if you are hungry or thirsty, then you suffer pain, and the following great and intensive pleasure is only the other side of the preceding pain.[xxviii] For example, if you are not very hungry, the appetite with which you eat is smaller than if you are very hungry. Good. These are the lowest pleasures, but then there are pleasures where the mere absence of the pleasure, absence of food or drink, is not unpleasant, and Plato gives the example—I believe it's Plato—gives the example of nice smells. I mean, unless you are a hopelessly corrupt human being, you cannot suffer from the absence of good smells, you know, like some so-called aesthetes, snobbish people. You cannot suffer from the absence of good smells as you can suffer from the absence of food and drink. These are therefore freer pleasures, because you are not compelled by your nature to seek them. That's one way of putting it. But we come to Aristotle's books on pleasure later on, in [subsequent] lessons[26]. Good.

Now in the sequel, 1102a5 following, the last chapter we can say, Aristotle expresses this simple thought: however complicated this equation may be—we must always think of that—one should perhaps put it this way to make it a bit more true to what Aristotle says: "e," small "e," or if you think that's still too much make it an epsilon—following[27] calculus, you know, very small, smaller than any other magnitude you can assign, but still something else is needed in addition.[xxix] So the core of happiness is virtue. Therefore we must study, above everything else, virtue; and that he begins to do. Let us read the first statement, 1102a5 to 7, the beginning of that chapter.

Mr. Reinken:
But inasmuch as happiness is a certain activity of soul in conformity with perfect goodness [virtue], it is necessary to examine the nature of virtue.[xxx] (1102a5-7)

Aretē; do you say "virtue" rather than "goodness"?

LS: Yes, say virtue; it doesn't make any difference. Now you note of course a distinction which is made as a matter of course between virtue and happiness. They are not identical.

[xxviii] Aristotle, *Politics* 1267a2–16.
[xxix] The transcriber notes: "The reference is to Strauss's equation, explaining Aristotle, H=V+e."
[xxx] In Rackham's translation: "it is necessary to examine the nature of goodness."

It's this epsilon [i.e., equipment], always to be considered. Now then in the sequel he gives a further reason why we must study virtue. The highest human good is the concern of the political man, but the political man is concerned with virtue above everything else, as we have seen before. How does he say here? He wishes to make the citizens good and obedient to the laws. This is a different formulation from before, but it means that same thing: doers of noble deeds. Aristotle doesn't say as clearly as Xenophon does that it is the virtue of the good leader to make happy those whom he leads. He is a bit more cautious. He says "to make them virtuous," because he may make them virtuous and that does not necessarily guarantee their full happiness, for the reason given. Let us read the sequel, when he speaks. An example of this, we have the legislators of the Cretan [at 1102a10 to 11].

Mr. Reinken:
witness the lawgivers of Crete and Sparta, and the other great legislators of history—

LS: No, of course "history" doesn't exist [in the Greek]: "if some others of this kind have come into being" or "have been." Yes. Now this judgment seems to contradict the negative things Aristotle says about Crete and Sparta in the second book of the *Politics*. But this is of course nonsense. Aristotle simply gives here a provisional statement. Anyone, any gentleman, would say that the Cretan and Spartan laws are fine and that's good enough for the purpose. That they are better than the Athenian [laws], Aristotle, I'm afraid, would admit, because Aristotle was not a democrat, but he would say they are very defective. Now the key point here is this: politics and morality are coextensive. The highest form of practice is the political life. The good man, the perfectly virtuous man, is as such fit to rule in a good polity, as is made clear in the *Politics*. In other words, Aristotle's coordination of morality and politics must not be mistaken for Machiavelli's. I mean, it's not a subservience of morality to politics, but they are coextensive. Now in the sequel he develops the thought that virtue is of course the virtue of the human soul, and hence the statesman must have some knowledge of the human soul. How will he know the goodness of the human soul, i.e., virtue, if he doesn't have some knowledge of the human soul? Let us read a23 following, "the politician must speculate about the soul."

Mr. Reinken: [Begins at the wrong place.][xxxi]

LS: No, I meant, later, a few lines later. "the politician must speculate about the soul but he must speculate for the sake of these things which we are discussing, and"—yes, do you have it?

Mr. Reinken:
The student of politics therefore as well as the psychologist must study the nature of the soul, though he will do so as an aid to politics, and only so far as is requisite for the objects of enquiry that he has in view: to pursue the subject in further detail would doubtless be more laborious than is necessary for his purpose. (1102a24-27)

LS: Yes. Well, this is of course of utmost topicality, and as it were what the doctor ordered for us: no scientific psychology required for the understanding of political things. I

[xxxi] As noted by the transcriber.

remember the case of the social smile which was discovered. When I asked a student once which psychological discovery is of any political importance,[28] he mentioned the social smile, and I told him that this is not even important for electioneering candidates, you know, who have to kiss babies, because it doesn't make the slightest different to them whether that smile is social or presocial. [Laughter] Well, you know, mere muscular change. That's clear. So I think that is still true; and here there is of course full agreement between Plato and Aristotle. The psychology which Plato gives in the *Republic* is deliberately provisional and as crude as the psychology given here. But you wanted to say something.

Mr. Glenn: It occurred to me: this interpretation that politics and morality are coextensive, how does that stack up against the question that Aristotle raises in the *Politics* where he asks the question, is the good man the same as the good citizen?, and he says no?

LS: Oh, that's very simple. Everyone here in this room can refute Mr. Glenn. Don't you remember?

Mr. Glenn: I'm not stating a position, I'm asking a question.

LS: Yes, but I would like to show you how simple the answer is by asking someone in the class. Mr. Emmert?

Mr. Emmert: He means the best regime there.

LS: Yes, well, the good citizen is relative to the regime. There can be a good citizen in communist Russia, in Nazi Germany, and there can also be a good citizen in an aristocracy, and so on. A good citizen is relative to the regime. Good man is not relative. Good man is in this sense absolute. But the good man, if you look at him and see what this involves, then you see that the good man and only the good man is fit to be a ruler in the best regime. This is not the only way. I mean, only the ruler in the best regime will show forth the good man in his fullness. In other words, a good man who is good enough to be a decent taxpayer and soldier in the community is a very qualified good man. [But] that's not the good man in his fullness. Very simply, for example, a judge must of course be just to a much higher degree than a simple man who never goes before a law court, obviously. These things which lie dormant in the ordinary man are activated, actualized, in the judge; now still more in the statesman who has to take momentous decisions without the guidance[29] [of] the law which the judge has. That is what he means.

Student: Well, then politics and morality are not simply coextensive.

LS: They are coextensive. They are not identical, but they are coextensive because there is no moral virtue which in its fullest form does not reveal itself in political action.

Same Student: It seems to me that it would be more precise to say that good politics and morality are coextensive.

LS: Yes, but bad politics is by definition defective politics, and therefore we can disregard it. I think[30] [this] is very important: the distinction between individual ethics and social ethics so familiar today is alien to Aristotle. From the very beginning he says political science is concerned with that. That's the most comprehensive view. A man is essentially a social being, a political animal, and therefore the doctrine of the perfection of man must be political. There is something in man which transcends the political, but this comes up in this work only at the end of the book—you know, the contemplative life. Now one could say this: What is the difference between modern scientific psychology and the crude psychology which Aristotle uses? In fairness to Max Weber, that much maligned man, one must say that he was sound regarding psychology. He didn't believe that scientific psychology can be of any use for the social scientist, and he put it very simply: the type of psychology which you need is that which you need for playing bridge. You know, a certain understanding of human beings, that you need. But scientific psychology is of no use, and one must understand that. Now what is, however,[31] the recommendation of modern scientific psychology which Aristotle doesn't see? I think one can say that the modern scientific psychology is related to the notion of manipulating human beings. Then of course, if that were our chief task, then we might have to know all kinds of things which we do not know. But for Aristotle the task of the statesman is of course not to manipulate human beings but to exhort them, to appeal to them, to *preach* to them. This word which has such a bad meaning in present-day social science [32]is perfectly proper for the salesman. Well, in America you have Lincoln, who did a lot of preaching, and his greatest acts are connected with acts of preaching. By the way, the other reason of course is that mass society and its special problems may create difficulties which require[33] certain kinds of studies about people getting tired and what not, which were not necessary in more simple societies.

Student: Well, even in playing bridge, a man who has played thousands of hands with people of different nationalities and made a statistical study of whether Japanese tend to finess . . . And there would be a role for a science there.

LS: Well, all kinds of things: you can also have a science of postage stamps, but the question is whether it's useful.

Mr. Reinken: I think I found a locus where Aristotle does take up this Madison Avenue approach implicitly, [*Politics*] 1308a, to which I referred. He gives five modes of deception by which oligarchies keep people out. These are petty tricks well worthy of recommendation by a social scientist.

LS: Yes, for such low class people, such low class regimes. But in the first place, Aristotle—

Mr. Reinken: And he says they don't work.

LS: Ah ha. Yes, sure. But apart from that the really clever oligarch discovered them without any professors at their elbow. So that's good. Now let us continue where we left off, a26: "This subject, about the soul, is spoken of."

Mr. Reinken:
some of the teaching current in extraneous discourses— (1102a26-28)

LS: Yes, extraneous discourses: in Greek it is "exoteric speeches."[xxxii] Now this word, exoteric speeches, is really ambiguous. It may mean popular, outside of serious consideration, for merely popular literature, but it may also [mean] exoteric to, outside of, the present study, and therefore belonging to natural science or psychology. I mention this only in passing.

Now then Aristotle proceeds to divide the soul according to a very common scheme into a rational and irrational part, and says what part means here is irrelevant for our political inquiries. That is a theoretical question of great importance, but here [it is] irrelevant. And a part of this irrational part is what we share with the plants, the merely vegetative in us, and this is most effective in dreams in man, i.e., at a time when there is no important difference between decent and indecent people. So therefore [it is] politically absolutely uninteresting. Good. Another part of the irrational part participates in reason either by disobeying or by obeying, very simply. Your digestive process: you can't command it, but you can command, for example, your arm, and the arm obeys. And you can also command your desires—I mean, simply to stop, at least not to bother you anymore. This is another part of the irrational soul, and this is of course of great importance. There is a parallel to this, Aristotle notes in b16 following, in the obedience or disobedience of the members of our body, which are subject also to *logos*. The man who is completely intemperate, i.e., who cannot control his sensual desires in any way, is a kind of paralytic. Just as in the case of a paralytic[34] [whose] arms and legs do not obey, in the case of the absolutely intemperate man the desires do not obey in any manner. But this would not be a case of excusable, criminally excusable, conduct,[35] [a] question which we may take up later when we come to the question of responsibility.

Student: [Seeks explanation of 1102b23 following.][xxxiii]

LS: Well, very simply, that a man is paralytic. A paralytic strictly understood, we [can] see, but that a man is paralyzed as regards his will we cannot strictly speaking see. I mean, we see him behave in a certain manner, but you do not see the paralysis as such. We infer that.

One may therefore say (that is 1103a, beginning) this is a minor subtlety. Hitherto he has said there is an irrational part and a rational part. And there is an interesting irrational part here: that's the desiring part, your desires which obey or disobey the reason. But [even] the fact[36] that they disobey it proves, of course, that they can obey. In the case of the digestive system, you cannot strictly speak of disobedience because there is no possibility of their obeying. Aristotle says, therefore, you may also divide it as follows. He introduces a bipartition of the rational part: the rational part proper, the commanding part, and that part of man which is by nature fit to obey through reason. So what he called first a subdivision

[xxxii] Strauss retranslates "*en tois exōterikois logois*."
[xxxiii] As noted by the transcriber.

of the irrational part you can also call a subdivision of the rational part: one which is ruling and in itself rational, and the other which is merely obediential. And then let us read the end, 1103a4, because here he introduces a distinction.

Mr. Reinken:
Now virtue also is differentiated in correspondence with this division of the soul.

LS: That is, a division into a rational part strictly understood, and a part which is rational only by being able to obey reason. Yes? Go on.

Mr. Reinken:
Some forms of virtue are called intellectual virtues, others moral virtues: Wisdom or intelligence and Prudence are intellectual, Liberality and Temperance are moral virtues. When describing a man's moral character we do not say that he is wise or intelligent, but gentle or temperate; but a wise man also is praised for his disposition, and praiseworthy dispositions we term virtues. (1103a4-10)

LS: Yes. In other words, this distinction between the two kinds of rationality is underlying the distinction of virtues into intellectual and moral virtues. The virtues of the intellect as intellect reside entirely in reason. The moral or ethical virtues reside to some extent in our appetitive life, in the subrational part. And of course Aristotle is here concerned in the book primarily with the ethical virtues and only later on does he speak of the intellectual. Mr. McAtee?

Mr. McAtee: I want to go back to something that we discussed earlier. That is, throughout this you've been talking about the fact that Aristotle has guided himself, in this section we read today, by generally received opinions. And it seems to me that there are several cases in which what he says is strange, and I have in mind this statement when he says that once a man has lost his happiness it will take him a long time to get it back again. But this seems to me to be contrary to what most people would say. They would say a good man, in other words, is someone who if he lost his happiness would get it back immediately.

LS: No. Well, take—oh, there are many examples. For example, you see—I mean, I have seen and I believe you have seen people who were very happily married, and then the wife dies. I assume it is a genuinely reasonably happy man. And this destroyed, in a way, for him his happiness; and then, say, after ten, fifteen, years—there's a beautiful description of that, not exactly in this form, in Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. Prince Andrew's first wife died, and when spring comes . . . Then the wound heals, as we call it. That is what Aristotle means, and the deeper a man is, the longer it will take for the wound to heal.

Mr. McAtee: You don't think he was speaking, as I would say, almost as an historian; in other words, from experience.

LS: Aristotle always speaks from experience. I mean, how can you speak about such matters without experience?

Mr. McAtee: I had in mind something which he knew somehow or could read in people who knew it, or else he knew it himself.

LS: No, but I think that is a very common thing. Or people lose a child, a son in war. How long will it take until the wound has healed? And one can say this is one criterion by which we distinguish superficial from nonsuperficial people, how long it takes for such wounds to heal. And this is what Aristotle has in mind. You know, there are people who are unable to suffer, who on such occasions simply get drunk, you know, and this kind of thing, or travel a lot. You can do that. But other people think that it does them good to suffer because it makes them more human. And this is what he has in mind. I mean, that Aristotle does not come up with an elegant solution as the Stoics did—happiness equal to virtue and that's all—is, I think, to his credit: because the Stoic solution[37] can be defended in classrooms, perhaps, but not in life. And Aristotle would say the test of such assertions surely is whether you can live on them.

Mr. McAtee: [Refers to Job, "who after all was very unhappy and then happy."][xxxiv]

LS: But here the problem is stated in very different terms. Yes?

Student: Is Aristotle's two-part division of the rational part of the soul comparable to Plato's entire division of the soul?

LS: No, he doesn't speak of the bipartition of the irrational part into desiring and—

Same Student: I was thinking that the three parts of Plato's division would be equivalent to the two parts on the rational side, the commanding and the obeying.

LS: No, Aristotle uses here a simpler distinction which Plato also uses first in the *Republic*, before we get the tripartition. This is a good question for later: what Aristotle has to say about that third part of Plato's, the *thymos* or spiritedness. We must keep this in mind.

I will take up in conclusion the question of Mr. Butterworth. I will at least read it. "If Aristotle has come upon his first principle by deduction and yet insists that he must proceed by way of induction, should we not expect him to demonstrate his first principle on inductive grounds? If he does not do this, what can we reasonably conclude?" Yes, but the question is simply [this]: Aristotle presupposes here something in his deductive thing, namely, that each being or each class of beings has a specific perfection, a *specific* perfection, so the perfection of a cat, a perfect cat, is something radically different from a perfect horse and from a perfect human being, and so on. Now this overall relation between beings, specific beings, and specific perfections is here presupposed, but how did he get it? This is not said here.[38] Something like induction would surely be the beginning of the argument, but induction of course never means in Aristotle Baconian induction. Never. I mean, therefore the question which was so crucial for Bacon later on, contradictory cases, doesn't play a role [for Aristotle]. What induction means you can see: for Aristotle a single case is sufficient or uncontested experience. For example, when Aristotle would say man is

[xxxiv] As noted by the transcriber.

a bisexual animal, i.e., the species consists of males and females, then he would say, "Well, I have never seen a human being who was not male or female." And if someone would say, Miss Jorgensen, or what her name was, or Mr. Jorgensen,[xxxv] he would say: Well, if this happens once in a billion[39] cases, it surely needs some study, but that doesn't affect the fact from which we must start, that man is a bisexual being, and this is essential to man, the human race. That is the way, uncontested experience.

That's one thing; and the other thing is a simple case. For example, how does Socrates proceed? That was what was originally called induction. Someone says in [the] *Laches* the simple case: courage means attack. Attack, attack. And then Socrates says: But look, the [Scythians][xxxvi] don't attack: they run away, and they are very brave people. You know, they are horsemen, and they turn up for a second and then they run away.[xxxvii] So the definition of courage in terms of mere attacking is deficient. That's induction. Induction means to take cases which you have observed and draw conclusions from them. That is the primary meaning. The Baconian notion of induction is entirely different, and that modern notion led of course then to the notion of the controlled experiment. This is not Aristotelian.

Mr. McAtee: [To the effect that Aristotle would consider Socratic induction to be dialectic and that Aristotle, in contrast, is trying to offer demonstrations.][xxxviii]

LS: Yes, not quite. I mean, when you read later on—that's a question which we should take up better later on when we have more evidence; for example, when Aristotle defines courage and he does more than merely give a definition: he describes it, he articulates it. Then, of course, this is only the result. I mean, Aristotle presents to you the results of his inquiry; he does not present to you his inquiry. But we would have to reconstruct it, and I think we can see, and we can do that if we make some effort, [that] he looked around, not only once or twice but for quite some time, and saw: What are the kinds of things which we praise as courageous? And (did I not forget something?) and then looked for other things, and then gradually he reached a point where he was unable to think of any other case. Well, then he said: Now it's good. In other words, this kind of guarantee for completeness which modern man somehow seeks, Aristotle was not so concerned with. The guarantee for completeness was that he could not think of any objection to it, and this was of course [something] for which he was attacked, by people like Kant especially. That is the so-called doctrine of categories; you must have heard of that.[40] Aristotle just gives his list, and Kant says, "Yes, but this is rhapsody, you know, a mere enumeration, no deduction. There are these categories, there cannot be any others." Nothing less than that was sufficient for Kant. Aristotle would say: "No, from what shall I deduce them? I just look around, and if it is complete then it is complete. And that was a great difficulty." I mean, for Aristotle there is not this—no *a priori* in this modern sense, you see, and that creates a difficulty for all modern readers. A famous pupil of Kant reading the *Poetics* for the first time was shocked by this mixture of statements which surely would belong to an aesthetics[41], and then

[xxxv] Christine Jorgensen (1926–1989).
[xxxvi] The transcript has a blank space here.
[xxxvii] Plato, *Laches* 191a–c.
[xxxviii] As noted by the transcriber.

Aristotle goes into very great details about how to build up a tragedy; you know, empirical, technical detail. For Aristotle the difference didn't exist. He wanted to give a complete account, as complete as he could, of tragedy. And whether one could there make a distinction between *a priori* and *a posteriori*, this question didn't exist for him, because Aristotle was not concerned with intellectual control but with openness; to see the thing, not controlling it but looking at it.

That corresponds to what I said about the difference between gratitude and self-reliance: a fundamentally receptive posture toward the world, not one where you stand outside and try to control it, the Cartesian and modern posture. This is very hard to understand. I mean, it is not so hard to understand it in purely descriptive terms. But that it is alive in one, that takes a long experience with these things. I mean, and I remember the first time when I read Aristotle, I couldn't understand this. I was of course brought up in the *a priori* country, in Germany. But when I read such Aristotelian arguments, say, in the first book of the *Physics*, and when he criticizes Parmenides—Parmenides had said being is one—and Aristotle says: Why?[xxxix] And then he says this: Furthermore, in addition, *n* arguments, as many as can think of, and no attempt to reduce them into a system where one demands the other. Just take them: here, here. Therefore one should never speak of a system in Aristotle. It took me a long time until I saw how sensible that is, but we modern people, to the extent to which we have received modern training, are not open to that. I mean, you see these logical positivists are of course opposed to all *a priori* construction. You know that, and [they say] this is bad German metaphysics and this kind of thing, but in their way they make the same mistake—you know, this kind of demand for completeness, and this inability to simply say, "If something is vouched for by uncontested experience, then I start from it." And then they say, "How can you do that? Then you arrive at pre-Copernicus. Then you will say the sun is rising in the east and setting in." You know? Or no, that you would say. The earth—oh, yes, I'm sorry. All kinds of things come in, witches and what have you. You know that. Aristotle would say: I can take care of witches without denying common sense. The mere fact that witches were at home in Thessaly rather than in Athens would be an interesting indication of what to think about that.

Mr. McAtee: But this same point, where you see Aristotle as different from Kant—

LS: From modern philosophy. There are no guarantees except those which are—man cannot guarantee it by his own power. If the whole were not in such a way that it were open to man, and man by nature in such a way that he was open to the whole, nothing could be done. This is simply given and we must try to understand that "that." We cannot leave it at the mere "that," but if we do not start from it and take it for granted—I have tried to describe it a little bit more precisely, but also rather narrowly in this epilogue when I compared Aristotle to the man from Missouri—you know, the man from Missouri as distinguished from the social scientist.[xl] Aristotle also wants to be shown, but not in that way in which we in this building are supposed to be shown, at least according to the ruling methodology.

[xxxix] Aristotle, *Physics* 184b19–24.

[xl] See Leo Strauss, "An Epilogue," in *Liberalism Ancient and Modern* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989), 203–23.

[1] Deleted “but.”
[2] Deleted “to.”
[3] Deleted “now.”
[4] Moved “here.”
[5] Deleted “but.”
[6] Deleted “capable.”
[7] Deleted “what.”
[8] Deleted “it.”
[9] Deleted “that.”
[10] Deleted “they.”
[11] Deleted “is what.”
[12] Deleted “a.”
[13] Deleted “us.”
[14] Deleted “have—they”
[15] Deleted “he.”
[16] Deleted “not.”
[17] Deleted “in.”
[18] Deleted “he.”
[19] Deleted “is out with.”
[20] Deleted “and the.”
[21] Deleted “would you say.”
[22] Deleted “had.”
[23] Deleted “in order”
[24] Deleted “8.”
[25] Moved “here.”
[26] Deleted “following.”
[27] Deleted “the.”
[28] Deleted “and then.”
[29] Deleted “by.”
[30] Deleted “it.”
[31] Deleted “what is.”
[32] Deleted “was of course—”
[33] Deleted “for.”
[34] Deleted “the.”
[35] Deleted “the.”
[36] Moved “even.”
[37] Deleted “that.”
[38] Deleted “and then.”
[39] Deleted “of.”
[40] Deleted “and.”
[41] Deleted “on the one hand.”

Session 4: April 11, 1963
What is virtue, and how do we become virtuous? Habituation; pleasure and pain; moral virtue as disposition
(Book 2.1-5)

Leo Strauss: [i]We have this difficulty. Aristotle had discussed [happiness] in his first book[1] and reached a general definition, according to which the core of happiness is virtue. And therefore *the* question now is: What is virtue? And that is, generally speaking, the theme of the second book. Now in the second book he discusses first how virtue is acquired or how we become virtuous, and with what virtue is concerned, before raising the question: What is virtue? And it would seem to be the more rational and sound procedure first to say what[2] virtue [is]. Now why does Aristotle proceed in this way? Let us remember the difficulty we encountered in book 1. The starting point was the variety of human ends, the variety of noble and just things which lend support to the view that perhaps all just and noble things are merely conventional. And the variety of the good things, which leads to the view that anything which can be said to be simply good—are not all good things somehow dependent on chance in such a way that something which is ordinarily good may accidentally become bad?

Now Aristotle appeals first to the divination all men have that there is one highest good which is called by all, at least by all Greeks, happiness, *eudaimonia*. And he gives what I called the scientific definition of it, scientific of course in the Aristotelian sense. Happiness is the activity, the being-at-work, of the specifically human according to excellence or virtue; say, the most perfect activity of the specifically human. Now this is of course very wide and includes on the one hand the purely theoretical man, the man wholly unconcerned with a life of action, as well as, say, for instance, a first-rate tyrant—you would also need that there. Now[3] Aristotle brings this definition together with what people in general say, and only by mating, as it were, the scientific definition with the popular view does he come closer to the ordinary view. And here it appears then that happiness consists chiefly in virtuous activity in the ordinary sense of the term, activity of moral virtue. And the agreement with the popular view is shown most clearly by the fact that in this context it is said that the noble and just things are by nature pleasant. In fact, they are *the* things which are by nature pleasant, as compared with pleasures of the senses and so on. And if they are by nature pleasant it goes without saying that they are natural. So here that seems to be a complete solution of the difficulty.

So happiness means then gentlemanship—of course, practiced gentlemanship—as pleasant. If it were not pleasant, it would not be happiness. But after we had reached this point a new difficulty arose, because there is some dependence of happiness—even if the emphasis is

[i] The transcriber notes: "The student paper was read after the session had already begun. The class opened with Dr. Strauss's lecture, which was subsequently interrupted by the reading of the paper."

altogether on virtue, there is some dependence [of happiness] on chance. And Aristotle follows this question in all its windings, but the net result is that this dependence cannot be entirely denied, but it cannot be helped. Such things as the fate of Priam can of course happen, Priam here being supposed to be a perfectly virtuous man. That can happen, and still it is preferable to be a miserable Priam, miserable in the vulgar sense of the term, than to be a happy crook. This is the last word. And I think we all can understand [this], even if we should not share this view.

Now the fundamental difficulty is then this. In the scientific definition of happiness, Aristotle had not spoken of moral virtue as such. He introduces moral virtue thematically by starting from the soul and its parts. In other words, he rises again to a scientific consideration of sorts. He shows it in this way: the possibility and the necessity of something like moral virtue without any regard to popular sayings or feelings. The soul consists of two parts: very roughly, one is the strictly rational; and the other is [that] which is in itself not rational but which can participate in the rational. And accordingly there are two kinds of virtue: the virtue of the purely rational part, the theoretical or dianoetic virtues; and those which belong as it were to the irrational part, the moral virtues. Now this distinction is in this form Aristotle's distinction—I mean, the term moral virtue or ethical virtue does not occur in Plato, for example. But this doesn't mean that the distinction is, so to speak, an invention of Aristole. We understand it directly today and wholly independent of the Aristotelian tradition. I give you a simple example from popular culture. Perry Mason is described somewhere as a man who is sharp like a steel trap and clean like a hound's tooth. That's a distinction: the sharpness, that's intellectual virtue; the cleanliness— [Laughter] Now honestly—I mean, one must not be snobbish; one must simply appear in mind.[ii] I remind you also of the New Testament reference to the serpents and the dogs.[iii] The serpents refer, in Aristotle's terms, to intellectual virtue and the dogs to moral virtue.

Now only the dianoetic or theoretical virtues reside in reason simply, in what is simply human. Moral virtue resides at least also in what man has in common with the other animals. And this settles already a question which is explicitly settled only in the tenth book: that the theoretical virtues are of higher rank than the moral virtues. Surely moral virtues are specifically human, and the reason is they require, they presuppose, reason, right reason. Let us read 1103b31 to 32. Shortly after the beginning of a chapter, chapter 2.

Mr. Reinken: Did you say the Ross was better?

LS: Whichever you have.

Mr. Reinken:
Now, that we must act according to the right rule— (1103b32)

[ii] In the transcript: "appear in mind. (?)"
[iii] See Mt 10:16: "See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves."

LS: Yes, let us say "right reason."[iv] Let us use the old, simple translation.

Mr. Reinken:
"is a common principle and must be assumed—it will be discussed later, i.e. both what the right reason is,[v] and how it is related to the other virtues." (1103b33-35)

LS: Yes, let us stop here. So Aristotle says of course moral virtue stands and falls by right reason, but he postpones a discussion of that for later. He abstracts from that here, and the reason, I believe, is this: because he wishes to make clear in advance the place of moral virtue in the economy of human life. Now let us then look at the plan of today's assignment. In the first section, 1103a14 to b25, Aristotle speaks of how moral virtue is acquired. Answer: It is acquired by habituation, not by learning. He will explain that later. Not by learning, as we acquire mathematics or this kind of thing. But—this is my comment—[vi] Now as I say, moral virtue is acquired by habituation. But look: Is moral virtue the only thing which is acquired by habituation? To take the most simple example, brutes also acquire certain habits which we regard as good—for example, when we say, "Good doggy"—by habituation. Now in the next section, 1103b26 to 1104a11, Aristotle gives another excursus on the exactness to be expected here, and where he repeats the earlier statement in a strong form: there is nothing stable in moral matters, nothing stable. And he doesn't say here that that is what the impression of people is, but he says it definitely. Good. Then he goes over in 1104a11 to b3 [the notion] that virtue is acquired by the doing of actions which are in a mean, neither too much nor too little. Again one can say a parallel to that we find in the training of animals. That the dog, for example, should jump at these and these kinds of people but not at others, at this time of the day and not at other times of the day, not at everyone, too much, not at no one, too little. So we find here also such a parallel. And then in the last section here, in 1104b3 to 1105a16: moral virtue is concerned with pleasure and pain and is achieved by pleasures and pains. And the most massive case of these pleasures and pains are of course bodily punishments and bodily rewards, the stick and the carrot.[4] In the case of man, of course, more praise and blame, but on the basic level[5] [it is] as in the case of brutes[6]. 1104b30: let us read that, a short passage.

Mr. Reinken:
There being three objects of choice and three of avoidance, the noble, the advantageous, the pleasant, and their contraries, the base, the injurious, the painful, about all of these the good man tends to go right and the bad man to go wrong, and especially about pleasure—

LS: Especially about pleasure. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
for this is common to the animals, and also it accompanies all objects of choice; for even the noble and the advantageous appear pleasant.

[iv] Strauss retranslates "*ton orthon logon*."
[v] In Ross's translation: "i.e. both what the right rule is, and how."
[vi] The transcriber notes that there is a "procedural interruption regarding [a] student who unexpectedly learns that he will have to read his paper."

Again, it has grown up with us all from our infancy— (1104b30-1105a2)

LS: Well, here we may stop. So you see, the basic stratum is that of pleasure and pain, and this man shares with all animals[7] [at] every stage of his development. So moral virtue has to do with that part of man which he has in common with the brutes. This is the overall lesson which Aristotle makes clear before he goes into the question of what precisely moral virtue is. But to come back to the key point, the moral virtues are acquired by habituation. Brutes also acquire good habits in this manner. But on the other hand there is also something which the brutes do not have at all which is acquired by habituation, and[8] [that is] the arts. For example, to become a shoemaker,[9] to do[10] [certain things] easily by frequently doing them, habituation plays a great role there too. Therefore the question is, which we have to take up anyway: What is the difference between the moral virtues and the arts, since both are acquired by a kind of habituation? Aristotle speaks of that. We may also read that in 1105a26, following.

Mr. Reinken:
Moreover the case of the arts is not really analogous to that of 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 temperately if they themselves are of a certain sort, but only if the agent also is in a certain state of mind when he does them: first he must act with knowledge; secondly he must deliberately choose 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 temperate actions.[vii] (1105a2-b5)

LS: Now if you remember Aristotle's high regard for knowledge as most emphatically stated at the beginning of the *Metaphysics*, you see that from this point of view, as far as we can see now, the arts are superior to moral virtue, because knowledge is a very minor matter, although an indispensable matter in moral virtue. In arts it is the all-important thing. And therefore—this only confirms what I said before—what Aristotle develops in this first half of the second part is to indicate to us the rank, the relatively low rank, of moral virtue, before he enters [into] the question of what moral virtue itself is. Yes?

Student: Are you suggesting that he does not say that animals can have moral virtue?

LS: No. But there is an analogon to moral virtue in the training of animals: habituation. And even there, [there] is a certain responsiveness. Perhaps [in the training of animals] one should not say [a responsiveness] to praise and blame, but to friendliness and unfriendliness[11], as everyone who has had any contact with animals knows. Good. Now I have to decide a great moral question: What shall I do to Mr. Mueller?

[vii] Mr. Reinken reads from Rackham's translation.

Student: A moral question?

LS: Yes, a moral question, sure. I mean, I have to reach a just decision. In other words, you are not prepared for reading your paper.

Mr. Mueller: I have my voice.

LS: You have your—and?

Mr. Mueller: And a paper.

LS: All right. What follows?

Mr. Mueller: [. . .]

LS: Yes, that is wholly irrelevant, because we are concerned here with the just and not with the pleasant.[viii] It was not always easy to follow you, Mr. Mueller. Only one point for those who [do] not [have] any acquaintance with Aristotle: the term practical wisdom, used by Mr. Mueller, is the translation of the same word which is also translated by "prudence" . . . because the meaning of prudence has become so low that people had to coin the term "practical wisdom" to remind us of the original meaning of prudence, lest there be any error. What did you say in the criticism of Ross's remark regarding the beginning of the second book? I did not quite follow that.

Mr. Mueller: Well, he speaks of virtue as being of two kinds.

LS: Yes, he says twofold—Aristotle—but it is not different. No, I think one should translate literally, I grant you, but I don't believe that here so very much depends—Aristotle surely means two kinds. Why he says here only twofold, I couldn't answer that question. It would surely have to be answered.

Mr. Mueller: I don't know whether I'm justified in saying this, but this may remind us of what virtue is . . .

LS: Yes, that is not so simple. That creates a difficulty, that there is a distinction of the perfection of the mind as mind and the perfection of manners, as they say, or character, a different story. You stated quite forcefully the difficulty: Why could moral virtue not be produced by teaching? After all, I mean, one must face that. Why couldn't it be done? Are there human abilities which cannot be produced by mere teaching, I mean, apart from moral virtue? In other words, which cannot possibly be acquired by sitting in a classroom and listening to something? I mean, for example, mathematics you can learn that way. Mr. Reinken?

Mr. Reinken: Not really.

[viii] Mr. Mueller reads his paper. The reading was not recorded. The recording resumes with Strauss's response to Mr. Mueller's paper.

LS: To some extent. Listening, of course—I mean, not dozing.

Mr. Reinken: But until you set out to prove your own theorems—

LS: Yes, but still, but to some extent you can. All right. Yes. But still, to some extent. But I give you a very simple example [of] what you cannot learn by listening: tightrope dancing. You have to do it. And so moral virtue is then closer to tightrope dancing than to mathematics. And Aristotle has this in mind. Well, the example is surely very crude and improper in many ways, but it is also very simple. Yes?

Student: The division into chapters and subchapters, is this prompted by Aristotle's—

LS: No, the division differs from edition to edition.

Same Student: There's no small particle at the beginning of each chapter?

LS: No. This is in no way of interest. I mean, it makes sense, the various divisions, but that doesn't mean . . .

Same Student: Is there any way that in reading the original Greek manuscript you can tell where there are paragraphs?

LS: No, that I couldn't tell you. I have never looked at a Greek manuscript, because I would be wholly unable to read manuscript Greek. But I would say, if you follow the printed text and disregard all divisions, you come across natural divisions. I mean, sure, for example, when he says in today's assignment[12], "Thereafter we must see what[13] virtue [is]." Clear division. Hitherto, we had not spoken of what[14] virtue [is]. Mr. Boyan?

Mr. Boyan: [Regarding use of the word "curiously" in the paper.][ix]

LS: Yes, well, did you not mean curiously in the older meaning of the term curiously.

Mr. Boyan: [. . .]

LS: Yes. Well, this, I think, sounds like the old translation of the Bible—the word curiously—meaning working very carefully and assiduously, something of this kind: not in the sense of being curious.

Mr. Boyan: No, certainly not that, but in the sense of an object of art, manufactured, this word curious is used . . .

LS: Well, let us not—this question is of course absolutely crucial, the difference between learning an art and acquiring a virtue, and we have to go into that. Now I remind you of the context: virtue is the core of happiness. What is virtue, and in particular, what is moral

[ix] As noted by the transcriber.

virtue? Why Aristotle begins with moral virtue and not with the theoretical is an important question, but one can say moral virtue is more accessible and also more in demand, generally speaking, than intellectual virtue. Really: all the time we have to be concerned with whether a man is honest or not, I mean, when you go to a shoemaker and so on; whereas intelligence, that is a special case. We need it only from time to time when we elect a mayor of the city or so, which is relatively rare thing.

Student: Isn't it the case that the men whom Aristotle is addressing [in] his lectures on man have moral virtue, but not intellectual virtues?

LS: Yes, sure. Surely, but this would only of course postpone the question. Why did he select such an audience for this subject? Now let us read the beginning of book 2. "Virtue being twofold, one being dianoetic, the other moral." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Virtue being, as we have seen, twofold,[x] 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, and has indeed derived its name,[xi] with a slight variation of form, from that word. (1103a14-18)

LS: Yes, well, that is extremely simple. *Ethos* [short "e"] means habituation or habit and *ēthos* [long "e"] means character. Whether the etymology is correct or not is of course not of the slightest importance to us. The substantive connection is clear: you acquire a character by habituation. Now the dianoetic virtue is acquired by learning in schools, and in the clearest case by mere listening. I thought of Mr. Reinken's difficulty, because you do not learn reading, writing, reckoning, by mere listening, and this may also be true of higher parts of mathematics. Therefore I thought of a simple example which you cannot possibly learn otherwise, except by mere listening: natural history in the old sense of the term: the description of a lion, especially in the country in which there are no lions. You can learn about that[15] —or of the stars, for that matter—only by listening to someone who tells you; by listening, and of course intelligent listening, by understanding as distinguished from action. But Aristotle says here it requires experience and time. Does moral virtue not also require experience and time? Is it not strange? Why does he say that? That is really difficult. Well, one thing is clear. I do not know whether it is relevant, but the learning as distinguished from the acquisition of a habit begins later than the acquisition of habits, as everyone who has ever seen a baby and what is done to him will know.[16] The learning proper—I mean, not learning in the wide sense used by psychology, where he learns of course from the first day, so to speak, but[17] [when] someone teaches him—starts later. I cannot explain this, why he puts his emphasis here on experience and time in the case of learning, dianoetic virtue, unless I assume that this can start very early, very early, and so to speak without experience and time which has passed [which makes] the beginner ready with acquisition of habits. Now he develops then in the sequel a thought. Let us also read that, the immediate sequel.

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[x] In Rackham's translation: "Virtue being, as we have seen, of two kinds."
[xi] In Rackham's translation: "whereas moral or ethical virtue is the product of habit (*ethos*), and has."

Mr. Reinken:
And therefore it is clear that none of the moral virtues is engendered in us by nature, for no natural property can be altered by habit.

LS: Literally, "none of the things which are by nature is habituated differently, is habituated so that it acts differently." Yes? "Like the stone, by nature goes down can never be accustomed, trained, to rest." What was the other example?

Mr. Reinken:
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 are engendered in us neither by nature nor yet in violation of nature; nature gives us the capacity to receive them, and this capacity is brought to maturity by habit. (1103a18-20)

LS: "To completion by habit." Yes. Moral virtue is acquired by habituation, not by learning. What this difference means we will gradually see. We do not possess moral virtue by nature. Things which a being possesses simply by nature cannot be affected by habituation without losing their nature. We are by nature able to acquire the moral virtues, for our appetitive life is by nature able to obey *logos*. That's a natural ability, and therefore we can acquire it. "By nature" means here what is actual at a moment, at the moment of birth, but we have also to consider of course the dispositions which we have at the moment of birth. A certain latitude or flexibility which the human baby has at the moment of birth, in a different way [from] a puppy, is as natural of course as its fixedness. But it is a disposition; it is not a fixed quality. For example, you cannot transform a beagle puppy into a St. Bernard puppy, but you can make it housebroken. To that extent it is not fixed [as] housebroken or not housebroken, but [as a] beagle [it] is fixed. Yes?

Student: Would Aristotle want to answer the question whether man is by nature something good or bad, or is he both?

LS: Yes, surely, he is neutral. He is neutral, but if we understand "by nature" in a narrower sense, that we do nothing whatever about it—which is of course already one decision, not to do anything. It calls for a decision. Doing nothing means to make a decision. And by virtue of that decision where you do nothing, you merely become invariably bad, whereas what Rousseau, in a way, meant probably: if you do not interfere, he will become good. That is surely a difference.

Now this, what we have read hitherto could be understood to mean that we possess by nature the possibility or potentiality to act virtuously. This understanding is rejected by Aristotle. By nature we do not possess the *dunamis*, the potentiality, to act morally, but we possess only the potentiality of acquiring moral virtue. Now Aristotle makes this clear by distinguishing moral virtue from the simpler case of sense perception. We possess the potentiality of seeing by nature, from the moment of birth, and the act of seeing can therefore follow immediately as an actualization of a natural potentiality. But this is not the

case in the case of moral virtue. We do not possess the ability, the power, the potentiality, of acting morally. We must acquire it. Yes, Mr. Burnam?

Mr. Burnam: The funny thing about the analogy, though, to the stone, is that it is possible, as Aristotle himself has said in other places, for even a person's capacity to acquire virtue to—

LS: Yes, there is no question that it can—

Mr. Burnam: to be destroyed.

LS: How could it be destroyed?

Mr. Burnam: Later—well, through very poor living conditions in childhood, he loses the capacity for it.

LS: Maybe, but that is an extreme case. But then he would really cease to be a human being, if he would completely lose it. But it may not be possible to develop it because of poor external conditions, but the possibility he has as a human being by the very fact that he is a rational animal, which every human being is, he has the possibility of acquiring virtue. The conditions required for [the] actualization of the potentiality may not be available; then he can never acquire it. Do you see the difference?

Mr. Burnam: But even the capacity, I think Aristotle would have to say—

LS: I don't think so. Aristotle would probably say it can—well, then he ceases—then he becomes a radically defective human being, like a moron or insane man. That of course can happen. We [discussed] that briefly last time. But as long as he is not insane or moronic, he still preserves the possibility. But it may no longer be possible for another reason: because he is now set in his ways, say, when he is fifty or so. Then there is the almost hopeless case. Good.

Student: This definition of nature as what one has at birth is somewhat different from the definition of nature as growth toward an end.

LS: Yes, that is true, but the situation is this. Let us say the nature at the beginning, at the moment of birth, or at the beginning more generally, because an acorn may also—it doesn't have to be a human being. And then there is an end. Now an acorn grows into an oak if nothing untoward happens. Here there is no growth, but man must do[18] [something] to reach his end. But this doesn't do away with the fact that both the beginning and the end are by nature. That the process of actualization requires human cooperation does not do away with the fact that the beginning as well as the end are not made by man. In the modern view, it is roughly so that the beginning is of course still regarded as natural but the end is made by man. They call it today frequently an ideal and mean by that something which has no other basis but a human projection. Men project it. Or [they call it] value; same thing. And here this is not in any way— [the end of man] is determined by nature.

The perfection of man can only be this because the nature as nature points to it. Although the nature, in the case of man, without human cooperation can never achieve it.

Student: Well, what I'm curious about—we still talk about natural justice. If justice is a moral virtue, therefore an acquired habit, what is the meaning of the term natural justice?

LS: That which is just in itself without any human determination or establishment of it. For example, the tax laws now or later are determined by human beings. They are positive laws. But, say, the principle underlying it, that [19]everyone protected by the social order should contribute according to his powers to its preservation, is more than a mere establishment of positive law. Even if there should be many societies which do not act on this but would say, "Let us put the highest taxes on those whose second name begins with an A to C" (which of course would lead to name changing, I suppose), or would say, "Let us put the highest taxes on those who cannot shoot duck." That's also possible, but[20] one would say it's a disgraceful principle.

Same Student: Then there is a natural power in man towards moral virtue, even though they are acquired.

LS: Yes. Yes, sure. Oh yes. Absolutely. It is a bit more complicated, but in the present stage we leave it entirely at that. Now let us continue at a32, when he says, "We acquire the virtues after having been in activity before," meaning: we do not acquire sense perception, we do not acquire the faculty of seeing by seeing. We have the faculty of seeing before we see. But in the case of the moral virtues we do not have that faculty or potentiality before we have done something about it, before we have acquired it. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
The virtues on the other hand we acquire by first having actually practised them, just as we do the arts. 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, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts. (1103a32-b2)

LS: Yes. As a curiosity, he says people become housebuilders, and *we* become just. In other words, we gentlemen would of course not be craftsmen. But this only as a little curiosity. So the parallel to the acquisition of moral virtue is the acquisition of the arts. A boy entering on his apprenticeship with a shoemaker cannot make shoes. He does not possess the power, the *dunamis*, the potentiality of making shoes; he only has the potentiality of learning to make shoes, the potentiality of making shoes. And how does he acquire that potentiality of making shoes? Answer: by making shoes. Well, he will do first abominable things with that leather, but gradually he will be able to make a shoe. We acquire the *dunamis* of acting nobly by acting nobly. That is difficult, but it is really common sense. Aristotle is very precise. Needless to say, the noble activity preceding the acquisition of the *dunamis*, virtue, is not perfect. As a matter of fact, it is very imperfect, as imperfect as the shoe work done by that apprentice is who has not yet acquired the art of the shoemaker, but this poor fumbling thing this boy is doing is necessary if he ever will

acquire[21] the art of shoemaking. Similarly, we must act "nobly" in a fumbling manner if we want ever to become noble simply. Think of when you observe children who are tolerably decently bred, how their decent breeding shows in these early stages, how many tactless [. . .] they inevitably commit, but which are nevertheless to be compared to the first shoe made by that apprentice. Without these little clumsinesses they would never become truly decent.

Student: Did you say that the apprentice acquires the potentiality for shoemaking by shoemaking? Is the same as saying he acquires the art?

LS: Now let us make a simple distinction which I believe I used before. Let us speak of moral virtue simply. We have by nature not the potentiality of virtue, but the potentiality of acquiring virtue; but once we have acquired virtue, then we have the potentiality of acting nobly because virtue means the potentiality of acting nobly.

Same Student: Then there is a difference between the potentiality for virtue and the potentiality of acquiring virtue.

LS: Yes, well, in former times they made a distinction between a proximate and a remote potentiality. For example, a tree in the forest has a remote potentiality of being a table. Once it is a board in a carpenter's workshop then it is in a close proximity. That's something similar. But what Aristotle wants to make clear is this: How do we acquire virtue? And this leads to the seemingly paradoxical thing that we are supposed to act justly before we are just, and only by acting justly before we are just do we become just. This sounds very paradoxical, and many sophists must have made beautiful fireworks with this difficulty, but nevertheless it is simply so.

Student: It also sounds like Machiavelli.

LS: On the contrary, Machiavelli learned certain things from Aristotle and put them into a different—I believe I have really stated this point. It's very simple. But I cannot do that now. Yes? Mr. Fleming.

Mr. Fleming: I'm confused, sir, about something you said earlier. In your earlier remarks to the class you said that knowledge is not necessary for virtue . . .

LS: Well, some knowledge is necessary, but it's very trivial.

Mr. Fleming: Sometimes Aristotle is really not precise in the way he expresses things.

LS: Oh, he is very precise. He doesn't say everything, all the things necessary, at the same time. That is not imprecise. And what he wants to make clear is this. Take a very simple example. The knowledge required regarding one special brand of temperance, say, [that] one shouldn't smoke: the knowledge is very simple. You don't have to know medicine. It's of course an idiotic habit. So everyone can know that. But to do it, the habit, that is the art, not to know, "I shouldn't smoke." That we all know. This is the point, against the

simplistic notion that moral virtue is knowledge, which of course never was Socrates's notion but it was frequently so understood. Aristotle rightly points out this point: that the hard thing is doing, not listening or preaching.

Student: What is the meaning of the parallel with the arts here, when a few pages later he is going to say it is a wrong analogy?

LS: Yes, but the [analogy with the] arts goes through the whole book, as we have seen. We cannot understand moral virtue if we do not see both the kinship and the difference. By the way, up to the present day, what is much of our social science trying to do? To replace moral virtue by an art. Is this not so? Manipulation. Manipulating human beings in this and this direction, it's an art. And moral virtue is of course not manipulation. We will have plenty of opportunities to discuss it.

Now let us first follow Aristotle's argument. We cannot read everything. Now Aristotle is now concerned only with establishing one point: that moral virtue arises through habituation. And then he uses *the* example, the statesman, because we know morality and politics are coextensive, which doesn't mean they are identical. The statesman makes the citizens good. How? By habituating them, not by mere preaching.[22] He speaks here of the legislator, but the difference is here not so important. Now how does the statesman do it? Aristotle doesn't develop it here. The legislator [does it] of course by punishments and rewards, but that is not mere preaching and mere telling. Laws must have teeth in them. A mere teaching has no teeth in it. Yes?

Student: I was impressed here, though, that the lawgiver is making somebody else good. That's not a very good analogy.

LS: Why not? I mean, look, it is really very precise. The starting point of the whole argument was this: the variety of ends. Is there not some order? Is there not a single end toward which all converge? And Aristotle says: Well, let us look at the arts, which all pursue an end. The arts have a certain order, and they all lead however to one highest art called the political art. And then the end which the statesman pursues will be the highest end, given the fact that the statesman's art is the highest art, as everyone admits. You see, the people to whom Aristotle talks are not social scientists; they are citizens. No, I don't deny that a social scientist can be a citizen, but that is a mere accident. [Laughter] Yes, an accident in the strict sense: he happens to be a citizen. And that is happiness as is there defined: happiness, [its] core [is] virtue. So let us simply call it moral virtue and not happiness. Now how does he make the citizens good and doers of noble things? By punishment and rewards, by praise and blame; and this is something different[23] [from] mere teaching because this affects and changes the life of the people in a way in which a mere teaching cannot be expected to do.

Same Student: How does the statesman himself become good?

LS: Because others have educated him.

Same Student: But not by his habituation.

LS: [24]He became [morally good] by habituation. Sure. Yes, well, let us follow that. Now the premise which must be made clear and comes out in the sequel: we all undergo habituation, every man. There is no man in the state of nature, so to speak, who has not undergone any habituation. But it may be bad habituation[25] [or] good habituation. What we call absence of breeding is of course a kind of breeding, namely, bad breeding. People who don't take this into consideration don't understand. Good. Bad actions, regardless of whether in morals or in arts, produce bad habits or bad craftsmanship. Acting well as a child or as an apprentice makes you a good man or a good artisan. Everything depends on habituation from the earliest childhood. That is the first point. And that is true in a way even of the arts, but still more so of moral virtue. Now let us read 1103b12 to13. No, let us read before: "from building well they will become good builders and from building badly they will become bad builders." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Were this is 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.

LS: Yes, everything concerns the actions.[26] Yes, here is the proof. Some people are good and others are bad regarding both arts and moral virtue. This is a fact. Everyone knows that, and furthermore it is universally known that this is connected with the kind of breeding or training they got. This is all that Aristotle says. That's all. Now of course we could make some connections. Does it not depend very much on the nature? You see a fellow who is a particularly nice man, and you happen to know that he has the most horrible, hopeless [circumstances].[xii] You know all these stories you hear about separation of the parents and this kind of thing, and a slum area and what have you. So in other words, [that] nature plays also a great role we know, and Aristotle knew better than any man. Aristotle deliberately abstracts here for the time being from nature. He acts here provisionally on the premise that breeding is practically omnicompetent. He knows that's not the [. . .] but that is only provisional. Now let us read b26, following.

Mr. Reinken: (I have been urged to go over to the Ross by Mr. Seltzer.)
Since, then, the present inquiry does not aim at theoretical knowledge like the others (for we are inquiring not in order to know what virtue is, but in order to become good, since otherwise our inquiry would have been of no use), we must examine the nature of actions, namely how we ought to do them— (1103b12-31)

LS: Yes, you see how bad that is. "It is necessary to consider what regards the actions."[xiii] He doesn't say "nature." The word nature has been so misused all the time. "How one must do them." Go on.

Mr. Reinken:

[xii] The transcript has a blank space here.
[xiii] Strauss retranslates "*ta peri tas praxeis*."

since our actions, as we have said, determine the quality of our dispositions.[xiv]

LS: No—dispositions, how shall I say, I would say let us translate this word by "habit"[xv] . . . In other words, the habits, i.e., vices or virtues, are acquired by action. This we know by now. A man acquires a good habit by doing the corresponding things. He acquires a habit of bravery by doing brave deeds, relatively speaking; not necessarily opposing an elephant, but a dog.[27] You know how a child learns to make his first step. Everything concerns the actions: what we have to do in order to become good, not the mere understanding, that is to say the "what." This is another reason why the discussion of the coming into being of virtue precedes the full elucidation of the "what" of virtue, which comes later. Again we see here another point. Ethics is of no theoretical interest. We do not learn much about the nature of the whole from ethics, the reason being that the truth of ethics, as Aristotle will make clear in the sequel, resides in the particulars: what I, circumstanced as I am, should do here and now. That is the really true and genuine and substantive ethical statement, and this has of course no theoretical importance. It doesn't tell me anything about the whole. Now let us read the immediate sequel, where we left off.

Mr. Reinken:
Now the formula 'to act in conformity with right reason'—[xvi]

LS: Yes, this we may drop; the next sentence. [Mr. Reinken reads the very next sentence.] Yes, this I don't mean; the following.

Mr. Reinken:
But let it be granted to begin with that the whole theory of conduct is bound to be an outline only and not an exact system, in accordance with the rule we laid down at the beginning, that philosophical theories must only be required to correspond—

LS: No, this is just terrible, "that the speeches should be demanded." I mean, they make a terrible pedant out of Aristotle. [Rather], "that the speeches should be demanded according to the matter," to the subject.[xvii] Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
that the accounts we demand must be in accordance with the subject-matter; matters concerned with conduct and questions of what is good for us have no fixity, any more than matters of health.[xviii] (1103b31-1104a5)

LS: All kinds of things can heal a disease under [the right][xix] circumstances. The same is true of moral matters. Yes?

[xiv] Mr. Reinken has returned to the Rackham translation.
[xv] Strauss retranslates "*heceis*."
[xvi] In Rackham's translation: "Now the formula 'to act in conformity with right principle'."
[xvii] Strauss retranslates "*hoti kata tēn hylēn hoi logoi apaitēteoi*."
[xviii] Mr. Reinken reads here from Ross's translation.
[xix] The transcript has a blank space here.

Mr. Reinken:
The general account being of this nature, the account of particular cases is yet more lacking in exactness; for they do not fall under any art or precept but the agents themselves must in each case consider what is appropriate to the occasion, as happens also in the art of medicine or of navigation.

But though our present account is of this nature we must give what help we can. (1104a5-11)

LS: Yes, let us stop here. So moral matters have nothing stable. No rule of action can be universally valid. One has to act always with a view to the situation, as we would say today, with a view to the [occasion],[xx] to the proper moment. Now this is not peculiar to action; it is true also in certain arts like medicine and piloting. These examples, I believe, are deliberately chosen. In Plato these are also favorite examples. What is in common to these two arts of medicine and piloting?

Student: [. . .]

LS: No, the very obvious thing: life is at stake, obviously, in important cases. They are in this sense dangerous arts, and therefore the gravity of what is at stake here leads to the consequence—well, think of a simple situation. [In certain circumstances,] no one can say what might be reasonable[28]; for example, in a plague. What would you do in a plague? It is wholly unknown. The plague described by Thucydides: the Athenians had to do something.[xxi] Or in a storm; I mean, the pilot never weathered such a storm, and[29] [whether] he can do better than a nonpilot—I mean, you would still trust him more and yet what is really the [. . .] in such a situation. Now no one can say what might be reasonable in certain circumstances. This does not mean that nothing whatever can be said of universal validity. We have already said it, in a way: the action to be chosen has to be reasonable. This is universally valid. It must be most conducive to the end of the circumstances; in the case of the pilot, to bring the people to port safely.

Student: [. . .]

LS: Yes, that is in a way true, but we have to come to the description of virtue and see how [. . .]. That's later, when we come to that. But let us look at certain—for example, what does the pilot know? He knows the end: to take the vessel safely to port. And he has, of course, experience about what different things can be done in different cases. He is an experienced man. But what does the moral man know about the ends as described hitherto? It's very hard to say. That remains here in the dark. Yes?

Student: He knows that he wants happiness and he knows, I guess, what happiness is.

LS: Yes, but look, the situation is this. The comparison with medicine is of course very important. Virtue is something like health of the soul. But the physician learns first

[xx] The transcript has a blank space here.
[xxi] Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, book 2, chapters 47–54.

anatomy and physiology, and some things, you know, so that he knows what the health of the body is. Aristotle explicitly said no study of psychology, which would be a study of the normal human being. This is for the time being very dark, but I think we should leave it at that. Yes?

Student: Would this be the appropriate moment to take up Mr. Franklin's argument? If Aristotle is admitting here that the circumstances are going to determine what is right or wrong—does that make sense?

LS: Yes, in what sense, the circumstances? The circumstances determine to a considerable extent what has to be done. For example, take the case of a pilot. The circumstances do not determine what he should do. The end determines what he should do: to bring the people safe to port. Similarly, what is the moral man to think of? What is the end? That is dark hitherto. Morality is the end. So it is to act morally for the sake of morality. That seems to be the situation with virtue. That's dark. The question is whether Aristotle must not determine some end other than moral virtue itself in order to find his bearing, and perhaps this is the deepest difficulty in this book. Let us leave this open, and let us return to the explicit argument which can be stated as follows. Aristotle says, as it were, this: it is very hard, and in a way not very useful, to speak about moral virtue in general. But something can be said about moral virtue in general, and that he is going to do in the rest of book 2. Let us first read 1104a11, where we left off.

Mr. Reinken:
First of all then we have to observe, that moral qualities are so constituted as to be destroyed by excess and by deficiency—as we see in 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. The same therefore is true of Temperance, Courage, and the other virtues. The man who runs away from everything in fear and never endures anything becomes a coward—[xxii] (1104a11-21)

LS: Is this true, Mr. Boyan? Is this true, what he says here? The analogy is obvious, but is this true, that a man who is running away from everything is bound to become a coward? Is this true? And the next sentence, "the boy who never fears anything at all but runs toward everything becomes overbold, foolishly bold"—yes, good. That's all we need in order to see that we acquire virtue by doing actions which are somehow in the middle, and we[30] [do not need more] now.

Student: This is the man who becomes a coward, but at the same time this is the man who we call a coward.

LS: Yes, it only means our language is good. What else does it mean? You say he is

[xxii] Mr. Reinken returns to the Rackham translation, from which he will read for the remainder of the course.

a coward and we call him coward—

Same Student: No, what the text says, he becomes a coward. What I don't understand is if he does all these things, we say he is a coward and we don't say he becomes a coward.

LS: No, he speaks here of the becoming. He's still concerned with how we become virtuous, and he says someone who, as it were, is trained in running away from everything is bound to become a coward. A boy who is trained not to run away from anything but [to] run towards everything, including earthquakes and tigers, if he survives, [he] is bound to become overbold. More he doesn't say.

Student: He is not saying that this is the whole story, though.

LS: Of course not. Aristotle wants only to say now some very general things which can safely be said.

Different Student: A man who we call a coward doesn't become a coward because he ran away from everything he feared. He might have become a coward for other reasons.

LS: Yes. How? How?

Same Student: Maybe when he was a child, every time he opened his mouth he was whacked in the face.

LS: Yes, sure. Good. That is true. Yes, that is also true. Good. But I thought you meant something else. One can say some are born cowards and others are born overbold. Aristotle will speak of that later. That's an important point. But let us first finish this section where we left off. "Moderation and courage are destroyed." Do you have it?

Mr. Reinken:
Thus moderation[xxiii] and Courage are destroyed by excess and deficiency, and preserved by the observance of the mean. (1104a25-27)

LS: "Of the mean." Yes, that's the point. So Aristotle says now a bit more about the genesis of virtues and vices. First he said they are acquired by habituation, and now he says they are acquired by habituations in actions which are neither too much nor too little, which are in the mean. From this, incidentally, it would follow that in extreme situations, where the mean actions are not possible, the virtues will not be able to arise. A certain normality of life is required for the acquisition of virtue, which I believe is also a very commonsensical statement: that there are places and circumstances in which you would not look for much virtue. As Descartes once put it when he was accused of being a nobleman, you know, [by] some opponent, and he said to this professor, "I can't help it that in my view it doesn't make any difference where you make your first steps in virtue, whether[31] [in the] castle of a nobleman or [in the camp] among[32] followers of an army," because that

[xxiii] In Rackham's translation: "Temperance."

was the mother of that professor, you see. But as a rule, it does make a difference. Yes. You see, he was very vicious, malicious.

Student: Even in his theoretical description of the nature of virtue Aristotle presumes a more or less normal actual world. In other words, the theory is not pure theory but is based upon the average world in which—

LS: Yes, sure. Well, but this is again a very commonsensical statement frequently said and explicitly said by Aristotle in the *Politics*, that if people are very bad, children of tyrants, or very poor, the chances are that they won't be good.[xxiv] That he says. In other words, there must be a certain normality of the situation. If very young children are exposed to all kinds of ugly and base things, that doesn't do them any good. I think[33] most modern psychologists in the profession still admit that. But let us come back to the main point. No man grows up without breeding. First statement. There is no unbred man, strictly speaking, but the breeding is either good or bad breeding. But everyone has undergone some kind of breeding. If the breeding is good, he becomes good; if the breeding is bad, he becomes bad. Now, many objections. Sure, that's provisional. We later on [will] have to consider also the contribution of nature to virtue, nature apart from breeding. Some children are simply nice from the very beginning and others are nasty from the very beginning.[34] Aristotle knows [that], but he doesn't speak of that here. Good. Now Aristotle—let us first—we cannot read everything, unfortunately.

What is true of the coming into being of virtue is also true of the virtuous actions, i.e., of the actions which you perform after having acquired virtue. They are all also mean actions, in between a "too little" and a "too much." Now what is, however, the difference between the coming into being of virtue or vice and the actions following from the established habit? And Aristotle gives here this answer, roughly in 1104b3, following: the good man derives pleasure from the virtuous action. He no longer [needs] a painful effort to become good. He derives pleasure from it, whereas the one who is not yet good does not. All moral virtue has to do with pleasure and pain. In the first place, and this is the theme of what follows,[35] moral virtue consists in deriving pleasure above all from morally good actions. Secondly, all virtues are concerned with actions or passions. All actions or passions are followed by pleasure and pain; therefore all virtues are concerned with pleasure and pain. And this is indicated also by the fact [of] how we treat vicious actions. They are punished, and punishment means infliction of pain. Punishment is like medicine. But of course the difference is this, that medicine is not necessarily unpleasant, whereas the punishment is meant to be unpleasant: to correct a false kind of pleasure by inflicting pain, to make that pleasure painful. Moral virtue comes into being by pleasures and pains. Moral virtue is concerned with pleasures and pains. Now let us[36] begin in 1104b29.

Mr. Reinken:
The following considerations also will give us further light on the same point.

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

[xxiv] See, e.g., Aristotle, *Politics* 1295b1–27 and 1336b1–7.

opposites, the base, the harmful, and the painful. Now in respect of all these the good man is likely to go right and the bad to go wrong, but especially in respect of pleasure; for pleasure is common 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 to us pleasant.

LS: Yes. You see, there is this distinction between the pleasant, the noble, which of course would include the just; that's what we call moral—and the expedient or useful. But pleasure is most important insofar as it is most universal, i.e., common to all animals, and it follows all election: pleasure or pain follows. And now let us read the immediate sequel.

Mr. Reinken:
Again, the susceptibility to pleasure has grown up with all of us from the cradle.

LS: So in other words, as very young babies, when we are wholly unable to think of the expedient and the noble we already feel pleasure and pain. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Hence this feeling is hard to eradicate, being engrained in the fabric of our lives.

Again, pleasure and pain are also the standards by which we all, in a greater or less degree, regulate our actions. On this account therefore pleasure and pain are necessarily our main concern, since to feel pleasure and pain rightly or wrongly has a great effect on conduct. (1104b29-1105a7)

LS: Yes. You see, Aristotle agrees with hedonism about the fact that pleasure is natural and most fundamental and universal. But he does not arrive at a hedonistic conclusion, because what ultimately counts is what we find our pleasure in: to enjoy well or ill, and this is not simply defined in terms of pleasure.

Student: Didn't John Stuart Mill also speak of qualitative differences among pleasures?[xxv]

LS: Yes, but the question is this, whether John Stuart Mill understands the desirable kind of pleasure merely in terms of pleasure or in terms of something else. Very simply, hedonism: pleasure and pain. Now of course everyone admits that there are bad pleasures and good pains, but the question is whether the bad pleasure is [merely] a pleasure which is followed[37] by pain, and the good pain merely[38] [a pain which] is followed by pleasure. Or differently stated, as Epicurus did, the purest pleasure is the good pleasure, and the pleasure which is admixed with pain in any way is not so good; whereas the distinction is always made in terms of pleasure—of the greater pleasure, the purer pleasure, the more lasting pleasure, or whether it is made in terms of something else, so that the goodness of a pleasure does not depend on its being pleasant but on an independent principle of goodness. That is developed very simply in Plato's *Gorgias*, for example. Now this is the view which Aristotle takes. There is another principle which cannot be called pleasure. By the way, the simple form is this. All animals seek pleasure, but each species has pleasures of its own.

[xxv] See John Stuart Mill, *Utiliarianism* (1863).

The pleasures of an elephant are not the pleasures of a rat, and neither are the pleasures of man. Now the difference between elephant, rat, and man has in itself nothing to do with pleasure but is based on the constitution of the various species of beings. Do you see that? That is what Aristotle means. Mr. Erickson?

Mr. Erickson: [To the effect that Mill has been accused of inconsistency on the ground that there is a certain wavering in his work so that one is not sure precisely where he stood.][xxvi]

LS: Yes, he was a very amiable man, and consistency sometimes doesn't go together with amiability.

Mr. Erickson: The hobgoblin of small minds.

LS: This I would not necessarily say. One should try to be consistent. One should try to be consistent. It's better. It's also more pleasant.

Student: [Refers to the Christian martyrs who derived great pleasure from being thrown to the lions.][xxvii]

LS: Yes, that I do not know.

Same Student: So then the question becomes, isn't this a little bit more complicated than is stated here?

LS: Yes, but Aristotle says only something very simple, just as he said this very simple thing: the actions by the performance of which we acquire moral virtue are in between somehow, neither too much nor too little. He also says the whole field of morality has to do with pleasure and pains. That is not meant to be a complete description. Aristotle doesn't believe that you can simply reduce the noble to the pleasant.[39] The artifice, so to speak, of breeding is to make the noble things the most pleasant things for a man: a change in the desires of the human being so that they regard the noble things as the only pleasures which they really pay any attention to. In other words, if there is no coincidence of pleasure and noble, then the man is not good according to Aristotle. Very simply, a man who doesn't find pleasure in just actions is not truly just. If he thinks only, "It is my damned duty to do that . . . ," then Aristotle would say[40] he is not truly just. I mean, his whole heart is not in it. That is what Aristotle means: the just man enjoys acting justly. But you see, these are just actions. Just actions are not as such pleasant actions; they must become pleasant actions. I think if you start from the phenomena which he has in mind and not from the seeming difficulties in the abstract statements, it is not so hard to understand what he means.

Same Student: I think I understand, but I was trying to see how the martyrs receive pleasure.

[xxvi] As noted by the transcriber.
[xxvii] As noted by the transcriber.

LS: Yes, but to that extent you could say Aristotle answers this question. They found pleasure in the things which are truly—which deserve to be pleasant, to be attractive. Good. Yes?

Student: [As to whether the notion of the noble, the good, and/or the just becoming pleasant doesn't go against what Aristotle said in book 1, that the noble and the just are by nature pleasant.][xxviii]

LS: What does it mean, "by nature pleasant"? It means for a healthy mature human being. That's what he means by that.

Same Student: Would it be making him too modern, then, to say that he is saying that they ought to be pleasant?

LS: Yes, the question is: What is the status of the ought? Ought could imply that it is never really achieved. Aristotle takes it for granted that there are just or virtuous men. There are—not a mere ought. If you speak of ought you might imply it does never have to be actual. Good.

Same Student: But he would say that it is actual, in fully developed man—

LS: He would say: I know such people.

Same Student: the pleasant is the same as the good.

LS: Not quite. I mean, for example, I suppose when you come[41] into a warm room in a cold winter, a very cold winter, they also would say that's pleasant, as everyone would say, but they wouldn't pay any store by that. They would say, surely, "That's pleasant, but that's nothing which is important to me. What's important to me is what is the truly pleasant or by nature pleasant, justice and so." Mr. Lyons?

Mr. Lyons: What is the expedient—

LS: Oh, that is simple: what is good for something [but] not desirable in itself, whereas both pleasure and the noble are meant to be desirable in themselves. Bitter medicine is the simplest example. No one would choose bitter medicine for its own sake. You choose it because you believe it is conducive to health.[42] Preliminary examinations are only expedient,[43] not noble or pleasant. I believe there is universal agreement as to the question. Yes? Good. But let us continue at 1105a17. Next chapter, then.

Mr. Reinken:
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 temperate they must do temperate actions.

[xxviii] As noted by the transcriber.

LS: The difficulty which you all must have heard of. Yes? Good.

Mr. Reinken:
For if they do just and temperate actions, they are just and temperate already, just as, if they spell correctly or play in tune, they are scholars or musicians.

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 scholar only if you spell correctly in the scholar's way, that is, in virtue of the scholarly knowledge which you yourself possess.

LS: Now let us stop here for a moment. One can do the just things or the grammatical things without being just or a grammarian. Hence one can become just by doing the just things. That's what Aristotle wants to say. Well, the example which he has in mind [is] how you learn writing. At that time you were not writers. Let us call now a writer a man who can write; let us say, write English. You were not writers when you went to school the first day, and yet you began, you wrote. Why? Someone made something here on the blackboard—that's an "I"—at least that's how I began—and you imitated. And you imitated all [the] other letters; and after some time, after you had imitated [them] all and learned how to put them together, vaguely, then you were writers. But you did writing without being a writer. Similarly, children or young people do noble things without having a noble character. Now let us follow the sequel.

Mr. Reinken:
Moreover the case of the arts is not really analogous to that of the virtues. Works of art have their merit in themselves—

LS: Yes, works of art. Of course, he doesn't mean a painting, he means a shoe or a table and any other of these primary things. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
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 temperately if they themselves are of a certain sort, but only if the agent also is in a certain state of mind when he does them: first he must act with knowledge; secondly he must deliberately choose the act, and choose it for its own sake; and thirdly the act must spring from a fixed and permanent disposition of character. (1105a17-34)

LS: In other words, he must be in the habit of doing these things. Yes?

Mr Reinken:
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 temperate actions. (1005b1-5)

LS: Yes, let us stop here. Now Aristotle brings[44] into the open a question which must have been always in our minds: What is the difference between an art and moral virtue? Now let us take an example: a good carpenter. A *good* carpenter doesn't mean of course a morally good carpenter. He may be morally good. You see it very simply: as a good carpenter he makes good tables. Is he in addition a good man? He will also be honest as a buyer and seller. But a man may be a good carpenter and dishonest, and another may be a bad carpenter and very honest. I hope this is clear. These are the simple facts from which Aristotle thinks he should start. Now let us look at a good carpenter. He may be a man who sleeps or is drunk most of the time and does his work only in order to get money for[45] [more] whisky, and he can be the best carpenter in town. There are such people. You hardly get him because he is usually drunk, but if you [do] get him he does a much better job than any other carpenter. Is it not possible? So you see, he does not choose the good work for its own sake. That's not important for him. He may do it only because his longing for whisky is so great that he must pull himself together and make another table. But he is a good carpenter. But a good man who does a good action in order to get an equivalent of whisky is of course a bad man, because he doesn't do it for its own sake.

Student: Would you mind contrasting this with the doctrine of the *Republic*?

LS: The same thing. I mean, it is only because of my great reverence of the AMA that I didn't use the doctor.[xxix]

Same Student: How does the just man in the *Republic* compare with the artist or artisan?

LS: The same is true. A man can be a first-rate surgeon, for example, who [has] never [had] any [failures][xxx] and is perfect, and yet most of the time he is not available because he drinks. I'm not now going into the question [of] whether the drinking might not eventually lead to an impairment of his art, as it could, but it needn't. That's exactly the same case. We can say the virtuous man does the noble things for their own sake. He is dedicated to them. He enjoys doing them, whereas nothing of this applies to the good craftsman. He doesn't have to be dedicated to this craft and enjoy performing it in order to be good. Now[46] [this distinction] is crucial, absolutely crucial[47]—we will come across it again, especially in the sixth book—in order to understand the peculiar character of moral virtue, and also the enormous difficulty which Socrates creates when he says all the time, or seems to say, justice or the other moral virtues are just like the arts. You remember, constantly in the Platonic dialogues this occurs. And[48] [this] is of course absolutely a paradox, and even crazy. But what does Socrates have in mind? And when we understand that, we [will] understand also what Aristotle is driving at. Here we have the clear distinction of art and of moral virtue. And we can say art is strictly speaking amoral, which doesn't mean of course that it's immoral, [but] amoral. The morality going with it, for example, that he has to be cautious and careful, this is not strictly speaking morality, it is simply good craftsmanship. And here [in] moral virtue,[49] there is nothing corresponding to art proper.

[xxix] The transcriber notes: "Apparently misheard "doctor" as "doctrine." AMA refers to the American Medical Association.

[xxx] The transcript has a blank space here.

Where does the difficulty come from? The difficulty arises from the fact—no, this distinction between art and moral virtue, that is a way of Platonic arguing and also, by the way, in Aristotle. The difference: that art is in some way superior to moral virtue—the element of knowledge is so very important [in the former] and[50] so very unimportant [in the latter]—points to something higher than both, as it were, which has the good qualities of art and moral virtue without having the bad qualities, disadvantages. And what is that? Of course, philosophy. That is surely the Platonic way of looking at it, [and] to some extent also the Aristotelian way, that all human pursuits which are of any respectability point to philosophy. Now what is the precise situation? The philosopher has one thing in common with the artisan: that his perfection consists in knowledge. And that is the reason why Socrates always starts from the artisan, and even Aristotle starts from the artisan, as we have seen. He has this in common with the morally virtuous man: that he is dedicated, that he enjoys. That is of the essence: to enjoy the knowing, but in such a way that the dedication necessarily follows from the knowledge. This is surely the Platonic view, and I believe also the Aristotelian view.

Now this may sound paradoxical, but part of the paradoxy arises from that simple misconception, namely,[51] the identification of the philosopher in the Platonic or Aristotelian sense with the professor of philosophy. Now a man can be a professor of philosophy without having anything to do with philosophy except that he knows some facts which concern somehow the philosopher. In England they speak now of people who "do philosophy," which is a beautiful expression and brings out the difference. One could almost say "doing in philosophy." So when Aristotle in the tenth book of the *Ethics*, at the end, speaks of the theoretical life, all these reflections prepare for what he says about the philosophic life. Also the difficulty we discussed before: the physician, the man concerned with making bodies healthy, has a clear knowledge of the healthy body with a view to which he treats the sick body. What does the moral man have as an equivalent? Does he have an equally clear knowledge of the healthy soul, with a view to which he treats the sick souls? A great question, very dark. This other difficulty also points to a higher solution which can only be found in the theoretical life. Now Rabbi Weiss, you had a point to make?

Rabbi Weiss: Well, I was wondering whether the artisans or carpenters can do their work for the sake of the work—

LS: Oh, sure. Sure, but it is not of the essence of that artisan. That's the point. A man may be a first-rate carpenter and be exactly that good-for-nothing I described. I mean, of course he is the opposite of a good-for-nothing in his capacity as a carpenter. But otherwise, for his family and so on, he is a good-for-nothing. That's possible. Good. Well, I would like to take up this question—a few more passages—we have to discuss this briefly. Yes, this point is made clear throughout: a man is not moderate, for example, if he is moderate regarding the food he takes[52] [out of] fear of an operation, where a physician told him, "If you eat so much you [will] have to undergo an operation," and then he is moderate, he is not a moderate man because his motivation is fear and not the intrinsic beauty or decency of moderation.

Now then in the next chapter (I can only state this very briefly) he begins with a definition of virtue and he states the problem as follows. Virtue can be only one of three things: a *pathos*—the simplest translation would be a "passion," or you can also say an affect, an affection—a power, or a habit, *hexis*. And he shows that it is only a *hexis*; *hexis* is, of course, difficult to translate. The traditional Latin translation is *habitus*, and from which the English word "habit" is derived, and I have nothing against the translation but it[53] has become such a misleading word. I mean, virtue is of course a good habit, but it is also something else. When you speak of smoking as his "habit," you do not necessarily mean a bad habit; it's just his habit. But it is surely not the kind of habit which virtue is. The point which Aristotle makes is this: we have various kinds of passions. He enumerates eleven of them here at the beginning of that chapter: say, anger and fear, envy, hatred, emulation, and pity, and many others. Virtue is essentially a posture towards passions. It cannot be a passion: [it is] a posture toward. Therefore "habit" must here be understood in the meaning of a posture toward. The Germans have a very good word for *hexis*: *Haltung*. That is really almost the same as in Greek, derived from [*echein*], to have, to hold. *Haltung*. Well, attitude, this word has become[54] too frequently used, including the adjective "attitudinal," which you surely must have heard. But, well, let us try it for once and say [virtue is] an attitude towards a passion, and [it] can never be a passion. That is, I think, the key point which he makes. Virtue surely is not in any way a habit in the sense of something enslaving, but an acquired freedom, a mastery. When one reads Aristotle and thinks a bit about it on the basis of our ordinary understanding, one sees: what else could you say about virtue in the most general way except that it is a habit? And the same is true of vice. But there are some modern resistances about it which have to do with a certain crude notion of habit, something which you thoughtlessly, automatically, mechanically do. This is of course not meant by Aristotle. And probably a part of the modern disinclination toward the term "habit" is that in modern thought, especially since Kant, virtue is understood to originate radically in man's self-determination, and therefore also in man's self-education; whereas for Aristotle as well as for Plato it is clear that the foundations are laid in an education applied to the young by others, not self-education. And of course at a certain moment the individual must himself take the responsibility, but he is able to take the responsibility only by not having had the responsibility before but [rather by] being bred and trained up to this point. This is, I believe, one of the resistances which we have in modern times.

There is also one implication which I believe is not altogether irrelevant which Aristotle will bring out later on when he speaks of justice. When we say virtue is a habit in our present meaning of the term, we imply also, I believe, [the possibility of] an occasional very rare deviation does not destroy it, and I think that is also meant by Aristotle. So that, in other words, a just man doesn't cease to be a just man if he is very rarely unjust. I suppose Aristotle doesn't mean a gross injustice, a very great crime, but [when], for example, in simple human relations[55] he prefers for some silly reasons one individual to another, the less deserving to the more deserving, this kind of thing is strictly speaking an unjust action, of course,[56] [but] this would not affect his being a just man, fundamentally. I think that is also an implication of what he means by[57] [habit]. Now in the sequel he will develop this more fully: what kind of habit moral virtue is, because after all an art,

possession of an art, is also a habit but of a different kind. This he will develop in the sequel. Mr. Kirwan?

Mr. Kirwan: Can I go back to the distinction between art and moral virtue? The drunken carpenter: it seems hard to accept this, because it would seem that the carpenter, in order to become a good carpenter in the first place, would have to have an appreciation of his art, like it in and of itself, and then later maybe become drunk but—

LS: Well, we are speaking of the good carpenter. Now the apprentice cannot be a good carpenter because he is an imperfect carpenter, being only an apprentice. So that he may have had and must have had some interest and some devotion and so on when learning it, that may be perfectly true. And he may also have had it earlier, say, but then when he was thirty-five, forty, he began this unfortunate habit and his art did not suffer from it. This is perfectly possible and does not necessarily—I mean, if he would, how shall I say? If his art itself would suffer from it, of course then he would no longer be a good carpenter, but it needn't be [so]. I mean, I have seen such cases, you know, of amazingly competent people, much more competent [than others], and no moral qualities like honesty, reliability, temperance and so, or courage, going with that. That's possible. And what Aristotle makes clear is this: that here in this case we look only at his production. He makes a table[58] [better and in a shorter time than anyone] else can. That's a good carpenter.

Mr. Kirwan: The man who builds a table may have, even though he is an alcoholic—

LS: Well, I didn't even say alcoholic. Likes to drink.

Mr. Kirwan: Well, if he drinks in excess is what we're talking about. This man may value the end of a good table, may have a pride in his work that the habit of drinking may eventually dissolve, and you see this man in [the] process, taken to the extreme of delirium [. . .] he will no longer be a good carpenter.

LS: Yes, sure. That's clear. Sure. But for this reason I didn't speak of an alcoholic. But let me see. I can only say what—I may be wrong, but if I err I err with Aristotle, because Aristotle makes it very clear that this doing [is] for its own sake—that is what you mean: the pride in workmanship—is not of the essence of the work. This would, by the way, be a quite interesting study. In modern times, as you surely have heard or read, a kind of ethics of work emerged. You know? Ethics of work, and people have all kinds of theories about it. Puritanism, and ultimately even medieval monks, you know: *ora et labora*, and this kind of thing.[xxxi] Good. But we cannot be sure that this was the way in which the Greek artisans understood themselves and were understood. You know? We don't know that, in other words, whether this peculiar morality of workmanship is something peculiar to the Christian world. One would have to investigate that. And whatever this may be, in Aristotle there is nothing of this. I mean, to begin with, these statements—also even in Thomas Aquinas, when Thomas Aquinas says that only prudence, practical wisdom, requires moral virtue, [while] the other intellectual virtues, wisdom, art, and so on, do not.[xxxii] That sounds

[xxxi] For instance, Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905).
[xxxii] See St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, §§1172, 1274.

to begin with wholly unintelligible to us. But I think Thomas here renders only what Aristotle says, because these qualities which the philosopher must have, or the mathematician, for that matter, or the carpenter or the physician, which are necessary for making him a good carpenter, [a] good physician, [a] good mathematician, [a] good theoretician in general, are not understood as moral virtues here for[59] [a] simple reason. Yes, I know the reason; it is at my feet and I didn't see it: because he regards them only as means. Do you see? Only as means, and the moral man regards them as good for their own sake. That's the point. So it is obvious, then, and I overlooked it. You see what kind of things we can all do. That's the point. You see, in other words, if he has to be temperate, honest—granting you everything which I do not grant, but for argument's sake only—they would be necessary only as means. Nietzsche, who in a way understood Plato amazingly and without knowing that he was understanding Plato (no, that happens, because he had read it in [. . .] He did not recognize many things which he said) makes once this remark. He says the praise of the three things, chastity, poverty, and obedience, or let us rather say "submission," in order to make it simpler—the philosophers, he says, always lived that way on the whole. I mean, he doesn't speak of the professor. They lived that way,[60] not *qua* virtuous, but only because they regarded them as indispensable for the theoretical life. And he uses this example. He says that these temperances or abstinences of the philosopher are as little moral as those of a jockey, who also has to abstain from quite a few things in order to be a good jockey; and no one would say the jockey is a morally good man, but [only that] he is a good jockey.[xxxiii] That's the parallel. Do you understand it now? But in one thing you are right: there is something which developed in modern times, I think, very clearly, and which has something to do with the pride of the artisan in his work and in his activity, and generally speaking a morality of work by virtue of which many people, including artisans, may today feel very differently from a Greek artisan. That would in itself be of some interest, but it is surely not of philosophic interest. It would be of secondary historical interest. Yes, Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: The point where we were talking about how circumstances determine the actions to be taken: Did I understand you correctly as saying that it is possible that this is the crucial point of the book for Aristotle, in that wouldn't the end that he sets forth have to be changed in the circumstances?

LS: Not at the end, no. I mean, I would first take issues with the expression, "the circumstances determine." That is not what Aristotle means. He means that the acting man [acts] with a view to the circumstances, not determined by the circumstances[xxxiv] from the back and being as it were a play thing of the circumstances, but looking as it were sovereignly at the circumstances; that given this set of circumstances I can only act this way, and given an entirely different set of circumstances I can only act [in] an entirely different way. It is not a determination by circumstances, but [the act of] looking at the circumstances [and] reaching one's decision on the basis of an appraisal of the circumstances.

[xxxiii] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Third Essay, §8.

[xxxiv] The transcript indicates uncertainty about an expression Strauss apparently uses here: "*artergo* (?)."

Mr. Butterworth: But isn't it possible given a certain set of circumstances that a man would have to abandon the end of moral virtue?

LS: No, Aristotle would deny that. He would simply say if the action which he commits in these extreme circumstances and which he commits in this situation conscientiously—in other words, not for a reason of cowardice or any other reason—then it is a conscientious act. But Aristotle will make considerable qualifications.[61] We will see that at the beginning of the third book, where he will say that there are certain actions which can under no circumstances become conscientious actions.

Mr. Butterworth: Yes, but wasn't it once in the fall quarter that you finally said that maybe Aristotle—

LS: Yes, but that is very complicated in Aristotle. I mean, the argument proceeds and one has to go much beyond that, and then the great question arises, of course. Then you would go into the whole question of politics. You know, in the day by day life of the citizen, very important questions do not arise at all. But they [do] arise in critical circumstances of the commonwealth. Well, the simplest example: lying is generally regarded as low and base, but this does not prevent any state that ever was and ever will be from employing spies. Now a spy is of course a professional liar, because if he would come, say, to Russia and would say, "I am here an agent to the State Department," you can imagine how effective his espionage would be. So he must—[62]whether he is a simple agent or whether he is an ambassador doesn't make any difference as far as the morality of the action is concerned, nor does it make any difference whether the man goes out as a spy himself or sends[63] [another] out as a spy. Morally it's the same; perhaps even graver. Good. Now if this is so, then a great difficulty arises. That is what we discussed in Xenophon. There is a simple conversation between Cyrus and his father, when his father[xxxv] says, "Well, all these things which I was strictly forbidden to do, to steal, to lie, to rob, to kill, now I am supposed to do as noble actions."[xxxvi] This is the problem. In other words, it would not arise in daily life in [a time of] peace, but the gravity of the question is not dependent on the frequency of the occurrence. I hope you will admit that. I mean, there are people who are very nice but not very thoughtful, who say [that] what happens very rarely you don't have to consider. Now that would be indeed a pleasant way of looking at things. Life becomes much easier. But it is of course philosophically impossible. Good.

Mr. Butterworth: But am I not right in sort of pushing that even from this broader perspective, the perspective of a statesman, that that end which Aristotle has set up now in referring to moral virtue has to be—

LS: Yes, but then we would have to go much beyond that. We would have to raise the question which Aristotle doesn't raise explicitly at all then: What are the ends or end with a view to which we ultimately choose? For example, if you say[64], as Aristotle would, clearly, "We choose bravery, a brave action, because of its intrinsic nobility," then this doesn't dispose of the question, Why are actions of courage regarded as noble? Why are they given

[xxxv] The transcriber notes "Slip of the tongue."
[xxxvi] Xenophon, *Cyropaedeia* 1.6.27–30.

this high status? Then you have to bring up the question "Why?" which of course Plato brings up,[65] [and] which all other philosophers, I believe one could say, bring up, except Aristotle. And then you would have to come back, for example, to the *polis*. Obviously, if you have a *polis* and therefore you have the possibility of war, you must have soldiers. And therefore from this point alone courage would be highly praised. Aristotle will make clear that this is not the only reason why we praise courage highly, but we don't have the rough material for that.

Student: [Regarding Job],[xxxvii] if the virtuous man simply is in a sense like the child regarding happiness, virtuous without knowledge of a certain kind, this is the same as you find in religion.

LS: No, I mean, the seriously religious man . . . Yes, but that is a question, whether you could call the way in which Aristotle's gentleman "knows" that the virtuous actions are choiceworthy for their own sake—whether you can call that faith.

Same Student: I was thinking that regarding happiness, the moral man would not say that now also he is at the same time happy, but he is just like the child.

LS: Oh no. Aristotle means this—I mean, it all turns around this key proposition of Aristotle, that the actions which are by nature pleasant are the moral actions. If this is true, then it follows that only the morally virtuous man can be happy.

Same Student: Can be, but then another element would seem to come in in the sense of knowledge.

LS: Yes. Well, what is the knowledge? The knowledge you meant here is only that this now, not to run away here but to run away there, is noble. That's all the knowledge you need. But we come to that. Aristotle has not yet defined what he means by that . . .

Same Student: [. . .]

LS: No, one thing is clear, that the morally virtuous man is for Aristotle not the highest human being. That is perfectly clear. That's the difference between Aristotle and surely Kant, but also some things in certain Stoics. There is something in Stoicism which points in the direction that the morally virtuous man is the most perfect human being. But in Kant, and not only in Kant, of course, [but] in the whole eighteenth century, they tried to replace the religious man, if I may say so, as the best man by the merely moral man, and this [continues] up to the present day. That is modern moral rationalism. That was not in Aristotle. Historically immensely powerful; I mean, the better liberals today, that's their view, that the highest that one can expect and for the sake of which everything else should be arranged is the morally virtuous man. They don't speak anymore—they would probably say the man of integrity, or they have other—but they mean fundamentally this. For

[xxxvii] As noted by the transcriber.

example, Mr. Miekeljohn on this campus:[xxxviii] he is a kind of Kant. He would take such a view.

Student: A man who fulfills his potentialities completely.

LS: Yes, that is something different, because what is the order of rank among the various potentialities? That's different. But the primary thing is, I believe, the status of morality.

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[1] Moved "hapiness.
[2] Moved "is."
[3] Deleted "when."
[4] Deleted "and."
[5] Deleted "again."
[6] Deleted "too."
[7] Deleted "and he has this on."
[8] Deleted "these are."
[9] Deleted "doing certain things."
[10] Deleted "them."
[11] Moved "in the training of animals."
[12] Deleted "at a certain point he says."
[13] Moved "is."
[14] Moved "is."
[15] Deleted "only."
[16] Deleted "the."
[17] Deleted "that."
[18] Deleted "it."
[19] Deleted "there should"
[20] Deleted "again."
[21] Deleted "the art."
[22] Deleted "or."
[23] Deleted "than."
[24] Moved "morally good."
[25] Deleted "and."
[26] Deleted "No, I'm sorry."
[27] Deleted "but."
[28] Moved "in certain circumstances."
[29] Deleted "that."
[30] Moved "not more do."
[31] Deleted "on a."
[32] Moved "the camp."
[33] Deleted "the."
[34] Deleted "That's what."
[35] Deleted "in the first place."
[36] Deleted "here."
[37] Deleted "merely because it is followed."
[38] Deleted "because it."
[39] Deleted "I mean, and."
[40] Deleted "then."
[41] Moved "in a cold winter, a very cold winter."
[42] Deleted "or."
[43] Deleted "are."

[xxxviii] Alexander Meiklejohn (1872–1964), reformer of undergraduate education in America and author of *Free Speech and Its Relation to Self-Government* (New York: Harper, 1948).

[44] Deleted “now.”
[45] Deleted “further.”
[46] Deleted “this.”
[47] Moved “this distinction.”
[48] Deleted “which.”
[49] Deleted “and here.”
[50] Deleted “here.”
[51] Deleted “for.”
[52] Deleted “because this moderation may be due to.”
[53] Deleted “is.”
[54] Deleted “so—.”
[55] Deleted “that.”
[56] Deleted “and.”
[57] Deleted “it.”
[58] Deleted “as good and in as short a time as no one.”
[59] Deleted “the.”
[60] Deleted “but.”
[61] Deleted “because.”
[62] Deleted “regardless of.”
[63] Deleted “him.”
[64] Deleted “this.”
[65] Deleted “but.”

Session 5: April 16, 1963
Moral virtue and aiming at the mean; virtue and the *polis*
(Book 2.6-9)

Leo Strauss: [In progress] —that you brought up, the last question, because it would be much more easy to understand than the references to Aristotle's *Logic* and the *Metaphysics* which you made, and which of course are in a way inevitable.[i] Of course Aristotle speaks about quite a few of the subjects which are barely alluded [to] here[1] [in] great detail in the logical writings, *Metaphysics*, and so on. And the natural thing, if one doesn't understand these terms, is to go back to these things. I mean, that's perfectly inevitable, but it is not wise with regard to us, you see, because we then try to explain something difficult to understand by something more difficult to understand. Because these passages in the *Metaphysics* or in the *Logic* are of course not so simple, and you look up Ross's translation—[2]or for that matter, if you know Greek, the Greek is not necessarily helpful.[3] Do you see what I mean? [A] general rule: one must never try to explain the dark or the obscure, these blatant things don't need explanation, by reference to things which are still more obscure. This is difficult, and of course you are not the only one who does this, by no means; the literature abounds with this kind of thing. But, as I say, when you refer to this manifest problem: Aristotle says there are certain actions which are simply and unqualifiedly bad under all circumstances and I, who claim to be in fundamental agreement with Aristotle, say the opposite, then that is his home—I mean, and also the example obviously is easily intelligible to everyone, even if he has never looked at Aristotle.

Now to come to a few specific points. The definition of virtue: of course it is meant to be a correct definition, and therefore it will be a definition by genus and specific difference, but you must here make a distinction. There are many virtues, and virtue is of course primarily always a specific virtue, say, courage. And courage would then mean, [in] the definition: courage is that virtue (that's the genus) related to[4] fear and confidence (which is the specific difference). And now of course there is also needed a definition of virtue as such, and here again we find the same difficulty. We have to indicate the genus to which virtue belongs, say, state of character or something of this kind, and then what kind of a state of character, because there are states of characters which are not virtues. That's clear. This was not perhaps brought out very clearly by you.

Now the translation, *Haltung*, which I suggested last time, has this advantage:[5] it is almost a literal translation of the Greek word *hexis*, derivative from *echein*, to have, to hold. But I did not make clear at that time that *Haltung* in this emphatic sense in which I used it suggests rather virtue than vice. I mean, this free sovereign attitude towards these creeping desires, that is of course characteristic of virtue rather than of vice. Now you see

[i] Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

what I mean.[6] [Take] the man who has a vice of complete lack of self-control: he doesn't have an attitude of sovereignty over these desires. Do you see that point? He is completely under the spell. What Aristotle means by stating that he has a *hexis* is that his being a slave of the passions is something for which he is responsible, which he has acquired by habitual subservience, and for that reason it is also a *hexis*, habit. But *Haltung* is for this reason perhaps not such a good translation as I suggested first.

Now when you speak of the occasional remark of Aristotle in 1106a6, when he calls the virtues dispositions, according to the translation of Ross and Rackham, I would say I think the translation is correct[7] [of] the word which he used here, *keisthai*.[ii] But while Aristotle may very well distinguish elsewhere[8] between a disposition in the sense you said, something which may last only for a short while, and a *hexis* or habit which is lasting, there is no reason why in a more provisional discussion he might [not] disregard the difference between disposition and habit and take them together [in contrast] with every kind of motion [the word which he used here is *kineisthai*] as motion). After all, the disposition, however short lasting, is not a motion. A state is a status; a state or status may last for only a second, but as status it is not a motion. So in other words, this kind of thing is based on the fact that one does not take into account sufficiently the fact that Aristotle is nowhere pedantic. Now of course this doesn't mean that he is, how shall I say, a man of levity;[9] on the contrary, because pedantism can be said to be a form of levity although it looks very heavy, namely, because it is based on a lack of reflection. There are various strata, so to speak, an infinite variety of strata, and it is[10] [neither] possible nor advisable always to speak on the highest level of theoretical reflection, not only because it is inconvenient but also [because] you miss certain things which you see more clearly if you are not so precise at every point. Aristotle's philosophy has always the character of an ascent from what we all know and see immediately to the principles, from what is first for us to what is first in itself, and this must somehow be preserved if we want to understand anything. Aristotle is[11] such a great teacher as perhaps no other philosopher is because he always keeps us reminded of the character of our knowledge as an attempt to ascend from the primary given to what one can call the principles.[iii]

So now I really should say something of a more general nature about Aristotle's *Ethics*, but somehow I believe it is wiser first to discuss our assignment. Now we are discussing now the second book of the *Ethics*, and I remind you of the overall context. We have first been told that the highest good is happiness and that the core of happiness is virtue. We naturally have to know what[12] virtue [is], and this, what is virtue, is the subject of the second book. To that extent the plan is perfectly clear. Now I[13] discussed last time briefly the difficulty that Aristotle discusses first: How is virtue acquired? [And he does this] before he discusses what virtue is, and he begins the discussion of what virtue is in 1105b19, where Mr. [Mueller]'s paper started. But we had last time a brief discussion, at

[ii] The word in the passage referred to here (1106a6) is "*diakeisthai*."
[iii] The transcriber notes: in the seventh line of this page Dr. Strauss apparently left out the word "not" between the words "might" and "disregard," and it should be inserted by the reader for the correct meaning of the sentence. The transcriber goes on to note that Mr. Burnam raises a question about class scheduling, and that Strauss settles the scheduling matter and continues.

least, of the first section up to 1106a13, and we will continue there, 1106a14. Now we have been told that virtue—of course also vice—is a habit, a habit acquired by habituation, and it is not something which we possess by nature without any effort on our part, as we possess a stomach or the sense of sight, and even the faculty of reasoning. But this is too general. We must also know what kind of *hexis*, of habit virtue is, because there are other habits apart from virtue and vice.

Now what Aristotle answers in general is this: it is a *hexis*, a habit, which makes the being in question[14] [behave] well and[15] [do] its work well. The distinction is not entirely irrelevant, because what we are concerned with in every case is how a being looks; its looks and its power. So in other words, if you have a horse which fulfills all other functions of a horse but just doesn't look like a horse, then there would be something wrong. And in the case of man[16] [this point] is perfectly clear, where Aristotle had said—we must [not] forget this shocking assertion—that happiness requires also beauty. Now, so this perfectly happy man who is as handsome as Lord Alexander, perhaps, or more, he must also of course not only look so well, he must also do the work of man well. Both things belong somehow together, and this we must mention in passing. Now what Aristotle says here then at the beginning is [that] every being has its specific virtue. For example, the eye has a virtue different from the virtue of the stomach, obviously. A good stomach is good not by virtue of seeing but by virtue of contributing to digestion, and vice versa. Then Aristotle gives also the example of the horse and this is a typically Aristotelian example, of which I don't know whether Mr. [. . .] —you felt a difficulty here; that was my impression. What was the difficulty?

Student: My question was, what does it mean to say a horse was good in itself?

LS: Well now, what he says: it makes a horse excellent, let us say, and good at running and carrying the man who is on his back, and not running away in battle. Yes, I think it has something to do with the difference between doing the work [and] having the power [on the one hand], and on the other hand what we may loosely call the looks. A horse might conceivably be very excellent in running, in carrying the man on its back, and in not running away in front of fire, artillery fire maybe, and yet somehow be deficient, ill-looking, and, I don't know, [have] other kinds of defects. And therefore we must distinguish that.

Same Student: [Objects to the translator's term "a horse good in itself."][iv]

LS: Yes, well, that was his attempt to translate it. He says literally, the virtue of a horse makes[17] the horse [both] respectable, excellent, however you want to translate that word *spoudaios*, and good at running and so on. That is what he says. But I think this distinction between looks and powers, which goes very deep into the whole prehistory of these problems, is helpful to the understanding. I thought you found a difficulty in the fact—and a great difficulty—that Aristotle, this damned anthropocentric fellow, judges the goodness of a horse entirely in terms of its usefulness for man. You know, after all, a horse might be[18] [useless] for these human purposes and even be a better horse. A large

[iv] As noted by the transcriber.

literature exists about the effect of domestication on animals. You know, a real lion is much better than a lion in a cage, and so on and so on. Yes, but Aristotle of course thinks, naturally, that for the animals which can be domesticated the domestication is an improvement, because it is an indirect participation in reason. Sure. And that is not a human prejudice, but that it is objectively so because reason is higher than nonreason. But however this may be, surely Aristotle speaks here only of the virtue of a horse understood as a domestic animal or a war animal. And whether the virtue of a horse taken only as a natural being is different, that he doesn't discuss here, and there is no difficulty in that, I believe.

Student: It would affect his point though, wouldn't it?

LS: Which? Not necessarily. No, surely not.

Same Student: So that if you said a horse is a good horse if he ran in the fields well or reproduced a lot or something—

LS: Yes, the latter.

Same Student: That would be ok.

LS: Yes. Yes, certainly. Let us begin to read at 1106a24, because we cannot possibly read everything. So in other words, since this is so, the virtue of man of course would be the habit through which man will become good and by starting from which he will do his work well. As is true of the eye, the stomach, the horse, [so it is] also true of man. That's clear. Now?

Mr. Reinken:
We have already indicated what this means; but it will throw more light on the subject if we consider what constitutes the specific nature of virtue.

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 lb. of food is a large ration for anybody and 2 lb. a small one: it does not follow that a trainer will prescribe 6 lb., for perhaps even this will be a large 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.

LS: Milon was a terrific athlete, you know.[v] I don't know how many pounds of steaks he had to eat every day—I believe a whole steer, it was said, or something of this kind. Quite a fellow, surely. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
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. (1106a24-b8)

LS: Yes, let us stop here for one moment. Now Aristotle is on his way to tell us what kind of habit virtue is, a good habit; and vice, a bad habit. But what is good? What does goodness mean? In a general way Aristotle says "the equal." He could also have said the proper, the fitting, and this is of course simply tautological, as people would say. But it is naturally not tautological, because all these different words point to different things. They therefore help us on our way. Now the equal is something like the middle, like the mean, but here are two kinds of mean. And I think Aristotle is here very explicit, because the gentlemen to whom he talks are not mathematicians. So he explains to them some very simple things: that if you have here, say, this, there is one mean here, and that is the same for all. All people do it. But then there is another kind of mean which is not that mathematical mean (although in certain cases it might coincide with the other), but which is the mean for us. And he gives a simple example from gymnastics or medicine: you must not eat too much, that's excess; and not eat too little, that's defect. Is it not perfectly simple? And this varies from individual to individual. It varies, but not only [with respect] to the individual—for example, whether he is very tall or very small and this kind of thing—but of course also [with respect] to the situation. For example, if they had not had any food to speak of for a whole week, say, in war, and then they eat, naturally something more is the mean. Much more may be the mean on that day than during peacetime, that goes without saying. In brief, the mean in the nonmathematical sense is determined with a view to the whole of [the] circumstances, of which the bodily character of the individual is only one part: the job at hand, the weather, age, and so on and so on. And this is the point which we must keep in mind: that this mean with regard to us, with regard to the individual to be treated, is not a peculiarity of morals but also of the arts. At least—well, obviously of the art of a shoemaker. Clearly the shoemaker will not make the same shoes for all people who have even the same size of[19] feet. Obviously not, because are they supposed to be used for dancing or are they supposed to be used for hiking? That would obviously make a great difference as to what a good shoe would be for the occasion. But this is very important, that, to repeat, the same is true of the arts, and we must know[20] the difference between the mean as sought by the arts and the mean as sought by morals. That we must keep in mind. That is not in any way clear. Now read the immediate sequel, please.

Mr. Reinken:
If therefore the way in which every art or science—

LS: *Every* art or science. You know that. Yes?

[v] Milo of Croton, wrestler and Olympian in the sixth century BCE.

Mr. Reinken:
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— (1106b8-14)

LS: Let us stop here for a moment. Here Aristotle brings in some evidence. After all, he seems to speak quite suddenly of the mean, and it is not necessary when you hear the good that you think of the mean. I suppose there are quite a few cultures in which this identification of the good with the mean would not occur as naturally as it does in Aristotle. Aristotle knows this, somehow, and he gives another example. There is some parallel between morality and art; this we know from the very beginning. Parallel. And now in the arts it is perfectly clear; everyone sees that. What is the perfect work of art? We are not speaking now of fine art [but] simple homely arts like the shoemaker, carpenter. What do you say of the perfect work of art? It is exactly right. That means you cannot add something to it or take away from it. Everything is necessary. This is what we understand by perfect thing, by perfect work of art. And the same of course would also be true—that as it were confirms the prejudice that moral goodness too might be a mean. Yes?

Student: But at least for us, isn't it true that the idea of virtue as a mean has slightly an unpleasant taste to it? I'm thinking of the idea of compromise as not being a positive virtue in itself, but just a balancing of—

LS: Yes, or mediocrity. Horace could call it golden mediocrity, but when you hear today the word mediocrity that is—in the Latin it could very well be called mediocrity.[vi] Yes, sure. In one of the early speeches in Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* there is something about that along these lines: that this kind of virtue as mediocrity is something very low.[vii] We will see that Aristotle was by no means blind to it, to this difficulty, but we must follow him first in many spheres. For example, in the arts it is undoubtedly true that you have to keep in the mean. There is always a possibility of doing wrong by doing too much, and of doing wrong by doing too little. That's a mean. Why should this not be true of actions? Now let us see. For example, a perfect book; let us take something more difficult than a shoe. A perfect book is also a book where you cannot take away anything nor add to anything; otherwise it wouldn't be perfect. I mean, if a sensible critic can say this and this important thing which ought to be in, say, this motivation for this action of this individual or this footnote in a scholarly book, then to that extent, if this is done not deliberately for good reasons, then it's of course a defect. But on the other hand, if you look not at a perfect book but at the perfect doctrine, perhaps you would have difficulties[21] in determining [it] in terms of [the] mean. You would simply say the perfect doctrine is the doctrine which is adequate as an account of a matter to be discussed, and the mean

[vi] Horace, *Odes* 2.10.
[vii] See the second speech in part 1 of Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarasthustra*, "The Academic Chairs of Virtue."

consideration is entirely irrelevant. It may be an excess of brevity or an excess of explicitness and length; that is irrelevant to the doctrine. So Aristotle speaks only here of moral matters, not of intellectual matters. You must keep this in mind. Plato, who is much more outspoken on these subjects than Aristotle is, has suggested in one of his dialogues roughly this:[22] regarding moral matters, mean (he doesn't use the word, but he means it); regarding matters of the intellect, excess. No excess can be great enough. Well, very simply, if you call a thinker a moderate thinker you couldn't say anything worse about him, but if you say of a man, "in his action he is moderate," you praise him. So mean has only to do with the arts and with moral matters. Good. Now let us continue where we left off, Mr. Reinken.

Mr. Reinken:
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. I refer to moral virtue, for this is concerned with passions[viii] and actions, in which one can have excess or deficiency or a due mean. (1106b14-18)

LS: Now let us stop here for one moment—I'm sorry, because we have to discuss it. So Aristotle has said something about the arts, and of the arts it makes very much sense, of the shoemaker or carpenter, to say the good work is in the mean. And this creates some plausibility that the same might be true of virtue, moral virtue. But is there not an important difference between the two? Is this not, so to speak, the mistake of Plato and Socrates, to have said virtue is an art, as Aristotle[23] [indicates] all the time? Yes, there is a difference, Aristotle says very emphatically. There is a difference, and what is that? Moral virtue is much more exact than art. This is very strange, very strange. And why is it very strange? Yes?

Student: Because I would say that it would be easier to find the mean in art than the mean in moral virtue.

LS: Yes, that has nothing to do with the exactness, has it? I mean, for example, say, the higher branches of mathematics may be very difficult to learn, and yet they might have the highest degree of exactness. No, but Aristotle himself had said something: You shouldn't expect too high an exactness in morals. That's the point. Now how do we explain that? Let me state the difficulty. The good in matters of morals depends decisively on circumstances, and therefore no exactness should be expected. That is what Aristotle had told us before. He went even further: he said, when speaking of the difference between arts and moral virtue, that while in art knowledge is of course decisive, in moral matters knowledge is the least important point. No knowledge to speak of there, he had said in 1105b1 to 4. Now Aristotle says the opposite is true. Moral virtue is more exact than art and better than art. Why?

Same Student: Well, he says "if," doesn't he?

[viii] In Rackham's translation: "emotions."

LS: No, that he says simply. Moral virtue is more exact and better than every art, just as nature is. This is not contingent, no. No, no. Now Thomas Aquinas explains this as follows: the good man cannot act badly if he wills, for his goodness consists precisely in never willing to act badly.[ix] The fundamental will of acting well makes impossible a momentary will to act badly. That has nothing to do with a denial of freedom of the will. But look at it—I mean, a good man is a man who always wills to act justly, for example. If he has a whim just now to act unjustly just for the fun of it or to [. . .].[x] I don't know what, then to that extent he is not a good man, because it is really very bad of him to make jokes about such matters, in such matters. He is only inclined to the good, as nature is. But the artisan can do his work badly if he wills. That is not essential to him as an artist or artisan, that he does it well. The inclination to the good work is not a part of the artisan as artisan. What is essential to the artisan is the capacity to do good work, not the inclination to do that. There is a Platonic dialogue in which that is discussed, especially the larger *Hippias*.[xi] A man who possesses an art is shown by the fact that he can consciously do well as well as badly. The man who possesses knowledge—well, the example is lying. Who is the best liar? Of course, a man who knows best. You can't lie about the back side of the moon if you do not know the truth. I mean, you can make unsupported assertions; that's not lying. But to lie, consciously to say the untruth, you must know. And therefore the knower is the best liar. Good. That is the kind of knowledge in art: the artisan can deliberately, willingly do the bad thing because he can do the right thing. And the case of moral virtue is different. Moral virtue does not permit this two-sidedness to the moral man which the artisan as artisan necessarily has. Good. There are of course other differences between the arts and moral virtue, which we will take up later when we come to the sixth book. One I could mention already now, that every art deals with a partial good: shoe, house, what have you. And moral virtue is concerned with man's whole good, at least up to a point. Now Aristotle continues as follows—we do not have to read that—

Student: Can I ask a question?

LS: Yes?

Same Student: What is the difference between *aretē* and what some people call an ethical virtue?

LS: *Aretē*, virtue, is a general term, a generic term: [it] applies to the stomach, to a mouse, to a lion, to a dog.

Same Student: [. . .]

LS: Well, among the human virtues it is distinguished especially from intellectual virtue. So my simple example: mind sharp like a steel trap, intellectual virtue; clean like a

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[ix] See St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, §451.
[x] The transcript has a blank space here. The transcriber notes that Strauss "used [a] French expression."
[xi] See, for instance, Plato, *Hippias Major*, 296b–c.

hound's tooth, ethical virtue; an honest man, a reliable man, to take present-day examples. This is ethical virtue, but intelligent, clever—

Student: *Aretē*: would this be what?

LS: Applies to both. Sure. Excellence is a simple translation for [the] *aretē* of any being.

Student: I think I understand this distinction between the good artist and the virtuous man, but I'm not sure it's well taken. Do we call an artist good who does bad work?

LS: That is a necessary consequence of his being a good artist. He[24] [could] do it deliberately bad.

Same Student: How are we going to know whether he is good or bad—

LS: Well, I mean, he makes now an atrocious blunder. Sometimes he's like a clown: atrocious things in handling a table or whatever it may be. A second later he does it infinitely better than anyone else and you see that he is—

Same Student: But then you know he's good, because he did it infinitely better, not because he did it badly.

LS: Did anyone ever say you can recognize the goodness of an artisan from the fact that a single man does a very inept thing in hammering or whatever he does? No one says that. You must take the whole thing. Look at it in a practical way. You come into a room in a carpenter's shop and see someone handling a hammer in a preposterous manner. And then of course you would say he should have become perhaps a professor, but surely not a carpenter. And then you see a minute later he does this in a superbly competent manner, and[25] you say he must have been joking. But he could not have done this jokingly if he did not possess the art. But it is of the essence of the artisan that he can do it deliberately both ways. The moral man cannot do it deliberately both ways. I mean, to that extent he is simply not a just or moderate man. I mean, think of this: a man who would, for example, rob—you know, with a gun—[26]a man just for the fun of it. Then you can say, of course, he may have a certain art of handling a gun. This may be proved by that (or handling human beings in general, appealing to their fear), but you cannot possibly say this is a just man. A just man would not do this even in a joke, of course.

Student: Another relevant point to the answer: the good artist may in fact do things badly: the whole existence of parody, if not Plato in the *Menexenus*, [then] Gilbert and Sullivan.[xii]

LS: No, that is something different. Well, look: you must admit that everyone who enters the theater, and especially if there is written very clearly, "Comedy," [then that] excludes for I believe everyone the suspicion that this is done in life. It is done on the stage. I

[xii] W. S. Gilbert (1836–1911) and Arthur Sullivan (1842–1900), Victorian-era composers of popular operas and songs.

mean, whatever terrible things happen in Platonic dialogues, perhaps from time to time this is also clearly some—everyone knows that. Every novel you read is of course, a lie. For example, that Mr. Miller should have loved Miss Smith, and then all kinds of conflicts [ensue]. All these things are of course not true. Obviously not. I mean, on this and this day this and this happened: everyone knows that's not true, but no one ever said, "These are all liars." And if the Greeks said the poets are all liars they did not mean that by it, they meant something else. So this creates no difficulty. Indeed, one thing is of course true. People who are in an extreme way concerned with morality, in an unreasonable way concerned with morality, objected to art throughout the ages, as you know. Think of Plato, think of Rousseau, and not to mention many others who said art is[27] [immoral], not for some reason for which D. H. Lawrence—this kind of thing—but on the simple ground that they are all lying all the time. But you must admit that is not a serious question on our level.

Student: How can we even call art a virtue if by definition virtue is a habit, and if the artist is not habituated to always performing good art, how is he even virtuous in what he does . . .

LS: But the artisan is not as such virtuous, as I tried to explain last time. No, but this is exactly the question.

Same Student: I thought we talked about intellectual and moral virtue. Virtue.

LS: Yes, yes.

Same Student: But virtue is habit and the artist is not habituated . . .

LS: No, no, not every virtue is a habit. But let us put it this way. Let us limit ourselves to the simple case of moral virtue and art. Both are habits. That is exactly the problem. What *habit* is moral virtue as distinguished from art? That is the question we discussed. Now let us really go on first and we will then take it up completely.

Now in the immediate sequel Aristotle says we must in each case—for example, regarding fearing or pity, we must not fear or pity more than[28] is proper, nor pity and fear less than[29] is proper. There is in each case—in the case of fear, in the case of pity, and in the case of each individual, namely, in the case of each particular situation of this individual—only one way of acting rightly, and innumerable ways of doing either too much or too little. This is the problem here. Now to see the difference. First, by a simple example. Let us take something which is helpful. Pascal spoke of a spirit of finesse, a spirit of subtlety, in contradistinction to the mathematical spirit.[xiii] Yes, well, the arts would not be such a good example, because we don't necessarily speak of the subtlety of a shoemaker or carpenter[30]. That might look a bit far-fetched. But if you take, for example, a perfect hostess, to take a very different example, how she has to act: she plays it by ear, and there are very fine lines. Take such a nice example: a guest is paralytic. [She has to know] how to help him and yet[31] [not][32] to rub it in that he has this defect,

[xiii] Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* (1670), 21–22.

and that depends obviously very much on the individual. In some cases, the best thing is simply not to pay any attention; in other cases, [one] necessarily [has] to pay attention. That is what Aristotle has in mind, and of which he thinks there is no parallel in the arts, no exact parallel. Now why he brings that out we must see later. Let us turn to 1106b36, next chapter.

Mr. Reinken:
Virtue then is a settled disposition of the mind determining the choice of actions and passions,[xiv] 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. (1106b36-1107a1)

LS: That is *the* definition of virtue. Let us see whether we can understand it. I would translate it slightly differently. "Virtue is then a habit of choosing or preferring, being in the mean with regard to us, that mean being defined, determined, by *logos*, and how the reasonable, or sensible, man would determine." The mean has to be determined by *logos*, by reasoning, but[33] [in a way that depends] on infinitely variable circumstances. And therefore only the man on the spot can determine what is the right thing in a given situation. Therefore this is more closely defined by saying, "how the sensible man would determine," namely, the sensible man on the spot. You can't tell in advance if you don't know the circumstances. Aristotle explains therefore in perfect accordance with this . . . in 1109b20. That's toward the end of the book.[xv]

Mr. Reinken:
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, but one who diverges more widely, for his error is noticed. Yet to what degree and how seriously a man must err to be blamed is not easy to define on principle [*logos*]. 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: Yes, what he means of course is, for example, in the case of colors, this shade [and] that shade: How will you express this [difference] in speech? Well, you can give wavelengths and this kind of thing, but then you don't speak of colors anymore. When you speak of colors as this or that shade, you have to show it and people see: perception, sense perception. Now we can enlarge it and use the term "perception" in a wider sense, where it does not apply to things strictly sensibly perceived. And this is what Aristotle means. The decision in the finer questions of morality cannot be given; you play it by ear. [To know] whether this is a tactful action in these circumstances, you have to know the circumstances and you have also to know certain things which you don't quite know: What kind of a man [is he]? How great is the sensibility of this particular individual? How far should you consider[34] [his] sensitivity? That's the problem which everyone who has some responsibility for other people, human beings, has. For example, a teacher: How far should you encourage a given student? You should encourage him, but there is

[xiv] In Rackham's translation: "emotions."
[xv] The transcriber notes: "A few inaudible words in last sentence."

in the other way also the danger of coddling him and not being severe enough. How to draw the line in a given case, how can you say that? You must know that student very well, which you do not know to begin with, and that's the difficulty here in these cases which have anything to do with—why, we have a word for what Aristotle calls perception: tact. Tact is of course one of the senses: touch, *tactus*. This is what Aristotle means. Aristotle doesn't leave it[35] at *logos*, although this is of course something which would possibly be defined or spelled out in speech but is not necessarily spelled out in speech before you do it and the moment you do it. That is what we mean by tact, and[36] this kind of tact does not play any role in the arts.

Student: How does this playing it by ear differ from pragmatism?

LS: Pragmatism doesn't know any principles, very simply stated, or it neglects[37] [them]. Aristotle says there are of course principles like the perfection of human nature.[38] [But] the fact that someone finds his highest fulfillment, I believe they say, in tightrope dancing, and another who finds it in benefiting his fellow men, how can the pragmatist make clear that to the one, the latter, is higher in rank than the former? I believe they can't do it. Aristotle can. So pragmatism overdoes the tact side and forgets. Good. And there are also people—of course in a way are more terrible, you can say—who forget about the other side and therefore are always right but always tactless. The great-grandfather of Bertrand Russell, as described by Lord Cecil in his book on Lord Melbourne,[xvi] is a beautiful example of a man without any tact, and we have also other examples of people of eminent tact [with] no sense of principles. Both are necessary. I believe this thesis makes sense. Yes?

Different Student: Some pragmatists would deny what you said about them.

LS: Well, there are some people who are inconsistent and are saved by their inconsistency. What would they say?

Same Student: Couldn't you argue that the pragmatist doesn't have a lack of principles, but his principles are doubtable—

LS: Yes, then they would come very close to Aristotle. Yes, but I cannot find it in fact. I mean, I agree with what you said first. On the one hand, they deny principles, and surely [they deny] unchangeable principles. But when it comes, for example, to the nice question of freedom of speech then they are extremely immovable indeed. So in other words, one should say they are both adherents of tact and of principle, but each in the wrong place. But the main point is[39] [this] is not a reasonable position. Mr. Glenn?

Mr. Glenn: [Suggests a distinction between formal and informal principles.][xvii]

LS: Yes, that is what I indicated by[40] [suggesting] how far [what Aristotle says of moral virtue] is not true also of the arts[41]. That is not made sufficiently clear.

[xvi] Lord David Cecil, *Melbourne* (London: Constable, 1965). (First published 1939.)
[xvii] As noted by the transcriber.

Mr. Glenn: [. . .]

LS: Yes, that is not—I mean, it may be formally perfect, but I don't believe it is materially sufficient.

Student: [. . .]

LS: No, well, look at the artisan. It is not sufficiently clear to cover that case. But we don't[42] yet [have] the evidence in, gentlemen. If you and Mr. Mueller will forgive me, we [will] go on now without interruption for about ten minutes. Now where were we now? Let us read where we left off.

Mr. Reinken:
And it is a mean state between two vices, one of excess and one of defect.[xviii]

LS: Now let us stop. Virtue between two vices. Which vices have this peculiarity—that's important —that one is an excess and the other is a defect? This is important. For example, the case of intelligence: it is not so that it is surrounded on the one hand by a defect, say, stupidity, and on the other hand by an excess of too intelligent. That doesn't exist. That doesn't exist, and therefore this is of course very helpful to distinguish the moral virtues from the intellectual virtues in general. Good. And now what did you say?

Mr. Reinken:
Furthermore, it is a mean state in that whereas the vices either fall short of or exceed what is right in feelings and in actions, virtue ascertains and adopts the mean.

LS: Yes, let us stop. Here he brings out the specific difference between the arts and moral virtue, namely, that the matter in which moral virtue works are the passions and actions. The shoemaker's matter is leather or wood; the carpenter's is wood and I don't know what: not actions. He doesn't work on passions and on actions. That is crucial for the essential difference, but a difficulty remains: why put passions and actions together? What is that which unites the two? This is not answered. Finding the mean and choosing it, that's important. So the choosing, the choice, presupposes the finding, naturally. The man who chooses the right but is not able to find it by himself, is he truly virtuous? Is he truly virtuous who has always to listen to someone else and then[43] he will obey—the good boy. But will he be a good man? That is the question, and that is of course very crucial for the whole status of moral virtue. Let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:
Hence while in respect of its substance and 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 an extreme. (1107a1-8)

[xviii] The reading of the text resumes at 1107a3 after the short excursion to 1109b20 earlier.

LS: Yes. Now this is very difficult, very difficult for me at least. Now the Aristotelian doctrine of the mean can be stated as follows, I mean, against the grossest misunderstandings. Here we have the two extremes, and then we have a mean. Now Aristotle would say, "The true mean is never that. That's not a true mean; that's a kind of mere compromise. The true mean is always on a higher level, always." Well, [there is an example] from the *Politics* where this is made absolutely clear:[xix] democracy, oligarchy, all the extremes. The mean; polity [is] higher, and aristocracy, still higher, [is] also a mean. Now why are they higher? Answer: because a new principle enters which is absent from both [extremes]. In other words, it's not sufficient to say that a polity is a regime which preserves the advantages of democracy while forsaking its disadvantages, and the same regarding oligarchy. That is not enough. It doesn't bring out the positive principle. Now the positive principle is stated. Democracy is concerned with freedom, mere freedom without any qualification, oligarchy with wealth, and the polity is concerned with some form of virtue. This is a new principle. An aristocracy is concerned with virtue as a whole. That's the Aristotelian teaching, what he means. But here, very strangely, he says [that] what is essential to moral virtue is not rank—that's good—but being a mean. It's very hard to understand, very hard. How can we explain that? I mean, it is of no use to turn to the *Metaphysics* about the definition of excellence and that kind of thing. This is surely very strange on the face of it.

Now let us look. Let us look at it from a practical point of view, the comparison with gymnastics. The man who finds the right diet, the right training for this individual circumstanced as he and he alone is . . . Now let us apply this to anger, fear, whatever it may be. The case of the gymnastic trainer is of course much better, much simpler, than that of the moral man, because the gymnastic trainer knows for what purpose [he trains]: he should become the best runner, the best wrestler, whatever it may be. The end is determined. But what is the end here in moral virtue? With a view to what should he now temper his anger in this way, and on another occasion another man in that and that way? With a view to what? Where is the end? Where is the end? The end was said to be—never forget that—happiness. But what do we know about happiness? We know only virtue is the core of happiness. So we are back where we were: virtue, or more simply stated, the virtuous action, is done for its own sake, whereas what the gymnastic trainer describes and what his student does serve an end different from the prescribed action. Here the prescribed action is said to be the end. This is, I think, the fundamental difficulty of the whole discussion, and of course I do not for one moment believe that Aristotle didn't know the difficulty. But this is the fundamental difficulty, I believe, of the whole thing. The assertion that virtue is essentially a mean between two extremes and not a peak, could this not be connected with the fact that the end with a view to which the distinction is made is left in the dark? This, I believe, is the real difficulty. Now Mr. McAtee, you wanted to say something?

Mr. McAtee: [To the effect that the end which Dr. Strauss had in mind was the law.][xx]

[xix] *Politics* 1295b–1296a.
[xx] As noted by the transcriber.

LS: Yes. But oh, God, Mr. McAtee. Sure it's wonderful . . . to say the brave man does not run away from the enemy when the law tells him, "Here you must stand." The law of course, or the commanding officer, it doesn't make any difference, because the commanding officer has his power by virtue of the law. That's simple. But if the law is bad?

Mr. McAtee: But the law is the law.

LS: Eeee[xxi]—now, no. As Aristotle in his wisdom said, the legal is somehow the just. He doesn't say the legal is the just, meaning that any law is better than complete absence of it.

Mr. McAtee: I think this difficulty runs all through here.

LS: Yes, sure, but that doesn't mean—I mean, to cross-reference to other difficulties doesn't face the difficulty. That doesn't solve it.

Mr. McAtee: [Refers to the legislator.][xxii]

LS: Yes, but the legislator must, as Plato would put it, look away from, toward something, in order to make the laws good. And Aristotle knew that, I'm sure by his own inequalities—

Mr. McAtee: [Sees the solution in the distinction between moral virtue and intellectual virtue.][xxiii]

LS: Yes, but that is exactly always the question. Sure. Yes, but the question with which we are concerned is: How far does this fundamental difficulty, which we found already in book 1, regarding the relationship between happiness and moral virtue not affect even such relative details as the definition of virtue, the formal definition of virtue, given in book 2? Now will you be so good and continue in 1108b30, where we were, or did I make a slip? Oh no, I'm sorry. Where were we now?

Mr. Reinken: (We were about to start 1107a9.)
Not every action or passion[xxiv] however admits of the observance of a due mean.

LS: No, that we do not need. We cannot possibly read that because it would take us too long. Let us turn to 1107a33. But we cannot really read this, although it would of course deserve a very close study. I would like to say only one thing. What we have read is the conclusion of the definition of virtue, and the whole difficulty is in there. After Aristotle has completed it, he wishes to make his definition of virtue more precise, more detailed, and then he shows that all virtues are in fact means between two extremes. In other

[xxi] This is not a very Strauss-like sound, but it is as it appears in the transcript.
[xxii] As noted by the transcriber.
[xxiii] As noted by the transcriber.
[xxiv] In Rackham's translation: "emotion."

words, we might find all kinds of difficulties regarding the definition, but when we look around us at the things which are regarded as virtue, we find that as a matter of fact in each case there is an excess and a defect. Take the simple case: courage. There is something like cowardice, obviously, but there is also on the other hand something like foolishly bold, however you might call it. Similarly regarding temperance, regarding sensual pleasures, there is intemperance, obviously, but there is also a complete abstinence of sense, or practically a complete abstinence of sense. You know, people who would eat bricks if someone could make them eatable; you know this kind of thing. And this is a defect here. So now Aristotle tries to show this in all cases. Someone may be concerned with honors in the sensible way, and one may be concerned with every kind of badge he can properly get anywhere, including photos in the *Sun Times* and in other places. And another man may be wholly indifferent to this kind of thing: that's also not good; it's a kind of inhumanity. But in many cases Aristotle is compelled to admit that there is no word in the language for that, and this is of course probably due to the fact that not everyone felt as clearly as Aristotle that every virtue is in fact a mean between two extremes. To that extent, this long enumeration also indicates the difficulty with which we are concerned. Well, people, we cannot read all these things. There are quite a few very subtle remarks into which we cannot go now. Instead I would like to take up a more general question, because one can easily get lost in these details. There are many very fine and subtle remarks, of course. Now first there is a question by Mr. McAtee: "Is there any relation which is common to intellectual virtue and moral virtue and equipment?" Now equipment is of course never virtue. Equipment is low.[xxv] No, no, no. That you cannot say. No.

Mr. McAtee: Would you say all virtues are means?

LS: All moral virtues are means according to Aristotle. The case of justice is very special—

Mr. McAtee: Murder?

LS: Yes. Is murder a virtue? What is murder in Aristotle's language?

Mr. McAtee: A vice?

LS: No. A vicious action, because murder can stem from all kinds of habits. It can stem from irascibility; it can stem from hatred. I don't know where it can stem from—all kinds of things. No, a vicious action. Now what was your point? You got that point. Mr. Mueller?

Mr. Mueller: In a way, there is a mean with regard to passions too, relative to a man. Is it possible then that the pity that A feels is too much pity for B to feel, according to the analogy of Milo and his—

[xxv] The transcriber notes: "The question seems to be whether there is a proportion: intellectual virtue is to moral virtue as moral virtue is to equipment."

LS: Yes, yes, sure—

Mr. Mueller: And would this be true of the virtues?

LS: No, but the same man—you must look at this—well, sure. Well, to the extent to which you mean now it can be defended. The pity which a general is supposed to feel in war, or more specifically in combat, is of course a different degree of virtue than [that] which, say, a relief nurse is supposed to feel. Yes? I suppose. So good. But generally speaking, must you not feel a different—[take] this example: when an eight-year-old little child lost his or her mother and when a fifty year-old man lost his father, would not the degree of compassion differ? Good. Now would it not also depend very much on whether the pitying individual has himself suffered a comparable loss at the same time, or if he has not suffered it? Obviously, an infinite variety [of circumstances]. The great question is, of course, [in] this passage, I believe—yes, this point which you raised—oh, yes, I must mention that. Can you give me the simple reference to this passage, Mr. Vari, where he speaks about the things where there cannot be any mean at all? Yes, let us read that, "not every action nor every affection, or passion."

Mr. Vari: The top of page 97, our translation.

LS: Yes, read that.

Reader:
Not every action or passion[xxvi] however admits of the observance of a due mean. Indeed the very names of some directly imply evil, for instance malice, 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, and in the right manner—

LS: You see, he can make jokes if he wants to.

Reader:
the mere commission of any of them is wrong. One might as well suppose there could be a due mean and 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. (1107a9-21)

LS: Well, good. In other words, then you could say he is a virtuous man because he is a moderate man. He is moderate in his cowardice—I mean, which is a subtlety but which is of course also an obscuring subtlety, and therefore we should better not try with that.

[xxvi] In Rackham's translation: "emotion."
[xxvii] In Rackham's translation: "feelings."

Now this point, this is extremely important—I'm sorry, Mr. Mueller, I must not forget that—extremely important, as Mr. Vari pointed out.[44] For me, at least, it is very important, because it flatly contradicts what I believe. But let us leave it only at this question; let us try to understand it. What is the cognitive status of this remark? There are certain passions, say, envy, which are simply bad. You cannot say he is a virtuous man because he is moderately envious. If he is envious, he's a bad man: very simple for Aristotle. And also you cannot say someone is—how shall I say?—murdered at the right time and the right place. Impossible. Aristotle says that; perfectly clear, no ambiguity. What is the cognitive status? How do we know it?

Student: It's an assertion.

LS: Yes, very well. It's an assertion supported by what? These things are called—when people speak of murder they mean a bad action. So. And there cannot be a mean. Very good. This, I think, is a beautiful case of what Aristotle means [when he gives] the "that" without giving the "why." You remember that, the key passage in the first book. The "that" is sufficient. We know that murder is bad; that is something from which we start. If it is bad there cannot possibly be a right mean. Perfectly clear. But naturally we must say, if only in order to fight evil men, [that] we must know why people generally hold everywhere that murder is bad. We must do that. Aristotle doesn't do it, but we must do it, and we can be sure that Aristotle has not completely neglected to give thought to this matter. But here he doesn't do it and surely the statement as it is made makes absolute sense, practically. Ultimately—stated with some theoretical precision—why do we not know here the "why" and only the "that"? Because we do not possess sufficient knowledge of *the* human good with a view to which we make these definite assertions: "Murder is always bad and envy is always bad." We are still on the way to it.

Student: But doesn't he sort of give a "why" in line 25 here, where he says there can be neither an excess nor a deficiency? Isn't he saying that by definition excess is not a mean, and by definition of deficiency is not a mean? Isn't that sort of a "why"?

LS: Yes, but you must admit, a circular "why."[xxviii] Yes, that's no good.

Different Student: Robin Hood made the point that theft isn't always bad.

LS: Yes, well, other people have made the same[45] [point].[46] By the way, Aristotle discusses this subject almost in these terms in the first half of book 3, namely, when he discusses the difficulty to determine what is the right thing in given circumstances, which is an indirect way of taking it up. Mr. Mueller, what was your point?

Mr. Mueller: Well, it's partly answered, possibly, but the question I raised before, virtue being the mean relative to us: the "us" is a little bit unclear—relative to different men, just as one would feel pity in different ways towards different people on different occasions; as the prudent man would judge, so with courage. So possibly with courage, so possibly with justice—

[xxviii] The transcriber notes that "the questioner agrees."

LS: Yes. Yes, sure. Surely that is the problem with which we are concerned. For example—well, let us say this, but I'm anticipating what we have to discuss next time. Yes, in the case of courage, now courage does not mean of course always to expose oneself to the danger of death, because that is the overbold fellow. The truly courageous man will sometimes run away. The coward will always run away. The over-bold fellow will never run away, and the courageous man will take his stand when it is noble to take his stand. Which are these cases? You are confronted on the Midway at twelve o'clock in the night by an armed gangster who asks you for your money. Is it ignoble for you or for me to give him the money? I believe most of us would say it is not ignoble. It is not—how shall I say?—a sign of resplendent courage, but surely a sensible man would give him his money because he would say, "My life is more valuable than money." But there can be other cases. For example, if it is someone with his sweetheart, I believe they call it, and the question is[47] [whether] he should surrender his sweetheart to these people. That would be a different case, would it not? Would it be different from money? Obviously. So where to draw the line? Now with a view to what? If you say in the first case that it's clear that life is a higher good than money, and especially the[48] limited amount of money [I suppose] you are likely to carry at that time and place, then there is no question. But obviously salvation of life is not the highest consideration, because then you could never get an army, on the basis [of the notion] that the preservation of life of the individual is the highest good for that individual. So well, in practice we know what happens. We will say: If he is commanded to stop on that lost, forlorn post he must stop there.[49] Then there come different occasions: how to behave as a prisoner of war. We have seen the case of Powers.[xxix] You have read the case of the prisoners of war in Korea, which are very difficult to judge for anyone who wasn't in that situation. And so there are then these interesting borderline cases. In other words, regarding the simple cases, no one has any doubt about that, but the interesting cases are the borderline cases because they show the fundamental difficulty: With a view to what do you make your choice? And you cannot possibly say: With a view to preservation of life. That's impossible, because then a soldier has no standard anymore—nor a policeman, for that matter, nor everyone of us involved in certain tough situations. So what is that standard? If you say "nobility," then you say something and also nothing, because what is the noble? How do you define the noble thing in the circumstances? That is the difficulty which Aristotle doesn't solve for us. And the solution which he gives, as the *nomos* dictates, is good enough for most practical purposes, but not for all, and not for the most important ones because [in those cases] you have to raise the question: Is the *nomos* sound or unsound? The *nomos* may tell you to do these and these things, and you will be shot, in war especially, if you don't obey the *nomos*. But it may be the unreasonable *nomos*. So you have to go beyond that. This is exactly the question which I would like briefly to discuss coherently.

Now Aristotle begins very clearly in the first book. Happiness has its core, virtue, but in such a way that virtue is inferior in dignity to happiness. Virtue is praiseworthy, but happiness is venerable (*timion*). And naturally virtue is primarily moral virtue. Aristotle

[xxix] Probably Gary Powers, the pilot of an American U-2 spyplane which was shot down in May 1960 while flying though Soviet airspace.

doesn't give a reason for that. He just does it, and he devotes books 2 to 5 to moral virtue. And of course the understanding of moral virtue will probably lead us to the insight that maybe we have to go beyond moral virtue, higher than moral virtue, but this is not developed here in any way. Let us limit ourselves at[50] [the] time being to moral virtue. The morally virtuous man chooses the noble and just things for their own sake. That is a definite assertion of Aristotle. He derives enjoyment from acting morally as such. If he does it for any other reason then he is tolerable but he is not a moral man, not a good man. He must not do the moral things as means for an end. So Aristotle rejects then what we can call utilitarianism, utilitarianism being the position according to which morality is useful or expedient for such things as preservation of life, for living with others and so on, in different ways represented by the Epicureans and by Hobbes. Hobbes, in his work *On The Citizen* (*De Cive*), chapter 3, paragraphs 31 to 32, should be read. That's very important statement especially also because it takes issue with Aristotle's definition of virtue as mean, and he rejects that.

Student: Who does?

LS: Hobbes, in *De Cive* in the given place.

Same Student: [Asks for repetition of the place cited.][xxx]

LS: *De Cive*, chapter 3, sections 31 to 32. So Aristotle surely rejects utilitarianism. Moral virtue is not for the sake of something else but it is its own end. But on the other hand, Aristotle also is not—Aristotle occupies a mean position between utilitarianism on the one hand, and what I shall roughly call moralism, and that I will explain now. Moralism I would define as the view that morality is the highest thing or the only thing of absolute worth. This is the position taken especially by Kant, who consistently opposes eudaemonism, namely, concern with happiness.[xxxi] You know, this was *the* admitted principle by all moral philosophy up to Kant; and Kant rejects it, and consistently, because whenever you speak of moral virtue and moral virtue is not the same as happiness, then happiness somehow threatens the status of moral virtue. Therefore it must at least be dislodged from the position which it had traditionally occupied. In Kant you have to read especially the beginning of his *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*. The first two pages are wonderfully revealing of Kant's position. Now Kant himself knew that he had a preparation in that, namely, in Rousseau. He himself said of Rousseau that Rousseau had brought him into right shape. Now Rousseau's position is not so elaborate and so technically clear as that of Kant, but some points are very clear. Again, in Rousseau not everything is equally revealing. His *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts*, his first publication, is most revealing in this respect.

Now Rousseau uses the term "conscience," and he calls conscience the sublime science of the simple souls. Everyone has, possesses by nature the knowledge required for acting morally, and precisely the sophisticated people are those [who are] morally endangered

[xxx] As noted by the transcriber.
[xxxi] On the topic of this and the following paragraphs, see the discussion in Leo Strauss, *The City and Man* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1964), 38–41.

because a kind of subtle science overlays this simple and sublime science. Now ultimately, however, there is a background to this view, and if I may sound like a sociologist, believe me, I do not mean it as a sociologist. Behind what Kant stated eventually with the greatest clarity, prepared decisively by Rousseau, there is this famous movement called, at least on the European continent, the Enlightenment, a movement of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which exploded in a way in the French Revolution but did not necessarily explode, as is shown in this country. Now what is the characteristic assertion? The bond of society is morality, not merely interest. This is a very powerful stratum of the Enlightenment which identifies morality with a well understood interest: you know, the utilitarian strain, but that is not essential, this utilitarian morality. But the practical meaning of that is morality is the bond, not religion. There may be a kind of religion which goes together with morality, called natural religion, deism, as Kant admitted to some extent. But the key point is morality is the core; and you see immediately what a terrific political importance this issue has. Only in this period can we say[51] [that morality took] on this absolute status which it never had before[52] [or] after. There are some preparations for that in certain Stoic teachings, but we cannot go into that.

Now prior to this Enlightenment moralism, the assertion that moral virtue is the highest or the only thing of absolute worth, as Kant puts it, was challenged by both philosophy and theology. By both: by theology, obviously; faith, religion, however it is called, is higher than mere morality. Morality is regarded as indispensable but it is not sufficient, and that is true of course in Judaism as well as in Christianity, and I have no doubt in Islam as well. I don't believe that a really orthodox Muslim, of the Middle Ages surely, would have said that it is perfectly sufficient to be a virtuous man without being a Muslim. Is this not true? And the same was of course true of Christians and of Jews. But the more important thing in our present context is of course the philosophic view. Moral virtue is not the highest. But the highest, particularly clearly in Aristotle, is philosophy. It's higher than moral virtue. This is also the teaching of Plato. Plato seems to have asserted that moral virtue is the highest, but when you look more closely at what Plato means, say, by justice, you see that it is[53] inseparable from philosophy, to say the least, [even] if it is not simply identical with philosophy. So if we[54] see that the absolutization of morality is a very particular phenomenon not going together with the moral consciousness of the human race at all times, only then are we prepared to understand Aristotle's specific position. Aristotle does not say [or] believe that moral virtue is the thing of absolute worth.

Now when we turn to Aristotle's discussion in the *Ethics*, to the extent to which we have read it up to now, we see that he has indicated the problem already in the first book, particularly by the relation between what I called, for convenience sake, the scientific definition of virtue and the [. . .] where he brings in the things said about virtue—as it were, the minor of that syllogism, the major being "the scientific definition" and "the things said" [being] the minor, and then he reaches a conclusion. Now let us try to understand that, and let us assume from the outset what we will see later very clearly in the tenth book, that thinking, understanding, is the most important thing. But from every point of view, even for those who will not devote themselves to a life of thinking, there is

surely a need for control of the passions. I mean, it is obvious from every point of view. From every point of view some control of the passions is obviously necessary, and therefore one could very well say: Well, what are the moral virtues? The properly controlled passions. And this control requires habituation. Someone born with very strong irascibility will need a very long period of controlling his savage beast, [his] anger. Habituation rather than instruction, because to realize that to be constantly angry whenever you are opposed in any matter, however trivial,[55] is foolish—this insight can be acquired in one second, so to speak, surely in two minutes. But this is by no means sufficient, the learning; the most important thing here is the habituation.

But what is the status of moral virtue? Virtue is the core of happiness. That's one assertion. Or is it not eventually the means to happiness? And this is of course an entirely different proposition. In the latter case, happiness would be the theoretical perfection, the end with a view to which the passions must be controlled. You control the passions in order to have a clear head; and obviously the passions, the uncontrolled passions, are incompatible with clear thinking, as you can find out by *empiri*, empirically, every day without having to read the *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*. Or you can also take another point of view: Is there not, after all, a very massive end which we all recognize as indispensable and with a view to which we must somehow understand moral virtue, [and] the control of the passions in particular? Sure, society in general, living together—[a] sweet saying. Moral virtue is obviously also needed for living together. Well, let us take a group of men, none of whom is ever thinking of devoting his life to thinking. Obviously, if they do not exercise a certain degree of self-control over their fears, their loves, their angers, they cannot live together well. So there are then two ends which we surely must recognize [with a view to which moral virtue would have to be understood ultimately: the one is] living together, society, or as Aristotle would say, the *polis*; and the other is thinking[56]. And if we look at these ends we can perhaps find the reasons for all these mere facts given now. For example, why is murder generally regarded as bad? I mean, without going into any deeper question, we can simply say that society is incompatible with the permission of murder. Incompatible. Society is not incompatible with killing, but the killing must be done when and where and to whom it is properly applied, i.e., [in a way] which is roughly defined by the law. And we find also all other things. This will do.

Now at any rate, however this may be, Aristotle leaves it undecided which of the two ends is here at the back, and he probably means both ends somehow enter. Contemplation, thinking, can be the end only for a few. Now why not forget about these few, who are so rare and don't play a great role? Why not forget about them? Now this I think we must understand in order to come closer to the true motives of Aristotle's thinking. If I say the end is society and I have to understand all moral virtue in the light of society—Hobbes is a remarkably clear representative of this view in this section to which I referred you.[xxxii] Hobbes simply says the end is peace, and all moral virtues have to be understood as means for peace. "Morally virtuous" means to be a peaceable man. That's part of the story, without question, but it is not sufficient, and we see this most clearly, I believe, when we turn to Machiavelli, because Machiavelli's whole doctrine is based on this principle: all virtues are to be understood as means for the *polis*, for the city, the

[xxxii] I.e., *On The Citizen* (*De Cive*), chapter 3, paragraphs 31–32.

political society. And of course the city doesn't demand merely peaceableness (this was Hobbes's somewhat narrow view) because the city also needs soldiers, and Hobbes forgot about that for some strange reasons, part of it being his own absolute distaste for danger. But this is of course not sufficient. He has much more serious reasons.

So Machiavelli takes the broad view. Whatever the habits which the city as a rule requires, these are virtues. Good. But what does the city require? What are the ends? Surely [the] self-preservation of the city, surely its prosperity, its glory. It's roughly these things: independence from foreign domination, prosperity, and glory. And whatever is required by these things is good, and the habits required with a view to these things are the virtues. It's a defensible position. But what is the difficulty? And that is, I think, the reason why Aristotle comes in. Well? Is this ken—independence of the political community, prosperity, and its prestige—sufficient? The Machiavellian assertion necessarily leads to Machiavellianism. Necessarily. Anything conducive to that end is good, and anything obstructing that end is bad. This follows necessarily from it. Our general feeling would be there must be something higher in the light of which the city determines what is right and wrong, higher than its selfish interest, the collective self-interest. We all somehow feel that. Therefore when we hear today the view that the national interest is the highest consideration in foreign affairs—that it will ordinarily prevail we all know, but that it is the highest consideration is of course subject to that question. Must we not make a distinction between the national interest, say, of the Congo, and the national interest of France? I mean, this concession we must make to General de Gaulle, I believe. In other words, we say also in old-fashioned language [that there is a difference] between a civilized society and an uncivilized. Where does this come in here? Where has Machiavelli supplied for that properly? He has not provided for that properly, and Aristotle tries to do that. There must be something higher than the interest of the *polis*, narrowly conceived, if we are to have a decent society. It makes sense. Now how does Aristotle get out of this difficulty? Schematically his answer is very simple: the city as a whole must aim at virtue. The city as a whole must aim at virtue. And Aristotle says, indeed, no city has ever done it properly, but still, that doesn't do away with the soundness of the demand. So the *polis* must be in the service of moral virtue. Moral virtue must be higher than the *polis*; it cannot be understood merely as a means for the *polis*. It is a defensible and I think even a necessary assertion.

And now there is a strange thing: if you think in specific terms, as you have to think in everything and especially in moral matters, about these two ends—heterogeneous ends, the *polis* and thinking—you see that what these two different ends require regarding control of the passions is not altogether dissimilar, to make an understatement. For example, it is clear that a man who is habitually intemperate, habitually cowardly, habitually irascible, and what the other vices are, is neither a good citizen nor apt to think. There are even other things, subtler things, which are necessary. For example, a city cannot exist without having people who are born to command, say, armies. Born to command: I mean, you need these kind of people, and they can be very obnoxious from time to time because they almost invariably know that they are born to command, and they do. Well, I think General de Gaulle and General Montgomery are good contemporary examples of this kind of thing, but they are obviously very useful men.

Now if you elaborate that, you come close to what Aristotle means by magnanimity: a man who claims high honors while deserving high honors. Yes, but there is something else. The magnanimous man, this great virtue which Aristotle will praise so highly in the fourth book, however also has something to do with the thinking man, the thinker, who for entirely different reasons—namely, because he sees so clearly the ephemeral character of everything human—is also for this reason magnanimous [and] does not take the petty things very seriously.

So in brief, somehow—by a strange artifice of nature, one could say—nature has so arranged things that the thinker and the *polis* require roughly the same kind of habits, roughly the moral virtues; and to that extent moral virtue, I think, can be said to be natural in Aristotle's sense. There is a kind of strange artifice which is ultimately not so strange if you think of the definition of man. Man is the animal which possesses *logos*, which possesses speech, and speech points on the one hand to speaking, communication, society, and on the other hand to thinking, so that in other words, the rationality of man is the common ground for that. But the crucial practical implication is this: that the requirements of thinking and the requirements of society are not altogether identical. There are certain subtleties. The Aristotelian doctrine of virtues, as developed later on, especially in the concrete parts, [the] second half of book 3 to the end of book 5—this is, when you think a bit about it, to a large extent obviously necessary if men are to live together in a nonsavage manner. And yet on the other hand, there is also a certain excess. There is some splendor, some [. . .] which is not sufficiently understood in terms of the utilitarian purposes of moral virtue but [is introduced] because it reflects the highest perfection of man: thinking. I believe roughly this is what Aristotle has in mind in the *Ethics*. He does not say this in this form, but he says only one thing very clearly in the tenth book: that the highest perfection of man is thinking. And the question arises: What's the relation of[57] thinking to moral virtue? And that is not made clear, not made clear at all. The best commentary on this subject in Aristotle you would find in the other *Ethics*, in the *Eudemian Ethics*, towards the end, where he speaks of the two types of morality, the gentleman's morality and another kind of morality which is not the gentleman's morality.[xxxiii] And of course in concrete terms, the question is this: must the thinker be a gentleman in the sense in which the gentleman understands the gentleman? That is a question which Socrates answered quite clearly with "No." Aristotle answers it, in fact also with "No," but not as clearly. That is Aristotle's special delicacy and tact in these matters.

I think if one tries to understand a book which is really worth studying, [I mean, a book of depth], then the question always must be[58]: Where does the author stand? From what point of view does he look at things? And I would say, at least in the cases where I have done the necessary study, I have found that the author says from the very beginning, or close to the beginning, exactly where he stands in the precisest possible form, but we don't read it. We don't read it seriously enough. Now Aristotle had said on page 2 in the ordinary editions what[59] his kind of inquiry [is], and he calls it, gives it a name: some kind of political understanding, *politikē tis*. And he distinguishes [this] very clearly in the context from the simple political understanding, the political understanding which the

[xxxiii] Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics* 1248b–1249a.

statesman and legislator need. And it is very closely related to that, as is indicated by the fact pointed out by some of you, that when Aristotle has to define what is the right action in specific terms, [he defines it] as the *nomos* would say, the work of the *nomothetēs*, of the legislator. But it is not identical with that. Aristotle's point of view is not identical [with that]. Aristotle looks in the direction of the legislator, but he looks also as it were higher at the same time, and this is, I think, the point of view from which one must understand the *Ethics* in general and ultimately every individual utterance in particular. Mr. Kirwan?

Mr. Kirwan: I'm confused. Initially it was established that moral virtue is a means to happiness, and then a means to the *polis* also—

LS: Yes. What is happiness? Yes, well, all right, say, happiness. But then the question arises: What's happiness? We have only been given a very general answer: the activity of the specifically human in an excellent manner. But what is that activity of the specifically human in the most excellent manner? Thinking. You see, Mr. Kirwan, I believe the difficulty which everyone like you, i.e., who has some training in Thomas, has when discussing the *Ethics* can be stated very simply. I will give some examples whenever I find them very clearly in Thomas's commentary, then I will tell you where the difference shows. I mean, the key question which must have bothered every one of you from the very beginning is this: What is the cognitive status of the moral principles according to Aristotle? This question is extremely difficult to answer in Aristotle. Very crudely, you can say, and *n* people have said it (all classical scholars say it all the time), the principle is the generally accepted principles of Greek morality. Now Aristotle would of course be a disgraceful philosopher if he had identified himself with the prejudices of his community. That's absolutely out of the question. I mean, occasionally he adopts them, for limited purposes, naturally, but not fundamentally. That's out of the question. But Thomas's answer is very clear: there are first principles of the practical reason, just as there are first principles of theoretical reason. But in Aristotle there is no reference to first principles of practical reason, [number one]. Number two, the other answer which is more specific of Thomas is that there is a habit of moral principles called *synderesis*, as you know, and this can be loosely translated by "conscience," so to speak, the general part of the conscience.[xxxiv] The very term is wholly alien to Aristotle. That doesn't exist. Therefore the Aristotelian position is different here from the Thomistic position and I must emphasize this point.

Mr. Kirwan: I was not thinking of Thomas, I was trying to understand the sense where for Machiavelli the end of the city is self-preservation, prosperity, and prestige. For Aristotle we must get above this and to go above this is to go to moral virtue. So in a sense it's a means, i.e., to control the passions, and also an end—

LS: Yes, that is the difficulty. You see, that is the difficulty. I can state it very simply. For the philosopher, for the thinker, moral virtue would be a means. For the nonphilosopher, moral virtue is the end. In other words, the highest at which he can aim

[xxxiv] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Part I, Q. 79, Art. 12–13.

is to love moral virtue for its own sake and not merely as a means for the grandeur of the city. That's clear. Now I can also—let me see, I have here a note which I can read to you.

Moral knowledge in Aristotle: well, what are the first reflections which we can reconstruct, as it were, when reading the book and considering the difficulties? First, it must be a kind of knowledge which does not require theoretical wisdom, for otherwise all except the few are condemned to immorality. That's the difficulty of Plato in the *Republic*—I mean, or they have this very problematic morality which the nonphilosophers have in the *Republic*. This is clear, but another reason for this: the wise man may not be particularly concerned with large parts of moral knowledge. If you consider 1107b25 following, what Aristotle says there about one of the virtues connected with honors, you see—I think you sense it there—this is not something with which Aristotle himself in his own life, or men of his kind, would ever be concerned, but the nonphilosophic man, the citizen, is legitimately very much concerned with that. More generally stated, the wise man does not need moral virtue *as such*, i.e., as choiceworthy for its own sake. Because his end, thinking, obviously demands it, you see, but moral virtue as defined is to choose morality as choiceworthy for its own sake. This becomes questionable in the light of the highest end. In other words, the wise man has a criterion for choice: what is conducive to thinking and also for thinking in the circumstances in which he is now, a criterion which the nonwise man lacks. Now the nonwise man can take the greatness of the city as the end, on the highest level, but this end is not high enough because it does not give him a criterion for distinguishing between a merely powerful and prosperous city and a city which deserves true respect, which is, I mean, not only prosperous and wealthy but also truly civilized. And this he gets in this way. But we must read much more to answer that. Yes?

Student: I wonder if you would say whether you think Aristotle's doctrine that the end of a *polis* is ultimately reconcilable to the ends of a thinking man or the philosopher through the institution of moderation which is requisite to both of those. Is this view of Aristotle ultimately in conflict with the view of Plato that the ends of the philosopher are in conflict with that of a *polis* as represented by the execution of Socrates?

LS: No, no, that's not so simple. The execution of Socrates proves only that the city of Athens as constituted at that time was defective; it doesn't prove in itself anything against the *polis*. Proof: in the *Laws*, Plato sketches a *polis* in which Socrates could never have been condemned to death. So in other words, from this point of view the *polis* is not essentially incompatible with philosophy. There is ordinarily a tension, perhaps, but this, I mean, one can say for the time being. Now in Aristotle, I believe, the same is true. As described in the *Politics*, a city which is a good city does not necessarily contain within itself philosophy, does *not* necessarily.[xxxv] When you look at the section about the parts of the city, the parts which a city absolutely needs and needs for its perfection: no philosophers. Plato, in the *Republic* and indirectly in the *Laws*, asserts there must be philosophers. And a medieval Aristotelian has stated[60] very nicely the Aristotelian view: that the city needs as city only one kind of teacher, if we disregard the teachers of military arts and rhetoric, which goes without saying: they are priests. The city as city

[xxxv] For instance, Aristotle, *Politics* 1324a.

does not need the philosophers. And this is so, and of course this is a great question. Somehow from Aristotle's point of view, surely philosophy is necessary for the perfection of man.[61] [And] the question [is how] to guarantee at least that the city is to a certain extent open to philosophy, although it can exist somehow without philosophy. This is guaranteed, I believe, by moral virtue as Aristotle defines it in his *Ethics*. Moral virtue as defined by Aristotle in his *Ethics* is not identical with what the common sense of mankind everywhere says to be moral virtue. You only have to read what he says about the more refined moral virutes like urbanity and gracefulness and so, which today would be called merely aesthetic, I believe, and which Aristotle regards as moral virtues: in other words, the concern of the city, at least in its higher parts, with refinements, which develops without the doings of philosophers. There are always poets and such people, and sculptors and so around. This points somehow to philosophy in Aristotle's view. Now did I answer that question to the satisfaction of the one who raised it? I forgot now who it was.[xxxvi]

Student: Winston Churchill was praising very highly the German enemy during the hardest, critical—

LS: Yes, Rommel. Yes?

Same Student: And I would imagine if he caught his soldiers doing that he would have punished them.

LS: Yes, surely, if[62] [that soldier were] killed by a British bomb[63] Churchill wouldn't have cried for one moment. Sure. But this doesn't mean, of course—this is one of the great things in men, that they can admire their enemies. I mean, this is at least the way in which one would have to look at it from the point of view of the classical thinkers. To love the enemies is a difficult thing. But men, I mean, at least men who are not completely stupid, cannot help admiring first-rate enemies. Obviously you have to do that. Churchill versus Rommel, for example. I mean, do you mean to say this is a sign of the fact that the *polis* points beyond itself? You can admire the enemy general as a general. That's very good. So that is perfectly true. As a matter of fact, all these predicates we give, just, moderate, urbane, or whatever it may be, are of course essentially not limited to the members of the particular *polis* or even of the particular nation. Obviously not. I mean, therefore it is so absurd, this view, which now is so powerful, that they mean of course only Greeks. And Aristotle never meant—I mean, we can prove it from Aristotle's own books: when he speaks of Carthage, which was not a Greek city, and praises it at least as highly as he praises the most highly praised Greek cities.[xxxvii] That is absolute nonsense, of course. Well, we have read the story about Priam in the first book of the *Ethics*, who according to all ordinary notions was a barbarian, and Aristotle treats him as a perfect gentleman. I mean, these people I think judge more or less in a strange way, a very complicated and inverted way, from their own narrowness to the narrowness of great thinkers. They simply don't know what a thinking man is. That is true. I mean, I say this without any harshness, although it sounds harsh. But this reminds

[xxxvi] The transcriber notes, "Apparently received an affirmative reply."
[xxxvii] Aristotle, *Politics* 1272b24–32.

me of something which a man, who was in a way my teacher, said—Husserl, who discussed a certain logical theory, and then he proved its absurdity and he called this an absurd doctrine. Footnote: when I call these doctrines absurd I do not mean to say harsh things about these men. "Absurd" has here a strictly objective meaning, which of course made it worse, naturally. Good. That I cannot help. But it is—well, Aristotle says *man* is a political animal. He means man and not the Greek, obviously not. He could have said a Greek is a political animal.

Student: I have two questions, one very general. In regard to your censure on going into other writings, especially into the logical parts—

LS: No, you must have understood my qualification. If you know this other writing of Aristotle better than you know the *Ethics*, then it's fine, but if you know it less well than the *Ethics* then it is of very dubious value.

Same Student: Are you suggesting that we can't start to understand the reasoning that is prominent in the *Ethics* unless we understand the reasoning put forth in these other logical—

LS: But I absolutely deny that. Look at whom Aristotle addresses here or in the *Politics*. In the case of the doctrine of the soul he makes it perfectly clear that a very crude version of the doctrine of the soul is perfectly sufficient for his purpose. Now what is true of the doctrine of the soul is of course much truer of logic proper.

Same Student: But isn't it true that when we're reading the *Ethics* we're not getting the basic teaching which is being put forth to these citizens, that even by the very fact that we sit here criticizing the book, going back and forth, that it shows—

LS: You mean we—I mean, the best of us and in us is addressed by Aristotle to the extent to which he gives some *kind* of political science, some *kind* of political understanding or science, not the political science proper. In other words, we are not addressed *qua* gentlemen but *qua* somehow theoretical men. That's true. Yes, but still, you must not forget, let us be really practical men. We, given the present circumstances—it is possible to be trained in political science without being trained in philosophy. I mean, that is one of the data of the situation, and as they say in the social science, this data is given. You must have heard that. So we have to live with that. Now therefore, since most of you (I know some of you are exceptions) have not had any training in these things, [64]or perhaps only a very bad training which is worse than no training, it is much better if we limit ourselves to what we can try to understand with our available means. You know? That I think is common sense, to do that. I do not wish to blame Mr. Vari for that, but I used him as it were as a kind of guinea pig to bring out some of these problems with which I—Mr. Vari?

Mr. Vari: Maybe because there wasn't sufficient time, but you didn't discuss what Aristotle's reasoning is about continuous divisibility . . .

LS: Well, don't believe one thing: that I can understand every passage in the *Ethics*. It's very, very tough. But as I understood it, it's this. Well, you all know what a continuum is, a continuum as distinguished from numbers which are discontinuous or discrete. Every continuum is infinitely divisible. The modern mathematicians have beautiful expressions of that. [. . .] has something to do with that. Into this kind of thing we don't have to go. Now why is it relevant here? Now take anger, and there can be something which we would ordinarily call an extreme of anger, where apoplexy immediately follows, and then an extreme of the absence of anger: someone does atrocious things to him and he just shrugs his shoulders. And it is impossible to find here a discontinuity, impossible to say this is another kind of anger. These are all degrees of anger, and there is no discontinuity between the extreme anger and the extremely little anger. Is this intelligible? That is what he means. And he says in spite of this continuity of the matter with which we deal, a discontinuity enters when we come to speak of virtue and vice, because then we distinguish between the right anger and the wrong anger. There is a discontinuity. Is this not clear? But you do not understand the problem of this rightness and wrongness if you do not see that it refers to a continuity in the matter. If the matter were already discontinuous, if we had here right anger and here wrong anger, that would be very simple. It would be very simple, and we would say: Well, those who feel the right anger, here, they are good men; those who feel the wrong anger are bad. But unfortunately the continuity [is there], and where does this come in? And then Aristotle can only give, to begin with, this very formal distinction: not too much, not too little. And he refines it a bit more by saying the too much and too little is not mathematically, arithmetically defined but is defined with a view to the individual in these individual circumstances. This of course leaves open the question which we raise all the time: With a view to *what* does he say *this* is the right thing? Common sense, the knowledge of the "that," as Aristotle would call it, is of great help, and if someone would say a father maybe is more entitled to be angry towards his child than the child is entitled to be angry towards his father, this makes some sense. Otherwise, I believe—at least those of us born up to a certain year. Good. And similar[ly], certain general rules of this kind make sense, but they are of course not specific enough. There may be situations in which the son may be entitled to be angry with the father, and also others where the father has no right to be angry with the son. You know this kind of thing. But here the difficulty arises. But all the difficulties, one can perhaps say—I cannot show that, but I suspect[65] that Aristotle means that the difficulties are rooted ultimately in this continuity. You know that: the passions are not of different kinds. I mean, of course fear is a different passion from anger, but the particular passion concerned, the various angers are not qualitatively different qua passions.[xxxviii]

The labels of the good and the bad passions are not easy to pick. We have to determine them. A particular passion is constant. Anger is always the same, but each act will be different.

[xxxviii] The transcriber notes: "At this point the tape ran out. The following is an almost literal paraphrase of the remainder of the session, taken from stenographic notes."

Student: How do you arrive at the assertion that for most passions the middle way is right, with exceptions, like envy, etc.? I do not see the cognitive status of this.

LS: It follows from the general statement. Wherever you speak of virtue, there can be two kinds of mistakes, excess or defect. Therefore there always can be too much or too little. With the analogy of the continuous line, you divide it. One part is small, one part great. This in itself does not say that the smaller part is better than the larger. It is "value-free." But when we begin to talk about the passions, for example, anger, the smaller or larger part is bad, already introducing another element. It is impossible to say in general that there is or should be *x* degree of passion, that on the passionometer, above seventy is not good. It is much more difficult. To that extent, moral science has a higher rank than medicine. As mere passions they cannot be judged. They have to be judged in the circumstances. You *can* give a crude approximation, but you cannot say "always."

Same Student: Why is the mean the right way?

LS: When you look around, always when people praise an action as good, it is in between deficiency and excess, especially in the case of moral actions. Delicacy is necessary, with one's own eyes to "hit it exactly between wind and water." When you cannot take anything away or add anything, when it is really constant. You can figure it out for yourself in an action of some interest. Crude cases are not so striking; for example, murder. But take the example of the perfect hostess: the exact mean.

Same Student: Is it correct to say that due to the nature of man, most of the passions require the mean?

LS: Ultimately you can say that. More practically, you say that this is a continuum: the two ends are in fact never the right thing. In other words, a man insensitive to desire, fear, pity, [and] anger does not exist, or there is something wrong with him. Also, the other extreme is impossible. But then, since all vices are also in between these extremes, the question is which in-between to choose. Every human action, good or bad, is in between two theoretical extremes. The difference is the right or the wrong in-between.

In the list of the passions, there are eleven. Do they all have a corresponding virtue? No, that is not the case. Most striking is the passion of compassion: a mere passion, i.e., morally neutral for Aristotle. But there are people who are simply beastly and some who are too soft. The right mean is however we might call it; we can call it gentleness. But Aristotle uses this term regarding anger and not mercy. That may have something to do with Greek notions. In the *Rhetoric* Aristotle makes clear that a man who has no compassion is bad, or who has compassion on the wrong occasion.[xxxix] But there is no virtue for that.

Same Student: Wouldn't *charis* be the virtue?

LS: That is not quite the same thing. That is gracefulness

[xxxix] See Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1376b.

[1] Deleted “at.”
[2] Deleted “I mean.”
[3] Deleted “It may not be helpful.”
[4] Deleted “that and that.”
[5] Deleted “because it corresponds—.”
[6] Deleted “Say.”
[7] Deleted “diathesis (?).”
[8] Deleted “where this is the theme.”
[9] Deleted “but.”
[10] Deleted “not.”
[11] Deleted “such a teacher.”
[12] Moved “is.”
[13] Deleted “have.”
[14] Deleted “behaving.”
[15] Deleted “doing.”
[16] Deleted “it.”
[17] Moved “both.”
[18] Deleted “impossible.”
[19] Deleted “the.”
[20] Deleted “what is.”
[21] Deleted “in saying.”
[22] Deleted “that.”
[23] Deleted “means.”
[24] Deleted “couldn’t.”
[25] Deleted “then.”
[26] Deleted “rob.”
[27] Deleted “immortal.”
[28] Deleted “it.”
[29] Deleted “it.”
[30] Deleted “and so.”
[31] Deleted “how.”
[32] Deleted “to.”
[33] Deleted “depending.”
[34] Deleted “the.”
[35] Deleted “by.”
[36] Deleted “this, of course.”
[37] Deleted “it.”
[38] Deleted “and.”
[39] Deleted “there.”
[40] Deleted “the suggestion.”
[41] Moved “what Aristotle says of moral virtue.”
[42] Moved “have.”
[43] Deleted “he will obey.”
[44] Deleted “because.”
[45] Deleted “thing.”
[46] Deleted “this question.”
[47] Deleted “that.”
[48] Moved “I suppose.”
[49] Deleted “and so.”
[50] Deleted “this.”
[51] Deleted “did morality take.”
[52] Deleted “and.”
[53] Deleted “to say the least.”
[54] Deleted “do not.”
[55] Deleted “that this.”

[56] Moved “with a view to which moral virtue would have to be understood ultimately.”
[57] Deleted “the.”
[58] Moved “I mean, a book of great depth.”
[59] Moved “is.”
[60] Deleted “this.”
[61] Deleted “as.”
[62] Deleted “he would have been.”
[63] Deleted “and.”
[64] Deleted “and I would say”
[65] Deleted “it—.”

Session 6: April 30, 1963
Virtue, choice, and knowledge; deliberation
(book 3.1-5)

Leo Strauss: [In progress] —and its good quality was partly due to the fact that you kept in mind our present problem and the alternative to Aristotle so powerful in our age; and especially the quotations from Mr. Lasswell[i] were very revealing in this respect. [ii] Now I have to say a few words before we turn to the discussion, and first [about] the terms used by Aristotle. That is very difficult, and I do not know whether what I am going to say is a solution to the problem, especially to every particular passage. But let us first make clear what the terms mean. Aristotle speaks first of what is ordinarily translated "the voluntary and involuntary," following our language, especially legal language. But what Aristotle speaks [of] first[1] should be translated "spontaneous and nonspontaneous." This is something which man has in common with the brutes and which of course also children have. We do some things spontaneously and we can simply say [. . .] gladly, and other things we do not do gladly but only under some compulsion. The compulsion may be compulsion proper—someone forces our hand—or it may be an indirect work of compulsion [through] ignorance—you know, we are prevented from seeing what we do. That is also not done gladly. Now this is [the] spontaneous and the nonspontaneous, and of course we cannot be held responsible for what we do under duress. And duress, first, literally understood: someone forces you, gripping your hand, to kill another man. That can happen, and indeed no one would ever say you have killed that man. That is clear. There are slighter cases which we will discuss later. There is a so-called psychological compulsion. We come to that later.

Now then we have something else: there is one term which Aristotle uses which would correspond grammatically, as it were, to our word "will." But this precisely is not what he means by will. This is rather wishing. That's wishing, and these can be very low and insignificant wishes which the scholastics called *velleitas*, velleity. For example, you wish I were now in bed and didn't have to sit here. And there may also be wishes of a much more powerful kind: you wish to be happy, you wish to be healthy. But what we call will is that which Aristotle calls choosing, choice, preference, however you translate it, and this according to Aristotle never refers to the end but always to means. You wish to be healthy, but you cannot be said to choose health; you choose to be operated upon or not to be operated upon, or whatever the case may be. So this in order to make clear very provisionally the meaning of the terms. The grave question is, which Mr. [. . .] stressed properly: Do we not also choose the ends? Is Aristotle not compelled eventually to assert that we also choose the ends? This, however, remains dark. The starting point is: we choose means to ends. Choice as Aristotle understands it is always the end result of

[i] Harold Laswell (1902–1978), scholar of law and political science, author of *Who Gets What, When, How* (1936).
[ii] Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

deliberation, and we do not deliberate about the ends. When physicians come together for a deliberation—Aristotle's favorite example—they do not deliberate as to whether they should heal the patient but [about] how to heal the patient, and therefore the choice recurs to operation, doing nothing, pills, and so on. Good. That is a model for moral action proper.

The question of freedom of course comes up, this famous classical—Aristotle takes freedom for granted, and the basis for that is our ordinary conduct. We say all the time, by implication and sometimes even explicitly: you could have acted differently. When someone is punished, wherever it may be—for example, in an examination, if a student is punished and, say, gets an F, this does not necessarily imply (that's interesting) that he could have gotten a C, B, or A; he might have been unable to. Therefore we do not call this punishment except in a metaphoric manner. But if someone is expelled because of improper conduct from a university or college, the implication is [that] he could have avoided it.[2] And also when we praise, we say it is a meritorious action because he chose freely to act in this manner. Now there are great difficulties here, great difficulties which were known at all times. There were people who denied freedom, so-called determinists, already in classical antiquity, but the issue came to the fore in modern times. And the most famous discussion up to the present day is still Hobbes's discussion with Bishop Bramhall, Bishop Bramhall representing the traditional Aristotelian position defending freedom, and Hobbes denying it.[iii] And Hobbes claimed he can explain all[3] political actions in terms of denial of freedom. Simply, punishment and reward, blame and praise, are the things which determine men to act, and if a man in a given case acts badly, then in this particular case the pull of desire for the thing which he wanted, say, money, was greater than the opposite pull exerted by fear of punishment or fear of blame. And Hobbes claimed that the whole social order can be understood in deterministic terms, and that there is a certain determinism [that] is implied in the very notion of reward and punishment because[4] [it counts] on the necessary effect of punishment and reward. But this, to come to a special point which Mr. [. . .] mentioned: there can no longer be from Hobbes's point of view—this is what Hobbes admits—moral indignation. This fellow had to act in the way he did given the circumstances. It does not follow, as you seem to imply, [that we respond with] pity, because, you know, this is a modern, sentimental solution. You can also draw the tough solution: We treat him—how does Locke call it?—as a tiger or a lion or any other savage animal.[iv] Do you remember the passage? Yes, we just hit him over the head. He threatens us; you know, by shooting all the time or trying to shoot. He is a nuisance, and we extirpate him for that. That's all. We don't have to have pity. Our concern with our self-preservation prevents us from having pity. But still, in the overall Western development the pitiful solution prevailed.

Student: [. . .]

[iii] Bishop John Bramhall's objections to Hobbes's arguments in *Of Liberty and Necessity* (1654) can be found in his *A Defence of True Liberty from Antecedent and Extrinsical Necessity* (1655). Thomas Hobbes replied in *The Questions concerning Liberty, Necessity, and Chance* (1656), leading to a further response by Bishop Bramhall in his *Castigations of Mr. Hobbes* (1658).
[iv] John Locke, *Second Treatise*, chapter 2, §11.

LS: Yes, well, that is another story, because Aristotle speaks on the basis of freedom. And then he says when we are confronted with a man where we cannot possibly say he did it freely, then we have pity with him or at least indulgence for him. Yes, that's a different story. But, I mean, the view that because the criminal is compelled by social circumstance and so on to act in the way in which he acts does not necessarily lead to compassion, of course. It can as well lead to the opposite conclusion: we, by necessity, extirpate him because we want to have order in society. [This] follows as naturally as pity, and it would be an interesting question, why the present-day determinists take the pitying side and not the harsh side. That would be an interesting question which is not yet quite clear. The difficulty which Aristotle has, of course, is this: the grownup man, virtuous or vicious, is responsible for his acts and therefore properly rewarded or punished. But in one way he cannot help any more; the virtuous man cannot help but acting virtuously and the vicious man cannot help acting viciously, generally speaking. Yes?

Student: This bothers me very much, Mr. Strauss. Is Aristotle here indirectly attacking the freedom of the will by saying it is determined once the habit of virtue is [. . .] into the soul? It seems to do this.

LS: Yes, it is a great difficulty.

Same Student: Because modern behaviorism does the same thing. I can remember as an undergraduate years ago when they talked about how a person could not help but act in the way they did when they kill somebody—

LS: No, no. I mean, whatever he may teach about the grown-up man, he would say, let us say, [that] the inclination, the powerful inclination which the virtuous man has to act virtuously and which the vicious man has to act viciously is no longer under his control. That has become his second nature. Nevertheless, he is responsible because he is made responsible for that inclination which he acquired voluntarily. Yes, but the question is this. Let us take the famous case of a child from a slum area, broken home; you know the whole story which you read daily in the papers. What can this poor fellow—when he is twenty, to what extent can he be held responsible? He never heard anything[5] [else]. Now Aristotle would question the fact. He heard of the other thing, without any question, but he didn't hear it in its proper authority. The people who were authoritative for him, his parents and his surroundings, used the words "the squares" only in quotation marks, you know, and this is evident. This is surely a grave question: To what extent can such a human being be made fully responsible for what he does? Aristotle has roughly this in mind. The child—yes, sure, the child can listen to his parents, his betters, or [he] can not listen. Now the child of course is not fully responsible. Aristotle makes this clear. And the child is guided in one or the other direction by punishment and reward. But then there is a certain moment when the childhood instruction becomes what they now call, I believe, internalized, and that is at the period of adolescence, generally speaking, where people—you know this from people of both sexes: a certain idealism of youth which comes to sight where children, the grown-up children, begin to criticize the parents on moral grounds, on the grounds of the principles in the name of which the parents have hitherto spanked, morally or physically, the children. That is the moment where it has become the property

of the grown-up child himself. And this is a key moment, of course, because here it will be seen whether the child will become truly virtuous and not merely [acting] on the basis of external sanctions or not. This is surely a grave question on the basis of Aristotle's presentation which you pointed out, that the responsibility is located at a relatively early stage in life. That's the difficulty. A solution could be that we may have to take children or education or growing up in a larger sense, so that some people are children even when they are in their forties, fifties, and sixties. That is a possibility and not a very fanciful one. No, no. Good.

Only one last point regarding Lasswell, because that is so typical for a certain lack of reflection in much of present-day political science. Lasswell says, if I understood you correctly (but I will not be held responsible for this quotation), that the question of the best polity is no longer necessary. We have rather to be concerned with alleviating tensions. Is this not what you said? "The ideal of a politics of prevention is to obviate conflict by the definite reduction of the tension level of society by effective methods." Yes, but where is the rejection of the best polity? I see. Oh. "The political methods of coercion, exhortation, and discussion assume that the role of politics is to solve conflicts when they have happened. The ideal of a politics of prevention is to obviate conflict by the definite reduction of the tension level of society."[v] Yes, very well; to which I would say this: these politics of tension require, of course, a specific set up. The politics of alleviation would be impossible in any Aristotelian or Platonic scheme. It would be impossible in any Hobbean scheme. It would be impossible in any traditional constitutional democracy scheme. So a certain polity is a presupposition of the alleviation of conflict; let us say something approaching the welfare state. Yes? Good. But that is a best polity. What these people do not see is—I mean, just as some people don't see, to use a colloquial phrase, that whatever you will do, you will have some kind of metaphysics. If you say metaphysics is something terrible, that doesn't solve the problem; you will have it nevertheless. In the same way, whatever position you take, you will have a certain view of the best polity, only sometimes you don't see it, because there is so much of it—you know, it's like air, of which you don't have to become aware. And [in] this notion, a certain welfaristic set-up is tacitly assumed to be the best polity, just as the people who say there is no common good —that's a metaphysical concept. Yes, but then they speak in the same breath of the open society, and the open society is of course one which is *the* common good. The open society is that form of society in which you don't have to think of the common good because it is the common good . . . This cannot be done. It is simply a form of thoughtlessness. Yes, Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: In regard to the discussion of responsibility and determinism, Aristotle in the first book of the *Ethics* mentioned how important breeding and education is. Now what would his answer be ultimately to this question which you posed in our own times about the slum youth without any good breeding or proper education?

LS: Well, you know Aristotle's answer. It is harsh, but perfectly consistent: that people thus bred should not have any say in the political community. They should not have any

[v] The quotation is from Lasswell's 1930 study *Psychopathology and Politics*; see Harold D. Laswell, *The Political Writings of Harold D. Laswell* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1951), 203.

say in the political community because they simply lack—I mean, whether they are ultimately responsible for that or not is not the question—but they lack the minimum of citizen qualification. That's it. That he would say, and to that extent he is absolutely consistent. And the modern view is, of course, that[6] an anonymous thing, society, owes to them the conditions of that so that they can become good citizens. That is all right, but Aristotle faced that question. That I wanted to make clear. Aristotle's opposition to democracy is this: that a sufficient education, i.e., formation of character, is not possible for all inhabitants of a city. That's very simple. Now I have discussed this so frequently, but I would like to repeat it again: that our modern solution is based on the pregress of science and technology, which makes it possible to give, at least in theory, everyone the required intellectual and moral education. To that extent there is a necessary commitment of modern democracy to supply every member of the society, every potential citizen, with a proper education. Moral education, too. And from that point of view, of course, all these measures demanded for [the] decent education of every member of society are perfectly legitimate. The question which comes in here is only this: whether the advantages of science and technology in the modern sense are simply advantages, [or] whether they also are not at the root of grave defects, of grave dangers which modern society has. That's a long story.

Student: Doesn't Aristotle also say that for happiness there have to be some external circumstances? So how can he place the responsibility on him for not being virtuous if he doesn't have these external—

LS: Yes, it all depends [on] what. I mean, for example, if it is such a simple matter like not killing or murdering, stealing, and so on, Aristotle would say the conditions for abstaining from these things are universally given. No one is compelled to murder or steal, and in the few cases where men are compelled to steal because the immediate alternative is starvation, the legislator in his wisdom does not regard this as punishable theft, as you know. I mean, if you stagger into a shop on 57th Street and cannot go on to Steinway's, let us say, and take something away, nothing will happen to you, as you know, and especially if you don't use a gun. That is clear. And as for the finer virtues, the more sophisticated virtues, that's another matter, of course, indeed. But on the other hand, if someone has very bad table manners or is very rude to other people, this is indeed blamed. But on the other hand, this also cannot be expected from everyone [. . .] What kind of a breeding, upbringing, does this man have? But we must always distinguish between the kind of actions required [here] and the massive ones, like killing and so on, [in which] no one is compelled. That's what Aristotle would say. But I think we have first to return to the general issue because of this interruption, which was in a way compulsory and for which I therefore do not apologize.[vi]

Now let us remind[7] [ourselves] of the overall context. Aristotle establishes, first, that there is a single highest end, and he establishes this on the basis of the hierarchy of the arts. There is a highest art of science, the political one, and its object is moral virtue. Morality and politics are coextensive. But his own inquiry is not *the* political art but some kind of political art. So there is a cleavage from the very beginning; and the political art itself, as

[vi] The transcriber notes that "the last class had been two weeks ago."

an art of sorts, is not moral virtue. It may require moral virtue, but it is not identical with moral virtue. Are then both his inquiry and the political art proper in the service of moral virtue? Now the highest is not moral virtue but happiness. Yet the core of happiness is moral virtue, and moral virtue is accessible to every normal human being. This is one part of the argument, but the other part is that happiness is venerable, whereas moral virtue is only praiseworthy. Differently stated, moral virtue is said to be accessible to every normal human being. But then we have also heard that moral virtue is accessible to every normal human being of good family who is not repulsively ugly. That's a very different proposition. And moral virtue in some places seems to be accessible only to men of great delicacy and tact, which definitely excludes many people. So it is not clear, then, what precisely is the end, the end toward which the statesman or moral man has to aim. Now for the moral man, the end is morality itself. That is to say, he regards the moral things, the noble and just things, as choiceworthy for their own sake, or as the things which are by nature most pleasant. There is no cleavage here between the pleasant and the noble, because the virtuous action is for the moral man the most pleasant thing. But does the moral man know that this is so? And Aristotle's answer is he knows the "that," but he does not necessarily know the "why." He knows that this and this is base, but he doesn't know why it is base. And this is one reason why the whole inquiry is of questionable, of limited, exactness. There are, however, quite a few difficulties here. The moral man knows of certain things, for example, murder, adultery, envy, that they are simply bad. But again the question, why? We have not had an answer to this question.

Everything has to be done with a view to the situation, to the circumstances here, now. And therefore [there is] great variety. The same action which may be virtuous in this set of circumstances may be vicious in another set of circumstances. Does this lead to the point that nothing in morality is simply stable, as it is said in one case? But this makes it all the more urgent to repeat the fundamental question: With a view to what do we make the distinction, [so] that we say this action is in that set of circumstances virtuous and in that set of circumstances vicious? How do we do that? This question we have to take up now and see what we can learn for it for the first half of book 3.

Virtue has been defined as a habit of choosing or preferring. We must therefore raise the question: What is choice? But this is not the way in which Aristotle begins the investigation. Choice is a species of the spontaneous. We must first therefore discuss the spontaneous in general and then choice in particular. But both when he takes up spontaneity and when he takes up choice, Aristotle fails to link up these subjects with the definition of virtue as a habit of choosing. The question: Is there not something—is there a fundamental difficulty regarding this part of the definition, as there was one regarding virtue as a mean and as there was one regarding the subject matter of moral virtue, actions and sentiments, actions and passions? Now let us begin at the beginning, in 1109b30. "Since virtue," meaning moral virtue, "has to do with passions (affects) as well as actions." Here Aristotle reminds us again of the difficulty which we know already. What is it which keeps together, which explains the unity of passions (or affects) and actions? There must be some unitary point of view, otherwise it couldn't be a single science. Differently stated, why does moral virtue have these two objects, the passions and actions? This is not yet clear. Now let us read the first few lines, Mr. Reinken.

Mr. Reinken:
Virtue however is concerned with passions and actions, and it is only spontaneous actions for which praise and blame are given; those that are non-spontaneous are condoned, and sometimes even pitied.[vii] Hence it seems to be necessary for the student of ethics to define the difference—

LS: "Those who reflect about virtue."[viii] "Ethics" makes it too much [of] an academic affair. That's already an established discipline. Good.

Mr. Reinken:
those who reflect about virtue to define the difference between the spontaneous and the non-spontaneous;[ix] and this will also be of service to the legislator in assigning rewards and punishments.

LS: Now let us stop here for the moment. Virtue is praiseworthy and vice is blameworthy. Hence they are spontaneous. We wouldn't blame or praise if they were not spontaneous. Mr. [. . .] mentioned the birthmark as an example. And, well, you can also—you don't blame a blind man for his blindness, and so on. The subject is necessary for two reasons: for those who reflect about virtue, and for the legislators. Here we have again the distinction between the political art, the legislators, and some kind of political art, what Aristotle is doing here. Now in the immediate sequel Aristotle asserts that all spontaneous things—does he always translate "spontaneous," Rackham?

Mr. Reinken: No, he's been using "voluntary, involuntary."

LS: I see. Oh, I'm surprised. Yes, that was very good of you to change it. Now Aristotle makes here in the sequel clear that the involuntary things are due either to force or to ignorance, and he speaks therefore first of force and then of ignorance. Let us begin at 1110a4 and read a few lines there.

Mr. Reinken:
But there is some doubt about actions done through fear of a worse alternative, or for some noble object—as for instance 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 inspontaneous.[x] (1109a30-1110a8)

[vii] In Rackham's translation: "Virtue however is concerned with emotions 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."
[viii] Strauss retranslates "*tois peri aretēs diaskopousi*."
[ix] In Rackham's translation: "the student of ethics to define the difference between the Voluntary and the Involuntary."
[x] In Rackham's translation: "voluntary or involuntary."

LS: Yes. Now are cases where a man does something out of fear of greater evils or with a view to something noble voluntary? And the example here is clear: the tyrant has his wife and children in his power. In other words, he does not physically force his hand. Is this so? And the answer? We have to read that, the immediate sequel.

Mr. Reinken:
A somewhat similar case is when cargo is jettisoned in a storm; apart from the 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' or composite; but they approximate rather to the spontaneous class.[xi] For at the actual time when they are done they are chosen or willed; and the end or motive of an act varies with the occasion, so that the terms spontaneous and inspontaneous should be used with reference to the time of action; now the actual deed in the cases in question is done spontaneously,[xii] 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 one's own power to do it or not. Such acts therefore are spontaneous, though perhaps inspontaneous apart from circumstances—for no one would choose to do any such action in and for itself.[xiii] (1110a8-20)

LS: Yes. I think the case of throwing that cargo in order to save one's life is a simple case, and every man of sense, i.e., everyone here, would say one should of course do it.[8] It is not an involuntary act although the circumstances are not chosen, but in the circumstances it is chosen voluntarily, deliberately. And now the question is: what about the tyrant? What about the tyrant who has the children? You know, this is no longer a historical example. We have seen so many cases of this kind in our age. We probably know people who were in such a situation. The question is this: is there anything which a man may not do in order, not indeed to save his [own] life (that is another thing), but to save his family? That's the point here, to save his family, and this is what Aristotle means: for the sake of something noble, not merely for the sake of preserving his life. [It was] to save these poor children, for example, so that he will not deserve mere indulgence but compassion, that he went through that anguish. The infinite variety of noble things which can be done or omitted, can be done and must be done, is due we see here not to the *nomos*, not [to] the fact that the legislator stipulates differently in different countries in different times, but to the variety of circumstances. It's not one artificially introduced by human arbitrary fiat. So what a man does by fear—this [is] key point—is to some extent voluntary. It depends [on] what kind of fear. That is crucial for Hobbes, by the way. Covenants extracted by fear—you promise a gangster to bring him the ten dollars which you do not have—are valid, according to Hobbes, in the state of nature. If the legislator forbids it then you don't have to do it, but in the state of nature [you do]. And why? Because the fundamental contract, the social contract, is extracted by fear. You would never give up these terrific rights to

[xi] In Rackham's translation: "but they approximate rather to the voluntary class."
[xii] In Rackham's translation: "so that the terms 'voluntary' and 'involuntary' should be used with reference to the time of action; now the actual deed in the cases in question is done voluntarily."
[xiii] In Rackham's translation: "Such acts therefore are voluntary, though perhaps involuntary apart from circumstances—for no one would choose to do any such action in and for itself."

everything you have in the state of nature unless you had fear of what is going to happen to you if there is no civil government, [no] civil society, no police. That is impossible. But we must keep to Aristotle's question: Is there a line somewhere? May a man do everything in order, for example, to save his children, his wife? Yes, Mr. Glenn?

Mr. Glenn: I'm wondering whether asking this fundamental question dealing with the distinction between the virtuous and the vicious, is this a legitimate question for the subject matter of the *Ethics*? Because ethics, it seems, is a practical science, not a theoretical science, and if we're asking, why aren't we asking a theoretical question?

LS: This poor fellow asks, shall he betray, say, his brother to the Gestapo?

Mr. Glenn: This is a very practical question.

LS: Yes, very practical.

Mr. Glenn: Yes, but I'm dealing more with the underlying question that we are trying to ask you. Why do we say that a thing is just, vicious, or virtuous?

LS: Yes, we do not know this.

Mr. Glenn: Is it a metaphysical question, or what is it?

LS: Yes, well, that is exactly the question. What does Aristotle—he assumes here in a rough way we all know that if someone—I mean, that such things as robbing, snatching purses and so are unjust actions, to say nothing of killing a man. We know that. I mean, Aristotle is very practical. He knows that he does not address people who have never heard of these things. Everyone, surely, even here in this class, everyone has heard of these things, of things which are proper to do and things which are improper to do, and wherever you go you will always find people who have always already heard it. The moral teacher never addresses people who have never heard of these things. He never addresses men in Hobbes's state of nature. That's impossible: he couldn't address [them] because anyone will kill him. And no one of you would sit here; you would all sit in some trenches with sticks and stones. So it's impossible. That is always presupposed. Yes? Very practical.

Mr. Glenn: I understand this.

LS: Yes. But this question is also a practical question. Is there literally no action which may not be done under compulsion, as defined? Good.

Student: All actions are spontaneous, although he seems to say—

LS: Yes, he didn't say it yet. He decided it in some kind[s] of cases, like throwing the luggage into the lake in order to save your life. This is, he says, a voluntary action; although the circumstances are not of your choosing, but the action was your choice.

Same Student: That would be the same in all acts of compulsion, wouldn't it?

LS: He never said that. I mean, he raised the question regarding the man whose children and wife are in the hands of a vicious tyrant. He raised the question. He didn't answer it yet. We must come to that. Now let us go on, Mr. Reinken.

Mr. Reinken:
Sometimes indeed men are actually praised—

LS: Are even praised for such acts done under compulsion. I mean, done under some Compulsion, where the circumstances—yes?

Mr. Reinken:
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: Yes, with nothing noble. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
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.

LS: Extreme torture would of course be an example. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
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: for instance, we think it ridiculous that Alcmaeon in Euripides' play is compelled by certain threats to murder his mother! (1110a20-29)

LS: Yes. So here Aristotle raises now the question: Is there a line or is there no line? And the key sentence is this—this is not quite literally translated: "Perhaps there are some things where no compulsion may be accepted as an excuse." In other words, there are certain actions which cannot be excused by any compulsion whatever, unless it is mere physical compulsion. Then of course you are not responsible. I mean, if someone grips your hand and—well, how shall I say?—let us use, say, the grandmother as an example, and [he] compels, uses your hand as a mere organ to kill your grandmother, then of course no one in his senses would say that you had killed your grandmother. But the question is when the compulsion is "psychological," [such as the] threats of a tyrant. Is there anything which may not be done under any circumstances? May one do the most base things in order to avoid the most painful things? Now Thomas Aquinas gives this answer. Someone is threatened with being set on fire on a pyre if he does not tell a jocular lie, or if he does

not commit an act unbecoming his dignity, say, to milk an ass, a she-ass.[xiv] And then of course in these cases Thomas, as a sensible man, says naturally [that] he will tell a jocular lie or he will milk—I mean, [even] a very great dignitary will milk the she-ass under these circumstances. He would be a fool if he didn't do it. Thomas regards this "perhaps" as merely rhetorical. Aristotle frequently says of very unqualifiedly true things, "perhaps." That's a kind of urbanity, and Thomas believes this is here the case, and he omits in his rendering [of] the Latin equivalent—I mean, this "perhaps" occurs also in the Latin translation. He omits this in his paraphrase. His example of such things is the following one: St. Lawrence, who sustained fire rather than to sacrifice to idols.[xv] There are things which may not be done under any circumstances. Now it is of course very interesting that he chooses this example, because this would not be an example which Aristotle would admit. That is divine law, not natural law. Now Euripides's Alcmaeon may not have had a good excuse for matricide in that play, but someone else might. You know, the reason there may be very poor. For example, [there might be a good reason] when killing the mother was the only way of preventing her from committing high treason, which is theoretically possible.

Now this is an absolutely crucial point. According to an eleventh-century Jewish author, Yehuda Halevi, in his book, *Kuzari*—this is the clearest case which I know, where [in] book 4, paragraph 19 [he] speaks of the difference between the philosophers and the religious law regarding this point, namely, that according to the philosophers there is no limit, that any action might become justifiable or excusable, whereas the religious law says no. And he of course speaks of the Jewish law and mentions three points: idolatry, murder, and incest, which are not justifiable under any circumstances; rather, death is to be preferred. This is indeed a key question. You see, everything depends here on how to interpret that *isōs*, that "perhaps." Is this to be taken literally, [i.e.], "perhaps"? Or is it Aristotle's urbane use of perhaps, which means "of course"? This is hard to say. Thomas, in his commentary, by the way, notes that Aristotle uses frequently "perhaps" in this book, in the *Ethics*, because of the uncertainty of moral matter[s].[xvi] So he knew this difficulty very well. Now the point, I think, is this. If we limit ourselves to natural or rational morality, we must say self-subsistent morality must demand universal validity of the most fundamental rules, for otherwise we are in need of a transmoral principle which justifies occasional deviations from the rules. Now let us read the sequel, and then I will give you some other medieval commentaries. Where we left off.

Mr. Reinken:
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. (1110a30-b1)

[xiv] See St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, §394.
[xv] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, §395.
[xvi] See St.Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, §§381, 396.

LS: Yes, let us stop here. Now here Averroes says—the famous Islamic commentator—from this it follows that man is praised or blamed because of his bowing to compulsion or not bowing to it. "I mean that in some place he is praised for bowing to compulsion, and in another place he is blamed for that."[xvii] So in other words, there is no absolute line, and it depends very much on the positive law where the line is drawn. Thomas Aquinas says, "Since these things to which someone is compelled are base, it is proper that regarding those men who are compelled to such actions by fear are blamed and those who are not compelled, who cannot be compelled, are praised."[xviii] In other words, here is a clear difference between Thomas and Averroes, [with] Thomas [definitely] drawing[9] a line—there are certain things which may not be done under any circumstances—and Averroes saying that there are no such lines. This is, indeed, a key question, and I think that Yehuda Halevi, by this remark to which I referred, has drawn our attention to a key problem which depends, as far as interpretation of Aristotle goes, on this single "perhaps." Is this to be taken literally, or is this the urbane use of the term where it means only a polite way of saying "absolutely"? That's the point.

Student: In any case, there is no possibility of deliberating about this matter.

LS: Yes, this he takes up later on,[10] because a virtuous man confronted with subtle situations by virtue of his habit has as it were anticipated the subtlety arising in these situations. I mean, that is, he knows—well, how shall I say? Do you ever deliberate whether you should kill a passer-by?[11] I mean, if you are attacked by a man, that's another matter; but you never deliberate, because that has become a settled thing for you: you don't do it. And the same applies to everything. Good. Mr. Glenn?

Mr. Glenn: Am I right in saying that this is the same question as whether there are some things which are evil in themselves?

LS: Yes, but he doesn't deny now that there are evils in themselves, but whether there are evils in the circumstances [. . .] actions. It ultimately depends not only on whether an action is intrinsically good or bad, but whether it is good or bad in the circumstances. For example, beating one's father is intrinsically bad, but it can be under certain circumstances good. For example, if the father is drunk [and] beats up the mother and the whole rest of the family in a savage way, in such a situation it may be good. It is never a pleasant situation. We always would have compassion with that son, but it is strictly speaking a good action. Is this not clear?

Mr. Glenn: It is clear, but who said it? Is this Averroes's interpretation?

[xvii] Strauss refers throughout this course to Averroes's paraphrase of the *Nicomachean Ethics* but does not indicate the edition from which his citations are drawn. The Hebrew translation of this text was first published in 1999; the Latin translation has yet to appear in a modern edition. Strauss may have acquired an unpublished manuscript of Averroes's commentary, or he may have utilized one of several sixteenth-century editions of the Latin text.

[xviii] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, §397.

LS: No, this is what Aristotle himself obviously says. But the question is now, of course, is there any—is there a single action which may not become good in the [right] circumstances? That's the question. And now I would say that the religious teachers, generally speaking, would say there are such actions, such things like blasphemy and denying one's religion, and this kind of thing. You know that. Martyrdom is in a way to be demanded. That's what all religious teaching means, and maybe [with] indulgence for[12] [us] people, but it can never be said it was the right thing to do. [Even if] it can be extremely excusable. And the example Thomas Aquinas gives is of course of a martyr who preferred death to becoming an idolator, if only for the occasion. But the question is this other action; I mean, if we disregard divine law altogether and limit ourselves to natural law, and then the question would[13] be, for example, killing—you know—and there it would be the question. Yes?

Student: Thomas's example presupposes the idea that this [. . .] will in so doing look forward to another life as a martyr. He would go to heaven, whereas Aristotle's man—

LS: Doesn't know that.

Same Student: would not and consequently this would seem to affect the circumstances in which both would act.

LS: Yes, sure. I'm sure that would have to be considered, but Thomas doesn't speak of it. He gives only this example. Whatever the further reasoning was, he only gives this as an example of—that bowing to idols is such a thing which is unqualifiedly bad. But it is unqualifiedly bad, obviously, on the basis of divine law, [the] Second Commandment, and not for natural reason. Aristotle himself was an idolater. You know? And whether now it is easier for a man believing in Christianity to undergo martyrdom for the sake of Christianity than a corresponding action would be for a pagan is another matter. I mean, it must surely be considered, but it doesn't have to be considered.

Student: This question of "perhaps" seems to be quite different from the discussion of moral virtues in a simple sense.

LS: Yes, but how, since moral virtue is a question ultimately of virtuous actions?

Same Student: What I'm saying is that when we discussed the relationship of knowledge and moral virtues, we really said that knowledge isn't that important for moral virtues.

LS: That's what Aristotle says. Yes, but you know this has to be qualified.

Same Student: Indeed. But we really talked about habituation and upbringing, etc., instead of really emphasizing knowledge. Now it seems that the question, once you talk about this "perhaps" and the discussion we have entered here of the problem that is created in the history of philosophy from the opinions on this "perhaps," then it seems more we have to rely on knowledge, and one could justify under what occasions it would be just to act one way or just to act another way.

LS: Yes, but knowledge is of course important. I mean, Aristotle says to begin with it is less important. In one sense, that's of course true. It is extremely easy to know—say, to take a very innocent example, I hope, that it is very easy to know that one shouldn't smoke. But for a habitual smoker, it is terribly difficult. It is infinitely easier to say to myself, "Don't smoke," than to do it, and Aristotle wisely says the knowledge here is trivial and the action is everything. But this is not the whole story. There are cases in which it is difficult to say what is the right thing to do. In the immediate sequel,[14] we will turn to b7 to 9. Mr. Reinken?

Mr. Reinken:
What kind of actions then are to be called 'compulsory'? Used without qualification, perhaps this term applies to any case where the cause of the action lies in things outside the agent, and when the agent contributes nothing. But when actions intrinsically involuntary are yet in given circumstances deliberately chosen in preference to a given alternative, and when their origin lies in the agent, these actions are to be pronounced intrinsically involuntary but voluntary in the circumstances, and in preference to the alternative. They approximate however rather to the voluntary class, since conduct consists of particular things done, and the particular things done in the cases in question are voluntary. But it is not easy to lay down rules for deciding which of two alternatives is to be chosen, for particular cases differ widely. (1110b2-9)

LS: You see how difficult it is to know. I mean, to say you shouldn't kill an innocent man and to understand that is very easy. But there are delicate questions, and there obviously great discernment and tact, however you call it, is required.

Same Student: Again the same question: If moral virtues in a certain sense are actions resulting from states of character—

LS: Yes, but there is always intelligence involved in that. There is always intelligence involved in it, discernment, what Aristotle calls prudence, which he will discuss at great length in the sixth book. That's also involved . . . [xix] We may not be every day confronted with a grave moral question. I hope not. In an orderly society one is not. But they are the measure of a man and [. . .] is determined, one can say, by the series of grave questions, grave moral questions, which he has decided in his life . . .

Same Student: [. . .]

LS: Yes. Well, you have been too impressed by this one remark that knowledge is not important in action—unduly. And as I say, it has a certain meaning. To some extent it is true that the payoff is never the knowledge, it's always the action. But that doesn't mean that knowledge is not very important. Now in the immediate sequel he says one cannot possibly make the pleasures and pains, the attractions and repulsions, going on from the

[xix] The transcriber notes that "the next few minutes of the tape is defective and not always audible."

object responsible and say that they compel a man, because then of course all responsibility would be dropped. In the compulsory actions proper, the individual is not strictly speaking the agent. This is clear. Take the extreme case where your hand is literally forced. Now in the sequel he turns to the second cause which make actions unspontaneous, and that is ignorance. Let us turn to 1110b18, the next chapter.[xx]

Mr. Reinken:
An act done through ignorance is in every case not spontaneous, but it is unspontaneous only when it causes the agent pain and regret:[xxi] since a man who has acted through ignorance and feels no compunction at all for what he has done, cannot indeed be said to have acted spontaneously,[xxii] as he was not aware of his action, yet cannot be said to have acted unspontaneously,[xxiii] as he is not sorry for it. Acts done through ignorance therefore fall into two classes: if the agent regrets the act, we think that he has acted unspontaneously; if he does not regret it, to mark the distinction we may call him a 'non-spontaneous' agent—[xxiv]

LS: Yes, well, it is not—what would be a simple example? Someone has eaten another man's delicious meal. But he has in fact stolen it: it belonged to someone else. But he is innocent because he didn't know it. He thought it was his meal, and then he hears that it was another man's meal. If he is genuinely sorry for that, if he regrets it and he is disturbed by that involuntary eating, then he is not responsible for it. Then he is not morally responsible, as we would say. That is not so difficult to understand. Now then come some other more subtle distinctions. Let us drop the next sentence and then go on.

Mr. Reinken:
Now it is true that all wicked men are ignorant of what they ought to do and refrain from doing, and that this error is the cause of injustice and of vice in general. But the term 'unspontaneous' does not really apply to an action when the agent is ignorant of his true interests.[xxv] The ignorance that makes an act blameworthy is not ignorance displayed in moral choice (that sort of ignorance constitutes vice)—that is to say, it is not general ignorance (because that is held to be blameworthy), but particular ignorance, ignorance of the circumstances of the act and of the things affected by it; for in this case the act is pitied and forgiven— (1110b18-1111a2)

LS: Yes. Now even all wicked people or vicious people act from ignorance. They are ignorant regarding the useful, as he says. They are ignorant regarding the good. They

[xx] The transcriber notes: "Actually it was not the next chapter, but still chapter 1."
[xxi] In Rackham's translation: "An act done through ignorance is in every case not voluntary, but it is involuntary only when it causes the agent pain and regret."
[xxii] In Rackham's translation: "cannot indeed be said to have acted voluntarily."
[xxiii] In Rackham's translation: "yet cannot be said to have acted involuntarily."
[xxiv] In Rackham's translation: "if the agent regrets the act, we think that he has acted involuntarily; if he does not regret it, to mark the distinction we may call him a 'non-voluntary' agent."
[xxv] In Rackham's translation: "But the term 'involuntary' does not really apply to an action when the agent is ignorant of his true interests."

don't really know. Well, take the simple criminal who thinks the squares are fools. A fool is a man who doesn't know what is good for him. The crooks know what is good for them. They are mistaken in this respect, in our opinion. They are ignorant regarding what is useful for them—a very simple thing. It's not metaphysical [but] very practical. Do you agree with the view of the crooks that the squares are fools? Well? Then you admit what Aristotle said. Aristotle says the crooks are ignorant regarding the good. They believe it is good, what they do.

Student: It seems to me that redefines every known difference that I grew up with—

LS: Wait. Aristotle says—

Same Student: Ignorance is the absence of knowledge.

LS: Yes, or the opposite. Yes, yes, sure. They do not know what is good. That this ignorance has been caused by bad breeding and so, or by other defects, Aristotle doesn't deny, but he's sticking to the phenomenon. I think it is simply empirically true. I repeat the simple thing: the crook says the squares are fools. They pay their taxes, and they do all kinds of other things which can be so easily avoided if you employ a shyster, and [then] you don't have to work so hard. You simply make a bank robbery, case a building properly. You know, they don't know how foolish they are, what kind of trouble they take. I also believe they are fools but they believe we are [really the] fools[15]. I mean, you have apparently never heard any—

Same Student: It sounds like Hobbesian determinism.

LS: No. That [view] is so remote from any theory, and they have never heard the name of one. But from time to time you should really read some account of these people. There is a book which was brought out by a Chicago sociologist twenty or thirty years ago—I forgot the title; one of you gave it to me—and it was quite amazing. And in addition, of course, we have—I'm sorry to say, through TV we have a very easy access to these people. Aristotle says here literally this ignorance regarding the general things—say, that cheating regarding taxes is bad or murder is bad—is the cause of their wickedness. And it is not to be excused or pitied: they ought to know it, but they don't know it. What is excusable or pitiable is only ignorance regarding particulars. Very simply, to take an example, someone enters his bedroom and he believes to find there his wife, and it is another woman. [Laughter] No, no, I'm sorry for that, but it is a very simple example.[16] [His action] is naturally excusable. Yes? Good. But he must deplore it. [Laughter] I'm sorry, that is what he says. I didn't wish to take the case of someone killing his father, believing honestly he is a burglar. It could happen; it would also be excusable. That's not so comical as the first.

Same Student: Would Saint Thomas agree with this definition?

LS: Yes, sure. No, I believe everyone would. I tried to—

Same Student: When I read this yesterday, I thought it was a misprint.

LS: No. There is some knowledge involved in all morality, whatever you and Mr. Vari may say. Or do you agree in this point?

Mr. Vari: Yes.

LS: Now, good. Good. Morality is based on some knowledge. This knowledge must be available to all if morality is to be expected from all. Yes, that's clear. It is general knowledge regarding principles, as we say, like murder, etc., are always bad. The bad man does not know these things, but through his *fault*. He could have known and he should have known. He did not listen. He would have listened if he had feared punishment or other disciplinary action, including simple exhortation in his childhood. More generally stated, this knowledge, this general knowledge is ordinarily supplied by the law, of course. The law everywhere forbids murder and so on and so on. Now let us go on where we left off, 1111a3.

Mr. Reinken:
Perhaps then it will be as well to specify the nature and number of these circumstances. They are (1) the agent, (2) the act, (3) the thing that is affected by or is the sphere of the act; and sometimes also (4) the instrument, for instance, a tool with which the act is done, (5) the effect, for instance, saving a man's life, and (6) the manner, for instance, gently or violently.

Now no one, unless mad, could be ignorant of all these circumstances together; nor yet, obviously, of the agent—for a man must know who he is himself.

LS: Yes, he could not possibly say, "I didn't do it because I didn't know that I was I." This kind of schizophrenia, of claimed schizophrenia, is not an excuse. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
But a man may be ignorant of (2) what he is doing, as for instance when people say 'it slipped out while they were speaking,' or 'they were not aware that the matter was a secret,' as Aeschylus said of the Mysteries; or that 'they let it off when they only meant to show how it worked' as the prisoner pleaded— [Laughter] (1111a3-11)

LS: Yes. No, that can happen. Well, you read it every day. Yes. Good. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Again (3) a person might mistake his son for an enemy, as Merope does; or (4) mistake a sharp spear for one with a button on it, or a heavy stone for a pumice-stone; or (5) one might kill a man by giving him medicine with the intention of saving his life; or (6) in loose wrestling hit him a blow when meaning only to grip his hand. Ignorance therefore being possible in respect of all these circumstances of the act, one who has acted in ignorance of any of them is held to have acted unspontaneously,[xxvi] and especially so if ignorant of the most important of them;

[xxvi] In Rackham's translation: "is held to have acted involuntarily."

and the most important of the circumstances seem to be the nature of the act itself and the effect it will produce.

Such then is the nature of the ignorance that justifies our speaking of an act as unspontaneous,[xxvii] given the further condition that the agent feels sorrow and regret for having committed it. (1111a11-21)

LS: I hope I have made this clear enough, this qualification of ignorance—I mean why this is a test, the repentance. Good. But may I remind you of the simple phrase, "Ignorance of the law is no excuse." That you know. A man may really be ignorant about the fact that there are tax laws altogether. It is a genuine ignorance, but it is inexcusable because he is obliged to know the law. And what is true of taxes is also true of murder and other things. That is a very simple thing. Aristotle wants to make clear which ignorance is excused: only ignorance regarding particular circumstances. Such ignorance is possible. A man can be honestly deceived about the character of the weapon he uses, [or] about other things, and then he is of course excusable. The simple example here is that Merope kills her son, thinking that he is an enemy. This is matricide, a very grave thing. Parricide is possible in the same way, and the whole story of Oedipus comes in here. Of course Oedipus is naturally absolutely innocent, from Aristotle's point of view, because he acted in complete ignorance of the fact that Laius was his father, that this man was his father and this woman was his mother, and that is it for Aristotle. You know, he does not believe that man can be responsible beyond his knowledge, beyond knowledge regarding particulars. I mean, Oedipus never said, "I am willing to kill my father." He found it terrible when he found out. It's a good example of what Aristotle means by ignorance. Yes, Mr. Weissberger?

Mr. Weissberger: Well, would he have killed his father if he wasn't the kind of man who would get into a fight with a man over the right of way in the road?

LS: Yes, but this was not in itself—that was not a premise of the situation, that this was in itself a criminal act. It became criminal only because it was the father. If this had been somebody else, anyone can get into a fight, and this fight may get out of hand and it may culminate in a killing. That is not supposed to be criminal. The criminality consists only in the fact that it was the father. Yes?

Student: But Aristotle would say that Oedipus was at least in part responsible and blameworthy because he should have somehow, by entreating the gods, found out what the truth was.

LS: No. No, no. He becomes guilty only because he refuses to listen to Teiresias, only because of this reason. And then if he had obeyed the divine law as it was then understood, namely, [if he] had listened to Teiresias, then Teiresias would have told him, "Don't try to find out your past." And then he would have lived happily ever after. And the sin in the play is that his foolish curiosity prevents him from being simply pious in the sense of Teiresias. That was the point. But for the action he was not responsible, surely not from Aristotle's point of view. But I suppose quite a few involuntary actions have

[xxvii] In Rackham's translation: "our speaking of an act as involuntary."

happened. Someone might have killed his father involuntarily and with perfect innocence as far as any law court is concerned and simply [have] become crazy about it when he became aware of it. That's another matter. But one can also say he was unreasonable. Aristotle would say that. Yes?

Student: Is the law the standard of this general knowledge?

LS: Roughly and generally speaking, yes. But you know the law is extremely—if you are rude to a fellow, [if] he asks you for the time and you give him a rude reply, you are not punishable by the law, and still someone would say that's a boorish action.

Same Student: I mean, you get bad laws, too.

LS: Yes, sure, naturally. This leads to a great difficulty, but crudely speaking we can leave it at the law. So in the next chapter Aristotle turns then to the subject of choice. Choice is a special kind of the spontaneous, the kind of the spontaneous which is limited to men who are no longer children. Now Aristotle makes then clear that choice is not the same as desire. Choice is not the same as desire. Obviously, if you desire something, you don't necessarily choose it; you may desire it and reject it. Easy. The more important distinction is that between choice and will. Now the principle is this: will goes to the end, toward the end. You will or wish. You wish to be healthy. And choice has to do with the means. Then choice is distinguished from opinion. That, I think, is also not difficult to understand. We may opine about everything. We may have opinions about Laos, and we cannot say[17] [that we have] have any choice regarding Laos, [the] actions there. The chosen is that voluntary which is, [which] has been an object of previous deliberation. If you desire something and go toward it simply, as it were without reflecting, that's one thing. But if you have deliberated about it—Should I do it? Is it wise to do it?—and then decide to do it, then it is an object of choice and no longer[18] of mere desire. Now what we have to read now is 1112a18, following. A new chapter begins there. "Do men deliberate about everything?" You see, after he has made clear that choice is based on deliberation, he must make clear what deliberation is. Now this will be where we begin.

Mr. Reinken:
As for Deliberation, do people deliberate about everything—are all things possible objects of deliberation—, or are there some things about which deliberation is impossible? The term 'object of deliberation' presumably must not be taken to include things about which a fool or a madman might deliberate, but to mean what a sensible person would deliberate about. (1112a18-21)

LS: Yes. In other words, a fool might deliberate about anything, but Aristotle says: Well, we naturally exclude that, because we are speaking to sensible people and we are not interested in the strange things which fools do. I have been attacked recently because when speaking of common sense, I[19] had spoken of enlightened and informed citizens as representative of common sense. And I was attacked [about] why I arbitrarily excluded unenlightened and unintelligent ones. Well, Aristotle has the answer. What can we learn from these people? We can learn something from enlightened and sensible people. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Well, then, nobody deliberates about things eternal, such as the order of the universe, or the incommensurability of the diagonal and the side of a square. Nor yet about things that change but follow a regular process, whether from necessity or by nature or through some other cause: such phenomena for instance as the solstices and the sunrise.

LS: For instance, we cannot deliberate about the weather. We can reflect about it, we can deliberate whether we should take a ride tomorrow and take the weather into consideration, but we cannot deliberate about the weather because we have no influence on the weather. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Nor about irregular occurrences, such as droughts and rains. Nor about the results of chance, such as finding a hidden treasure.

LS: Obviously not, because by definition it's something which comes to sight suddenly and unexpectedly. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
The reason why we do not deliberate about these things is that none of them can be effected by our agency.

LS: You omitted something: "nor about all human things, for example, how the Scythians would."

Mr. Reinken: Oh, there's a transposition.

LS: I see. All right. All right.

Mr. Reinken: I'll go back.
But we do not deliberate about all human affairs without exception either: for example, no Lacedaemonian deliberates about the best form of government for Scythia— (1112a21-36)

LS: Yes, some commentator whom I read said this shows the narrow-mindedness of Aristotle, because he didn't go in for global politics. We deliberate here about Venezuela and Laos, which of course is not quite true. We do not, strictly speaking, deliberate. They deliberate there, and when we do it, we do it from the point of view that it is very relevant for this country. It is a kind of deliberation about American matters. Sure. So there is nothing narrow-minded here. Good. Yes?

Student: [Regarding constitutions for foreign countries.][xxviii]

[xxviii] As noted by the transcriber.

LS: Yes, that is a different case. He is asked—Aristotle too would. Some barbaric nation would come to him, and he has the time and the necessary knowledge. He would, I believe, as a humane man do it, but it is not strictly speaking deliberation. One deliberates about one's own things. You must have a point of reference from which you start. Yes. Good. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:
The reason why we do not deliberate about these things is that none of them can be effected by our agency. We deliberate about things that are in our control and are attainable by action (which are in fact the only things that still remain to be considered; for Nature, Necessity, and Chance, with the addition of Intelligence and human agency generally, exhaust the generally accepted list of causes).[xxix] Also there is no room for deliberation about matters fully ascertained and completely formulated as sciences; such for instance as orthography—[xxx]

LS: Yes, it is clear. No one deliberates, "Shall I write the 'h' this way or that way?" I have never seen that. I've never seen anyone do that, because that is absolutely fixed. That's the "h," and that is not a letter in the Latin alphabet. Good.

Mr. Reinken:
> for we have no uncertainty as to how a word ought to be spelt. We deliberate about things in which our agency operates but does not always produce the same results; for instance about questions of medicine and of business; and we deliberate about navigation more than about athletic training, because it has been less completely reduced to a science; and similarly with other pursuits also. And we deliberate more about the arts than about the sciences because we are more uncertain about them.

Deliberation then is employed in matters which, though subject to rules that generally hold good, are uncertain in their issue; or where the issue is indeterminate, and where, when the matter is important, we take others into our deliberations, distrusting our own capacity to decide.

And we deliberate not about ends, but about means. A doctor does not deliberate whether he is to cure his patient, nor an orator whether he is to convince his audience, nor a statesman whether he is to secure good government, nor does anyone else debate about the end of his profession or calling— (1112a30-b16)

LS: This solves the problem of Herbert Simon to a large extent of the infinite alternatives which everyone has to consider. Some of you will have read Mr. Storing's analysis of

[xxix] At this point Mr. Reinken omits the section he read earlier (and a little bit more) about the Scythians. The section reads: "But we do not deliberate about all human affairs without exception either: for example, no Lacedaemonian deliberates about the best form of government for Scythia; but any particular set of men deliberates about the things attainable by their own actions."
[xxx] As Mr. Reinken indicated earlier, this is where he resumes.

Simon's teaching on this point.[xxxi] For Aristotle, it's clear: the end is always established prior to the deliberation, and then you deliberate about the means. And he describes deliberation in the sequel, and that is really important for the modern discussions of what is now characteristically called "decision making," where the element of deliberation is not so visible but[20] only the last, final stage, and the emphasis has shifted from the rational process of deliberation to the mere act of the will: the decision. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
they take some end for granted, and consider how and by what means it can be achieved. If they find that there are several means of achieving it, they proceed to consider which of these will attain it most easily and best. If there is only one means by which it can be accomplished, they ask how it is to be accomplished by that means, and by what means that means can itself be achieved until they reach the first link in the chain of causes, which is the last in the order of discovery. (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.) (1112b16-25)

LS: Is this clear? You deliberate from the end. Say, the end is health, and in this particular case of this particular patient suffering from this disease. And then you find out it is this and this disease. This means is ordinarily helpful in most cases. There is no reason to assume that this is an atypical case, and then you decide on this and this. And now the first step:[21] the first step, let's say roughly—let us assume it's an operation: the first step would probably be, according to the present means, to give him anaesthetics. That is probably no longer spelled out because it's a matter of course, and therefore the end of the deliberation [is]: give him anaesthetics so that he can be safely operated on. And this is the first step in the action. Then you go down from the end to the last step in the analysis and then you ascend again from that to the end, hopefully that he will be healthy after the operation. This is *the* classic statement about deliberation. Now one point which is very important[22] to consider [here] is that in this whole analysis[23] there is no difference between moral deliberation and medical deliberation. No difference. The example is throughout the same.[24] Of course that doesn't mean that there is no difference whatever, but it forces us to raise the question all the more, which Aristotle doesn't answer here: What is the difference between moral and medical deliberation? Well, you can of course also replace the physicians by the pilot, or by any other deliberator. That doesn't make any fundamental difference. Now what would be the difference?

Student: Couldn't we say the difference was what we found to be the difference between art and moral virtue before?

LS: Namely?

[xxxi] Herbert J. Storing, "The Science of Administration: Herbert A. Simon," in *Essays on the Scientific Study of Politics*, ed. Herbert J. Storing (NY: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1962), 63–150.

Student: That the artisan could deliberate on to the end opposite the right end. He could deliberate on it if he were working with some animal and he wanted to test something: let me make him sick in a certain way so that I will test a new serum. Well, how do I do that? In other words, he won't deliberate, he doesn't have to deliberate on health if in the name of health he deliberates—

LS: Aristotle makes it perfectly clear that the physician takes the end for granted: health. I mean, he doesn't think of that physician who is considering, "Should[25] [I] poison him or destroy him?"—because his relatives would give the physician money, you know, from the inheritance. These things have happened, and this Aristotle excludes. He takes here for granted the noncriminal physician. It is true: the physician as physician is not necessarily a noncriminal. The virtuous man is necessarily noncriminal. Is that what you mean? That is true.

Same Student: That was what I meant, but—

LS: Yes, but this is not here a matter of consideration. We must never forget that. Mr. Burnam?

Mr. Burnam: I think it has something to do with the fact, just the simple fact that bodily health is much more obvious than mental health.

LS: Yes, that is one good point, but it doesn't go far enough. I would go a step further. I mean, not only is mental health—because mental health is of course here not understood in the sense of psychiatry; it's understood in the sense of virtue. And this is the point. Yes, but more generally stated, in the case of medical deliberation the end is clearly defined: health. What is the end in moral deliberation? The end in moral deliberation is the moral action itself. You see, you want to act virtuously, and therefore you consider all the circumstances properly. But with a view to what? To moral action. It is an entirely circular procedure. With a view to what do you determine the action? Do you see[26] the difficulty? I mean, the difference between morality and arts is that the artisan's act has an end outside of the act itself: the shoe, health, or whatever it may be. The moral act does not have an end outside of itself: it is to be done for its own sake. It is in this sense an end in itself. That is very difficult. Now Thomas Aquinas in his commentary somewhere to this passage says generally speaking the ends—and he means here also the ends of moral action—are given by nature. Yes?[27] Then it would be clear. We would then have this situation: the moral man acts with a view to natural ends. But not the natural character of the ends but [rather] the wise choice of the means to these ends makes him moral. But this is not what Aristotle says. In a way Aristotle must imply it, but only in a way. Mr. Dry?

Mr. Dry: This might be going ahead a little, but it is confusing because in talking about courage and another virtue Aristotle says that the end is not the moral virtue but the honor that we derive. The end of moral virtue is not moral virtue but honor. The courageous man does the right thing [. . .] for honors—

LS: Then there must be something wrong with the translation. One should not translate *to kalon* by honor; *to kalon* is the noble. And that may be identical, [it] may be used synonymously with honor, but Aristotle makes it explicitly clear: the man who acts courageously for the sake of honor, the honors given by the city, is not the courageous man proper. On the contrary, to anticipate that, I think the example of courage is beautiful, because in this whole discussion of courage, where courage is defined as a virtue to be shown on the field of honor, [the] field of battle, there is not a single reference to the fatherland, to the *polis* [as] the end. Thomas Aquinas in his commentary insists on that, but Aristotle does not speak of it.[xxxii] That is exactly the great difficulty of the *Ethics*: that the end of moral action is not defined. It is only indicated by that word "happiness," and that is in one sense a question mark, because it is not elaborated, what it means. Mr. Glenn?

Mr. Glenn: What does Aristotle mean when he says that we do not deliberate about those things which we cannot bring about by our own efforts? My problem is this: the political scientist in the classroom can deliberate about things like the goals of American foreign policy. He deliberates about this in a real sense, and yet he doesn't have much influence.

LS: Yes, but he has some. The position is that he's a citizen of a democracy, a voter, and perhaps he will become a congressman in the future. There is no difficulty.

Mr. Glenn: Well, my problem is this: when Aristotle says this sort of absolutely, that we do not deliberate about things which we cannot bring about by our own efforts—

LS: Yes, by our own means. Yes, of course you cannot bring about by your, Mr. Glenn's, own efforts, but you can very well[28] [by] the community['s efforts]. The American people deliberate about what they can bring about. Now not all American people deliberate, for various reasons, but those who are politically interested do; and this deliberation is, in a way, of course going on all the time in newspapers and in debates in Congress and every other place. That is no difficulty.[29] [There] is a famous difficulty, that if you have one hundred-eighty-millionth of power of decision, can this be called the power of decision? You know, that's a famous difficulty in this large democracy, but this doesn't affect the Aristotelian point. Modern democracy stands and falls by the fact that this voting power, in spite of its littleness in numerical terms, is something important. And I believe if they would take away that right from you, you wouldn't like it.

Mr. Glenn: Would you say, then, that you have to interpret this "by our own efforts" to mean our own, collectively—

LS: Yes, sure, necessarily, individually or collectively. It depends. If it is a political matter, it is of course collective. If it is a private matter, it is of course the individual's own.

Mr. Glenn: Should we then also understand it to mean—"our own efforts" to mean our own efforts no matter how little effect—

[xxxii] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, §537.

LS: Yes. Yes, sure. Sure, sure. The simple Athenian member of the assembly also had very little to say, you know. He had just one vote. And the speeches, the political speeches, were called deliberative speeches. Speeches about laws, about war and peace, were called deliberative speeches. That is deliberation. Deliberation is of course political deliberation as well as private, that goes without saying. Yes. But it's good you bring it up, since it wasn't quite clear.

Student: I think it's still not solved, because if you had a dictatorship, then by definition what goes on in a political science class would not be deliberation.

LS: No, well, what is going on in political science classes could at best be called an imitation of deliberation, training in deliberation. Yes, sure, just as many things which are going on in medical schools are not medication but an imitation of medication so that they can become medicators.

Same Student: Then this is a special usage.

LS: Yes, but this is not difficult to understand, is it? Just as the shoes made by an apprentice in the first year are not shoes strictly speaking, because no one can use them. But by having made these shoes he will be able, next year or the year thereafter, to make a shoe which a human being can wear. There is no difficulty in that. You see? I mean, if one uses one's head [30]and if one thinks of the subject matter in the proper terms and does not go off into irrelevant abstractions, this is clear. Is it not? I mean, that there can be and must be imitations for the purpose of instruction and learning and habituation in all fields of human endeavor?

Same Student: I'm not completely satisfied, but I'll let it go.

LS: Think a bit about it and draw on your experience.

Student: Of how much brunt is the objection that a physician might want to deliberate about the end, euthanasia, for example?

LS: About the end?

Same Student: About the end, health: he might decide that it might be for the better if the patient—

LS: You know what will happen to him: he will be punished for murder. He is not a physician in order to reach a decision [about] whether this man should live or die. That doesn't fall within his competence. He is to heal, if possible; and if not, to make the rest of the case of the patient reasonably comfortable. That's all that he is for, and according to the ordinary understanding no man has the right to decide whether it is good for another man to live or to die. Strictly speaking, no man is supposed to make such a decision. That is not a question. But it is indeed true that the physician or any other artisan may misuse

his art, and in misusing it may [still] be very able as an artisan. That is true. That is the point which Mr. Dry brought up. But I think the more urgent question for us is that in the case of the arts, the end which the art serves is well defined. [Take], for example, the pilot who says now, "All the baggage must be thrown into the sea, otherwise I can't save the boat." It is perfectly clear, the end: he wants to bring the ship and the human beings on it to port. That is *the* clear end with a view to which he decides, taking into consideration the circumstances: the tempest, [the] time of day, and so on. But what is that with a view to which you decide that this degree of anger is proper in the circumstances, and that degree improper? As I put it last time, the degrees of anger don't run around with tags, "proper degree," but you have to find out in each case, and this is exactly the point. Now a few more points I would briefly like to mention. Let us see only one passage, 1114b16. That is toward the end of that chapter, however it is called. 1114b16, where he summarizes the statement about the end.

Student: Your last comment seemed to tie back to the dual nature of virtue, because when you first raised this business—and people were bothered—that the end of moral action is not defined, there were strange looks. And you illustrate it now, and it is much less arguable that as virtue as concerned with passions—

LS: For example?

Same Student: You just gave the business of the degree of anger felt.

LS: Yes, but with a view to what?

Same Student: That the end is the thing itself.

LS: The end is the right degree of anger in the circumstances. That is what you already established. But with a view to what do we establish the right degree? The right degree is not universally the same. It depends on the circumstances. But you must have something outside of the circumstances in order to determine what is the right degree of anger in the circumstances. Is this clear? Now the right degree of anger is the end, but you cannot determine the right degree of anger with a view to the supposedly-known right degree of anger. Now let us take another case. Let us take the virtue of temperance: how much to eat and so on; how much to eat, and also how to eat: slow, fast, and so on and so on. Aristotle refers to that (we will take this up next time) with a view to health in the first place. There you have an end different from the right degree of indulgence. But what do you have in the other cases? That is the question. Now in a way this is taken up in this passage, then we will conclude. In the preceding passage, 1114a31 to b16, Aristotle puts the difficulty in this form: either we are responsible for the end which comes to sight[31] [for] us or we are not.[32] [In the latter case] the end is not chosen by us but imposed by nature, and then everything depends on what nature has given to him. You must be well-born; then you will have the right kind of end. And if you are ill-born you [will] have the wrong kind of end. And then the evil man simply doesn't know the true end. He is by nature blind to it. That's one thing. Aristotle is not quite satisfied, and therefore he goes on in this passage, the few lines which I would like us to read. 1114b16.

Mr. Reinken:
Whether then a man's view of his end, whatever it may be, is not given by nature but is partly due to himself, or whether, although his end is determined by nature, yet virtue is spontaneous because the good man's actions to gain his end are spontaneous, in either case vice will be just as much spontaneous as virtue; [xxxiii] for the bad man equally with the good possesses spontaneity in his actions—

LS: Yes, this is the point. Now let us see what this means. Either we are to some extent at least responsible for the end which comes to sight[33] [for] us—then freedom is no question—or we are not responsible [for it]. But even in the latter case, we are at least responsible for what we do with regard to the end and the things done with regard to ends. They are the locus of virtue and vice, and therefore freedom is saved. What Aristotle seems to drive at is this (and this is of course no[t a] possible solution): that knowledge or ignorance of the end is irrelevant for moral virtue. He cannot possibly mean that, and yet some of the statements sound as if they were that. But he cannot leave it; he retracts, surely, this implication in the immediate sequel, in b21.

Mr. Reinken:
If then, as is said, our virtues are spontaneous[xxxiv] (and in fact we are in a sense ourselves partly the cause of our moral dispositions, and it is our having a certain character that makes us set up an end of a certain kind), it follows that our vices are spontaneous also; they are spontaneous in the same manner as our virtues.[xxxv] (1114b16-26)

LS: Yes. In other words, here he seems to say the ends are established on the basis of the good or bad habit which we have acquired. Since we are responsible for the good or bad habit which we acquired, we are also responsible for the end which comes to sight. This is still very dark, and I think the difficulty is this,[34] always this: How do we know the right ends? The definition of virtue given in the second book, that it is a mean, is connected with that because the definition of the mean, of virtue in terms of mean, of course blurs that. With a view to what is the mean determined? That's always the question. But that we can say on the basis of general observation that virtuous actions are always in between acts which do too much and acts which do too little, that is plausible. We can say the right attitude to anger will always lead to degrees of anger short of apoplexy on the one hand and stupid insensitivity to insult on the other. That's safe to say. But what about the exact determination? With a view to what? If we assume (in many cases we do that)[35] as an end the *polis*, the political society—and this affects of course many virtues and many virtuous actions—then we have a standard outside. And things would be in a way much simpler if we could always refer ourselves to, as we say now, society. But Aristotle does not regard this as sufficient. Why? That's a long question. We must follow that. Aristotle does not regard this as sufficient, although he's fully aware, of course—after all, the book is called

[xxxiii] In Rackham's translation: "yet virtue is voluntary because the good man's actions to gain his end are voluntary, in either case vice will be just as much voluntary as virtue."
[xxxiv] In Rackham's translation: "If then, as is said, our virtues are voluntary."
[xxxv] In Rackham's translation: "it follows that our vices are voluntary also; they are voluntary in the same manner as our virtues."

politikē tis, a kind of political inquiry. So he is the last man in the world who could have forgotten about the *polis*. But he does not regard the *polis* and its interests and what is required for it as sufficient for determining our action. And the simplest explanation is that he had the feeling there is something in man which transcends the *polis*, and therefore the *polis* would not be good enough [to do so]. In addition, there is also this difficulty: when you speak of *the polis*, you leave undetermined whether it is a good or bad *polis*.

Now how do you make a distinction between the good and bad *polis*? There you will bring in virtue. This is the most natural distinction there, [the] most natural term for distinguishing between the good and bad *polis*. And therefore you come into Machiavellianism if you take the *polis* undefined, without any regard to goodness or badness, the mere self-preservation of the *polis* by hook and by crook as *the* standard. This can be done. Machiavelli has shown that it can be done. But it is not good enough, obviously. We all know that, see [that] from time to time at least. Yes, but if we reject[36] the *polis* as a sufficient criterion, what other criterion can we find? And I believe—I repeat this again—that the only clear statement about a specific end which Aristotle gives is the contemplative life, and it is clear that the contemplative life, the life of the mind, determines well enough how one should act towards others as well as towards the subrational part of man. But this is obviously insufficient, because very few people lead the contemplative life, and Aristotle has to find somehow a mean between the *polis* undefined—I mean, only taken as a society of men living together in peace—[on the one hand], and the contemplative life on the other, and to see somehow[37] some conversions between the two. This is the standard, the possible standard, for nonphilosophic men, and that is, I think, what he means by moral virtue.

Whatever ends you may take, whatever natural ends you may take, will not cover the whole ground. I mean, if you say, for example, self-preservation, [that] is of course impossible. Then there cannot be courage, as Hobbes has clearly seen. It is clear. I mean, if self-preservation is *the* end, then courage is a vice, naturally. I mean, unless in those circumstances, which also may happen, where courage might be conducive to self-preservation. There are such cases. For example, jumping on a chair when some dangerous animal like a mouse or a rat enters may be helpful. Well, we will discuss that when we come to the particular virtues. But what we have to expect from the analysis of the particular virtues is whether this question of the end with a view to which moral man determines what is the right action here now, whether that question is answered. It will surely be made more specific by the analysis of the virtues.

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[1] Moved "of."
[2] Deleted "He could have done it."
[3] Deleted "the."
[4] Deleted "of counting."
[5] Deleted "other."
[6] Deleted "society."
[7] Deleted "us."
[8] Deleted "but."
[9] Deleted "definitely."
[10] Deleted "This he takes up later on."
[11] Deleted "Do you ever deliberate."
[12] Deleted "we."

[13] Deleted “then.”
[14] Deleted “when.”
[15] Moved “really.”
[16] Deleted “he.”
[17] Deleted “to.”
[18] Deleted “any more.”
[19] Deleted “had said.”
[20] Deleted “simply.”
[21] Deleted “and.”
[22] Moved “here.”
[23] Deleted “here.”
[24] Deleted “and.”
[25] Deleted “he not.”
[26] Deleted “that.”
[27] Deleted “are given by nature.”
[28] Deleted “be.”
[29] Deleted “that.”
[30] Deleted “I mean”
[31] Deleted “to.”
[32] Deleted “then.”
[33] Deleted “to.”
[34] Deleted “is.”
[35] Deleted “assume.”
[36] Deleted “that.”
[37] Deleted “see.”

Session 7: May 2, 1963
The particular virtues: courage and moderation
(Book 3.6-12)

Leo Strauss: It was a good paper, and quite a few things are correct.[i] You make in my opinion only one great slip. It was casual, but still we should clear it up. You said, when you spoke about the remark about immortality or life after death, that Aristotle leaves this open because this is a theological and not a philosophic question. Can you tell me what Aristotle understands by theology?

Ms. Goldschmidt: I thought he meant by religion revealed religion.

LS: Yes, but did Aristotle have any notion of revealed religion?

Ms. Goldschmidt: I don't know. Doesn't revealed religion reveal such things as he omits?

LS: Yes, but, well, what does the term "theology" mean in Aristotle? That is always the best beginning.

Ms. Goldschmidt: Yes. He didn't even use the term.

LS: Oh yes—not here, but he does, and it is the same as what came to be called later on metaphysics. So it is a part, the highest part, of philosophy. So there is no theology for Aristotle outside of philosophy. There is no revealed theology in Aristotle.

Ms. Goldschmidt: Yes, well, that's what I meant by theology.

LS: Yes, but you could have chosen a better way to say it. No, this is not possible, that Aristotle omits something because it belongs to the province of theology. That's impossible. Yes, there is no such outside field from his point of view. Now as for the more special point, you had some difficulties in understanding why Aristotle arrives at the conclusion that courage refers to the danger of dying in battle as distinguished, for example, from a shipwreck, and it seemed to you first that Aristotle was as it were guided by the legislators who praised the brave soldiers and not the men who behave bravely in shipwrecks (unless they are the same, so that they would also be soldiers, of course). But then you said: No, the legislators are irrelevant. It is intelligible in itself because the enemy you can resist. You have a fighting chance, so to speak. You cannot do anything against the ocean. But is this sufficient? Take another case: a physician who exposes his life in an epidemic. And don't say that this didn't exist in Greece, because we know from

[i] Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

Thucydides's description of the plague that there were quite a few physicians who exposed their lives in order to save the city.[ii] Now why should the physician who exposes his life not be as brave as the soldier? I mean, what is the Aristotelian answer, as far as you could discern it in this section which you discussed?

Ms. Goldschmidt: [. . .]

LS: But it is perfectly clear that they went into an infected house. That was as dangerous as to go in[to] a minefield. So? Well, the legislator didn't honor these physicians as they honor the soldiers, so you have to come back to the legislator. And the question is whether that is a mere convention or whether there is not a substantive reason for taking one's bearings by what the legislators say. Perhaps it is not an accident that there are always legislators around. Perhaps it has something to do with the fact that man is a political being. Good. So these are the two points.

I read Miss Goldschmidt's paper about the first half of book 3, and there is only one point which I would like to mention here in class. Miss Goldschmidt has seen the difficulties, but here is one point where I believe she went wrong. She says, "Men who see the golden mean through something that could be called genius, these men may be the freest, for even though they know what the good course of action is, they are not bound by good character to follow that course of action and can still choose either. Perhaps these men are the only ones who can truly do evil, for the virtuous man is bound by his good character—he cannot do evil—and the vicious man is bound by his bad character. The vicious man cannot but do evil." Do you see that? This doesn't stand. That is a contradiction.

Now let us now turn to a discussion of our assignment. I hope we can cover more of the ground today than we did last time.[1] Aristotle turns now, from the middle of the third book toward at least the end of the fifth, to the particular virtues: courage, moderation, and so on. Now it is important to realize this: Aristotle has defined[2] virtue in general: the genus. And now he comes to the species. But the definition of the genus was not complete. It was not precise. It was given [. . .] in a general outline. It[3] was left in a certain vagueness. Therefore we must contend with the possibility that when we study the particular virtues we will learn something about virtue in general which we have not yet learned[4]. In other words, the procedure of Aristotle is not simply[5] from the more universal to the particular. There is also a way back. More generally stated, the genus is a whole which comprises the species, and the species is a part of the genus. The way from the whole to the part is accompanied also by a way from the part to the whole. We do not understand the whole except by understanding the parts. But of course we also can never understand a part unless we understand it as part of a whole, i.e., unless we have some understanding of the whole. This is a great misfortune, but this is the fate of human knowledge, that we always have some inkling of the whole. Otherwise we couldn't begin to think. But we have to go to the parts in order to get more specific knowledge, and this more specific knowledge is bound to affect our previous opinions about the whole. This is surely Plato's view, but to some extent, at least in the *Ethics*, this applies to Aristotle as well. I give you a simple example. "Man is a rational animal." You cannot understand "man," therefore, if you do

[ii] E.g., Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, book 2, §47.

not [already] know what "animal" is, what "living being" is. But when you understand "man," this particular being who possesses reason, this throws light again on "animal," namely, that "animal" is compatible with rationality. This does not become sufficiently clear from the general understanding of animality.

Now the greatest difficulty which we had, I believe,[6] in the general analysis of virtue [was this]: virtue has to do with choice of means, but the habit of choosing the mean or the means is itself the end. I mean, excuse me,[7] [that] slip was very bad. I didn't mean now "the mean"; I meant the means for an end. The habit of choosing the means is itself the end. In the arts, it is different. The physician chooses, say, the operation [as] the means for the end: health. The end is health, not the operation. But in moral life the action which we choose, which is meant to be a means, is at the same time the end. Do we not need knowledge of the end, of a different end, in order to choose rightly the means? But what is that end with a view to which we determine that this is the right thing to do now? What do we learn from the analysis of courage or manliness regarding the end? First, the question: Why does he begin in the analysis of the virtues, [and] already in this enumeration of the virtues in book 2, with courage, with manliness? Why does he do that? After all, unless we have proven that Aristotle[8] tossed a coin, we must assume that he had a reason for beginning with courage. He surely doesn't tell us. We have to find out. Now when we read the first few lines of this passage—Mr. Reinken?

Mr. Reinken:
But to resume, 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. In so doing we shall also make it clear how many virtues there are. (1115a4-6)

LS: Yes, how many there are. See, Aristotle seems to be interested in that purely statistical question: how many virtues there are. Yes. Well, but why is Aristotle interested? Why is the question of how many virtues there are important?

Mr. Reinken: By contrast to Plato?

LS: Perhaps. Yes, that would be one thing, but you can also say, if you know these and these are virtues, only these and these discussed by Aristotle are virtues. There may be others. People speak of those. You count. You make a list for yourself. You compare your list with Aristotle's list. The number will play a certain role. You will see which are excluded by Aristotle. That's not unimportant. Let us keep in mind this question: why does he begin with courage or manliness? Do you know another writer, whom Aristotle knew, who also begins in a way with courage? It's one of these nasty examples, as you seem to have gathered. Yes. Well, in the *Laws*, the first book of the *Laws*. He begins with courage and goes along into the others; and I think the first book of the *Laws* will also supply the answer as to why Aristotle begins with courage. Now when he goes on[9], courage has to do with fear and confidence, the opposite of fear, [a] sense of security. But he shifts immediately to fear as distinguished from a sense of confidence, because courage is primarily the right posture toward fears and not toward feelings of security. And this is connected with the fact that fear has always to do with evil, with impending evil or

possible future evil—painful things. You don't need a particular attitude toward confidence. That doesn't create a difficulty for your life if you are confident, but if you are fearful of evil, that disturbs you and you have to do something about it. And this is the difference between courage and its related virtue, moderation. Here we have to do with pleasant things, the attractions of pleasures which also disturb. Now let us turn to a10 to 12 only to give you some specimens of Aristotle's procedure. So, that courage has to do with fears is not a difficult assertion, everyone would admit that. But which kind of fears? Let us turn to a10.

Mr. Reinken:
It is true then that we fear all evil things, for example, disgrace, poverty, disease, lack of friends, death; but it is not thought that Courage is related to all these things—

LS: Yes, let us stop here. You see, so there are many fear-inspiring things. Aristotle gives some striking examples, but how does he make his selection? On the basis of what? The translator says, "it is thought." It is supposed to be; it seems; it is generally assumed.[iii] No one would call a man who can control his fear regarding disgrace a brave or courageous man. The same applies to the other things like poverty and so on. Now let us make a jump to [line] 24. Aristotle gives other examples: which kinds of fears are not the matter of courage. Now there he raises the question about what kind of things[10] [are] fear-inspiring.[11] Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
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.

LS: More literally "not the one who is concerned with the greatest things?" Meaning the greatest fear-inspiring things, question mark. Yes. "For no one is more sustaining of the terrible things than the courageous man." Now, and what is this most fear-inspiring thing?

Mr. Reinken:
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. (1115a10-28)

LS: Yes, "we think" is again "it seems." You see the interesting point: before he had discussed in the first book—that's your point, Mr. Burnam. What do you want to say?

Mr. Burnam: He makes clear [that] what he said in the first book was a concession to opinion.

LS: Yes, but it was not a very strong point in the first book, either. But here it comes quite clear. Yes. But Aristotle of course—yes, so what we suspected there, that this is not such a grave problem for him, becomes now perfectly clear.

[iii] Strauss offers other translations of *dokei*.

Mr. Burnam: Yes, the only question is why he mentions it here.

LS: You see, the question of—that was mentioned last time, I believe by Mr. Kirwan—if there is a certainty of life after death: the status of courage is affected by it. I mean, courage as Aristotle understands it is displayed with a certainty on the part of the courageous man that he risks everything for his whole future. There is no future beyond his death. That is a point—why he must make it here. And this may have something to do with the question of the difference between[12] virtue in the strict sense and virtue of the citizen. Perhaps he spoke before in the first book of the citizen['s] point of view; that we do not know. But the main point is again[13] that he doesn't assert definitely that to the dead man nothing good or bad ever occurs. He only says it is thought to be: thought to be in certain circles, like those circles which he addresses here. So we know this much then: courage has to do with the fear-inspiring death and not with other fear-inspiring things, at least not primarily. Secondarily it might. Good. This is, however, not sufficient.

Mr. Reinken:
But even death, we should hold, 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.

LS: Yes. Also here he uses a question: "not that in the most noble things?" He doesn't assert it. He raises the question, [offers] no contradiction, then he goes on. Now the most noble fearful dangers are those in war. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
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 republics and under monarchies.

The courageous man, therefore, in the proper sense of the term, will be he who fearlessly confronts a noble death, or some sudden peril that threatens death; and the perils of war answer this description most fully. (1115a28-35)

LS: Yes, now let us see here. So the locus of courage is then war, facing death in battle. Now that this is not a peculiarity of Greeks is also, I have been told—not indeed by anthropologists, but I know it from much less respectable sources which I decline to identify—that the Red Indians called their warriors "the braves." And this is it. The brave man, the courageous man, is a warrior. So this is not a peculiarity. For those interested in minor subtleties, when he says here in [line] 31, "in agreement or corresponding to that are also the honors both in the cities and with the rulers," Averroes makes this remark: "men have already agreed in this, convened in this, that those who sustain death in battles are to be praised and [. . .]." In other words—that is the line which Mr. Weissberger took—there is a kind of convention to do that, praising the warriors in particular. Aristotle does not say this here; this is [the] interpretation given by Averroes. Good. But I think the thesis in itself, that courage has its locus in the field of honor—the clinic, the hospital where the

diseased people are, is not called the field of honor. The field of honor is battle. This is not surprising, although one can say perhaps the philosopher should take a somewhat broader view. And one can deplore Aristotle's sticking to the phenomena, and we will take this up at the end. Now I suggest we turn to the next chapter, 1115b7, because we cannot read everything.

Mr. Reinken:
Now although the same things are not fearful to everybody, there are some terrors which we pronounce beyond human endurance, and these of course are fearful to everyone in his senses.

LS: In other words, there cannot be bravery there or courage there. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
And the terrors that man can endure differ in magnitude and degree; as also do the situations inspiring confidence. But the courageous man is proof against fear so far as man may be. Hence although he will sometimes fear even terrors not beyond man's endurance, he will do so in the right way, and he will endure them as principle dictates, for the sake of that which is noble;[iv] for that is the end at which virtue aims.

LS: Here he speaks of the end of virtue. We will take this up again. Let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:
On the other hand it is possible to fear such terrors too much, and too little; and also to fear things that are not fearful as if they were fearful. Error arises either from fearing what one ought not to fear, or from fearing in the wrong manner, or at the wrong time, or the like; and similarly with regard to occasions for confidence.

The courageous man then is he that 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 dares the deeds that manifest courage, for the sake of that which is noble.) (1115b7-24)

LS: Yes, let us stop here and let us try to understand it. Facing death in battle is the act of the courageous man. Now what does this mean? Must he not run away under any circumstances? May he not surrender under any circumstances?[14] [That] would be simple, but it is not so simple. There are situations in which it is right for him to run away and right for him to surrender, but where to draw the line? You see, if the rule were universally valid, [there would be] no question. But has the same line to be drawn by everyone? For example, whether a man is wounded or not wounded, whether he [still] has[15] ammunition,

[iv] In Rackham's translation: "for the sake of what is noble."

whether he is on a reconnoitering party, or whether it is a decisive battle on which everything depends: these are obviously circumstances which are very relevant. Again, this only shows how to draw the line. Now Aristotle speaks first of the fact that different things are fear-inspiring for different human beings. Now of course he doesn't mention that here, but he thinks here of course also of the difference between men and women—although that is not relevant here immediately, because we have already excluded women because courage, the locus of courage, is war. But let us look even for a moment at women. There are some stories about women who jump on a chair when a mouse appears, and this is generally regarded as a misplaced fear, not a rational one. But I think we would all say in fairness to everyone that if it is not a mouse but a rat, it would be a somewhat different situation because a rat is a more fear-inspiring animal than a mouse. I think if it is a black panther even men would be excused if we were to jump not only on chairs but to the ceiling. So there is a variety of fearful things for different human beings. Yet there are certain limits to that. There are certain things which are too fear-inspiring for every human being and where no human being can be expected to stand. That is one point. One thing could, of course, be entirely new weapons, entirely new, absolutely unexpected weapons, wholly surprising. Think: elephants coming up against a great army who have never been confronted by elephants, as the Romans[16] [were]. This cannot be simply regarded as cowardice if the Romans don't know them. Next time they will know and they will change their tactics, of course. Mr. Weissberger?

Ms. Weissberger: [As to whether the case of Macabeus confronting the elephants in the Apocrypha[v] was one of courage.][vi]

LS: Yes, that would be extraordinary courage. Good. Yes, sure, that would be extraordinary courage. But he might have heard of elephants already before. [Laughter] No, that would not detract from his courage, but would make it more intelligible that in such a situation—good. Now the second consideration is this. Courage is the right posture not merely toward death in battle but also toward other fear-inspiring things, and this makes the questions of how to draw the line, i.e., of the *telos*, of the end, still more urgent. Now when we take the example of the woman confronted by the mouse or by the rat, why is it more reasonable if it is a rat than if it is a mouse? Why is it more reasonable?

Student: The fear of danger is more.

LS: Yes, but danger: danger of what?

Same Student: The rat can kill them.

LS: Can kill them. Yes, what is then the point of view? Very simple: life and limbs, yes. Life and limbs. Very good. Yes, but clearly this is of no help, because the courageous man precisely exposes life and limb in the proper situation, not when confronted with a black panther but when confronted by an enemy. But how does he draw the line? I mean, the

[v] 1 Maccabees 6:32–47.
[vi] As noted by the transcriber.

line cannot be drawn with a view to self-preservation. That's impossible. Then there would never be any brave man. Yes? Is it not clear?

Same Student: If the battlefield is the main field of courage, we sacrifice our lives or we put our lives in jeopardy there for the *polis*, for the state.

LS: Yes, but still, did Aristotle say anything about the *polis*? What did Aristotle say about the end, the end at which the courageous, the brave man, the manly man aims?

Same Student: The noble.

LS: The noble. Period. You must admit, that is not very enlightening. Somehow we have in mind—we all know a certain bit about these things—we have in mind something like the *polis*. That's not stated. And what about you, Mr. Boyan?

Mr. Boyan: Yes, we're not going to emphasize simply the relationship of fears to things that may cause death. There are other things that can cause fear and that can be another reason why the question of self-preservation cannot be the standard.

LS: I mean, what is that other reason why self-preservation cannot be the standard?

Mr. Boyan: Well, because you fear other things that have nothing to do with self-preservation.

LS: Yes, for instance?

Mr. Boyan: You may fear you're going to flunk an exam.

LS: Yes, Aristotle—he has excluded [that]. No one is regarded as a courageous man in Aristotle's sense because he has no fear of flunking an examination. It may be either that he has a just estimate of his powers, and it may also be a man of extraordinary levity, but it is not the sphere of courage or cowardice. I mean, we may take up later on the question why Aristotle excludes so rigorously the other fields of apprehensions and how to fight them from the sphere of courage. We may do that, but let us first—

Mr. Boyan: He does mention other things: pain, when he's talking about the coward, page 161. "But to seek death in order to escape from poverty, or the pangs of love, or from pain or sorrow."[vii] Okay, those are three other things.

LS: Yes. May I suggest this very humdrum procedure: that we wait until we come to that passage. Good. So Aristotle has now made reasonably clear what courage is, i.e., what its matter, its field is, but he has not yet made clear what the end is, except for saying it is the noble. And he distinguishes then in the sequel the two defects belonging to courage: the excess and the defect. The excess is rashness, boldness, however you call it, and the defect proper is cowardice, of course. Yes, Mr. Burnam?

[vii] 1116a13–14.

Mr. Burnam: What I don't understand: is that a mistranslation, or what is the structure of that argument there? He says the courage of the courageous man is noble. Therefore its end is nobility. In the passage we just read.

LS: The end of every activity is that which corresponds to the habit in question, and for the courageous man courage is noble. That is what we had. The editors don't like that. They have all kinds of remarks. But this is what we have.

Mr. Burnam: But then he goes on. He says, "therefore its end is nobility."

LS: Yes, well, "such like, then, is also the end." I suppose he means that noble is then also the end. That he means here.

Mr. Burnam: You take out "therefore."

LS: Yes, well, something like the "therefore" is there: in Greek, *ge*.[viii]

Student: On the artisan: it seems the major premise was that every activity aims at the end that corresponds to the habit of which it is the manifestation. The major premise is that for activities the *telos*, the thing to which it tends is of like character with the actual practice.

Mr. Burnam: Well, you could say his courage is just. Therefore its end is justice. But that doesn't help, does it?

LS: Now let us see. "The end of every activity (of every *energeias*) is that which corresponds to the *hexis*." So the end of a just action is that which corresponds to the habit of justice. The end of the courageous action is that which corresponds to the habit of courage. And how they are related, that is not taken up here.[17] The point is this. The transition is here then this: "so the courageous man aims at being courageous," and he does everything that he does with the ultimate view to being courageous. And courage, his being courageous, has the character of being noble. That it shares with justice, temperance, and so on. He acts courageously because he is concerned with acting nobly and concerned with nothing else. That, I think, is the meaning of that passage. Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: In lines 17, following, where our translator says, "The courageous man then is he that endures or fears the right things," etc., etc., how would you reply to the question that this seems to be tautological?

LS: That is not tautological because it indicates the various considerations which have to be considered, the various circumstances. For example, one action, say, running away from the enemy, maybe is base sometimes and not base on other occasions. So you cannot give here a complete list of the occasions on which it is wise or unwise, because it

[viii] In Rackham's edition, the passage referred to by Mr. Burnam (1115b21–23) contains the particle *dē* in the line to which Strauss refers, not *ge*.

depends on so many different circumstances: whether it is a small group reconnoitering only or whether it is a large army, and how large and how small. That depends on the circumstances, you know, [and] that you cannot say. And also let me see what are the other points. Yes, and does he do it—how one should—for example, it may be the right thing in these circumstances to withdraw but not to run away throwing away one's guns or whatever you have. That depends.

Mr. Butterworth: Well we have in our translation "the right things," "the right purpose," "the right manner," and "the right time."

LS: Yes, let us see: "what one should do and in the right manner, the right time (right occasion) and many other considerations." The circumstances; we have spoken of that before. There always is a variety of circumstances and they all must be considered. and that is in itself something very simple. The difficulty is, however, as I have stated before: towards what do you look in order to adjust the right thing to the circumstances? There must be some principle. This he calls the noble, and that is of course too general. I mean, with a view to what do you draw the line? You draw the line not merely with a view to the circumstances, but also with a view to something else, because if you would say the end is self-preservation, the same circumstances would recommend in all these cases; perhaps running away, as Hobbes said. But if the end is not self-preservation, what is it? Aristotle has told us hitherto only the noble, and the noble means, negatively: not self-preservation. This much we know, but that is too general. Why don't we first finish this section and then see what we can learn?

Now he makes[18] clear in the sequel that to brave death or to choose death in order to avoid poverty, erotic troubles, and pain is not courage but cowardice, because in the first place it is softness to run away from toilsome things. Softness is almost the same as cowardice. And second, why does he do that? Who commits suicide because he is about to become poor and he is not loved by his girl, or he has to expect great pain? He does this not for the sake of something noble but in order to escape merely from an evil, without an outlook of something noble. So this noble [element] must be present if there is to be courage. I think you can understand that. You can understand it, although we would like to hear from such a master like Aristotle something more specific than just the noble in general. But I believe he will give it to us to some extent. Good.

Now then in the sequel, in 1116a15, he does something which he doesn't do elsewhere in his discussion of the virtues, namely, he presents the sham forms of the virtue: here, courage, [and] five sham forms. No such variety exists elsewhere, and this throws light on courage: that it has so many false imitations, whereas the other virtues don't seem to have that. Now the first of which he speaks is political courage, the courage of the citizen, and he is prompted in the best case by the desire for honor,[19] for being[20] honored by badges or by any special distinction—you know, external signs of honor, or in the worst case, fear of punishment. He doesn't run away because he knows that he will be shot as a deserter, whatever the case may be. Good. Then we have the second case, the courage of mercenaries. Political courage is the courage of the citizens who fight; the courage of the mercenaries[21] is a lower case. It is not strictly speaking courage because it is due merely to

experience. They know that there is no serious danger. They can lick everyone. They can shoot better, or whatever the weapons at the time may be. There is no real danger. What is dangerous to the inexperienced or less experienced is not a danger to them. Therefore there is nothing particularly admirable. And then three—let us read here b15 to 23, 1116b15 to 23. "The mercenaries become cowards."

Mr. Reinken:
professional soldiers prove cowards when the danger imposes too great a strain, and when they are at a disadvantage in numbers and equipment; for they are the first to run away, while citizen troops stand their ground and die fighting, as happened in the battle at the temple of Hermes. This is because citizens think it disgraceful to run away, and prefer death to safety so procured; whereas professional soldiers were relying from the outset on superior strength, and when they discover they are outnumbered they take to flight, fearing death more than disgrace. But this is not true courage. (1116b15-23)

LS: Yes. You see, this is one form in which Aristotle illustrates it. Now then he turns to the three other cases of sham courage. [First,] mere animal spirits. We may say the lion, the boar, and there are also human beings who can act this way. The fourth case [is] those who are, to use a present-day expression, the optimists: people who have good hopes, from being accustomed to win[ning]. They always lick[22] [their opponents]. Think of a colonial nation surrounded by subject people and, you know, they make some police raids from time to time. There is no risk involved; they always know that they are better armed. This is also not true courage. And the last one is[23] sheer ignorance:[24] they don't know how dangerous it is. I remember a case of Bob Hope[ix] stroking a tiger or a lion. He didn't know what it was; he thought it was a dog. But[25] no one would call him—at the moment he became aware of what he had done, he was properly apprehensive. Yes.

Now we have[26]—I mean, we cannot read all these things, but at the end of this passage we have all the data required for giving an answer, some answer to the question of the end. Aristotle does not say a word about the fact that the courageous man as defined by him faces death for the *polis*, for the fatherland, for the common good; not a word. Thomas Aquinas in his commentary does this, but we know that Thomas Aquinas is always anxious to see the rationale of the various virtues. Aristotle does not do that, not even when he speaks of the citizen courage, which is not true courage, does he mention that [the reason] they do not run away, whereas the mercenaries [do] run away, [is] because they think of their wives and children and the city; not even there. How can we explain that? And of course, when we start from the fact of the *polis*, we see that a *polis* cannot exist if it does not have a considerable number of courageous men. Courage is absolutely necessary for the existence of the city. That's clear. I mean, to that extent courage is rationally praised, because it is needed for the *polis*. Aristotle does not even allude to that, and not because it is completely a matter of course. He mentions quite a few things which are merely a matter of course. Why does he not do it? But before I go on, Mr. McAtee?

[ix] Bob Hope (1903–2003), American comedian.

Mr. McAtee: Is a possible answer to your question that he explained earlier the fact that all men recognize that military courage is to be rewarded and lack of military courage punished?

LS: Yes, yes, sure. That would seem to follow from that. Yes, this is the reason why I took issue with Mr. Weissberger's statement. Good. Someone else wanted to say something. Oh, Mr. Kirwan.

Mr. Kirwan: It is hard for me to conceive in a practical situation of how the end of battle would not be related significantly to a particular *polis*, whether a good one or a bad one.

LS: Sure. Of course not. Of course, also the salvation of the *polis* would naturally be the point of view with a view to which you draw the line. I mean, for example, in some cases it is no serious danger if the army is defeated. It may be an outlying district of no strategic importance. But then if the enemy approached the city, where really the future of the city is at stake strictly speaking, then the situation is different, obviously. In other words, to repeat, we must draw the line. The sentiments of fear do not come around with tags around them, as I said last time. Here this degree of fear in this circumstance is bad and this [degree] is good. We have to determine that, and we must determine it with a view to something. If we say "with a view to the noble," that is not sufficient, because we want to find out precisely what the noble now is. And when we say "the salvation of the fatherland," then we say something. Of course that doesn't mean that the individual soldier will necessarily determine that. That may be impossible for military reasons. Maybe it will have to be done by the commanding officer and the courage of the soldier will then be simply that he resists where he is commanded to resist and withdraws where he is commanded to withdraw and doesn't think of his survival. But still [. . .][x] Mr. Boyan?

Mr. Boyan: Does Aristotle rest courage on the basis of the *polis* or does he rather base it on the fact that courage is a virtue and virtue is the core of happiness?

LS: Yes, sure. In other words, what do you mean? He talks to the people who have no doubt that courage is a praiseworthy thing and who also would admit to him that courage is to be shown above all in war. All right, but these other people to whom he talks would, of course, always say[27] [that] courage is a virtue of war and [that] war is necessary for the good of the *polis*, of course. They would all add that. Aristotle here says less than the gentlemen, than the good citizens. He says less than them. He does not refer to[28] [the *polis*]. That's the striking thing. And we have to wonder why he does not mention that.

Student: Does it belong to justice rather than to courage?

LS: Perhaps. Perhaps but even here the question simply is so manifest in belonging to war. It means that he avoids the question.

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[x] The transcriber notes: "rest of this sentence barely audible because of defective tape (to the effect that the soldier is dependent for his survival on the *polis*.)"

Student: Isn't the reason that the *polis* is the means for the noble life that you cannot have the good man without the city—

LS: Yes, but on the other hand, in what does the good life consist[29], the good life in the sense of moral virtue, except in being a good citizen or ruler? You see? I mean, what is the highest activity of the citizen?

Same Student: If courage is for the sake of the noble it would seem that the *polis* is also for the sake of the noble.

LS: In other words, this silence about the *polis*, you mean, is inspired by the fact that Aristotle from the very beginning looks beyond the *polis* to that to which the *polis* is dedicated. Is that what you mean? Yes. One could also say that as follows: this question of the *polis* is inseparable, for Aristotle, from the question of the *politeia*. The fatherland is for Aristotle the mere matter and it receives its form from the order, from the social and political order . . . Now if the fatherland has a bad regime, then it is[30] [not] so wonderful, I mean so praiseworthy, if someone defends this bad thing. Or, differently stated, the *polis* itself can be good or bad, and therefore we would have to say, strictly speaking, that courage should be displayed in the cause of a good *polis*. So what is it that makes the *polis* good? And then we come again back to moral virtue. Yes. Now Mr. Kirwan.

Mr. Kirwan: [. . .]

LS: Yes, this would only say that Aristotle probably had some reason for leaving that in the dark. It would only amount to that. The relation of courage to the *polis* is obvious, but this relation is not free from ambiguity because of the ambiguity of the *polis*. What is the end of this particular *polis*? If this *polis* is dedicated to something evil so that it is a bad regime, then this courage is perhaps not so—it is misplaced. I mean, you know, the man may still be, in the ordinary sense of the word, very courageous, but that is not the perfect form of courage because we have to consider that. But, once you raise this difficult question of the end of the *polis*, then you come into deep waters and then it is, perhaps, wise[31] to stop the question here.

Student: [To the effect that in battle hope doesn't play the part that fear plays, so that one is already dealing with a different emotion.][xi]

LS: No, no, what you now call hope is what Aristotle calls confidence or sense of the [. . .]. That is fear. And whenever there is fear in contradistinction to desperation, there always is some hope. This doesn't affect the question.

Same Student: Fear is not the same as desperation?

[xi] As noted by the transcriber.

LS: Yes, desperation is an extreme of fear. No hope is anymore left . . . [xii] In all forms except this, extreme hope and fear are still present, but we speak of fear when the element of hope is very small or relatively small. When you have hope you have invariably fear. I mean, when you hope that this will come to pass you are not sure that it will come to pass. You also have an expectation of evil. An expectation of evil is fear. To that extent, they are not identical but they are indistinguishable. Mr. McAtee, you have been neglected.

Mr. McAtee: [Refers to the discussion in the first book of the *Laws*.][xiii]

LS: You can put it this way, but this statement is a very harsh one and you can state it much more simply as follows. If you say *polis* you say, in modern language, a sovereign state, and then you say of course a variety of sovereign states, and then you say the possibility of war. To that extent, *polis* and war are inseparable and therefore, when you say this then you say the *polis* must sell[xiv] [to its citizens] the virtue of courage. That's clear. I mean, that is very simple. The strange thing is that Aristotle doesn't even allude to it. When he speaks of the kind of virtue which is obviously related to the *polis*, namely the citizen courage, as a sham form even if it is the best sham form—even there he doesn't speak of the *polis* and above all this citizen courage is not the true courage. I believe that settles it. Now we must go on now. Let us turn to 1117a29. We have a new chapter again.

Mr. Reinken:
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.

LS: In other words, someone in a situation of perfect security is not tinged by any fear[32] [such that] you can call him courageous. So the bombs must be known to be near to give him an opportunity for showing courage now.

Mr. Reinken:
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 honors of victory—is pleasant, but the blows they receive must hurt them, being men of flesh and blood, and also all the labor 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. (1117a29-b7)

LS: In other words, Aristotle would never have become a boxer. Yes?

[xii] The transcriber notes "inaudible exchange."
[xiii] As noted by the transcriber.
[xiv] In the transcript: "sell (?)"

Mr. Reinken:
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 glory in war to the greatest prizes of life.

It is not true therefore of every virtue that its active exercise is essentially pleasant, save insofar as attains its end.

LS: No, "as it touches on the end." It touches on the end in the case of courage. Why? Because he does it for the sake of the noble. And to that extent it is pleasant, but from every [other] point of view it is most unpleasant. So the famous words of Horace: it is sweet and noble to die for the fatherland."[xv] Aristotle would question the sweet to some extent; not entirely, but to some extent. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
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. (1117b7-20)

LS: Yes, let us stop here. So this is a general reflection about the peculiar status of courage as distinguished from all the other virtues, from *all* other virtues. In all other virtues the activity, the full activity, is pleasant. In the case of courage the full activity is not pleasant.[xvi] Courage is a virtue apart. You said it is a nonphilosophic virtue. That is what you meant. This is perhaps not—you don't insist on the expression. But something of this kind is stated, if you look that up in Plato's *Laws*, book 12, 963e, where this is made very clear. The highest act of courage cannot be simply gratified, whereas the highest acts of the other virtues can be simply gratified. This means courage is the lowest virtue, and this is the reason why Aristotle begins with courage and ascends to the other virtues. There are some remarks, for example, in the *Rhetoric* and other places where he says—[33]in the fifth chapter of the first book—moderation and courage are virtues of a young man, i.e., they do not require maturity as the more sophisticated virtues [do], to which he turns later. There is an ascent in intellectuality. Justice is a much more intellectual virtue, as you see if you think of the highest act of virtue, what a judge has to do, assigning to the . . . That requires much more intellectual activity than the act of courage. The general also has to be courageous, but the general is not the general exclusively because he is courageous. That is only a condition for his being general. What distinguishes him as general from the simple soldier is that he has a kind of intellect regarding war which the simple soldier does not necessarily possess. So this is, I think, the

[xv] Horace, *Odes* 3.2.13.
[xvi] From this point the transcript of this session is based on the remastered audiofile.

reason for this order. Ya, but we have to raise quite a few questions. Yes, Mr. Weissberger.

Mr. Weissberger: In order for the courageous man to know what to fear or not to fear he has to have some sort of wisdom, and this is not found in everybody; like a man might look at a mine field or something like that and not know it's a mine field—

LS: Yes, but the question is this: Who makes the decision whether to stay or to leave, ultimately?

Mr. Weissberger: The general.

LS: Ultimately, this is so. That the key point of courage in war is not so much [in] these decisions as whether to suppress his fear and to stick to his guns. That is what courage is. And that a certain difference of judgment is needed, surely, but you know that, because there are all kinds of echelons. Ya? Sometimes the leader of a platoon must make certain decisions. But these are not the great decisions. I think the difficulty we—yes?

Student: In his analysis of courage, do you think that Aristotle comes closest to Kant's analysis of moral virtue in . . .

LS: Ya, you mean the so to speak almost complete absence of pleasure. Yes. Indeed. But since we must go on, I have made a remark about that in *What Is Political Philosophy?*, page 280, if you would look that up, and surely it is of some importance but I cannot now go into it.[xvii] I must only first repeat something and not go into that now because we will take it up when we come to moderation.

The question of the end is so unclear. But[34] at the end of this section on courage, Aristotle says this much should be said about courage: what courage is is not difficult to grasp in outline from what has been said. This is not meant to be an exhaustive analysis of courage. Quite a few things of which we think are not even alluded to. Think of Antigone's courage against Creon, courage against tyrants, and also against tyrannical mobs: no allusion to it. But why does Aristotle not speak of that? [Why] doesn't [he] allude[35] to this kind of thing, this kind of courage? It would fall under another virtue: justice. I mean, that is what Antigone believes[36] [she acts] for. Or take political courage, risking not merely unpopularity but even deciding in favor of a cause which is not certainly—which might lead to disaster, and to have to do it. We also speak of intellectual courage: not here. How would Aristotle call that? Did not Aristotle speak somewhere of what we would call intellectual courage in this book? Yes?

Different Student: In regard to Plato.

LS: Yes. How did he call it?

[xvii] Leo Strauss, *What is Political Philosophy? And Other Studies* (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1959). The context is a review of John Dewey's *German Philosophy and Politics* (1942).

Same Student: Truth is higher than friendship.

LS: Higher? He uses another expression than higher.[xviii] Friendship for wisdom is to be preferred to friendship for Plato. So in other words, he wouldn't call this courage. He would only say to break with a revered teacher like Plato doesn't require courage, it requires love of wisdom. This is improperly called courage. Now in order to understand our meaning of courage—and I think many people must be disappointed with these few pages on courage, [which] is due to the fact that we call many things courage which were not regarded as courage in former times. There is a term which reminds us of that, a term which we have found in such different writers as Xenophon and Rousseau, so they are probably not touched, not affected by the difference between the modern[s] and ancients, and that is strength of soul. We call courage frequently what would formerly have been called strength of soul, and of course all virtues as Aristotle understands them are forms of strength of soul: strength of soul regarding death, strength of soul regarding desires, strength of soul regarding love of possessions and honors, and whatever else it may be. Why has courage taken the place of strength of soul? Perhaps people don't want to speak anymore of soul, which is a good reason in many cases. That could be one reason, but I do not know. It would be a worthy subject of inquiry for a better understanding of ourselves. Yes?

Student: Would the death of Socrates, wouldn't that involve a certain amount of courage?

LS: Yes, because it has clearly to do with death, directly. Ya? That is true, but Socrates is not credited, at least by Xenophon, with courage, with *andreios*, manliness.

Same Student: He's credited with temperance.

LS: Yes, well, I think it is of course connected with the strength of soul. Socrates didn't flinch. But whether it would be properly called courage is another matter. Of course, everyone speaking today from our present outlook would say Socrates was a courageous man. He braved quite a few things, not only death but also, you know, in the trial of the generals he braved the multitude. Sure. But this I do not know. I have not made a study, but it would be worth making: since what time does courage have this broad meaning which it has now? And I believe that this might lead to interesting results. I do not know. The simplest thing in all such cases it to take the Oxford dictionary and look up courage; what it meant as long as there is any record, and then one can perhaps find something, sometimes already in the Oxford dictionary but usually one needs more. Mr. Glenn?

Mr. Glenn: What does Aristotle mean when he talks about the imperfect kinds of courage? Just in what sense . . .

LS: Because they are not guided by the noble, these brave men. The man who doesn't run away because there is an M.P. behind him . . . is not generally courageous. Wouldn't you admit that?

[xviii] A few students offer expressions, but they are inaudible.

Mr. Glenn: Yes, certainly.

LS: Good. And the man who is courageous in the sense of Bob Hope? You would also not call him courageous. Yes, but the question is why there may be such sham forms also in the case of the other virtues, but Aristotle does not go out of his way in any other case, except in the case of courage, to show these sham forms. And I think that is meant to be an indication of the questionable character of courage.

Mr. Glenn: In other words, courage in general is defined by its end, but the particular kinds of courage will be defined by the motive?

LS: Yes, also by their ends; but the best kind of citizen, as described here, "citizen courageous man," is guided by the hope to be mentioned in the daily report of his division. Ya? And Aristotle would say that is not true courage because this is not the end for which a man should be courageous. But the interesting thing is that Aristotle doesn't say he must be swayed by dedication to his country, and therefore he will be disinterested in such distinction. Well, he would enjoy it when he gets it, but it is not his main consideration. The main consideration is to win the war for the sake of the country, and the extraordinary thing is that Aristotle leaves it at the noble without indicating specifically which form the noble takes in the case of this virtue.

Mr. Glenn: . . . to me at least, the emphasis is on the conventional character of courage, because if you do away with war, then you've done away with most courageous . . .

LS: Yes, but is this not a "quote unrealistic unquote" premise? You must admit, Aristotle has in his favor the whole evidence up to the year 1963, and if you don't believe me, then think of Laos and other places. Ya? So, I mean, this other is a promise, that there will never be war. But even if there will never be war there might very well be civil wars in this world state. Then you still have to send people there to put down the civil war. You know? And you can say there is only a police force there, but then this police force would then be the locus of courage in Aristotle's sense. No, we cannot jump over the facts of life on the basis of a promise. We don't know whether that check is not—you know, whether it is not an overdraft.

Mr. Glenn: What brought this to my mind was that the papers recently have been referring to Arnold Maremont's stand as courageous.

LS: Who was that?

Mr. Glenn: Mr. Maremont.[xix]

[xix] The reference is to the then-chairman of the Illinois Public Aid Commission Arnold H. Maremont, who was being sharply attacked for (1) persuading the commission to provide contraceptive tablets to unmarried mothers of children being supported by the state, with the intention of limiting the financial burden on Illinois of supporting the increasing number of such children, and (2) attacking members of the State Legislature who advocated the placing of ceilings

LS: Yes, well, that is what they call—how is it called?—civilian courage. [Laughter] Ya, ya, sure, let us disregard that, but there is surely the case that some people—there are many remarks about that by Bismarck, who felt that the Germans' military courage is very common, but civilian courage very rare. You know, we can call it that: that someone, when he sees his superior officer commit a gross act of injustice, tells him, "I refuse to obey your order," and there is no danger of his being shot for that but only the authority [of the officer]. You can call that courage; Aristotle would not call it courage. He would say this fellow lacked strength of soul and he would probably say that belongs to the sphere of justice rather than of courage. But these are not mere names, as some people say. We would simply say why this military virtue has become so universalized that you call all these things, Mr. Maremont [LS chuckles] and Socrates and so on and so on [laughter]—that you call all this courage. Why? How come? And not strength of soul. When you speak of strength of soul you do not necessarily think of matters military, but when you speak of courage we still think primarily of it. Yes?

Student: Did you say earlier that courage . . . requires an element of hope? I mean, is courage possible where the certainty of death is sure if you don't run away, say? I mean, it would seem to me it would be possible to do something noble that would result surely in death, where the alternative would be running away.

LS: Yes. Very good. Why is the brave man in such a situation not in a state of despair? Because he sees something apart from his death, namely, the noble. Ya? So that from Aristotle's point of view only the coward would despair because he sees nothing except his life and doesn't see that noble which enables him to transcend life.

Same Student: But that means that the noble is something beyond death, in a sense. Is it?

LS: In a sense, yes. And that is of course the peculiar character of courage, not of other virtues.

Same Student: . . .

LS: Ya, but this paradoxy—I mean, this may be a paradoxical statement, but it may still be true to the facts. The minimum of intellectual courage, that one must admit things which are paradoxical but true. Now we must really go on, if you don't mind, and there will be another occasion.

Now we turn now to moderation. Now in the case of moderation, what Aristotle calls *sōphrosynē* [LS writes on the blackboard], this has a much broader meaning in other writers, like Plato; in Thucydides, much broader, and it is something like being sensible—yes, moderation—well, when we call a man moderate we do not think merely of his moderation regarding food and drink. Aristotle uses *sōphrosynē* only in relation to the

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on relief recipients and specifically accusing some of the southern Illinois members of being racists on grounds that probably were not entirely devoid of merit.

sensual pleasures. Only. This was not completely impossible; there are such traces of that, moderation is very narrowly limited also in Plato and probably in other writers, in general usage. But I mention this only: just as he limits courage strictly to war, he limits moderation strictly to the sensual pleasures. And therefore they are the lowest, the most obvious virtues and the most urgent virtues. The most obvious and most urgent, and therefore the lowest.

Student: Rackham uses the word "temperance." Now is that more accurate?

LS: You can do it. It would in one way be correct in the case of Aristotle, because when you speak now in English of temperance, thinking of temperance leagues and other things, naturally that's true. But since I have made, on the basis of broader considerations, the habit to translate *sōphrosynē* by "moderation," I would like to cling to that.

Different Student: Is this the same virtue which is discussed in the beginning of book 7?

LS: No, no, no. No, no, that is continence,[37] [in] the ordinary translation. We [will] come to that. That is a very special case. Now Thomas Aquinas explains the relation of the two virtues as follows. Courage has to do with the fear-inspiring things which destroy human life, especially death, of course; moderation has to do with the pleasant things by which human life is preserved: food, drink, and so on.[xx] And therefore he takes a broad view of human nature, of the parts of the human soul, and sees how these two virtues are related to these parts. The interesting thing again is that Aristotle does not do that. Aristotle does not make any deduction of the virtues from a higher principle. That is his peculiarity. Now what Aristotle states[38] here is that temperance, or moderation let me say, is concerned with bodily pleasures. It has to do with the irrational part of man. And let us read 1118a9. No, we cannot; we cannot read this whole thing. And then he says "but not all pleasures of all senses"; for example, not the pleasure of seeing. If a man has an excessive desire for hearing music he is not called immoderate; it is another defect, but it doesn't fall under this heading. He limits it to touch and taste. Touch and taste. And let us see. There are very beautiful remarks about that; for example, the dogs. Ya? The dogs do not enjoy the smell of hares or rabbits except because these smells announce the meat, the food. And some people also enjoy the smell of the impending meal, but this is not strictly an enjoyment of smells but an enjoyment of food, of the sense of touch. Now let us begin at 1118a26.

Mr. Reinken:
These are the pleasures of touch and taste. But even taste appears to play but a small part, if any, in moderation.[xxi] For taste is concerned with discriminating flavours, as is done by wine-tasters, and cooks preparing savoury dishes— (1118a26-29)

LS: In other words, not yet the enjoyment. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

[xx] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, §595.
[xxi] In Rackham's translation: "in Temperance."

but it is not exactly the flavours that give pleasure, or at all events not to the profligate: it is actually enjoying the object that is pleasant, and this is done solely through the sense of touch, alike in eating and drinking and in what are called the pleasures of sex. This is why a certain gourmand wished that his throat might be longer than a crane's, showing that his pleasure lay in the sensation of contact.

LS: In other words, he did not wish an extension of his tongue, that's the point, but of that part of the body which is directly concerned with enjoyment. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: I think also we should mention the pleasures of the teeth, biting into . . . [Laughter]

LS: Yes, Aristotle would be very practical and say that is only just like smell, a kind of anticipation.

Mr. Reinken: No, it's part of the pleasure of touch . . . [Laughter]

LS: Good. Now let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:
Hence the sense to which Profligacy is related is the most universal of the senses; and there appears to be good ground for the disrepute in which it is held, because it belongs to us not as human beings but as animals.

LS: Ya, "it"—what is that, "it"?

Mr. Reinken: The sense of touch.

LS: Yes, this is the way in which it was understood by Averroes and in the Islamic tradition, I believe, in general. But in the Western tradition it was always understood to refer not to the sense of touch but to the vice here: the vice, intemperance or profligacy, is disgraceful, because from Aristotle's point of view a sense, a natural sense, cannot be itself disgraceful. This I mention in passing. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:
Therefore it is bestial to revel in such pleasures, and to like them better than any others. We do not refer to the most refined of the pleasures of touch, such as the enjoyment of friction and warm baths in the gymnasia; the tactual pleasures of the profligate have to do with certain parts only, not with the whole of the body. (1116a29-b8)

LS: Ya. In other words the pleasure deriving from massage, even the excessive pleasure, is not that of a profligate. They have only to do with parts of the body and Aristotle does not develop that. He is very delicate; he speaks much more of food and drink than of the pleasures of sex—of course he has them also in mind. Yes. Now then he speaks in the sequel of the variability of the pleasures in question. So in other words, all men need food and drink, but there is also a desire of this man for *this* kind of food, or in the case of sex,

a love for *this* woman, not for all women. Ya? But to some extent Aristotle says these specifications too are natural and not merely due to training and habituation. It is quite interesting that Aristotle does not for one moment consider here heterosexuality. You see, Aristotle takes the naturalness very literally. The love in question, sex, is heterosexual. I mention this in passing. Let us turn to b15.

Mr. Reinken: b15?

LS: "In the natural desires."

Mr. Reinken:
Not but what there is also something natural in such tastes; for different things are pleasant to different people, and there are some special delicacies which all men like better than ordinary food.

In the case of the natural desires, then, few men err, and in one way only, that of excess in quantity—

LS: In other words, for food as such, or drink as such, few men err and the error is invariably in the direction of too much. This can be disregarded, the people who don't have any desire for food and drink. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
for to eat or drink in repletion of ordinary food and drink is to exceed what is natural in amount, since the natural desire is only to satisfy one's wants. Hence people who over-eat are called 'mad-bellies,' meaning that they fill that organ beyond the right measure; it is persons of especially slavish nature that are liable to this form of excess.

But in regard to the pleasures peculiar to particular people, many men err, and err in many ways. For when people are said to be 'very fond of' so and so, it is either because they like things that it is not right to like, or like them more than most people do, or like them in a wrong manner; and the profligate exceed in all these ways. For they like some things that are wrong, and indeed abominable, and any such things that it is right to like they like more than is right, and more than most people.

It is clear then that excess in relation to pleasure is Profligacy, and that it is blameworthy. (1118b15-29)

LS: Let us stop here, then. In the natural desires few men go wrong, and those who do do it in the direction of excess. Errors are frequent regarding the particular kinds of pleasure, meaning things which one should not enjoy, or more than one should enjoy them and in a manner one should not[39]. For example, [enjoying] things not good for them and deriving too great enjoyment from them instead of enjoying them reasonably, [or] to be taken up completely by the enjoyment; these would be examples. Yes. Now in the immediate

sequel he makes clear that the brave man, the courageous man, is praised because he does not flinch or suffer because of the evil involved, the present danger of death. The moderate man is not praised because he does not flinch or suffer because of the evil involved, the absence of these things, but because of his conduct in the presence of the pleasant things. Then he speaks in the sequel of the excess as such, profligacy, as[40] [Rackham] translates. And he is in the paradoxical situation that he suffers because of pleasure: he is pained because of a pleasure. That seems to be a difficulty which Aristotle doesn't develop here which plays a great role in Plato's argument. The defect, however, insensitivity to these pleasures, occurs very rarely. Very rarely. Now let us turn to 1119a11, because this has then to do with the question of the end. 1119a11.

Mr. Reinken:
The moderate man keeps a middle course in these matters.[xxii] 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, *et cetera*. 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;[xxiii] he only cares for them as right principle enjoins. (1119a11-21)

LS: Ya. Now here we have a much more specific statement about the ends with a view to which the virtuous man orders his life: health and fitness of the body, and the means,[41] what you can afford. In other words, there is nothing wrong if you[42] eat particular delicacies at the wrong time of the year if you can afford it. Why not? But if you cannot afford it, then you are a profligate man because you cannot control yourself. Now these two parts of the story are strictly calculating. Ya? Think of a calculating fellow who would of course be guided by that: he would never eat or drink too much, naturally, because, you know, [this] leads to unnecessary complications; nor would he get into financial troubles because he would eat too much. These are sheer calculating considerations. What distinguishes the virtuous man from the calculator? What is it? Because there were three things mentioned, and the central one is the most important: it must not be against the noble. So the noble is the third consideration, which of course would not affect in any way the calculator, the man who merely calculates, the valetudinarian, however you might call him. Now what is that which is not noble? Well, let us look at food. For example, how he eats. How he eats. Well, we all know these simple things. He would eat the right portion, just as the calculator would. You know? To that extent there is no difference. And also the kind of food which he can afford. But what is the difference between the mere calculator and the virtuous man regarding eating or drinking? I think something which you all know: *how* he eats. The calculator as calculator is not in the least interested in good table manners. Whereas the virtuous man would not eat too hastily nor too slowly, because too

[xxii] In Rackham's translation : "The temoerate man keeps a middle course in these matters."
[xxiii] In Rackham's translation: "Not so the temperate man."

hastily is a sign which reveals lack of self-control, and too slowly might reveal affectation: super-dainty. And not too much at one bite and not too little at one bite; and not too audibly. The whole sphere which we may call "Don't permit the other or force the other to participate in your digestive process" [laughter] is of course here a very important consideration. And also the right time; for example, not during a lecture, or so. But on the other hand, at certain times these strict manners may have to be relaxed; for example, sudden alarm: the enemy is coming. Then you will not insist on ceremony, as we say. I think we all understand that.

Now, to repeat, the two considerations of health and of means are useful, utilitarian, we can say. The noble is concentrated in the third point mentioned. Now what is that, if we look at these manners of eating? Of course there are infinite varieties and some are purely irrelevant: whether you should eat a potato, should cut it with a knife; or fish, or may not do it. You know, there are great variations, *n*. But something is of course everywhere the case. Certain ways of eating are decent and others are indecent. The noble is of course the decent. Ya? Only "decent" is now in our language a somewhat lower word than noble is, but the primary meaning is the same. Now what is it? First we would say how one's eating and drinking looks or sounds to others. Ya? One doesn't wish to offend others. [If that is] out of some kind of fear of others or in order to fawn upon the others, that of course is not virtuous. If someone eats decently when he is invited with the president of his university or corporation but on no other occasion, then he is not a well-mannered man, you know, because his motivation is sheer calculation. But if it is his second nature that he would eat decently with whomever he eats, and even if he is alone, then he is well-mannered. So there must be no servile motivation. But what is behind that? Living together would be impossible if each were not concerned with the decent opinion of others and of *any* others. With the opinion of some others, everybody is concerned, but of *any* others, of any others. But it is also, I think, important, this motivation, that we must be concerned with the decent opinion of any others, must somehow have disappeared if we are to be truly decent. If we still have to think of it, why we behave decently, then we are not yet truly decent. Does it not make sense? And here you see why the end *rightly* disappears. If the end is still in sight, you still have to train yourself. If your training is completed, you do not have to think of that. Decency must have become a matter of course—a matter of course, something where you don't have to give any *logos*, any reason. The virtuous action (in this case, decent eating) must be performed for its own sake. That's the way in which one does it, period. That is surely something which Aristotle has in mind. Whether that is philosophically satisfactory is another question, but it is surely true to the phenomena as they appear in ordinary life. Well, there are some more points which we have to consider, but does this satisfy you? Yes?

Student: This is the same difference also as between citizen courage and true courage in that true courage, even if you are alone and no one is around to see your cowardice—

LS: Yes, sure. That is clear. Ya, ya. And that is of course the touchstone of true virtue. It is not sufficient; someone may do it even then in a self-deceptive way because some others might hear of it, but strictly speaking, of course at the moment the consideration of others is in it, is no longer purely moral. Mr. Lyons?

Mr. Lyons: I think there is at least one problem here, and that is . . . relation to the . . .

LS: You must speak a bit louder.

Mr. Lyons: . . .

LS: You mean the children cannot possibly help that.

Mr. Lyons: Oh, I wouldn't question it for a moment, but I mean as far as defining what moderation can be, we have to know the decent opinion, precisely the character of the—

LS: Ya, but this is not here sufficiently clear? You must not eat like a ravenous beast, and on the other hand you must not pretend that you don't need any food—you know, take minimal pieces and so on, and take only a drop of water. There are people who have such pretenses. You must admit that you are a human being who needs food and drink and not be ashamed of it, number one. But yet you must not surrender to it in a way in which a dog may gracefully surrender. Yes?

Student: Well, still, that defines the extremes, but if that wasn't necessary, to refer to that early training in which you have a conscious regard for the decent opinion of others in order to set forth those extremes.

LS: Ya, but does it not help in this case, for example, if this is a young man of twenty, and six feet high and a hundred ninety pounds, and on the other hand you have a tiny girl, that the portions, both the whole meal and also the bulks, will legitimately differ in the two cases? Ya? And this is easy to figure out. I mean, if you would see a very tiny girl eating enormous steaks, then you would at least be surprised [laughter], but if you would see a Marine sergeant eating them you would not be surprised. Is it not clear? Mr. Boyan?

Mr. Boyan: I have a sort of an amusing question. What is the interpretation of this with regard to sex: that it must be decently done?

LS: No, that is so—you see, I compared Aristotle to Jane Austen, which is of course not a statement which I would ever make in print because it would [LS chuckles] completely destroy my already destroyed reputation [great laughter], but nevertheless there is something to that. Aristotle is very delicate about it. The examples which—he speaks much more frequently of food and drink than of sex. Yes, but Mr. Boyan, what would be your answer? [Laughter] I mean, you must not draw me out. [Great laughter] Well, there are things which are, I believe, elementary to most grown-up people and which therefore don't have to be said, but it doesn't do any harm if one makes them clear to oneself once in one's life, but—

Mr. McAtee: May I answer Mr. Boyan?

LS: Yes, you have courage, Mr. McAtee. [Laughter]

Mr. McAtee: I ask you to save your judgment. I have a Victorian example.

LS: Very good.

Mr. McAtee: My grandmother, who was a Victorian lady, taught me that certain things should not be mentioned.

LS: Ya, ya, that's part of it, sure.

Mr. McAtee: For example, instead of saying "breasts of chicken," to refer to it as some other thing, or a leg of chicken. [Laughter]

LS: Yes, sure. No, that is it can be overdone [great laughter] but it is surely—no, but the principle is of course also universally recognized. Well, may I draw your attention to a very simple thing: that ordinarily we eat and drink in the presence of people who are not our legitimate wives or husbands, and in the case of venereal pleasures they are very private and therefore the consideration of how things look to others is less relevant. Must I spell this out in a graduate course? [Laughter] Good. And there are some other things—

Mr. Boyan: No, I raised it in a different sense, in the sense of Mr. Lyons's question as to what in any given society is the decent opinion of others.

LS: Oh, well, this depends. I mean, surely some things are purely conventional. Why should you not use a knife for dividing fish and you may do it in the case of meat? I mean, that depends. Even fork and knife are of course purely conventional things; there are societies in which people don't use forks and knives. They are conveniences. Once they have been introduced it is regarded as proper to use them because the non-use of them seems to reveal such an eagerness to eat that you don't use this convenience. I mean, in other words, the reason, the moral reason, is not the technical reason. Forks and knives are technical conveniences;[43] otherwise a man would be morally guilty if he didn't use a steak knife and only an ordinary knife. We would only say it's more practical for such things to use a steak knife, but the moral reason has of course to do with this: not [to] behave like a pig, or so. Ya? That is clear. And I think this, some equivalent of this exists everywhere. I have not made these trips which Margaret Mead has made; she would probably violently protest.[xxiv] But I still would assume that some distinction is made everywhere, and of course there are certain occasions, festivals, celebrations, where it is thought to be right to eat *maxima* and drink *maxima*. That is of course the exception, and the formal character, festivals, only confirms the rule. The principle would not be affected by these variations. Ya, now let us first go on and read the immediate sequel, 1119a21, following.

Mr. Reinken:
Profligacy seems to be more voluntary than Cowardice. For the former is caused by pleasure, the latter by pain, and pleasure is a thing we choose, pain a thing we avoid. Also pain makes us beside ourselves: it destroys the sufferer's nature; whereas pleasure has no

[xxiv] Margaret Mead (1901–1978), American anthropologist.

such effect. Therefore Profligacy is the more voluntary vice. And consequently it is the more reprehensible; since moreover it is easier to train oneself to resist the temptations of pleasure, because these occur frequently in life—

LS: In other words, you have, say, three meals a day, where you can train yourself. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
and to practice resistance to them involves no danger—

LS: Is it not clear? No explosions . . . use the knife, and so on. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
whereas the reverse is the case with the objects of fear.

LS: Ya.

Mr. Reinken:
On the other hand, the possession of a cowardly character would seem to be more voluntary than particular manifestations of cowardice: for cowardliness in itself is not painful, but particular accesses of cowardice are so painful as to make a man beside himself, and cause him to throw away his arms or otherwise behave in an unseemly manner; so that cowardly actions actually seem to be done under compulsion. But with the profligate on the contrary the particular acts are voluntary, for they are done with desire and appetite, but the character in general is less so, since no one desires to be a profligate. (1119a21-34)

LS: Yes, let us stop here. That is not easy. Well, one part of the argument is clear: cowardly actions are more excusable than profligate ones. That is very interesting, that Aristotle says so. Fear of death exerts a compulsion which no objects of desire can exert. And if someone doesn't believe it, I remind him of an example which Rousseau occasionally gives. If someone is in love with a woman with whom he shouldn't be in love and says he cannot resist her attraction, and he has an arrangement with her to ascend the window—you know, in former times this was a common practice, as you know from the literature. So Rousseau suggests: only erect a gallows in front of the window, and he knows when he will come out of that chamber he will be hanged.[xxv] The desire will have gone. [Laughter] So the desire can be controlled, whereas fear of death, to control that is a much tougher thing. Everyone desires to be in a state where he does not have to risk his life. To that extent there is a natural inclination toward cowardice. But no one wants to be in a state in which he is filled will all kinds of desire. I think that is what Aristotle means, with all *kinds* of desire. I mean, a man might wish in general that he could indulge all his desires, but then he really doesn't make clear to himself what he means. And if you give him an enumeration of all kinds of desire, he would say, "Oh no! Delete that, delete that,

[xxv] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile, or On Education*, trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979), book 4, 325. This example is adopted by Kant in the Second Critique; see Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 27.

delete that." You can easily do that for yourself. The coward fails to fight his fear. The intemperate man fails to fight his desire. The coward desires a state in which he did not have to fight his fear. He desires a state in which there is nothing to fear. The profligate man, on the other hand, desires a state in which he does not have to fight his desire. This is roughly what he means.

Then in the sequel he speaks of the relation, the special relevance of intemperance to children. Now this cannot be brought out clearly in English. It can be brought out clearly in German, apart from Greek. The word which Aristotle uses for profligacy, *akolasia*, corresponds exactly to the German word *Ungezogenheit*, and this is applied of course ordinarily to children. Well, it corresponds to naughtiness in the sense of naughty children. There is no English equivalent. In Greek it was clear. In brief, intemperance is *the* vice of childhood, the vice of childhood, and this determines of course also the rank of moderation because it has to do with things which are strongest in childhood or in early youth.

Yes. Now I believe we see now a bit more clearly from the example of moderation what Aristotle means about this end business. I will try to restate it, but I think you will also see we have not solved the difficulty. In the arts, the end is the work, say, the shoe and not the shoemaking; or rather the end which the shoe serves, to protect us when walking. In action, in moral action, the end is the activity, the moral act itself. But with a view to what is the proper act to be determined? With a view to which ends is the act, which in itself is the end to be determined? Now we have seen [in] the case of moderation that the ends with a view to which the moderate man determines what is the proper act in the circumstances are health, his finances, and decency, how it looks. The act thus determined is done for its own sake; that is to say, as decent, because of its decency. The universal end, [the] decent, makes the peculiar end of this act *the* end of this act. Now I will explain it to you. The surgeon's operation: with a view to the health of *this* patient, this patient, determined in general by what? Human health. But human health in general is never the end of any surgeon. It is always the end of this or that human being. Now let us look then at moderation. This moderate man's act tends toward this act of moderation: this decent behavior at the dinner table on this occasion. And this is to be determined by moderation in general, but moderation in general is not the end of this moderate act. This moderate act has no end beyond itself. [LS raps on the table throughout the sentence for emphasis.]

This is all very well. There is only one difficulty which we have not solved in any way. How is this reconcilable with the fact that moral action has to do with things related to ends? Related to ends. Food is surely related to the end of health, of sustenance of life. But is then this relatedness to the end of sustenance of life ultimately irrelevant for determining the act of moderation? It enters it to some extent, as we have seen. We consider health in determining what is a moderate act for me here now. But this consideration of the end of sustenance of the body is not the peculiarly moral thing, because the calculator, the valetudinarian, does the same thing and he is not the truly moderate man. I believe we have clarified the situation a bit, but we cannot claim to have full clarity about it, and we should also not expect it. I mean, one thing which Plato called, or I think he called it, love of toil—love of toil is an important part of learning. Learning is

toilsome, as Aristotle says, and we must not flinch and look out whether perhaps the next book or the next two books will make it somewhat more clear. I believe full clarity is not to be expected because for Aristotle *the* end is the theoretical life, and therefore there must be some difficulties and darknesses regarding the life which is not theoretical. That must be in one way or the other. Please, Mr. Seltzer.

Mr. Seltzer: Could decency be regarded as the means to living together?

LS: Ya, one could say that, but people live together also rather indecently. After all, let us think of it. I spoke of this as a simple rule: no participation in other people's digestive processes. But there are quite a few people who I have seen—well, in armies it is quite obvious, but also certain boorish people don't mind that and regard certain things which we wouldn't regard as desirable—they can live with them. You know? So living together is possible in a piggish manner. We include nonpiggish in living together. On the basis of what? On the basis of what consideration? It is not proper to human beings. Therefore we speak of piggish.

Mr. Seltzer: And then it would be necessarily a deduction from the theoretical understanding of a human being. What is the good human being?

LS: Ya, but perhaps here we must consider whether these very general remarks which Aristotle makes about man as distinguished from the brutes[44], namely, that[45] [man] is a rational and political animal, would not be sufficient without a deeper study of what rationality and sociality mean. The question—yes, one would have to go—for example, when you speak, the sense of decency, of propriety, of fittingness, proportion, that has something to do with rationality. [One must consider] whether[46] decency,[47] decency even in this sense, regarding the matters we discussed today, is not a reflection of man's rationality. That would, I suppose, be Aristotle's ultimate answer, but he does not elaborate that. He presents it, these virtues, as it were like statues, like goddesses' statues. [He] presents them to us, and what he says about them is easily recognizable. I mean, we may have some difficulties at this or that point, but on the whole, courage as he hammers it out, and moderation, liberality, are known to us as such. You know? In other words, he doesn't speak about things of which we have never heard before. We know them, and he leaves it at that. There is somehow the desire to understand more. For example, the simple question: Why these ten or eleven virtues and not others? Therefore the question of number points to the problem. Aristotle does not do that. He takes the structure as this: obviously there are bodily evils and bodily goods, and there must be a proper posture to the bodily evils, courage, [and] to the bodily goods, moderation. Then there are other things which are not strictly bodily, sensual, like property: although that is mostly tangible and yet it is not sensual. Then there is honor, and therefore we have virtues regarding property and regarding honor. And then there are other more subtle things: people living together, being together, for no business purposes, just to enjoy their being together. There are virtues related to that. This is roughly the list of virtues which Aristotle has. And then of course justice, which occupies a very special place. But Aristotle does not—I mean, [xxvi]

[xxvi] The audiofile ends at this point. The remainder of the transcript of this session is taken from the original transcript.

Plato in the *Republic* says there are three parts of the soul. There can be a perfection of each part. Since these parts are the whole there must be [a] virtue of the whole. There must be four virtues. This is a deduction of the virtues. Aristotle takes the virtues as he sees them. He molds them [and] omits certain things. This is sufficient for all practical purposes, but theoretically insufficient. We cannot help looking for the theoretical basis.[xxvii]

Mr. Seltzer: Is Aristotle really interested in common ordinary people as moral agents?

LS: The gentlemen whom he addresses are not philosophers. He addresses only gentlemen, but he has also in mind other people. Virtue is something of which all non-very-defective men are capable. Aristotle believes that the full realm of the virtues is not accessible to all, but only to a minority. That is a very great problem. Every man is supposed to be capable of all virtues, and yet according to Aristotle a man without the proper breeding cannot be virtuous, but only the few who have this breeding; for example, economic independence. That is something which must be faced.

One can say there is a kind of pyramid. At the bottom, crude rules with which all men can comply; otherwise they will be punished. In the example of courage, citizen courage, which appeals to the desire for distinction or to fear is common; true courage is very rare. More refined, a small group of people is capable of moral virtue, strictly understood. Still rarer are the theoretical virtues. And Aristotle says this is according to nature. The whole political doctrine is based on this premise. If all men were capable of full moral virtue democracy would be a requirement of justice. Only because this is not possible is Aristotle opposed to democracy. Therefore, great practical consequences. Aristotle could have been satisfied with lesser demands, taking that of which practically all are capable, but he was not satisfied with that. Society can do better than that. If it does, it is better than that.

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[1] Deleted “now.”
[2] Deleted “before.”
[3] Deleted “somewhat.”
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[6] Moved “was this.”
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[8] Deleted “used a coin.”
[9] Deleted “then, there and he speaks.”
[10] Deleted “kind of.”
[11] Deleted “things then is.”
[12] Deleted “the.”
[13] Deleted “here.”
[14] Deleted “and it.”
[15] Moved “still.”
[16] Deleted “did.”
[17] Deleted “The point is this.”

[xxvii] The transcriber notes that “the tape ran out and the rest of the paragraph as well as what follows is an almost literal paraphrase of the remainder of the session, taken from stenographic notes.”

[18] Deleted “then.”
[19] Deleted “meaning.”
[20] Deleted “himself.”
[21] Deleted “and this.”
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[23] Deleted from ignorance, from.”
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[34] Deleted “something else.”
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Session 8: May 7, 1963
The virtues continued: liberality, munificence; magnanimity as one peak of moral virtue
(Book 4.1-3)

Leo Strauss: [In progress] —it was not always easy to understand.[i] You mentioned one point which I did not understand regarding a clear deviation of Thomas from Aristotle regarding liberality. I did not understand what that was.

Student: A distinction, not a deviation.

LS: Which distinction?

Same Student: [. . .]

LS: Yes, I think that is an explanation given by Thomas, not by Aristotle, but it is not a deviation. But you said on another occasion that there was such a difference, and I don't remember it now. Now you made very clear, partly on the basis of Thomas's remarks in the *Summa*, that liberality is, as you put it, beyond the call of duty, and that is the reason why the liberal action calls for gratitude. The merely just action—if the employer pays his employee, [this] does not call for gratitude on the part of the employee. So beyond the call of duty:[1] that is what Aristotle means by the noble in contradistinction to the just. That you understood very well. You mentioned also the ambiguity of prodigality. Aristotle, when he speaks of prodigality proper, means that which is not the consequence of another vice, namely, that if someone is concerned with sensual pleasures and wastes his money on food and drink and so on, this is not the prodigal man proper. The prodigal man proper is the man who enjoys easy spending irrationally, regardless of the purpose. I mean, when prodigality is in the service of sensual desire, then it is lack of self-control, intemperance, but not prodigality. Everyone was pleased, I observed, and you too, about Aristotle's nice remarks about the subtleties of meanness. You know, it is a very amusing vice, although it can be ugly too. But the stingy and the greedy; you know, these are two very different things. Sometimes they come together, but sometimes they are also separate form each other. Now prodigality: Aristotle has a certain liking for the prodigal compared to the mean. Aristotle has a certain liking for the prodigal. Yes. Now what is the parallel in the case of the other virtues? You know the old story: every virtue is a mean between an excess and a defect. And here prodigality is the excess and is nicer than the defect, meanness. Now what is the case in the other virtues which we have discussed before?

Same Student: Courage and moderation?

[i] Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading of the paper was not recorded.

LS: Yes, which is here the preferred vice, in the case of courage?

Same Student: Audacity would be preferred.

LS: Yes, let us say audacity, and the worse vice is cowardice. And in the case of temperance or moderation? Which is worse, insensitivity to sensual pleasures or complete indulgence, from Aristotle's point of view? Yes?

Student: Indulgence is worse.

LS: Worse. Sure. You also can say intemperance.[2] Insensitivity is, of course, a defect. But there is a principle underlying all these preferences for the excess or the defect, whatever the case may be. What's the principle?

First Student: [Inaudible. Refers to extremes.][ii]

LS: No, they are all extremes. No, [the principle is] not being enslaved. The prodigal man is not enslaved to wealth; the mean man is. I mean, it is not sufficient not to be enslaved. You must also be reasonable, which he is not. Similarly, the audacious man is not enslaved by fear; on the contrary. And the insensitive man—if he exists, which Aristotle doubts—the purely insensitive man is not enslaved by sensual pleasures. That's the principle. Therefore they are more curable.

So let us now turn to our discussion of these virtues, and next time of course we will take the rest of book 4. And I would like today to discuss liberality and munificence, and at least a part of the discussion of magnanimity. Otherwise we have too much next time. Now let us remind ourselves again of the overall question, of the broadest question. Now Aristotle starts, you recall, observing the infinite variety of human pursuits or human ends. If we see that, we can easily arrive at the view that all noble and just things are merely conventional and that the good things also are bad [at times], as he states it at the beginning; in other words, the view which is now called relativism. But again there is one key distinction between the relativism with which Aristotle is faced and present-day relativism, and that is the distinction between nature and convention. Present-day relativism treats all values as of equal status, and ancient relativism, with which Aristotle is confronted, is based on the distinction between what is by nature good on the one hand, and the noble and just on the other. There is nothing by nature good according to present-day relativism. This is of course always the difference. Yet, in spite of this enormous variety there is some underlying agreement as to a single comprehensive good, and that there is such an agreement is based on two considerations. First, they all are human beings—as human nature, [the] same human nature in all men. And second, which to begin with is merely a word, happiness: they all wish to be happy. And this is somewhat more than a mere word, a divination of a desirable state. However, there is [a] great variety of opinion as to what constitutes happiness, but it is now a limited variety and an ordered variety. And this is Aristotle's ordering of the three ways of life: the life of pleasure, of mere enjoyment; the political life; and the theoretical life. And Aristotle says:

[ii] As noted by the transcriber.

show me a third one.[iii] So however great the variety within the three may be, this is the choice with which every human being is confronted sooner or later: Does he want to lead a life of what is now called fun or does he wish to lead the political life or the theoretical life?

Now the political life is primarily concerned with honor, but Aristotle shows in a few easy steps that it doesn't make sense to make honor one's end, because honor is always given for something, and that for which honor is given is virtue. Therefore the aim of the political life is virtue in the sense of moral virtue. Differently stated, moral virtue, with which we are still concerned, is on the one hand of course only the choice of one kind of people, the people of the political life. But on the other hand it is expected of everyone, and therefore it has a kind of universality which the two others do not have. No one is expected to lead a life of fun. No one is expected to lead the theoretical life. But everyone is expected to be decent, and this is a kind of universality which is of great importance. Now there is some agreement then regarding what constitutes virtue and also regarding what constitutes the particular virtues. All men at all times speak of good men or bad men. And there is also some distinction made [in these], and perhaps the Greeks made this more clearly than others. That is of course purely accidental. For example, a good man must be temperate; a good man must be just (and these are not exactly the same things); a good man must not be a coward; a good man must be reasonable; a good man must be liberal, and whatever you have. These things are intelligible to everyone even if he has not heard of them in these terms. With a few examples he will understand it even if there are no such words in his language; but he will recognize the phenomena. Therefore the *Ethics* has [3] great evidence [for itself]. I mean, we all know the things which he is talking about, and no one can say that thing doesn't exist. No one can say that. He can disagree with a particular statement of Aristotle about liberality, but he cannot deny that there is such a thing and that at least on the face of it it is a nice thing. And this is all we need in order to begin to understand.

The difficulty is this: on the one hand virtue is the core of happiness; on the other hand virtue is praiseworthy, whereas happiness is worthy of reverence. The first statement puts all the emphasis on moral virtue: it's the core of happiness. The second statement puts all the emphasis on happiness as distinguished from moral virtue. These two statements of the first book indicate the difficulty from the very beginning. One can also say virtue is the core of happiness; therefore virtue is choiceworthy for its own sake. But if virtue is praiseworthy while happiness alone is worthy of reverence, then virtue does not seem to be the end, *the* end, but rather happiness. Now this is a difficulty which has attracted us all the time. In what sense is moral virtue the end, as Aristotle doesn't tire of saying?

Now we have discussed the virtues of courage and of moderation. Now if we look at moderation: take eating. We eat for the purpose of health and fitness, but we are also concerned with decency in eating, and this decency is not meant to be for any other purpose[4] [such as] health or fitness, but it is chosen or supposed to be chosen for its own sake. In the case of courage, braving death in battle: for the purpose of defending the city. Is then bravery not for its own sake? Must it be constituted by this end, defending the city?

[iii] The transcriber notes: "Apparent slip of the tongue."

Well, we have seen that Aristotle does not say that bravery is essentially for the purpose of defending the city. He is silent about the purpose. This is an indication of the difficulty, of the overall difficulty.

Now let us turn to the virtue of liberality. This follows immediately on moderation. And this may very well have this reason: because it was possible—as we know from Xenophon, for example—to speak of moderation primarily dealing with the sensual pleasures, but also of moderation in regard to wealth; and quite naturally, because we need wealth for getting food and so on. The Greek word *eleutheriotētos*, which is reasonably well translated by "liberality," means of course primarily not that very narrow thing which Aristotle has in mind and which we have in mind when we speak of liberality, dealing with wealth, but means literally the character becoming a free man: *eleutheros* is free, and *eleutherios*, free-like, the man who behaves like a free man in opposition to a slave. And Aristotle narrows it down, perhaps more than any other classical writer, to the free man's conduct regarding wealth. How can this be understood? Perhaps one can say that the most frequent opportunity which a man has in showing that he is a free man is his dealing with wealth. You know, peace is more frequent than war, and the most common public and visible[5] [trait] of a man is how he behaves toward wealth. This may be sufficient as a reason for this narrowing down which Aristotle does.

Now what is the purpose of liberality? To help others from one's own possessions, of course. It presupposes, therefore, that one does not squander one's possessions. If you do that you have nothing to help others. Liberality is a mean between prodigality and stinginess or meanness. Now let us first read 1119b22. That's the beginning of the book.

Mr. Reinken:
Next let us speak of Liberality. This virtue seems to be the observance of the mean in relation to wealth: we praise a man as liberal not in war, nor in matters in which we praise him as temperate, nor in judicial decisions, but in relation to giving and getting wealth, and especially in giving; wealth meaning all those things whose value is measured by money. (1119b22-28)

LS: In other words, wealth is not everything which we possess. If someone is attached to something, an heirloom, for example, which he would not give to any other man under any circumstances, this would not be a proof of illiberality because what he cherishes is not something which can be expressed in money. It may be something which wouldn't fetch more than a cent, and yet it is for him very valuable, but in a value not to be expressed by money. That he means by this remark. Yes?

Student: I was very surprised in reading this and when you just gave your statement that Aristotle narrows this word more than the Greeks did.

LS: In general.

Same Student: In general. Did the Greeks in general refer to liberality as being temperate in judicial decisions?

LS: No, it has primarily this broad meaning: conduct becoming a free man in contradistinction to a slave, and this becomes internalized: not the freedom in the political sense, merely in the civil sense, but freedom for the low things in man. Very common.

Same Student: Yes, this word has, it seems to me, a history.

LS: Yes. I mean, the narrowing to money is in this emphatic sense Aristotle's innovation. Good. Now go on, Mr. Reinken.

Mr. Reinken:
Prodigality and Meanness on the other hand are both of them modes of excess and of deficiency in relation to wealth. Meanness is always applied to those who care more than is proper about wealth, but Prodigality is sometimes used with a wider connotation, since we call the unrestrained and those who squander money on debauchery prodigal; and therefore prodigality is thought to be extremely wicked, because it is a combination of vices. But this is not the proper application of the word: really it denotes the possessor of one particular vice, that of wasting one's substance; for he who is ruined by his own agency is a hopeless case indeed, and to waste one's substance seems to be in a way to ruin oneself, inasmuch wealth is the means of life. This then is the sense in which the term Prodigality is here understood.

LS: Yes, now one second. So prodigality is destruction of one's substance. You know, it is strange that the English language has preserved "substance." The Greek word is *ousia*, which is the metaphysical term "substance," and that we still say in everyday life "a man of substance" is quite interesting. I cannot go into that now. The prodigal man destroys that through which life is possible. Prodigality is bad because it ruins oneself. This seems to be narrow utilitarian consideration, just as in the case of the temperate man it is unhealthy to be intemperate. But the temperate man is not the valetudinarian. So we must wait—where the peculiar end of the liberal man will be. Now read on where you left off.

Mr. Reinken:
Now riches are an article of use; but articles of use can be used either well or ill, and he who uses a thing best is he who possess the virtue related to that thing; therefore that man will use riches best who possess the virtue related to wealth; and this is the liberal man. (1119b28-1120a8)

LS: Yes. So you see here again a kinship between moral virtue and art. Of everything, say, of wealth as well as of a shoe or of a table, there is a right use and a wrong use. One could say there is an art regarding the right use of money—now private economics, I suppose. How to invest your money properly is an art, and to that extent there is a similarity between moral virtue and an art. For example, how to use best a car; this is however a kind of art, the art of driving a car or using a car. But the moral virtue is something different from such forms of using a thing well, and he will develop this in the immediate sequel. Let us read the next sentence.

Mr. Reinken:
But the use of wealth seems to consist in spending and in giving; getting wealth and keeping it are modes of acquisition rather than of use.

LS: Yes. So now he makes it clear. Liberality is not such an art. The use of wealth is not the "sake [for which]" of an art because it consists in spending and giving, and if you apply it in the case of the art, of a car, for example, the use of the car is driving it, it is not giving it away. This is not the matter of an art proper. Spending and giving, yet the emphasis is on giving, as we have seen. The emphasis is on giving. Now what is the purpose of giving? I mean, obviously liberality cannot be a virtue—liberality, the virtue controlling giving, cannot be a virtue if giving is not as such something good. Why is giving good? Let us read lines 21 to 23. That's the end of this chapter. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
And of all virtuous people the liberal are perhaps the most beloved, because they are beneficial to others; and they are so in that they give. (1120a8-23)

LS: Yes. So that's it. So why is giving good? Why is it good?

Mr. Reinken: It benefits.

LS: It benefits others. It is useful to others. The givers are loved because they give. That reminds [us] of a statement we discussed in an earlier seminar about people who are loved or why people love others.

Mr. Reinken: Men believe to love those they believe to benefit them.

LS: Yes, it happens to be in the *Oeconomicus* of Xenophon—you know, it deals with giving. Yes, men believe [themselves] to love what they believe is useful to them. You see, that is a slightly spurious reason, and Aristotle probably doesn't leave it at that, as we shall see in the sequel. Liberality is of course useful to the liberal too, because the liberal man is useful to others, and the others, to some extent at least, will look at him with a friendly eye, and that may come in handy at some future occasion. But this is a strictly utilitarian account of why liberality is good. Let us read the immediate sequel.

Mr. Reinken:
Acts of virtue are noble, and are performed for the sake of their nobility; the liberal man therefore will give for the nobility of giving. And he will give rightly, for he will give to the right people, and the right amount, and at the right time, and fulfill all the other conditions of right giving. Also he will give with pleasure, or at all events without pain; for virtuous action is pleasant, or painless—it certainly cannot be painful. One who gives to the wrong people, or not for the nobility of giving but from some other motive, will not be called liberal, but by some different title; nor will he who gives with pain, for he would prefer the money to the noble deed, which is not the mark of a liberal man. (1120a23-31)

LS: Yes. So the liberal man does not act with a view to the usefulness of liberality. He acts liberally for the sake of acting liberally. This nobility of the act is the cause [of] why he acts. The word cause occurs in line 29.[iv] He does it for the sake of no other cause except because it is noble. He gives his money gladly. Otherwise, he must be compelled by something. To act by compulsion, or even by self-compulsion (self-compulsion is Kant's formula), is not good enough for Aristotle, because what you do under self-compulsion you don't do gladly, you force yourself to do it. Aristotle demands that it is done gladly or at least without pain. And why does he give it gladly? Because he does not cling to his money. The nobility consists, it would seem, in the inner freedom from money, from his possessions. His heart is not in his possessions. Therefore the nobility doesn't show itself merely in giving to others, but also in his spending in general. After all, we spend money not only on others but also on ourselves, and there too we can recognize to some extent the liberal man. Take as an example one of the best presentations I know of the stingy and greedy man, in Balzac's novel *Eugénie Grandet*.[v] There is an old peasant who has become a millionaire by the full activity of stinginess and greediness; and there is a single candle in the house, so when he wants to go down to the cellar everyone else must sit in the dark . . . And this is of course also a sign of an illiberal man, that he doesn't spend enough on himself. He could easily have had two candles. The liberal man is a man who, knowing the worth of money, uses it nobly, because if he[6] [did not] know the work of money, he wouldn't be liberal, of course. The noble use consists in inner freedom from money. This inner freedom, this perfection of his soul, that he is not a slave of money, is the end, the noble. He exercises his nobility in regard to money; that is to say, in regard to something which is not the end but for ends. You remember that. We read this already before, that moral virtue is immediately concerned with things which are related to an end, for an end, and not the end. Money is for an end, and this is the thing with which the liberal man has to do. But the end is that inner freedom which he shows in application to these things for an end. Similarly, in the case of moderation, the inner freedom from the desires; or in the case of courage, the inner freedom from fear of death. Generally speaking, the virtuous man's heart is not in the desires, the fear, and possessions; his heart is in the freedom from them. This makes the noble. But the question is whether this is sufficient, and we must see what we find more about it. Yes?

Student: Is there a particular significance to the virtue of courage as distinguished from the others? Liberality is concerned with pleasure, virtue in general with pleasure, but not courage. Now why?

LS: Yes, that is difficult. You know, that is a special difficulty in the case of courage, that all the circumstances are unpleasant, but when you think for what he does—he gives the example of the boxer. Receiving these blows all the time is most unpleasant, but when he thinks of the [honor],[vi] that's pleasant. Now here only the courageous man doesn't think of an external praise, or a badge, or whatever he might get, but he thinks of the intrinsic nobility of the action. That is crucial for Aristotle. He said earlier that for the virtuous man

[iv] Strauss refers to the Greek, *aitia*.
[v] Strauss refers to Felix Grandet in Honoré de Balzac, *Eugénie Grandet* (1833).
[vi] The transcript has a blank space here.

the noble and just things are the things by nature pleasant, more pleasant than what is ordinarily understood by pleasant, pleasures of the sense. Whether this is so simple as it seems to be said is another matter.

Mr. McAtee: May I ask a question?

LS: Yes, Mr. McAtee.

Mr. McAtee: This inner freedom is a little bit confusing to me. I know a story by Shakespeare about a man who was very liberal. He gave away all his money and then no one showed any gratitude. He was very angry at that.[vii]

LS: Yes, but could one not say that his liberality was somewhat spurious, because it was regarded by him as a kind of investment?

Mr. McAtee: That is one point. A second point would be, didn't they owe him some gratitude?

LS: Yes, but you cannot—they behaved ignobly by being ungrateful, but to some extent a man who counts on gratitude also is not very noble. If someone goes around and says, "You must help me; you are under an obligation to be grateful to me," that's an awkward position for any man—which doesn't mean that some people might not do it. I mean, if he has done it gladly and freely, then there were no strings attached to it. But you cannot make from the relation of liberality a relation of justice. If you give something to someone and you say, "well, when I need money you will help me too," and that's understood, then there is at least a moral obligation on the other side to do that. I mean, an obligation of this kind: that you can claim it. You see, sometimes there are moral obligations which cannot be properly claimed[7], and are in this sense one-sided. That happens.

Mr. McAtee: [. . .]

LS: No, that is the worst kind of historicism. But you would have to say this: Aristotle claims to be the natural morality, and the Bible, in the light of Greek philosophy, has to be described as supernatural morality. That's another matter. And if you use then these convenient terms, Greeks and Bible, all right.

Mr. McAtee: [. . .]

LS: Yes, but as I say, that is quite natural for someone who has obliged others. If he has obliged others, the others are obliged to him, but in the case of free gifts this is not true. There is no such obligation. Mr. Fleming?

[vii] *Timon of Athens*.

Mr. Fleming: [To the effect that a liberal man may not expect or demand gratitude but may be surprised if he doesn't get it, and that this wouldn't violate the virtue of liberality unless he were merely "doing it to grandstand."][viii]

LS: No, that is of course also not genuine virtue, but the difficulty in general for Aristotle I believe is this—I thought of it when Brother Chrysostum read his paper, when he said one can doubt whether there is a single liberal man, you know, in the strict sense. It is so hard [to verify]. Aristotle would admit that, but Aristotle would say this distinguishes him radically from the biblical tradition. The intentions are immanifest. You cannot judge men on the basis of intentions. And when Aristotle speaks of virtues and virtuous actions, he takes it for granted that there are virtuous men and virtuous actions although it is impossible to look into any heart. And Aristotle takes this simple view: you look at a whole life, and where you see a man in all kinds of situations, not only on grandstands but, so to say, when he is surprised, when he is as it were not dressed—and then of course you have to know a man very well, very intimately, to judge of him. That's clear. But if you know such a man intimately, that is to say, also when you have seen him not on the grandstand, and you know him for a long period of time, then you can judge him and say, as Aristotle doesn't have any hesitation [to do], "He is a virtuous man." That there are all kinds of dark things going on in the underground, that's clear. That every man has, and this cannot be changed. But the main point is what he makes of them.

Mr. Fleming: But my query was [that] there is nothing inconsistent, is there, in the definition of liberality by the liberal man being surprised at the lack of gratitude to the point where he might comment on it? That is, this wouldn't prove the lack of liberality, that it surprised him.

LS: No, no, surely not. Yes, well, one could only say if he were a very experienced man he would not be surprised. That is clear, although I believe—I'm now an old man and have some right to speak about these things—I must say I think one exaggerates the amount of ingratitude in the world. I think that is unfair. But there is some, naturally, and some people regard gratitude as a mere burden and hate their benefactors. That can happen, and it is not a very noble thing but you come across it from time to time. Good. Now in the sequel—we must now limit ourselves to a few key passages. The liberal man does not honor money; he honors virtue. Liberality consists chiefly in helping others, i.e., in not regarding oneself. Now this, helping others, not regarding oneself, is also a crude sign of nobility. The calculating man is a rather base man and the man or woman who can't forget himself in the proper way. Therefore *erōs* is something noble, because it makes those who are in love less self-regarding than men otherwise are. Let us turn to 1120b14.

Mr. Reinken:
But it is not easy for a liberal man to be rich, since he is not good either at getting money or at keeping it, while he is profuse in spending it and values wealth not for its own sake but as a means of giving. (1120b14-17)

[viii] As noted by the transcriber.

LS: For the sake of giving. Good. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Hence people blame fortune because the most deserving men are the least wealthy. But this is really perfectly natural: you cannot have money, any more than anything else, without taking pains to have it.

LS: Yes, let us stop here for one moment. The liberal man honors money only for the sake of giving. His heart is then in the giving. Therefore he must honor money as a means, surely. Now if we generalize from the remarks about liberality, we have then a twofold end of [this] moral virtue. First, the inner freedom from, in this case, money, and [second], a freedom for something, for giving. Inner freedom from money so that he can be free for giving. Both things are required in the case of liberality. Nietzsche's famous[8] political formula: what people ordinarily understand by freedom today (in the nineteenth century) is freedom from something. But this is not sufficient: we must also know that for which the freedom is required. The other is a formal or empty freedom. Both things are needed, and I think Aristotle implies this, [although] he doesn't say so. The freedom from is clear in all these cases, but a freedom [is] also for something. Now let us turn to 1121a, at the beginning.

Mr. Reinken:
If the liberal man should happen to spend in a manner contrary to what is right and noble, he will feel pain, though in a moderate degree and in the right manner: for it is a mark of virtue to feel both pleasure and pain on the right occasions and in the right manner. Also the liberal man is an easy person to deal with in money matters; he can be cheated, because he does not value money—

LS: Yes, not honor money.

Mr. Reinken:
honor money, and is more distressed if he has paid less than he ought than he is annoyed if he has paid more: he does not agree with the saying of Simonides. (1120b17-1121a8)

LS: Yes, Simonides was a poet, you know, a famous poet, famous for his greed. [He was] the only wise man of Greece who was notorious for his greed. Now whether this is literally true or was a joke because he had written a poem which could be interpreted in that way we do not know, because we know too little about him. The liberal man has inner freedom from money but is concerned of course with spending it properly. He is annoyed with himself if he did not spend money where he ought to have spent it; for example, if he had given it to some man who will go to the next tavern and do some mischief there and not to a poor widow who would use it properly for her poor children. Yet, and this is also important, he is only rationally annoyed, moderately annoyed. He will not beat his breast. You know, that is also the casual remark, but not unimportant. Yes. Now in the sequel Aristotle develops that the prodigal is to be preferred to the stingy. Prodigality is not base but foolish. It defeats its own purpose. In a27, you may go on.

Mr. Reinken:

The prodigal of this type therefore—

LS: In other words, who is only a prodigal because he is an easy spender. He doesn't waste it in getting drunk and so on, and ruining himself, which is another problem. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

[We may say the prodigal strictly considered] 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: So in other words, what we can call loosely the utilitarian consideration—his own utility and utility of others—is very important, at least in the case of liberality, but it is not the only consideration. So the truth which utilitarianism has is always recognized by Aristotle. But it is always clear, utilitarianism is never enough, because of its calculating character and also because it omits some virtues which cannot well be understood from the point of view of utility. Yes, the prodigal is better than the stingy, for they help many, whereas the stingy does not help anyone, that's clear, not even himself. Why does he not even help himself? Yes?

Mr. Reinken: He is enslaved.

LS: Yes, the greater narrowness of his horizon which comes from that. In b, 1121b3 to 7.

Mr. Reinken:
Hence even their giving is not really liberal: their gifts are not noble, nor given for the nobility of giving, nor in the right way; on the contrary, sometimes they make men rich who ought to be poor, and will not give anything to the worthy, while heaping gifts on flatterers and others who minister to their pleasures.

LS: Yes, the common run of prodigals. Yes? The common run of prodigals. The liberal man gives to those who deserve to have; that is to say, to the potentially liberal, because only the potentially liberal deserve to have.[9] There is from this point of view a common interest of the virtuous. This, in a nasty expression, is of course what you find in Polemarchus's definition of justice: helping the friends and hurting the enemies, or at least not helping the enemies, means then helping the virtuous and not helping the vicious.[ix] Yes? In the first book of Plato's *Republic*. You know that. Now a little bit later on, in b12.

Mr. Reinken:
This then is what the prodigal comes to if he is not brought under discipline; but if he is taken in hand, he may attain the due mean and the right scale of liberality. 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 mankind are avaricious rather than open-handed. (1121a27-b16)

[ix] See Plato, *Republic*, book 1, 332d.

LS: Yes. Now let us go. So stinginess and greediness are in a way more natural than liberality and prodigality. Thomas in his commentary on the passage speaks therefore, very strange as it may sound, of a natural inclination toward money.[x] There is no such natural inclination toward giving. Now we have seen something similar in the case of cowardice. This recoiling from death is more natural than the facing of it. That is an interesting point. But of course this doesn't make them better. It is simply on a lower level of man's nature which must be controlled by the higher level. So a natural inclination is indeed never bad as a natural inclination, but since man is a being consisting of many levels, he is a good man if the upper levels control the lower levels. Now then he gives a long discussion, which is very interesting to read but we cannot afford reading it, about the distinction between the stingy and the greedy man. Let us read only one passage of this section, in b31.

Mr. Reinken:
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—

LS: In other words, these are the greedy, not the stingy. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
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 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: Yes, "tyrants," tyrants. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
tyrants who sack cities and rob temples, are not termed mean, but rather wicked or impious, or unjust. But the dicer and the footpad or brigand are to be classed as mean, as showing sordid greed— (1121b31-1122a8)

LS: Yes, that is quite interesting. Aristotle sees that there is a certain grandeur in the tyrant which pickpocket[s] and other criminals do not have. One cannot strictly speaking call tyrants of this kind mean in the sense used here, because the grandness of the scale distinguishes him from the mean proper. Yes, now Mr. Glenn?

Mr. Glenn: Is it legitimate to ask here why he says that meanness is more base than prodigality?

LS: That is an absolutely necessary question . . .

Mr. Glenn: [Pursues the distinction further.][xi]

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[x] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, §698.
[xi] As noted by the transcriber.

LS: Now even granting for the moment that prodigals are free from enslavement to money and therefore able and willing to give . . . this defect is unreasonable. He does not give reasonably, and therefore he is a vicious man.[xii] No virtue can be without reason, and he is an indiscriminate spender and giver. He makes one mistake after another. He gives the money to the wrong people all the time, and this is not living. That is the point. Just as the overbold man is not enslaved by fear of death but[10] risks his life for unreasonable purposes, for purposes which are not worth risking. You see, Aristotle, as he made clear at the beginning when he spoke of the mean between an excess and defect—this is not schematic, [as if] you know that it doesn't make any difference whether you err on this side or that side. It makes a great difference. It depends. In the case of liberality it is better, if you have to err, to err on the side of excess, whereas in the case of sensual desire it is better to err on the side of defect. You have always to look at the specific matter of the virtue in consideration to see which is so. There is no general formula which would cover infinitely all cases. What Aristotle ventures to say is that in all cases, with the exception of justice, there will be an excess and defect. This we can say in general, but whether the excess is worse or the defect is worse, that depends on the matter of the virtue in question. Yes, Mr. Vari.

Mr. Vari: [As to whether a man can be called liberal if he spends the early part of his life amassing wealth and then become as benefactor of educational activities.][xiii]

LS: It is good that Professor Friedman[xiv] and others are not here. They would strongly disagree with your analysis of these great benefactors. But I don't know the facts sufficiently, and therefore I cannot say anything about it. From Aristotle's point of view, that's impossible. I state this moral problem very simply as follows: happiness equals virtue plus equipment. Now at the beginning,[11] a young man of twenty will say, "Well, I want to be happy and I know virtue is needed, but for the time being I need the equipment—the equipment first by all means, fair or foul, and getting the virtue afterward." This is not—Aristotle would say, you know why? He would say: Look, because the habits you acquire while you acquire the equipment by fair means or foul will not cease to be effective when you say, "Now I want to be absolutely just and fair." This doesn't stop overnight.

Mr. Vari: May I mention a specific case? Julius Rosenwald.[xv]

LS: I do not know him. I know the name. I know there is a building called Rosenwald Hall.

Mr. Vari: He was also the boss of Sears, Roebuck.

[xii] The transcriber notes that here Strauss "indicates inaudible that he means vicious in the sense of possessed with vices."
[xiii] As noted by the transcriber.
[xiv] Probably the economist Milton Friedman (1912–2006).
[xv] Julius Rosenwald (1862–1932), American businessman and philanthropist. He was a benefactor of the University of Chicago, where Rosenwald Hall is named after him.

LS: Yes, that I know.

Mr. Vari: We know in those days at Sears, Roebuck the workers were really not treated too well. But I believe that the money he made out of his workers he gave to this University, and this University thinks of him as a virtuous man, really, and the workers think of him as another sort.

LS: I can reply to you by a quotation from Xenophon: "Most men mistake their benefactor for a good man."[xvi] And I don't see why this university should be under [a] very special obligation of being stricter in these matters than other institutions. There was a Roman emperor—who was it? [Vespasian],[xvii] I believe, who did something which was not immoral. He instituted a tax for men's rooms or the equivalent of that[12] in ancient Rome, and there was a great shock about such a tax, whereupon the emperor said, "It doesn't stink." He meant the money. So I am not responsible for that. If I were the president and you would tell men that, then I would go into the facts, and if they are true I might change this. I might say, "All right, there will no longer be such a founder's day if that is true." But fortunately, I don't have any say in that. But, as I say, we don't go into the question of the truth of the facts. We would have to make some long study. And in addition, in such matters we have to consider another point. In such matters of so-called social justice one must judge the people according to what is regarded as the right thing at the time. You know that social justice was not as strictly understood in the nineteenth century generally as it is now. You know quite a few practices which were then regarded as commanded by a kind of natural law of the economic sphere. You know that. This is no longer generally held, although there are still people who believe it is so . . . This one would in fairness also have to consider. Yes?

Student: How accurate must we regard Aristotle's statement that among morally virtuous people the liberal are the most beloved? If meanness is more prevalent than liberality—

LS: [. . .] Most people are mean, and therefore it means most people love money. Therefore they love to receive money; therefore they love the givers. That is no contradiction.

Different Student: [. . .]

LS: No, that is a distinction which he will prove. Meanness is to be divided into stinginess and greediness, and it is very interesting to see both sides. I mean, there are people who are absolutely stingy and in no way greedy, and then you have people who are very greedy and in no way stingy. So that happens. Now this point is regarding the[13] stingy man [strictly speaking] who . . . [says], "I don't want anything from you, but I want to"—that exists. That's not Aristotle's responsibility. There are such great varieties. On the contrary; it's his duty to bring them out. Good.

[xvi] Xenophon, *Hellenica*, 7.3.12.
[xvii] The transcript has a blank space here.

Now let us turn to the much more interesting virtue of munificence: *magnificence* in Latin, and *megaloprepeia* in Greek. This is concerned with expense alone, not with giving. From this it follows that every munificent man is liberal, but not every liberal man is munificent. The liberal man is free from money, and shows it above all in giving; to some extent also in spending but not on a large scale: for example, there are two candles instead of one. This would be the difference between a liberal man as distinguished from a stingy or mean man. But these are of course minor items. The munificent man spends on a large scale. Now let us read in 1122a34 to 35, when he says, "The munificent man."

Mr. Reinken:
is an artist in expenditure—

LS: Well, literally "resembles a knower." Yes, go on.

Mr. Reinken:
The munificent man resembles a knower in expenditure: he can discern what is suitable, and spend great sums with good taste.

LS: Yes, also more literally, "for he can contemplate" (*theōrēsai*). "He can contemplate with sureness and spends large sums in a proper manner." So it is interesting here and an indication of things to come: the munificent man alone is called "resembling a knower." He did not use such [a] strong phrase when he spoke of the liberal man, the moderate [man], and the courageous man. Why is this so? Let us read the immediate sequel.

Mr. Reinken:
(For as we said at the outset, a disposition is defined by the activities in which it is displayed, and by the objects to which it is related.) So the munificent man's expenditure is suitable as well as great. And consequently the objects he produces must also be great and suitable; for so only will a great expenditure be suitable [to the result]—[xviii] (1122a34-b4)

LS: Yes, now let us stop here. The munificent man resembles a knower because he alone has to do with the great or grand or big. This is the first reason. Now what is the connection between the grand and knowledge?

Mr. Reinken: It covers the whole expanse.

LS: When Plato speaks of the philosopher in the sixth book of the *Republic*, he says the philosopher is munificent. He doesn't mean it here literally in the narrow sense in which Aristotle means it, namely, regarding spending, but he means it, literally, the munificent man is the man who does becoming things on a grand scale or things becoming a great man. This is implied; and he says of the philosopher that since he looks at being as a whole, and at time as a whole, he cannot be petty. That is the point, but it will become clearer in the sequel. Let us turn to b6 to 8.

[xviii] The punctuation in this passage follows Rackham's translation.

Mr. Reinken:
Hence, as the object produced must be worthy of the expenditure, so also must the expenditure be worthy of or even exceed the object produced. Again, the motive of the munificent man in such expenditure will be the nobility of the action, this motive being characteristic of all the virtues. Moreover he will spend gladly and lavishly, since nice calculation is shabby—

LS: Yes, what he calls "nice calculation" is in Greek "*akribologia*," exact calculation. You know, exactness, this great virtue of theoretical understanding, is something very low in practice: penny pinchers. If we make calculations as theoreticians we must be penny pinchers, as it were, but penny pinchers proper are very bad. The end is the noble, as always. Now let us go on where you left off.

Mr. Reinken:
The magnificent man will therefore necessarily be also a liberal man. For the liberal man too will spend the right amount in the right manner; and it is in the amount and manner of his expenditure that the element 'great' in the magnificent or 'greatly splendid' man, that is to say his greatness, is shown, these being the things in which Liberality is displayed. And the magnificent man from an equal outlay will achieve a more magnificent result; for the same standard of excellence does not apply to an achievement as to a possession—

LS: So in other words, conceivably a liberal man as liberal might spend the same amount of money in a given case as the munificent does, but the element of grandeur is absent in the case of the liberal. The liberal may give somewhere in secret. It will not show in any way. But what the munificent man does must show. That doesn't mean that it is done for showmanship; then it would be a vice. But it must show. Now let us go on. First we must read this sequel.

Mr. Reinken:
with possessions the thing worth the highest price is the most honored, for instance gold, but the achievement most honored is one that is great and noble (since a great achievement arouses the admiration of the spectator, and the quality of causing admiration belongs to munificence)— (1122b4-18)

LS: Yes, this is important. It must cause admiration. It must be an object of beholding, of contemplating. Otherwise it is not a munificent act. It might be a liberal act. Yes?

Mr. Boyan: I'm sorry, but I don't see—well, maybe we're not through. I don't see why this is a finer—

LS: Yes, but wait, wait. Aristotle is working his way, and he shows first the similarities and also the differences of the two kindred virtues by harping only on one theme: magnificence, *magnum*, great man. And what it is comes out in the sequel. Go on, Mr. Reinken.

Mr. Reinken:

and excellence in an achievement involves greatness. Now there are some forms of expenditure definitely entitled honorable, for instance expenditure on the service of the gods—votive offerings, public buildings, sacrifices—and the offices of religion generally; and those public benefactions which are favorite objects of ambition, for instance the duty, as it is esteemed in certain states, of equipping a chorus splendidly or fitting out a ship of war, or even of giving a banquet to the public. But in all these matters, as has been said, the scale of expenditure must be judged with reference to the person spending, that is, to his position and his resources; for expenditure should be proportionate to means, and suitable not only to the occasion but to the giver. Hence, a poor man cannot be munificent,[xix] since he has not the means to make a great outlay suitably; the poor man who attempts munificence is foolish, for he spends out of proportion to his means, and beyond what he ought, whereas an act displays virtue only when it is done in the right way.

LS: Yes, this is universal. A foolish action cannot be a virtuous action; absolutely. No Don Quixotes. It can be nice, in a way—I mean, touching—but it cannot be good. Yes. Now go on.

Mr. Reinken:
But great public benefactions are suitable for those who have adequate resources derived from their own exertions or from their ancestors or connexions, and for the high-born and famous and the like, since birth, fame and so on all have an element of greatness and distinction.

LS: In other words, there must be greatness not only in the deed. There must also be greatness in the doer and this may be due to nobility of discernment; it may be due to other things. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
The munificent man, therefore, is especially of this sort, and munificence mostly finds its outlet in these public benefactions, as we have said— (1122b18-35)

LS: Let us stop here. So now we have the answer to your question, Mr. Boyan. The expense corresponding to the greatness of the beings with a view to which the expenses are made: that makes the munificent man munificent. Now these beings are, first, the gods; second, other superhuman beings (in Greek, *daimōn*); and third, the city, public things. Of course, public buildings erected by a private man would naturally also form that. Now this is, I think, the solution to this riddle. Only in this part of the discussion of moral virtues does Aristotle speak of the gods. *Only*. A commentator of the seventeenth century (not on Aristotle exactly, but he knew his Aristotle very well), Gronovius, who wrote comments on Grotius's *War and Peace*, says: "one must forgive Aristotle that he has not mentioned among the moral virtues, religion, for to him as well as to all other ancients outside of the church the place of divine worship falls under the heading of

[xix] Throughout this and the following passages, Mr. Reinken substitutes "munificent" for Rackham's "magnificent."

munificence."[xx] I do not know what evidence he has for saying this of all ancients, but in the case of Aristotle it is surely true. What religion as a virtue is for Aristotle [is] munificence. Well, look at it. For example, sacrificing, worship. Are the sacrifices which a poor fellow makes—such a gross disproportion between the smallness of the gifts and the grandeur of the gods: that's not fitting. Only a very powerful and wealthy man can sacrifice. That this is in a deep sense ironical on the part of Aristotle, I have no doubt, but he states the facts as they are. No poor man or no obscure man can be munificent. We have read it. No poor man and no obscure man can honor the gods properly, because his poverty and his obscurity make it impossible for him to honor the gods properly. Now here we see of course a difference between Aristotle and the Bible in the clearest way. In the Bible sometimes, in the psalms and elsewhere, the pious are called the poor ones. Here, by definition—I mean, if we make a legitimate substitution—the pious, those who worship the gods properly, can only be the rich. A great subject of attack already in classical antiquity, but Aristotle follows this line. Now first Mr. Lyons.

Mr. Lyons: Where is the irony for Aristotle?

LS: Yes, well, because is there not also something fishy about that? . . . But he sticks to what quite a few of his contemporaries would have admitted. A hundred oxen is a much greater honoring than a pigeon, a dove, to say nothing of smaller things. Yes?

Student: Does this matter of obscurity mean that a tasteful and magnificent gift should not or cannot be anonymous?

LS: No, I meant an obscure man—you know, a man of obscure origin; just a nobody, as they say. If a nobody should approach an altar of Zeus there is a certain disproportion. If it is a very great man in the city, very great—you know [. . .] could present Zeus with the image of Pericles; but to take some sausage seller, that would have been a blasphemy. Yes? Do you see that? Good. Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: Who is the seventeenth-century commentator?

LS: Gronovius, probably Gronus in German or Dutch, but Gronovius in Latin. Good. Gronovius's remarks on Grotius's critique of Aristotle are very sound. He understood Aristotle much better than Grotius did. Mr. Boyan.

Mr. Boyan: By comparing the munificent man to a knower, it seems to me he's putting this man higher than, say, the liberal man and that's the thing that I'm questioning as reasonable. I don't know whether a man who quietly gives some money to charity or something, you know, with the welfare situation in Illinois—

LS: Yes, that's liberal. That's liberal.

[xx] J. F. Gronovius, note on Grotius's *De Jure Belli ac Pacis*, Prolegg. §45, as cited in Leo Strauss, *On Tyranny: Corrected and Expanded Edition including the Strauss-Kojève Correspondence*, ed. Victor Gourevitch and Michael S. Roth (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 130, n. 2.

Student: Yes, I think that might be higher than some guy who makes quite . . .

LS: No, but you have to take into consideration the object, too, in the case of the three others we have discussed hitherto: the courageous, the moderate, and the liberal. There is no reference whatever to the gods. In the case of munificence, there is a reference. Therefore, when he says knower and uses the word "contemplation," this fine word here, they foreshadow—to repeat, in Aristotle's *Ethics the* moral virtue regarding the gods is munificence, none other. There is no virtue called piety. The word "piety" existed in Greece. Plato has written a dialogue on piety with the understanding that this is a virtue, [xxi] and all the more striking is Aristotle's refusal to do that. For Aristotle the place of piety is taken by two different virtues, (a) munificence, and (b) theoretical wisdom: theoretical wisdom, which deals with the true gods, the stars, [and] the ruler of the whole, but not with Zeus and Athena or Hera. This he regarded as necessary for the *polis*, but the virtue most becoming to these gods as popularly understood is honoring on a grand scale, and this honoring on a grand scale means of course expenditure on a grand scale. I mean, the inner reverence in prayer or whatever have you, not a word is said about that. I mean, I think that is—if only from the point of view of understanding the cleavage between the two elements of our Western tradition—of utmost importance, obviously. Aristotle's statements, of course, cannot be called the Greek view, because most Greeks would have absolutely disagreed with him. But among these few Greeks who we remember there would have been quite a few who would have agreed. Thucydides, I'm sure, would have taken a similar view.

Brother Chrysostom: The medieval counterpart of ancient munificence would be the medieval church builders.

LS: Yes, yes, sure. Yes, but no Christian would say that a man who can afford to build a cathedral is more decent to God than a simple man who is absolutely poor.

Brother Chrysostom: I don't know.

LS: Well, then, the famous distinction between the administration and the nonadministration would come in. That's another matter. But you are very cynical, Brother Chrysostom. But that is probably true. I'm sure the temptation to honor greater—

Brother Chrysostom: [. . .]

LS: Yes, but is this deed in itself more meritorious?

Brother Chrysostom: [. . .]

LS: Yes, that I believe is—I mean, you must know Christian charity much better than I do, but it doesn't sound right to me. I mean, that sometimes prelates will of course, just as

[xxi] Plato, *Euthyphro*.

university presidents, be greatly concerned with this kind of founders and honor them particularly, more perhaps than they deserve, that I grant you.

Brother Chrysostom: I think I am aware of what you are saying, but on the other hand I don't know whether those medieval church leaders who built them, really edifices of grandeur, were not meritorious. On the contrary.

LS: Yes, but the question is, however, whether that makes them more pleasing in the eyes of God than a simple fellow who can never even give a mite to a poor man but reveres God properly in his heart.

Brother Chrysostom: Oh, I would never say that.

LS: Ah ha. But Aristotle says it! Aristotle says it. Good. Let us reflect for one moment about what we learn regarding the general question of the end. Now what is the end of the munificent man? Let us disregard the gods and say the end of munificence is adorning the city in various ways. This is not sufficient, of course, because it depends also on the situation of the individual who does the adorning. I mean, if this money comes from unsavory sources, then it is not a munificent act. The end as the noble includes a variety of considerations, of which the adorning of the city is only one. And this virtue of munificence, too, its matter is that which is related to the end, the means, not the end, namely, it deals with money or rather large-scale spending. Let us read 1123a4 to 5. "That the munificent man does not spend for himself."

Mr. Reinken:
the munificent man[xxii] does not spend money on himself but on public objects, and his gifts have some resemblance to votive offerings.

LS: Yes, you see again the religious element in munificence which is absent from the three other virtues. A little bit later, a9.

Mr. Reinken:
and to prefer spending on permanent objects, because these are the most noble; and to spend an amount that is appropriate to the particular occasion, for the same gifts are not suitable for the gods and for men, and the same expenditure is not appropriate to a sacrifice and a funeral. (1123a4-11)

LS: Yes, you see again this reference. Later there will be some more. Again, munificence is the virtue which takes the place of piety. And then at the end, the last sentence, a31 to 33.

Mr. Reinken:
These dispositions then are vices, but they do not bring serious discredit, since they are not injurious to others, nor are they excessively unseemly. (1123a31-33)

[xxii] In Rackham's translation: "the magnificent man."

LS: So the vices corresponding to munificence are—how do you call it?—not boasting—

Mr. Reinken: Paltriness—

LS: Ostentation. And the other is of course—what is the vice corresponding—

Mr. Reinken: Paltriness.

LS: Vulgarity.

Mr. Reinken: He calls it paltriness.

LS: Yes, [*apeirokalia*], lack of experience in things beautiful, literally translated. Yes, vulgarity, one can say. These vices are not particularly—they are vices but men are not disgraced by them, and for two reasons. The first is [that] these vices are not harmful to others; and the other, they are not unbecoming, grossly unbecoming to the actor. Positively stated, there are two overall ends involving other virtues: utility to others and becoming to the doer. Or we can[14] [call] the latter one perfection of the doer; the perfection of the doer and the utility to others. In the utilitarian morality narrowly conceived, only the utility to others is considered, and perhaps also the utility of the individual narrowly conceived, but not the perfection of the individual. That's the point. Now let us turn to the beginning of the section on magnanimity.

Student: Isn't what the magnificent man knows [is] what is good of his kind?

LS: No, it is knowledge—as a kind of foreshadowing of the grandeur and the rank of the objects of munificence, the gods. I do not believe you can give any other reason. You can say it requires a greater discrimination, at least on the face of it, to know what is becoming to the gods, in contradistinction to what is becoming for a man, than any intrahuman discrimination . . . Now Mr. Butterworth.

Mr. Butterworth: [As to the view of Thomas Aquinas and Averroes.][xxiii]

LS: Averroes agrees with Aristotle, of course. He agrees with him. I mean, after all, the Muslims built mosques. Don't you know that? So? They had a great opportunity for displaying nobly on a grand scale there, too.

Mr. Butterworth: I'm thinking—you said that this is a foreshadowing of knowing, in this case, *the* god—

LS: Yes, this is there, surely. Well, simply stated, I believe that through the discussion of moral virtue in books 3 to 5, there shines through somehow what Aristotle regards as the simply good life, the theoretical life. And the gods, even as they are popularly understood, and the reverence for them are as it were a divination of the truly superhuman. But it

[xxiii] As noted by the transcriber.

becomes visible most clearly hitherto in the section on munificence, and let us see whether we can find anything in the sequel. Mr. Mueller?

Mr. Mueller: [As to whether King Solomon was especially honored for splendid buildings.][xxiv]

LS: King Solomon. Yes, sure. But the main point, of course, is that he is a king of peace. His father, David, was not permitted to build the temple. Good. Yes, sure. No, the Bible doesn't say that possession of wealth and power is evil. That is what some modern people say, but not the Bible. That there are dangers, sure. But in themselves they are not necessarily evil. Yes, Mr. Glenn, you are the last one.

Mr. Glenn: What is this perfection of the doer that seems to be part of moral virtue?

LS: What I called formerly by such an expression as the freedom, the inner freedom from these depressing things.

Now Aristotle turns from magnificence to another grand virtue, magnanimity; and the names could have been the opposite, but Aristotle set it down in these particular names. Now this is of course a particularly famous and grand section, for reasons which will appear later. Now the magnanimous man has to do not with money or possessions, but with honors, and with great honors. Aristotle will later on speak of a virtue which has to do with not-great honors [but with] medium-size or small [honors]. But here we deal with great honors, and the magnanimous man is a man who claims for himself great honors while deserving them. And we have—of course when we read Greek books, especially Thucydides, you find quite a few. Alcibiades is of course such a man; in another way, Pericles. I mean, when you read Alcibiades's speech before the Sicilian expedition, after he had been attacked by Nicias, then he says, "Look what I did, how I won this race in Olympia and how I almost licked the Spartans at Mantineia." The Spartans won that battle but they almost lost it, and therefore he can say it is almost a victory and so.[xxv] But the way in which he speaks there: "I am this man and I can rightly claim the honor to be sent as the commander-in-chief to Sicily." And of course Aristotle does not agree with this. He starts from this Alcibiadean or Periclean view, but he rises much higher. But the starting point is this common view. Now there are a number of[15] [types] here, more than one, more than two. First, men may claim great honors for themselves without deserving them, and then he is—how do they translate that? What is a man who claims great honors for himself and does not deserve them?

Student: Small-souled?

LS: No, no, no.

Same Student: Vain, vainglorious.

[xxiv] As noted by the transcriber.
[xxv] Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, book 6, §16.

LS: Vain, vainglorious. And the small-souled man is the man who could claim great honors for himself but doesn't have the courage to do that. Small-souled. And then there is another type, who is much more frequent and quite nice; namely, a man who does not claim great honors, knowing that he does not deserve them. Aristotle says that's a sensible man but not a magnanimous man. This I find always very enjoyable, his remark. Good. Yes?

Student: Would this mean that Aristotle would say that George Washington, for refusing the crown and returning to his plantation, would be small-souled man?

LS: That depends very much on the circumstances. But if he[16] [did] it on the ground of unworthiness—there could be other reasons. There could be reasons of another kind. But if he[17] [regarded] himself as unworthy while in fact he was worthy, he would say it was small-souled; [*mikropsychos*],[xxvi] you could say, in opposition to magnanimous.

Same Student: It was clearly magnanimous.

LS: Yes, Aristotle makes clear later on that this is, you could say, the contradiction in the magnanimous man: that he is also not attached to honors and looks down on them. Therefore that is complicated. But we are speaking first of the surface phenomenon . . . Mr. Glenn?

Mr. Glenn: Now in the case of George Washington, aren't we judging his motives . . .

LS: That I didn't say, but Aristotle simply says the motives, to the extent to which they do not become manifest in deed or speech. Good.[xxvii] Now let us read 1123b15.

Mr. Reinken:
Though therefore in regard to the greatness of his claim the magnanimous man[xxviii] is an extreme, by reason of its rightness he stands at the mean point, for he claims what he deserves; while the vain and the small-souled err by excess and defect respectively.

If then the magnanimous man[xxix] claims and is worthy of great things and most of all the greatest things, magnanimity[xxx] must be concerned with some one object especially. 'Worthy' is a term of relation: it denotes having a claim to good 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

[xxvi] The transcript has a blank space here.
[xxvii] The transcriber notes: "The questioner, during the inaudible portion, appears to have asserted that Dr. Strauss said one cannot judge a man's motives."
[xxviii] In Rackham's translation: "the great-souled man is an extreme."
[xxix] In Rackham's translation: "the great-souled man."
[xxx] In Rackham's translation: "Greatness of Soul."

magnanimous man[xxxi] 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 magnanimous[xxxii] are concerned, since it is honour above all else which great men claim and deserve.

LS: Yes, now let us stop here for one moment. You see, we see here now the deeper kinship between these two virtues, munificence and magnanimity, which are discussed in the immediate sequel. Both are concerned with grandness. Now the munificent man is the only one who can honor the gods properly, as we have seen, according to their greatness. The magnanimous man goes beyond the munificent man. He behaves, in a way, like the gods. He claims great honors for himself. To that extent he is a peak of the whole moral part. Now let us continue where we left off.

Mr. Reinken:
The small-souled man falls short both as judged by his own deserts and in comparison with the claim of the magnanimous man;[xxxiii] the vain man on the other hand exceeds as judged by his own standard, but does not however exceed the magnanimous man.[xxxiv] (1123b15-26)

LS: In other words, the vainglorious man can never claim higher honors than the magnanimous man does, because the magnanimous man claims the highest honors. The mistake of the vainglorious man is[18] that he [only] believes that he is worthy of them, whereas the magnanimous man is worthy of them. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
And inasmuch as the magnanimous man[xxxv] deserves most, he must be the best of men; for the better a man is the more he deserves, and he that is best deserves most. Therefore the truly magnanimous man[xxxvi] must be a good man. Indeed greatness in each of the virtues would seem to go with magnanimity.[xxxvii] For instance, one cannot imagine the magnanimous man[xxxviii] running at full speed when retreating in battle, nor acting dishonestly; since what motive for base conduct has a man to whom nothing is great? Considering all the virtues in turn, we shall feel it quite ridiculous to picture the magnanimous man as other than a good man.[xxxix] 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. Magnanimity[xl] seems therefore to be as it were a crowning ornament of the virtues:

[xxxi] In Rackham's translation: "the great-souled man."
[xxxii] In Rackham's translation: "the great-souled."
[xxxiii] In Rackham's translation : "the great-souled man."
[xxxiv] In Rackham's translation: "great-souled man."
[xxxv] In Rackham's translation: "the great-souled man."
[xxxvi] In Rackham's translation: "the truly great-souled man."
[xxxvii] In Rackham's translation: "greatness of soul."
[xxxviii] In Rackham's translation: "one cannot imagine the great-souled man."
[xxxix] In Rackham's translation: "quite ridiculous to picture the great-souled man as other than a good man."
[xl] In Rackham's translation: "Greatness of Soul."

it enhances their greatness, and it cannot exist without them. Hence it is hard to be truly magnanimous, for magnanimity is impossible without moral nobility.[xli] (1223b27-1224a4)

LS: Yes. "Without perfect gentlemanship" would be a somewhat better translation.[xlii] So magnanimity comprises all virtues, presupposes them, and[19] adorns them. I mean, a man may have all virtues, but if he is not conscious of having them he is less perfect than if he is conscious of them. And why? Because it shows a lack of intelligence if he does not know that he has them. And this consciousness and the acting on this consciousness is an ornament of all the virtues. Magnanimity is *the* peak. I must add immediately, it is one peak: the other peak is justice, to which we will turn here in book 5. And this is characteristic of Aristotle's *Ethics*, that it has two peaks, magnanimity and justice. Magnanimity is concerned with the perfection of the individual. Justice is the social virtue[20]. These two different considerations are co-present in the *Ethics*. If justice were simply the highest virtue from every point of view, then magnanimity could not occupy the [same highest] place. And it would be interesting to follow the history of these two virtues through the ages. It is very clear in Hobbes and Descartes. I mean—you laughed because you have read that somewhere? No. Well, I described it somewhere. The Hobbean tradition which ends then in utilitarianism reduces all virtue to justice. It is not concerned with the perfection of the individual. And the other line, which was presented in the seventeenth century, especially by Descartes, tries to understand all perfection as the perfection of the individual. Descartes's key virtue is called generosity, but this is wholly, so to speak, the Latin translation of magnanimity. Next Mr. Kirwan, and then you.

Mr. Kirwan: The language you used regarding magnanimity and justice are different and I wonder how you mean that. In regard to justice, it's the perfection of all the virtues whereas magnanimity is the crown of all virtues—

LS: I'm speaking now, of course, of general virtue. The difference will be made clear by Mr. Dry when we come to it. Both magnanimity and general virtue presuppose all other virtues, but from a different point of view. From the point of view of the individual and his consciousness of his worth, that's magnanimity. From the point of view of what the city demands, general justice. Mr. Boyan?

Mr. Boyan: Yes, I was going to save this for my paper, but it might be of interest to point out that if you take book 4 and you divide the book by the center of the book, you come right into the center of this discussion of magnanimity.

LS: Oh, that is very interesting. I didn't do it. Did you take an edition without footnotes so that you—

Mr. Boyan: I took this edition. I'm sorry.

[xli] In Rackham's translation: "Hence it is hard to be truly great-souled, for greatness of soul is impossible without moral nobility."
[xlii] Strauss retranslates "*hoion te aneu kalokagathias*."

LS: Yes, there are footnotes. Yes, you would have to do the boring job of counting lines to make clear where the arithmetic center is. I wouldn't be surprised. I wouldn't be surprised, because that is a clear descent afterward. But as I say, justice also comes in. But in the immediate sequel, in a few cases, in 1124a8 to 9 and 28 to 29, the virtue of the magnanimous man is called *pantelos*—has an overall perfection. You will have to see, Mr. Dry, whether anything of this kind is said of general justice. It is genuinely a question, which of these two peaks is the higher in Aristotle's sense, and that is very important. Now Aristotle develops that in the sequel: the thought that of course, being a reasonable man, he chooses, claims the honors only from the right kind of people. He's not concerned with the acclaim of fools. What's the use of that? If the men who are competent to judge honor him, that he is concerned with. But he will not even be concerned with these honors. That would mean to be enslaved by honors, and because he is not concerned with them he accepts them as deserving them. It's hard for us to imagine such a man, because we are all brought up in the biblical tradition, but for Aristotle there was no difficulty of that. He accepts them as due to him . . . And he has no sense of gratitude—"Yes, I deserve them and I accept them"—and therefore is thought to be supercilious, a contemner, but Aristotle insists that he is a perfectly rational man.

Student: Did Aristotle make a distinction between vaingloriousness and pride?

LS: No, you can say magnanimity is noble pride. You can call it pride, noble pride.

Same Student: But is there a distinction between vanity or vaingloriousness and ignoble pride?

LS: Yes. Well, there are all kinds of things. I mean, there are kinds of self-complacency which we also call vanity from time to time. Aristotle speaks of forms of this when he comes to speak of the narrowly understood social virtues. I mean, you know, the lines are difficult to draw. You know there are people who are like hungry dogs in regard to small honors; [21]whenever they can get a badge they are very occupied, and all kinds of empty titles are very relevant. We also call such people vain. Or men who regard everything which belongs to them and which they did or suffered as just wonderful because it happened to them. This is also a form of vanity. One should think about it, surely, but Aristotle defines here this kind of thing translated by vanity as that someone regards himself worthy of high honors without deserving them.

Same Student: [Elaborates his understanding of ignoble pride as claiming honors that are usually reserved for the gods.][xliii]

LS: No. I mean, well, say, Pericles, Alcibiades, did not claim the honor that there should be sacrifices to them. They never did. There were kings and potentates who claimed that, but this is not what Aristotle means.

Now what struck me for the first time in reading this section, which I have read before, was this very simple thing: [it concerns] honor, high honor, and not a word is said here

[xliii] As noted by the transcriber.

about immortal glory, glory after death. You noticed that, Mr. Kirwan. You noticed that. Yes. That is very remarkable. In Alcibiades's speech in Athens, in Thucydides's book 6, chapter 16, sections 5 to 6, there it is mentioned. Alcibiades is very much concerned [and] thinks about what will they say about him after his death. Here Aristotle is absolutely silent about it, and that is strange. After all, if you think of the greatest honors, you would think of immortal glory. Now I believe we have to bring this together with another very strange silence which we observed in the section on courage, bravery in battle: not a word said about the fatherland for the sake of which this death is faced. In both cases there is no thought of what survives; [of] either the fatherland which survives the death of the brave man or glory. The whole sphere of moral virtue is in the perishable and with a view to the perishable. This, I think, is what Aristotle means by that, and this is, I think, important for the understanding of the overall message. You see, what Aristotle does is of course this. There was a lot of reflection on the virtues going on before him, in the poets, in the historians, and in the philosophers, and in addition by thoughtful people all over Greece throughout the centuries who did not write, in a kind of wisdom which became embodied in proverbs or what have you. Aristotle takes that and recognizes the wisdom there, but he does not merely codify it in his *Ethics*: he changes it. He modifies it. As every true codifier of customs does not simply put it down but he perfects the customs by the way in which he puts it down, that is much more true, I think, of Aristotle. And of course one would have to find out from which point of view does Aristotle modify what is called traditional Greek morality, and I think the general answer is obvious, from which point of view he would do it: from what was for him the highest point of view, the theoretical life.

Student: I was wondering if justice is also perishable—

LS: Yes, what does it mean, justice [as] perishable? No man's moderate action and no man's virtuous action is imperishable. I mean, he dies. Now the question of immortality is here completely ruled out in this passage which occurred earlier. I have the reference to it here: 1111b22 to 23, when he speaks of the difference between deliberating and wishing. And then he says in passing [that] men wish immortality. They cannot deliberate how to get immortality, but they wish, and with the understanding—no, men wish for the impossible, "for instance, immortality." Now this could of course merely mean, literally understood, that they will never die . . .[xliv] But it can of course also mean there is no immortality of the individual. That is entirely left open here, and I think it is characteristic for the morality of the *Ethics*. Well, that has been said *n* times, and Thomas Aquinas points it out in his commentary on more than one occasion.[xlv] Aristotle is concerned in this book only with the felicity of this life. That is clear; no one would deny that. But I would go a step further and say it deals with the felicity of this life as the *only* felicity.

Same Student: Yes, but in a sense Aristotle himself is immortal through his writings . . .

LS: Yes, but Aristotle would never admit that . . . It has happened to Aristotle's books—you know, they were buried in cellars somewhere in Asia Minor for some time, and they were not found and quite a few of them are lost. And that fate was so kind to Aristotle's

[xliv] The transcriber notes: "about seven inaudible words to the same effect."
[xlv] For instance, St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, §2136.

writings that so much of them survived, but much less than was with Plato . . . I believe that all these men wrote their works which we call immortal with the perfect understanding that literally they are not immortal. No, no, they cannot be. You can say they deserve to be immortal, but that they should be in fact what we call immortal . . .

Same Student: Would Aristotle say that it is possible for thought to be imperishable, not in terms of whether it is remembered altogether, but—

LS: But its truth, you mean, but its inner truth, that whenever men think sufficiently they would eventually arrive at it. Surely that is clear. But that doesn't mean that any books are literally speaking what we would call immortal . . . and even, of course . . . if and when the world perishes all glory belonging to the world perishes. That is clear. And I think we modern people, through our belief in progress—that was very characteristic. You know, the original emergence of the belief in progress . . . in the eighteenth century . . . was in this respect much more thoughtful. It said the world must have a beginning . . . and it must be infinite in the future. There must be no end of human life on Earth ever. Then of course you can say it can be immortal because you have a guarantee that somehow there will always be men on Earth who may remember the brave deeds of earlier men. But this belief has no basis, neither in Revelation nor in reason . . . A couple of billion years or even a hundred billion years is not eternity.

Same Student: If this is true, then the whole sphere of intellectual virtue as well as moral virtue would also be perishable.

LS: Yes, but it is concern[ed] with the imperishable, whereas moral virtue is concern[ed with] this act of liberality, this act now done by one perishable being to another perishable being . . . That's the difference. The major consideration of philosophy . . . always said that philosophy or contemplation is higher than action. Every *polis*, however great, perishes. [At] the peak of Athens, Pericles himself perished. What has come into being and has become great will also perish. And I think the modern belief in progress has simply led to some facile belief in the immortality of what is essentially mortal. And when you read in the nineteenth century, some of the greatest men there: the concern, for example, of men like Jacob Burckhardt, a famous historian, as you know, with museums and the preservation of every beautiful painting and sculpture: involved in that concern is [the thought that] if these things are not preserved, [then] the highest perishes, which no wise man of old would have thought, because that cannot be the highest, this kind of thing. They may be very useful, very wonderful; they can never be the highest. The highest cannot be something made by man, whether they are books . . . I mean, from the biblical point of view, of course it is simply idolatry. But the Greek philosophers wouldn't have spoken of idolators; they would say it is a great error of judgment to believe that the perishable can be as such imperishable.

Student: Isn't Marx's philosophy of history closer to what you are saying than other philosophies of history?

LS: Well, Marx, to my knowledge, never speaks about that. But Engels speaks about it in his pamphlet on Feuerbach, where he says, well, the natural scientists tell us that there will also be a decay of the world, and therefore a decay of the perfect communist society, mind you, but that's a long way off.[xlvi] That's a very practical answer, but one must also say it's an answer wholly unworthy of a man who claims to be a philosopher. No, if anyone was taken in completely by what men can do, it was Marx. He was not the only one, but he was surely one of them. Yes?

Student: How would this fit in with the concern that you expressed at the end of the last hour regarding what the end of moral action is?

LS: The end of moral action as Aristotle understands it, I think, is clear: to be a good man, i.e., while you live. That is it. You know, a very simple example: whether a man's life is longer or shorter doesn't depend on [. . .] and yet a man can lead a short life well and a long life badly. So only as long as we live do we have a responsibility.

Same Student: If I'm not mistaken, however, you phrased your question as being a little bit more difficult to answer.

LS: Yes, otherwise we would say the best man is the man who lives longest, which no one in his senses will say because it is empirically wrong. We see people sometimes who are in their high nineties, although not very frequently, and in most cases we have nothing but compassion for them because of the decay of their mental powers and so on. Mr. Winiarski?

Mr. Winiarski: Could you not say, however, that the peak of moral virtue is also concern with the eternal because the magnanimous man claims for himself those honors which are also claimed for the gods?

LS: Yes, but as [they are] given to him, [so] they perish with him. I mean, even if they are remembered for some time, for a century or so,[22] what does it mean? I mean, really *sic transit gloria mentis*, a wise word.

Mr. Winiarski: Yes, but doesn't Aristotle really transform the horizon within which the man of moral virtue looks at this—

LS: Yes, in a very indirect way. I believe I understand what you mean. Since Aristotle's understanding of moral virtue is, according to its claim, that understanding which is in agreement with the eternal truth, to that extent it participates in a very indirect way, but in a *very* indirect way, in eternity. So to say that Aristotle's teaching—I mean, to overstate it, Aristotle's moral teaching is from this point of view the eternal moral teaching. Is that what you mean?

Mr. Winiarski: That would be part of it. Yes—

[xlvi] Friedrich Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy* (1888) (first published in *Die Neue Zeit*).

LS: Yes, but that doesn't mean, of course, that it will be eternal as his teaching, as the teaching connected with this individual, Aristotle from Stageira. They might be long forgotten; his books might be destroyed. It would always deserve to be destroyed because it is a true teaching.

Mr. Winiarski: [To the effect that eventually Aristotle transcends the horizon of morality.][xlvii]

LS: Yes. Yes, sure. Very good. In other words, Aristotle, you can say, takes a variety of understandings of morality; and one of them, and perhaps the most respectable, is the one which you sketch. But then he shows, not by argument—the argument we would have to find out—but by indications that this is wrong, this understanding, because—one can put it this way: because it regards as eternal what is not eternal. Simply spoken, it is somehow based on the belief in such beings as Zeus and Hera and so on. And if they are not, then the morality based on them is as such untenable. That indeed. But I think the basic thought: we have—not in any way by [virtue of] the biblical tradition but [rather] by [virtue of] the modern philosophies of history especially)—[forgotten][xlviii] the thought which was so familiar to earlier generations of men, that while societies are much more long lasting than individuals . . . they are still as perishable as individuals: [this] is for us not so simply present. Although it is not—because the biblical thought is entirely different. Every eternity of which the Bible speaks, insofar as it refers to human beings, is eternity by virtue of a free act of God, of a divine promise, not an inherent one. The eternity of Israel, the eternity of the church, this is not meant to be a natural eternity, as you know. That's the difference. And Aristotle of course does not know anything of a revealed religion. That is perfectly clear.

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[1] Deleted "and."
[2] Deleted "yes, but."
[3] Deleted "a."
[4] Deleted "for the purpose of."
[5] Deleted "thing."
[6] Deleted "wouldn't."
[7] Deleted "by one."
[8] Deleted "formula."
[9] Deleted "and."
[10] Deleted "he."
[11] Deleted "say."
[12] Deleted "[that] they had."
[13] Moved "strictly speaking."
[14] Deleted "state."
[15] Deleted "rises."
[16] Deleted "would do."
[17] Deleted "would regard."
[18] Moved "only."
[19] Deleted "it."
[20] Deleted "society."

[xlvii] As noted by the transcriber.
[xlviii] Brackets in original transcript.

[21] Deleted “you know”
[22] Deleted “but.”

Session 9: May 9, 1963
The virtues continued: magnanimity, gentleness, the social virtues
(Book 4.3-9)

Leo Strauss: [In progress] . . . I apologize.[i] I think it is necessary for us to face this seeming difficulty which you have presented to us. And as for the names you mentioned, I can only quote a famous philosopher, Leibniz, who used to say . . . [ii] "I despise almost nothing." I mean, there are some things which are simply despicable, of course, but I have seen very simple and unpretentious articles, God knows where, by young people from which one could learn something. And why should one not learn from Mr. Mills and Mr. Fromm? That's of course clear, and that is all right. But this is not the substantive question which you raised. Regarding Freud in general, one must not forget Freud is of course not responsible for the relaxation of sexual manners in our age. I think he himself was rather strict, a rather strict man in his life and also in what he thought was good for human beings. Therefore he has been accused . . . of Victorianism, and I would have to go into the particular examples. To do that you would laugh very much, but I must suppress that. Now Mills, of course—you showed me that article.[iii] Well, this is clear. You have today the tendency in certain circles, some of whom call themselves liberals [while] others call themselves conservatives (you know, these lines are not so simple to draw), and what is characteristic of both is [that] everything is just fine. We don't need any recourse to principles, because our American method of trial and error and so on has led to much better results than any intellectual efforts ever did. I read once in a fashionable journal a review of such a book which was entitled—which has the subtitle, "Thought: Down With Thought." In other words, that's just a dig, and they have clarified it, and that will more or less settle all questions. And then of course everyone who is concerned with principles, as I suppose Mr. Mills was, to that extent I would agree with him, of course.

Now what is your error? You were right when you said that generally speaking the order in book 4, second half of book 4, is one of descent because no virtue as highly praised as magnanimity ever occurred again, and the last one is not even a virtue, sense of shame. But this is no criticism of what you said, but just to make it quite clear: the structure of books 3 to 4, I mean, where he begins with the particular virtues in the middle of book 3, [is] ascent followed by a descent. And there is, by the way, a proof of which I never thought before. When he speaks of the sense of shame he contrasts the shaming man who blushes with the fearing man who gets pain, and courage has to do with this [matter of] cold feet. But one must add one thing: then there begins something here which is in a way higher: justice. Sure. This you know, but I only didn't wish to make—.

[i] Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.
[ii] The transcriber notes that Strauss "gives the original and then translates."
[iii] Possibly Edwin Mills (1928–2021), American economist.

Now to come to your specific point, what you told us about Fromm.[iv] Fromm agrees in a broad way with Aristotle. So there is a human nature, and therefore there is also a point toward the perfection or the goodness of human nature. To that extent, of course, there must indeed be agreement. But what has he got that Aristotle ain't got? What was your point there?

Student: I made the point that—

LS: Because of the psychology.

Same Student: because of the psychology one comes up with certain other dimensions of why people behave the way they do, and then the consequences of that would be different than simply to make a moral discourse about the goodness or badness of . . .

LS: Yes, but Aristotle's *Ethics* is in the first place not meant to be condemnatory.

Same Student: No, I say it may.

LS: This is accidental, that for example you have greater indulgence for cowards than, say, for people who eat and drink too much. You know, that's one example. That is not the point. But what is the precise difficulty? Do we know more about the vices, to use the simple Aristotelian term, by virtue of this kind of psychology than we did before?

Same Student: I would argue that we know more about why they occur than we did before, and that may make a difference. In other words, we don't know more about what is good and what is bad, but we do have a better understanding of why someone is good and someone is bad.

LS: All right. That is a reasonable statement. In other words, we know more about the conditions favorable to vice, and therefore indirectly of course also about the conditions favorable to virtue. Yes? Good. Perhaps that is so, but what is the difference? I mean, what is the key difference between Aristotle and these people? If you put the emphasis on the conditions, you imply men can be made good by right conditioning and the people who are bad have become bad by virtue of wrong conditioning. Now for Aristotle, however, the most important characteristic is—while he's not blind to that, you know, Aristotle's not blind to the conditions—but for him, Aristotle, the decisive thing in upbringing is hearing, what you are told. You can also call it exhortation and dehortation. This was where the whole thing started in the seventeenth century, when men like Hobbes came and said this teaching of the moralists like Aristotle and Cicero is of no use. They exhort and dehort. People don't become good by exhortation and dehortation. Those are mere words. What you have to do is something of sterner stuff than mere speeches, and this could be a good police force, which was Hobbes's major increment of virtue. And you could also eventually arrive at the psychoanalyst's couch, but the

[iv] Evidently Erich Fromm (1900–1980), German-Jewish psychologist and member of the Frankfurt School.

principle is the same. The principle is the same: the distrust in exhortation and dehortation, the distrust in *logos*—because, you know, *logos* means every speech, not only the demonstrative speech, but also the exhortive and dehortive speeches.

Same Student: I don't think I'd draw that conclusion . . . He does talk about character as resulting from this sort of thing, this canalization of energy—

LS: But habituation as Aristotle means it is not exactly the same as canalization of energy. Canalization of energy can also take place in inanimate things, like electricity or what have you. Habituation is here meant to be something which can be done to some extent with the higher animals (you can make a dog housebroken) but which in a fuller and a more emphatic sense is specifically human. Now furthermore I would like to state the points which one would have—I don't say that you are wrong, but which would have to be established before I would accept your thesis. The second point is this. A psychology you need; Aristotle has said it very clearly in book 1. But the question is what kind of psychology. Now Aristotle's first assertion is [that] a crude psychology will do for this purpose. You remember? A crude psychology; you don't need a refined psychology as he gave it to some extent in his book *On the Soul*. You don't have to know these subtleties about memory and about the difference between seeing and hearing. This is unimportant for the purpose of educating oneself for citizenship or for humanity and anything else. But the second point is this: you used the terms sadism and masochism. It's very interesting. I mean, in other words, certain kinds of bestiality, to put it very simply, are called by these terms, i.e., one believes that certain sexual perversions are the key to these particular kinds of inhuman conduct. More generally stated, and I think that is of course connected with Freud as a whole, that the whole life of man has to be understood ultimately in terms of sex.

Same Student: Fromm takes strong exception to Freud; in fact, he has a reputation for that.

LS: Yes, but I mean this point has nothing to do with Fromm. You read in the daily papers and in journals of very conservative men who are opposed to Freud[v] in all its senses. [But] they still use these terms sadism and masochism, therewith tacitly accepting the whole view. Now that sex is very important is a statement which one can safely make, but that it should be the key to everything is of course an entirely different assertion. I mean, in other words, the river can never rise higher than the source. If the premises from which the psychologists start are too narrow, then however demonstrated all the detailed results may be by research projects and questionnaires and so, the narrowness will still show in the results. I mean, that is, I think, what in a different way is of course also true of Marx, the narrowness of the premise. You cannot later get in. Freud says much more; so does Marx. But the question is whether he can get it in legitimately by having started this way. This is the question with Marx which is fundamental, the same as with Freud, only the emphasis is on the needs and production for the sake of needs, and not on sex. What is the situation? At a certain moment man appears, and this creature, as distinguished from all other ones, must produce in order to live. Producing is a form of

[v] I.e., to Freud's teaching.

cooperation also. And out of the modes of production imposed on them by their environments, say, fishermen or whatever it may be, or hunters, this leads then to the rest of their life. Their laws, their beliefs, all have to be understood in terms of the mode of production. But why? That's a mere dogmatic assertion. Why should these first men who were somehow distinguished from non-men by some *x*, and this *x* shows itself in a peculiar kind of foresight connected with production, leading to production—why should they not all[1], however stupid and untrained they may be, have had some thoughts about this [world] in which they live. They wouldn't call it "world," surely. I don't know how they would call it, but somehow they also thought about matters other than production. Why should these thoughts be secondary compared with the modes of production? Marx never proved this assumption. But his proof, he believed, is that he alone can give an account of history, but which meant in practice of what has happened in Europe in the modern centuries. That was the point. This is not a good enough proof.

There is another point which you mentioned which I found very interesting: insecurity, terms of insecurity. This implies a healthy normal human being is secure. What does this mean? The whole problem is involved in this context. You can't talk of insecurity without having already settled what security means. What does it mean? A negative thing I can say: it does not mean strength of soul. I believe security (that would be my first guess)[2] is a substitute for strength of soul, and I think you only have to say that to see that there is something not quite clear. What does security mean? It is very interesting: the accusation made against the nineteenth century by some leading critics of the nineteenth century and, *a fortiori*, of the twentieth century, is the security, the overriding concern with security. Well, of course, first of all, [with] external security; I mean, we don't have that [concern about] security. You know, think of Orlando Wilson.[vi] But still, we are very anxious for security. But then there is economic security and all the guarantees. The very notion of insurance: you know, insurances are a very recent invention, two hundred years old. Insurance, to make us sure, where former people lived all throughout their lives in insecurity, more or less. But they had their certainties, but they were of a different kind. So here in this question of insecurity I believe there is buried a very great problem and the ultimate reason, if I'm not[3] [mistaken], is this: the older people probably thought that the situation of man as man is essentially insecure. I mean, there can be islands of security, but fundamentally the situation of man is insecure; whereas I would not be surprised if the ultimate premise of these modern people is [that] the situation of man *ought* to be secure and we have *the* tool: conquest of nature. These forces making for insecurity can be controlled.

So in other words, to repeat, I'm perfectly willing to accept everything you have said as soon as these questions are answered, but to be frank, straightforward, I believe that most of these people who write about these matters today do not think about these implications. The words we use all the time: all these words are really loaded. I mean, the intellectuals—I have mentioned this before: the image, the image of America which plays such a great role now. And it occurred to me that when you should look at the TV you would see that a major element of the commercials have to do with cosmetics, i.e., with

[vi] O. W. Wilson (1900-1972), Chicago police superintendant from 1960 to 1967; he was also author of several books on policing.

the image a man and a woman wish to present to the world. You know, that[4] he is hairless, that he is hairy and so on and so on. And is this kind of image of America not a kind of political cosmetics, if I may say so? And just as cosmetics was described by Plato in the *Gorgias* very nicely as a sham art, because the right way for looking well and healthy is[5] [not to use cosmetics] but only to have a healthy[6] [appearance]. And what about this health? So what I'm driving at is only this. I may be wrong in my political judgment; I don't care for that. But all these words which we use and which we take for granted as if we understood them as well as we understand when I say "table": the latter is no question,[7] we all understand each other and if there is the slightest misunderstanding it can be explained immediately, but the concepts, as they say,[8] [are where] the problems are buried. And by accepting these terms we accept the whole world which goes with them. We are of course more immediately intelligible because these are the terms generally used. Insecurity, we have it all the time. He or she is insecure, which can be an absolutely good and nice character trait too. Sure, I mean, I mean if you compare a rash—

Same Student: [To the effect that insecurity in the psychoanalytic sense is incompatible with the maximum unfolding of the potentialities of man.][vii]

LS: Yes, that is true. Someone is too much ashamed: he will not learn. That is quite true. But on the other hand, if he doesn't have a certain docility and deference, he will also not learn. So, I mean, it is too general. And strength of soul sounds to me clearer and less ambiguous than security. Good. But I liked your paper, and it was very good that you read a paper. Yes, Mr Reinken?

Mr. Reinken: May I go back to a point where you mentioned that with Hobbes there was a break from *logos* to the police force and you extended this to the modern psychiatrist. I would like to defend the notion that this couch is an instrument of *logos* and even more so than the habituation. You have the neurotic . . . He drinks, and he knows he really drinks too much. He knows he ought not to do it, so he goes and sees somebody several times a week. They talk and they talk and they talk. And they build up a reasoned discourse about the Oedipus complex and he comes to understand it, and with luck after two years he stops drinking. Now this surely may be the use of *logos*—

LS: The best psychologist I know—I know nothing of that, but I know a first-rate psychologist. His name is Irving Strauss. Some of his books I read in English. I mean, he is absolutely distrustful of the theoretical basis of psychoanalysis. But I asked him: what about the therapeutic results? And he said it all depends on what you understand by a result. And I understood this for my own purposes as follows. One of my former students gave a course in the College here, and he had a student who had one of these things, you know, personality problems, and he couldn't work and was very miserable. And then he went, naturally, to the psychiatrist. And two or three years later my friend met him again, and this young man was perfectly happy, was working downtown and drew a regular salary, probably was married and so on. But then my young friend said to me: Was he not better off when he was miserable than when he is so completely adjusted now? All his

[vii] As noted by the transcriber.

"ambitions," good or bad, which made him miserable had gone. So you see, then you have to open it a bit. Surely it is not good to be an alcoholic, by all means. It's very bad, there is no question about that. And if they can do that, perhaps it's all right. But I would say generally speaking, when the responsibility of a man is greatly impaired, very greatly impaired, then it is of course a matter for people other than exhorters.

Mr. Reinken: I got the sort of answer I wanted to hear. It is closer to the weaknesses—

LS: Yes. And in addition, of course the *logos* which comes out on the couch, on the psychiatrist's couch, is of course already loaded in the direction of the Oedipus complex. You know what I mean? Yes. So therefore, that is not a proof that this man suffered from this Oedipal desire. Yes. Good. Yes?

Student: I wanted to ask about two things. Just in passing, about this instance you mentioned: Wouldn't one have to ask this young man's psychiatrist if this was a good choice of life or a satisfactory result? Perhaps the alternative to this complacency was too disastrous to contemplate. Perhaps this was as far as this young man could go.

LS: Could be. Well, I do not know the case. I couldn't say.

Same Student: I wanted to mention about what you said about sadism. There it might be very interesting to consider briefly what—something about the Marquis de Sade himself. The great point there (one must read that detestable man) is that there is nothing natural. And when you use the expression "denaturing nature" you might think of the Marquis de Sade because there is no—perhaps that which is sexual is indeed not fundamental, but it is in some way underlying—

LS: Yes, well I have never read him. I know there was a big fight for him in France after the Second World War and that brought out his books and all this kind of thing. But I don't know; I don't go into the prehistory. It's now customary to call certain aberrations sadism. Whether they fully agree with those from which that Marquis de Sade suffered or not is—

Same Student: By "sadism" fundamentally they mean or can be said to mean that which is really against nature in the most violent way, in the most perverse way, in the most vicious way, overturning any standard whatsoever, even the minimal standard.

LS: Yes, well, Aristotle does not go into these refinements of psychology (I mean, this kind of question) because he doesn't believe they are politically relevant. I know that Lasswell once had a hope that no one would be elected to Congress or even to the presidency unless he had a clean bill of health from a psychoanalyst. But this would be of course highly unrealistic. And the very simple thing: if this were to be made [a requirement] you can be sure that very subtle methods of bribing psychoanalysts would be deduced, given the enormous—so that is not practical.

Student: That is one of the points that I've heard argued, that it may have political relevance. I gave the change in the definition of insanity. That of course is going to have to be resolved as a question of law, and law is a political thing.

LS: Yes, yes, sure. Yes, but even here, I mean, one would have to go into the question whether the law is necessarily—well, the sharpest case against law from such a psychological point of view, we can say, [is] that law embodies to some extent the desire of revenge for the injured party. That is the point. One cannot settle the issue without raising the question [of] whether some desire for this satisfaction, although not on the highest level, has not to be considered in order to have a minimum satisfaction of the people as a whole.

Same Student: [. . .]

LS: Even that. Even that would have to be discussed and not swept under the rug. This is the only thing which we must always oppose: sweeping things under the rug. But this must be the last question.

Student: When you spoke of security—I would like to raise one objection, perhaps a trivial one. Commercial insurance wasn't known before the nineteenth century, but life insurance—

LS: Was older.

Same Student: and burial insurance—doesn't this have to be considered?

LS: Yes, yes, sure. Eighteenth century.

Same Student: Well, commercial insurance surely goes back to the seventeenth century.

LS: Which kind of commercial?

Same Student: The so-called sea insurance—

LS: Sea insurance. Yes, well, I'm sure if you trace it a bit, you will probably find also other kinds of insurances which creditors and debtors—

Same Student: Well, I realize that you weren't going this far, but when one speaks of this desire for security which is particularly manifest in life insurance, burial insurance, doesn't this have to do with the fragmentation, alienation—

LS: Yes, but still, it is not uninteresting that perhaps the greatest man who was involved in the mathematical problems of insuring and therewith also with insurance was Leibniz,

one of the leaders of European rationalism.[viii] That's not uninteresting. I mean, there is some connection. Well, I only wanted to mention this[9] to make clear that security is not such a simple term. When Plato, Aristotle, or Thucydides speak of *asphaleia*, which you can translate [as] "security," they mean of course not this kind of thing. They mean that, say, the Athenian empire is secure, and so[10] they can make an expedition to Sicily without fearing the conquest of the city of Athens by the Spartans. This kind of thing. And [the] walls of a city: I mean, men were always concerned with their security. And they wore shoes for the security of their feet, surely, but there is obviously something different by what is meant now by security.

Now first I have here some questions. Mr. Butterworth: To what extent does Aristotle's admission in book 1 that this inquiry does not admit of scientific precision lend support to the positivist's statement that values cannot be deduced from facts? None at all, I would say. After all, as has been said often enough, there are quite a few parts of social science which don't permit [of] exactness. Meteorology is the most common example [in natural science]. The uncertainty or the inexactness of morality has nothing to do with the fact-value distinction at all. That arises from entirely different considerations, as is proven by the very simple thing: the men who were the opposite numbers in classical antiquity of our relativism and [who] said all noble and just things are merely posited by societies but the good things are not. I mean, that health is good or having good children is good, this is not a thing posited. It has nothing to do with that. Mr. Burnam?

Mr. Burnam: Does this mean that Aristotle would say that lack of scientific precision in ethics doesn't imply that there is no genuine knowledge?

LS: Yes, you can also—yes, sure. I mean, in other words, that to be brave is good and to be a coward is bad is not affected by it. That's what you mean. Yes. In other words, you cannot make as good a case for cowardice as for bravery, whereas the consistent relativist would say you can do that.

Now this is Brother Chrysostom; he would like to rectify any damage he may have caused. "The two great churchmen of the twelfth century, St. Bernard of [Clairvaux and] Abbot Suger of [Saint-Denis]: both were distinguished in their fear of God,[11] life and statesmanship, but one difference was that Bernard was a fanatic puritan in matters of art, while Suger, despite the severe criticism of Bernard, built a church which became the Gothic landmark in beauty and grandeur."[ix] Yes, but here you compare—I mean, if I retranslate it in Aristotelian terms—a man lacking munificence [compared] with a man who was munificent: naturally, the man possessing it would be higher. But on the other hand, the question is not here munificence, but the question is here the importance of art in the building of churches. You cannot say that Suger was not munificent because he held this view. For example, someone might say we should have buildings here on the

[viii] On Leibniz and insurance, see, e.g., J.-Matthias Graf von der Schulenburg and Christian Thomann, "Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz's Work on Insurance," in *The Appeal of Insurance*, ed. Geoffrey Clark, et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010).
[ix] The Basilica of St. Denis, near Paris.

campus which look more like barracks than like the Center for Continuing Education.[x] This does not necessarily mean that this man opposes munificence because, come to think of it, this might be as expensive as the other.

Student: It might be better looking.

LS: Well, I can't say. It's still too young, the Center of Continuing Education, to say anything like that. "The rest being equal, Suger's munificence is that much more meritorious in the sight of God because it was votive, and in a way which pertained to human excellence. Munificence was within their means because Bernard and Suger represented . . . " Yes. No, there is no question whether—I mean, I think I really misunderstand you. A munificent deed as a virtuous deed is surely more meritorious than not doing it, but if a man is prevented by poverty from being munificent, that cannot be held against him.

Different Student: No.

LS: Sure. That's all that I said. Whereas Aristotle says, in effect: the poor man, by being deprived of the possibility of being munificent, is morally his inferior. That's the hypothesis. Now let us turn to our text. We have a lot of things to do. Let us see, we begin roughly where we left off. We don't read it.

We were involved in the discussion of magnanimity. Now what Aristotle does here—and this is a particular difficulty of this section more than of any other section—[is] that Aristotle moves back and forth between two concepts of magnanimity without stating [them], and one is what we can call the vulgar notion of the magnanimous man. The vulgar notion: think of Alcibiades as a great example. And then the sophisticated notion, which is[12] [Aristotle's] notion. Now according to the vulgar notion, the magnanimous man does not have to be a man of perfect virtue. No one ever said that [of] Alcibiades. Not even Alcibiades himself said that he was a man of perfect virtue. But a man who is very—well, from a noble family, very handsome, very effected, very brave, and very clever, he could manage the affairs of the city better than anybody else. Yes. This man would have been regarded as magnanimous. He believes he is worthy of the greatest honors and deserves them, because the key qualities—courage or energy on the one hand, and political judgment [on the other]—he possesses to a high degree. But that [is different from] his private life:[13] he is not virtuous there, has all kinds of debts, to say nothing of other things. Yes. And other things, for example, this story: when he fled to Sparta—that is quite an example—when he fled to Sparta, having betrayed Athens, but under considerable provocation, we must say, then he had a love affair with the Queen of Sparta and only because there was a fire in the palace was it discovered, Alcibiades appearing, so to speak, in his pajamas. Good. But the point was this—this is of course not in Thucydides, who would not write such things, but in a later writer—that Alcibiades had these illicit relations not out of sexual desire but because he wanted[14] his offspring [to be] the kings in Sparta.[xi] You see that even in this crime a certain magnanimity shows

[x] Located at 1307 East 60th Street; designed by Edward Durell Stone (1902–1978) in 1962.
[xi] Plutarch, *Lives*, "Alcibiades," chapter 23.

itself. [Laughter] A grand object: I mean, not [the] satisfaction of desire but, you know, the founder as it were of a royal line. Good. So Aristotle indicates here, and that is very characteristic, in 1124b2 that the vulgarly magnanimous man imitates the truly magnanimous. Now this is meant in a Platonic sense of the term. Alcibiades didn't think to imitate the truly magnanimous man who is also truly virtuous. But without knowing it, without wishing it, he was a copy, and from the strict sense a poor copy of the truly magnanimous man. Every defective thing is an imitation of something good. That's a Platonic thought which Aristotle here surely adopts.

Now as for the question of the ends, which we have taken up time and again, where does the usefulness of magnanimity appear? I mean, it is quite good to look around in one's own age, you know, [at] people one sees or reads about. Montgomery of El Alamein[xii] is, in a way, an example. He regards himself as worthy of great honors (he leaves no doubt about that) and in a way he deserves great honors. After all, he was the victor at El Alamein—the famous story. Now some writers said about him [that] he walked around as a man who was born to command by a more than human dispensation. Yes, you see, but look at it from the point of view of the *polis*. The city needs men born to command—I mean, otherwise it couldn't be governed—and these people born to command are almost inevitably aware of that and this awareness will show itself, of course. This is, I mean, the utilitarian basis, so to speak, of magnanimity as Aristotle understands it. And Aristotle develops then the further characteristics of the magnanimous man. He is high minded. He will look down even on mere life, and therefore he will not cling to life. He will sacrifice it when it is proper.

Student: [Refers to Churchill's remark that democracies are notoriously ungrateful on being defeated in an election and suggests that this also applies to its heroes.][xiii]

LS: Yes, but Winston Churchill didn't say this merely as a criticism. No, he did not mean—well, the feeling of oppression by such an outstanding man: he had enough. Let's have some other people. Let us have some less exacting figures, like Atlee and so. And Churchill of course was not sound enough in the view of the Labour Party regarding social security, the welfare state. That was another reason. And Churchill would, of course,[15] never have gotten this position except for the extreme peril which England was in. He[16] [would have been] out of the running otherwise since the twenties, and he had changed parties twice. Good.

Now[17] [the magnanimous man] faces dangers, but only dangers which are worth facing, great dangers. Thomas in his commentary says, "for example, for the common good, for justice, for divine worship and other things described."[xiv] Now it's interesting again that Aristotle does not define what great dangers are. Thomas spells this out. Good. Now let us turn to 1124b9. This we must read.

[xii] Bernard Law Montgomery (1887–1976), British field marshal who led British and commonwealth forces to victory over the Germans and Italians at El Alamein in Egypt in 1942.
[xiii] As noted by the transcriber.
[xiv] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, §760.

Mr. Reinken:
He is fond of conferring benefits, but ashamed to receive them, because the former is a mark of superiority and the latter of inferiority. (1124b9-10)

LS: You see. I mean, that has also to do with the vulgar phenomenon, in the first place. He doesn't want to be dependent on anyone else, but he enjoys the others inferior to him. I mean, that is a somewhat ambiguous statement but it nevertheless, in a different way, in a more subtle and sophisticated way, will also show in the truly magnanimous. But first let us listen to what Aristotle has to say. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
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. (1124b11-13)

LS: You see, so he wipes out the unpleasant situation that he has been benefited. Yes?

Student: Did we not study an example in such a man as Cyrus?

LS: Yes. Very good. But what's the difference between Cyrus and the magnanimous man?

Same Student: Well, Cyrus evidently was not doing it for the best of reasons.

LS: Ah ha. The calculations: these people who get these gifts will love him in this ambiguous way of loving and that makes him a popular ruler. Yes?

Different Student: Cyrus gets more than he gives.

LS: In addition. Yes, yes, sure. We have seen that when we read the *Education of Cyrus*.[xv] This human kindness is an excellent image which he projects on persons. Mr. Mueller?

Mr. Mueller: Is this still the vulgar view of magnanimity? Because this is the only thing in the description of the magnanimous man that really seems to bother me. There seems to be in a way a kind of pettiness.

LS: Yes, yes.

Mr. Mueller: President Kennedy is continually being given presents by well-wishers—

LS: No, but that may well be due to the office. That's an entirely different matter.

Mr. Mueller: But there does seem to be a kind of pettiness in this not-wanting to be beholden to anybody.

[xv] Strauss taught a course on Xenophon in the winter quarter of 1963. Audio recordings and the transcript of the course are available on the Leo Strauss Center website.

LS: Yes, sure. No, I see your point. This is what I say: that some interpreters—Burnet felt that this whole thing was shot through with irony.[xvi] I can understand that, but it is not precise enough. It is more precise to say Aristotle always starts from the facts as everyone knows them. I mean, even the nonsophisticated people: what they regard as a high-minded, proud man. And then he says: Yes, but that doesn't possess all virtue, and this affects everything. And Aristotle doesn't spell out in each case how it would look, but he would still say in a refined way this will also show on the highest level. Perhaps we find some examples. Let us first continue to read. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
The magnanimous[xvii] are thought to have a good memory for any benefit they have conferred—

LS: You see also, "they are thought." This is the common view.

Mr. Reinken:
but a bad memory for those which they have received (since the recipient of the benefit is the inferior of his benefactor, whereas they desire to be superior); and to enjoy being reminded of the former but to dislike being reminded of the latter—

LS: Does this need any comment, that it is pleasant to be reminded that one has been a benefactor and it is very unpleasant to be reminded that one has been the recipient of benefactions, commonly, crudely speaking? Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
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.

It is also characteristic of the magnanimous[xviii] 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 towards 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 a 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 honor or achievement; and will not engage in many undertakings, but only in such as are important and distinguished. (1124b13-26)

LS: Yes, "which are great and spoken about." Spoken about, we can say. This is a remarkable piece. You see here also that Zeus is of course a magnanimous being. Thetis

[xvi] See John Burnet, *The Ethics of Aristotle* (London: Methuen, 1990), 179.
[xvii] In Rackham's translation: "The great-souled."
[xviii] In Rackham's translation: "the great-souled man."

treats him as one has to treat a magnanimous being. So in other words, the similarity between the magnanimous and the gods, of which I spoke last time, shines through here too. Yes, one could not say better what pride is as Aristotle does[18] in all these points. True pride, I mean, not low-class. And I think this phenomenon we all know: the fellow who is extremely devout to his superiors and extremely nasty to his inferiors. The Germans call them the cyclists because they use their feet, down, and bow their head lower. It is still used, Mr. [. .], *Radfahrer*?

Student: Not too much.

LS: I see. But you get the idea. Good. Yes, this remark, he will not go in where others occupy already the first rank: Caesar said that. "Better first in a village in the Alps than the second in Rome."[xix] Now naturally he will also be frank because of his sense of security, as Mr. Boyan would say. Because of his certainty of superiority, he doesn't have to conceal it. He will show his likes and dislikes frankly because of his position. But on the other hand (which is mentioned in passing), he will be ironical when he speaks to the many, but this is due to his magnanimity because "ironical" means to dissemble one's superiority. That's the primary meaning. And of course he will not spread it thick when talking to the many, but there he will simply say, as Pericles does, just an Athenian citizen who happens to be more competent than most others. Yes. Good. 1125a5, "He will not talk about human beings; he will not engage in gossip."

Mr. Reinken:
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. (1125a5-8)

LS: Yes, well, "except for the sake of *hybris*," whatever that means. Yes, *hybris*: hurling defiance. That he does. Well, Achilles in the first book of the *Iliad* saying to his Lord, Agamemnon—how does he say? "You have the eyes of a dog and the heart of a deer"—no, "heavy of wine, having the eyes of a dog and the heart of a deer," which I believe is the most perfect insult against a warrior which can be invented.[xx] It's really perfect. You see, the deer of course runs away, and this the warrior should never do [that] under any circumstances. The heart of a deer is very bad but on the other hand a deer is a nice-looking creature, and therefore to compensate for that he says, "the look, the eyes, of a dog," because the dog on the other hand is a courageous animal. So he has to combine these two animals. That is the art of simile making: to put together [a unity] from various things and then you get his characteristics [from both]. I remember from our time a famous example when Churchill once in a speech, I think in the House of Commons, called Hitler a "guttersnipe."[xxi] I believe that Churchill never has called a man in ordinary life a guttersnipe, you know, although he may have deserved the epithet, but [he did] in

[xix] Plutarch, *Lives*, "Caesar," chapter 11.
[xx] Homer, *Iliad* 1.225.
[xxi] In a radio broadcast on 22 June 1941.

this case in a speech when the whole Europe lay at the feet of Hitler. That is what he means through *hybris*. Good. Now let us read a16.

Mr. Reinken:
Such then being the magnanimous man,[xxii] 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 deprives himself of the good things 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], for (people argue), if he deserved any good, he would try to obtain it.[xxiii] 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.

LS: In other words, the defect of what now would be called modesty: that a man does not achieve his highest by a misplaced modesty is what Aristotle calls small-souledness. Here we see the end is self-perfection, and the small-souled man does not reach the perfection of which he is capable because of this lack. The outstanding man knows that he is outstanding. If he should not know it he lacks somehow in intelligence. That is what Aristotle means. And now let us read only the last three lines of this chapter.

Mr. Reinken:
Smallness of Soul is more opposed than Vanity to Greatness of Soul, being both more prevalent and worse. (1125a16-34)

LS: Yes. Now is this not strange? Would we not say that the man who underestimates his worth is better than the man who overestimates his worth? Is this not paradoxical? How would you explain it?

Mr. Reinken: The vain man has an excellent chance of being corrected by experience.

LS: Yes, or as Aristotle said before, that the small-souledness, pusillanimity, makes men worse than they could be. The other doesn't make them worse. It may not make them better. That is one thing, and the other thing—

Student: Social science talks about self-fulfilling and [self]-denying prophecies.

LS: Yes, I know, but what has this to do with—

Same Student: Like the small-souled man, by considering himself inferior, really may fail to fulfill his potentialities.

[xxii] In Rackham's translation: "Such then being the Great-Souled man."
[xxiii] Punctuation in this sentence follows Rackham's edition of the text.

LS: Yes, yes. That's what Aristotle means. He doesn't give himself a chance. The vain man will make himself ridiculous when he tries for [. . .] but at least he doesn't miss a chance of doing something greater if by some circumstances he might be able to do it. The other point we must also consider: the greater vice is the more common vice. Here I quote again Thomas: "that which happened because of a greater inclination of human nature."[xxiv] In other words, more men are small-souled than vain, but it is manifest that it happens more frequently that some are pusillanimous, namely, [those] who omit to do good things which they could [do], than [that men are vain] by overreaching themselves to do good things which they cannot do. It is fundamentally the same consideration. Yes, Mr. Kirwan?

Mr. Kirwan: It would seem to me that the small-souled man—I think of the Western hero: he's a taciturn man; he's very quiet. He never brags about how well he can shoot and fight and do the things that he does, and yet everyone knows how good he is and he doesn't have to say anything. If he says something he may tarnish the image.

LS: Yes, I know. These men have a particular charm. I remember one example which has to do not with the man himself, but with something belonging to him, in Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. There is a very poor relative. And there is a big hunting party, and by far the best dog is that poor uncle's dog. And of course the dog is also not conspicuous by beauty or breeding and so, but he just does the work. And then the embarrassed pride which he has when his dog proves to be the best and all admire him is very charmingly and touchingly told.[xxv] Of course I see the point which you make, but Aristotle takes a broader view and says: Would this man, if he had greater confidence and spoke up on some occasion—after all, why does he not speak up? Is this not due to the fact that he is unduly impressed by the others? And this is lack of judgment. We must also see this now. We generally prefer the most unassuming people to the more assuming.

Student: This may be tied in with the lack of confidence, which is tied in with cowardice.

LS: Yes, or also lack of judgment. In other words, self-consciousness, as we call it characteristically, which is self-consciousness in the negative sense. After all, self-consciousness could also mean consciousness of one's worth. Somehow we prefer self-conscious people in the present use of the term.

Student: You keep your mouth shut.

LS: Yes, [and] not only that. We think also it is good mannered, and the famous British understatements, I think, are connected with that.

Student: Is this partly a religious influence?

[xxiv] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, §790.
[xxv] Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, book 7.

LS: Yes, that has often been said. It is connected with Puritanism. After Max Weber there is nothing which has not been traced to Puritanism. Yes, that has something to do—I believe Weber speaks even about it somewhere in his essay. I forgot it.

Same Student: [. . .]

LS: No, no, I mean, the biblical critique of pride could under certain conditions take this form. I mean, for example, is it not the usage in the House of Commons when the Speaker is elected that he must play a show by his conduct, the sense of his unworthiness and of his unwillingness to become Speaker? Those who have taken courses in comparative government should know. I believe that is so. I think that is even a part of the British Constitution: you know, the sense of [. . .] The Athenians wouldn't have done that.

Student: [Refers to some statesman in Britain who was very influential behind the scenes and says he isn't an example of a small-souled man.][xxvi]

LS: That is very true. I thought of another example which is more famous, perhaps, and that is Richelieu, the gray eminence.[xxvii] *Gray* eminence. And that was not the choice[xxviii] of classical antiquity: the wire puller. But they had in Germany a poor repetition of that, in a man called Holstein around 1900.[xxix] He also was called the gray eminence. No, the traditional imagination was fired by Scipio, the conqueror of Carthage and of Hannibal. This is an interesting thing; it has to do with the fact that people talk today so much about power and not much about glory. Power you can have as a wire puller. You cannot have glory as a wire puller. But of course I didn't mean to say that Richelieu was nothing but a wire puller, but [only] comparatively speaking. And the famous traditional fault of historiography, the praising of the captain over against the inventor of useful machines—that is the great theme of nineteenth-century criticism—has something to do with that. Now power is not as such resplendent, glory is. And a certain kind of sobriety: solid comfort versus ostentation, and this kind of thing. Comfortable self-preservation is one of the most beautiful expressions coined; I believe it was coined by Locke for indicating a very powerful thing. In other words, not being clad in purple but in the best Scotch wool. Wool will be better: lasting and more useful, and so on and so on. That is part of this moral story. I think one can trace that in Hobbes, the substitution of power for glory. You see, the point is also this: power has many other recommendations for a number of reasons, but this is part of our story. I think if you would read all the textbooks in American government, comparative government, whatever it may be, you would find hardly any references to glory, but plenty to power. And this is only the end-product of a long story, if it is the end.

[xxvi] As noted by the transcriber.
[xxvii] Cardinal Armand Jean du Plessis, Duke of Richelieu (1585–1642) became cardinal in 1622 and served as chief minister to King Louis XIII of France.
[xxviii] In the transcript: "choice (?)."
[xxix] Friedrich von Holstein (1837–1909), German civil servant and diplomat.

Now in the immediate sequel Aristotle discusses another virtue regarding honors. He has nothing much to say about it. It is nameless, but it exists, of course. He uses a proportion: liberality to munificence equal to "x" to magnanimity. Liberality has to do with small or medium expenses; munificence with large ones. Magnanimity has to do with large honors. There must be some virtue governing our conduct regarding small and medium honors, and he speaks about that briefly and, of course, the principle is obvious: there must also be a right conduct regarding small honors because you can surely make mistakes about them and both ways, to be [too] much concerned with them and too little concerned with them. Yes?

Mr. Kirwan: This would demonstrate that there was a descent in order, because if he were going to be consistent he would have put this in the order earlier than munificence: put "x" first, but he didn't.

LS: Yes, very good. Very good. Someone said in addition—I forgot who he was—that magnanimity—oh, last time, but did you count in the meantime?

Mr. Boyan: I haven't counted now. I'll count for next time.

Student: It did come up in the middle. Here there are no footnotes.

LS: Where? In which edition?

Same Student: The Ross translation.

LS: Ah ha. But it would roughly correspond to the proportions of the Greek text. Yes. Magnanimity in the center of books 3, second half, to—

Mr. Boyan: No, book 4 by itself.

LS: Oh no. That is good enough. Good. Now let us turn to the next, which is in Greek *praotēs*, and translated how?

Mr. Reinken: Gentleness.

LS: Gentleness, mildness, [*clementia*] in Latin. Yes. Now let us read about that.

Mr. Reinken:
Gentleness is the observance of the mean in relation to anger. There is as a matter of fact no recognized name for the mean in this respect—indeed there can hardly be said to be names for the extremes either—, so we apply the word Gentleness to the mean though really it inclines to the side of the defect.

LS: Meaning what people ordinarily understand by a gentle or mild man is not the right meaning, because he is too mild. That he means by it. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
This has no name, but the excess may be called a sort of Irascibility, for the emotion concerned is anger, though the causes producing it are many and various.

Now we praise a man who feels anger on the right grounds and against the right persons, and also in the right manner and at the right moment and for the right length of time. (1125b27-33)

LS: That is something which he didn't say of the other virtues. Here in the case of anger it is important for how long we have the anger. It is irrational to be angry beyond a certain moment. Yes?

Student: Do you think that the introduction of the consideration of duration shows how much less important this thing is?

LS: No, that it does not.

Same Student: But it's a transitory characteristic.

LS: No, no, no, no. Because it has to do with insults. Anger has to do with insults and with revenging the insult, and therefore the revenge does not necessarily take place immediately. I mean, you must eat every day, but you do not have to take your revenge on the same day. In most cases you can't do it, and therefore the time element is here very important. But since it is important, it is also important in this way: for how long should you feel it? If someone[19] insulted you twenty years ago, should you still be angry with him twenty years later? Good.

Mr. Reinken:
He may then be called gentle-tempered, if we take gentleness to be a praiseworthy quality (for 'gentle' really denotes a calm temper, not led by emotion but only becoming angry in such a manner, for such causes and for such a length of time as principle may ordain; although the quality is thought rather to err on the side of defect, since the gentle-tempered man is not prompt to seek redress for injuries, but rather inclined to forgive them.)

LS: That's the same point. You see, what people ordinarily mean by a gentle man: he is too gentle. He seems to make a mistake. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
The defect, on the other hand, call it a sort of Lack of Spirit or what not, is blamed; since those who do not get angry at things at which it is right to be angry are considered foolish, and so are those who do not get angry in the right manner, at the right time, and with the right people. It is thought that they do not feel or resent an injury, and that if a man is never angry he will not stand up for himself; and it is considered servile to put up with an insult to oneself or to suffer one's friends to be insulted. (1125b33-1126a8)

LS: Yes. You see, here is the end: the concern with one's honor and the well-being at least of those near and dear to one. If one didn't have that concern, one wouldn't have anger. That is a function. Then Aristotle speaks of two kinds of excesses here.[20] The defect is the same, incapable of being angry, but the excess [is twofold]: those who fly off the handle easily and on every slight occasion and cease very soon (you know these, [they] get easily angry, and then it's finished); and then those, the vindictive ones, who do not get angry easily, but when they get angry it lasts for years and years. Good.

Student: In the passage you just read is it significant that he says that "it is *thought* that they do not feel or resent an injury" and that "it is *considered* servile"?

LS: Yes, yes, sure. In all these cases he defers to what is generally thought. One must discuss each by itself.[21] Aristotle may agree with them and he may disagree with them, just as in Thucydides. When Thucydides says of the Spartan king in the first book, "he was thought to be intelligent and moderate,"[xxx] that doesn't mean that Thucydides thought he was intelligent and moderate.[22] You have to read what Thucydides says about his deeds [to find out] whether Thucydides is likely to have called him intelligent and moderate.

Same Student: Is there an indication of what Aristotle's true view is in this particular—

LS: I think we find something in the sequel. Let us read. Yes?

Student: Excuse me, but I'd just like to bring out something that we just discussed. You said smallness of soul is more prominent than vanity. Isn't it the belief of a lot of people, a lot of philosophers too, some philosophers, that most people are vainer and are most likely to overestimate themselves? I just wanted you to comment on this.

LS: Well, I think—yes. I mean, if you isolate them and put them under a very close scrutiny you might find that. But have you been . . . [xxxi] Well, there you could see that the vanity is rare, because there was only one particularly clear instance at times exhibited in public. I mean, it is really rare.[23] When you take a kind of x-ray you may perhaps say most men are vain, but when you use it also in a loose sense, that they want to make a good impression,[24] this may be due to perfectly virtuous motives. After all, it is also an insult to people not to put one's best foot forward, you can say. This is not vanity if someone tries to put his best foot forward. But if you take it in a conspicuous case, then I believe one can say it's rare. People who are filled with a sense of self-importance, I mean, they strike you. Not every human being has that. Not every human being. I mean, they will be very conspicuous; they make themselves conspicuous.

Student: A great deal of the primping, especially the vanities which are sometimes held to make up vanity proceed rather more from small souls. People are so much afraid that

[xxx] Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, book 1, §79.
[xxxi] The transcriber notes that Strauss "inaudibly asks the student a question and gets an affirmative reply."

their best friend wouldn't tell them [they have bad breath] that they devote countless hours to Listerine.

LS: Yes, but still they have small souls.

Same Student: They have small souls. They are not vain; quite the opposite.

LS: Yes, yes. No, I think that is defensible. Let us turn to a26.

Mr. Reinken:
Bitterness—

LS: Yes, well literally, that would be[25] difficult people, people who are burdened among us. Heavy, literally translated, *chalepoi*. Or which do you translate? [a]26.[xxxii]

Mr. Reinken: Yes, I can't get the word you're saying.

LS: *Chalepoi*: heavy, difficult, burdened.

Mr. Reinken: Heaviness . . .

LS: Yes, but we cannot use this in English. How do you say? In German you can speak of difficult people, but in English you don't do it, I believe. Yes, go on. Well, let us not waste time.

Mr. Reinken:
is the most troublesome form of bad temper both to a man himself and to his nearest friends.

LS: No, these are others. These are the bitter ones. No, next one.

Mr. Reinken:
Those who lose their tempers at the wrong things, and more and longer than they ought, and who refuse to be reconciled without obtaining redress or retaliating, we call Harsh-tempered.

LS: Yes, all right. That is what I tried to—literally, it would be heavy, difficult. Literally, yes. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:
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. (1126a26-32)

[xxxii] The transcriber notes: "As will appear immediately, Dr. Strauss was referring to the sentence following the one that had been begun."

LS: Yes, obviously. Obviously. I mean a man who is a real menace to society. Now Aristotle says here first that the desire for revenge is more human, but almost in the sense in which Nietzsche used his book title, *Human, All Too Human*, what he called in another connection more natural.[xxxiii] So this is more natural but it is less good for living together. So man is not simply and unqualifiedly by nature meant for living together. He has also by nature certain things in himself which make living together difficult. We must see how this is worked out. Thomas makes this remark to this point: that what is so natural is the desire for revenge after one has been hurt, of course.[xxxiv] Otherwise, man is by nature more inclined—by nature inclined—toward gentleness. You know there are beasts who are not gentle under any circumstances, but man is by nature a gentle being. But if hurt, then he can be very nasty, as we all know. Read the immediate sequel.

Mr. Reinken:
But what was said above is also clear from what we are now saying; it is not easy to define in what manner and with whom and on what grounds and how long one ought to be angry, and up to what point one does right in so doing and where error begins. For he who transgresses the limit only a little is not held blameworthy, whether he errs on the side of excess or defect; in fact, we sometimes praise those deficient in anger and call them gentle-tempered, and we sometimes praise those who are harsh-tempered as manly, and fitted to command. (1126a33-b2)

LS: Let us stop here. Here we get, incidentally, an answer [to] why this inclination to anger and toward excessive anger even is compatible with man's natural sociality: because [that] man is by nature social means for Aristotle [that] man is by nature a political animal, a member of political society, a society which consists of rulers and ruled. And it consists of generals and soldiers; it consists of sergeants, drill sergeants, and recruits. And here is where these faculties [which are] difficult for living together fulfill a social function. It is not to speak against a man drilling soldiers if the recruits say it is hard to live with him. Obviously, because that's not his function, that they should live with him: they should be trained by him. Good. So in other words, there is no contradiction between the naturalness of anger and the natural sociality.

Now there are, of course, in all these points many things of great importance, but we still have to cover quite a bit of ground. Then Aristotle turns to three virtues—yes, Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: I didn't follow the connection when you said there is no tension between this natural—tension to harshness and—

LS: Not to harshness; to anger and [the] desire for revenge. The harsh are a small minority of men. That's one thing. Aristotle doesn't go into what makes people harsh. Aristotle apparently took this view: that the human race produces all kinds of people at all times. It's a kind of big zoo. And just as it produces gentle people and nice people,

[xxxiii] Cf. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, §103.
[xxxiv] See St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, §§804–805.

and also over-quiet people, it also produces people who are irascible and some who are even really downright nasty to hell. That is so, and this has always been the case and will be the case. Yes, here I have it. The tacit premise of these people, of your people,[xxxv] is that babies could be made [. . .] and if some people have undesirable characteristics—for example, they are too quiet or too loud, too soft or too harsh—this can only be due to their environment—their environment including now the mother's womb according to more recent researches, but it is still environment. And that is the point.

Student: I think it's not quite accurate, and when you go into this question of anger, particularly—I mean, quickness of the reaction, that would be natural. You know, whether a man would be quick or melancholic, that would be according to nature. The other thing would be according to environment to some extent.

LS: What's the evidence for that? Are there not people who are by nature sour and as it were too rugged for ordinary human relations?

Same Student: No, that would be admitted. There would probably be further observations, though, of this particular gentleman, that society will provide outlets for him. For example, the army serves this function.

LS: Yes, sure, sure. And other places too. There are other places, examiners. What is the dilemma?

Mr. Butterworth: My dilemma isn't solved.

LS: What is the dilemma?

Mr. Butterworth: I don't see how Aristotle answers this tension by saying: Well, this means that one should display his anger then on right occasions—

LS: Is this not sensible?

Mr. Butterworth: It's sensible, but it doesn't answer—

LS: But Mr. Butterworth, you walk the street with your aged grandfather and someone insults him, and the next time you walk there with the heavyweight boxing champion. In which case would your anger be proper and improper? I would say in the case of the aged grandfather, because he cannot defend himself, and you, somehow aware of it, develop in you the mood to defend him. You know this other boy, the heavyweight champion, he can take care of himself. You don't have to invest any emotional energy in that issue. That's a very simple case. There are other cases where the point is—one would have to develop that. But[26] we only go into a case where you were angry last time and consider all the circumstances, or perhaps in a case which you might remember where you were angry wrongly and see why it was wrong to be so angry. Perhaps the thing was not worthwhile. I suppose if someone is trying to cheat you of a cent you have less reason to

[xxxv] The transcriber notes: "i.e., referring again to this meeting's seminar paper."

be angry than if someone cheats you of a thousand dollars. That's another consideration: the triviality of the object plays a great role.

Mr. Butterworth: Is it being too difficult to say that this more or less shows the underlying difficulty as to whether a man is inadequate[xxxvi] for society, the fact that you do need an anger impulse to fight off other people with whom you're supposed to live?

LS: Yes, but you need it, surely, in war, number one, which was always present to Aristotle. But apart from that, there may be civil war. There is crime, and these police systems as we know them did not always exist. It was to some extent a matter also of the citizen's duty. So anger is always needed. It is always needed.

Student: Raising of children.

LS: Yes, well, this famous story of the people who didn't spank the children at all and then finally strangled their brats because they became unbearable. Or this question from piracy[xxxvii] which I heard: What is nobler, to spank a child in anger, or to put down a certain day of the week in advance, say, Saturday afternoon, for the spanking in cold blood? Which is more human? Good.

We come now to these three virtues which we may loosely call the social virtues, which have to do with living together not for the purpose of doing any business, just for the sake of one's enjoyment. And the first virtue which he mentions we can call friendliness. And there are obviously two extremes, the unfriendly man, the nasty man in this sense—I mean, not nasty in the sense of the man who can never forgive insults, but who doesn't wish to please anyone, you know, an ogre. And on the other extreme we have then the super-friendly man, you know, who is unbearable and who may be—you know, he may do that for gain like an advertiser or salesman, or he may do it without any ulterior motives simply because he is such a prodigal fellow that he has to be always super-nice. This, I think, is clear. Let us read only 1126b, 11 to—oh, that's the beginning of the chapter.

Mr. Reinken:
In society and the common life and intercourse of conversation and business, some men are considered to be Obsequious; these are people who complaisantly approve of everything and never raise objections, but think it a duty to avoid giving pain to those with whom they come in contact. Those on the contrary who object to everything and do not care in the least what pain they cause, are called Surly or Quarrelsome. Now it is clear that the dispositions described are blameworthy, and that the middle disposition between them is praiseworthy—that is, the tendency to acquiesce in the right things, and likewise to disapprove of the right things, in the right manner. (1126b11-19)

[xxxvi] In the transcript: "inadequate (?)."
[xxxvii] In the transcript: "piracy (?)."

LS: Now let us stop here. Now why does Aristotle say here so simply as an absolute shock to the value-free social scientist, "it is not immanifest that these two habits are blameworthy and the median habit is praiseworthy"? Why can he say that?

Mr. Reinken: Experience?

LS: Yes, he would ask that man: What do you like? Which kind of people do you like? And [which] do you think is nice, is praiseworthy, and the other is blameworthy? It is so. It hasn't changed. The forms in which this is shown—whether you should always show it to the accompaniment of a smile or whether the smile is rejected as somewhat undignified—that depends on different countries, but a friendly man and an unfriendly man you can easily distinguish, and also of course the super-friendly man. Let us read, just as a specimen of Aristotle's example, in b28.

Mr. Reinken:
We have said then in general terms that he will behave in the right manner in society. We mean that in designing either to give pain or to contribute pleasure he will be guided by considerations of honour and of expediency. For he seems to be concerned with pleasure and pain in social intercourse. He will disapprove of pleasures in which it is dishonourable or harmful to himself for him to join, preferring to give pain; and he will also disapprove of and refuse to acquiesce in a pleasure that brings any considerable discredit or harm to the agent, if his opposition will not cause much pain. And he will comport himself— (1126b28-37)

LS: Yes, and so on. That's clear. Do you see that point? I mean, the super-friendly man who never raises opposition, who always wants to be a good boy like everybody else, regardless of what the others plan or do; and the man who does not do that always [and] says, "No, I don't go along with that." And if it is a nasty practical joke he might say, "No, that I won't do." I mean, I appeal to the experience of every one of you. You know this as well as I do, that these are facts of life, and Aristotle records them, I think, clearly enough. Yes?

Student: Isn't there a contradiction between the way in which the man who has this virtue treats those in high positions and the magnanimous man? In the sense that we would have read if we continued; it says that he gives proper deference to each class. And so it would seem to me he is somewhat deferential to the men of high position in contrast to the magnanimous man.

LS: But the question is—no, there is no contrast, because the questions are so very different. I think Churchill is a beautiful contemporary example of the magnanimous man. Churchill would of course behave with the utmost deference if he would meet socially, say, the president of the United States, or for that matter, the king of Afghanistan, if there is still a king of Afghanistan. That's the point. That doesn't mean that Churchill would for one moment believe that he is inferior in human rank to the king of Afghanistan, but he would surely treat him with a peculiar sign of external respect

which he would not show to a very young man, for example. And that he would treat older people more politely than younger people, these are the kinds of things. There is no difficulty. Here it is not a matter of rank and honor, but it's a matter of friendliness. Now the magnanimous man—

Student: [. . .]

LS: Yes, but in this case where the magnanimous man—what exactly did he say about him that creates your difficulty? I forgot it now.

Same Student: That he is haughty toward the great. He is haughty towards men of position.

LS: I mean, there is something to that. Yes, but the question of honors is not involved here at all. It's in no way involved here at all. Here it's a question of courtesy, and that is not a matter of—you can also put it this way.

Mr. Reinken: He says later, "getting along with other people."

LS: Yes. Yes, sure: courteous. You can almost say what Aristotle calls here[27] friendship, but making it clear [it is] the friendship without affection, what we call friendliness, because friendliness—

Mr. Reinken: Straightforwardness.

LS: No, no, that's something else. Friendliness is friendship without affection. Is it not true? It is not biblical charity; it's something different. It doesn't mean that it is spurious, but it is not with affection, and the reason it is not with affection is shown by the fact that it shows itself to all human beings.

Student: Is affability considered—

LS: That was also used as a translation.

Student: But as I understood it here, when the magnanimous man is described he isn't haughty with respect to honor. Honor is referred to when he mentions that he is haughty toward men of position.

LS: Yes, as I say, here the end is being together without business, and in the case of magnanimity the end is honor. It's an entirely different situation. So can you not see a man who is magnanimous, who acts magnanimously in the senate and who acts courteously in a social gathering? There's no difficulty. I mean, if he would behave with all his sense of the dignity of his rank all the time, he would be an unbearable bore. He can unbend and that is his courtesy. Yes.

Now then he speaks of another of these social virtues, let us first finish that. Social virtue, which he calls—what is that? We can call it straightforwardness. It's not the best translation.

Mr. Reinken: It says here it is without an exact name, but Rackham calls it "sincerity as regards one's merits."[xxxviii]

LS: Yes, but here the question is the kind of straightforwardness and veracity which has nothing to do with any business, because then veracity falls under the heading of justice, of course. If you say the untruth about yourself and your merchandise, you are a dishonest man. But here he is only concerned [about] the opinion which you have about yourself: whether you show yourself as what you are or conceal what you are. Of this concealment there are two kinds. You can show yourself as better than you are, and you can show yourself as worse than you are—I mean, deliberately show yourself, you know, purposely. That's the point. I mean, a man may show himself worse than he is unintentionally; for example, someone may write a paper and he could have written a better one. But a man wishes to show himself inferior to what he truly is. Now how does he translate the excess—who shows himself more than he is?

Mr. Reinken: He says first, "The observance of the mean in relation to Boastfulness."

LS: Boastful. Yes, the boaster. And yes, he makes it very clear. The boaster is not a fellow like an advertiser on a fair who boasts, because this is not a boaster. He simply boosts his merchandise and all boasting is only in the service of gain. But the boaster is a man who enjoys exaggerating, saying the untruth about himself in a too-favorable direction; he enjoys that for its own sake. And the opposite man, whom Aristotle calls the ironical man, is the man who enjoys showing himself as lesser than he is. There are extreme forms of the latter; for example, what we would now call, I believe, snobs, people who walk around, say, in particular clothing in order to show that they are distinguished from the others on the negative side, say, poorer, more backward-looking, as if they had come straight from the nineteenth century. That exists now, and there were similar things of course in Greece too. Mr. Mueller?

Mr. Mueller: This is certainly related to the section where he mentions Socrates having a contempt for qualities that people [upheld], at the end of this chapter. "These also mostly disown qualities held in high esteem, as Socrates used to do." Is this the conclusion of all this business about irony, an ironical attitude.

LS: Yes, sure. Now when Socrates says—for example, some sophists ask him something or assert something, and he says: "Well, you are so much cleverer than I am. I have not yet the foggiest notion about this matter of which you talk." And then it is irony because Socrates knows quite well that he knows as much as, say, Protagoras about it. He makes himself lesser than he is. Now that irony is a gracious vice Aristotle doesn't deny, but, strictly speaking, it is a vice. It may be redeemed, as it were, by very important positive

[xxxviii] This is not in the main text but in the margin of Rackham's translation on page 239. It is in reference to 1127a13.

functions which it fulfills, but in itself it is a vice. A man should show himself as what he is.

Mr. Mueller: Well, when he says, "I know much less about this than you do," that may be a manifestation of a gracious vice, but when Aristotle says that he is—among the other qualities which Socrates disowns that are commonly held in high esteem, this quality is—knowing about what's good and bad, I guess, with Socrates.

LS: Oh, that is a long story. For example, Socrates was not particularly proud of being an Athenian citizen from [both] the father's and [the] mother's side, which was highly esteemed. No, generally things which he lacked, say, money: Socrates was poor, and wealth is generally respected, and he says, "Well, I don't respect it." And this is also slightly discourteous, because most people think wealth is not so despicable. And this kind of thing. Yes, but Aristotle doesn't go into the subtleties of Socratic irony at all. He leaves it at this nice gentleman's view. A gentleman wouldn't do that, what Socrates does, but he would probably not even go to where Protagoras is in the first place. Higher considerations led Socrates to go to such infamous places; that's another matter. But still, these are then higher considerations going much beyond the level on which we are here. But generally speaking: for example, young Hippocrates at the beginning of the *Protagoras*, a future gentleman, a really nice boy who is full of enthusiasm for culture, [has] heard that Protagoras has arrived in Athens, and of course he must be introduced. And the only man he knows who might introduce him is Socrates, so he wakes Socrates in the very early morning. And he was really a gentleman because he came back in a hurry from chasing a fugitive slave, which is also part of the gentleman. That's the other side of the matter. Socrates didn't chase fugitive slaves, and not only for the reason that he didn't have any, but I think even if he had some he wouldn't have done it. So then Socrates tells him, "Why do you want to go there? Do you want to exercise Protagoras's profession, i.e., to teach for money"—something utterly unbecoming a gentleman? And then Hippocrates of course is shocked and says, "Of course not. I want to learn something so that I can play a leading role in Athens." That's the point. Here you have it. I mean, well, later, [look at] Hippocrates at forty years old or fifty years old and[28] [doing] somewhat better than he probably was, then you have the difference between Socrates and a gentleman. But what do I talk [of]? We read last quarter the *Oeconomicus*, Socrates and Ischomachus. Ischomachus of course would never be ironical. If someone would ask him about anything, he would say straightforwardly: "This I know, and this I do not know." He would not do what Socrates does: that he says "I do not know" in cases where he knows very well, or where at least he knows quite well that the other man does not know but only claims to know. Irony is not a gentleman's virtue, which does not mean that it doesn't have high functions, but the gentleman is not the top for—of course not for Aristotle too.

Now let us see. In 1128b3 to 4—we cannot read it—what the basis of this virtue is. Relaxation and play seem to be necessary in life. "Seems," "is thought to be"; but we know also from other places that Aristotle thought that this thought was a sound thought. We do need that. Yes, but if we need relaxation, if we need gatherings for no purpose other than to speak and to communicate, then there must be a virtue controlling that,

because whatever men do they may do well and badly. And the proper behavior here in this respect, as far as speaking about oneself is concerned, is veracity, not a boaster nor a dissembler of your virtues. This makes absolute sense, I think. Of course one must be concerned surely also [with] not hurting the feeling of others. That is, in other words, the social purpose and also it is an affection of the individual because it presupposes intelligence of some sort.

Now the last one which he mentions here of these virtues is—oh, I'm sorry, I had anticipated. The third virtue is the virtue relating to enjoyment and amusement in society, to jokes in the widest sense of the term, practical or theoretical. And here the right kind is called *eutrapelia*. How does one translate that?

Mr. Reinken: Wittiness?

LS: Yes, urbane wittiness, and the opposite poles are sour-pusses—

Mr. Reinken: Buffoonery and boorishness.

LS: Yes, boorish, boorish fellow, and buffoonery. You know, the man who cannot—who says or does any joke, whether it is fitting and appropriate for the situation or not. And the boorish man would probably sit there and say nothing and never laugh too. He is only then a burden of his society. And the obvious solution is: well, some jokes are proper and others are not, and simply to refuse to make jokes in a society which has assembled for that purpose is of course wholly improper, too. So it makes sense. Yes. Good. Someone raised his hand? No. Then we come to the last virtue in book 4, and that is sense of shame.

The chief assertion of Aristotle is sense of shame is not a virtue. Sense of shame is a praiseworthy passion in the case of young people, but for a grownup man, a gentleman, sense of shame is not a virtue. Let us read 1128b23 to 25. One little point. "For the gentleman."

Mr. Reinken:
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—

LS: In other words, he won't do this kind of thing. The mere fact that this is not the thing to do induces him not to do it. Therefore he has never a reason for shame. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
(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. (1128b23-25)

LS: Yes, what he calls here "the things shameful in truth and shameful according to opinion" corresponds of course to the distinction between nature and convention. In every society there are things which are not done because it is conventional, the

conventions there; and this is very characteristic of Aristotle. The gentleman will not make here an ambiguous distinction and follow what is intrinsically noble as well as the customs and not deviate from that. Yes, Mr. Erikson?

Mr. Erikson: [Refers to the fact that Christ never laughed.][xxxix]

LS: Yes, but Sir Thomas More, who had given much thought to these matters, said, I would not—[xl] Yes, but this is true both ways. I also have difficulties in hearing you. Now Sir Thomas More, who tells this story, makes this remark: "I will not swear that he never laughed, but at least he left us no example of his laughing."[xli] You know, after all, the Gospels do not supply us with every detail.

Mr. Erikson: Is it not true that within laugher itself there is an element of cruelty?

LS: That was Hobbes's misanthropic remark, that laughing comes always from a feeling of superiority to others.[xlii] You know, and he gives such a simple example: laughing when someone else falls. We laugh, but that is not the whole story. Protagoras, if I remember well, said laughing or smiling is a becoming resplendence of the soul. Have you ever heard of an angelic smile?

Mr. Erikson: Yes, a smile, but that's not laughter. But what about when people laugh at a ridiculous machine? People do this. An absurd object. It's very hard to see the element of cruelty there.

LS: I believe that this kind of psychology really doesn't work, because it takes an accident for the essence of the thing. The old definition of the laughable in Aristotle is the harmlessly evil. I mean, we don't laugh about an act or murder, a harmful evil, but we laugh about a harmless evil on all kinds of levels. Very uneducated young children laugh about everybody they affect, as we know. Well, when we become older we don't do that. That depends on the degree of our sophistication. We laugh heartily about extremely stupid utterances, whether by students or professors, yes, but do we do it in order to feel ourselves superior, or do we do it because it is a harmless evil? That's a question. That Hobbes had this nasty grimness and sees only this side of it, that is his business. And I suppose there may be on many occasions an element of malice, but it is not necessary. You see how many occasions on which we laugh where no individual human beings are involved, where we tell stories about some man X. What does the feeling of superiority mean? We laugh about ourselves from time to time, and so I don't believe that this is true. I mean, you can say laughing[29] is ultimately [one of] the few relaxations of the deep fears which grip us all the time. There were people who have said this. I don't believe that's necessary. And why not leave it at that phenomenal thing, something like Aristotle said: harmless evils. For example, if people would build up an institute of research with

[xxxix] As noted by the transcriber.
[xl] The transcriber notes that there is a brief interruption when someone asks Strauss to speak more loudly.
[xli] Thomas More, *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*, book 1, chapter 13.
[xlii] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chapter 6.

big foundation money in order to breed sheep without wool, we all would laugh. We all would laugh because it is really, in a way, a harmless evil. You see, I mean nothing bad could come out of it; the sheep can also be eaten, although one would say you can have the same thing by shearing sheep. You see, you can do that. The joke is unfortunately not from me but from Jonathan Swift, in the third book of *Gulliver's Travels*, a must for everyone who wants to understand present-day life. Good. [Laughter] No, honestly. Swift has seen what was coming, but he didn't see yet the social science research. He saw only what kind of thing natural science, if left to itself, might try to do. Yes?

Student: I wondered whether the last thing under the distinction between the things really shameful and those reputed to be so . . . the alternative is that if one does something which is conventionally held shameful but you feel it is right anyway, you wouldn't feel pain, but it seems to me that this is kind of a harsh statement, that one ought not do either—

LS: Yes, yes, that is what I called the Jane Austen element of Aristotle: "Be decent." "Decent" has all kinds of levels and there are levels where it is really conventional, but even there: be decent.

Same Student: I mean, if you were a Southerner who entertained guests and you happened to invite a Negro, and this might be quite shameful but you might feel that this is surely right.

LS: Yes, but what would you say in this case? In this case there would be a conflict between what is intrinsically decent and conventional decency, but Aristotle is under no obligation to discuss all other cases. He states only the general principle, namely, the principle that the conventionally decent has also to be respected. If there is a conflict between the two, then you have to think for yourself and it depends how important it is. If it is[30] [the case that] your insisting on what is intrinsically decent is merely an empty manifestation, it might be unwise because you only—how shall I say?—make troubles without any cause of that. In other situations, that depends. I knew a man who went so far in this view that he said if he had to go to a cannibal society to decannibalize them, he would of course have to live with them for a long time and he would naturally in the first part of his sojourn with them be a cannibal—you know, just to become a normal member of the society. This goes probably too far. Yes?

Student: Do I understand that regarding the virtue of small-souledness which we were speaking about earlier, you suggested small-souledness can be linked up with modesty?

LS: No, [not] what we call modesty. No, Aristotle's view of modesty can be stated very simply: a man not worthy of great honors, not claiming for himself great honors. That's a modest man and it is not a high virtue but it is, of course, virtue.

Same Student: So then for Aristotle modesty would not be able to go hand in hand with magnanimity?

LS: No, no. Yes, well, for example, if you look at a man who at least impresses me so much as Churchill does—but I think if I were to give a brief description in terms of adjectives of Churchill, the word "modest" wouldn't come up. Not because he is immodest, but [because] it's not a characteristic virtue [of him].

Student: Would it be fair to say that modesty for Aristotle is related to what later was called humility? Is it the same?

LS: No, no, because the motivation is entirely different. Modesty—Aristotle calls it *sōphrōn*, which I ordinarily translate by "moderate," but in this connection it means simply a reasonable man. No,[31] humility, *tapeinotēs* in Greek, has invariably a negative meaning: abject. I wanted to bring up this very point in a different form, namely this section on sense of shame on which I would like to say a word.

Now Aristotle has spoken here very little about sense of shame; only to make clear that sense of shame is not a virtue. But the detailed discussion you would find in the *Rhetoric*, book 2, chapter 6, and there he mentions, among other things, that men feel shame in front of good men, for example. I mean, say, if you are in a—I mean, if a man behaves improperly in a group of men who all behave improperly, you would not be ashamed of them. But if there is one silent member there who behaves decently, you would be ashamed of him.[xliii] Now of which beings are men particularly ashamed? Now the Greek word *aidōs* is applied from Homer on until Plato, inclusive, and probably beyond, to the gods. Men should be ashamed of the gods. Now he would probably translate this in English—the expression in English—differently, but it is the same word in Greek. I mean, for example, that someone should oppress weak human beings or commit another gross injustice which is not punished by the human law: [this is] fear of the gods. But the Greeks can as well, say, be ashamed of the gods, hold the gods in reverence. Same word.

Student: Not "ashamed before," but "ashamed of"?

LS: No, with a view to. Well, how would you express it? My English is poor. What do you say of a child?

Same Student: He is ashamed of himself before his parents.

LS: Before the gods. So the highest beings before [which] man can be ashamed are the gods. Plato, in the *Laws* 671d, calls sense of shame a divine fear to distinguish it from ordinary fears. Now what is so extraordinarily interesting in Aristotle is that there is not a single allusion to this rich and old meaning of sense of shame, where it has the meaning of reverence and awe, all these things. Nothing. Just as in other cases we have seen: liberality narrowed down, and *sōphrosynē* narrowed down, and so on and so on. This is completely absent from Aristotle. But of course the Greeks, and that means naturally also Aristotle, knew that. Now what is implied in this notion of being ashamed of the gods or what can be implied?

[xliii] The transcriber notes: "In these remarks of Dr. Strauss there is implicit that he means by 'ashamed of' the expression 'ashamed in front of.'"

Student: [. . .]

LS: Yes, perhaps the gods know more about what is going on in men than men do: the omniscience of the gods. The word occurs in Greece. I mean, omniscient, the gods know everything. What I'm driving at is this—Mr. Burnam?

Mr. Burnam: I just wanted to say inferiority of some sort is implied.[xliv]

LS: I think of a very simple statement of Aristotle: a gentleman does not make mistakes, does not sin. In Greek, it's the same word. In other words, the denial that shame is a virtue means that men can be unimpeachably virtuous. That is the key: that someone can be so justly satisfied with his virtue that he says, "I have nothing to be ashamed of," not in the common understanding but in a deeper sense. This does not occur in Plato. It is a peculiarity of Aristotle. Plato did not throw out sense of shame as much as Aristotle. For the grown-up gentleman, everything can be perfect. Man is not necessarily sinful.

Student: Is this connected from the other side, that the gods in their perfection are unconcerned with men?

LS: Yes.

Same Student: Also, why is religion reduced to munificence?

LS: That is clear. Aristotle rewrites so-called Greek morality from a new point of view, which was prepared by some philosophers, but in a way which had never been done before. His was a defense of morality, but he takes it from the traditional context. This partly explains the fact that he can be accepted by Christians, Jews, and Muslims. He is not specifically Greek.

Same Student: Would biblical meekness be akin to Aristotle's smallness of soul?

LS: From Aristotle's point of view, not the biblical.

Same Student: Not necessarily. If smallness of soul is not being worthy of great enterprises, Moses, who was small and humble, certainly regarded himself as worthy of great enterprises.

LS: "Those who win their principality by their own virtue."[xlv] Clearly stated, that to possess something, believe to possess it by one's own virtue, not by the grace of God, that is the big point. According to Machiavelli, Moses was a most outstanding man who owed greatness to his own virtue. Also the example in Spinoza's *Ethics*: what is important is to think well about oneself, meaning justifiably. This is exactly what the

[xliv] The transcriber notes: "At this point the tape ran out. What follows is an almost literal paraphrase of the remainder of the session taken from stenographic notes."
[xlv] The transcriber notes that Strauss refers to Machiavelli's P*rince*, chapter 6.

Bible questions, that man should think well about himself. Xenophon has some of the clearest statements. He has Socrates say, "I admire myself tremendously." That was common. That was what the theoretical tradition meant by pride: not silly pride but a deeper thing which applies to all men in the decisive respect, *superbia*. The most obvious difference is not Greeks/Jews, but philosophers/biblical tradition. Even in Thucydides, Nicias shows us that the Greeks in general have as many pious men, according to their notion of piety, as in any nation. Aristotle is the most obvious. In the list of the virtues, piety does not occur. There is the social side of piety, munificence. The other, the true virtue regarding the gods, is knowledge of the gods, of the cosmos.

Same Student: [Regarding humility.][xlvi]

LS: Humility for the Greeks was always associated with vice, abjectness. It is never used in a positive sense in Aristotle. In Plato it is twice and in Xenophon once; in both, in the context of speaking of Sparta. Sparta was much more old fashioned.

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[1] Deleted "have."
[2] Deleted "security."
[3] Deleted "surprised."
[4] Deleted "if."
[5] Deleted "to be without this."
[6] Deleted "front."
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[17] Deleted "he."
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[19] Deleted "has."
[20] Deleted "I mean, of the excesses."
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[22] Deleted "but."
[23] Deleted "I mean."
[24] Deleted "and."
[25] Deleted "difficult."
[26] Deleted "this is really not—"
[27] Deleted "which he calls."
[28] Deleted "making."
[29] Deleted "that."
[31] Deleted "the."

[xlvi] As noted by the transcriber.

Session 10: May 14, 1963
Universal and particular justice; justice as the second peak of moral virtue (Book 5.1-5)

Leo Strauss: [In progress] —but there is this legal question or question of justice: Did you not trespass on Mr. Dry's ground?[i] You had an agreement. Of course, you did this section, and you will not be punished for that, which in my reckoning belongs to the second half which I ought to take up next time. But it is perfectly all right. But I have to take up of course today the first part, and I believe your neglect, relative neglect, of the first half of book 5 had some consequences for your understanding of Aristotle. I [will] come to that later. Now only a few points.

First, regarding the general thing as to the interpretation of book 5, and in particular [of] the section on natural right. I mean, I do not claim that what I said in *Natural Right and History* is *the* solution to the difficulty. It was only the best I could do at the time. I believe I made it somewhat clearer in a later statement which is not yet published, but of which some of you have copies, an article I wrote for the second edition of the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*.[ii] I didn't have enough copies, but some of you, I believe, did get copies. Do you have one, Mr. Butterworth? But some got [them], some of them did. Well, I'm sorry, I have no longer any copies. Perhaps—Miss Perkins, is there still something from which it could be—? Perhaps we do that.

Mr. Butterworth: Was the substance of that article in your lectures last fall?

LS: Yes, yes. Yes, but still I went over it again.

Mr. Butterworth: I see.

LS: And if Miss Perkins would be so kind, because it is a mere act of kindness and not of duty, to reproduce it. How many people are there roughly? Forty? Fifty?[1] Then you could all have a copy. But I'm still not satisfied. There are quite a few difficulties there.

Now there is only one point where I am sure you are wrong. You referred to Aristotle's distinction between the man who commits an unjust action and the unjust man. The distinction is very simple. Someone may commit an unjust action without being an unjust man. The example which Aristotle gives is the adulterer overcome by passion, and he didn't commit the action in cold blood, if this is not a somewhat peculiar expression. No, but after all, there can be mitigating circumstances. This woman [could] have seduced

[i] Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.
[ii] Leo Strauss, "Natural Law," in *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, ed. David Sills (New York: Macmillan Company and the Free Press, 1968), vol. 2, 80–90.

him—I mean, [could] have put a kind of pressure on him that is very hard to resist. That could happen, and you cannot call such man an unjust man although he committed an unjust action. That's clear. But you say a man can be a tyrant without being unjust and yet only committing an unjust action. I believe this Aristotle would not admit.

Ms. Kirley: In a sense. In the sense that if justice be seen as a quality, that since there is no law in tyranny this would be outside of the realm of legal justice.

LS: Oh, but it is not the legal. No, no. We have to go over this passage about legal justice to which you referred in order to make this clear. But a tyrant is a man, of course, who habitually acts unjustly.

Now before we turn to the assignment, I would like to say a word about the paper of Miss Kirley, which I liked very much. I'll read you a brief point that concerns the second half of book 4. She raises the question: there are the two peaks, magnanimity and justice, and in between are the social virtues. And why are they in between? That's a necessary question. "Aristotle is left with the task of finding the mean between the contemplative life and the *polis*." Aristotle doesn't use the word "mean" here, but it is very apt. It's a very Aristotelian term, a mean, and this mean is to be found in these social graces, as we might say. There was one more point. Yes. And then she has some interesting reflections about the transition from the sphere of the individual, by which she means from the peak, magnanimity, to the sphere of society, by which she means the [second] peak, justice, "is important to Aristotle's thought in still another way, namely, in connection with the problem of friendship"—which is also a very good point, friendship being a kind of society, [an] association which is not the political association but which is as such closer in its highest form to the philosophic association. That's the general philosophy. This was also very sound. And I think there was one more point. No, this is all.

I would like to mention one point: when we discussed courage and we wondered how does it come [about] that we use the word courage today in a much broader sense than Aristotle uses it in the *Ethics*. You know, *Profiles of Courage* is the title of a book by President Kennedy,[iii] by which he did not mean (I haven't read the book, but from what I have heard about it)[2] on the field of battle. Is this correct? Good. Now this broader use where we can also speak of intellectual courage, this occurs, I was reminded, in Averroes's paraphrase of the *Republic*, where he speaks of the courage of the philosophers over against certain opinions. By the way, this commentary of Averroes, which is not available at present, it is lost in the original. A Hebrew translation is the closest we have, and this Hebrew translation has been edited, but in a very poor manner, and [it] has been translated into English in a still poorer manner. Therefore it is as good as if it didn't exist, but Mr. Mahdi[iv] and I hope that one day some man or body of men will bring out a decent edition and a decent English translation.[v] Now this is quite interesting for the following reason: because Averroes wrote this commentary on the

[iii] John F. Kennedy, *Profiles in Courage* (New York: Harper, 1956).
[iv] Muhsin Mahdi (1926-2007), Iraqi–American Arabist.
[v] See *Averroes on Plato's* Republic, trans. Ralph Lerner (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1974).

Republic because he didn't have access to Aristotle's *Politics*, which was not available in Arabia. He had the *Ethics*, the Aristotelian *Ethics*, and he wrote a comment on that, but he didn't have the *Politics* and so he took Plato's *Republic*. But he interprets the *Republic* from this point of view, which is quite interesting: he says the purpose of the virtues is not presented in the *Ethics*, and in order to understand the purpose of the virtues one has to engage in the political considerations, for which he takes Plato's *Republic* in the absence of Aristotle's *Politics*.

Ms. Kirley: I don't understand that. Would you mind repeating it? Would you mind repeating what Averroes's point is?

LS: The virtues must be understood in terms of the *polis*, and this is not done in the *Ethics* but is done in the *Politics*. Now let me see. I would like to mention—I believe I mentioned it but I would like to emphasize it again. In the fifteenth chapter of Machiavelli's *Prince*, one of the most important utterances in the history of political philosophy—the chapter is exactly one and three-quarters of a page long, so you see sometimes something can be very important without being very long, a great comfort for those who fear they cannot write a sixty-page master's thesis or a two hundred-page doctor's thesis.[3] This passage requires very careful reading. Machiavelli gives here an enumeration of the virtues and vices, in which justice does not occur, very interestingly, but there is always one vice opposed to a virtue. In other words, virtue is not understood as a mean. And I have tried to interpret the passage, but I think I did not do justice to this passage and it deserves your serious study. The number of virtues is the same as in Aristotle, but the individual virtues mentioned are not the same. Good. Now let us turn to our assignment. Yes, Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: Just one question regarding courage. When we were dealing with the virtue of courage in book 4, you mentioned that if one were to read it in the *Laws*—if one were to understand why Aristotle dealt with courage—

LS: Oh, yes, that is simple: because in the *Laws* courage is presented as the lowest virtue.

Mr. Butterworth: The only thing I'm wondering [is] what would be the importance of the fact that in Plato courage seems to be an intellectual virtue, whereas for Aristotle—

LS: Yes, is it an intellectual virtue? I mean, Averroes in his commentary says so, but is it an intellectual virtue in Plato? That's a long question.

Mr. Butterworth: The reason I thought it was is because it's associated with three other very prominently intellectual virtues.

LS: Which?

Mr. Butterworth: Justice, what we call prudence, and then intelligence.

LS: By whom?

Mr. Butterworth: In the *Laws*.

LS: But not courage. Courage is the lowest.

Mr. Butterworth: Those are four, and courage is in the fourth rank of those.

LS: The lowest, yes. And the intellectual virtues are the highest. I mean, you cannot make a mechanical identification of the *Ethics* with the teaching of the first two books of the *Laws*, but only this particular point: courage [is] at the bottom. That is the same, and this is usually not considered when one studies the structure, the plan, of the *Ethics*.

I would like to mention one point regarding the character of the teaching of the *Ethics* as a whole. We have been always concerned with the question of the purpose or the end. Now what is the end? The end of moral virtue is said to be moral virtue. Now how can we understand that? When Plato speaks of the various virtues, he presents them as imitations of ideas. Crudely stated, there is moderation: men are moderate, more or less. None is perfectly moderate, but there is an idea of moderation, moderation itself, by which he takes his bearings. Now this doctrine of ideas is of course also Aristotelian, although Aristotle reinterprets it very radically, changes it very radically, but one point is, I believe, important. Aristotle distinguishes the idea[4]—the *eidos*, the form—and the end. Very simply, the form of a shoe is not the purpose of a shoe, and you can understand the form of a shoe only in the light of the purpose. When you know that the shoe serves the purpose of protecting the feet, then you understand the form of the shoe. It must be somehow modeled on the foot. But in the case of natural beings, the distinction between form and end ceases to be decisive. The form is the end, meaning, simply stated, the procreation of animals has no other purpose except to preserve the being of the species. The end of that action is the permanence of the being of the species, of the form. Now if you apply this to Aristotle—I mean, this Aristotelian principle to his *Ethics*—then you see there is an identification of the *eidos*, of the form, and the end. This, I believe, we have not mentioned and it should also be considered.

Student: I think we discussed before the end of the moral virtues, and we had the ambiguity that it may also be happiness.

LS: Well, happiness, that is no question, that this is the end. There's no difficulty there. A perfectly satisfactory state in accordance with the nature of man, that cannot have another end. That is obviously the end. But the difficulty concerns the relation of happiness to moral virtue. They are not identical. Now Aristotle says on the one hand that virtuous activity is the core of happiness. To that extent it would seem to be practically the same as happiness, but he does not simply identify them, and that indicates the difficulty. We will take up this question on more than one occasion.

Student: Where did you say it was that Aristotle identifies formal and final?

LS: Second book of the *Physics*, as far as natural things are concerned.[vi] Yes, not artifacts. In the case of artifacts the distinction obtains throughout. Good. Mr. Burnam?

[vi] Cf. Aristotle, *Physics* 193b19–20.

Mr. Burnam: How are the form and the end identified in the *Ethics*?

LS: Not explicitly. That's the difficulty: this whole question is not discussed very clearly here, and we have to look around everywhere else to find our bearings. And one, I think if we realize that this identification of the end and the form is characteristic of the natural things as Aristotle understands them—dogs do not fulfill any other function but to be dogs; dogs are not there in order to watch our houses. This is something for which we may use them, but this is not the reason why they are dogs. In other words, the usual word for that is Aristotle admits only an intrinsic teleology, not an extrinsic one. Good. Now let us now begin and turn to the fifth book, *the* book on justice.

Now Aristotle makes first a distinction between two kinds of justice: the just in the sense of the legal and the just in the sense of the equal, as Aristotle puts it. And Aristotle arrives at this view that there are two kinds of justice by starting from the two meanings of injustice. When we call a man unjust, we mean either a lawbreaker or we mean a grasping man. Now these are not the same things. A man may be grasping without being a lawbreaker, and a man may be a lawbreaker without [being] grasping. Now if the vices differ, it is to be assumed that the virtues differ: that if there are two kinds of injustice, there are likely to be two kinds of justice. This is the way in which Aristotle begins the argument. First, then, what is the unjust man in the sense of the unequal? Now unequal means here the man who wants to have more, the grasping. He seeks—what is his error? Aristotle says in 1129b, at the beginning: he seeks the things which are simply good and yet they are not good for him. Now the things which are simply good are health, a reasonable amount of things, of property, and the other goods which we all naturally regard as goods. This kind of justice and injustice which is unequal is directly concerned with the simply good things for oneself. Is this point clear? We may perhaps read it, 1129b1 to 11.

Mr. Reinken:
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.

LS: It's clear. For example, for a certain individual it is better if he is poor than if he is rich, because he would ruin himself by the wealth. Disease, illness, may be good for a certain individual because it keeps him from mischief, although disease is an evil. That is what Aristotle means by that. Good. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
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 absolutely may also be good for them. (1129b1-6)

LS: In other words, they should wish to be such beings that health and property would be good for them. Then they would be healthy human beings, in the first place, morally healthy. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
The unjust man does not however always choose the larger share: of things that, speaking absolutely, are bad he chooses the smaller share—

LS: Is this not clear? For example, he chooses more as far as his salary is concerned, but he chooses less as far as taxes are concerned. Aristotle is very specific about that. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
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.

LS: You see, Aristotle can be very explicit as he is here. Good.

Mr. Reinken:
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: Yes. Now what he says, "unfair," is, literally translated, "unequal."[vii] He takes more or less, not the equal, what is in the middle. Good. Now this kind of just or unjust man is directly concerned with the simply good things for himself. For himself. That's the only consideration. Now we come to the second meaning of justice and injustice in the sequel, the immediate sequel. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: There some manuscripts add, "Also a law breaker."[viii]

LS: Yes, let us—

Mr. Reinken: Skip that?

LS: Yes.

Mr. Reinken:
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—

LS: "Somehow." Let us be literal: "somehow." Because it is absurd to say that all laws are just unqualifiedly. There are customs which are most unjust, but in a sense even these unjust laws are just. In a sense. But the reason is clear: because any law, any restraint, is better than the complete absence of restraint. Even a very poor legal order is better than anarchy. That is what Aristotle means. Yes? Go on.

Mr. Reinken:

[vii] Strauss retranslates *anisos*.
[viii] This is a footnote on page 256 of Rackham's translation.

for what is lawful is decided by legislature— (1129b6-13)

LS: No, "by the legislative."[ix] Supply not "assembly" but "art" or "knowledge."

Mr. Reinken:
by the legislative, and the several decisions of the legislative we call rules of justice.[x]

LS: "We call just." Why "rules"? The word does not occur. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Now all the various pronouncements of the law aim either at the common interest of all, or at the interest of a ruling class—

LS: No, "the laws speak or pronounce about everything," about all things. Of course not about astronomy, that goes without saying, but everything which can possibly be subject to law. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
or at the interest of a ruling class determined either by excellence or in some other similar way; so that in one of its senses the term 'just' is applied to anything that produces and preserves the happiness, or the component parts of the happiness, of the political community. (1129b13-19)

LS: Yes, let us stop here. The just and unjust in the second sense is directly concerned with the common good, the unjust man by disregarding the common good, the just man by considering it with the happiness of the political community; whereas the just or unjust [man] in the first case is concerned with the simply good things with a view to himself. Justice in this sense, in the sense of the common good, depends on the legislative art: breaking the law and the law is a product of the legislative art. This justice is questionable. The products of this art are "somehow" just. If this is a poor legislative, then it will make poor laws; and yet even those poor laws are to be obeyed, unless in certain extreme cases.

Student: What about the interest of the ruling class? In the passage we just read, "the interest of a ruling class," is that a good translation?

LS: Yes, "the common good for all or the best or the authoritative or in any other way." In other words, Aristotle speaks here indeed very succinctly, and he develops this much more fully in the *Politics*. All laws depend on the legislator, and the legislator (let us use a simple modern term) is the sovereign. But the sovereign can be one man, a few men, and many or all; and the few men can be the rich (oligarchy), the few men can be the virtuous (aristocracy), and so on. Therefore the laws depend essentially on the polity, as

[ix] Strauss retranslates "*tēs nomothetikēs*."
[x] In Rackham's translation: "by legislature, and the several decisions of the legislature we call rules of justice."

Aristotle puts it; on the regime, essentially. This enormously important question is here only touched upon because its development would lead here much too far.

Same Student: But the conclusion is that whatever the regime, or whether the laws aim at the interest of a part or of the whole, they still are somehow just.

LS: Yes, "somehow." Well, you know what happens: you have heard the famous statement some years ago—I mean, when you say the good of a part and the good of the whole, but each ruling part of course claims that its ruling is good for the whole. "What is good for General Motors," you remember that?[xi] Good. So that happens all the time. Aristotle is not here under a compulsion to go into this difficulty. That is the theme of the *Politics*. Mr. Glenn?

Mr. Glenn: Well, the interpretation I got out of this is that they are in some sense good or sometimes good. It may not be *the* common good.

LS: Yes, you can put it this way, but I believe—that is true. It may be the misunderstood common good, that is quite true. But still, there is also the other thing not to be underestimated, this equation which you find in Xenophon or in Plato from time to time: the just is the legal. And this of course was not an invention of philosophy. What is the most crude criterion of whether a man is just or not? That he doesn't claim more than what belongs to him by law, that he does not do anything to any man which he is not entitled to do by the law. Legal is [the] just, and the unjust is the use of force, violence. That's the most crude distinction, and that is not negated [here] because there is something in that notion that any law is better than no law. In a discussion—I have mentioned[xii] . . . this in another class—in the *Harvard Law Review* some years ago . . . the question was raised, this question was raised and the point was rightly made that if the Nazis had stuck to the Nazi laws, some of the more dastardly things could not have been done, because there is a strange transformation which takes place when people pronounce laws. There are things which are not as such as sayable as they are doable, and especially publicly sayable in a law. There is something to that. I mean, that is not negated. It is surely not sufficient. Yes?

Student: [Asks whether there is a distinction between laws just in the sense that they aim at the common good and laws just in the sense that law is better than no law.][xiii]

[xi] The famous statement allegedly made by Charles Wilson, the CEO of General Motors, was "What is good for General Motors is good for America." Wilson's actual statement was however different: as President Eisenhower's nominee for defense secretary in 1953, Wilson reluctantly agreed to sell his General Motors stocks to avoid a conflict of interest, saying that he had not thought there was a conflict "because for years I thought what was good for our country was good for General Motors, and vice versa."

[xii] The transcriber notes that "at this point the recording head, which had been defective throughout this course without operator becoming aware of it, began to make poor contact with the tape. This continued for half an hour, resulting in barely audible recording. Ellipses will be used below to denote the inaudible portions."

[xiii] As noted by the transcriber.

LS: Yes, this is a long story. This has something to do with the mere fact that a law is in general just. I mean, a law cannot be made as easily the vehicle of revenge of the ruler on this particular individual. Somehow it must have a more general formula . . . This is underlying the separation of powers later on, this notion: the generality of law as a kind of being general; that is more rational than a nongeneral statement . . . Mr. Boyan?

Mr. Boyan: Is a bill of attainder a law, a bill that specifically mentions certain persons?

LS: Yes, but this is a long question. According to the more recent theory developed by Montesquieu and taken over [. . .] it could not be a legislative act. It is necessarily a judicial act . . . A bill of attainder would mean the subsumption of this particular case, whoever this is, under the general law of high treason. Now whether this can be done by the same organ, say, the legislative, which also gives the law, that's the question. And separation of powers means it cannot be done by the same organ; it must be done by the judicial body as distinguished from the legislative body. But the distinction between the bodies, between the powers—the separation of powers—and the distinction of the function itself are two very different things. A legislative act is not a judicial act, and every judicial act presupposes a legislative, a law . . .[xiv]

Now Aristotle has made clear that there is a kind of justice which is concerned with the common good, however understood, wise or unwise. Now the law prescribes actions of all virtues, Aristotle says in the sequel, and he gives some examples: actions of courage, actions of temperance, and so on and so on . . . Does the law prescribe the actions of all the virtues? It does prescribe the actions of justice in the narrow sense. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: It would not prescribe the actions of the majority.

LS: Yes. Very good. And more simply, the social virtues. I mean, there is no law anywhere where the boorish man will be punished with a fine because he never laughs at a good joke.

Student: [. . .]

LS: What I think is only this: that this is an overstatement of Aristotle. Good. Now let us turn to 1129b25. "This justice which is law abidingness." Do you have it?[xv] "This justice is perfect virtue, but not simply, not without qualification, but perfect virtue with a view toward the others," the perfect social virtue.

Mr. Reinken:
This is why Justice is often thought to be the chief of the virtues, and more sublime 'or than the evening or the morning star'; and we have the proverb—

In Justice is all Virtue found in sum.

[xiv] The transcriber notes that "the same point is repeated in a brief exchange."
[xv] The transcriber notes that Mr. Reinken begins to read in the wrong place.

And Justice is perfect virtue because it is the practice of perfect virtue; and 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 practise virtue in their own private affairs but cannot do so in their relations with another. This is why we approve the saying of Bias, 'Office will show a man'; for in office one is brought into relation with others and becomes a member of a community.

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—

LS: Literally, "another man's good." This has a derogatory meaning. Yes? Another man's good and not your own good . . . Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
what is for the advantage of another, either a ruler or an associate. As then the worst man is he who practises 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: they are the same quality of mind, but their essence is different; what as displayed in relation to others is Justice, as being simply a disposition of a certain kind is Virtue). (1129b25-1130a13)

LS: Yes. Now this I had of course in mind when I spoke of the fact that justice is the peak, but also together with magnanimity. Universal justice, the justice from the point of view of the common good, from the point of view of the law: this is the highest virtue. The perfect virtue transcends in splendor the most resplendent stars which shine in dusk or dawn. This is an indication of what he means: the rare. Magnanimity is the ornament of the overall concern with complete virtue . . . altogether perfect, absolutely, so that the term used in the case of magnanimity is stronger than the term used here. This justice is the virtue of the ruler in the highest case[5]. I mean, the man who can lead a virtuous life for himself and on the highest level seems to be inferior to the man who can lead a virtuous life in such a way that he can guide whole societies toward virtue. Does this not make sense? From this point of view, this kind of justice is the highest virtue. The best man is the perfect ruler. But you can look at it in two ways, namely, [if you look at it] as the man who serves everybody else by ruling them, this is the point of view of justice; but if you would look at him so that the many ruled serve him because he is the model—they look toward the virtuous man—that's magnanimity . . . Now universal justice depends on law, but the law can be bad. The law depends on the regime. Universal justice is therefore simply good only if the regime is the best. This would be an Aristotelian assertion. But the best regime is here the law.[xvi] Ordinary universal justice is therefore [. . .] and from

[xvi] In the transcript: "law (?)."

this point of view the status of magnanimity compared with justice is increased. Do you see that point? Virtue as required by magnanimity does not have this relation to others. Yes, Mr. Dry, what did you want to say?

Mr. Dry: I thought that in this book the just is the lawful.

LS: Yes, but this was the case: the lawful things are "somehow" just. Somehow. It can mean also this: they tend to be just, they wish to be just, but they are not necessarily so.

Student: [Refers to the distinction between the good man and the good citizen.][xvii]

LS: Yes, we come to that. In the *Politics*. That's a long story. Yes, but we must see here Aristotle has asserted that morality and politics are coextensive and there would be a perfect harmony between them if the statement regarding universal justice were unqualifiedly correct. If the laws command the actions of all virtues and command them rightly, it's wonderful. Then there is perfect harmony between politics and morality. But if the laws are imperfect, then human perfection may be found much more among isolated individuals then in society at large. Does it not make sense?

Student: [To the effect that the moving principle is different in each case.][xviii]

LS: Sure. Well, this will come out in this way: if you had the perfect case, a perfect regime with the best laws, and laws provided for all virtues so that law-abidingness is identical with goodness. This is very hard for us to understand on the basis of our very limited modern legal system. But if you take, for example, the Old Testament or Jewish tradition, according to this view a man who obeys the law in all its points is a good man. There is nothing else. Something of this kind is in the notion underlying ancient law, which Aristotle of course knew. But the difficulty is, as you have seen here, there are certain virtues which couldn't find a place in any law: the social graces, which Aristotle regarded as important enough to give them the status of virtues, which we have discussed. Let us go beyond that. In the case of the best regime and the best laws there would be this perfect harmony between law and morality, [so] that to obey the law is identical with being a good citizen as well as a good man. But we don't have the best regime, and this is no accident that it is so hard to find. And this is no accident, i.e, there is an inherent difficulty in getting the best laws, and if you think through this difficulty, then you arrive at the view ultimately that the nature of things does not permit it. That point will come out at the end of book 10. Yes, Mr. Boyan, and then Mr. Butterworth.

Mr. Boyan: [To the effect that since all the virtues are not provided for by the law, the law deals with the lower virtues.][xix]

LS: It could be, but the law omits some parts of virtue. Aristotle says "all." Aristotle wants to point out that question, too. I mean, if the law does not cover all forms of

[xvii] As noted by the transcriber.
[xviii] As noted by the transcriber.
[xix] As noted by the transcriber.

goodness, then it has a much lower rank, naturally, than [it would] if it covered all forms of goodness. And in the identification of highest virtue with legal justice, the power of the law has this all-comprehensive character.

Mr. Butterworth: [Regarding the relationship of magnanimity to perfect virtue.][xx]

LS: There are *n* specific virtues . . . There are two virtues which are general, which require or include all other virtues, and these are magnanimity and justice, and the praise which Aristotle bestows on each of them is, to say the least, equal. He praises magnanimity as much, one can say, as he praises justice. Therefore there are two peaks of Aristotle's *Ethics*. But in the case of magnanimity, the relation to the others is not essential. The magnanimous man is concerned with his own perfection and with the consciousness of his perfection. The just man is *essentially* related to others. Is this not clear? Good. The total virtue as Aristotle sees it is the same as justice. But the being, as he puts it, is not the same. The being is not the same; namely, the point of view of the being is not the same. If you look at it from the point of view of virtue, of the perfection of the individual, that's one thing. If you look at it from the point of view of society or of the *polis*, that's another point of view. And the whole problem is concentrated in this brief passage, and Aristotle goes into this question that the legal virtue prescribes the actions of all the virtues.[xxi]

Student: In what sense is justice perfect virtue without qualification?

LS: No, he does not say this. He says, in 1129b25, "this justice," universal justice, "is perfect virtue, but not simply"—i.e., not without an addition, without a qualification—but complete virtue with a view to others. As we state it, in its social function. If virtue were the good simply, i.e., the perfection of the individual, then it is not identical with justice. But if it is understood in its social function, then you can say it is perfect virtue.

Same Student: [. . .]

LS: But Aristotle does not say that. He says only it is, as it were—just as in the case of magnanimity, the magnanimous man has all the other virtues, and yet then magnanimity brings an ornament to the other virtues. Here it is not an ornament but it is said to be social. Does he show his virtue also in the political context? If not, then he is inferior.

Same Student: Is he saying that justice is the only social virtue? It seems that a problem with moral virtue is what about the other social virtues that he discussed.

LS: No, he says justice alone among the virtues is thought to be another man's good, meaning this: if you are temperate, courageous, and the other virtues, that is your own good. You feel better . . . But justice, at first glance, benefits more the others than it benefits you . . . Here the concern with others is in the foreground. The friendly man as

[xx] As noted by the transcriber.
[xxi] The transcriber notes that Strauss "inaudibly indicates that he is about to turn to particular justice, when [he is] interrupted by a question."

friendly man is concerned with himself, being as nice as possible, as decent as possible, as good as possible. But from the point of view of justice, you are concerned with the community as a whole. That makes the difference.

Same Student: Aristotle is speaking here of the law in a universal sense and yet he speaks of rightly framed laws.

LS: Yes, sure.

Same Student: And this is something higher?

LS: Naturally. Yes, but who ever believed that Aristotle was a vulgar legal positivist or social conformist? Of course not. I mean, this man was sensitive about that.

Same Student: [. . .]

LS: Well, we have seen all these virtues, all with the exception of particular justice to which we come now. These virtues . . . they are the standard . . .[xxii] We come to a passage about it. Let us turn to 1130a24, because we must follow the argument. Aristotle is now going to prove that there is a particular justice, not only universal justice which is identical with law-abidingness . . . Now let us turn to that, Mr. Reinken. In 1130a24, "The man who commits adultery for the sake of gain." Well, how do they call him today? [Laughter]

Mr. Reinken: Page 263, paragraph four.
Again, suppose two men to commit adultery, one for profit, and gaining by the act, the other from desire, and having to pay—

LS: Yes, the point: he pays in addition; the other gains in addition. You know? The one gets richer and the other gets poorer. Good.

Mr. Reinken:
then the latter would be deemed to be a profligate rather than a man who takes more than his due, while the former would be deemed unjust, but not profligate; clearly therefore it is being done for profit that makes the action unjust. (1130a24-28)

LS: Isn't this a sign . . . that it is a particular justice? Because the law is broken by both, but the one, in addition to being a lawbreaker, is a profligate; the other is, in addition to being a lawbreaker, an unjust man because he is concerned with gain. Yes? Go on.

Mr. Reinken:
Again, whereas all other unjust acts are invariably ascribed to some particular vice—for example, adultery is put down to Profligacy, desertion from the ranks to

[xxii] The transcriber notes that Strauss "appears to have said that these virtues are the standard with a view to which the legislator ought to take his bearings."

Cowardice, assault to Anger—an unjust act by which a man has profited is not attributed to any vice except Injustice.

Hence it is a manifest that there is another sort of Injustice besides universal Injustice, the former being a part of the latter. It is called by the same name because its definition falls in the same genus, both sorts of Injustice being exhibited in a man's relation to others; but whereas Injustice in the particular sense is concerned with honour or money or security, or whatever term we may employ to include all these things, its motive being the pleasure of gain, Injustice in the universal sense is concerned with all the things that are the sphere of Virtue.

LS: Yes. Is it clear now why they have the same names, universal justice and particular justice? Because both have to do with the other man, with the others. They are both emphatically social, but nevertheless they are different. Not all acting unjustly is acting greedily, for the sake of gain. And one may act unjustly only for the sake of gain as distinguished from the satisfaction of a specific desire; for example, if someone kills another man out of anger: to satisfy his anger, he kills him. Another, a thug, does it for pay; he doesn't satisfy his anger by killing him. He is the unjust man in the sense of particular justice. Averroes gives this example: a man who does not undertake particulars is unjust, i.e., transgresses the law, but is not unjust in the sense of harming other men. That's the point. The man who takes risks by stinginess is not unjust in the second sense, because he doesn't take away from another man what belongs to him. He is unjust in the first sense, because the law in the broadest sense wants you to be liberal, generous. And if you are not generous you are in this sense a breaker of the law, but[6] [you are] not unjust in the second sense. Now the immediate sequel is a repetition which emphasizes the fact that particular justice is a part of universal justice, i.e., of universal virtue understood from a special point of view. This means all virtues previously mentioned are part of universal justice, and this is repeated in order to emphasize that this is the problem, ultimately. Now let us turn to b20, 1130b20.

Mr. Reinken:
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.[xxiii] 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— (1130a28-b23)

LS: You see here, by the way, not all laws direct us to virtue. But generally, many of them, the majority of them [do]. The *nomos* goes beyond virtue, obviously. Right and left driving does not as such direct us toward virtue, and all the technical laws have no direct relation to virtue. There are many things of this kind. Yes?

[xxiii] In Rackham's translation: "towards someone else, and that Injustice which is the practice of vice towards someone else."

Mr. Reinken:
conduct displaying the various particular virtues and forbids conduct displaying the various particular vices. Also the regulations 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 it would seem that to be a good man is not in every case the same thing as to be a good citizen.[xxiv]

LS: Yes, now this is discussed in the third book of the *Politics* and is one of the most important discussions of the *Politics*. Not all laws are concerned with virtue.[xxv] The laws which are concerned with virtue are those which have to do with education toward virtue above all: the education of the citizen. But the education of the citizen is relative to the regime: the education of the citizen in a democracy differs from the education of a citizen in an oligarchy or aristocracy. That's clear. Now since a good man is not a good—which he doesn't develop here—a good citizen[7] in a tyranny, [say], cannot be a good man, because a good citizen in a tyranny means a man who is absolutely loyal to the tyranny, and how can a good man be loyal to tyranny? Therefore the good citizen is relative to the regime. The good man is not relative to any regime. On the contrary: the good man is the standard for establishing the various ranks of the various regimes. Here you have your answer. The good man, the virtuous [man]: that's the standard in the light of which we judge of the regime. This is, by the way, made very beautiful and clearly stated in the first book of Plato's *Laws*, which you might read. So not all laws then direct us to virtue, and on the other hand the law does not prescribe the actions of all virtues. We have seen this before. Law and virtue, politics and morality, are not simply coextensive. There are lots of loose ends on both sides, and by considering these loose ends we will see the fundamental difficulty. Will you read the immediate sequel?

Mr. Reinken:
Particular Justice on the other hand, and that which is just in the sense corresponding to it, is divided into two kinds. One kind is exercised in the distribution of honour, wealth, and the other divisible asserts of the community, which may be allotted among its members in equal or unequal shares. The other kind is that which supplies a corrective principle in private transactions. (1130b23-35)

LS: Yes, let us stop here for one moment. So particular justice, with which alone we will deal in the sequel, consists of two parts, which we may call distributive justice and commutative justice. The terms are not so important. Distributive justice means especially the distribution of honors and ruling offices, in which case it is essential to

[xxiv] The transcriber notes: "with the reversal of the tape at this point, the defect which began on page 7 was corrected. In the opinion of the transcriber, the omitted portions on the five and a half pages preceding do not contain any remarks crucial to the argument and were chiefly omissions of scattered inaudible phrases. However, some of Dr. Strauss's remarks above should be regarded as slight paraphrasing of what he said rather than as a perfect verbatim transcript."
[xxv] Aristotle, *Politics* 1276b18–35.

consider both the things distributed, honors and offices, and the men. And so you have at least four items in every act of distributive justice: [a] minimum [of] two things and [a] minimum [of] two men to whom they are distributed. It is proportionate justice. As thing "a" is to man A, thing "b" is to man B. Let us say that's a dogcatcher [and a] president: the man who is to be the dogcatcher must be a different man than the man who is to be president. Obviously. I mean, otherwise you could say anyone could be dogcatcher and anyone could be president, which is excluded by the notion of distributive justice. Distributive justice is the justice which gives unequal things to unequal people, and this is the true equality in this field. But there is also a sphere in which simple equality is just, and this is what we can call commutative justice. But commutative justice as Aristotle understands it includes also penal justice. That's a minor difficulty. I mean, commutative justice[8] is of course primarily that in exchange, in selling and buying and so on. There, there should be equality of merchandise, alpha, and the value paid for it—let us say an "aleph," because I have used already the Latin. This is the equality, simple equality. But the same is true of punishments. If someone beats you unjustly he should be punished with another beating. Now this leads to certain difficulties, because some things cannot be returned in kind. You cannot punish a man who committed high treason by committing high treason against him, and some other cases. You know, the simple *jus* [. . .] doesn't work, as Aristotle states in a special satire. Let us see here in the immediate sequel the examples.

Mr. Reinken:
This Corrective Justice again has two sub-divisions, corresponding to the two classes of private transactions, those which are voluntary and those which are involuntary. Examples of voluntary transactions are selling, buying, lending at interest, pledging, lending without interest, depositing, letting for hire; these transactions being termed voluntary because they are voluntarily entered upon. Of involuntary transactions some are furtive, for instance, theft, adultery, poisoning, procuring, enticement of slaves, assassination, false witness; others are violent, for instance, assault, imprisonment, murder, robbery with violence, maiming, abusive language, contumelious treatment. (1131a1-9)

LS: Yes. If you count, you will see that Aristotle enumerates in each case seven—this number seven which plays such a great role—and in the center of the whole thing is procuring. Now does this remind you of something? Who was a habitual procurer?

Mr. Reinken: Socrates.

LS: Socrates. Well, in a somewhat different sense, but still he called it procuring in the *Theaetetus*.[xxvi] Good. Now then he describes first in the sequel distributive justice, and here the key point which we have to consider is this, in this section a10 to b24, that he gives here an example—I think that is in this section.

Mr. Reinken: [Begins to read at 1131a24.][xxvii]

[xxvi] Cf. Plato, *Theaetetus* 150a.
[xxvii] As noted by the transcriber.

LS: No, we cannot read that, unfortunately. There is a kind of justice where consideration of the persons is a requirement of justice, and there is a kind of justice where consideration of the persons is unjust. Does it make sense? That's what Aristotle means. I mean, someone has killed another man. To consider whether the killer is rich or poor is unjust, but if the office is that of a treasurer it is very important to know how his own family is [. . .] This is the simple observation from which Aristotle starts. Now let us read 1131b32, because we cannot cover the whole ground. That is in the next chapter: "the just in exchange." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
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— (1131b32-1132a4)

LS: Yes. Now let us stop here. Is it not strange that the good man, the gentleman, can commit crimes? You remember we read in the end of book 4, when he discussed the sense of shame, he said that the good man will never commit anything of which he is ashamed. Now we know of course if mitigating circumstances—you know, he is seduced by a singularly seductive woman, so it would be almost beyond a man's power to resist her. But still, would he not have to be ashamed if this becomes matter of public knowledge? That's a strange question. Yes?

Student: Isn't the question of voluntary and involuntary implicit here, though?

LS: Yes, but this is a long question. One must raise this question. T: think of present-day penal law, which considers the persons very much, much more than it was done in the olden times. Perhaps the gentleman should be punished more severely if he succumbs to such a thing than some nongentleman; or perhaps less severely because if even he, such a man,[9] fell on such an occasion, then the temptation must have been almost superhuman. But still, both are legitimate considerations so that is not easy to understand why the person should not have to be considered. The whole question of penal law is of course here in [this question], but it is not fully developed. Plato, in the *Laws*, is much more specific about it, and Plato shows the difficulty very neatly in the following terms.[xxviii] It cannot be the isolated act, the isolated act of murder or theft or whatever it may be, because—well, you know, there are circumstances which are extenuating and may be extremely extenuating. Now Plato states as a very general principle: Is he corrigible or incorrigible? Someone commits a crime and then he goes to a rehabilitation center, whatever the crime was. Now in that center it may prove to be that the man was already completely rehabilitated in the moment he enters it. He committed a murder or a homicide and he will never commit it again. Not that he says it; that wouldn't be sufficient. But the student of his soul sees: this was such a lesson to him that he will never do it. And then there is a petty thief, of whom one is absolutely sure that he will do

[xxviii] See Plato, *Laws*, book 9, 862c–863a.

the same thing again and again and again. Now Plato has this rule: the incorrigible ones must be exterminated regardless of the magnitude of the crime, and the corrigible ones are to be rehabilitated. And this may take, so to say, five minutes in the case of a given murderer. This is *the* beautiful statement of the problem, because then the question [is]: Why do we think that's so unjust to execute the petty thief who will be a petty thief as long as he will be able to steal, and the murderer who will never do it again may be executed? What is that? To what extent is the question of the severity of the damage done to others a true consideration of justice? It's a grave question. Is it not at least as important to consider how corrupt he is in himself? Is the severity of the damage necessarily in a relation to the corruption of the soul? That's a great question, and the whole difficulty of penal justice is involved in this. Aristotle does not develop this here.

Student: Later in book 5, it could be said that he covers this . . .

LS: Yes, but still I think even we today would not regard an act of homicide as simply excusable. I mean, if he killed a man in anger he will be punished, will he not?

Same Student: Oh yes, I was just thinking of how Aristotle would deal with it.

Student: Isn't what you are saying now about commutative justice that we would take the person into consideration, his character and his stature and so forth?

LS: Yes. Yes.

Same Student: Well, then in what sense did you mean it when you said that in commutative justice the simple equality is the true equality and that to consider the persons would be unjust?

LS: This is what Aristotle says to begin with. We have read the statement. It is irrelevant whether the murderer was a gentleman or a nongentleman. He murdered. This and this is the punishment for murder. He will be given it.

Same Student: In other words, is he arguing dialectically here?

LS: No, no, no. No, I mean—well, of course it is not a complete statement. Aristotle has a long section on equity later on in the second part, and especially in the *Rhetoric*.[xxix] You know this. But in a very rough way (you see, that is the point), what Aristotle has in mind is to begin with a very crude but important distinction. There are cases in which it is just to give to all men, whoever they may be, the same, and any distinction between persons is unjust; and then there are cases in which to give the same to everyone is unjust. This simple fundamental thing is clear, isn't it?

Same Student: Yes, it's very clear. I see.

[xxix] Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1374a–b.

LS: Yes, but the difficulty I believe we have is that penal justice is then treated under the heading, so to speak, of commutative justice. That creates a certain difficulty.

Same Student: That was my problem. Commutative justice as a whole does not mean the kind of justice in which you disregard people, but just certain divisions—

LS: Yes. I mean, the difficulty, I believe, appears most clearly—and perhaps we read this first—in the section in the next chapter; this is 1132b21, where Aristotle discusses another notion of justice. Let us first read that.

Student: You meant to say that Plato doesn't put penal justice into this kind of a category?

LS: Yes. Yes, of course he makes, naturally, this point. The fundamental distinction is the same. There is a kind of justice which is simply egalitarian, and there is a kind of justice which cannot be egalitarian. But in the case of penal justice, no, it's different. Will you read that?

Mr. Reinken:
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 another.'

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 an act was done with or without the consent of the other party. 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; 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—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: Now let us stop—see here. Yes, what is the meaning of that? Now to understand this I propose this consideration. Aristotle subordinates penal justice under commutative

justice, and in addition he distinguishes between commutative justice and distributive justice. His view is diametrically opposed to the crude view which understands all justice in the light of punitive justice. Now of this view we have some traces; for example, in Plato's *Gorgias*, where the term right, *dikē* in Greek, is identified with punishment.[xxx] Right is punishment; a tough and barbaric view. Justice is simple equality of reaction to action. Tit not for tat, but for tit, because when you say "tit for tat," it's obviously something different. Aristotle says such simple equality is in no case just, but a close approximation to it exists in the justice of exchange as distinguished from punitive justice. In punitive justice there is no simple correspondence between deed and suffering, for one has to consider whether the deed was done willingly or not, as he indicates. That's one point. And also an example which I used before: one cannot punish high treason with high treason, and one can also not punish an eye with an eye, literally understood, *jus* [. . .] This he has in mind. Now here he speaks of this fact—he comes here now to this narrower view: men cannot stand it if they cannot requite evil with evil. In a way they are treated like slaves: they can't give back. And another consideration: men cannot live comfortably if they do not requite good with good. They know they must even start with doing good, with a kind of doing good, indeed, which pays: commutative justice. Here he mentions the Graces, *charitos* in Greek. And *charis* in Greek means both "grace" and "gratitude." It is very interesting that he mentions the goddesses of grace in this book of justice. He does not mention the goddess of right, *dikē*. I believe nothing is more characteristic of Aristotle, of the spirit of the *Ethics*, [than the fact] that when he discusses justice he mentions the Graces and does not mention the stern goddess of right. That is what I always felt when I compared him in this unforgivable way to Jane Austen: the gracefulness of Aristotle. This is something which is characteristic of the whole book. Think of his treatment of courage, where so many things which we regard as essential to courage are omitted. Now let us read only one more passage, in 1133a21. He develops this at great length: the commutative justice as *the* bond of society, the needs of all for the service of the others. It is very remarkable that he speaks more extensively about commutative justice proper than about penal justice and about distributive justice. That's very strange.

Mr. Burnam: It is also strange, too, when he speaks about distributive justice there's so much emphasis on the mathematical part. He doesn't discuss the various criteria of distributive justice.

LS: Yes, well, first let us read this, 1133a22. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
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. (1133a20-22)

LS: Well, this is the problem. Isn't it? I mean, if all were shoemakers or all were cultivators of the soil, there would be no exchange, no need for exchange. The need for

[xxx] Cf. Plato, *Gorgias* 469a–479e.

exchange presupposes a kind of inequality, diversity, say, the shoemaker and the physician. Only on this basis is exchange possible, on the basis of diversity. But the products of the two artisans are of different worth: a shoe and a healing from a severe illness, or the making of a bed and the building of a house. How can there be a relation of justice? That's the question. And now how does he go on?

Mr. Reinken:
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];[xxxi] 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: In other words, exchange is obviously necessary, but the exchange must be equal. Otherwise the exchange would break down. Is this in need of proof? I mean, because if the exchange were not equal the one side would regard itself as defrauded, as simply losing, and it would no longer exchange. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
It is therefore necessary that all commodities shall be measured by some one standard, as was said before. And this standard is in reality demand, which is what holds everything together—

LS: Yes, "need" is the better, more literal translation. "Need."[xxxii] The shoemaker needs the physician and the physician needs the shoes and hence the shoemaker. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
since if men cease to have wants or if their wants alter, exchange will go on no longer, or will be on different lines. But need 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 it can be altered and rendered useless at will. (1133a23-32)

LS: Yes. Now you see, Mr. Burnam,[xxxiii] the very recondite act to which Aristotle refers in order to explain the mathematical character is money. You know that money is obviously numerical. You know, you find invariably numbers on the bills and the coins. It is necessary to find a common measure for things which are in themselves incommensurable but become commensurable only with a view to [the] one thing which they have in common—they are objects of needs—on this basis: the basis of exchange. And therefore whether a payment was just means: Did he pay the right price? And this is invariably a kind of number. Even if, as Aristotle points out at the end of the chapter, when there was not yet money, there was still a numerical relation: one house, five beds, for example. They must have been very poor houses and very elegant beds.

[xxxi] The brackets appear in Rackham's translation.
[xxxii] Strauss translates *chreia*.
[xxxiii] The transcriber notes that Strauss refers to Mr. Burnam's recent question about distributive justice's mathematical element.

Mr. Burnam: I'm not sure that I understand the mechanism that's operating here. Is he saying that justice in this sense requires something like what you might call today a free market mechanism?

LS: No! That is a very great difficulty, but Aristotle speaks here of what came to be called later on the just price, the *just* price. The market price is as such not the just price, but Aristotle does not develop it. Thomas, in his commentary on the passage, says that the just price is determined by labor and expense.[xxxiv] I mean, much more labor is needed for building a house and much more material is needed (expense) than for making a bed. Is it not clear? So there is a kind of intrinsic relation between the worth of the things to be exchanged. The exchange is just if the just price is paid, and the just price is exactly not the one produced by the market. But Aristotle does not speak explicitly of the just price. That's of some importance.

Mr. Burnam: That poses the question of the thing you hear about a truck driver and a schoolteacher. There may be more need for a truck driver—

LS: Yes, because you also have to consider the danger of being murdered on the road and the very small danger of being murdered in a classroom. Yes, this has also to do with it.

Mr. Burnam: And yet how would you argue from this, then, that the teacher should get more remuneration than the truck driver?

LS: Yes, well, they get much less remuneration, and I believe one reason is because it is much more dangerous to be a truck driver than to be a teacher. It is not universally true, I know, but in most places, I would say. For example, I have never heard of any assault on a teacher in the University of Chicago in a classroom. Outside? That's another story. Well, why does a physician get more money than a shoemaker, ordinarily? I think one has to take into consideration, as we all do—Aristotle doesn't develop it—that it requires much more expense to become a physician than to become a shoemaker, and therefore this is also taken into consideration. Now what is so striking in this section is in the first place one thing: here, regarding commutative justice, the question [of] why it is good is answered by Aristotle. It is obviously necessary for any higher society to have exchange; to have [a] division of labor, and therefore to have exchange. And exchange is not possible if there is not fair exchange, because those who are habitually defrauded will not produce. So here the question of the end and purpose of this particular virtue is made massively clear. It is also important that commutative justice does not come fully into its own except through money.[10] [There] are underdeveloped forms, [such as] the barter. Money means *nomos*, something which is established by the *polis* and depends entirely on it, as he has stated. But the difficulty—and this I think is a subject for which I wish we had Mr. Cropsey[xxxv] here because, as you know, he is not only an economist but also a

[xxxiv] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, §983.

[xxxv] Joseph Cropsey was one of Strauss's colleagues in the political science department and co-editor with him of *History of Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963, 1972, 1987).

student of the history of economic thought. This was of course one of the gravest issues and [one] affecting everyday life in every point in the modern centuries when modern economics emerged, with its rejection of the notion of the just price, of an intrinsic just price; and the just price is [instead] simply that which is produced by the market, supply and demand. There is no moral criterion, whereas here Aristotle seems to imply it, and Thomas Aquinas clearly states it. The question can perhaps be stated as follows: How is commutative justice affected by compulsion? We have seen that when people act under compulsion they may decently do things which they otherwise may not do. The example of Aristotle [is when] the family of a man is in the hands of a tyrant: Is the man obliged to disobey the tyrant, which means in practical terms to be responsible for the torturing and killing of his nearest and dearest? A grave question. You know? And the question is: Are there any actions which may not be done under this kind of compulsion? This [is a] question to which Aristotle does not give an answer, or rather [gives] only an ambiguous answer. Now for example, the famous case: bad harvests or epidemics [or] the need for physicians. If the physicians raise their demands because they have to be up the whole day and night and everyone needs them, everyone is willing to pay any price in order to get the physicians. Similarly in the case of bad harvests and a famine situation, where everyone is willing to pay any price in order to get the minimum of food he and his family need. And this was traditionally regarded as an atrocious act, to exploit such compulsory situations. That was underlying this idea of the just price, and therefore [we have] the notion of maximum prices as something to be established by the government and [as a] requirement of justice. And then the opposite view is of course [that] the only safe and possible thing is to leave everything to the mechanism of the market. That's the opposite view. I cannot give you a discussion of that because I simply do not know enough of it, but this was a crucial thing in the development of the modern economics: you know, that there is a sphere of a self-regulating market and morality cannot enter in any way except in this purely accidental thing, that you can have laws against dilution of food and this kind of thing. In other words, preventing fraud. This of course is possible, but not beyond that. Yes, Miss Huckins?

Ms. Huckins: I'm sorry, but I forgot what you said a little while ago. Would you explain again to what extent money can be said to be a measure of artifacts as much as nature is a measure of natural things?

LS: Well, take the simple thing. I suppose if you take a pencil, it is not difficult to know or to find out how much it costs. Let us say ten cents (I haven't bought a pencil in a long time) or five cents. And what would such a table cost? What would such a building cost? All things have some prices which vary from situation to situation, but in every situation there is a reasonable clarity about the range of the prices for any kind of object. Now this means that all things have become commensurable, all things of this kind. Aristotle reminds us of exceptions. For example, if you had an heirloom, this is in a way priceless, because it has its value for you and for no one else; therefore it cannot be expressed in monetary terms. But all other things which are in themselves equally usable by everybody else have these prices in money. Money is this equalizer. What's the difficulty here?

Ms. Huckins: Can it be said to be a standard for the worth of things? For example, if they are needed, then this is worth. Aristotle also says that nature makes nothing in vain . . . You can turn it around and say that everything that is, is necessary.

LS: Thomas in his commentary makes a remark, a wise remark, that a little mouse is of much greater dignity and in this sense worth more than a barrel of gold, because a mouse is a living being and the gold is inanimate.[xxxvi] But you know quite well what the worth of a mouse in value, in monetary terms is: zero, and probably less than zero. So you cannot start from that. The starting point is human need. Men don't need mice. They do need, indirectly and even directly, gold; for example, for ornaments, for adorning themselves, and further [. . .] So we must start from human need and not from any broader consideration which is wholly irrelevant as far as human exchange is concerned. In other words, *qua* exchangers we are not metaphysicians who look at things from the point of view of their rank in the order of beings. That's impossible. But we look at them from their value with a view to our needs alone. Yes, of course you can say the greatest need is for air because we cannot live without it for a single day, and air is the least expensive thing in the world because there is so much of it. And therefore the further consideration is not only need but also scarcity, the other consideration which in the economic doctrine has developed from the days of Aristotle on and [has undergone] certain important modifications in modern times. I mean, what is the precise difficulty which you have?

Ms. Huckins: If you start with need, is money in its best use an intrinsic measure or standard for artifacts the way nature is a standard of the natural things?

LS: Yes, this cannot be done. I mean, the most wonderful work of art, if it does not find any interested buyers—you must have heard something about what people paid for some now famous paintings, say, fifty years ago when these painters were still unknown and not yet accepted. You know this kind of thing. That has nothing to do with the intrinsic worth. It has to do with the need or, if you want to say, with the demand, and that is of course absolutely necessary, because we are not speaking here about anything except the justice in exchange. I mean, the discussions of Marx, for example, in the *Kapital*, they all are connected with this, with the question of what is just. For example, what is just in the case of wages? Does the laborer get his fair wages? In which way is this to be determined? Merely by supply and demand? This could conceivably mean [that] if there is a great oversupply of workers and you can have them for the bare minimum, the lowest subsistence level, this is a fair wage. Or must it take other things into consideration? You know, the great fights regarding social policy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The fair price and the fair wage: these are the key concepts belonging to commutative justice as Aristotle understands it. And Aristotle surely did not mean that this is to be established by a simple mechanism. The great fight which took place in England around 1640 between the Old Regime, Charles I, Archbishop Laud on the one hand, and the Long Parliament, had very much to do with this issue. The parliament was opposed to the constant interference of the Old Regime of Charles and Archbishop Laud with economics, and the Long Parliament didn't want to have anything of this kind. That was

[xxxvi] In his commentary Thomas compared the mouse with a pearl. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, §981.

a great issue. This is clearly and beautifully described in Froude's *History of England* in the introduction; [the] introductory part.[xxxvii] This was the issue. And Tawney, in his *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*.[xxxviii] But of course one must not merely assume that Aristotle's view regarding justice in exchange is identical with that of the Christian tradition. I mean, that would need a careful study. Aristotle doesn't say anything about just prices or just wages, of course. I mean, how could there be just wages if there is slavery? No, this we will take up next time: what you discussed in your paper at the beginning, that there cannot be justice proper between the master and the slave or, for that matter, between the father and the children. Which doesn't mean, of course, that a master or a father cannot be unjust; obviously he can, but in a very limited way. If a father takes away money which his child has in a piggy bank, he does not rob or steal. He has a right to do it. In the case of a fellow citizen, it is theft or robbery, whatever the case may be. The same applies to the slaves. The slave has no property of his own. It doesn't mean that there are no relations, but they are very limited relations. I will explain it next time.

Student: Did you say Hume's history?

LS: Froude. No, no, Hume was—had no questions about economics, but Froude.[xxxix]

Different Student: Who did you say wrote *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*?

LS: That's Tawney. Tawney.[xl] When he discusses the issue of the civil war, he speaks of that too. But Froude states it in more detail, this point, than Tawney does. Yes?

Student: I have a more general question. We were speaking earlier of the relation between moral virtue and the *polis*, and you said that it seems that if there were a best regime these two things would be identical, but that it is no accident that the best regime cannot come about.

LS: Yes, then we go [on] a bit about Aristotle because Aristotle never say[s] it cannot come about. All right. Yes, for clarity's sake. Well, if it cannot be, then of course universal justice will inevitably occupy a lower rank, because universal justice will then obey very imperfect laws; and this is something much lower than, as Aristotle puts it, to be a law unto oneself in the right manner. To follow the law of reason, let us put it this way: [it] would then be higher than to be merely obedient to the imperfect laws of society, would it not?

Same Student: Isn't it also important that Aristotle doesn't say this? In other words, are there any grounds on which one could say definitely this is no answer?

[xxxvii] James Anthony Froude, *History of England*, 12 vols. (New York: Scribner, 1856–1870).
[xxxviii] R. H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism: A Historical Study* (London: John Murray, 1926).
[xxxix] Strauss spells Froude's name.
[xl] Strauss spells Tawney's name.

LS: What is no answer?

Same Student: That the two cannot coincide, do not coincide. It's not accidental that they don't coincide: they *cannot* coincide.

LS: Yes, but this leads of course then to a depreciation of the *polis*. Doesn't it? And this, however—Aristotle will do that toward the end of the *Ethics*, but the point is [that] this is a very grave thing, to depreciate the *polis*. And Aristotle therefore waits with it, so to speak, until the last moment. It is good for us to act on the premise that the *polis* can be good, because all improvements, all political interest, is based on that.

Same Student: Yes, but doesn't it go beyond depreciating the *polis*, since our chance to gain any sort of insight into moral virtue depends on the *polis*?

LS: In order to understand the classics, one must always contrast them with the modern solutions. The modern solutions are much more simple theoretically and simply say that political society has no other function but to guarantee, say, peace (Hobbes's view), self-preservation, or in the highest case (not in the highest case, only enlarged), comfortable self-preservation. And all concern with the morality of the citizens is none of the state's business. That is the modern solution. But you can see [that] this also leads to very great difficulties, this simple solution, because you cannot have any civil society which is worth being called a civil society[11] [when] you do not have some of the virtues, surely,[12] [when] you do not have a considerable degree of public spiritedness generally. So the virtues come in willy nilly, and then you are confronted with the question: should you regard the virtues only as means in the service of comfortable self-preservation, or is this not an injustice done to the virtues, to look at them only from this point of view? This is the point; and if you take this into consideration you see that Plato and Aristotle's position was broader, more encompassing, than the modern view is. You know, that there are so many difficulties and loose ends and what have you in Aristotle's teaching is undeniable, but the justification for that is exactly the breadth of the consideration. Aristotle gives the *polis* the greatest chance to be a perfect human society. He is aware of the practical impossibility of its being a perfect human society, but it will never be as good as it can be if the maximum of what it, as it were, tends to be or wishes to be is not clearly visualized. That is, I think, the justification. Mr. McAtee?

Mr. McAtee: To return to the question which you took up at the beginning, the way in which virtue reproduces itself as both the end and the form. Do I state it correctly?

LS: No. Well, I didn't say it reproduces itself, but the form is the end. Yes. In other words, this is also something easy to understand: to raise the question, "Why should I be decent?" is being indecent. Therefore, from this point of view it is very easy to say that you cannot raise the question. That is a strong point in Kant's position—Kant, who made this, I believe, clearer than any other man. It was indeed easy for Kant, you can say, to do it because *the* competitor of moral virtue was from the very beginning theoretical perfection. By destroying the possibility of theoretical perfection, by allegedly proving the impossibility of speculative metaphysics, Kant destroyed *the* competitor of moral

virtue. Is this not clear? I mean, is this point clear: that, to use a simple term, if metaphysics is impossible, if knowledge of the thing-in-itself, as Kant puts it, is impossible, if knowledge of the soul as it is in itself is impossible, then theoretical knowledge can have only a very low rank. It can only be knowledge of the phenomena, as Kant puts it. And then moral virtue necessarily is higher in rank than theoretical perfection.

Mr. McAtee: I tried to answer this on the basis, though, not of the theoretical virtues but just of the moral virtues, and the total thing I came up with was this: that I thought about a man, a very decent man, magnanimous man, who, for example, was walking around the courtyard and then very young men see him and they admire his dignity and the way that he is, and they somehow imitate him, his looks and somehow his virtue—

LS: Yes, but if it were his intention to act as a model then he would not—

Mr. McAtee: [. . .]

LS: No, then we see the great absurdity that the virtue of everyone is to serve as a guide for the virtue of everybody else. So everyone is there for somebody else, and no one is there for himself. This leads to absurdities.

Mr. McAtee: No, but I mean, isn't it true that the fact that he is virtuous is at the same time for himself and that it is—and this makes it worthy of being imitated?

LS: Yes, sure. All right, but if you develop that, it will come back to the same problem—

Mr. McAtee: In other words, is there any *erōs* involved?

LS: Well, that is not an Aristotelian question. It's difficult enough to understand Aristotle as he is; let us not bring in something of which he hasn't spoken. But what you say amounts to this: Is not magnanimity, then, because it is concerned with the perfection of the individual, as such inferior to justice as universal justice? Of course it is inferior, as Aristotle says. But then the difficulty arises: this universal justice is part of the social order. It presupposes the social order. It presupposes the laws. The dignity of universal justice depends on the quality of the laws which it obeys. And then you get into the whole difficulty into which you do not get in the case of a magnanimous man, because a magnanimous man is guided by the law in himself and not by the civil law, except accidentally. If there is an *aristē politeia*, a best regime, if it is in existence, then of course the status of justice is definitely higher than that of magnanimity. But if civil society is always imperfect, if it is never the *aristē politeia*, then the status of the individuals rises accordingly. Is it not clear? And simply speaking, one can state Aristotle's view as follows: "I have seen a number of excellent men, Plato, for example, and some others. I have not seen many excellent cities. As a matter of fact, I haven't seen a single excellent city." Now this can be an accident; it was so hitherto, but in the future it might come. Aristotle, I think, shows you, when you study the *Politics* carefully, that it is not an accident, that the problem which the city has to fulfill is of such a complexity that

the chances of its being excellent are extremely small. This doesn't mean that there is not an important difference between a less imperfect and a most imperfect *polis*. That's terribly important. But still, the decisive question: Is the level which the individual can reach not higher than the level which a society can reach? And I believe the answer, both of Plato and Aristotle, [is that] the individual can reach a higher rank, and therefore the rank of magnanimity will be higher than that of universal justice because universal justice is that highest thing only in the case[13] [that] the laws are all wise. And this requires that the legislator, the sovereign, is wise, and this is not to be expected. I mean, relative wisdom, yes, but nothing more that that. Not simple wisdom.

Mr. McAtee: Something that only occurred to me when you read it that I wanted to ask you about is the temples of the graces. He says that we establish these statues because we want to show that one should return kindness, that is, equanimity of a kind.

LS: Equanimity? Oh no. Equanimity means to have an equal mind whether the going is good or the going is bad.

Mr. McAtee: I stated it badly. My point was simply this, that if we should return kindness, what do we do in the case of unkindness?

LS: Yes, Aristotle says[14] [that] most people say, "Hit back." But Aristotle says much less about hitting back than about giving back because he is a nice man, because he likes the graces.

Mr. McAtee: Isn't this simply a special case of the old story, helping friends and harming enemies?

LS: Sure, but with the emphasis on helping friends and deemphasis on hurting enemies.

Mr. McAtee: So it is definitely a political virtue.

LS: Well, in a way all virtues are political. In a way, because man is a social animal, but there is still the difference whether the concern is primarily with the *polis* or primarily with the perfection of the individual.

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[1] Deleted "and reproduce it."
[2] Deleted "he did not mean there courage."
[3] Deleted "here."
[4] Deleted "and the end."
[5] Deleted "the ruler."
[6] Deleted "he is."
[7] Moved "say."
[8] Deleted "well."
[9] Deleted "if."
[10] Deleted "the."
[11] Deleted "in which."
[12] Deleted "in which."
[13] Deleted "if."
[14] Deleted "so."

Session 11: May 16, 1963
Natural right/positive right; ignorance and justice
(Book 5.6-11)

Leo Strauss: [In progress] —Now you thought almost constantly of Plato's *Republic*, and in one respect that is very good because surely Aristotle knew it and pondered over it, but on the other hand it is very hard to find direct connections between the particular teachings of the fifth book and those of the *Republic*.[i] The most striking difference would seem to be, as you stated at the beginning, that the key question in the *Republic* is: Is justice good? Now you said that contrary to appearance, Aristotle does take up this question. And where?

Mr. Boyan: Well, I said that contrary to appearance, he does take up the question of the nature of justice.

LS: Yes, sure. Yes, but what about this question, "Is justice good?" Which of course cannot be answered if you do not know what justice is.

Mr. Boyan: Well, that I felt he has to take [it] up, or at least in talking about justice he has shown that there are difficulties.

LS: Yes, but can one not say that in the dark section of the fifth book he comes very close to taking up the question of whether justice is good, in the last page of it?

Mr. Boyan: [As to whether Dr. Strauss means at the point where Aristotle discusses suicide.][ii]

LS: In the last chapter. Yes, in this connection, when he discusses suicide. Then he says, "Is doing injustice worse than suffering injustice or vice versa?" That is the way in which Plato talks about justice. I didn't quite understand what you meant by saying that Aristotle might have said that Thomas Aquinas, if he erred, erred harmlessly. What do you mean by that?

Mr. Boyan: Well, I felt that you could use the doctrine of the moral virtues again, that the right would be the mean. There would be two ways of making mistakes. You could misinterpret Aristotle's teaching the way Thomas did, which would not create any harm. But on the other hand, by coming to some doctrine where anything goes—

[i] Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.
[ii] As noted by the transcriber.

LS: Yes, sure. That one can surely say. I mean, very generally stated, both are on the side of the angels. That I believe is true.

You made another point, if I understand you correctly, that particular justice is natural justice, natural right, and universal justice is not natural right.

Mr. Boyan: It would encompass it, but it could also be more.

LS: Yes, there is something to that. We will take it up. The last point which I would like to take up is this: justice is not a mean as the other virtues are means. This was a subject on which you dwelt for quite some time. How did you interpret it? You tried to solve this question by linking it up with the question of *erōs*. This I didn't understand.

Mr. Boyan: Well, I mean, it shows that a man cannot be treated unjustly, because we must extend our definition, must we not, and say no one acts contrary to his wish. Then later on the translation uses the same word, "wish," to say the incontinent man might do things against his wish. Therefore, there I interpret "wish" as meaning his idea of the good, and "contrary to his wish" I interpret as being desire, want. No one suffers injustice unless he wants to . . .

LS: I believe the context is somewhat different. Let us see when we come to that. But let us take this undeniable fact, that Aristotle does not admit that justice is a virtue between two vices, whereas all other virtues are between two vices. This is a difficult assertion. Now what is justice, very generally stated? And let us speak of particular justice. Now what does it mean? A man who does not want more than he deserves, more of goods and less of evils. And the man who wants less of the evils and more of the goods is what?

Mr. Boyan: He is unjust.

LS: And what about the man who wants to have less of the goods and more of the evils?

Mr. Boyan: He doesn't exist.

LS: Is this so certain? There is a real question here. Let us say the just man is the one who insists on his rights. The unjust man wants to have more than is his right. And could there not be an excess, the man who does not insist on his rights at all or to a very mild degree?

Mr. Boyan: Sure.

LS: Yes. Who? There are two forms at least of it.

Mr. Boyan: Well, the fellow who doesn't know any better.

LS: Let us call him, with a colloquial expression, the sucker. This is one way. This is one faulty extreme, which is not meant by Aristotle. But then there is something more noble than the sucker who also wouldn't insist on his rights.

Mr. Boyan: Socrates.

LS: Yes. A man who is not sufficiently concerned with wealth, honors, and the other goods which are exposed to other men. That could also be. That cannot be a vice, surely, and perhaps this is a question which one would have to consider, because obviously justice presupposes that one attaches great value to those goods with which justice is concerned, the goods which are subject to interference by others.

Mr. Boyan: Aristotle did mention that case when he says some men do seem to take less willingly, but he says they really get more of another good.

LS: Well, does Socrates not get more of another good?

Mr. Boyan: Yes, he does. Therefore he is covered.

LS: Yes, sure. Yes, but still it would not fall under justice proper, because he does not enter the arena. Yes?

Mr. Boyan: Yes, I would agree that what Socrates does one would not consider to be a vice, but in some circumstances one might consider this sucker type. Take a Negro in the South who doesn't want to vote.

LS: No, that would not be the sucker. The sucker would be a man[1] [who] simply would be unaware of what is involved, you know, and is too stupid. But [this is] someone who knows quite well what it is about and simply says: It is not worth the effort; there are higher things. Well, I believe what you wanted to say, Mr. Boyan, is this: he has to consider the others and he would be a man lacking public spiritedness. In other words, he would not merely defend his own rights. This can always look a bit petty, the concern with one's own rights. But if by standing up for one's own rights one stands up for what is simply right then it is different. Do you see? In other words, the sucker is one possibility. The other man, who is above the sphere, could be said to lack public spiritedness. That [is something] *you* should say from your point of view, which is very well known to me. Mr. Reinken?

Mr. Reinken: I wanted to draw the distinction which might straighten out the matter of the excess corresponding to justice. The amount of things which Socrates takes can be measured as what he takes from exchanges of goods; that is, things which would be good for Socrates and good for Protagoras. And justice has to do with taking your fair share with respect to how much money per head. But there could be a vice of pusillanimity: not taking enough of the things that are good for you as you.

LS: Yes, if it is pusillanimity, then it is surely a vice. But [what] if it is not pusillanimity, if it is due to a sober consideration that these are not things sufficiently worth it?

Mr. Reinken: I was trying to show the parallel between magnanimity and justice. Magnanimity is taking what you are entitled to of the particular goods suitable to you as you, and justice is taking what you are entitled to of the world's things.

LS: Yes, but we have seen that there is a subtle shift[2] [from] the magnanimous man,[3] the man who demands these honors which he truly deserves, to the man who is not concerned with honors because he knows his worth above all. You remember the transition from Alcibiades to Socrates which takes place in the magnanimous man. There is a kind of magnanimity possible which does not claim these honors although, so to say, objectively knowing that he would deserve them. Like Socrates, who says, "Well, you want to show me what I deserve; all right, give me the greatest honor which the city can give, give me that free feeding [whatever the proper expression—LS] in the Prytaneum." But Socrates was never seriously concerned with having the greatest honor which the city of Athens could give. He only says: If you want to do something to honor or punish me to give me what I deserve, only the highest honor which you can give would be proper for your sake. Socrates didn't want it. He only said, as it were: You want to act according to your notion of justice, please. Socrates didn't want to have it. Socrates had enough food which he liked without this formal honor by the city. Mr. Weissberger. Oh no, I'm sorry, Mr. Wenger.

Mr. Wenger: This might be moving a little bit ahead. I wonder if the man who does not demand his due even though worthy of highest honors would be equivalent to the man of divine virtue mentioned in book 7?

LS: Let us wait until we come there. Yes, Mr. McAtee?

Mr. McAtee: This question of justice: that there is an extreme of injustice but not the opposite, which you may call the lack of justice. I think of a clear example which I think is close to the thing that Aristotle has in mind. Take the example of someone who is not intentionally just for the sake of justice, but someone who is in love.

LS: Why is[4] justice involved [here]? Do you mean friendship? Well, no, let us then wait until we come to friendship, to the book on friendship. Good.

Now first I would like to begin with this general remark. This section contains Aristotle's utterance on natural right, the sole utterance, because what he says about the subject in the *Rhetoric* is not Aristotle's doctrine of natural right but is the doctrine of how natural right is to be used in forensic rhetoric; interestingly enough, in forensic rhetoric, not in deliberative rhetoric.[iii] That's interesting. So when the question is war and peace, or even legislation, deliberative rhetoric, the natural right does not enter. In forensic rhetoric it does. That is important. The Aristotelian teaching regarding natural right we have in this single page of the *Ethics* or in that single page of the *Magna Moralia*,[iv] if the *Magna Moralia*[5] [is] Aristotle's work. Mr. Butterworth?

[iii] Cf. Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1373b.
[iv] Aristotle, *Magna Moralia* 1194b–1195a.

Mr. Butterworth: Just one question before we start. I didn't catch the other extreme when you were talking about the sucker and the small-souled man.

LS: No. That's the same. I mean, that Socrates looks in a way like the sucker: he gets less and he gets always less.[v] Yes, but now I must really go on.

Mr. Butterworth: What is the other half of this? If there's a defect, is there an excess?

LS: Yes, this is my question. There is an obvious excess, or defect rather. The excess is injustice. There's one obvious defect: that's the sucker who doesn't know what he is doing. But the interesting defect is that of Socrates, because that cannot possibly be called a vice. Now let us now turn to a coherent discussion and there will be no interruption for some time.

Well, this section on natural right, as I said, is one page and it is very difficult to understand. And considering the enormous importance of the subject, that's very strange. But his difficulty is not limited to the section on natural right. The whole second half of book 5 is the most difficult section of the *Ethics* hitherto. I mean, we have had quite a few individual passages which were difficult, but on the whole the structure and the plan was lucid. In this second half, the plan becomes very obscure. Now the first half, we can say, ends at 1134a14 to 16. "Regarding justice and injustice, what the nature of each is, this may suffice. Also regarding the just and unjust in general." So we know now what justice is and what the just is and the opposites [of these].

Now what subjects does he take up thereafter? Or rather, what are the main points which we must keep in mind for the rest? We have understood one thing: universal justice is the highest virtue. Universal justice means lawabidingness. It is the highest virtue and it is based on the equation of the just and the legal. But the just and the legal are not simply equal. The just is only the legal "in a way." Then we have learned about particular justice, commutative and distributive justice. Now the very distinction between particular justice and universal justice implies that particular justice is not legal, which doesn't mean it's illegal [but that] it is natural. I mean, the relations of distributions, you know, these famous proportions, these are intrinsically right relations and not dependent on law. This we must keep in mind. The clearest case of particular justice we had was that of exchange, of peaceful and voluntary exchange, this discussion where the purpose and usefulness of particular justice became perfectly clear. Men cannot live well if they do not exchange goods and services, and men won't do that if there is not some fairness in the exchange. Now this, however, we must not forget: this kind of justice, the justice of exchange, while being very important of course, is not something very high. No great subtlety is required for being just in this sense. Is this clear? I mean, to be an honest drug store man, that is not something terrifically difficult. It's much less difficult than to be brave on the battlefield. In extreme situations it may even be difficult, that's true, but only in extreme situations. Now what is the Platonic parallel to this kind of justice, the justice of exchange, of mere

[v] In parentheses here, a note probably made by the transcriber: "Beginning of the eighth book of the *Republic* where this is described in a very impressive scene, how the best regime decays."

exchange of goods and services and nothing else added to it? Where is it discussed in the *Republic*, in Mr. Dry's source?

Mr. Reinken: Book 2.

LS: Book 2. But that's too general, because there is so much in book 2.

Mr. Reinken: In the first city?

LS: Yes. How is that first city called?

Mr. Reinken: The city of pigs.[vi]

LS: The city of pigs. It is also called the true city. The true city: that is usually forgotten. "City of pigs" is said by Glaucon; "the true city" is said by Socrates. Now Socrates can be presumed to have been more competent than Glaucon was, especially since Glaucon makes a gross blunder: the city of pigs is in fact a city without pigs. Pigs come in only with the corruption of the city of pigs. So that's quite interesting. Good.

Now the other point we mentioned already before: that there is only one vice opposed to justice, not two. Now when we turn to this second half which begins in 1134a17, what is the key point here? Now the key point is one may act unjustly without being unjust. Well, let us read that.

Mr. Reinken:
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: Yes. You see, that's an extraordinary assertion: where to draw the line. How often does he have to steal in order to be a thief? Yes, you see, and this is probably very hard, to answer this question in quantitative terms. The distinction between the just and the unjust man is obscured, but on the other hand it is undeniable that, say, a single unjust act does not make a man a simply unjust man. This is a crucial point. Now this doing injustice, the single unjust act or the number of single unjust acts, rather than injustice is the overall theme of the second half of the fifth book. What this means is for the time being not very clear. But Aristotle seems to drop that immediately, after a strange reference to one particular kind of justice which has been discussed in the first half, namely, the relation of the just to the *antipeponthos*. How is this translated?

[vi] Plato, *Republic* 372d.

Mr. Reinken: Reciprocity.

LS: Reciprocity. What this means is completely unclear for the time being. Let us leave this difficulty open. What does he then say? Then he makes a very emphatic sentence. "But it must not escape us that what we seek is both the simply just and the politically just." Now it is intelligible to say the simply just and the politically just are the same. That's the way in which it is understood, for example, by Thomas Aquinas and I believe also by all modern commentators, as far as I could see. But I'm not so certain, because he says "both." Maybe there is a distinction between the simply just and the politically just, but this we can leave open for the time being, and surely he will speak in the sequel of the politically just. Now the politically just is that justice which obtains among free and equal men, men who are independent of each other, fellow citizens. So what obtains within the family, say, between the master and the slave or the father and the children, is subpolitical because they are not independent. There cannot be any possibility of stealing, for example. Well, the child may steal from the father, but the father cannot steal from the child, and similar considerations apply to master and slave. So in other words, that is a rather undeveloped form of justice. Many things which are relevant among fellow citizens are irrelevant in this relation and therefore one can say full-grown justice exists only among people who are independent of each other but live together in the same *polis*. Now there was some difficulty which you had.

Student: No, I just wondered if maybe this distinction was what was meant by justice without qualification. If political justice is the full-grown justice, we consider just that and not the other parts.

LS: No, no. It could be—very simply, what I suspect is here implied is this: a society of free and equals. And this can be a democracy or any other form of republican government, let us say. But what if actual kingship, as Aristotle says somewhere, is the best regime, you know, superior to it? Now then of course this would be not political justice as defined but another one, and that might be the simply just: say, the absolutely superior king ruling [his society] like a father[6]. That might be higher. Now that may seem funny, but I'm sorry, Aristotle says repeatedly that kingship, the right kind of kingship is the best regime, in the *Ethics*[vii] and in the *Politics*.[viii] But it would only unnecessarily obscure the issue. Let us forget about this subtlety, about what might be the difference between political justice and absolute justice, and the let us concentrate on political justice. To repeat, for all practical purposes the highest form of justice is that obtaining among independent men living together as members of civil society. Obviously there are many more relations of justice among fellow citizens than among people who are not fellow citizens. Obviously. I mean, think of any question of election to office, this whole sphere, or fighting together in a battle, even in war, where they are all united. Now it is in this context that Aristotle takes up the question of natural right. Let us turn then to this passage, 1134b18. "Of the political right, one part is natural, the other part is legal, and natural is that which has everywhere the same force," which obtains everywhere and not by virtue of having been voted or not,

[vii] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1160a36–37.
[viii] See, for instance, the discussion in *Politics* 1286a–1288a.

but legal is that where, to begin with, it doesn't make any difference how you settle it, but once they have established it, it does make a difference. For example, right and left driving: that is in itself utterly irrelevant, but once it is settled as a law it does make a difference: you go to jail when you do the wrong thing. Good. This distinction is perfectly clear, isn't it? A kind of justice which depends on human arrangements and a kind of justice which does not depend on human arrangements, which is intrinsically right, intrinsically right or extrinsically right. This is perfectly intelligible, I believe. If not, I would like to hear that. I mean, take the extreme case of left driving and right driving contrasted with such a simple rule like first come, first served. Good. Yes?

Same Student: What does that mean? It's intrinsically right, with the emphasis on right.

LS: All right, it is always good when one raises such questions to think of negative cases where it is massively clear. Think of a law which would say everyone whose family name begins with the letters A to C does not have to pay taxes. Everyone would say that is an unfair law, because the beginning of the family name has no possible relation to the requirements of civil society. And, in addition, it is so complicated. You would have to have a rider: no family names can henceforth be changed, because there would be a big flight of all the Browns and so on, to other things. But the key point is [this]: what Aristotle says is in itself clear, but [he gives] no examples. Now he gives two examples of merely legal right: that one should ransom people for one mina (which is some Greek coin), and that one should sacrifice a goat but not two sheep. Good. Everyone would agree that this is not intrinsically wrong. To ransom them for half a mina or for two minae wouldn't make any difference, and also it would not make any difference whether you sacrifice two sheep or a single goat or one sheep and two goats, and so on and so on. At least from the point of view of natural reason it wouldn't make any difference. But still, these are examples of legal right. But what of natural right? I believe what we have to do is to generalize from that. To ransom a prisoner for this and this amount, that is legal. But what about the duty to ransom prisoners? Or more generally stated, is it not right that the *polis* compensates the members who have suffered in the service of the *polis* more than others? Is it not fair that they be compensated by the *polis*? [7]I think everyone would say yes. If you can help it, why should these fellows stay in Korea (wherever it was) for the end of their days as household slaves or working in quarries? You know, this kind of thing happened. Is it not the duty of the *polis* to compensate them? I mean, if they were traitors, no, but if they were bona fide prisoners of war, sure, it's fair to do that. Or also—now the second case, that is more unfamiliar to us, but easy to understand from any earlier point of view. There must be sacrifices to the gods; or still more generally, worship of the gods is by natural right. How to worship them, this depends on positive law. Whether of the city or of the oracle of Delphi it doesn't make any difference, because that is of course also positive law, what the priestess in Delphi would say. Is this clear? And we can enlarge on that, and then we arrive at the notion [that] natural right is that right without which no *polis* is possible. Yes? Good. Now let us go on. Yes, and then he gives[8] other examples. For example, special laws, private laws: to sacrifice to Brasidas, as some cities in northern Greece did. Brasidas was a famous Spartan commander. That's of course clearly not natural right. They might have decided not to worship him but only put up a monument to him or what[ever]; it would have been perfectly sufficient. And the decrees: decrees are

the individual decisions as distinguished from laws; for example, to wage war, or [to decide] on the basis of a law this man will go to jail. Yes?

Student: This conception of natural right depends on the existence of human beings.

LS: Yes, sure. This was no difficulty for Aristotle, because he believed in the eternity of the visible universe, and therefore in the eternity of the human species. If there is no eternity, then there arises something like the difficulty which you mention. Good. Do you have it, Mr. Reinken?

Mr. Reinken:
Some people think that all rules of justice are merely—

LS: Yes, "rules of justice" is of course a word which never occurs: "that all just things."[ix] Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
think that all just things are merely conventional,[x] because whereas a law of nature is immutable and has the same validity everywhere—

LS: Yes, "what is by nature right."[xi] I mean, law never occurs here. Yes, "is unchangeable and has everywhere the same force," as he had said before.

Mr. Reinken:
same force, as, for instance, a fire burns both here and in Persia, the just things are seen to vary.[xii] (1134b23-27)

LS: You see this example: fire burns in Greece as well as in Persia, because this is a natural quality of the fire. But if you look, say, at the inheritance laws of Greece and of Persia—I have never looked at them, but I suppose you would find quite a few differences. Why? Because it is not natural that inheritance should be regulated in this way or in that way; that depends on the opinion of the Greeks on the one hand, and the Persians on the other. And the just things they see are changed, meaning everywhere. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
That the just things vary is not absolutely true,[xiii] 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 the just things are variable.[xiv] 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 just

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[ix] Strauss translates "*ta dikaia*."
[x] In Rackham's translation: "think that all rules of justice are merely conventional."
[xi] Strauss retranslates "*hoti to men physei*."
[xii] In Rackham's translation: "same validity everywhere, as fire burns both here and in Persia, rules of justice are seen to vary."
[xiii] In Rackham's translation: "That rules of justice vary is not absolutely true."
[xiv] In Rackham's translation: "all rules of justice are variable."

things,[xv] though not absolute, are natural, and which are not natural but legal and conventional, both sorts alike being variable. The same distinction will hold good—

LS: Yes. Now do you see? What is the distinction? I mean, changeable is characteristic of both, but if the changeable in question owes its justice to nature, then it is natural. If it owes its nature to human legislation, human fiat, then it is legal. More simply stated, there are two differences between the natural and the legal which are generally adduced. The first is unchangeability, and the second is dependence on human fiat or not on human fiat. Unchangeability is dropped, but depending or not depending on human fiat is retained. Good. Yes, now the next sentence.

Mr. Reinken:
The same distinction will hold good in all other matters; for instance, the right hand is naturally stronger than the left, yet it is possible for all men to be born ambidextrous.[xvi] (1134b27-34)

LS: No, "to become."[xvii]

Mr. Reinken: To become? I thought *genesthai* was—

LS: No, no; *genesthai* is become. Become. Now everyone is born, according to Aristotle, with some exceptions, right handed in some ways, but everyone can become ambidextrous. Now let us stop here, considering only this last example. By nature all men are right handed, or most of them. By human doings, all men can become ambidextrous. Now to be ambidextrous (I believe that's the premise here) is a better condition than to be only right handed. Plato developed that at length; Aristotle, I do not remember.[xviii] Now ambidexterity is not natural but superior to the natural. Now if we apply this to the natural right question, then positive right, the right kind of positive right, is superior to natural right, and this makes sense in connection with what preceded. Aristotle gave examples of legal right, and these examples permit us to figure out what he understood by natural right: as I said, those things which every *polis* must do in order to be a *polis*, worshiping the gods, compensating citizens for what they did in the service of the *polis*, and so on. Let us call that the minimum conditions of civil society. Natural right describes the in-themselves unchangeable minimum conditions. In themselves. I come to that later. Now this view I know from Islamic and Jewish interpretations. It does not occur, as far as I know, in the Christian tradition except in Marsilius of Padua. Marsilius of Padua's *Defender of the Peace* has also this view, but he doesn't call it natural right for some reason.[xix] So this is a possible view. Now the Platonic parallel to that is to be found in the first book of the *Republic*, toward the second half.[xx] There are certain minimum conditions which every

[xv] In Rackham's translation: "and it is easy to see which rules of justice."
[xvi] In Rackham's translation: "yet it is possible for any man to make himself ambidextrous."
[xvii] Strauss retranslates "*genesthai*."
[xviii] Cf. Plato, *Laws*, book 7, 794d–795d.
[xix] Cf. Strauss's discussion of Marsilius in Leo Strauss, "Marsilius of Padua," in *Liberalism Ancient and Modern* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1968), 185–202.
[xx] Cf. 351c–352a.

human association must fulfill. To some extent every human association must be just if it is to last. And now comes the horrible example: the thieves. A bunch of thieves cannot last if they do not exercise some fairness among themselves in the sharing of the booty, and also[9] [a] kind of distributive justice: he who did more, ran greater risks, gets more, and especially he who has proved to be the cleverest and bravest must be the ruler. Now this is of course in a way very shocking, but we have to consider all kinds of phenomena to understand it. This is, you can say, the minimum condition of any society, however low. This is natural. You know, this doesn't depend on any human establishment. The nature of the case, the nature of society, requires that.

Now why is it changeable nevertheless? Well, because there may be situations in which the preservation of this thing may be detrimental to society. Extreme situations. I think this is in itself a consistent possibility. By the way, on a much more simple level you find it in[10] Roman law [the] assertion that natural right is that which nature taught all animals, and all other right is positive. Now this view does not go so far, because this has in mind a human right, a right of human society, but it has of course a certain kinship with that. Mr. Burnam?

Mr. Burnam: Are you saying that positive right improves on natural right only in extreme conditions?

LS: No, no. From this point of view the positive right would always be—I mean, not always, [but] the positive right would be in principle an improvement, a sophistication of the natural right.

Mr. Burnam: But that improvement only occurs in extreme situations.

LS: No, no, not necessarily. I mean, a civil society is radically distinguished from a gang of robbers. Take the clearest case: now a positive law of a civil society, by acting on this difference between civil society and a gang of robbers, improves on the natural right. Is this not clear? Or was the sentence too long? If natural right determines the minimum conditions of social life, then everything which goes beyond the minimum conditions in the way of improving man is an improvement of natural right.

Mr. Burnam: Does that mean there's no natural right with regard to inheritance laws?

LS: Yes, well, I mean, there are really great questions. You know the famous fight about primogeniture,[11] equal division of the inheritance, [and] that the youngest should inherit. These are three possibilities which are well known immediately, but there are many more. You can also have confiscation, i.e., denial of inheritance, as you have in some countries now, at least apart from a certain amount of property.

Mr. Burnam: Doesn't natural right eliminate that situation? I mean, to the extent that inheritance laws depend on the regime and Aristotle says one regime is better than another.

LS: Yes, this is what Aristotle says in the sequel, in 1135a3. "Similarly, the not natural but human," say, principles of rights, "are not the same everywhere since not even the regimes are the same everywhere." Which kind of inheritance law [there is], or maybe no inheritance law at all, depends on the regime, as everyone would admit. Yes? Good. But then Aristotle goes on: "but nevertheless there is no regime alone everywhere according to nature the best." He does not say "everywhere the justest" because it is not everywhere the justest. It is the justest only where the conditions are fulfilled.

Mr. Burnam: [. . .]

LS: Let me put it this way. The order of the regimes with a view to human virtue which Aristotle develops in the *Politics* and in the *Ethics*: this is not the question of natural right now, because this is not a question of right strictly understood. This is a question of what is good. I mean, if people establish in a given situation an oligarchy or a democracy in a *polis*, this is not necessarily a question of right, surely not of natural right.

Mr. Burnam: It is giving every man his due, though.

LS: Yes, but that is controversial. The oligarchs say to give every man his due means to give everyone his due with a view to his wealth, and the democrats say giving everyone his due means with a view to the fact that he is a free man. And these are surely very conflicting notions of right, and Aristotle says they are both insufficient, both inadequate. Therefore, when you establish a democracy or an oligarchy you choose something imperfect, and there is no intrinsic necessity to do it. The necessity arises from the fact that in this particular community the wealthy people are so strong and so very entrenched in power and have ruled to the satisfaction of the poor. Leave that alone. In another city the same might apply to a democracy. Now you can say: Well, there is one which is intrinsically simply just, [and that is] the rule of the virtuous men, the aristocracy proper. Yes, well, then we have to go into the question: Is it right in the sense of a duty to establish everywhere an aristocracy? Of course not, because in many cases the conditions are not fulfilled. Then you come into the whole political problem which to some extent is avoided here. To some extent. Rabbi Weiss?

Rabbi Weiss: Where the conditions could be fulfilled, would it be true that the positive laws of the best regime would be always the same?

LS: How could they? How could they? They would of course have to be changed.

Rabbi Weiss: Because of conditions?

LS: Yes, sure, the conditions change. There may be anything—for example, inheritance laws. They may have worked up to now reasonably well, but then there is an abundance of heiresses because of many wars where many fell. And this Aristotle discusses in the second book of the *Politics* when he speaks of Sparta, where that happened.[xxi] Therefore there was a kind of gynococracy, because these heiresses had an enormous power,

[xxi] Aristotle, *Politics* 1269b–1270a.

naturally, because they were—well, I don't have to labor that. Good. And therefore in such a situation it might be necessary—you are confronted with the question: Should the daughters inherit, or should not rather some other regulation be made regarding inheritance, regarding the possession of these lots with a view to this situation, to have always a sufficient supply of soldiers and also of members of the assembly and this kind of thing, any kind of changes of laws? Well, the notion of Plato and Aristotle that one should not change laws easily and one should be very cautious in changing [them] in no way contradicts the undeniable fact that change of laws is necessary from time to time. The laws do not fulfill their function anymore and must be changed. Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: In your reply to Mr. Burnam, you were saying that whatever goes beyond these basic conditions that are found in natural right would improve natural right—

LS: Not whatever; it may also be a foolish law which is worse.

Mr. Butterworth: On what grounds would that decision be made as to whether it were foolish or not foolish?

LS: Well, very simply, taking it very strictly as I stated it: that the minimum conditions of society are those which apply even to a gang of robbers. A civil society is not a gang of robbers. The *x* which distinguishes a civil society from a gang of robbers: let us call that virtue, if you don't mind. Then the improvement: the laws are the better the more they contribute toward making the citizens virtuous. Now one could say even the lowest regime comes closer to this highest requirement than the gang of robbers. That is surely the case, but not enough. I would like to mention one point only in connection with these minimum conditions, or let me call it the flooring as distinguished from the ceiling. Now we have seen another flooring of Aristotle apart from what I call the minimum conditions, and these are what he said in the section about retribution, the conditions of peaceful exchange, commutative justice in the narrow sense, which I compared to the first city or the city of pigs in the *Republic*. You see, the city of pigs is not the gang of robbers, because the gang of robbers lives unjustly on others, whereas the first city, the true city or the city of pigs, is a just society. Therefore this flooring is not identical with the one I mentioned first. This I believe explains—and that is a subtlety, the reference in 1134a24 to 25. That's the only way in which I can understand that. [Rather], 23 to 24. Why should he make this reference here to this question of the relation—how does he translate it? Read it, whoever has it.

Mr. Reinken:
It was previously stated how the reciprocal is related to the just.[xxii] (1134a23-24)

LS: Yes. It doesn't make any sense, this casual reference, if it has not something to do with that. That's the best I can think of at least. Mr. Schrock?

[xxii] In Rackham's translation: "The relation of Reciprocity to Justice has been stated already."

Mr. Schrock: Wouldn't it be a compulsion of natural right to achieve the best regime possible in the circumstances? In other words, is the city of pigs just if something better is possible . . .

LS: Is this an obligation of justice strictly understood?—[xxiii] But he denies that this can be called justice or injustice in the proper sense of the term. That is a metaphoric use of justice, as he says, which should be kept separate if we try to understand justice as such. That's the reason why this question comes up. Not metaphorical: that is always what Aristotle has in mind. Let us speak precisely, let us be empirical. That is Aristotle's point all the time. Of course Plato agrees, but one cannot call this justice. Justice is always what you owe to someone else, including of course to the *polis*, but this does not belong to that. So you see how relevant it was. Now how does he go on from here? Let us turn to 1135a, the immediate sequel. "Of the just and legal things"—let us disregard the difference between natural just and legal just—"each of that is related like the universal to the individual cases." Now that's extremely simple to understand. Isn't it? If theft is unjust (that's a universal), this act of theft is an individual to be subsumed under it. Good. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: [Begins at the wrong place.][xxiv]

LS: No, before. "For the deeds," the things done, "are many, but of those each is one because it is a universal." The acts of theft are innumerable, but theft is one, as is proven by the fact that you call all these acts of theft. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
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.'

LS: It is not an unjust act, in other words. I mean, theft is in itself unjust, let us say, but it is clearly not an unjust act if you have not committed theft. Now let us go on to—in the sequel he makes again clear, in a17, a key point for the whole argument: acting unjustly is necessarily a voluntary act. Well, we know that already from the second book, or third book. I mean, if we are compelled to act in a certain manner either by ignorance or by compulsion proper, then we are not responsible for it. The thing itself is bad, is unjust. If you are compelled by a tyrant who has your family under control to do something which is forbidden, you do a forbidden thing. The thing in itself is unjust, but your action is not unjust if the assumption is right that this was a compulsion beyond human power. Good. Now in 1135b16, go on.

Mr. Reinken:
When then the injury happens contrary to reasonable expectations it is (1) a misadventure. (1135a9-b16)

[xxiii] The transcriber notes that there is a break in the tape at this point and a sentence or two were lost.
[xxiv] As noted by the transcriber.

LS: I think that is perfectly clear. To give a simple example: well, you live in the country somewhere far from the city. All the members of your family are in, and there is no one coming to you except the postman and the milkman in the morning. And you throw something out of the window, and it so happened that at this moment someone comes in, which never happens, then it is a misfortune. You have not committed a crime. You have not committed an unjust act. This is clear. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
When, though not contrary to reasonable expectation, it is done without evil intent, it is (2) 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 (3) an act of injustice or wrong; such, for instance, are injuries done through anger, or any other unavoidable or natural passion—

LS: "And other passions." He doesn't say that.[xxv] Let us stick to that. So we have this case mentioned before, that I hate to bring up but I must, of the man who commits adultery out of passion. He doesn't do it out of anger. That he has in mind. He does this, and yet it is a forbidden act. It is a wrong act. But he is not guilty, strictly speaking. Oh, I'm sorry, you are right.[12] [Mr. Reinken] was right. In the sequel: "and other passions which happen." How did you translate that?

Mr. Reinken: "Or any other unavoidable or natural passion."

LS: Yes, all right. But you must admit, that goes very far. That covers a large ground. Doesn't it? Every overpowering passion, we can say: that covers a large territory, as they say. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
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. (1135b17-27)

LS: Now let us stop here. So let us keep this in mind, this key distinction which is so important for the rest: that acting unjustly is not the same as being unjust. And the difficulty is only where to draw the line. I mean, we cannot lay down a hard and fast rule: if it happens once, then he is not an unjust man, but if it happens more than once then he becomes an unjust man. It is not so simple as that. So if there can be many such acts without making him unjust, where to draw the line? Because at some point, of course, a line would have to be drawn, because even if you say, "Well, he does it in each case out of overpowering passion and not of set purpose or malice aforethought," that won't be sufficient for any practical purpose.

[xxv] That is, in the translator's rendering of "*alla pathē hosa anagkaia ē physika*."

Student: Couldn't he be a just man if he gives into his passion frequently without being a virtuous man?

LS: Yes, Aristotle says he is. In the earlier passage we read last time, he speaks explicitly of the virtuous man who committed adultery.

Same Student: I'm thinking of the opposite case where a man habitually gives in to his passion. He doesn't have self-control.

LS: But Aristotle thinks of such a case. You see, let us say—well, if we take this example: he is not a profligate man, but in the particular case he is so strongly in love that it is impossible for him to withstand that. That is what he means. Humanly speaking impossible. That[13] [is what Aristotle] has in mind.

Student: But that would be sense of shame, wouldn't it?

LS: Yes, but this is a difficulty which we have seen, and I must say the more I think about the fifth book, the more I believe that this remark about the man who does not have a sense of shame because he never does anything wrong at the end of the fourth book is as it were planted there to remind us of the grave difficulty which he will bring up in book 5, namely, that such a man who never does any wrong doesn't exist. I do not know, but it is surely striking that it occurs there, and then we get this great surprise suddenly of the virtuous man who commits adultery, steals, and so on and so on. He only gives us some hint in the case of adultery: he says by *pathos*, by passion. He does not give us any hint regarding theft, because clearly if he would steal because he is starving, no one would call this theft. I mean, this we cannot think of. Yes?

Student: I wonder if we would understand this distinction correctly by putting it in terms of the distinction between act and what we would call habit or disposition?

LS: Yes, yes. Yes, that's correct. I mean, if you take the isolated act, the isolated bad act is compatible with a good habit as far as justice is concerned. That is what he means.

Student: But an isolated bad act done by choice is always unjust.

LS: Yes. Yes, sure. Nevertheless, think of it in practical legal terms. If you are to judge of that you see that is not too helpful. Now in order to understand that, I suggest this consideration—I mean, also the context. If all natural right is changeable, then the just, what is just, is to some extent indistinguishable from the unjust. Does this make sense? The things do not come, as it were, with a label on themselves: "I am just," "I'm unjust." If the natural just were unchangeable, then it would be clear in all cases. But since what is just is changeable, that means that some things which under some conditions are unjust are under others just. The just is to some extent indistinguishable from the unjust. What is coming[14] out [now] is a parallel to that, that the just man is not as easily distinguishable from the unjust man as we would like[15]. He will take up this later on explicitly. We come to that. In other words, if we could say: "Well, he stole: an unjust man. He committed

adultery, and so on. This man who never committed any unjust act is a just man"—it is not so simple. This is what Aristotle is bringing out in this context. Now the range of acting unjustly is limited if the inflictor of the damage does not act voluntarily. Is this clear? If he is—well, the crude case of completely ignorant or complete compulsion, but even passion, overpowering passion, makes the action involuntary. And now Aristotle goes over to another consideration: the range of acting unjustly is limited, secondly, because the damaged party might will the damage. Now let us turn to that in 1136—where is that? a10. Oh yes, a new chapter.

Mr. Reinken:
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: In other words, if the son killed the mother at the request of the mother, is this still an unjust act? That's the question. Now let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:
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?

LS: No, we cannot read this whole passage. Let us perhaps turn to 1136b1.

Mr. Reinken:
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.' If so, though a man can be harmed and can have an unjust thing done to him voluntarily, no one can suffer injustice voluntarily, 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. (1136a10-b9)

LS: Now let us stop here for a moment. So what if the other party requests the forbidden action? What do we have to say about it? Now this will be taken up more fully in the sequel. Let us turn first to b32, a brief passage. What is the overall argument? Well, it is still the whole question of how to recognize just or unjust actions. In this context, this passage occurs about a judge in 32 to 34.

Mr. Reinken:
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 justice in the primary sense)—

LS: Yes. Well, the justice in the primary sense must mean the natural right. Yes. What does this mean here? A judge passes an unjust judgment. This judgment is intrinsically unjust, and yet the judge is not legally guilty because—take a case of a course of not-guilty ignorance—he could not have known the fact which spoke in favor of the opposite judgment, of the true judgment. That's clear. But thereupon Aristotle says: Well, that is a nice situation. The man is legally just and the judgment which he passes is unjust. He surely must leave it at that. I mean, there is no possible alternative to that, and yet there is something awkward about it, and this awkwardness reminds us[16] of the importance of the distinction between the legal right and the natural right. Well, legal right abounds with legal presumptions. The legal presumptions arbitrarily established rules of justice which lead to the consequence that many unjust actions go unpunished and that many unjust judgments are passed, because this is the only way in which human beings with their imperfections can do justice. But it is an extremely imperfect justice. This comes out, I think, by this example. In brief, the problem of justice is much more complex than human beings think. "Human beings," [*anthrōpoi*], can have in Greek a somewhat derogatory meaning, as distinguished from "men," *andres*. We have seen that. Because what do human beings think? They think that the just is identical with the legal. And this is almost unavoidable, and yet it is wrong: 1137a4, following.

Mr. Reinken:
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. (1136b32-1137a13)

LS: Is it not strange? And Aristotle is supposed to have been a quasi-legal positivist. They are just only by accident, which is a very strong statement meaning they are meant to be just but they almost always remain behind what they are meant to be. Therefore, because the law does not tell us what [the] just is except by accident—which can also mean in a given case it may happen [to be just]—therefore it is difficult to be a just man or an unjust man, because what you can easily know is what the law tells you, and what the law tells you is not necessarily what is intrinsically just and not just. The conclusion of this argument, in a26.

Mr. Reinken:
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: doubtless, for example, the gods.

LS: In other words, because they would always make a good use of them, they cannot have enough of them. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
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 ordinary mortals. (1137a26-30)

LS: Yes, "this is human," Aristotle says.[xxvi] "Human" has this meaning which it has in Nietzsche's famous book title, *Human, All Too Human*. On the highest level there is no need for any limitation. They should have everything. That's Plato's thought in the *Republic*: no private property, the property to be distributed according to the decision of the sages, of the virtuous and sage men. That's one thing; and the other thing is people who should not have any property and whom you help by taking away their property, because they will buy heroin[17] [with] it or whatever else it may be. But the average man: justice belongs, and surely justice as the lawful belongs to the average, and therefore that is its essential limitation. And if there are people who are not average—and that is of course the basis of the whole book, as we shall see in book 10 [with] the theoretical life—then justice must be kept in its place, as it were, as something indeed necessary. Indeed necessary, but not more. Now Mr. Erickson.

Mr. Erickson: [To the effect of whether or not the previous passage, in arguing that all good things should be taken away from the incurably unjust man, indicates a natural right for the punishment of starvation.][xxvii]

LS: No, I mean, why should one be beastly? Quick execution would be much more human.

Mr. Erickson: No, I'd be wrong anyway, because probably they'd be able to use their food well in the sense that they would have dietary tracts. Otherwise they'd not be alive.

LS: All right, you can also find other things. If the community is sufficiently wealthy, you can have farms where they live, you know, under supervision and kept from mischief. You know, you have read sufficiently, I suppose, about this kind of institution which exists in this country. I have read of it in the daily paper. This is one way of doing it, but this is an extremely wealthy society. What about the society which is not wealthy? And Plato of course states this in the same way: the incurably bad are only a burden on society. And this raises of course a very grave moral question: What if you cannot bring home to them in a legal way that they have committed a crime,[18] [yet] you know that they are crooks and do all kinds of things? You are sure they have murdered people and all this kind of thing, [but] that is of course not a legal proof that they committed it. So a man can be absolutely

[xxvi] Strauss retranslates "ordinary mortals."
[xxvii] As noted by the transcriber.

wicked and go through his life and be a pest for society, and nothing can be done. But that is the necessary implication of the rule of law, and we must insist on it, that it is so, but we must also see that it is a very defective justice which we get through law. That is what Aristotle states.

Student: What is this intrinsic justice or intrinsic injustice of which he is speaking in this passage?

LS: That a housebuilder [who] exchanges with a shoemaker a house for shoes should not be given a single shoe or a single pair of shoes for the house, that's one example. Or that you should not punish in the same way an act of petty theft as an act of high treason. These crude verities which we all know but which we nevertheless must not neglect: that we have a certain sense that there are crimes which are much graver than others, and that's a kind of justice which is crucial for punitive justice. But in the justice of exchange, for example, if a man uses fraud and says that this toothpaste is superior to all other toothpastes because there was a research project somewhere, this is of course an unjust act, the act of fraud.

Same Student: Well, I understand these unjust acts. This isn't the problem that I have here. Perhaps I should state that. How is it that something is intrinsically just and yet changeable? I mean, because if we conceive of the extreme situation in which a pair of gold shoes might be worth more than a run down house—

LS: Of golden shoes. Yes, or shoes worn by a Hollywood star. Surely that would have to be considered. That would have to be considered. But here is where opinion of a society comes in very much, I mean as far as legal justice is concerned. But let us take a clearer case. For example, the value of a physician's service in an epidemic where he is much more needed—I mean, there are many more sick people around and much more depends on his being there at the right time—than, say, if he has only a few common colds to treat. And this is an entirely different situation, where he will be confronted with the kind of question with which he is not confronted elsewhere: whom should he treat first where the lives of people depend on this decision of the physician? Or the same applies also in famine when someone has gathered a sufficient amount of grain. May he charge anything the traffic will bear because people will pay anything they can? They might be willing to give a house for some pounds of meat, or powdered meat. It might happen. What about that? What Aristotle has in mind fundamentally is of course that this exploitation of situations of necessity would be unjust. There must be some proportion. But he would probably say that it is legitimate in such a situation, maybe, to charge somewhat more. Perhaps. I do not know. I mean, in case he had more troubles in getting this additional grain or whatever it may be. But otherwise, to consider only his profit without considering the proportions between what he gives and what he gets is unjust. I mean, I do not know a clear example in the case of the justice of exchange which would be affected by an emergency situation. The clear cases are the political cases. For example, in a given situation it might be impossible to have proper criminal prosecution of all crimes committed, and simply a kind of amnesty must be given for these people [so as] not to have this enormous backlog after the emergency ceased: in a way, the very unjust action.

In a way, because these criminals of this period profited indirectly from the emergency situation. There's something unjust about that, and yet it is just in the circumstances.

Same Student: Couldn't we say then that the statement of Aristotle that natural right is changeable could be clarified correctly by saying that every natural right in practice is changeable or practically speaking or in a concrete circumstances is changeable?

LS: Yes, I think he means that. I can give you another example, but this is also more in the sphere of political action; that of the individual's action. This is a statement taken from Montesquieu, who was a very profound thinker on these matters, as you know, and he makes this remark. An Englishman, Sir William Petty,[xxviii] in a way the founder of political economy, had figured out the value of a human being in money. You see, he had something in common with the later economists. He went about it in the right way. He went to the slave market in Algiers and he found out at once, "This is the value of a human being," whereupon Montesquieu, who was a deeper thinker, said, "This may be the value of an Englishman, but not the value of a man. But there are countries where a human being is worth much less; in some cases the value is zero and even less than zero."[xxix] When you hear certain descriptions of the situation in India and other places you are reminded of it. What can the right of an individual be in cases of extreme overpopulation and extreme scarcity and so on? That's a very important question. I think Aristotle has this in mind. Some conditions must be given if this is to be fulfilled. Oh, Mr. Weissberger. I'm sorry. Yes?

Mr. Weissberger: I got the impression in the beginning that you said Aristotle thinks that the laws should only be brought up against natural justice by the wise man; that most of the people, the average man, should worship the laws.

LS: That is surely wise, because very generally speaking, one can say that the legislator or legislators are generally speaking supposed to have given more thought to the question of what would be a good arrangement than most people who are not legislators. This is the idea surely underlying the American Constitution: that the House of Representatives [and the] Senate should as a rule consist of the cream of this society. Now whether this is in fact the case is the subject of empirical studies. But still, most of them are trained lawyers, whereas the average man is not a trained lawyer. You see the difficulties also from this example. But[19] habitual dissatisfaction with the laws is not good, because it is not good for a habit of lawabidingness, and this is a long question not discussed in this book. But the main point is made perfectly clear: legal justice is almost always and for necessary reasons very imperfect justice but the best which human beings can do in this sphere. Good. Yes?

[xxviii] William Petty (1623–1687) was a political economist and statistician (and a professor of anatomy and of music). He was one of the originators of political arithmetic. His *Essays in Political Arithmetick and Political Survey or Anatomy of Ireland* (1672) calculated estimates of population and income.

[xxix] Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws*, vol. 2, book 23, chapter 17.

Student: Just one question about the passage we read in 1137a26. You mentioned that somehow it pointed us toward the contemplative life expressed in book 10. I don't understand what that connection was.

LS: If the sphere of justice, if the premise of what is understood by justice is average men, then the question arises: What about the best men? And Aristotle's answer to that question is the contemplative life. Now I think we understand this much now of the sequence of the argument that we see why Aristotle takes up the question of equity in the sequel in 1137a31, following, because we have seen the defects of law, of legal justice, so clearly. And now there is one thing which is meant to be the corrective of legal justice, and this is equity. And therefore he takes up the subject of equity, fundamentally along the lines of Plato's *Statesman*, but we cannot go into the details. (What did I do? No, I made a big mistake. I'm sorry.) No, in this passage here let us read—well, we don't have the time to read it. This chapter is relatively clear. There is only one grave question: What does it mean, the correction of positive law[20] by equity? Is this done with a view to natural law or not? I believe Aristotle himself is not clear about this subject. The simplest solution would of course be to say that the judge in each case sees—say, the law in itself may be according to natural law, but in a given case it works a hardship. Then it is to be corrected in the light of natural law. More simply stated, the law may be in accordance with the natural law in the sense that it does not contradict it, but in a given case it does contradict natural right and then it is to be corrected in the light of natural right. But it is also possible that Aristotle means the law must be corrected along the lines intended by the legislator, which is a different proposition. For instance, the law is made by a democratic legislator and in a given case it has antidemocratic implications. Then [Aristotle would say that] the legislator, if he were here,[21] would say: "No, this I didn't want, and therefore in this case I would deviate from the application of the law and would modify the application." This question is not decided here, which we would have to consider very carefully.

Now let us turn to the next and last chapter. I would like to give a brief introduction to that. The whole argument of the second half of book 5 was based on the premise that suffering injustice exists only when it is involuntary so, say, that if the mother says to the son, as in this Euripidean tragedy, "Kill me, I beg you to kill me," then she doesn't suffer injustice. And therefore the act is not unjust. Or, which is the same thing, that one cannot do injustice to oneself. As Aristotle puts it occasionally: you can't steal from yourself. This, I believe, is obviously clear. You can't go stealthily into the safe and steal from yourself. Now this would be admitted, I believe, by everyone. I know that you could [not] rob yourself, but you could kill yourself, however. That's the question. But if we leave it in this way, we can say, we would be compelled to say, a man may do to himself what he pleases without being unjust. I mean, he may be ignoble from another point of view, but he wouldn't commit an act of injustice. And he may do to any other what pleases that other man. Justice is concerned only with what men do to each other against their wish. Differently stated, justice is nothing but the order of peace. But this contradicts flagrantly the notion of universal justice stated at the beginning of the book, for if the just is identical with the noble, with the work of all virtues—that is the meaning of the section on universal justice—one commits an unjust act by doing anything base to oneself or to

others. This is the difficulty, and Aristotle faces it in the immediate sequel. Let us read the beginning of that chapter.

Mr. Reinken:
The foregoing discussion has indicated the answer to the question: is it possible or not for a man to commit injustice against himself?

LS: Now what is the answer, to be quite clear? One cannot commit injustice against oneself. You know the role which it plays in present-day discussions about all kinds of crimes by which society is apparently not harmed. You know? Well, homosexuality is one example. You know, of course.

Student: Is this a disguised version of the Golden Rule?

LS: No.

Same Student: Really. I mean, "Do unto others what you would have others do." It's the same idea.

LS: Yes, that is true, but you could say if you take it literally it could mean to support it, but that is not meant by the Golden Rule. The Golden Rule does not allow such a literal interpretation as you give it. Crudely understood, it is all right, but then it means of course no harming, and not the mere wishing. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
(1) 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). (1138a4-7)

LS: Yes, now let us stop here for one moment. So it seems that it follows that it is just to kill oneself if one doesn't like to live anymore or, for that matter, to kill someone else if that someone else says, "Kill me." Of course it would be wise in this case to have lots of witnesses around to make it quite sure. I would advise that very strongly if anybody is thinking about that. But here Aristotle brings up again the quest of universal justice. You have seen that. About universal justice he makes this strange remark: what the law does not command, it forbids. That is totalitarianism in the worst sense, isn't it? Because is not all freedom based somehow on the principle that what the law does not command, it permits? Sure, and that's common sense. Now what does Aristotle mean by that? And I read many years ago in a commentator that this is an absurd proposition, because where does the law command to breathe? Nowhere is it to be found in any code. Hence the law forbids breathing. But Aristotle doesn't talk nonsense. What does he mean by that?

Mr. Reinken: Well, politics and morality are coextensive, and therefore the law commands all virtuous acts. Since in committing suicide you take a life, this is contrary to the right rule of reason.

LS: Yes, but where does the law command to breathe?

Mr. Reinken: But breathing, does that come into the sphere of the moral actions?

LS: Well, if you kill yourself, you cease to breathe.

Mr. Reinken: All right, then it's not the breathing that you're getting at, it's the killing yourself.

LS: Also, also. Let us take this example.

Student: The law of nature commands us to breathe.

LS: Yes, not the law of nature in Aristotle's sense.

Same Student: I think it's in the *Physics* where he starts from what nature is and brings out quite clearly—

LS: Yes, but this you cannot immediately apply here. This is another consideration. Yes?

Rabbi Weiss: Wouldn't this be a means to doing virtuous acts?

LS: Yes, sure. You are supposed to do your duty to the city, which is expressed in *n* ways: to pay taxes, military service, and what have you, and you don't do that. It will come out in the sequel. This is of course the notion of universal justice. The law is all-comprehensive, and therefore there is nothing which is permitted. If you do something loosely called permitted, you obey the law in this very fact by doing it. Rabbi Weiss, you must understand that, because that is, if I understand anything, the spirit of the tradition of Jewish law. What is called a commandment in Hebrew has both meanings: you may do it and you should do it. But we don't have to go into the Jewish understanding. When Socrates says in the *Apology*, "I am just in defending myself,"[xxx] literally translated [from *dikaios eimi apologēsasthai*],[xxxi] it is impossible to say whether he means "I have the right to defend myself" or "the duty to defend myself." This clear-cut distinction between right and duty which is such a matter of course for us is not a matter of course for ancient law. The right has something in common with performing the duty, and vice-versa. It is, as it were, a privilege that you may do a commandment. That is not so simply distinguished. Now let us read the immediate sequel.

Mr. Reinken:
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

[xxx] *Apology* 18a.
[xxxi] The transcriber notes that Strauss "quotes the Greek."

injustice; but against whom? It seems to be against the state rather than against himself—(1138a8-14)

LS: Yes, the *polis*. All right, let us not insist on that. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
for he suffers voluntarily, and nobody suffers injustice voluntarily. This is why the city exacts a penalty; suicide is punished by certain marks of dishonour, as being an offence against the city.[xxxii] (1138a14)

LS: So the law, in the sense of universal justice, is concerned with the *polis*, and we cannot understand if we disregard that. By harming oneself, one may very well harm the *polis*; even if you like that harming yourself, [if] you wish to be dead, to destroy yourself, you may [still] harm the *polis*. The law is all-comprehensive because one belongs altogether to the *polis*. Therefore you cannot run away from the *polis* by committing suicide. Yes?

Student: I find it hard to believe that there aren't people who suffer injustice voluntarily, who actually wish to die or actually wish to fall down a flight of stairs.

LS: Yes. Well, what do you mean by that? Do you mean by that people who are in one way or the other sick?

Same Student: Yes.

LS: Oh yes. Well, Aristotle, I think, never speaks of what mad people do. He would never take this as an example. I mean, in other words, this is not a book dealing with psychopathology; this is a book dealing with the virtuous and vicious normal human beings. But I know that there is a tendency in modern times, in our time, to say that every vicious man is a lunatic of sorts. This [view] Aristotle didn't share.[22] His whole teaching [is that] a lunatic is not responsible, and Aristotle thought vicious people are responsible. This, I believe, is the difference. By the way, I believe that our use of the word responsibility now reflects this change. When we speak of a man today—in praise of a man, saying he is a responsible man, that's a term of praise, isn't it? Just as if you say he is irresponsible it is it is a term of blame. But for Aristotle being responsible cannot be a term of praise, because responsibility is the condition for being either virtuous or vicious. Say—what was this famous man in the Prohibition era here in Chicago? Al Capone is of course a responsible man. It is a very interesting question: Why has the term responsible taken the place of the term virtue? I believe part of the reason is our wish that all vice be understood as irresponsible, i.e., as bad—you know, they shouldn't be punished; they should be medically treated. My explanation of it may be wrong, but the fact is undeniable, that responsibility as such has become a term of praise. I believe the way may have been via political things, that you say responsible government, government responsible to the governed is fundamentally good, and irresponsible government,

[xxxii] In Rackham's translation: "This is why the state exacts a penalty; suicide is punished by certain marks of dishonour as being an offence against the state."

absolute government is bad. And then there may have been a migration of political meaning of responsibility in terms of goodness to the individual. That might have taken place.

Student: I would think it is common but it is not necessary that you say that a man is irresponsible for his acts when you desire to treat him medically. Take a drug addict: you might blame him for being a drug addict and still feel that you can cure him by medical treatment.

LS: How far does this contradict [itself]? What I remember is only that the psychiatrists are in the habit of saying, "Well, responsible in your sense, in the sense in which the law means it, he is," but [all the while] implying that is a very poor and crude understanding of responsibility. That I have heard directly.

Same Student: It's my understanding that some psychiatrists say that they are attempting to find the causes of certain vices without making a moral judgment as to these vices.

LS: Yes. Yes, but of course virtuous and vicious means moral judgment. There is no question. Good.

Now Aristotle, in this passage which we read, has shown that one cannot do injustice to oneself in the sense of universal justice, because in this case here discussed of suicide, one does injustice to the *polis* rather than to oneself. In the sequel he tries to show that one cannot do injustice to oneself in the sense of particular justice. Now here it is clear, because particular justice requires always two partners and if there is only one man, one cannot speak of justice in the sense of particular justice. Let us read a28.

Mr. Reinken:
(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. Thus in itself to suffer injustice is the lesser evil, though accidentally it may be the greater. With this however science is not concerned—

LS: Yes, science, or *technē*, rather: art.

Mr. Reinken:
technē pronounces pleurisy a more serious disorder than a sprain,[xxxiii] 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.) (1138a28-b6)

[xxxiii] In Rackham's translation: "science pronounces pleurisy a more serious disorder."

LS: Yes, that's a wise thought. You see? Now here we have a beautiful example of the parallel between art and virtue, here in the case of justice. Now to do injustice is worse than suffering injustice because—well, the reasons, I believe, are obvious, because[23] suffering injustice does not in itself harm your character. Doing injustice harms your character—the argument, well, in Plato frequently, in the first book of the *Republic* and elsewhere. I read in a recent commentary that Plato could never have said, as Aristotle puts it here, that by accident suffering injustice could be worse than doing injustice. Of course he could. The whole statement occurs in Plato's *Gorgias*. Suffering injustice is of course an evil from Plato's point of view; it is only the minor evil compared with doing injustice. But this in passing. In itself, doing injustice is worse than suffering injustice, but by accident suffering injustice might be worse than doing injustice. And here he gives a parallel from medicine.[xxxiv] Well, say, typhus or tuberculosis is worse than a common cold, and yet under certain conditions which I cannot now imagine a common cold might be a greater evil than tuberculosis. Well, Aristotle doesn't take such extreme examples, but I tried to make it quite clear. Yes, but is there not a certain inadequacy in these examples, the example from medicine or from the arts generally? Medicine, being an art, is not concerned with accidents as accidents. The medical man says of course pleurisy is worse than spraining an ankle. That this spraining the ankle has in another sphere this bad consequence is of no concern to the medical man. All arts are special, dealing with this or that aspect of human life. Prudence is comprehensive. It deals with all, as we see from the fact that we ask a physician for advice (What shall I do?) and the physician tells you you should be operated upon, I don't know what. You have to decide whether you want to be operated upon, because you take other things into consideration. Maybe you have an examination and it is much more important for you to pass that examination at the proper time, whatever else it might be. Or you[r time] might be absolutely necessary for some other thing. Now what is the application of that to the question [about the claim] that in itself doing injustice is worse than suffering injustice, but by accident suffering injustice may be worse than doing injustice? What is the implication of that? The physician can give a simple statement: this is a worse disease than the other. But the acting man who must make a decision now has to consider the accidental situation. Is this not so? Can he be guided entirely by the objective order, [by the] super- and subordination rank of the various evils? Must he not consider also the urgency or nonurgency of what is required in the situation? Is there someone among you who can state the question more clearly and incisively than I am now able to state it?

Student: I don't see why it would necessarily be unjust if it was urgent. Something which is normally unjust, why would it be unjust in that [particular] circumstance? I'm addressing myself to the question he asked, not to the difference between art and—

LS: Oh, you had such an example in Defoe, hadn't you, of a similar question? This question—you mentioned something to me.

[xxxiv] Plato, *Gorgias* 478c.

Same Student:[xxxv] Well, Crusoe rescues some bereft people on a ship at sea, but he has to go someplace else and so he leaves them there to die. But he says that we had our business to do: we had to go where we were going. But his task wasn't that urgent. In other words, he was doing them an injustice by not taking them back to port even though it would have taken him off his schedule.

LS: Yes, what in case he was under another pressing obligation?

Same Student: Well, then I don't think it would be unjust. It's too bad, but why do we have to say that he has offended justice if there were other people who needed his help, more important people, a shipload of pregnant women or something? Why couldn't he go off and take care of them rather than these people who will die but aren't as important?

LS: It reminds me of a case—well, I don't remember it now. Yes?

Student: May I give an example? At least in the mind of [. . .] Caiaphas, assuming that he read the political situation right, it is good that one man should die for the people.

LS: Was he a just man?

Same Student: It was certainly an injustice in that case.

LS: Yes, but the question would be of a perfectly clear case of a just man. That's the question.

Same Student: I thought you were taking the fact that it may be a greater evil to suffer injustice than to do an act of injustice, that to do injustice may accidentally not be the greatest evil. Therefore a prudent man may sometimes, as Caiaphas alleges himself, commit injustice lest there be a greater evil done.

LS: Yes, surely. I mean this point: the example which Aristotle gives from the art of medicine is infinitely more simple because of the simple hierarchy in each art. But prudence has to take into consideration everything. That is the key point. Therefore there cannot be an art of prudence as there can be an art of medicine. The art of medicine can give you a kind of list, as it were, from the greatest disease down to the common cold or whatever it may be.

Same Student: And there are things of the same kind.

LS: Yes, but overall, what is subject to *phronēsis*, to prudence: there, in a given situation, the greater medical evil may be the lesser evil, obviously. I mean this: that you have to take into consideration everything in prudence, whereas an art never takes into consideration everything but only what is subject to the art. [That] makes prudential decisions infinitely more complicated and difficult. Yes?

[xxxv] Probably Mr. Shrock.

Student: Would you be willing to expand this to take in the whole question of the theoretical sciences which would tell you about the natural hierarchy of ends—

LS: [These] don't help you in a given case. They are not sufficient. They are only a condition for stating the problem, and a partial condition because what may be intrinsically higher may not be the most urgent. For example, it may be intrinsically higher, maybe, to seek the truth, but to undergo an operation may be the most urgent and no one would say that these are morally [. . .] things. Yes?

Student: They had a famous case, which they always use in the law school, of a captain at sea in a lifeboat. This actually occurred before an English court. There was not a chance of being picked up and it appeared that everyone was going to die on the boat. They were on the brink of starvation, and the captain and his crew were eventually involved in an act of cannibalism. And then within a short period of time they were picked up and the captain was brought before a court of law.

LS: Yes, that's surely a very extreme case where it is impossible to judge.

Student: It would seem to me that in extreme situations the prudent man might have to think of killing himself rather than being captured. For instance, I'm thinking of the prime minister of England. In some situations it might be better to kill yourself before you are captured . . . You have to consider the possibility of killing yourself.

LS: Can you explain to me how far this is relevant to our question now?

Same Student: Because the prudent man has to consider in some situations killing himself as being a right decision, whereas the master of the art, the doctor, would say never to kill himself.

LS: Yes, for him as artisan; in this capacity, not as human being, this question of course never arises. Yes, but I still don't follow it. Yes?

Student: I want to raise a confusing issue. What about the issue of euthanasia? That is the story of a doctor whose wife was very, very sick and she wanted relief of her pain, so he killed her. The next day he went into his office and he found a medical journal on his desk that had been there for two weeks, and in this journal was the cure for this disease his wife had.

LS: Well, I would say that shows the wisdom of abstaining from mercy killing. I could not draw any other conclusion.

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[1] Deleted "—because he."
[2] Deleted "in."
[3] Moved "from."
[4] Moved "here."
[5] Deleted "are."
[6] Moved "his society."
[7] Deleted "and."

[8] Deleted “then.”
[9] Deleted “the.”
[10] Deleted “the.”
[11] Deleted “and.”
[12] Deleted “he.”
[13] Deleted “he.”
[14] Moved “now.”
[15] Deleted “it.”
[16] Deleted “of the fact.”
[17] Deleted “for.”
[18] Deleted “that.”
[19] Deleted “the.”
[20] Deleted “the correction.”
[21] Moved “Aristotle would say.”
[22] Deleted “this view he didn’t share.”
[23] Deleted “the.”

Session 12: May 21, 1963
Intellectual virtues; prudence and wisdom; the legislative art
(Book 6)

Leo Strauss: [In progress] [i]—there was only one thing where you surely said the thing that is not [true]. Aristotle does not reject, at the beginning of book 6, the mean. He only says that it is insufficient.[ii]

Mr. Seltzer: Well, he puts it aside in favor of a deeper inquiry.

LS: But in other words, that's the point . . . I did not quite understand what you said regarding the difference between the praiseworthy things and the venerable things. That I didn't see.

Student: [. . .]

LS: Yes, that one can say, but one can also say . . . and then toward the end, it came out: the end is wisdom. Yes, but what about those not-few people who cannot be wise, who cannot be theoretically wise? To what do they look in making [. . .] Put it this way: how does Aristotle answer the question[1], Where does the prudent man look in order to make his choice of the mean? The end is moral virtue. But how is the end of moral virtue known to the nontheoretically wise man, and how does he know that is the right thing? If you take a gentleman on the one hand, a crook on the other, how does the gentleman know that the crook's principles are wrong? How does he know that?

Student: [Inaudible reply: appears to have mentioned "experience."][iii]

LS: Is this knowledge? The darkness is here [regarding] the cognitive status of the ends. That's the big difficulty. You saw it. Virtue is dark. Before I turn to that, I have to say a word about Mr. Seltzer's query. This is a very good query. It is one of the rare cases where someone makes a criticism of what I suggested on the basis of understanding and not on the basis of a parrot-like repetition of Max Weber's methodology, and this has never happened to me in print, so I appreciate it very much. I can only say this. It really questions the whole position which I take, nothing less than that, and it does it in a very apt and reasonable way. I cannot discuss it now—impossible. Otherwise I would have to give some lectures. But I suggest, because you won't be able to read what I wrote—well, the difficulty, what is his chief difficulty? Aristotle's political or moral science is somehow linked up, *somehow* linked up, with his theoretical science, and his theoretical

[i] The transcriber notes: "on side one of this tape the recorder heads made defective contact with the tape, resulting in a poor recording. Ellipses will be used where necessary."
[ii] Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.
[iii] As noted by the transcriber.

science is much more difficult to ascend to than his moral science. What Aristotle says, say, about liberality can be said to be as true today as it was in older times, but what he says about heaven and about animals and plants does not have this evidence. This is a famous difficulty. And you do not raise the question in this form; you are very sensibly modest and say we have to accept the possibility that Aristotle's theoretical teaching might be true. Prior to investigation, we cannot know that. Must we not therefore study the whole theoretical work of Aristotle, the *Logic*, *Physics*, and so on? Absolutely. We must do that. But, you know, so many things which we must do we don't do without becoming guilty, because we have to make our choices, our decisions. Life is so short, and all these other things. So a political scientist cannot be expected to become a competent student of the *Physics* and *Logic*. I mean, I'm sufficiently commonsensical to admit that, against you.

But how does the question come up? [How does] the theoretical question come up in the context of political science? Very briefly, [in] this [way]: the Aristotelian thesis is that there is a sphere of prudence, both private and public, which is relatively closed, so that your theoretical knowledge or ignorance does not seriously affect it. This is one side of the matter. But only *relatively* closed because—and here we come to the practical issue—the sphere of prudence is always threatened, at all times, by theoretically wrong opinions: in our time by the positivistic methodology especially, which is incompatible with prudence, but also by other things. We have also such things like Marxism or Nazism, or whatever you take. In brief, it is impossible to be a competent political scientist if one is not able to meet these theoretical issues posed by logical positivism on the one hand, and by such things as Marxism and Nazism on the other. And there may be some other things of this kind. Do you see? Now this is, however, feasible within political science. It is possible for a political scientist to meet the issue created by logical positivism and it is possible to meet the issues created by, say Marxism and Nazism. The latter is done, even on the college level sometimes, in the so-called "Isms" course. This is, I think, the practical solution to your question. I refer you to a passage in my "Epilogue" to Storing's book, page 309, bottom, to 310, top.[iv] (I made a note here.)

But I have a broader suggestion which I address to the class. I think Mr. Seltzer and I should have a real disputation in the fall quarter—no, honestly—and in which you elaborate this much more than you do now. It is for your own good. And then we have it out in the political science club. What do you think about that? Mr. Kirwan, would it not be—

Mr. Kirwan: Mr. Lyons is the president now—

LS: Well, is this not surely the same thing? I mean, usually I address this group anyway; I mean, usually I talk to the union anyway during the year. Why don't we do it next time in this form of a disputation? You be the challenger—

Mr. Seltzer: I really don't feel competent to—

[iv] Herbert Storing, *Essays on the Scientific Study of Politics* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962).

LS: Well, do some homework over the summer.

Yes, Mr. Butterworth's question regarding justice: Where would one classify justice? Even though Aristotle says that justice is part of the moral virtues or it is one of the moral virtues, it is certainly quite distinct from the other moral virtues and yet it is not like the other intellectual virtues. Answer: it is a moral virtue. It is different because, speaking quite externally, there is no wrong extreme. I mean, there is only injustice. There is no—how shall I say?—the sucker, as I call it, sucker or Socrates, whomever you take. This is not taken into consideration deliberately by Aristotle. That's a moral virtue, and it has to do with the subject matter of justice as distinguished from the other virtues.

Student: [. . .]

LS: This is not the definition of the moral virtues. It has something to do with the desires, the inclinations, of the individual, whereas the intellectual virtues are not perfections of the desires. Whether a man is greedy for what belongs to others or he is not, that is a kind of[2] desire. To that extent, it's a moral virtue. Yes, Mr. Reinken?

Mr. Reinken: I would like to go back to the gentleman and the philosopher and change one word. You speak of the man of prudence looking to habit.

LS: The gentleman is a prudent man.

Mr. Reinken: As habit. And you say there's still some darkness, and we don't see what the connection is with the philosopher who looks to wisdom, and if you replace habit by the laws—

LS: Oh, that's beautiful, but if the laws were always good there would be no question. Then it is simply: the knowledge which the prudent man requires is what he gets through the lawgiver. But unfortunately the legislators are not always good; therefore this wonderful solution is not sufficient.

Mr. Reinken: You could not have a gentleman in a society that was ignorant of good laws. If the laws were wholly bad, then there wouldn't be any gentlemen.

LS: No. Oh, no. That can be. There are people born with good natures. There were gentlemen in Athens, which according to the strict doctrine of Plato was a bad regime. There are regimes which are tolerant. The democracy described in the eighth book of the *Republic* is very bad, but it is tolerable. Therefore all kinds of nice people were possible in Athens: Nicias, Demosthenes, Pericles.

Mr. Reinken: [. . .]

LS: Yes. Well, this is an extremely rare case, that you would have a regime where all laws are preposterous. Some good laws exist everywhere, and one can say as long as the family

is not entirely destroyed there is a chance that in some families the children will be brought up in a nice way. There can be gentlemen in a bad regime.

Mr. Reinken: [. . .]

LS: Yes, but even the settled rules—I mean, connected with the notions of honor and fealty—were very bad. Good. But we come to that question . . . Mr. Burnam?

Mr. Burnam: I was going to say, wouldn't one say that Aristotle's answer about the cognitive status of the moral virtues be that they require prudence, and prudence has both reason and—

LS: Yes, sure, prudence is a form of reason. But let us now turn to that. Perhaps we [will] clear it up. Now let us start as simply as we can with the theme of book 6. In order to do the right thing one must will the right thing, because otherwise you do the right thing for the wrong reason. You must will the right thing. And before one can will it, one must know it. This seems to be clear. Now the right thing is not made known by the law, positive or natural, for the positive law may be bad and natural right is changeable. The right thing is of course always the right thing to do here and now, in the circumstances, and the circumstances may call for a change of the natural right. Aristotle must therefore identify the kind of knowledge which is required for doing the right thing and make clear how that knowledge cooperates with the will. This is very generally the subject of book 6. Now doing the right thing occurs, however, not only in action but also within the arts. Therefore Aristotle must make clear the difference between action and production (production being the arts), but this falls under the heading [of] kinds of knowledge, because art is also a kind of knowledge. Now we read only a very few passages today, because we have now a whole book. I'll say something about 1139a22 to 26.

Moral virtue is a habit of preferring or choosing. Choice is desire going with deliberation. I mean, if you desire without deliberating, then it is mere desire as the animals too have it. Choice going with deliberation or reasoning or figuring out—the Greek word [is] *logistikē*. The *logos* must be true and the desire must be correct. Only then is the action virtuous, but in such a way of course that the true *logos* must agree with the correct desire; otherwise there is a conflict and the action cannot be virtuous. Here there is a difficulty. The correctness of the desire seems to precede the truth of the *logos*, the *logos* enabling you to determine what is the right thing here and now. Or is it the other way around? The answer: Desire gives you the end, the correct desire [gives] the true end, and the reasoning supplies the knowledge of the means. The end, let us say, is determined by nature. That would be the simplest, the correct end; and the means are determined by reason. For example, the end: self-preservation, in the simple case. This is not figured out by us. That determines us by nature. But then we figure out: How can I, circumstanced as I am, preserve myself, for example, in a tornado, or in illness or whatever the case may be? But of course here the question arises: How can we distinguish between the correct or natural desire and the incorrect and the unnatural desire? The reason involved here is practical reason, which as such is distinguished from theoretical reason.

Previously Aristotle had distinguished between the scientific knowledge and the deliberative figuring out of reason. Well, "scientific": we will find out later what Aristotle means by it. Then there is another kind of reasoning which he calls deliberative and/or logistic, which of course has nothing to do with logistic as used in military science. But *logistikē* means figuring out, a figuring out kind of reasoning. You figure out how to construct a triangle, how to build a bridge, how to act in these and these circumstances. It will later on become clear.

Now in the first statement, both were described in fact as theoretical. The deliberative, the logistic is not necessarily practical. You will see that this is of some importance. What does he mean by that? Everything, even the objects of action or of art—this shoemaker's material now for making this pair of shoes—can be made the object of theoretical understanding. It can be done. You can take a purely theoretical attitude toward objects of action or art. There is a simple proof of that known at all times: history. A historian studies actions done by particular men in particular cities, but of course they have been modified somewhat. They [are] actions completed, but it is still not scientific knowledge in the strict sense of the term. The acts, the done things, are not the subject of practical reason anymore, nor are they the objects of theoretical reason. This is a particularly important interesting case. The objects of action—What shall I do now?—are not in themselves of any theoretical interest. That is what Aristotle means. They are interesting only to the individual actor, man or individual. One does not strictly speaking learn something by the use of practical reason. You learn something from your thoughts, so it's easier for you to act the next time but you do not learn something fundamentally. For example, if you make such a mistake regarding a particular firm you learn never to do it again, but the major premise, "Don't do business with unreliable firms"—well, at a certain moment when you make that clear for the first time, you acquire for the first time that major premise, but later on it's too general anymore.

Now in 1139a35, following, Aristotle speaks for the first time of the difference between art and action or production, making, and action. This is so important because the mean, as we remember, is of course as important in the arts as it is in action. The shoemaker wants to make a fitting shoe, a shoe that is neither too large (excess) nor too small (defect). Therefore, to that extent art and action are very closely akin. What is the difference? And the answer given first is that the arts are all partial. *All* [are] partial, deal with a part of the human good. There is no universal art. The whole human good is the concern of action. Therefore arts have a greater theoretical exactness than the sphere of action. The end is doing well, but not in the sense in which we use the word now: *doing* well, acting well. This means this particular good act now as part of one's good life, but the end which you propose is not directly the good life. It is this action *now*, of course understood as part of the good life and not merely as a means for the good life. If you go to a shoemaker and get shoes, these shoes are never an end. They are always a means. *Always* a means. What for the shoemaker is the end, the shoes, is in itself a means. In acting, *only in acting*, is the action the end. The particular good action is the end. Good.

In 1139b14 we find a second repetition. The first time Aristotle had distinguished between two kinds of contemplating: the scientific on the one hand, and the deliberative, logistic,

on the other. In the second statement, 1139a26, following, he distinguishes between theoretical and practical reasoning. And now what does he do? Oh, yes, let us read this characteristic beginning.

Mr. Reinken:
Let us then discuss these virtues afresh, going more deeply into the matter.

LS: Yes, higher up and let us speak about them again. It is an explicit repetition. This I mention only with a view to the question of Aristotle's procedure. Let us now read the immediate sequel.

Mr. Reinken:
Let it be assumed that there are five qualities—

LS: Now in other words, what he said hitherto was deliberately incomplete. Now he busts the case wide open and brings in the whole issue. But it would have been much more systematic to open the whole book with the following remark. Read that, the next sentence.

Mr. Reinken:
that there are five qualities through which the mind achieves truth in affirmation or denial, namely Art or technical skill, Scientific Knowledge, Prudence, Wisdom, and Intelligence. (1139b14-16)

LS: Yes, let us stop here. This should have been said at the beginning. Aristotle does not proceed in this way. He brings it up only in a more advanced stage of the argument because he wanted us to concentrate on some particular points right from the beginning. Now you see that prudence is in the center. Forgive me this pedantic remark, but I enjoy finding more and more evidence for my merely empirical rule that the most important is in the center. Now you see again what it means here. Prudence is not the most important in itself. That we learn later. It's wisdom. But it's the most important in the context, naturally. In the context of ethics we must understand prudence [to be] above everything else. Now in his treatment he proceeds as follows. He treats first the excellences—let us call these excellences—which presuppose knowledge of the principles, and then the excellences which consist in knowledge of the principles. First[3] [Aristotle] speaks of science in this chapter, and this is explicitly based—*explicitly* based; it is a unique case in this whole book—on[4] [his own] *Logic*. He calls it the *Analytic*. But what does this mean? The other intellectual virtues mentioned here are not the objects of analytics. There he cannot refer to that. Science, we learn here, is a habit of demonstrative knowledge, and that means of course, in the first place, mathematical sciences are science. They start from known principles, and Mr. Burnam explained that. But how do we get the principles themselves? This is a question which one cannot altogether avoid. Aristotle goes into that here: he says "by induction." But induction doesn't mean in Aristotle what it means in Francis Bacon or today. You just look around. You lead up: *epagōgē* means literally leading up to, look around. For example, how do you proceed when speaking to someone who has never heard of a triangle? You show him: here, that's a triangle. This, this,

various kinds of triangles; these all are triangles. Yes, you show him, and perhaps you show him also that there are such things not only on the blackboard but there are also things somewhere which are triangles or circles or lines. You "lead up to" so that he knows this is something which *is* there and not merely by virtue of arbitrary invention. I think we leave it at this point.

The next item he discusses—because we have to concentrate on prudence—the next is art. Art, production, is not merely knowledge, although one can say its core is knowledge. Aristotle speaks here of course only of its cognitive element, the knowledge element in art, because clearly, say, a shoemaker who knows how to make shoes must have the know-how, and the know-how does not consist merely in knowing certain rules. You know, you wouldn't say a man has the know-how if he is a kind of back seat driver and could never drive himself. So this manual element, if I may say so, is of course also essential to art. But it is not the core. The core is the knowledge. But in art too: scientific knowledge, art, and prudence are not knowledge of principles. The principles to which the artisan refers are given to him, presupposed by him; [for example], protection of feet, human feet. That's the end[5] with a view to which he looks around for material—leather, wood, or whatever it may be; probably not iron. And he looks around for how to go about [it], you know, how to do it, how to prepare the material and how to build it, transform it into a shoe.

Now we come then to practical wisdom. You see also (for those who are interested in this trivial thing), while he changes the order in the execution from the order in the initial enumeration, prudence remains in the center. So pedantic can Aristotle be and it is at the same time also a good lesson for us. Now let us turn to 1140a25, at the beginning of this chapter; yes, at the beginning of the chapter on prudence.

Mr. Reinken:
We may arrive at a definition of Prudence by considering who are the persons whom we call prudent.

LS: I don't have to say that Aristotle doesn't speak of a definition of prudence. That makes it all much more school-like than Aristotle is. "Regarding prudence,"[v] and so on; not definition. But all right.

Mr. Reinken:
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.

LS: "As a whole."[vi] Yes. So this is again clear: the arts are partial. Prudence is not partial. Yes. Now go on.

Mr. Reinken:

[v] Strauss retranslates "*peri phronēseōs*."
[vi] Strauss retranslates "*to eu zēn holōs*."

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 particular end of value— (1140a24-30)

LS: Can you think of an example?

Mr. Reinken: [. . .]

LS: Or a man may be very good in finding the right wives for the right men, particularly good in that respect and in no other respect. But we call it prudence nevertheless, although it is only a partial prudence because there is no *technē*, no art of it. There is no art, strictly speaking. But prudence simply, with which alone we are concerned, is distinguished from art by its totality. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
(other than those ends which are the object of an art); so that the prudent man in general will be the man who is good at deliberating about the whole.[vii]

But no one deliberates about things that cannot vary, nor about things not within his power to do. 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—

LS: Yes, let us stop here for one moment. We see, in the first place, that in the sphere of prudence the principles, the *archai*, are changeable. In the case of science, they are not changeable. A triangle always means a triangle. What this means we don't know yet. We have only the statement. But here we may remind ourselves as a minor help of the fact that in the fifth book we have seen that the natural right, which is a principle, is changeable. So this is universalized now. In the sphere of prudence the principles are changeable. And furthermore, art has its end outside the activity, obviously. The end of housebuilding is [that there is] a house there when it is completed, completely divorced from the activity of housebuilding, whereas prudence has as its end the activity, the good act. Now let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:
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.

Hence, men like Pericles are deemed prudent, because they possess a faculty of discerning what things are good for themselves and for mankind— (1140a30-b10)

[vii] In Rackham's translation: "will be the man who is good at deliberating in general."

LS: "For mankind" can give a wrong notion; "for the human beings."[viii] In other words, Aristotle does not suggest that Pericles thought of the greatest good of the greatest number of human beings all over the globe, for example, in the Spartan, Peloponnesian War, whatever it is. Good.

Mr. Reinken:
and that is our conception of an expert in Domestic Economy or Political Science.

(This also accounts for the word Temperance, which signifies 'preserving prudence.'

LS: That is a word which I translated moderation, *sōphrosynē*, and Aristotle uses an etymology of dubious value, that *sōphrosynē* is derived from *sōzein*, preserving prudence. We don't have to go into that, because what Aristotle means is independent of that etymology.

Mr. Reinken:
And moderation[ix] 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 as a means to this end, and for its sake; for vice tends to destroy the sense of principle.) (1140b10-20)

LS: "It tends to destroy the principle." There's nothing of "the sense of it."[x] In the sphere of prudence or action, the principles—that for the sake of which or the things to be done—do not come to sight at all. Now let me see, I'm sorry. No, the implication. Yes, what do we see? In the case of prudence, as distinguished from art and theoretical knowledge, the principles are affected by our morality or immorality. A man may be immoral, to use a convenient expression, and can be theoretically perfectly sound in his demonstration. And the same may be true of an artisan—we have discussed this interesting case of the drunk carpenter. But in moral matters, in matters of action, that is not possible. Here the decency or indecency of the man affects his grasp of the principles. Let us see, what does he mean? Yes, what are the principles here which he means, which are destroyed by immorality? Which are they?

Student: [. . .]

LS: Yes, but is this not again presupposed by the prudent man? I mean, prudence does not supply the principles. Prudence doesn't supply the principles; prudence acts on the basis

[viii] Strauss retranslates "*tois anthrōpois*."
[ix] In Rackham's translation: "And Temperance."
[x] Strauss retranslates "*hē kakia phthartikē arches*."

of knowledge of principles. Now if a man is immoral, then his sense of the principles is destroyed, or weakened, or[6] blurred. That is the point which he makes hitherto. Now let us wait until we come—later on.

Now in the next chapter he turns to the awareness of principles of which he had not spoken hitherto. To repeat again: these first three things which he has mentioned (these are science, art, and prudence)[7] all presuppose knowledge of the principles. They are based on knowledge of the principles. They do not supply knowledge of the principles. Now he turns to the question of knowledge of the principles, and he speaks first of the principles of science. What is the faculty or the excellence by virtue of which we know the principles? And this is called by Aristotle *nous*, which we can translate or express by intelligence, intellecting; by intellecting, by grasping with the mind's eye. Well, in modern times this notion of *nous* has become blurred. The Platonic–Aristotelian view is very briefly this. There are two actions of the mind, let us say intellecting and reasoning. Reasoning connects. I mean, before you can connect two ideas you must first have grasped each idea by itself. The grasp of the idea is *nous*. The linking up, connecting, comparing: that's a matter of reasoning; in Greek, [*dianoia*]. So we have here an answer to the question regarding the faculty by which we have knowledge of the principles of demonstration, the principles of science. The question which is much more important to us is: How do we get the principles of action, the principles of action as distinguished from demonstration? In the case of the arts, it is not interesting because we all know. Look at the shoemaker, look at the physician, how[8] [they have their ends of] health [and] protection of feet; victory in the case of the general. That's no particular question. In action it's a great question. Now this leads to the conclusion in the next chapter, which we read, in 1141a17, following. Now he turns to something else which is wisdom. How is wisdom related to what went before? Now do you have it?

Mr. Reinken:
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— (1141a17-19)

LS: Yes, well, "between intellect and science,"[xi] between grasping, clear grasp of the principles, and demonstration. Demonstration belongs to the sphere of *dianoia*. In Latin that is *intellectus*[xii] and *dianoia* is *ratio*. Wisdom comprises both. Someone may know the principles simply because they are transmitted to them ("I tell you so, period"), and then he can argue very well on the basis of the principles. That is demonstration. But of course if he does not have the grasp of the principles, he is in a way blind. He acts on authority. On the other hand, if a man has only knowledge of the principles, only *nous*, and cannot draw conclusions from it, he also is in a way—is surely not a wise man, because he doesn't know what the principles imply. Both. Let us read on where you left off. Let us first read that.

[xi] Strauss retranslates "*nous kai epistēmē*."
[xii] The transcriber notes that "something was apparently written on the blackboard to which he referred."

Mr. Reinken:
it must be a consummated knowledge of the most exalted objects.

For it is absurd to think that Political Science or Prudence is the loftiest kind of knowledge, inasmuch as man is not the highest thing in the world.

LS: He doesn't say "the loftiest"; "the most serious."[xiii] Aristotle has a very serious view of seriousness.

Mr. Reinken:
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.

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. It may be argued that man is superior to the other animals, but this makes no difference—

LS: No, that is "the best": "that man is the best of the other animals," not merely better.[xiv] Yes, "this makes no difference." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
but this makes no difference: since there exist other things far more divine in their nature than man, for instance, to mention the most visible, the things of which the celestial system is composed.

LS: Literally, the "cosmos,"[xv] but Aristotle understands indeed primarily by *kosmos* the heaven. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
These considerations therefore show that Wisdom is both Scientific Knowledge and Intuitive Intelligence— (1141a20-1141b3)

LS: Yes, that is one way. Yes, but—yes, all right.

Mr. Reinken:

[xiii] Strauss retranslates "*spoudaiotatēn*."
[xiv] Strauss retranslates "*beltiston*."
[xv] Strauss retranslates "*kosmos*."

[*nous*] as regards the things of the most exalted nature.[xvi] 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, marvellous, 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. (1141b3-8)

LS: They "do not seek the human good."[xvii] Let us stop here for one moment. Now this is of course a very crucial passage. That is undeniable. Yes?

Student: Because where do we go with wisdom if we haven't been prudent now?

LS: Yes, let us first understand what Aristotle explicitly says. He clearly asserts that wisdom, i.e., knowledge, i.e., intellect plus demonstration combined, is by far superior in dignity to prudence, and the reason is [that] prudence has to do with what is good for man. Now the suggestion that there are other animals which can be prudent is of course strictly provisional. In the strict sense no animal other than man is prudent. Prudence has to do with the merely human, which is of interest only to human beings for their life; and therefore it is partial, just as medicine is. Aristotle gives an example: there are people doctors and horse doctors. But the people doctors deal only with human health; the horse doctors deal only with horsic health, if we may coin this word, and this is essentially partial. Now there are quite a few other things here to [. . .] but the relation between political science, as he translates it, and prudence will come up later on. The key point is this: man is only a part of the whole, and therefore any knowledge of man and of things relevant to man cannot be the universal, all-comprehensive knowledge; and this [all-comprehensive knowledge] is the knowledge of the *kosmos*, provisionally stated, loosely stated. In a way, everything is clear.[xviii]

But there is one point which I cannot[xix] understand immediately and which I believe is one obstacle to our understanding now. This is hard for us to understand because we think, of course, when people speak of science (we think naturally of modern natural science),[9] [that][10] the question may very well be raised: Why should this be of greater dignity than moral–political science? Indeed, why should it? Because that is as partial as human knowledge. It is only the subhuman; why should the knowledge of the subhuman be of higher dignity than knowledge of the human? For us this is not immediately intelligible. Now I would like to mention one point. We regard it as possible that knowledge of moral principles or of political principles is of higher dignity than knowledge of nature. What is the condition for the supremacy of morality as it was stated with particular emphasis by Kant? Answer—what is the answer? Why did Kant reject this whole notion?

[xvi] In Rackham's translation: "Intuitive Intelligence as regards the things of the most exalted nature."
[xvii] Strauss retranslates "*ou ta anthrōpina zētousin*."
[xviii] At this point the transcriber notes: "During the last six lines of the transcript, the defect which was mentioned earlier began to interfere with the audibility. Ellipses will be used as necessary in what follows."
[xix] In the transcript: "cannot (?)"

Student: Impossibility of knowing the whole.

LS: Yes. The most venerable things, as Aristotle calls them, are not knowable. In traditional terms, speculative metaphysics is impossible. If there is no possibility of knowledge, say, of the soul as soul because what scientific psychology deals with is not the soul,[11] [then] there is no speculative knowledge of any true dignity. I note another point here which has very much to do with the issue raised by Kant. When he speaks of the status of secondary qualities, good or bad means always good for someone, for an individual or for a species. But *for*: white or black does not mean white for or black for; it means white. And [there is] the fact—I don't know whether Aristotle knew that—that dogs don't see or other animals don't see some of the colors. [12]That the lower animals, the [*thēres*], don't see, he knew of course, but that, say, the color line as we know it may be perceptual only by men, that is uninteresting to Aristotle. You know the distinction between primary and secondary qualities as they were stated by Locke: the weight and size, such qualities are primary qualities; but the sensible qualities, colors, sounds, and so on, are the secondary qualities. One implication was [that] only the primary qualities belong to the thing; the secondary qualities are in us. When the atoms—colorless, soundless things—affect us, then they appear as colored, sounding, and what the other qualities are. For Aristotle that doesn't exist. The secondary qualities belong as much to the thing as the primary qualities. But there are qualities which things have which have a relativity to man in themselves, because when you say, "This is good," "This thing is good," you mean always a relativity to man, or maybe to individuals. Or you may also say "It's good for fishes," but it is always relative to something, which is not true of the [sensual primary][xx] qualities. That is of crucial importance and was one of the differences between modern philosophy and Aristotelian and Platonic philosophy in the crucial seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

We note also another point here, as is shown by the examples of Anaxagoras and Thales, famous philosophers. A man may be wise without being prudent. Thales was not prudent, as is shown by the fact that, [while] looking at the stars, he fell into a ditch. He could not take care of his own business. And of course, since prudence and moral virtue are inseparable, there can be a man who is wise without having moral virtue.

Student: What about the time he cornered the market on wine presses?

LS: Yes, sure. That is the proof that Thales was not as dumb as that Thracian may have thought. But Aristotle starts here from common views.

Different Student: Why is it that art is partial and prudence is total?

LS: For a man. And that is very good. We reach then this proportion: art to prudence equals to prudence to wisdom. Art deals with a part of the human good. Prudence deals with the whole human good. Wisdom deals with the whole, not merely with the whole human good, but with the whole. That is immediately clear.

[xx] In the transcript: "sensual (?)."

Student: [Appears to have thought that the discussion which mentioned Kant, above, asserted the superiority of morality.][xxi]

LS: No, I tried to explain the obstacle which we have today in understanding Aristotle because for us, I suppose for most of us today, it would make sense to say that knowledge of human things, in the widest sense of the word—"humanity," that comes from "man" you know—that humanity has a higher dignity than natural science. Perhaps not from the point of view of simple cognitive standards of exactness,[13] but as subject matter: that these marvelous notions of the stars and of the planets cannot be compared with the most atrocious actions of the worst criminal, because he has intelligence. He has intelligence and they lack intelligence. So for us, I believe, it is immediately sensible that the sciences of man should be of higher dignity, because their object, man, is of higher dignity. Does it not make sense for us today to say that the sciences of man are of higher dignity because man is of a higher dignity than subhuman nature?

Student: [As to whether this was the Aristotelian view.][xxii]

LS: No, Aristotle rejects this view,[14] the reason being that the heavenly bodies are for him not soulless beings. That's one point. The heavenly bodies are for him not soulless beings. I cannot go into that now. But here is another one, a reason which we can immediately understand: because science as Aristotle means it here, or wisdom now, has to do with the whole. Of this whole, man is of course a part. And if our natural science, insofar as it deals with man, should give only a segment of man, or maybe a caricature of man, then it is not the true science of man. Then we would be in need of a theoretical science of man, which of course would not be moral and political philosophy because they are practical sciences. But the understanding of the nature of man would still be a part of a complete natural science even today, regardless of whether our natural science is able to provide that or not. And I believe it is unable to provide it.

Student: How does it follow that we are in need of a theoretical science for our understanding of man?

LS: But a theoretical man wishes today as in the olden times to have universal knowledge, and he would not be satisfied with a knowledge of a part of the whole, namely, of other things subhuman. That would not be knowledge of the whole. This theoretical science would surely be higher . . . By the way, one reason why ethics ceased to be a practical science and became a theoretical science as it is now is because it is meant to supply . . . the theoretical knowledge of man. Never forget, Aristotle is very clear: this is a practical science.

Same Student: [. . .]

[xxi] As noted by the transcriber.
[xxii] As noted by the transcriber.

LS: Yes, we [will] come to that later. That is a very important question.[15] I [will] give you only a provisional answer, but it is a very authentic answer. This book was said to be some kind of political science, *politikē tis*. That means it is not political science altogether. Differently stated, Aristotle's *Ethics* is in a sense theoretical . . .

Student: Does this mean that the proper study of the *kosmos* would be the concern of natural science?

LS: Yes, of course. We must not forget this: we use the term metaphysics, a non-Aristotelian term. Aristotle uses the term "the first philosophy," and the first philosophy is all-comprehensive and it deals with the principles of everything. I mean, if you take, for example, such a work as *On the Soul*, if you want to make a pigeonhole in a way in which Aristotle does not pigeonhole, that is somehow in between natural science . . . and is really psychology[xxiii] —where he speaks about the mind, which is after all the highest theme of *De Anima*. What is that? I mean, if you understand by natural science, in a somewhat untraditional sense, the knowledge of everything, meaning of the kinds of everything, of all kinds of beings, then you can call it natural science.

Same Student: Would this be the distinction between teleological natural science as opposed to—

LS: Yes, sure, you can put it this way. Sure. Yes, this is the last question now at this point.

Mr. Seltzer: Would you say that the deepest difficulty of modern scientific psychology is that it's based on human construction?

LS: Yes, perhaps. That is true of all modern science, in a way. Sure, but this leads very far. Yes, one can say that. But this requires long studies, Mr. Seltzer, some of which you will do during the summer, as we have seen.

Now let us continue our argument, because we have not yet reached the main difficulty. Prudence is concerned, as he explains in the sequel, with universals as well as with particulars or singulars. As was shown by Mr. Burnam: don't do business with an unreliable firm; this is an unreliable firm. Yes, that is good enough. Aristotle adds that knowledge of the singulars is more important than the former, [i.e., universals]. It's much more important to know that you should not deal with this firm X than to have the general notion and be blind regarding the particular case. If a man [knows][16] in a groping way[17] only, "I will never go again to that shop," he is a more prudent man than the man who knows one should not go to bad shops but is unable to subsume properly [the individual case]. Good. Nevertheless, in a sense the highest form of prudence is the most universal one. That is 1141b22, following. That's the next chapter, or it is here in one edition used as a chapter, when he says the relation of prudence and—yes, "political science" is not a good translation. Let us say the political art, which is also not a perfect translation but it avoids the grossest error, as if Aristotle were speaking of what is now called political

[xxiii] The tape was changed at this point, and the transcriber notes that this eliminates "the defective audibility."

science.[xxiv] Yes? "The political art and prudence is the same habit." Do you have that? Yes?

Mr. Reinken: Our chapter 8.
Prudence is indeed the same quality of mind as the political art,[xxv] though their essence is different. Of Prudence as regards the state, one kind, as supreme and directive, is called Legislative Science—

LS: "Art," always art.

Mr. Reinken:
art; the other, as dealing with particular occurrences, has the name, political art,[xxvi] that really belongs to both kinds. The latter is concerned with action and deliberation (for a parliamentary enactment is a thing to be done, being the last step in a 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 they who perform actions, like the workmen in an industry. Prudence also is commonly understood to mean especially that kind of wisdom which is concerned with oneself, the individual; and this is given the name, Prudence, which really belongs to all the kinds, while the others are distinguished as Domestic Economy, Legislature, and political art, the latter being subdivided into Deliberative art and Judicial art.[xxvii] (1141b23-33)

LS: Let us stop here and try to understand it. Now we have here first a distinction of things which are the same habit, as Aristotle puts it, but the being or the essence is different, and that has to do with a difference of spheres. Now what is that schema? The most architectonic, [as] he calls it (like most comparable to what the architect is in relation to the builders, the carpenters), is the legislative. Then we have the political art, which is simply subject to the legislative, because all political action takes place in a framework of a constitution, however you call that. And this [art] is therefore subject to that [art]. And it issues, as Aristotle puts it, in decrees, meaning decisions regarding particular cases, as the legislative art lays down the laws: general and permanent rules. And then there is another one. The political is subdivided because there are two kinds of special decisions: those made in Parliament, as this Englishman puts it, but let us say in the assembly, war or peace, for example, and then those made in law courts. And therefore there is a deliberative, or political in the narrower sense, and the judicial. And of this, the legislative is the highest. The legislative art, to speak of that first, is akin to prudence because it is concerned with good laws for this community. This is what the legislator wants. He's not someone in any classroom. Now these are all forms of prudence, as Thomas Aquinas puts it,[xxviii] insofar as they have their being not merely in reason alone but have also something

[xxiv] Strauss retranslates "*hē politikē*."
[xxv] In Rackham's translation: "Prudence is indeed the same quality of mind as Political Science."
[xxvi] In Rackham's translation: "has the name, Political Science."
[xxvii] In Rakcham's translation: "and Political Science, the latter being subdivided into Deliberative Science and Judicial Science."
[xxviii] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, §§1196–1197.

in the desire. The legislator giving laws for a community must have not only judgment[18] [with respect to] what the good laws are; he must also be concerned with this community. That's the desire. But insofar as they exist in reason alone they are sometimes called practical sciences, like ethics, economics, and political science. So we have now a very interesting thing. There is a possibility—.[xxix] The legislator has to do with this particular community, period, as much as the prudent man is concerned with his well being or his family's. That [concern] is economic; when he has to do with his family's well-being: economic prudence, because economic doesn't mean moneymaking but means management of the household, including the beating of wife and the spanking of children. So one shouldn't translate it by "economics," because that is today misleading. Good.

Now in a way, in the highest case, the legislative case, it is possible—.[xxx] If you look at Aristotle, what he is doing here in the *Ethics* and in the *Politics*, he doesn't legislate, but he teaches legislators. Aristotle is not concerned with the laws of Corinth or of some other Greek city; he is concerned with something from which every legislator can learn. The concern for the city, which means only for this or that city, is the[19] [aim] of the legislator. So that is the meaning[20] [of what] Aristotle said[21] at the beginning: it is not the political art but it is "some kind of political art" which he teaches. "Some kind" because he is the teacher of statesmen, legislators, judges, or what have you. These sciences are, as they were called in the medieval literature sometimes, theoretical–practical. They are not simply theoretical—[xxxi] That is important. That has a very great implication. If this is so, then in the true order of things—since the individual is of course subject to the law, clearly, so that every prudent action depends for its being prudent on its being generally speaking lawabiding[xxxii]—an action may be lawabiding without being prudent, obviously. I mean, how many imprudent actions are not felonies of any kind? If you go all the time to that shop where you are cheated, you do not commit a punishable offense, obviously. But on the other hand, if you do something which is illegal, that's imprudent to do, generally speaking. There may also be a situation where the laws are so bad that the prudent action must be illegal.

So generally speaking, the prudent action is lawabiding; the prudent action is subject to the law. And the law of course is the work of the legislative art; and the legislative art, if it is to be perfect, would have been acquired by sitting at the feet of a teacher of legislators, say, of Aristotle or of Plato, or perhaps even some others. Good. That would mean, however, that prudence is ultimately subject to an art, to that thing which Aristotle does which is not simply a higher form of prudence. This is an important distinction to keep in mind. Surely this is crucial for the understanding of what Aristotle is doing as a whole in his *Politics* and his *Ethics*. Political science as we call it now—all right, we can say that what Aristotle does in the *Ethics* and in his *Politics* is political science, but this is

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[xxix] The transcriber notes that this is a "false start anticipating a point to be made below."
[xxx] The transcriber notes: "again this point is dropped."
[xxxi] Here the transcriber notes: "A possible slip of the tongue since the point he was driving at seemed to be they are not simply practical; the point which was twice dropped above was apparently that it is possible for the political art as practiced by the teacher of legislators to be universal and not involved with a particular city, hence to be to some extent theoretical."
[xxxii] The transcriber notes: "he drops this to elucidate the last clause."

something different from the political art, from what the statesman in a given community does here and now. Action is always action here and now, and this as such can never be the object of a science, only in a very complicated and derivative sense. Science has to do with the universals and uses the particulars only as examples for illustration, but they are not as such the objects of it. This, then, has to be said about the relation of Aristotle's work—of course, if Aristotle didn't know prudence and didn't know prudent men, he could never have written the book, but it is not in his capacity as a prudent man but as a man transcending prudence, as a wise man, that he can write the book. Someone raised this difficulty. Were you the man, Mr. Burnam? How did you state your question?

Mr. Burnam: I forget now.

LS: Well, at any rate, let us keep in mind this strange development: that in a sense prudence, being subject to the legislative art, is ultimately subject to the quasi-theoretical enterprise of men like Aristotle and Plato. So we would come back from Aristotle to the Platonic point of view. If the philosophers don't rule, everything is wrong. It seems to be. But Aristotle does not take this way; we must see why in the immediate sequel. Now Mr. Butterworth.

Mr. Butterworth: I don't follow your reasoning as to why prudence is ultimately subject to an art.

LS: Because every prudent act takes place within a *polis* or within a political community of one kind or another, and therefore it is subject to that. The prudent man has always to consider the law and, generally speaking, his action must be lawabiding; and this law is the work of an art, the legislative art. And if it is good—not by accident, but certainly good—then the legislator must have been the pupil of a teacher of the legislative art, of a philosopher.

Mr. Butterworth: The difficulty that I have, though, is that it seems that if that's the case, then prudence is going to be equated to the legislative art, and Aristotle says it isn't.

LS: Yes, not equated because prudence proper is the action of the individual. It takes place within that framework, but it is not dictated by the framework. Then men would always be like children who were told by the law in each case what to do, which they aren't. No, that is no difficulty. Mr. Dry?

Mr. Dry: Why would the teacher of the legislative art have to have knowledge of the things not human?

LS: This is not yet said. Or did I say it? Oh yes, I was so imprudent to say that the teacher of legislators is a philosopher, and therefore—. All right, I withdraw for the time being, not because it is wrong but because it unnecessarily complicates the argument now, because we have now to find out whether that is true, what I said, that prudence is subject ultimately to the legislative art; really, to the legislative science given here in books like

Aristotle's. That I have to do. That is crucial. Why is prudence, so to speak, sovereign and must remain sovereign? That is answered, I believe, in the sequel. Yes?

Student: This relationship between the political art and prudence, the scheme you drew there is the same relationship as between justice in the widest sense and virtue.

LS: Yes, but we have to raise this question: Can we leave it at that? Can we leave it at this statement in book 5 that universal justice is the same as virtue, but only with a view to the other? This question will come up again. Now let us turn to 1141b33. "Now a kind of knowledge would then be to know for oneself, for one's own purposes: prudence." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
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—

LS: In other words, this schema might lead us to the view that the political man, the politically active man, is higher than the private man, and of course the legislator still higher, and Aristotle still higher. This is now discussed. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
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 see their own good, and suppose that it is right to do so.

LS: In other words, Aristotle reminds us now of the common prejudice which we still understand, especially in this country, against the politician. I mean, this has nothing to do with philosophy. Very nonphilosophic men have this prejudice and say a man who is minding his own business is a wiser man, a more prudent man, a more decent man, than these busybodies. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
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 probably as a matter of fact— (1141b33-1142a10)

LS: No, why "probably"? "Perhaps."[xxxiii] This is[22] [one of those] dangerous "perhaps-es" of Aristotle where one doesn't know what he means, especially. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

[xxxiii] Strauss retranslates "*isōs*."

as a matter of fact a man cannot pursue his own welfare without Domestic Economy and even Politics. Moreover, even the proper conduct of one's own affairs is a difficult problem, and requires consideration.

LS: Yes, let us stop here for one moment. The subordination of prudence proper to the political art, and this whole edifice, this whole hierarchy, is by no means unquestioned. A case can be made for the view that prudence is higher. Why? *The* question ultimately concerns which way of life a man should choose: the political or the theoretical. From the very beginning we were reminded of it, and it will come out. The answer will be given at the end. Now this question can of course not be decided by the legislator, because the legislator must decide in favor of the political life, in olden times at any rate. That means, however, that the most important choice a man can make can be made only by the individual, and therefore prudence is in one sense the highest. This choice is guided by the order of rank of the activities, but also by the situation, by the circumstances, [and] by the gifts of the individual and the circumstances. And this cannot be foreseen; this can only be seen when you look at the situation, and the decision can be made only by the individual. Prudence is the highest because the order of ends, [and] the rank of ends of the intrinsically high [and] the intrinsically low, is different from the most urgent; and I believe that is the key difficulty of practice. Something may be very low in rank and may be the most urgent. [A] simple example: [an] appendix operation. That's nothing high. We do not admire anyone because he underwent an appendix operation. No one does that. It is no sign of any human dignity to have undergone or not to have undergone it, and yet it may be in a given situation the most urgent thing that a man could do. So the priority cannot be established on the basis of the order of rank of the ends. That is the difficulty of human knowledge. It is something very elementary, but it is usually not theoretically stated properly. This is the reason why ultimately prudence is, in a sense, sovereign: namely, independent of the order of rank. The order of rank does not tell it, but it does not make questionable for one moment the order of rank. But it is not sufficient.

Student: Is this because if a man who was capable chose the theoretical life when the most urgent was more important in the situation, that it would ultimately destroy also the possibility of the theoretical life for him?

LS: Yes, sure. Yes, and yet it may be necessary at some time for the philosopher to side, as it were, against the *polis*. That is the problem of Socrates, by the way, because the simple formula which Socrates suggests—simply one has to obey the laws, period—is not sufficient, as a careful study of the *Crito* would show. Socrates deliberates. That is usually overlooked. Socrates does not simply say, "One must obey the laws. Every citizen must obey the laws; I, Socrates, am a citizen, therefore I have to obey the laws." That's not deliberation, that's a simple subsumption. Socrates deliberates. He takes into account many things, one of them being his old age. So the question is: How would Socrates have acted if he were forty and if the fate of philosophy as far as he knew would depend on his action? It's a very long question. And therefore [it requires] prudence, meaning the decisions of the individual. But the word "decision" has now acquired such an abominable

meaning where it means the decision is not guided by any rational consideration.[xxxiv] The decision is of course guided by rational considerations, by the order of the ends, which is not dependent on the decisions but pre-exists the decisions. But the order of the ends is not sufficient because of the essential difference between the highest and the most urgent. And everyone knows this from his own life [and] can perhaps find, if this were not indelicate, beautiful examples where he or she came across that conflict between the higher and the most urgent. Mr. Dry?

Mr. Dry: Would this explain why in book 7 of the *Republic* Socrates says philosophy has to come down?

LS: No, that's not the same question. No. That is a general question, because the philosopher cannot avoid entirely the responsibility for other human beings. That's the reason. It is a general point. Mr. McAtee?

Mr. McAtee: May I give a homely example just to see if I'm following up this point? One objection that one could raise here would be that for the sake of deliberation, one should begin with those things which are closest to home.

LS: Yes, yes, sure. Yes, yes, you do that, but if—

Mr. McAtee: If you were a very good man and very good at deliberating, you might even be interested in your community.

LS: Oh, sure, that's no question. That is clear. But the difficulty is this: if you always do the most urgent regardless of the order of rank, you will never do what is intrinsically best. That is also a matter of discernment. When must I stop being concerned with lower but very urgent things and turn to the higher? Obviously there cannot be general rules for that, but there must be a kind of instinct.

Mr. McAtee: But one would never be interested in these other things which are lower. Let's say foreign policy: at what point does foreign policy become of interest, say, to a man involved in—

LS: A purely theoretical man. Surely, some are not interested, you know, but a few might be—

Mr. McAtee: But would a man be happy not to be?

LS: Well, there is no general answer. There are situations in which theoretical men can afford the luxury not to take any interest in it. There are situations in which it is impossible. That depends.

[xxxiv] See Strauss's discussion of this term 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.

Mr. McAtee: And there is an essential difference between Aristotle and many scientific—

LS: Yes, sure. Yes, well, this whole question has disappeared because prudence, strictly speaking, has no longer a status, because the view which prevails today is that all prudence can be subsumed, [that] prudence is, so to speak, folkloristic, and what we would want to have is a science guiding us—say, for example, probability calculus can replace prudence.

Mr. McAtee: I mean something more simple. For example, when he picks up a newspaper he is disgusted at all these problems, for example, atomic warfare and so on.

LS: Well, a situation may be so hopeless that he just takes cover, as Plato puts it in the *Republic*. Because a storm is coming, such terrible weather, what can he do? And the situation may not be entirely hopeless, and then he will do something. That depends, and that is exactly the point.

Yes, then Aristotle discusses three habits akin to prudence: to be good at advising, understanding, and judgment. We cannot read these things. They are for our general purpose now most important for a negative reason. None of these is a faculty of perceiving of the principles of action. They all presuppose that you know the principles of action, just as prudence does. Now let us turn to a passage where Aristotle brings us back to *the* issue: in 1143b14, at the end of a chapter.

Mr. Reinken:
We have now discussed the nature and respective spheres of Prudence and Wisdom, and have shown that each is the virtue of a different part of the soul. (1143b14-16)

LS: Yes, let us stop here for one moment. So the relation of prudence and wisdom, that is the key, the highest question raised here. Now he discusses that in the sequel by raising two radical questions. First, and that is very strange, are wisdom and prudence of any use? [This is] the most extreme question one can raise here. And second, prudence being admittedly lower in rank than wisdom, how can it be in control of wisdom? For he had said in the introduction to this work that the political art is the highest, the most authoritative. It determines which arts and sciences are to be studied in the community. It's still in a way true, at least in state universities where the state legislature has any say in these matters. In the European countries, the continental countries, it's of course still more the case. Now as for the first question, he says this: wisdom deals with what is always and not with things coming into being and perishing. If it deals with the laws of coming into being and perishing, it deals of course with what is always, the laws being here understood to be permanent. Therefore it cannot deal with what makes men happy, because that is a process of coming into being: you are not happy, and [then you] become happy. As for prudence, moral virtue is something like health of the soul, but knowledge of that health is as little needed for being healthy as knowledge of the health of the body, medicine, is needed for being healthy in body. There are so many people who enjoy perfect health

because they have never used a physician. Why should this not be possible regarding the health of the soul?

Now these are the questions, and he begins to discuss them in 1144a, beginning. Wisdom and prudence are choiceworthy for their own sake as virtues, i.e., perfections of parts of the soul, even if they should produce nothing. In other words, if something must lie waste, it is inferior to its being properly cultivated for its own sake. But wisdom is that part of virtue which produces happiness not as medicine produces health, but as health produces healthy actions. In other words, wisdom is identical with happiness. That's why it is good. Now let us turn to 1144a6.

Mr. Reinken:
Wisdom is a part of Virtue as a whole, and therefore by its possession, or rather by its exercise, renders a man happy.

Also Prudence as well as Moral Virtue determines the complete performance of man's proper function: Virtue ensures the rightness of the end we aim at, Prudence ensures the rightness of the means we adopt to gain that end.

LS: Yes. So Aristotle says what is additionally needed, additionally to wisdom, for happiness is supplied by the cooperation of prudence and moral virtue. The end, the principle, is supplied by moral virtue, that is to say, not by any knowledge. Moral virtue makes us do the right or noble things for their own sake. That is what he does. Now let us go on in a23. We cannot read this all.

Mr. Reinken:
There is a certain faculty called Cleverness, which is the capacity for doing the things aforesaid that conduce to the aim we propose, and so attaining that aim. If the aim is noble, this is a praiseworthy faculty; if base, it is mere knavery; this is how we come to speak of both prudent men and knaves as clever. Now this faculty is not identical with Prudence, but Prudence implies it. But that eye of the soul of which we spoke cannot acquire the quality of Prudence without possessing Virtue. This we have said before, and it is manifestly true. For deductive interferences about matters of conduct—

LS: No, "syllogisms," "the practical syllogisms."[xxxv]

Mr. Reinken:
always have a major premise of the form 'Since the End or Supreme Good is so and so' (whatever it may be, since we may take it as anything we like for the sake of the argument); but the Supreme Good only appears good to the good man: vice prevents the mind and causes it to hold false views about the first principles of conduct. Hence it is clear that we cannot be prudent without being good. (1144a6-36)

[xxxv] Strauss retranslates "*hoi syllogismoi tōn praktōn*."

LS: Now let us stop here. So we can say "cleverness"—you know what cleverness is. Prudence is cultured cleverness, and cleverness presupposes the end; and therefore prudence as cultured cleverness also presupposes the end. Prudence is an eye of the soul, as it is here called. But again we raise the question: Which eyes of the soul see the principles and the ends? Prudence doesn't see it. Prudence sees only what is good for the end. Which eye of the soul sees that the good is the noble, and not the pleasant or the lucrative, whatever it be? This has a further implication. It is clear that not all men are clever—I believe that we can take as a sound major [premise] of a syllogism. But if not all men are clever, then not all men can be prudent. Does it not follow? And if prudence is a condition of moral goodness, not all men can be morally good. And yet moral goodness was said to be available for all men except morons or insane people. Yet we also have read in the first book the quotation from Hesiod about three kinds of people: one, [those] who know by themselves, who have the eye of the soul; those who listen to those wiser than they are; and those who have neither understanding nor do they listen to the others. And the last are of course the worst. In other words, let me say it simply. If the situation were simply as I stated before, it would amount to this absurdity: that you can tell a man, "Be intelligent!" which is manifestly impossible. But we can say to a man, "Be sensible." Sensible and prudent [are] the same thing. That makes sense. We say it all the time. Why can we say to everyone, however unintelligent: "Be sensible"? Because in order to be sensible he has only to do what we, [who are] supposedly wiser, tell him to do. Being sensible can consist merely in listening to others. Being intelligent cannot be commanded; sensibility can be commanded. By the way, the law itself commands it sometimes. What is the legal formula for what a prudent man would do in given cases? What is the legal formula, Mr. Fleming? If a man acts in a way which is very irrational, there is a legal formula for that—in driving, or in building a fence or—

Mr. Fleming: [. . .]

LS: No, no, no. There is a more specific formula.

Mr. Fleming: Reasonable man test.

LS: Reasonable man. Everyone is legally presupposed to be able to do what a reasonable man—that's it, because you can say to a man "Be sensible" but not "Be intelligent."

Student: The technical term is "reasonably prudent man."

LS: Yes. The possibility that a morally good man does materially bad things exists. In other words, a nice man who [wishes] to do what decent men tell him and prudent men tell him and doesn't find anyone, and he is too dumb to distinguish between a clever crook and a prudent man. That can happen. He may do the materially bad thing because he picks the wrong advisor; and it is possible that there may also be a nice advisor, I mean, a very intelligent advisor, who himself is not prudent because he lacks the cleverness. There is a present-day writer whose chief subject is this interesting situation, and that is Wodehouse, the British humorist, because Bertie Wooster, this very nice young man, is wholly unable to act prudently because it is not given to him, and therefore he turns to his valet, called

Jeeves, whom he regards as a paragon of prudence.[xxxvi] But Jeeves too is not prudent, and that leads to a very amusing situation. But this is a grave moral problem.

Now Aristotle goes on as follows and says here we have cleverness, and cleverness cultivated is prudence. And now he says there is a parallel to that from the side of desire or will. Here is moral virtue. There is also something which is in proportion. Cleverness to prudence equal[s][23] *x* to moral virtue. Now what is that *x*? This Aristotle calls natural virtue, which means not yet virtue, also noncultivated. Moral virtue is cultivated natural virtue, just as prudence is cultivated cleverness, and the two must grow together. The growth of cleverness into prudence and the growth of natural virtue into moral virtue must go together; then you will arrive at the perfect gentleman at the end.

Different Student: Is natural virtue similar to *virtù*?

LS: No. No, no, no. Oh, no. That's good you raised this question. No, what he means is clear: there are people who are by nature nice. Well, you all see it sometimes: small kids, perhaps exposed to a bad surrounding and [yet] are good natured, are not particularly cowardly, and are fair, you know, in their way in which they can be. Nice kids. But of course a nice kid cannot be a perfect gentleman. A kid may be nice and clever in its childish way. Now if both are properly cultivated, then it can become a perfect gentleman. There are [also] kids who are not nice and who are also stupid. This creates a grave question whether they can ever become perfect gentlemen.

Different Student: Do you think there is any connection etymologically with the word nice? The word nice originally meant—

LS: Exact.

Same Student: It also meant having a connotation of badness—

LS: No, I did not think of that. I did not know it. I did not know this bad connotation. I know nice in the sense of exact. But at any rate, whatever may be true of English etymology, the thesis, I believe, is in itself intelligible. Isn't it? Yes, but still our question is not yet answered. Let us read the end of that book, 1145a5, the last six or seven lines. "The choice, the will, cannot be correct without prudence nor without virtue."

Mr. Reinken:
our choice of actions will not be right without Prudence any more than without Moral Virtue, since, while Moral Virtue enables us to achieve the end, Prudence makes us adopt the right means to the end. (1145a4-6)

[xxxvi] P. G. Wodehouse (1881–1975), English writer most famous for his novels that center on Bertie Wooster and his manservant Jeeves.

LS: Yes, not "to achieve the end." I believe it means also "to see the end." The word is here omitted.[xxxvii] Yes. So this is what he has repeated time and again. The end is supplied by moral virtue. Prudence supplies the means. But the end being the principle, it means moral virtue supplies the principle. Prudence presupposes the knowledge of the principle. Now read the end first.

Mr. Reinken:
But nevertheless it is not really the case that Prudence is in authority over Wisdom, or over the higher part of the intellect, any more than medical science is in authority over health. Medical science does not control health, but studies how to procure it; hence it issues orders *in the interests of* health, but not *to* health. And again, one might as well say that Political art governs the gods,[xxxviii] because it gives orders about everything in the State. (1145a7-11)

LS: In other words, while it gives laws and orders regarding the worship of the gods—which it, according to Aristotle, does—[this] does not mean, of course,[24] [that the political art] controls the gods. So prudence is, as it were—prudence and moral virtue order the subtheoretical life of man so that man can devote his life to the theoretical life. That's in the highest case, and there they cooperate. But here that is of course an evasion of our question, because in this case the end is the theoretical life and its state of the will is the desire for the theoretical life. If you have a man who desires the theoretical life and knows in a general way what the theoretical life is, then he will deliberate prudently about the conditions of his dedicating himself, circumstanced as he is, to the theoretical life. An extremely simple situation. But what about those people who for one reason or the other do not choose the theoretical life? Where do they get the knowledge of the end? Do you see that point? Do you see this difficulty? Where do they get it? Now in one way, one can say—and this is the answer which Thomas occasionally suggests in his commentary, which to some extent is true—their nature supplies the end. Nature: there is a natural inclination toward the lower ends as well as toward the knowledge.[xxxix] But the question of course arises [regarding] how to discern the natural end from perversions of the natural end. That comes up. And how can the nonwise man, [the] nontheoretically wise man, have the proper discernment? Would this not be a form of theoretical knowledge?

Let me state it differently. Prudence does not supply knowledge of the end. But those who possess the natural virtues (you know, in the sense defined) they are "by nature": they by nature tend toward the good end. They by nature desire the good end. But they make blunders in detail before they have acquired prudence, obviously. Think of this nice kid confronted with a situation he or she never saw, and not being able to put two and two together properly, lacking prudence. The nice kid will make mistakes, that's clear. But if he has acquired prudence he will never make this kind of mistake. According to this interpretation, good upbringing does not imply the right ends, knowledge of the right ends, but in previous statements we had the impression that good upbringing, moral education,

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[xxxvii] The sentence Strauss is referring to runs: "*hē men gar to telos hē de ta pros to telos poiei prattein*."
[xxxviii] In Rackham's translation: "that Political Science governs the gods."
[xxxix] Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, §1511.

does create this awareness of the good ends. That remains absolutely dark. The characteristic of the sixth book, I believe one can say, is this negative point: that we do not get any clarity about the cognitive status of the moral principles. We get reasonable clarity about prudence, but prudence, to repeat, presupposes knowledge of the ends.

Student: Isn't this clarity in that the end is something higher in our notion of a hierarchy?

LS: Yes, but this is of no great help, because the majority of men cannot and will not dedicate themselves to the theoretical life, and the perfect gentleman is defined as a man who is not a theoretical man, who will lead the political or the economic life but not the theoretical life.

Same Student: Don't we speak of a well brought-up child and he is aware that there are certain authorities . . .

LS: Yes, but how does he know? Because his parents told him? How did his parents get it? Because their parents told them.

Same Student: He knows that his parents know better than he does.

LS: Yes, all right. Yes, that is not the point. But where did the parents get this knowledge themselves? And you cannot go *ad infinitum*. Eventually you have to come to some knowledge which is not merely imparted by parents. You see, it leads then to a vicious circle. Here is one society which imparts this kind of principles into children. There is another society which includes others. The principles may very well profoundly disagree, I mean, not in crude matters but in matters which are refined in any sense of refined. How is it possible? Naturally the people of[25] society A would say, "We are the ones who have the nice proper notion of gentlemanship, and the others are barbarians." That we know. That happens all the time. But obviously one cannot leave it at that. Ultimately we must raise the question of some standard by virtue of which one can judge whether[26] and to what extent [a given society] is barbaric or not barbaric. That you have to do, and the well brought-up people as such cannot answer. Mr. Sabine, who is well known because of his theory of political thought,[xl] gave once here a lecture in Chicago in which he took a very strong stand for liberalism [that was] in no way relativistic. And I was quite surprised, because the books seem to be thoroughly relativistic. And I asked him, "How come? On what ground do you take this stand?" And then he said, very disarmingly, "I suppose I take this stand because I was brought up in this country." I believe you can all see that's not sufficient, because on the same ground some cannibals will be in favor of cannibalism: because they were brought up in a cannibal society. That won't do: you have to go to a higher principle. And I believe what Aristotle presupposes here is, of course, that there are some people—. No, more radically stated, *the* end is the theoretical life, and ultimately the dignity of moral virtue can only be understood in the light of this end. But the concern with morality, the desire for morality as the end, and not looking beyond that, is a kind of divination of the true end of man which somehow stops, which is somehow thwarted. That

[xl] See George Sabine, *A History of Political Theory* (London and Sydney: George G. Harrap, 1937).

would be the way in which Plato would understand it, and ultimately Aristotle, I believe, would also have to say something of this kind.

Same Student: What do you mean by "will"? Do you translate force by will or desire by will?

LS: No, I meant it here synonymously with desire going with reason regardless of whether it is right or wrong, because there can also be a bad will.

Same Student: It cannot simply mean desire?

LS: No, no. The mere desire cannot very well be in man because it will always be affected by the fact that man is a rational animal. Rabbi Weiss?

Rabbi Weiss: Would it be proper to say that the nature of morality is such that the ends must be dark, as Aristotle indicated in book 1 where he says that the "what" supplies the first principles?

LS: No, not the "what," the "that."

Rabbi Weiss: I'm sorry, I meant the "that."

LS: Oh, yes. In other words,[27] the "why" doesn't have to be known. But all right, how do people know *that* the good is the noble? Say, because they have been told by their parents, who also told them that this is noble, this is noble, this is base, this is base. But we cannot leave it at that. I mean, we here, theoretical men, cannot leave it at that. We have to raise the question, "Why?" And Aristotle has—I'm sure that Aristotle [has]—I explained this in a former meeting. Two ends, massive ends, are obviously here, although not stressed very much. One is clearly theoretical knowledge, *theōria*; the other is *polis*. Man is the rational animal. Man is the animal which possesses *logos*, which means both reason and speech.[28] Reason in its highest form is theoretical reason. Speech points to society, communication, living together. The most perfect form of that is the *polis*, according to Aristotle. Therefore *theōria* and *polis* are *the* ends within which the whole life of man takes place. The moral virtues must ultimately be understood in the light of these two ends. Now these two ends are not identical. What *theōria* requires is not identical in every point with what the *polis* requires. It is not identical. Since, however, the root of both is the same, man's nature, man's nature as a rational animal, therefore there is also a kind of growing together (if I may say so, using an Aristotelian expression) of the requirements of *theōria* on the one hand, and of the *polis* on the other. And this web constituted by this growing together: this is moral virtue. Now what Aristotle does in a perfectly legitimate way is this: what comes to sight first in our orientation are the moral virtues, not the "whys." *Theōria* on the one hand and the *polis* on the other, these are the phenomena, and we start from these phenomena and try to understand them. I mean, the amazing evidence which Aristotle's statements about the moral virtues have in books 3 to 5 is due to the fact [that] we still recognize these things, when he speaks about liberality or whatever it may be. We may perhaps say he should have mentioned some other virtues and so on; perhaps we have to

quarrel with him at this or that point, but in the main it is an evidently sensible enterprise and evidently necessary enterprise.

So for the understanding of the moral virtues as such (and that means also for the statesman and legislator), the raising of this question of the "why" of the moral virtues, the ends which they somehow serve, is not so important because the statesman is concerned with having a society in which the gentlemen preponderate. Therefore he has to know what a gentleman is; and if he doesn't know it, well, he will not know it sufficiently if he doesn't study Aristotle's *Ethics* or some equivalent to that. That he will do. But the main concern then is very simple: what institutions are most conducive to the rule of gentlemen? The *Politics*. And what are most conducive in these circumstances? Well, that you must ask the man on the spot. Look at the map; look at the armament of the various states and all this kind of thing. That's easy; theoretically easy, not a difficult question. So I believe something of this kind is what Aristotle has in mind, because it is absolutely amazing how much he pushes back in the *Ethics* this question of the ends of man. Well, Thomas says, in his truly Aristotelian spirit, that the ends are ultimately the natural ends, and the natural ends are of course derivative from the nature of man.[xli] And the nature of man being the rational animal, both the *polis* and *theōria* follow necessarily. In other words, Aristotle could have written a deduction of the virtues from the nature of man, but because he tried to be as practical as possible, to remain as close as possible to the needs of the legislator and political man, he did not do that. Yes?

Rabbi Weiss: In the attempt to understand what he means by the "that" [which] provides the first principles in book 1, I wonder if by a poor analogy such as looking at a beautiful flower—you can't prove exactly why it's beautiful. That it's beautiful you can see. The same is true within action: that it's beautiful, resplendent can be seen, but you can't always go behind it.

LS: Yes, only the trouble is that people ordinarily don't fight about the beauty of flowers. They may fight about the flower but not about whether it's beautiful or not; whereas they do fight about rule, who should rule; and there the gentlemen are in conflict with the various kinds of nongentlemen. And therefore the issue is—the gentlemen are challenged in a very effective way every day: is gentlemanship so terribly important as you claim? Yes? Here you are.

Rabbi Weiss: Isn't there some beauty in the act—

LS: Yes, sure. Well, I suppose most people would agree regarding the beauty of a particular flower, although there is also disagreement there. But this doesn't have this importance for human life as a whole, because gentlemanship as such is questioned by the nongentlemen and, as it is put in Xenophon's *Athenian Constitution*, which we read last quarter, the nongentlemen say we like rather to be ruled by low-class people who take care of our interests than by gentlemen who take care of the interests of gentlemen. And they question the relevance of gentlemanship, and therefore it is a much graver issue. In other words, the nobility of many things is not seen; of *these* [noble] things is not seen. Yes?

[xli] Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, §106.

Student: I'm not sure, but I think I disagree with Aristotle.

LS: That is extremely important to us, but only under one condition: that you have reasons which you can make clear.

Same Student: Well, first of all, I'd like to know whether I understood him properly or not so that I can say I disagree.

LS: It's too late, but why don't you write it?

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[1] Deleted "as to."
[2] Deleted "his."
[3] Deleted "he."
[4] Deleted "Aristotle's."
[5] Deleted "and."
[6] Deleted "is."
[7] Deleted "they"
[8] Deleted "he has the end."
[9] Deleted "and."
[10] Deleted "there."
[11] Deleted "therefore."
[12] Deleted "The higher animals—"
[13] Deleted "perhaps not."
[14] Deleted "well."
[15] Deleted "but."
[16] Deleted "only."
[17] Moved "knows."
[18] Deleted "on."
[19] Deleted "sake."
[20] Deleted "where."
[21] Deleted "this."
[22] Deleted "these."
[23] Deleted "to."
[24] Deleted "it."
[25] Deleted "the."
[26] Moved "a given society."
[27] Deleted "and."
[28] Deleted "the."

Session 13: May 23, 1963
Continence and incontinence; pleasure and pain
(Book 7)

Leo Strauss: [In progress] [i]—Now first you raised the absolutely necessary question, what does book 7 mean[ii] . . . [iii] You also raised the question: Why does Aristotle discuss bestiality at such length, whereas he says almost nothing about the divine? And you suggested one answer: that perhaps it would be the question of the contemplative life. Now we have already seen an earlier allusion to that question of the divine in the chapter of magnanimity, which we must also not forget[iv] . . . Now what is this most striking gray phenomenon? . . . What is the phenomenon? What is the phenomenon from which Aristotle starts? The virtuous man is the man who knows the right things and invariably does it. The vicious man is the man who does not know the right thing and thinks the wrong thing is the right thing and invariably does it.[v] Now what is the gray phenomenon?

Mr. Wenger: He knows and doesn't do it—he knows the right thing.

LS: Yes. And doesn't do it. And this would be the gray: neither black nor white. Yes, that is quite true. Now for the terms, I suggest this translation: continence. Let us call it continence and the opposite incontinence, because continence does take a narrow meaning in English, too.[vi] This is all right here. Still, this creates a difficulty which you did not mention. Incontinence we know: the man who knows the right thing and doesn't do it. What is the continent man, however? That I believe you did not make clear.

Mr. Wenger: The continent is the man who is tempted but does not give in.

LS: So. Why is he not perfectly virtuous?

Mr. Wenger: Because he doesn't really want to; he doesn't choose to.

LS: Oh, no, no, no, no. He chooses, he is tempted! So that the truly virtuous man is not even tempted. That is the point. And how does Aristotle call that truly virtuous man in this sphere who is not even tempted?

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[i] The transcriber notes that "a brief part of the beginning of this tape was recorded defectively, and pages 1 to 4 can therefore be expected to be somewhat incomplete."
[ii] Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.
[iii] The transcriber notes that there are a few minutes of inaudible exchange here.
[iv] The transcriber notes that the "next remarks indicate that Dr. Strauss was pleased with a suggestion in the paper that what was read hitherto was black and white, and in book 7 there is also gray."
[v] The transcriber indicates that the word "invariably" is uncertain in both cases in this sentence.
[vi] These terms translate "*egkrateia*" and "*akrasia*."

Mr. Wenger: The moderate.

LS: The moderate. So let us stick to these terms. Now once we see that, that the subject is continence and incontinence—and let us call this fellow [LS writes on the blackboard] the dissolute man or profligate. But do you not call profligate a man who wastes his money? But you wouldn't call him dissolute. So I think "dissolute" is probably better. But the question is this: Are there not also in the sphere of the other virtues temptations, so that a man, for example, is tempted to be stingy but overcomes it, whereas the truly liberal man would not even be tempted to be stingy? Do you see that? In other words, should there not also be a whole rainbow of continences? He says it. There is a kind of continence regarding money, honors, and what have you, but this is not continence proper. Continence proper has to do only with what?

Mr. Wenger: With bodily pleasures.

LS: Bodily pleasures. That is, here we are concerned only with one virtue, moderation, not with the others. One could add one point to make clear the terminology. There is another thing which is akin to continence: in Greek, [*karteria*].[vii] I would translate this by "endurance." Continence has to do with pleasures, and endurance with pains. So that is clear. So in other words, if someone is tempted to run away from the dangers of fire or something but doesn't succumb to the temptation, [he] is an enduring man. Otherwise he is soft. So what would be the virtue correspoinding to endurance?

Mr. Wenger: Courage.

LS: So. And that's very interesting . . . And it is quite interesting, however, [that] the emphasis is entirely on this sphere of the pleasures of the body, not on the pains. That is remarkable, and however we have to explain that, the fact must surely be noted.

Now there was another point which your paper gave occasion to mention. Why are the bodily pleasures—the right posture toward them, or the tolerable posture: the right posture toward them is moderation; the tolerable posture toward them is continence. Why are they terribly important? That would be the question of which I don't know whether anyone has, to which anyone including myself has the answer. But that would surely be the question which would have to be answered in the long run. Why is the right posture toward the bodily pleasures of such an importance that Aristotle devotes to it the bulk of a whole book of the *Ethics*? After all, since the other temptations, say, regarding pain and the others, are also important. I leave it at this remark for the time being.

Only a final point which concerns purely your usage, which is not only your usage: you used the word "pessimism," and by implication of course also optimism. Now these terms are truly senseless terms, and they have their origin in one of the most common human vices: laziness, thoughtlessness. Optimism is the view created by Leibniz, according to which the visible universe is the best of all possible worlds: *optimus*, *optimum universum*. Pessimism is the reply to that: the visible universe is the worst of all

[vii] The transcript has a blank space here.

possible worlds. That was created by Schopenhauer in the nineteenth century. These are terms which are wholly meaningless when used for other purposes. I mean, why don't we say of a man who is—there are some people who always think they flunk an examination or, you know, all things will go wrong. We know such people. Why don't we call them apprehensive or fearsome people and the other ones sanguine people? It is much clearer. And I think only a great lot of nonsense is said if these terms are used. I know that I can at most influence one or two of you to change that, but I cannot change the usage because people like, apparently, the high falutin' words for their own sake. That cannot be changed by any things done in the classroom.

Before we turn to our text, the question, the author of which is not known to me:[viii] What is the difference between the virtue of Rousseau (meaning the virtue of which Rousseau speaks, of course) and Aristotelian virtue? That is a hard question, because in a way it is truly the same because Rousseau understands by virtue, on the one hand, strength of the soul and that is not a bad formula for what Aristotle understands by it. And the second meaning of virtue is performance of duties: the social virtues, what Aristotle would call universal justice. There are differences, but they would not show on the level of a simple answer, a straightforward answer, to this straightforward question. Who raised this question? Mr. McAtee?

Mr. McAtee: I was interested in whether there was a difference with respect to principle.

LS: Yes, but there is a whole question of the sphere of the theoretical life, which in Aristotle looks entirely different. I can only fall back on Mr. Reinken's famous and beautiful formulation in our Rousseau seminar.[ix] What did you say about the contemplation of Rousseau?

Mr. Reinken: That it was the secularized beatific vision.

LS: Yes, very good. And there is no such thing in Aristotle. Good. But now let us turn to our discussion and let us first try to understand the beginning of the seventh book. "After that we must speak, having made another beginning." Here a new beginning. Why does he make here a new beginning? That would be the question. Now the subject of the bulk of this part is continence, but [with] a special emphasis on incontinence; and the historical reason, one can say, the external reason why this is so important is because Socrates had denied the possibility of incontinence, meaning the possibility that someone can know the better and choose the worse. Well, Socrates had as much common sense as Aristotle. What he meant by that is a long question into which we cannot go here, but on the face of it it is a clear denial of common sense. And Aristotle has, of course, to face it. So the pleasant things to which the incontinent man succumbs and which tempt the continent man are, it would seem, things which are by nature pleasant, at first glance, especially the sexual pleasures. This is quite clear, that the sexual pleasures are here of special importance. To be tempted by them and even to succumb to them while knowing

[viii] Mr. McAtee submitted a written question to Strauss.
[ix] Autumn quarter, 1962. The transcript of the seminar is available on the Leo Strauss Center website.

that one ought not to desire them is not simply virtue, nor [is it] vice. To succumb to them is less than vice, and to be tempted by them is less than virtue. So virtue–vice doesn't exhaust the moral sphere. Already at the end of book 4 Aristotle had said that continence is not virtue. He made this clear. Book 7 deals then, we can say, with moral phenomena other than virtues and vices strictly understood.

Now we have to consider a few things which we have seen previously. At the end of book 4 there was this remarkable statement about the sense of shame, which is also not a virtue nor a vice strictly understood. It is something for young people; it is something praiseworthy in young people but not in mature people, and therefore it is not a virtue proper. Now the shamefaced man or young man commits improper acts but deplores committing them, we have seen, and this shows that he is immature. The gentleman doesn't do things which[1] [ought not to be] done, period; therefore he has never a reason for being ashamed. The continent man does not commit them either. But he would like to commit them, only he controls himself. Why is this case important? Now we have seen in book 5 references to the fact that a gentleman—there are a number of Greek words for gentleman: one is *epieikeia*, the word which can also take the precise meaning of the equitable man (*epieikēs* is equitable), but it has also a broader meaning where it means—it is very hard to say. What would be an English equivalent, a quasi-synonym for perfect gentleman?

Mr. Reinken: Noble?

LS: No, that wouldn't do it, because it is strong. Say, "a fine man" or something of this kind. No, Aristotle says in the fifth book more than once that such a nice man may commit adultery, but nevertheless it is emphasized he will not be an unjust man. I give you the passages: 1132a2 to 3, 1134a19 to 23. Now at the end of book 4 there was a strict statement: the gentleman never does anything which is in any way improper. He changes it now in book 5, and what is the subject of book 5? Justice. What is the peculiarity of justice compared with the other virtues? Common sense: I mean not a high falutin' thing.

Mr. Reinken: [. . .]

LS: Yes, that's not practical enough. I mean, morality in general has to do with things praised and blamed, but in the sphere of justice people go beyond praising and blaming. They reward and punish, and especially punish. So justice, we can say, is the virtue which has more teeth in it than the other virtues, which I believe makes sense. Therefore, in this connection,[2] because life becomes more tough here, one has also to be more cautious and has to consider [the difference] between forgivable and unforgivable things, between aggravating and extenuating things. And in this connection one must simply say this: this really is a very respectable man throughout his life, and then this has happened to him. And then to disapprove of it is one thing, but to put him in jail or worse things is another thing. And there you have to watch your step and make finer distinctions. That would be one reason. I think we can leave it at this remark for the time being regarding the whole context. Yes?

Student: I'm sorry, but I just didn't follow the reasoning. I wonder if you would repeat it.

LS: Is there not a difference between praise and blame on the one hand, and acquittal and condemnation on the other? And acquittal and condemnation are more closely connected with justice than with any other virtue, and therefore that is also more the sphere where excuse or aggravation, extenuating or nonextenuating [circumstances] have to be considered. For example, if someone is stingy, he is not a legal offender; you say he is a stingy fellow. But if he commits adultery, that's a punishable offense.

Student: [As to how a virtuous man not subject to temptation could commit adultery.][x]

LS: Yes—no, but that is the point. We come to that. We learn from book 7 that he is not a virtuous man but he is—

Same Student: Not a vicious man either.

LS: No, no, he's not vicious. No, no, now let me see.

Same Student: [. . .]

LS: Yes, but here we are concerned with a man who is not continent.

Same Student: That's not a vice or virtue. Right?

LS: Yes. Well, but they are still[3] somehow good: continence is good, and incontinence is bad. That still remains, but it is [not] as radically good as moderation is, and incontinence is not as radically bad as dissoluteness is. The dissolute man simply thinks it is not wrong to steal, to commit adultery, or whatever it may be. Do you see that? Is there not a difference between people who say, "Any pleasure which I find, whatever the law or decency says about it, I will try to get," and the other man who says, "No, I would like very much always to do the right and decent thing," but in certain situations he succumbed? Or another man, who never succumbs but is tempted. That is what Mr. Wenger so nicely said: the simple black and white picture of books 3 to 5 is now abandoned. Now we have to do with what happens mostly among human beings. I will give you an example from the literature. It's not high literature. Unfortunately, it's from German, but I can't help it, having been brought up in Germany. There was a well-known German humorist called Wilhelm Busch who wrote comical stories in very simple verses, and one is called "The Pious Helen."[xi] She was a girl, not very strict, and then when she reached a certain age she turned to alcohol, and she really detested herself for doing that. She went down on her knees and prayed that she may not do it. So she had really the good intention, but unfortunately the temptation was so great that while kneeling she moved toward the booze. You see, that is a clear case of incontinence as distinguished from dissoluteness. The dissolute individual would not have had any misgivings from

[x] As noted by the transcriber.
[xi] Wilhelm Busch, *Die fromme Helene* (Heidelberg: Basserman, 1872).

dissoluteness. The dissolute individual would not have had any misgivings in emptying one whisky bottle after the other, you know, except if she [suffered] bodily from it. But[4] [the girl in the story] really didn't want to do it, so she is better than the other. But also the continent man who does not move while kneeling toward the whisky bottle is less than the man who [does not have] to make a special prayer in order to be protected against drinking unnecessary whisky, if whisky is ever necessary.

Student: I think this is all a very interesting argument, but you could argue that the incontinent man is worse than the dissolute man because he does know better.

LS: But is this not of some importance, that he can control himself? I mean, from what point of view do you look at that?

Same Student: I don't know. I would argue that the man who doesn't know any better—

LS: Yes, but this ignorance is guilty, you know.[5] [Aristotle] discussed that in book 2. He should know better. Ultimately it's his fault that he does not, just as someone would say—an employee is fired because he didn't do his duty and he said, "I'm sorry, I forgot my duty." You cannot; you are supposed never to forget your duty. I mean, if he [said] he forgot that Mr. X was not Mr. Y, this is surely excusable; but forgetting of one's duty is as such the guilt. That we are supposed never to forget.

Student: [As to whether any of the other virtues have teeth; for example, courage and its opposite conceived in terms of deserting in battle.][xii]

LS: No, why was Aristotle so silent about the *polis* when he spoke of courage? He took away the whole basis of courage as justice.

Father Vaughan: Do[es] the Jewish or the Christian tradition admit the possibility of Aristotelian moral virtue?

LS: Well, there are some men here, Father Vaughan, who know the Christian view much better than I do, and Mr. [. . .] too. But I would say that no Jew or Christian would ever admit that there can be a virtuous man in Aristotle's sense. I mean, this is not Jewish apologetics on my part, but they say that the notion of the Pharisee in the New Testament is more aptly applied, more simply applied to the Aristotelian good man at the end of book 4, because the Pharisees all admitted, of course, that they are sinners, in spite of all merits that may have been claimed for enlarging luxuries and other things. But they admitted always they were sinners, whereas the gentleman of Aristotle doesn't admit that he is a sinner. Is this clear?

Different Student: This clarifies a lot.

LS: I'm glad.

[xii] As noted by the transcriber.

Same Student: This position is absolutely incompatible with the Christian psychology.

LS: Oh, there is no question.

Same Student: This is the point that I had difficulty grasping before.

LS: But you see now—again I quote Mr. Wenger. Now when he comes to the black-white, goes over the black-white discussion, he comes closer to things which—also to common sense. But the question is: Why did Aristotle make the black–white picture? That we have to raise. Sure. But I believe—do you know the reason why he made it? Can you imagine a reason?

Same Student: No, except if he really wanted to characterize the whole broad picture of what he thought might be possible.

LS: He was not a logical positivist, so he must have forgotten that. No, a very substantial reason. For example, let us take moderation. Let us grant that no man is moderate, strictly understood. Let us grant that. But we also say to the extent to which he is not moderate, he is a sinner; he is defective in some way. It may not be a grave sin, but there is some defect in him. But how can you face that if you do not know in the first place what the perfectly moderate man is? You know, whenever you speak of an imperfection you claim to know what the perfection is, and therefore it is absolutely necessary, even if the perfectly moderate man were not possible, to know what the perfectly moderate man would be. You see, there is also this: immoderate people—there are all kinds of immoderateness, kinds and degrees, and in order to recognize them, in order to diagnose them, you have to have a picture of the perfectly moderate man, just as you cannot diagnose diseases of any part of the body if you do not know the healthy shape and healthy function of that part of the body. Good. But I'm glad that some point became clearer to you. By the way, I must say one point. Unfortunately, I have not looked it up. In this very remarkable essay of Winston Churchill on Lord Birkenhead, whose name was Smith[xiii]—I forgot his first name, that's the trouble.

Mr. Reinken: F. E.

LS: F. E. Oh, thank you. F. E. Very good. And F. E. Birkenhead, who was by the way a remarkable lawyer—there is a wonderful dialogue between young F. E. Birkenhead, when he was pleading before a London law court, and a very dignified old judge. And how this young lawyer took this dignified but somewhat unintelligent judge for a ride is a sheer beauty, a dialogue improvised by F. E. while he lived. And F. E. Birkenhead—F. E. Smith, I'm sorry—gave Churchill Aristotle's *Ethics* to read, of course in English translation because Churchill, as you know, has an allergy to foreign languages. And when Churchill had read it he said, "That's it." And there is even a remark which he makes, I believe in the very essay on Birkenhead, or in some other one when he speaks of some very distinguished British gentleman: "Well, he always did the right thing, he never made any mistake." He expresses himself even more strongly, exactly along the lines of

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

the end of book 4 of the *Ethics*: a man who has nothing in him which he could ever rebuke. Oh yes, Mr. Glenn.

Mr. Glenn: When you speak of the man who in principle is never supposed to forget his duty, this seems to me to deny the possibility of inculpable ignorance.

LS: . . . You may forget that the date is the fifteenth of April and believe it is the first of May. This is a slightly different thing, although I believe it is not quite different, because the duty of paying your taxes means paying your taxes at that date at the latest. But let us now go on, because quite a few things, I believe, will become clear.

At the beginning of book 7 we had a beautiful example when he speaks of the divine man and quotes Homer on Hector. And shortly thereafter he says beastly men occur most frequently among barbarians, which doesn't mean of course that most barbarians are bestial, but [only that] they are more frequent among barbarians than among Greeks, not more. But Hector too is a barbarian, so you see how foolish these people are who say Aristotle shared one hundred percent the prejudices of the most narrow-minded [. . .] peasants about the superiority of the Greeks to barbarians. The only evidence they have is a statement, this famous thing[6] (we do not know [if it even came] from Aristotle's own mouth), this famous advice to Alexander that he should not go in for a mixture of Greeks and Persians. You know, but this doesn't have the dignity—even if it were absolutely true, which I do not know—which Aristotle's own writings have. So Aristotle surely did not think that. Let us turn to 1145b2 to 7. That's the end of that chapter.[xiv]

Mr. Reinken:
Our proper course with this subject as with others will be to present the various views about it, and then, after first reviewing the difficulties they involve, finally to establish if possible all or, if not all, the greater part and the most important of the opinions generally held with respect to these states of mind; since if the discrepancies can be solved, and a residuum of current opinion left standing, the true view will have been sufficiently established. (1145b2-7)

LS: Yes, what he translates [as] "the current opinion" is in Greek *endoxa*, and that means simply the things which exist in opinion, which are generally accepted. This is a quite remarkable statement. It is interesting that Aristotle did not do this earlier. There he did not start from the rightly held opinions and ascend step by step to the true view. That was done, to the extent to which he did it, very quickly. Here we have a model example of the ascent from opinions to knowledge. Good. And it shows that in a way this is a more sophisticated discussion[7] than the previous discussions were. Now we cannot possibly read everything; only for illustration there is 1146a21.

Mr. Reinken:
Again (*a*, *c*) there is the difficulty raised by the argument of the sophists. The sophists wish to show their cleverness by entrapping their adversary into a paradox, and when they are successful, the resultant chain of reasoning ends in a deadlock: the mind is

[xiv] The transcriber notes here" "not in most translations."

fettered, being unwilling to stand still because it cannot approve the conclusion reached, yet unable to go forward because it cannot untie the knot of the argument. Now one of their arguments proves that Folly combined with incontinence is a virtue.[xv]

LS: I trust you understand that state of mind. Someone gave you a demonstration which is flawless and you are sure the whole thing is wrong. Your mind is fettered, the most uneasy condition of mind. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
It runs as follows: if a man is foolish and also incontinent, owing to his incontinence he does the opposite of what he believes that he ought to do;[xvi] but he believes that good things are bad, and that he ought not to do them; therefore he will do good things and not bad ones. (1146a21-30)

LS: Yes. So is it not beautiful? Well, I thought of a simple example. He believes that suicide is the right thing in the circumstances, but then he is too cowardly to shoot himself. So he does the right thing, not killing himself, out of a vice. Now the difficulty, of course, is clear: his doing the right thing is not truly doing the right thing, because he does it for the wrong reasons. But from a practical point of view, it is better. He has this kind of lack of self-control regarding death in this situation. So that is a nice point. Yes. Now the difference between the incontinent man and the dissolute man we have discussed before; we do not have to go into that. And then there is a very fine analysis. What does this precisely mean: that the incontinent man knows and he acts against knowledge? Aristotle becomes here very subtle. Does[8] [the incontinent man] know both premises of the syllogism? For example, pleasurable things of this kind are bad; this is a pleasurable thing of the kind in question; hence it should not be done—is not only one thing [. . .] clear, either the major or the minor [premise], what the case may be. This does not affect the broader issue, therefore I pass over that.

In 1147a24, following, he discusses first the simple case of perfect agreement between major and minor premise because there is no desire present. That's easy. This is a bad pleasurable thing: no. Pleasurable things of this kind are bad, but this is a pleasurable thing of the bad kind. Hence it is bad. It shouldn't be done. That is relatively simple if you do not have any desire for the pleasurable thing in question. I believe we can pass this over. But in the more interesting case, what happens is, in Aristotle's analysis, that the desire establishes, as it were, a major premise which suits the desire; namely, someone desires, say, a woman whom he shouldn't desire. And the desire establishes the premise: women of this kind should be desired.[9] It is not made explicitly, but it is implied in the whole mental process. Good. Thomas calls this very nicely the universal of concupiscence, the universal generated by concupiscence.[xvii] Differently stated, the incontinent man acts not properly on knowledge. No, he has the knowledge, "This is bad." But there is no other knowledge which contradicts it. There is not strictly speaking

[xv] In Rackham's translation: "Folly combined with Unrestraint is a virtue."
[xvi] In Rackham's translation: "if a man is foolish and also unrestrained, owing to his unrestraint he does the opposite of what he believes that he ought to do."
[xvii] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, §1347.

even an opinion which contradicts the major [premise] but an implicit opinion, roughly this. Let us leave it at this case. He doesn't opine this woman should be desired, but it is only implied in him. Therefore the Socratic analysis is fundamentally wrong.

Yes, and as we have said before, in the sequel continence and incontinence, simply stated, have to do with the necessary things which create pleasure, and that is to say, the bodily things, i.e. the subject matter of continence or incontinence is food, drink, and sex. The incontinent man is characterized by powerful desires overcoming his choice of the good. The dissolute man has made a choice of the bad, a deliberate choice for the bad. Let us turn to 1148b15 to 19.

Mr. Reinken:
Besides those things however which are naturally pleasant, of which some are pleasant generally and others pleasant to particular races of animals and of men, there are other things, not naturally pleasant, which become pleasant either as a result of arrested development or from habit, or in some cases owing to natural depravity. Now corresponding to each of these kinds of unnatural pleasures we may observe a related disposition of character. (1148b15-19)

LS: Yes. Now in other words—and then he speaks of the bestial, of bestiality. I mean, people who have desires for which no normal human being would have a desire. This is of course not incontinence; that's bestiality. Incontinence proper has to do with the things which are by nature pleasant, not with things which become pleasant because of a natural defect or an illness or a custom. Now in the sequel he gives some examples of incontinence in the wider sense, not in the strict sense. We can postpone it.

Then we have to say something about he next chapter, because that is important for our broader issue, the section 1149a24, beginning, where the thesis is maintained that incontinence regarding anger is less base than incontinence regarding desires. Does this ring a bell, Mr. Dry? It seems—

Mr. Dry: Well, yes, I was thinking that that would be the explanation [of] why continence has to do with moderation regarding bodily pleasures.

LS: That is so very good. I didn't think of that, but that's very true. Very true. Very good.

Mr. Boyan: The two horses?

LS: No, more generally. That is not literally true, what you said, because the two horses—there is no distinction between desire and anger, Mr. Boyan.

Mr. Boyan: [Trying to clear up a point he made earlier, he asks whether the point Dr. Strauss just made is that the dissolute man has made a choice of the bad.][xviii]

[xviii] As noted by the transcriber.

LS: Yes, he is convinced that to enjoy all women who are attractive to him is the right thing, whereas the incontinent man says, "No, it's wrong," but in a given situation he succumbs. And the continent man says also it is wrong, but he is tempted but he never succumbs.

Mr. Boyan: The kind of situation I had in mind has to do with someone who is raised in a slum and he is brought up to think that certain things—it never occurs to him that—

LS: Yes, he is corrupted by custom. He is corrupted; to that extent he is of course excusable. At least there is an extenuating circumstance. But it doesn't make him good.

Mr. Boyan: Yes, but I thought he would be less bad than the fellow who was brought up right as the usually good—

LS: To some extent, but since custom or habit becomes second nature, it is from a certain stage on almost as bad as if he had been born with a bad nature. Aristotle was not sentimental, but on the other hand he was of course not inhuman—no, very far from it. In other words, quite a few things are excusable, surely, and we must listen to every reasonable excuse. But whatever is excusable [or] is in need of excuse[10] is in itself bad. I mean, you don't excuse yourself if you go and write your prelim papers[xix] properly. It's not an object of excuse. If you would, which God forbid, flunk, then if you are responsible to anyone else, there might be a need for excuse. Yes, do you see that? Good. But the excusable is necessarily bad.[11] It doesn't mean it is devilishly bad; of course, then it wouldn't be excusable. But it is bad.

Mr. Boyan: Is it worse than incontinence?

LS: What?

Mr. Boyan: Being excusably bad.

LS: But the incontinent man is to some extent excusable. To some extent. We come to that. But let us—if you don't mind, because we really have so much to discuss. This section is extremely interesting because it deals with a Platonic subject, as Mr. Reinken divined, namely, the famous teaching of Plato according to which spiritedness is higher in rank than desire.

Student: With the two horses—

LS: The two horses—I'm sorry, no. The two horses occur in the *Phaedrus*—

Same Student: And one is white—

[xix] Preliminary examinations in the political science department.

LS: Yes, one is beautiful, and the other looks like Socrates.[xx] Period. Leave it at the description. But they are both called desires. In the *Phaedrus* he does not make the distinction between desire and spiritedness which he makes in the *Republic*.[xxi] Yes, this is of some importance.

Same Student: [. . .]

LS: The dialogues *Republic* and *Timaeus* deal with that. The *Phaedrus* does not deal with the distinction between them. And in the *Republic*, where is that? In the psychology: book 4. Good.

Now why is incontinence regarding anger less base than incontinence regarding desires? The first argument[12] is really Platonic. Now listen to that: in anger there is an element of listening to reason. In desire there is no element of listening to reason. The object of anger is revenge. You want to get at him who hurt you, who despised you or who acted arrogantly toward you. Thomas Aquinas explains this very beautifully. The object of desire has the nature of an end.[xxii] The apple: you want to eat it. But revenge has not in itself the nature of an end. Therefore, because revenge is not an end but a means, namely, the restoration of your original state, therefore there is a kind of reasoning applied. For [in] desiring an apple you don't know any reason; you don't need any reason, you just see it. Well, like our ancestors: beautiful to look at and promising good taste. I'm speaking of Eve. Of course it is not certain that it was an apple, as you know. The Bible doesn't have that. Aristotle says anger moves by syllogizing. There is an implicit syllogism in anger. The second reason, and this sounds very strange: anger is more natural than desire, meaning anger is more natural than desire for the non-necessary things. The desire for the necessary and for mere food,[13] not for dainties, is natural. That is not the point, the desire for the non-necessary things. And he gives a nice example of some family inheritance of anger which is very amusing to read, where the son was always beating the father. And so [he says], "This [14][runs] in our family," and therefore the judge found that is not something which can be severely punished. And there was always a limit: "He only dragged me to the door and not beyond"; also that is all inherited and therefore excusable. The third point, which is quite interesting: anger is less insidious than desire, and the proof of that are the descriptions of Aphrodite, the goddess of love, whose wiles were famous. Being less insidious, it is less unjust. In other words, there is a certain frankness of anger, and the other is not frank. And the last item: anger is essentially without *hybris* because anger is necessarily accompanied by pain. You are hurt. And *hybris* implies pleasure. I mean, if you are arrogant there is an element of pleasure implied, but actions from *hybris* are to a higher degree objects of anger, objects of justified anger, i.e., they are to a higher degree unjust. Here we are. That is roughly the brief summary of Aristotle's four arguments.

Now Aristotle follows here the Platonic teaching, with some arguments of his own regarding the respective rank of desire and anger. Now this Platonic teaching is meant by

[xx] Plato, *Phaedrus* 246a–e.
[xxi] Plato, *Republic* 439e–441b.
[xxii] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, §1389.

Plato himself [to be taken] with a great grain of salt, as I have explained in my last course on the *Republic*, and also in my chapter on Plato.[xxiii] So Plato himself didn't mean that so literally. Why does Aristotle adopt it? Now in order to understand this, we have to consider the character of Aristotle's teaching as a whole. Aristotle is distinguished from Plato, especially in the *Ethics*, by his "narrow"[xxiv] treatment of the phenomena. For example, when Aristotle speaks about moderation, he means this virtue concerned with pleasures of the body, whereas when Plato speaks of moderation, that is so enlarged that it means all forms of moderation. Similarly in the case of courage: courage in Aristotle means—the matter is the battlefield, conduct on the battlefield. For Plato all kinds of courage, moral courage, [for example], are also implied. Of course, Aristotle, when he speaks of desire, thinks of Aphrodite, as is shown by the examples here. But Aristotle doesn't use the word *erōs* here, only desire, [*epithumia*].[xxv] But when Plato speaks of this whole subject of desire, he thinks also and above all of philosophic *erōs*. Aristotle says: Well, that has nothing to do with our subject here. No one has ever been accused of a crime on account of philosophic *erōs* as such. Of course we must not forget the fact that the word *erōs* occurs in a very high place in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. The unmoved mover moves the whole [*oyranos*][xxvi] as an object of *erōs*, desire. But still that is not a subject with which we deal here, where we deal with strictly human things.

Now one can easily show the difficulties of the Platonic-Aristotelian assertion regarding the higher rank of anger of spiritedness compared with desire. A simple example: a nasty child desires something, an unreasonable desire; the child doesn't get it, and then he begins to scream and he makes things of course worse by screaming. His desiring it is in a way much [less][xxvii] worse than his anger. And you could find simple examples from the lives of grownup people as well. Now let us take first the crude legal case. My example is partly taken from Thomas Aquinas. Now what is the most well-known crime connected with bodily desire?

Different Student: Promiscuity.

LS: Yes, but is not rape worse? I didn't ask for the most common example. But rape, I believe, is a greater one than promiscuity. Is there any law against promiscuity per se?

Same Student: Only if it means public adultery.

LS: All right. So in other words, promiscuity is too vague a term for our purposes. But rape is surely a statutory crime. Good. Now on the other hand, what is the worst kind of crime arising from anger? Let us say killing a human being. Now when the man who had

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[xxiii] Leo Strauss, "Plato," in *History of Political Philosophy*, eds. Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey, (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1963). Strauss taught a course on the *Republic* in the autumn quarter of 1961. The transcript of that course is available on the Leo Strauss Center website.
[xxiv] Quotation marks appear in the original transcript. Strauss might have said "quote narrow unquote."
[xxv] The transcript has a blank space; the transcriber simply notes "gives Greek."
[xxvi] The transcript has a blank space; the transcriber notes "gives Greek."
[xxvii] "[less]" appears in the transcript.

killed another man would say, “I am terribly sorry, but I did it in anger,” and it can be demonstrated by witnesses that he was angered, it is an extenuating circumstance. If a rapist would say, “I had to do it because of such a strong desire,” this is not an extenuating circumstance. So you have to think always of specific questions in order to understand [the issue], because Aristotle always thinks of them. We are in the sphere of practical science. One can of course also say, if one wants to be nasty—and that is, by the way, what Aristotle also implies—the rapist had some pleasure. The angry man didn’t have pleasure. He was pained by his anger, and the law has in a strange way a greater sympathy for those who have pain than for those who have pleasure. How to explain this abyss is fortunately not my function.

Student: The obverse of this, though, is that in the absence of extenuating circumstances the murderer pays the higher price.

LS: Yes, but we are speaking now of comparable things. We are not speaking now of murder and rape; we are speaking now of anger and desire. And anger is an extenuating circumstance; desire as such, not. Desire could come in another way: if the so-called victim of the rape had really provoked it, quasi, then I suppose one would question whether it was rape. Yes, sure. That is a different question.

Student: Doesn’t this contradict the statement he made earlier, that incontinence regarding anger is worse than incontinence regarding desire?

LS: When did he ever say that?

Same Student: The forgiveableness of murder in anger is greater than that of rape in desire. I thought the original statement made was that it is more reprehensible or more blameworthy to be incontinent in matters of anger.

LS: No. No, no, no, no, no. He said the opposite. Then you misunderstood Aristotle’s assertion. Yes.

Now a further consideration, and which goes deeper: he who is angry (even that nasty brat to whom I referred) forgets the sensual object to that extent. And in the clear case, the angry man, whatever the primary motive for his anger may have been, forgets about it and in the “logic” of his action he is perfectly willing to fight and to die. In a way, he overcomes with a whole adherence to the sensual goods including life itself. This bespeaks a certain superiority of anger. And that is of course of the utmost importance, because this anger is therefore the basis—not the basis, but a very important ingredient of military courage. You say the phrase, “He has never heard a shot fired in anger.” [In battle], shots are[15] fired in anger, how[ever] low the degree of anger in the individual soldier may be. But the whole situation calls for something like anger. Punitive justice is hardly thinkable without a certain degree of anger, still less war. Good. Now I believe this has something to do with the fact that we had first the discussion of justice before we had this section on continence.

Now I go on with my survey, 1150a, toward the end. To act badly when prompted by a strong desire is less evil than to act badly when prompted by a weak desire. This throws light on our dissolute man. The dissolute man doesn't have to act. I mean, he is sure[16] [that] he is willing to enjoy [any pleasurable thing which is around], you know, and he takes it in his stride, as it were. He is not overcome by a very strong desire, just as beating in anger is less evil than beating a man without anger. But to be prompted by a very strong desire is incontinence in contradistinction to dissoluteness.

Aristotle says then a few words about the other thing, endurance, which is fundamentally the same, only in relation to pain, and he gives some examples. In a commentary I read some nice examples of the opposite of endurance, which the Greeks called *malakia*, softness, and the great post-Aristotelian example was [the case of the] Sybarites. And I read two stories which I thought I should tell you. An example of a Sybarite is a man who got a hernia when seeing other people doing very hard work. And also the Sybarites were extremely sensitive to noises, so they prohibited the blacksmiths in their city as well as roosters. They wanted to have it very quiet. You know? Good. I thought that would amuse you. Aristotle has, of course, this phenomenon, the fundamental phenomenon, in mind. 1151a3; I think we should read that.

Mr. Reinken:
That incontinence is not strictly a vice (though it is perhaps vice in a sense), is clear; for incontinence acts against deliberate choice, Vice in accordance with it.[xxviii] But nevertheless in the actions that result from it it resembles Vice: just as Demodocus wrote of the people of Miletus—

Milesians are no fools, 'tis true,
But yet they act as fools would do.

Similarly, the unrestrained are not unjust, but they do unjust things.

LS: Is this clear? Because they have no set purpose. You remember the man who committed adultery without being an adulterer. That's this case. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Again, the incontinent man is[xxix] so constituted as to pursue bodily pleasures that are excessive and contrary to right principle without any belief that he ought to do so, whereas the dissolute, because he is so constituted[xxx] as to pursue them, is convinced that he ought to pursue them. Therefore the former can easily be persuaded to change, but the latter cannot. For virtue preserves the fundamental principle, vice destroys it— (1151a5-16)

LS: "The principle," that means of course the end in action. Yes. Yes?

[xxviii] In Rackham's translation: "That Unrestraint is not strictly a vice (though it is perhaps vice in a sense), is clear; for Unrestraint acts against deliberate choice, Vice in accordace with it."
[xxix] In Rackham's translation: "Again, the unrestrained man is."
[xxx] In Rackham's translation: "whereas the profligate, because he is so constituted."

Mr. Reinken:
and the first principle or starting-point in matters of conduct is the end proposed, which corresponds to the hypotheses of mathematics; hence no more in ethics than in mathematics are the first principles imparted by process of reasoning, but by virtue, whether natural or acquired by training in right opinion as to the first principle. (115a16-19)

LS: Yes. You see here this term is very interesting. Virtue produces orthodoxy, but orthodoxy in the Greek sense, meaning right opinion, correct *opinion*, not knowledge. (How what virtue produces, right opinion, can be transformed into knowledge and whether it can be transformed, that's a great question which is not opened here.) The moral man opines rightly; he has no knowledge. That is of course a famous Platonic distinction. But a man who has right opinion knows the "that" but doesn't know the "why," and therefore he cannot defend his principles. You see? I mean, there is no possible discussion between the gentleman and the nongentleman on the principles. Mr. Fleming?

Mr. Fleming: I just wanted a repetition. You say that the man of opinion knows the fact but not the why. Knowledge is the distinction of knowing the fact and the why. Right?

LS: Yes, sure. Yes, that means understanding: to know why it is so and not merely that it is so. If you know a certain very strange animal which no one has seen before, there are people who have not seen it and will say, "There ain't no such animal." But sense perception will compel him to admit that there is such an animal. But this is not knowledge: this is a mere observation, empirical knowledge in the strict sense of the term. Only if you understand it, if you see what kind of animal it is and how it is related to other kinds, then you can say we have logical knowledge. Mr. Glenn?

Mr. Glenn: There is no possible discussion between gentlemen and nongentlemen on matters of principles. Does it then follow that whether or not you are a gentleman or a nongentleman is arbitrary?

LS: No. Oh, well, life is more complicated. It's not black–white, as we learned from Mr. Wenger. Read the discussion between Alcibiades and Nicias about the Sicilian expedition. Here you have a clear scoundrel, if a very able scoundrel, Alcibiades, and there you have a perfect gentleman. And they utterly disagree on principles and even on the action—Should they go to Sicily?—and yet some discussion is possible, because there is then a decision made. You know? Oh, there is always something which brings about some agreement, and here the majority decision is, "We go to Sicily," to which both must bow. And then the question comes up: How shall we prepare it properly? And then even Alcibiades says, "Ask Nicias. He is a much more experienced man than I am." So, you know, in practice, after all, we live together, so we don't know whether—I mean, here in this room we know it, but otherwise we don't know when we talk to a man in a shop or so whether he was[17] an ex-convict, and still he gives us our cigarettes over the counter and we have some agreement here without any difficulty. You know, not always,

not all questions which arise and involve transactions among human beings raise questions of principle. You know that. I mean, because you couldn't do anything if you would always have to have recourse to principle. That is not possible.

Student: Well, in what spheres then according to Aristotle would recourse to principle correctly arise? In other words, when would the gentleman need—

LS: Oh, in politics it happens all the time. If we take the strict orthodox Aristotelian view, there is no agreement possible between the gentleman and the nongentleman. But on the other hand, say some very low class people (I do not mean now convicts or so, simply not gentlemen) are in the city, of course, and they probably form the majority. And being gentlemen, they are concerned with justice and they will listen to the claims of these nongentlemen and will see where they've got a point, and there they will act according to it. The best help for the understanding of much of Aristotle is surely reading the daily paper or such things—you know, ordinary cases in human life as they arise all the time. We must never forget them if one wants to understand a line.

Same Student: The gentlemen there didn't have any recourse to principle; they simply made firm their right opinion.

LS: Yes, sure. That was the point we discussed last time in connection with Mr. Seltzer. Sophists come and question the principles of gentlemen: they say they are old convention-bound fogies. And then something must be done about it. Or philosophers of history come who say they know the wave of the future. Then something must be done about it. And that cannot be done by the gentlemen anymore; then you need theoretical men.

Student: Does the prudent man have a similar problem to the moral man?

LS: The prudent man is the same as the moral man. Oh yes. Oh, they are inseparable. That we have read in book 6.

Same Student: Then he also cannot truly defend. He does the right thing. He knows how to make the right choice.

LS: No, he can defend on the basis of the principles. He can prove, as Mr. [Burnam] did last time, that it is extremely absurd to buy this kind of stuff in this shop. That he can prove to you and can refute anyone who denies it. But this is of course only means to ends. But as for the ends, he cannot—well, he can perhaps use some arguments *ad hominem* if he is an able, an experienced, man. That he can do. But he cannot give a true establishment of the principles. Let us go on where we left off, Mr. Reinken.

Mr. Reinken:
The man of principle therefore is temperate, the man who has lost all principle, dissolute.[xxxi] But there is a person who abandons his choice, against right

[xxxi] In Rackham's translation: "the man who has lost all principle, profligate."

principle, under the influence of passion, who is mastered by passion sufficiently for him not to act in accordance with right principle, but not so completely as to be of such a character as to believe that the reckless pursuit of pleasure is right. This is the incontinent man: he is better than the dissolute,[xxxii] and not absolutely bad, for in him the highest part of man, the fundamental principle— (1151a19-26)

LS: Yes, "in him the best, the principle, is preserved,"[xxxiii] because he still knows or opines correctly. This and this is the right thing, like this woman I gave you as an example who knew she shouldn't drink. She knew that. Knowledge was never for one moment obscured, only she couldn't help it. Now let us see. We cannot possibly read everything. Yes, we must turn now to the last section in 1152b.

After having discussed this whole issue of continence and incontinence, Aristotle turns then to a discussion of pleasure and pain. It is clear. He has spoken all the time of pleasure and pain, and so he must make [explicit] what was hitherto only implied. He makes [it] now the theme. This is clear. The difficulty is created by the fact that the section on pleasure and pain is repeated at the beginning of the tenth book. We have this order. End of book 7, pleasure and pain. Books 8 and 9, friendship. Book 10, pleasure again. And there are of course many agreements but there are perhaps also some subtle disagreements, and it would be good if those who write their papers on the tenth book would consider the relation of these two sections if they find the time for that.

Now the beginning of this section is very dark. I can give you a very short summary. By the way, does it make sense to you that you have first pleasure, which was never thematically discussed although referred to all the time, then friendship, and then pleasure again? Friendship is surrounded by pleasure. Yes, well, in order to understand that one would [have to] know what friendship is. Friendship is in a way a higher form of living together than the *polis*. That we will see when we come to friendship. And a characteristic of that is the element of pleasure. I mean, in this very simple sense: if you do not like to be together with someone, then you can respect him, but you are not friends. Friends like to be together and talk. Yes? That's clear. This is of some importance. I believe Mr. Jaffa has written something about this point in his book, if I remember well.[xxxiv] Now let us read the beginning of this pleasure section. First the beginning.

Mr. Reinken:
It is also the business of the political philosopher to examine the nature of Pleasure and Pain; for he is the master-craftsman, and lays down the end which is the standard whereby we pronounce things good or bad in the absolute sense. (1152b1-4)

LS: Now let us stop here. This is hard to translate. "To consider, to speculate, about pleasure and pain belongs to the man" (I give you now the lowest translation) "who seeks

[xxxii] In Rackham's translation: "This is the unrestrained man: he is better than the profligate."
[xxxiii] Strauss retranslates "*sōzetai gar to beltiston, hē archē*."
[xxxiv] Probably Harry V. Jaffa, *Thomism and Aristotelianism: A Study of the Commentary by Thomas Aquinas on the Nicomachean Ethics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952).

the political art." But the word used for seeking is *philosophoun*, and it might be better to say: "who seeks as a philosopher the political art." Yes. "For he is the architect of the end." That's very strange. It is obscure here whether Aristotle speaks here of the political art or the political man, or[18] [a] *kind* of political art and[19] [a] *kind* of political man. You remember that distinction between the political art proper and Aristotle's enterprise, which he calls a *kind* of politics? Never forget that. This is dark. Whichever it may be, he is the architect of the end. That's strange, "the architect." Is then the end an artifact? I mean, he should look at the end, but why does he call him an architect? Yes?

Mr. Reinken: I was thinking that sometimes you can't look at what it is you are going to do until you've done it.

LS: Yes, but the end. He doesn't say the action. You mean that—

Mr. Reinken: That the end is understood only when it is finished.

LS: No, no. You see, the end toward which we look—we call each particular thing either good or bad simply. So he has not in mind the individual action, individual or political, to be done, but the end with a view to which these individual actions are to be judged. That's a hard thing, and I don't claim to understand this passage. What I have read in commentaries was absolutely insufficient. I suggest the following consideration as a possible clue. The best regime in the Platonic–Aristotelian sense is a construct. It is a construct, [and] to that extent an artifact. Not only is this particular *polis* manmade (that is easy), but even the model of the best regime is a human construct. In Platonic language, there is no idea of the best city. There is no idea of the just city. There is an idea of justice. There is an idea of the *polis*, perhaps. But there is no idea of the just city together. There are other difficulties, but we don't have the time. Now read the immediate sequel.

Mr. Reinken:
Moreover this investigation is fundamental for our study, because we have established that Moral Virtue and Vice are concerned with pleasures and pains, and most people hold that pleasure is a necessary adjunct of Happiness, which is why the word denoting 'supreme bliss' is derived from the verb meaning 'to enjoy.' (1152b4-8)

LS: Now let us stop here. So Aristotle gives a long argument [concerning] why it is necessary to discuss pleasure and pain. He would have gotten away without that explanation; we all would have granted it to him on the basis of what we have seen hitherto. But the interesting point is this: here he says it belongs to the necessary things for us to consider[20]. This is an additional reflection. The previous one, that it is necessary for the man who is philosophically concerned with politics, is not necessary. What does that mean? An older English commentator, Grant, involuntarily helped me in understanding that passage. The way in which he translates it: "Pleasure and pain come within the scope of him who makes politics a philosophy . . . Also they are quite

necessary for us to consider since we have laid down,"[xxxv] etc., etc.[21] I mean, on the basis of this paraphrase one would come to the conclusion that Aristotle is not a man who treats [politics] philosophically[22] or is an architect of the end. What this means we would have to figure out. We have simply no time to do it, because I must give at least a survey of this section.

Now in the immediate sequel Aristotle gives a number of arguments which allegedly prove that either no pleasure is good, or only a few pleasures are good, or pleasure cannot be the greatest good. And this [final position] is a view which Aristotle attacks. In other words, Aristotle's argument is a vindication of pleasure. Such a vindication was necessary, as we all can know without knowing all kinds of reports in out of the way places, because we all remember, or most of us will remember the *Gorgias*, the attack on pleasure as such. Pleasure is bad versus the good. And also in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, the story of Prodicus: Heracles at the crossroads, and the one leads to virtue and the other leads to vice.[xxxvi] [There], the other name of vice is pleasure. So don't believe people who say that[23] [it] is Puritanism to say pleasure is bad. There have been quite a few non-Puritan Greeks who had the same view. Not Aristotle, but surely some. Good.

There are quite a few of these arguments which are extremely interesting. I will give you a very brief report, and a few passages we must read. Now one of the arguments, and a particularly interesting point which has something to do with Plato: the depreciation of pleasure is based on the assumption that pleasure belongs to coming into being, and coming into being is clearly inferior to being. But Aristotle says there is also pleasure going with being, going with completion, going with being-at-work on the finer level, what Aristotle calls *energeia*. The error is based on the notion that unchangeable things do not do anything. Well, we can all understand it. We speak of processes all the time, and in a way Plato made the same mistake from Aristotle's point of view by speaking of genesis in general. For instance, going into the theater and watching the play are both processes, but according to Aristotle they are radically different because you go into the theater for watching the play. The process of going into the theater[24] is a genesis, which makes possible. But this is the end; there is no change anymore. You are on that peak, relative peak here where you watch the play. This is of course not the highest example. To be on the peak is better than coming into being. This is the premise common to Plato and Aristotle. But there are also other people who praise pleasure precisely because it is coming into being, because it is change. The most famous example is Callicles in the *Gorgias*—you know, the dynamic notion of life. You know, to change, change, change, change. Good . . .

[xxxv] Aristotle, *The Ethics of Aristotle: Illustrated with Essays and Notes*, vol. 2, trans. Sir Alexander Grant (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1885), 232. The original text reads: "Pleasure and pain are subjects which come within the scope of him who makes politics a philosophy, for he has to frame the idea of that supreme end, in reference to which we call things absolutely good or bad. Also these are quite necessary for us to consider, since we have laid down."

[xxxvi] Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 2.1.21–34.

Now Aristotle distinguishes then here between pleasure belonging to genesis, which is as such a lower pleasure, and pleasure belonging to being in the act, being on the peak. Music played, when you can play: that's in the act. But when you learn music: that is the genesis of your becoming a musician. And this latter is surely inferior in rank to the former, not only because it is worse for the ear to hear someone learning to play than someone who can play, but above all because he learns to play in order to play. Once he has learned it and commands the art, then he has reached this peak. Now that is then a subtle question, whether there are not peaks above peaks. There would be a difference, I suppose, between someone who can play sufficiently for his local group and someone who can play in Carnegie Hall,[25] whatever the subtle distinction may be.

Now Aristotle makes another distinction which is important: between the pleasure belonging to the activity in question (say, the pleasure of hearing music) and the pleasure which is alien to it (eating peanuts while music is played). And conflicts are easily possible. Aristotle gives a nice example. He says, if I may change the example a bit, that when the play is bad, people eat more peanuts. I don't know whether this has been confirmed by recent research.

Mr. Reinken: Today it's popcorn.

LS: Popcorn. I'm sorry. Good. And so, for example, the fact which was used by the opponents: the pleasures of sex are indeed incompatible with actual thinking, but that doesn't say anything against pleasure, because thinking has its own pleasure and therefore the question cannot be—a rejection of pleasure cannot follow from the fact that there are bad pleasures, or even pleasures incompatible without being bad—incompatible with the highest pleasures. On the contrary, the pleasure going with thinking is so far from being adverse to thinking, [it] makes strengthened thinking. If you like to study geometry, you will be a better geometrician than if you do not like it, but to like studying geometry means deriving pleasure from studying it. And then of course there is the essential difference of the activities, and hence of the pleasures, [which] leads of course to the possibility of conflict so that, for example, thinking may be bad for health. But this of course is not an argument against thinking; it has to do with a deeper difficulty into which Aristotle will go. Aristotle goes even further. Pleasure may not only be good; it may even be the best, although there are bad pleasures. And Aristotle gives this simple example: science or knowledge may be the best although there are kinds of knowledge which are bad, meaning there are things of which it is much better not to know anything than to know them. And this doesn't prove that knowledge as such is bad, of course. The fact that brutes and all men pursue pleasure also doesn't prove that pleasure is something low. It is rather an indication of the opposite. That is in 1153a25. No, no, 1153b. I'm sorry.

Mr. Reinken: 1153b25. Section 5, page 441.
Moreover, that all animals and all human beings pursue pleasure is some indication that it is in a sense the Supreme Good— (1153b25-26)

LS: In other words, this was used as an argument [against pleasure]: since even the brutes and the lowest of human beings pursue pleasure, hence it can't be something good. And Aristotle turns it around. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
No rumour noised abroad by many peoples
Comes utterly to naught.

But they do not all pursue the same pleasure, since the natural state and the best state neither is nor seems to be the same for them all; yet still they all pursue pleasure. Indeed it is possible that in reality they do not pursue the pleasure which they think and would say they do, but all the same pleasure; for nature has implanted in all things something divine. (1153b27-32)

LS: Yes. Now what does he mean here? The pleasure which dogs or hens or whatever it may be pursue, surely these are not [. . .] but Aristotle says what they mean by their pleasure: what they may pursue does not yet show that this is what they intend unknowingly. The beasts who seek the pleasure of copulation do not know that they seek the reproduction of their species. That would be the simplest example. And this is for the sake of the perpetuity of the species, a form of immortality. That is a Platonic thought, which is clear. Now then he turns especially to the bodily pleasures. So in other words, the case against pleasure is absolutely weaker. What people can say with some right is that the bodily pleasures are questionable. We cannot read the whole thing; only 1154a15, following.

Mr. Reinken:
Now you can have an excess of the bodily goods; and it is pursuing this excess that makes a bad man, not pursuing the necessary pleasures, for everybody enjoys savory food, wine, and sexual pleasure in some degree, though not everybody to the right degree. With pain it is—

LS: And so that is the same thing. So in other words, the bodily pleasures are not as such bad, even the unnecessary ones, which is indicated here by the word—how do you translate *opson*? Dainty food, or what?

Mr. Reinken: Savory food.

LS: What you eat in addition to the bread, in Greek: the meat, fish, or whatever it may be, which is not as necessary as the bread in the Greek view. And even that is in itself of course not simply bad. The beginning of the next chapter is very important. Oh, I'm sorry, you have not this division. 1154a22.

Mr. Reinken: Page 443, bottom.
We ought however not only to state the true view, but also to account for the false one, since to do so helps to confirm the true— (1154a15-24)

LS: No, "contributes toward conviction."[xxxvii]

Mr. Reinken:
for when we have found a probable explanation why something appears to be true though it is not true, this increases our belief in the truth. (1154a24-26)

LS: Yes, or "conviction of the truth." It's the same words. Yes. Yes? "And therefore we must say for what reason the bodily pleasures appear to be more choiceworthy than the nonbodily ones." Now this remark is of course of the greatest importance, and everyone, at least if he has some experience, knows that it is not sufficient to refute an error. You must also understand why the error is so powerful; otherwise you cannot see what binds the mind[s] of those who follow the error. I think that is something which we all should ponder over, although it may take some time until you realize the full weight of this point. I[26] [have] this experience almost every day, the absurdity of this kind of social science positivism. Well, I think that's perfectly evident to me, but how come that so many people—and surely quite a few of them are quite intelligent—cannot get away from it? I mean, it is not due in all cases to the foundations and their money and their research projects. Of course not. There must be something and something of weight which is there. If one does not face that, the criticism is necessarily incomplete. Mr. Glenn, you know why I speak to you in this particular connection.

Now Aristotle explains then in the sequel why most men regard the bodily pleasures as the highest, and these are very beautiful gems which we unfortunately cannot read. Either the animal nature in general or the particular nature of certain kinds of human beings leads them not to look beyond the bodily pleasures. The living being is always in toil, Aristotle says—is always in toil and wishes to get out of that toil but relieves the toil with pleasure. Therefore it belongs to its constitution. 1154b15.

Mr. Reinken:
Pleasures unaccompanied by pain, on the other hand—and these are those derived from things naturally and not accidentally pleasant—do not admit of excess. By things accidentally pleasant I mean things taken as restoratives—

LS: Yes, medical things.[xxxviii] For example, that is clear, that sometimes a man in pain regards as pleasant what wouldn't be pleasant to a healthy human being because it takes away the pain. That he means by accidentally pleasant: it is pleasant only because he is sick; it is not intrinsically. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
really their restorative effect is produced by the operation of that part of the system which has remained sound, and hence the remedy itself is thought to be pleasant. Those things on the contrary are naturally pleasant which stimulate the activity of a given nature. (1154b15-20)

[xxxvii] Strauss retranslates "*sumballetai pros tēn pistin*."
[xxxviii] Strauss retranslates "*ta iatreuonta*."

LS: Yes, a given nature in its perfect or healthy form. Good. Yes? Good. And now go on.

Mr. Reinken:
Nothing however can continue to give us pleasure always, because our nature is not simple, but contains a second element (which is what makes us perishable beings), and consequently, whenever one of these two elements is active, its activity runs counter to the nature of the other—

LS: Is this not interesting? "Runs counter," "is against the nature of the other nature." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
while when the two are balanced, their action feels neither painful nor pleasant.

LS: In other words, our pleasures are somehow connected with the duality of our nature. If there [were] harmony between them, let us say between the mind and the body, harmony in itself would not be pleasant. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Since if any man had a simple nature, the same activity would afford him the greatest pleasure always. Hence God enjoys a single simple pleasure perpetually. For there is not only an activity of motion—

LS: Yes, activity: *energeia*, the being-in-the-act, the being-in-the-act of motion. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
but also a being-in-the-act of immobility,[xxxix] and there is essentially a truer pleasure in rest than in motion.

LS: [. . .][xl] There is more pleasure in rest than in motion. To be in the peak means to be in a state of rest. That is what is so difficult to understand in modern times, attacked at the beginning by Bacon in famous passages [27]when he takes the side of Callicles in the *Gorgias* against Socrates in *The Advancement of Learning*[xli] and other places. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
But change in all things is sweet, as the poet says— (1154b20-29)

LS: Yes, now here comes the difference from the poet.

Mr. Reinken:

[xxxix] In Rackham's translation: "but also an activity of immobility."
[xl] The transcriber notes: "a few words difficult to hear in which he either approves of or objects to the translation 'essentially.'"
[xli] Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, book 2, in *Francis Bacon: A Critical Edition of the Major Works*, ed. Brian Vickers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 250–51.

owing to some badness in us; since just as a changeable man is bad, so also is a nature that needs change; for it is not simple nor good. (1154b30-31)

LS: Yes, that is the point. That change is present is due to the fact that our nature is complex, or, as Aristotle puts it in the first book of the *Metaphysics*, our nature is enslaved in many ways, and therefore the getting rid of the chains from time to time is pleasant: hunger, thirst. And of course once we have eaten enough, eating will no longer be pleasant: ceasing of pleasure, change. And if we had the highest pleasure, which is according to Aristotle that of thinking or learning, then we can't do this for a very long time because we get tired, and that means of course we carry with us some heavy weight, the body, and therefore there can never be a state of—.[xlii] Yes.

Now I was unable to elaborate a thought which occurred to me when reading this marvelous passage: the difference of Machiavelli. The key assertion of Machiavelli is that there is no good without an accompanying evil. There cannot be a simply good thing. And then of course change is simply good, because then we must go over from that [good] where we have too much of the evil to the other one. I have not succeeded, I'm sorry to say, in clarifying that. Now we must see how Aristotle's notion of pleasure will look when we have gone over the repetition in the first part of book 10. Yes?

Student: When Aristotle says that god always enjoys a single and simple pleasure, is that to say that god's nature is simple, not complex as ours of body and soul?

LS: Yes, yes, sure. Pure mind. Yes?

Student: Earlier, when we read this example of a sophist and their attempts to fetter our minds with arguments, this reminded me of the use of the word sophist in the description of Socrates—

LS: Which surely Aristotle did not mean. That is sure.

Same Student: Would there be a reverse action of this? I mean, what would be the significance of this? It doesn't have to be mainly negative, in other words.

LS: No, that I do not believe. Aristotle, I think, means sophist always, as far as I remember, in the same pejorative sense, whereas in Plato it is not so. Plato calls *erōs* a sophist (what here is called Aphrodite), insidious; that's the same thing. But this is in this connection a praise. Even genuine philosophers are sometimes called by Plato sophists. But in Aristotle this is now settled: a sophist is a sham philosopher.

Same Student: Well, does the description then that's here applied to sophists necessarily have to limit itself only to sophists?

[xlii] The transcriber notes: "interrupted briefly by strange noise in the room."

LS: Well, I mean, if you mean to say to these individuals of the fifth and fourth century who are called sophists in the text books. There are also sophists in other ages.

Same Student: Would you grant that it can also be applied to Socrates?

LS: No, I don't think so.

Same Student: The idea of fettering a man's mind so that he—

LS: Yes, but Socrates did it for curative purposes, he didn't do it just in order to assert his superiority or to impress people by his cleverness. No, no, I mean, it is necessary to state that against this somewhat simpleminded view which one encounters from time to time. From both Plato's and Aristotle's point of view, the erring philosopher is not a sophist. That's clear. Democritus was an erring philosopher but he was not a sophist, and that has to do with[28] character, because the sophist is a man who uses his philosophy for the purpose of gain or prestige. Democritus never did that. He gave away his property and used it only for traveling and finding out all kinds of strange animals and so. He's not a sophist, but he was an erring philosopher because atoms and void are not sufficient for understanding the whole. And this is, I think, important. Otherwise you make Plato and Aristotle in a very narrow sense dogmatic philosophers, which they were not. I can only repeat the same thing: what Plato and Aristotle call a sophist is what we in fact mean, without knowing it, always by the word "intellectual," because no one has ever defined what an intellectual is. If you say (that's my old story, so some of you must forgive me for repeating myself) an intellectual is a man who lives from reading and writing, then every bank clerk would be an intellectual. So you would have to say from reading and writing what kind of things. And there is also the strange thing: there can of course not be a sham sophist, because the sophist as such is a sham, and therefore I believe there cannot be a sham intellectual. And therefore I was quite surprised to read in a column by some noble lord who writes in American newspapers (I forgot his name)—he spoke of the fake intellectuals surrounding President Kennedy. Now I do not wish to say anything in defense of these gentlemen, but I would say "fake intellectuals" would seem not to be the proper term. The only meaning which "fake intellectual" could have is that there are people, I believe, who never open a book but wish under certain circumstances to be regarded as bookish men and walk around with books. This is the maximum I would grant, whereas the intellectual does open books and even writes lots of them. Rabbi Weiss?

Rabbi Weiss: I'm not sure I understand the exact difference between *energeia* and genesis.

LS: [29][*Energeia*] is what the completed thing does. The genesis is the movement upward toward the completed state.

Rabbi Weiss: According to Aristotle?

LS: Yes, yes, sure.

Rabbi Weiss: But *energeia*, he says, also can be this movement upward, I gathered.

LS: No, no, no, no. *Energeia* is the activity of the completed thing. Take my simple example: watching the play as distinguished from going to the theater.

Rabbi Weiss: What puzzled me was this passage where there is not only an *energeia* of motion but also—

LS: Yes. Yes, but that is a somewhat derivative sense. Oh no, he may mean this. For example, the heavenly bodies as he understands them are always in motion, and it is in a way their being to move locally, in circles and ellipses. It doesn't make any difference. They are in activity at their peak. They are always at their peak, but they are at their peak by motion. And he adds now something and says there is even the possibility of beings which are in action, at their peak, while being unchangeable. I mean, god as here understood is the being which is absolutely unchangeable but always in act, *actus purus* as it was said in the Middle Ages.

Rabbi Weiss: *Energeia* is always the peak?

LS: No, *energeia* means in itself to be in one's work. *In one's work*. And *entelechia*, which is the other word, that means to be in the end status. But *energeia* and *entelechia* belong together. Genesis, understood in contradistinction to *energeia*, has this meaning: in a sense of course the housebuilders are in their activity, they are in their *energeia* when building the house (to that extent it is true) and not when they deliberate or are hired for building a house; then of course not. But when they are in the act of building a house, to that extent it is true. But the key point for Aristotle in this argument is the radical distinction between genesis and *energeia*, and especially because Plato had brought together pleasure and genesis, pleasure and coming-into-being. Aristotle says: No, there are pleasures also after the completed genesis, and these are precisely the highest pleasures. This theme will be taken up again in the first part of book 10.[xliii]

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[1] Deleted "are not being."
[2] Deleted "therefore."
[3] Deleted "they are."
[4] Deleted "she."
[5] Deleted "he."
[6] Deleted "which."
[7] Deleted "in a way."
[8] Deleted "he."
[9] Deleted "but."
[10] Deleted "is."
[11] Deleted "But it is necessarily bad."
[12] Deleted "that."
[13] Deleted "and."
[14] Deleted "is running"
[15] Moved "in battle."
[16] Moved "any pleasurable thing which is around."

[xliii] The transcriber notes: "End of take except for discussion of future class schedule."

[17] Deleted “not.”
[18] Deleted “the.”
[19] Deleted “the.”
[20] Deleted “them.”
[21] Deleted “etc.”
[22] Moved “politics.”
[23] Deleted “this.”
[24] Deleted “that.”
[25] Deleted “and.”
[26] Deleted “make.”
[27] Deleted “when he compares”
[28] Deleted “the.”
[29] Deleted “that.”

Session 14: May 28, 1963
Friendship; friendship and justice
(Book 8)

Leo Strauss: [In progress] —and Aristotle in the whole discussion points toward philosophy, the philosophic life. That is perfectly sound and you gave quite a few of the arguments. I do not have to enter into that. The only point which I did not understand (it was very hard to understand this for physical reasons) is what you said about the relation between the friendship discussion and the continence discussion at the beginning.[i] Can you repeat it?

Student: [. . .]

LS: Relative to what follows, the discussion of incontinence and the opposite: that showed the inadequacy, the insufficiency, of the discussion of the moral virtues proper. Incontinence is lower than moderation, than moral virtue . . .[ii]

Now one can perhaps state it as follows. In book 7 we discussed the fact that the gentleman may be tempted by bad things . . . and he is tempted by pleasure. And therefore Aristotle concludes the seventh book with his first discussion of pleasure. He will discuss pleasure again at the beginning of book 10, so that the discussion of friendship is surrounded on both sides by the discussion of pleasure. Pleasure seems to be more visibly an accompaniment of friendship than of moral virtue. Good. Surely friendship is a *pathos*, an affection, being affected, whereas moral virtue as such is not. It is simply a *habitus*, a *hexis*. At the beginning of book 8, right at the beginning, Aristotle mentions the two considerations why one must treat friendship[1] and then toward the end of this first discussion, in 1155a28 to 31, he speaks of the duality in friendship itself. Friendship is not only necessary but also noble. Now virtue we have learned is noble. But it was somehow understood, but never made clear, that virtue is also necessary. Necessary *for* something; for instance, for the political community. Here this great question of the end which virtue serves (you know, which bothered us all the time), this question is explicitly raised and answered regarding friendship. And therefore we would have to figure out retrospectively what the reply to the question of the end of virtue is.

Now there are a few details in the discussion which are of some importance. When he speaks of the necessity of friendship he refers to the natural character of friendship, at least for some forms of friendship, in 16. Do you have that, 1155a16? “By nature it seems

[i] Strauss responds to a student’s paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading of the paper was not recorded.
[ii] The transcriber notes that about a minute was lost here because of a defective tape, and that Strauss’s remarks were to the effect that friendship is connected with moral virtue but is not identical with it. Following this portion, Strauss turns to a discussion of book 8.

to exist in the generator toward the generated and in the generated toward the generating, not only in human beings but also in birds and most of the animals." Yes, do you have that?

Mr. Reinken:
as also is friendship between members of the same species; and this is especially strong in the human race; for which reason we praise those who love their fellow men.

LS: Yes, let us stop here. So in other words, friendship does have a clear natural basis, in a way more than virtue, because virtue also has a natural basis but virtue doesn't come into being by nature. It comes into being by habituation. But friendship has its actuality by nature. To that extent it is more natural. The second example, the love of the generated for the generator: this passage is absent from the old Latin translation. [According to] a remark of a recent edition which I used, [this is] because this was a very great question before Aristotle's time. In the case of the human race we find mutual love of parents and children but in the case of the brutes it is not the case. There is a concern of the generators for the generated but not vice versa. In Aristophanes's *Birds* this theme is developed at great length, but we have also some pre-Socratic writings dealing with that. So the implication was that the love of the young for their old parents is due to *nomos*, to habituation, and not natural. This is probably reflected here. That he speaks of birds in particular couldn't help reminding me of the Aristophanean comedy in particular. Will you read the immediate sequel please?

Mr. Reinken:
Even when travelling abroad one can observe that a natural affinity and friendship exist between man—

LS: Yes, "natural" is too strong: "how familiar and something friendly man is to man."[iii] Yes, I can understand how one arrives at the translation but it is too strong. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Moreover, friendship appears to be the bond of the city—[iv] (1154a19-23)

LS: Yes, "friendship seems *also* to keep together the cities." This "also" is very important. That's a different consideration from *physis*. Yes, and then he makes clear that in the *polis* friendship is superior to justice. If you have justice you need still friendship in addition, but if you have friendship you do not need justice. So friendship is more encompassing than justice. Now *the* question as it appears from the sequel is this—which was discussed prior to Aristotle especially in Plato's dialogue *Lysis*: Is friendship primarily among similar beings or among dissimilar ones? The question makes sense, doesn't it? I mean, because similar beings are attracted to one another, on the one hand, but on the other they don't need each other so much. You know, there is some kind of supplementation [that] seems to be implied in friendship, and that requires dissimilarity. Good. At the beginning of [1155]b Aristotle turns to the physical side of the question

[iii] Strauss retranslates "*hōs oikeion hapas anthrōpos anthrōpō kai philon*."
[iv] In Rackham's translation: "Moreover, friendship appears to be the bond of the state."

because this is a general cosmological principle, whether similars attract each other by nature or dissimilars. Now you can easily see: if similars [attracted] each other [merely], all life as we know it would be destroyed because everything which *is* consists of dissimilars. I mean, say, air would go only in this way, water in that way, fire that way, and there would be no composite for them. But on the other hand, it seems there are also some reasons why the dissimilar things are kept together. Now Aristotle excludes this physical discussion from his work because he deals, as he makes clear in 1155b8 to 9, with the human things, the specifically human things as distinguished from the physical in general.

Then he begins this discussion by determining first what love is. *The* word for friendship is *philia*, which all composites with "phil-"—philatelics, philanthropy, and so on: loving, friend of or loving. The verb is *philein*, and from this we derive the adjective *phileton*. We have to say here "the lovable" because the English word friendship or friend does not permit it. For example, kissing is also called *philein*, so it has to do with what people love. But it is not possible to render this in English without a brief comment. But clearly love as *philia* is not the same as love as *erōs*. I can't change that. In the case where it is necessary I will point out which [is] the Greek word in question[2]. *Erōs* means primarily something like longing for, desiring. And that is not implied in this meaning, but the phenomena are surely akin. Now he distinguishes then three kinds of the lovable: the good, the pleasant, and the useful. And there are therefore three kinds of friendship where the friends are united by the good or by the pleasant or by the useful. The last is of course business friends, and [the] pleasant is [where] they have a [common] pleasure and nothing else, and only the good one is the true one. Now let us read 1156a. That's the end of the chapter, 3 to 5.

Mr. Reinken:
To be friends therefore, men must (1) feel goodwill for each other, that is, wish each other's good, and (2) be aware of each other's goodwill, and (3) the cause of their goodwill must be one of the lovable qualities mentioned above. (1156a3-5)

LS: I.e., good, pleasant, or useful. So this is a summary of the definition of friendship. Goodwill: indispensable is goodwill. But you can have goodwill toward someone who lives in Greenland or elsewhere. You never meet; you hear of him, that he's a fine man, and then you have goodwill toward him. But friendship requires more. It requires that there is mutual goodwill, i.e., they must know each other, and in addition it must be combined with knowledge of this on both sides. So if A and B have goodwill towards each other but do not know it, then they cannot be friends. That's clear. So that is the first answer to the question.

Now genuine friendship is possible only when we love the other for his sake and not merely for our sake, meaning for the utility or pleasure he gives to us. In other words, if we do not have the feeling that it is good that he *is*, regardless of what he is for us, then it is not true friendship. Let us read 1156b7, at the beginning of the new chapter.[v]

[v] The transcriber notes: "Not a new chapter in the Loeb edition."

Mr. Reinken:
The perfect form of friendship is that between the good, and those who resemble each other in virtue.

LS: Yes, "and are similar to each other not in any other respect but in respect of virtue."[vi] Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
For these friends wish each alike the other's good in respect of their goodness, and they are good in themselves—

LS: So that the other can say it is good that he is, because if the other were not good he would not derive pleasure from the fact that he merely is. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
but it is those who wish the good of their friends for their friends' sake who are friends in the fullest sense, since they love each other for themselves and not accidentally.

LS: In other words, as means for an end. You may love your business partner because he is a good business man. You do not love him for his own sake, but for the reward which he brings. But true friendship, of course, is where you love the other for his own sake. Yes? "The friendship of those."

Mr. Reinken:
Hence, the friendship of these lasts as long as they continue to be good; and virtue is a permanent quality.

LS: In other words, this is indissoluble except by death, whereas the other forms of friendship are easily dissolvable. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
And each is good relatively to his friend as well as absolutely, since the good are both good absolutely and profitable to each other. And each is pleasant in both ways also, since good men are pleasant both absolutely and to each other; for everyone is pleased by his own actions, and therefore by actions that resemble his own—

LS: "And both good friends have actions resembling each other."[vii] Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
and the actions of all good men are the same or similar. Such friendship is naturally permanent, since it combines in itself all the attributes that friends ought to possess. (1156b7-20)

[vi] Strauss retranslates "*kat' aretēn homoiōn*."
[vii] Strauss anticipates and retranslates the following phrase: "*tōn agathōn hai autai ē homoiai*."

LS: Yes, let us stop here. The thought is clear, and that will be repeated very frequently throughout the book. Perfect friendship is possible only among the good, and there is a certain *prima facie* evidence in favor of that. But nevertheless it gives rise to some difficulties. He makes clear in the sequel that perfect friendship is therefore rare; because good men are rare, but also because friendship, a lasting friendship, requires in any case[3] fairly long acquaintance, and this is not available every time. Good.

But there are certain difficulties, I mean, if we look at it on the basis of what we seem to have observed. In the first place, is there no friendship possible among nonvirtuous people? And I mean not the friendship for the sake of gain or pleasure but that they like each other on the basis of their very defects of character. You know, two gangsters may admire each other because of the kind of "virtues" which they have: cleverness, toughness, and so on and so on. And this admiration may transcend the sphere of calculation. I regard this as possible, although the only evidence I have is from a movie. Good. But surely I see no intrinsic impossibility in that. But the much more serious question is: virtue may be the necessary condition of friendship; is it the sufficient condition? Is it not possible that two perfectly virtuous men may go on each other's nerves, to put it very tenderly? Is this impossible? Well, of course the examples of which I could think are not examples of perfectly virtuous men. They are extremely rare and it's hard to say if I [have] ever met one. But I know highly respectable people who respect each other's characters and can't spend half an hour together without some unpleasantness. In other words, Aristotle seems to speak about a very rare bird, an extremely rare bird, the perfect friend. And is this not only rare but perhaps not even possible? That's the question which one can't help raising. Now Aristotle answers our question to some extent, and the answer is very simple: virtue is the necessary but not the sufficient condition of true friendship. Now let us see, 1157a3.

Mr. Reinken:
Friendship based on pleasure has a similarity to friendship based on virtue, for good men are pleasant to one another; and the same is true of friendship based on utility, for good men are useful to each other. In these cases also the friendship is most lasting when each friend derives the same benefit, for instance pleasure, from the other, and not only so, but derives it from the same thing, as in a friendship between two witty people, and not as in one between a lover and his beloved. These do not find their pleasure in the same things: the lover's pleasure is in gazing at his beloved, the loved one's pleasure is in receiving the attentions of the lover; and when the loved one's beauty fades, the friendship sometimes fades too, as the lover no longer finds pleasure in the sight of his beloved, and the loved one no longer receives the attentions of the lover; though on the other hand many do remain friends if as a result of their intimacy they have come to love each other's characters, both being alike in character. (1157a3-11)

LS: Now let us stop here. So here he explains first how there can be friendship among the nonvirtuous. I mean, these lovers are not presupposed to be virtuous men, and they derive pleasure from each other but from different sides of each other: the lover from the youthful bloom—I think he thinks here of homosexual love—and the beloved from being

courted. So they have pleasure from each other but not from the same thing in each other. And nevertheless it may happen that owing to the long acquaintance and the long living together a more lasting friendship may occur. So this similarity of character may also exist on the subvirtuous level and cause some friendship which is not simply based on pleasure or on calculation. Now let us go on, a little bit further on in a20. "Only the friendship of the good is unexposed to calumny" or "proof to calumny."

Mr. Reinken:
Also friendship between good men alone is proof against calumny; for a man is slow to believe anybody's word about a friend whom he has himself tried and tested for many years, and with them there is the mutual confidence, the incapacity ever to do each other wrong, and all the other characteristics that are required in true friendship. Whereas the other forms of friendship are liable to be dissolved by calumny and suspicion.

LS: Yes. So we see here now the two men may be virtuous, but they must know of each other that they are virtuous. Therefore, their being virtuous is only a necessary but not the sufficient condition and this knowledge requires testing through all kinds of difficult situations and that two men do not necessarily undergo. A little bit later on, in 33.

Mr. Reinken:
But these two secondary forms of friendship—

LS: Meaning based on pleasure or utility.

Mr. Reinken:
are not very likely to coincide: men do not make friends with each other both for utility and for pleasure at the same time, since accidental qualities are rarely found in combination.

LS: Yes. So again this lasting and the long time required. There is one passage we omitted, a25 to 30, which we should however read. Where we were.

Mr. Reinken:
But since people do apply the term 'friends' to persons whose regard for each other is based on utility, just as states can be 'friends'— (1157a20-36)

LS: No, "as the states can call each other friends."[viii] . . .

Mr. Reinken: Our book has it in quotes.

LS: Yes. Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

[viii] Strauss retranslates "*legousi philous…hōsper hai poleis*."

can be 'friends,' call each other friends, (since expediency is generally recognized as the motive of international alliances)— [ix] (1157a26-28)

LS: Yes, now let us stop here. So this raises the question (which is of course only alluded to here): Can there be friendship among cities? Well, business friendships, alliances, of course. That we know. Alliances are possible. But if two men are allies they are not yet friends, and this is a grave question. If friendship is something very high and cities as cities are unable to be friends to each other, this shows that in an important respect the individual is superior to the *polis*. Yes?

Student: If a regime is characterized, at least in part, by what it looks up to, if two regimes look up to the same thing wouldn't it imply that there could be friendship between them, particularly if they look up to moral virtue as aristocracies would?

LS: That is a very good point. So in other words, one could say there is something at least between—I don't say between the United States, but between a very important sector of the United States and Great Britain. That is true, and if we take this sector to be the preponderant or authoritative, we can simply say friendship. But still, apparently in the *polis* there is something else to be considered: not only what it looks up to but also the fact, we and they, in a more radical way than among individuals. But I don't draw[4] [a stronger] conclusion from this passage than the passage induces us to wonder: can there be true friendship among cities?

Student: A counterexample from modern times would seem to be the relations of Britain and France. Churchill expressed the warmest friendship towards France in 1940. He even offered to marry it.

LS: De Gaulle didn't believe it.

Same Student: De Gaulle perhaps had a clearer understanding or colder understanding of the political things. Britain has not exactly been beloved of France in the last two years.

LS: No, no, and de Gaulle never believed in that. I know. But still, if the needs are extremely grave and the dangers are particularly grave, their alliance can look like the closest friendships. Sure. But whatever may be the truth, our primary question here is what Aristotle thought to be the truth. And here we have not more except an allusion to the question: Can there be friendship among cities? Now let us turn to 1157b5, following.

Mr. Reinken:
It is with friendship as it is with the virtues; men are called good in two senses, either as having a virtuous disposition or as realizing virtue in action, and similarly friends when in each other's company derive pleasure from and confer benefits on each other, whereas friends who are asleep or parted are not actively friendly, yet have the disposition to be

[ix] In Rackham's translation: "can be 'friends,' (since expediency is generally recognized as the motive of international alliances)."

so. For separation does not destroy friendship absolutely, though it prevents its active exercise.

LS: Does that make sense? Doesn't it? They are friends. They have the habit, but the habit is dormant, and therefore the *energeia*, the being-at-work of friendship, the actuality, is not there. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
If however the absence be prolonged, it seems to cause the friendly feeling itself to be forgotten: hence the poet's remark

Full many a man finds friendship end
For lack of converse with his friend.

The old and the morose do not appear to be much given to friendship, for their capacity to please is small, and nobody can pass his days in the company of one who is distasteful to him, or not pleasing, since it seems to be one of the strongest instincts of nature to shun what is painful and seek what is pleasant.

LS: Yes, "one of the strongest instincts," literally translated: "for nature seems to flee to the highest degree the painful and to strive to the highest degree for the pleasant." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
And when persons approve of each other without seeking each other's society—[x]

LS: No, "and not living together with one another."[xi] Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
without living together, this seems to be goodwill rather than friendship. Nothing is more characteristic of friends than that they seek to live together.[xii]

LS: No, "than living together."[xiii]

Mr. Reinken:
than living together:[xiv] poor men desire their friends' assistance, and even the most prosperous wish for their companionship (indeed they are the last people to adopt the life of a recluse); but it is impossible for men to spend their time together unless they give each other pleasure, or have common tastes. The latter seems to be the bond between the members of a comradeship. (1157b5-1158a24)

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[x] In Rackham's translation: "without seeking such other's society."
[xi] Strauss retranslates "*mē syzōntes*."
[xii] In Rackham's translation: "without seeking such other's society, this seems to be goodwill rather than friendship. Nothing is more characteristic of friends than that they seek each other's society."
[xiii] Strauss retranslates "*to syzēn*."
[xiv] In Rackham's translation: "than that they seek each other's society."

LS: Yes, we will come to that. Now we see here we get an answer to the question: what is required in addition to virtue? Friendship requires living together and deriving pleasure from living together. In this connection he points out the key importance of pleasure. One must have pleasure in the same things. And now an interesting case: a morose man is not a virtuous man in Aristotle's sense, strictly speaking. But there is of course no reason whatever why an old man cannot be virtuous, strictly speaking. And yet old men who can be perfectly virtuous as such are not good for friends because of the infirmities of old age. I mean, not the [. . .] infirmities, perhaps even they too. That's also important. So, again, virtue is the necessary but not the sufficient condition for friendship. Yes?

Student: Aristotle seems to have the notion that the old are concerned with profit and not pleasure.

LS: Yes, this is at length developed in the *Rhetoric*. There is a chapter on the young and the old and this is reflected in many cases.[xv] The young seek more pleasure than profit. In other words, a young man who is [. . .] and calculating all the time is more detestable than an old man who does it, and vice versa. But on the other hand the older men are "cynical" and more concerned with gain than with pleasure. That is a rough description. And the best time of age is middle age, thirty five to forty nine. In other words, the junior executive and the senior executive in present-day American life. Yes?

Student: Is living together to be taken very literally?

LS: As much as they can. Sitting together and talking together rather than working together. You know, there are people who sit together and talk together. There was even a place for it established by Plato, and another one established by Aristotle. That was the original meaning of "schools," *scholē*. And now what has happened to schools? Yes. Part of it is, of course, the obsession with examinations, something which could be changed. And in 1157b34: let us read that. Yes, 34 to 36, just the end: "for everyone loves what is good for him."

Mr. Reinken:
For it is agreed that what is good and pleasant absolutely is lovable and desirable strictly, while what is good and pleasant for a particular person is lovable and desirable relatively to that person; but the friendship of good men for each other rests on both these grounds.

Liking seems to be an emotion, friendship a fixed disposition— (1157b26-30)

LS: Yes, that is an important sentence. You know, I referred to it before. Yes, an emotion, a *pathos* in Greek, an affection. You are affected by it. No, but I meant a passage a bit later. "Everyone loves what is good for him and he gives back the equal both in will and in pleasure."

[xv] Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1389b–1390a.

Mr. Reinken:
Each party therefore both loves his own good and also makes an equivalent return by wishing the other's good, and by affording him pleasure; for there is a saying, 'Amity is equality,' and this is most fully realized in the friendships of the good. (1157b34-1158b1)

LS: Yes, now let us keep this in mind. Friendship is equality and it means something like "rendering the equal," but not in a contentious sense. Then it is, of course, no longer friendship. But they give to each other the same. Let us keep this in mind for the following discussion. In the sequel, 1158a10, he makes clear that no one can have many friends. Friendship is an exclusive relation.[5] Of course there might be many virtuous men. But not all virtuous men even living in the same town or village can be friends because of the exclusivist character of friendship. This is another indication of the fact that virtue is the necessary but not the sufficient condition for friendship. Now in the sequel then, 1158b, he explains the two kinds of friendship from another point of view. Here we had three kinds of friendship from the point of view of the noble, the pleasant, and the useful, and now a bipartition. Is friendship based on equality or on inequality, i.e., on excellence of one part? In the friendship where one part is superior to the other, the superior is loved to a higher degree and the inferior loves to a higher degree. It is a loving according to the worth of each. The higher is more worthy of loving and the lower is less worthy of loving. This is a kind of equality, but of course only the distributive equality. You remember the two kinds of justice? That resembles distributive justice. Good. And now let us turn to 1158b29. That's a new chapter, when he explains the difference between justice and friendship from this point of view. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Equality in friendship, however, does not seem to be like equality in matters of justice. In the sphere of justice, 'equal' (fair) means primarily proportionate to desert—

LS: In other words, distributive justice. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
and 'equal in quantity' is only a secondary sense—

LS: The other kind of justice—

Mr. Reinken: Commutative.

LS: Commutative. Commutative justice is a lower kind of justice. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
whereas in friendship 'equal in quantity' is the primary meaning, and 'proportionate to desert' only secondary. (1158b29-33)

LS: Yes, that is very remarkable, isn't it? The radical difference between justice and friendship: in justice proportionate equality is higher. The hierarchy within society is the

most important consideration in the *polis*. In friendship, however, simple equality is the fuller form of friendship. Now let us go on where we left off.

Mr. Reinken:
This is clearly seen when a wide disparity arises between two friends in point of virtue or vice, or of wealth, or anything else; they no longer remain nor indeed expect to remain friends. This is most manifest in the case of the gods, whose superiority in every good attribute is pre-eminent; but it is also seen with princes: in their case also men much below them in station do not expect to be their friends, nor do persons of no particular merit expect to be the friends of men of distinguished excellence or wisdom. It is true that we cannot fix a precise limit in such cases, up to which two men can still be friends; the gap may go on widening and the friendship still remain; but when one becomes very remote from the other, as God is remote from man, it can continue no longer. This gives rise to the question, is it not after all untrue that we wish our friends the greatest of goods? for instance, can we wish them to become gods? for then they will lose us as friends, and therefore lose certain goods—

LS: No, better: "we will lose them as friends,"[xvi] and we do ourselves harm if we wish them the best. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
If then it was rightly said above that a true friend wishes his friend's good for that friend's own sake, the friend would have to remain himself, whatever that may be; so that he will really wish him only the greatest goods compatible with his remaining a human being. And perhaps not all of these, for everybody wishes good things for himself most of all. (1158b33-1159a12)

LS: Yes, you see, there is a seamy side to that. So there is no friendship possible between men as radically distant as men [are] from gods. I mean, no one can say that he is an intimate of Zeus and Zeus comes to him and asks him for advice. I mean, that would be a preposterous suggestion. Nor between kings and their subjects: let us keep that in mind because kings will be mentioned later on with great emphasis, as Mr. Lyons knows. Also, everyone wishes to the highest degree the good things to himself. Therefore a man might wish to become himself a god, but not that his friend become a god and he thus loses his friend. I note this remark, that everyone wishes to the highest degree the good for himself. Bring this together with a passage, 1157b16 to 17, on the key importance of pleasure. Now if everyone wishes to the highest degree good things to himself, he might wish to become himself a god, although he thus ceases to remain a friend of his friends. This could also happen. It's only the reverse side of what Aristotle says. But how could a man wish to become a god and cease to be a human being in Aristotle's horizon? What do gods have to the highest degree? What do gods get to the highest degree that men do not get to the highest degree?

Mr. Reinken: [. . .]

[xvi] Strauss retranslates "*oude eti philoi esontai autois*."

LS: Yes, but crudely. Gods are honored rather than loved. I remind you of what he said about this subject in the section on magnanimity, 1123b18, following. In other words, being honored might be thought to be higher than being loved and being loved in its turn being higher than loving, because we have seen that the lower loves to a higher degree than the higher. But[6] now let us read 1159a12, where we left off. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Most men however, because they love honour, seem to be more desirous of receiving than of bestowing affection. Hence most men like flattery, for a flatterer is a friend who is your inferior, or pretends to be so, and to love you more than you love him; but to be loved is felt to be nearly the same as to be honoured, which most people covet. They do not however appear to value honour for its own sake, but for something incidental to it. Most people like receiving honour from men of high station, because they hope for something from them: they think that if they want something, the great man will be able to give it them; so they enjoy being honoured by him as a token of benefits to come.

LS: Yes, so this is the most vulgar form. They don't really love honor; it's a kind of check for something more useful to them. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Those on the other hand who covet being honoured by good men, and by persons who know them, do so from a desire to confirm their own opinion of themselves; so these like honour because they are assured of their worth by their confidence in the judgement of those who assert it.

LS: Yes. This is somewhat better, although it shows of course some basic defect. They have no self-confidence in their being virtuous.[xvii] Go on.

Mr. Reinken:
Affection on the other hand men like for its own sake— (1159a12-25)

LS: Yes, "being loved"[xviii] they like for its own sake. In other words, a kind of warmth coming toward you. And I think that's the basis of present-day American psychology, the fellow who complains that he's not being loved; and that's the reason why he committed arson: to get the warmth. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:
Being loved on the other hand men like for its own sake;[xix] from which we infer that it is more valuable than honour, and that friendship is desirable in itself.

[xvii] The transcriber notes: "Inaudible question interjected which Dr. Strauss says is irrelevant to this passage."
[xviii] Strauss retranslates: "*tō phileisthai*."
[xix] In Rackham's translation: "Affection on the other hand men like for its own sake."

But in its essence friendship seems to consist more in giving than in receiving affection—

LS: Yes, well, "in loving rather than in being loved." Yes. So—and he gives some examples of it.

Mr. Reinken:
witness the pleasure that mothers take in loving their children. Some mothers put their infants out to nurse, and though knowing and loving them, do not ask to be loved by them in return, if it be impossible to have this as well, but are content if they see them prospering; they retain their own love for them even though the children, not knowing them, cannot render them any part of what is due to a mother. (1159a25-33)

LS: Yes. So in other words, the clearest case of a selfless love is the love of mothers. So this argument implies that the superior loves more [than] the inferior,[7] [and not] the other way around. The mother loves the child more than the child loves the mother, contrary to what was said before. So this all indicates that there is a fundamental difficulty here regarding the friendship resting on inequality. We have seen that virtue is only the necessary but not the sufficient condition of friendship, and one reason is that friendship requires equality in addition to virtue. Two men may both be virtuous and yet unequal in other respects; but not in virtue. But this creates a new difficulty, namely, the kinship between friendship and justice of which Aristotle had spoken.[8] In justice inequality is the highest form, as we have seen, but in friendship equality is the highest form. Now this is taken up in the sequel. Let us turn to 1159b25.

Mr. Boyan: I see a difficulty in the statement that the mother's love for the child is the most selfless love. This is not the present-day view.

LS: It also was not Plato's view. For Plato there is only what is called *amor indigention*,[xx] a love based on need, and therefore there is a need of the mother which is underlying her overflowing love. There is a love based on need and an overflowing love not based on need and Plato recognizes only the love based on need. In the case of Aristotle that is more complicated—[xxi]

Now let us turn to 1159b25.

Mr. Reinken:
The objects and the personal relationships with which friendship is concerned appear, as was said at the outset, to be the same as those which are the sphere of justice. For in every partnership we find mutual rights of some sort—

[xx] This is as it appears in the transcript.
[xxi] The transcriber notes: "The discussion beginning here and continuing through 1161a25, inclusive, was recorded defectively. An attempt will be made to transcribe it utilizing the partially audible tape in combination with a partial stenographic transcript taken in class."

LS: Literally, "there seems to be something just."[xxii]

Mr. Reinken:
one notes that shipmates and fellow-soldiers speak of each other as 'my friend,' and so in fact do the partners in any joint undertaking. But their friendship is limited to the extent of their association in their common business, for so also are their mutual rights as associates. (1159b25-30)

LS: . . . Both friendship and justice have to do with communities, societies, associations, but there is a variety of associations and hence there will be a variety of rights and a variety of friendships. Now this is developed in the sequel, and the main point is this: the maximum of friendship exists where the maximum of right or justice is possible, namely where there is a maximum of association, of society. And where do you find the maximum of association? In the *polis*. Hence the *polis* is the only association which is not partial . . . Hence we would expect that the highest friendship is that uniting fellow citizens . . .

Student: In what sense is the *polis* least partial?

LS: Because it is devoted to the common good embracing all other goods, whereas all other associations are devoted to a partial good, to the good of this group, say, workers….

Same Student: [. . .]

LS: That raises the great question: Is there not an essential difference between the gang of robbers and the *polis*? Now I think there are various reasons which permit one to assert that the *polis* is devoted to the good. For example, the essentially parasitic character of the gang of robbers: they can only live on the margin of a society. And contrast that [with] the majority of the citizens, [who] are not robbers . . . So in other words,[9] [the robbers] live on the fact that the *polis* is decent or tries to be. In addition, what do they do with the booty and what does the *polis* do with the booty?

Mr. Reinken: That depends on the *polis*.

LS: Yes, but one thing is sure: no *polis* can use the booty for lower purposes than the gang of robbers . . . Now let us see. To repeat, it seems to follow from the preceding argument that the highest here is that which unites fellow citizens. Let us turn then to 1160a28 to 30. That's the end of that chapter. "All associations appear to be parts of the political association."

Mr. Reinken:

[xxii] Srauss retranslates "*dokei ti dikaion einai*."

All these associations then appear to be parts of the political association;[xxiii] and the limited friendships which we reviewed will correspond to the limited associations from which they spring.

LS: So Aristotle does then not draw the conclusion that the highest friendship is that of fellow citizens, but all forms of friendship have their political equivalent, their political similar, and that is something much more limited. The implication is the *polis* is not strictly speaking a community of friends. Of course, a man can only have very few friends and [in] the *polis* are many fellow citizens. Ultimately, one can say, the *polis* is not a community of friends in the highest sense because the *polis* does not consist of men who philosophize together. But that is here not spelled out. Now Aristotle does then look at the regime from the point of view of friendship. Which kinds of friendship do they desire? And he speaks here first of the three good regimes and then of the three bad regimes: kingship, aristocracy, timocracy—as he calls it here, what he calls elsewhere the polity, and then tyranny and oligarchy and democracy; and kingship is the best and tyranny the worst. So I suppose you all know that. We cannot read the whole thing. Let us read first about why kingship is best, in 1160a36.

Mr. Reinken:
The best of these constitutions is Kingship, and the worst Timocracy. The perversion of Kingship is Tyranny. Both are monarchies, but there is a very wide difference between them: a tyrant studies his own advantage, a king that of his subjects. For a monarch is not a king if he does not possess independent resources, and is not better supplied with goods of every kind than his subjects; but a ruler so situated lacks nothing, and therefore will not study his own interests but those of his subjects. (1160a28-b6)

LS: That's clear. In other words, the true king is a human being who abounds with *all* goods, not only food and so on but also wisdom and virtue. Now he explains later on in this chapter what corresponds to the king in the household, and that's the father. So the notion of the king as father plays a very great role in European monarchic tradition, and you will find it of course most extremely stated in Filmer, the famous book which Locke criticized.[xxiv] Let us turn to 1161a10. That's the beginning of the next chapter.

Mr. Reinken:
Under each of these forms of government we find friendship existing between ruler and ruled, to the same extent as justice. The friendship of a king for his subjects is one of superiority in beneficence; for a king does good to his subjects, inasmuch as being good he studies to promote their welfare, as a shepherd studies the welfare of his sheep—(1161a10-14)

[xxiii] In Rackham's translation: "All these associations then appear to be parts of the association of the State."
[xxiv] Sir Robert Filmer, *Patriarcha, or The Natural Power of Kings* (1680).

LS: Literally, "that they do well,"[xxv] and this has of course also and above all the meaning that they act well. In other words, this is not meant to be that he is concerned merely with their welfare, that they are well fed, but that they act well. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
hence Homer called Agamenmon 'shepherd of the people.' The friendship of a father for his child is of the same kind (only here the benefits bestowed are greater, for the father is the source of the child's existence, which seems to be the greatest of all boons, and of its nurture and education; and we also ascribe the same benefits to our forefathers). For it is as natural for a father to rule his children, and forefathers those descended from them, as for a king to rule his subjects. These friendships then involve a superiority of benefits on one side, which is why parents receive honour as well as service. The claims of justice also, therefore, in these relations are not the same on both sides, but proportionate to desert, as is the affection bestowed.

LS: Yes, "the love, the friendship, bestowed."[xxvi] So the love of the father is superior to the love of the king, because the father has given the child his being, which the king has never done. This means that from the point of view of friendship, the household is superior to the city. A much richer form of friendship is possible there. However this may be, in this kind of friendship there is no equality of the father and the children and therefore honor of the higher by the lower. Among equals there is strictly speaking no such honor. We have had a reference to this same question of the complicated relation between honor and friendship in 1158b33, following. Now let us go on where we left off.

Mr. Reinken:
The friendship between husband and wife again is the same as that which prevails between rulers and subjects in an aristocracy; for it is in proportion to excellence, and the better party receives the larger share [of good],[xxvii] whilst each party receives what is appropriate to each— (1161a15-24)

LS: In other words, this is an aristocracy. That doesn't mean the wife is simply ruled. She also participates in the rule. But since aristocracy divides honors in accordance with merit, and the merit of the husband, other things being equal, is higher than the merit of the wife, therefore the husband has a greater say in the household than the wife. He doesn't have an absolute say. Then it would be barbaric. Now go on.[xxviii]

Mr. Reinken:
Friendship between brothers is like that between members of comradeship: the two parties are equal in station and age, and this usually implies identity of feelings and of character. The counterpart of fraternal friendship is that which exists under the timocratic form of constitution; since the ideal of Timocracy is that all citizens shall be equal and

[xxv] Strauss retranslates "*eu prattōsin*."
[xxvi] Strauss retranslates "*hē philia*."
[xxvii] The brackets appear in Rackham's translation.
[xxviii] The transcriber notes: "Tape audibility back to normal."

shall be good, so that they all rule in turn, and all have an equal share of power; and therefore the friendship between them is also one of equality.

LS: Yes, let us stop. Of course "ideal" doesn't occur. He says, "the citizens wish to be equal and good"—wish or tend.[xxix] "Ideal" is not an Aristotelian conception. So friendship among brothers resembles that among comrades. That is what we ordinarily mean by friendship; I mean, comrades. It doesn't have the military meaning, necessarily. In such a friendship the partners are [a]like in the affections they have enjoyed and in character. And the friendship of brothers resembles the friendship among fellow citizens in what we would call a democracy and what Aristotle calls a timocracy, by which he means a decent kind of democracy. He explains briefly what the analogon of democracy in a household is. We haven't read that—well, where there is no father around, you know, or where the ruler is weak and everyone can do what he likes. That's of course something very bad. Good. Now let us pursue this argument in 1161b, beginning, because we cannot read everything.

Mr. Reinken:
but there can be no friendship, nor justice, towards inanimate things—

LS: This is clear. I mean, for example, toward this.[xxx] You can't be a friend of it, and you can't do it injustice. You may do yourself injustice in a metaphoric sense of the word "injustice"; if you are drunk and destroy it, and this kind of thing. That's clear. Good.

Mr. Reinken:
indeed not even towards a horse or an ox, nor yet towards a slave as slave.

LS: Yes. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:
For master and slave have nothing in common: a slave is a living tool, just as a tool is an inanimate slave. Therefore there can be no friendship with a slave as slave, though there can be as human being: for there seems to be some room for justice in the relations of every human being with every other that is capable of participating in law and contact, and hence friendship also is possible with everyone so far as he is a human being. (1161b1-5)

LS: Let us stop here. So now the first part, what he says about slavery, are the things which you all know from the beginning of the *Politics*. The slave is simply a living tool and has no [. . .] of his own.[xxxi] But now, deviating from the *Politics*,[10] he says there may be a relation of friendship with a slave *qua* human being, because it is in principle possible to have. Wherever there are human beings, there are relations of justice [which are] at least possible. Every human being as such is capable[11] [of participating] in law and agreement, and therefore there can be relations of justice. But wherever there are

[xxix] Strauss retranslates "*isoi hoi politai boulontai kai epieikeis einai*."
[xxx] The transcriber notes that Strauss gestures to an object on the desk.
[xxxi] Aristotle, *Politics* 1253b–1254b.

relations of justice, there also may be relations of friendship. Therefore the master may be the friend of the slave.

Student: The natural slave, the mentally defective slave: would this hold true here?

LS: Pardon?

Same Student: The man who is unable to take care of himself, the mentally defective man as a slave.

LS: Yes, what would you say?

Same Student: I would say no.

LS: No. Therefore what does Aristotle do here?

Same Student: He talks about the conventional slave.

LS: Very good. So he abstracts for the natural slave. Sure. That he does without any question, because it is clear. I mean, to state it in simple terms: you can't be a friend of a moron and he cannot [have a friendship] with you. I think even Mr. Roche of the ADA would admit that, so that is perfectly legitimate to say.[xxxii] But the important point here is this: this is the most radical questioning of slavery which occurs in the work of Aristotle. And the reason is this: because the whole context questions, in a way, the *polis*—I mean, not the necessity of the *polis*, that is obviously necessary, but its rank. And this is done in the following manner: kingship as the best regime does not permit friendship proper, which requires equality, between the king and his subjects. The *polis* as such tends toward a regime which is lower than the best, here called timocracy. And there is no friendship proper between the fellow citizens as such because fellow citizens are many; friends are always few. The number alone would prevent it. And of course not all fellow citizens are virtuous men. That would be an additional reason which would prevent that. Friendship transcends the city, and this was of course clearly seen by Mr. Lyons. That is, I think, the key point. Yes, now let us go on in[12] 1161b12.

Mr. Reinken:
All friendship, as we have said, involves community; but the friendship between relatives and between members of a comradeship may be set apart as being less in the nature of partnerships than are the friendships between fellow-citizens, fellow-tribesmen, shipmates, and the like; since these seem to be founded as it were on a definite compact. (1161b12-15)

LS: Yes, what does he mean now? That is a dangerous translation. "Every friendship exists within some community, as has been said. Someone might limit off the friendship based on kinship and that of comrades, but the political friendship and the friendship

[xxxii] John Pearson Roche (1923–1994), American professor of political science and political consultant.

between members of a tribe and of people sailing together and such like belong rather to the community-like friendships," meaning here in a lower sense, to the association, to the merely utilitarian associations. That is what he means. "For they seem to be by virtue of some agreement." Yes, what does he mean here by that? The political friendships, the friendship among fellow citizens.

Now I think the passage is perfectly explained by Averroes. Averroes says he intends that the one which is based on agreement or convenience of the genus, i.e., of consanguinity, is natural, but the last one which is based on the part of society, as he calls it here, is based on habit, on customs, on manners. In other words, the political friendship, distinguished from that among kin, is based on some agreement. There's no agreement between parents and children or between brothers. There's no agreement. They are natural friends. In other words in a sense the *polis* is natural, as Aristotle makes very clear at the beginning of the *Politics*, but in another sense it is not natural. It is based on consent and agreement, and this means it is less natural. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
With the latter friendships may be classed family ties of hospitality between foreigners.

LS: In other words, yes, the relations between *xenikai*; between, say, an Athenian and a Spartan. You know there were not[13] hotel arrangements in the ancient times; you had a family with which you stayed when you went to the other city, and vice versa. There was a friendly relation, but it was strictly speaking a contractual relation. I mean, not a crude contractual one, but they stay in your house when they come to Sparta and you stay in their house when you come to Athens. That's clear. So that's not very interesting. Now we come to the one based on kinship. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Friendship between relatives itself seems to include a variety of species, but all appear to derive from the affection of parent for child. For parents love their children as part of themselves, whereas children love their parents as the source of their being. Also parents know their offspring with more certainty than children know their parentage; and progenitor is more attached to progeny than progeny to progenitor, since that which springs from a thing belongs to the thing from which it springs—for instance, a tooth or hair or what not to its owner—whereas the thing it springs from does not belong to it at all, or only in a less degree. The affection of the parent exceeds that of the child in duration also; parents love their children as soon as they are born, children their parents only when time has elapsed, and they have acquired understanding, or at least perception. These considerations also explain why parental affection is stronger in the mother. (1161b17-27)

LS: Why? The mother spends much more time with the child after its birth. I believe he means that. I hope he means that. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Parents then love their children as themselves (one's offspring being as it were another self—other because separate); children love their parents as the source of their being; brothers love each other as being from the same source, since the identity of their relations to that source identifies them with one another— (1161b28-31)

LS: And let us stop here. I think that is now clear. So Aristotle saw these complications to which Mr. Boyan referred.[xxxiii] Now, and therefore it follows from the same thing: parents love their children more than the children love the parents. But on the other hand, the children are supposed to honor the parents, whereas the parents are not supposed to honor the children to the same degree. Of course present-day notions of pedagogy, which naturally constitute a great progress, have changed it completely. 1162a16.

Mr. Reinken:
The friendship between husband and wife appears to be a natural instinct—

LS: Yes, well "instinct" does not occur. It "seems to exist according to nature."[xxxiv] Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
by nature; since man is by nature a pairing creature even more than he is a political creature, inasmuch as the family is an earlier and more fundamental institution than the city,[xxxv] and the procreation of offspring a more general characteristic of the animal creation. (1162a16-18)

LS: So it belongs to the whole genus and not merely to the species of man, and therefore it is to a higher degree natural. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
So whereas with the other animals the association of the sexes aims only at continuing the species, human beings cohabit not only for the sake of begetting children but also to provide the needs of life; for with the human race division of labor begins at the outset, and man and woman have different functions; thus they supply each other's wants, putting their special capacities into the common stock. Hence the friendship of man and wife seems to be one of utility and pleasure combined. But it may also be based on virtue, if the partners be of high moral character; for either sex has its special virtue, and this may be the ground of attraction. Children, too, seem to be a bond of union, and therefore childless marriages are more easily dissolved; for children are a good possessed by both parents in common, and common property holds people together.

LS: Let us stop here. I believe that is clear. So the key point, I believe, here is this: that man is by nature to a higher degree a pairing animal than a political animal. This has all to do with the questioning of the rank of the *polis*, which is characteristic of the whole

[xxxiii] The transcriber notes that the "reference is to the question at the bottom of page 10 and top of page 11."
[xxxiv] Strauss retranslates "*dokei kata physin uparchein*."
[xxxv] In Rackham's translation: "and more fundamental institution than the State."

book. And what he says about the relations of the two sexes: some of you will remember what we read on this subject in Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*, that[14] not merely the cooperation of the two sexes in generation but also the work which they have to do is, as it were, laid out for them by nature.[xxxvi] After all, it could be thinkable that in the human race the best fighters might be the females, as I believe[15] is the case in tigers and dogs and other races. But in the case of men it seems that the protector by nature is male and the protected is the female, together with the children; and therefore that the woman is at home and the man goes out to fight is, in a way, an institute of nature. This he surely has in mind here. Now let us read the immediate sequel.

Mr. Reinken:
The question what rules of conduct should govern the relations between husband and wife, and generally between friend and friend, seems to be ultimately a question of justice. There are different claims of justice between friends and strangers, between members of a comradeship and schoolfellows. (1162a18-33)

LS: Now what does he mean, then? The correct and proper thing in friendship is what is just in these relations. Since the friendships differ radically, the justice required on both parts differs radically; hence also[16] [what is] correct in friendships. But still there must be some difference between the right and the friendship, say, between husband and wife or between fellow pupils, or whatever the case may be. Well, I think one can say from a practical point of view that in the case of friendship it would be done gladly, whereas if it is a matter of right it is not necessarily done gladly because there is the affection there. Yes. Now in the sequel he speaks of specific troubles in friendship, namely, mutual dissatisfactions, and they arise of course chiefly in the case of friendships for the sake of the useful, because there are clearly defined the business relations, so to speak. We have to consider 1162b21, where he speaks about these mutual rebukes in friendship. Yes? "It seems, then."

Mr. Reinken:
that, as justice is of two kinds, one unwritten and the other defined by law, so the friendship based on utility may be either moral or legal. Hence occasions for complaint chiefly occur when the type of friendship in view at the conclusion of the transaction is not the same as when the relationship was formed. Such a connexion when on stated terms is one of the legal type, whether it be a purely business matter of exchange on the spot, or a more liberal accommodation for future repayment, though still with an agreement as to the *quid pro quo*; and in the latter case the obligation is clear and cannot cause dispute, though there is an element of friendliness in the delay allowed, for which reason in some cities there[xxxvii] is no action at law in these cases, it being held that the party to a contract involving credit must abide by the consequences. The moral type on the other hand is not based on stated terms, but the gift or other service is given as to a friend, although the giver expects to receive an equivalent or greater return, as though it had not been a free gift but a loan; and as he ends the relationship in a

[xxxvi] Xenophon, *Oeconomicus* 7.22.
[xxxvii] In Rackham's translation: "for which reason in some states there."

different spirit from that in which he began it, he will complain. The reason of this is that all men, or most men, wish what is noble but choose what is profitable— (1162b21-36)

LS: Yes. In other words, they wish for themselves that the others act nobly, but they— yes. Good. You see, that is a somewhat cynical passage, as you must have seen. But the most interesting point is this: How did he call that distinction of the two kinds of right in his treatise on justice? Legal and natural. He does not call it natural here. He calls the one "legal" again and the other "unwritten." Now clearly an unwritten law, an unwritten right, is not necessarily natural. It can be merely customary right. But he calls it more precisely here the moral or [the] ethical, no longer [the] natural. And in addition, he makes this distinction only regarding the friendship based on the useful, on some form of exchange, not [regarding] the highest form of friendship, where this whole issue would not arise. Now that is quite interesting. I think what you will find by going through the book on friendship [is] that the *polis* is questioned to a higher degree here than ever before, and I believe it is connected with[17] [this] that he drops here the expression of natural right. You remember this statement[18] that the natural right is but it is changeable. Here it is no longer even called natural. As it were, the treatise on friendship prepares the discussion of that phenomenon which simply transcends the *polis*, and that is philosophy, in the latter part of book 10. Let us read only 1163b12, following. That is toward the end of the book.

Mr. Reinken:
since requital in accordance with desert restores equality, and is the preservative of friendship, as has been said above.

This principle therefore should also regulate the intercourse of friends who are unequal: the one who is benefited in purse or character must repay what he can, namely honour. For friendship exacts what is possible, not what is due; requital in accordance with desert is in fact sometimes impossible, for instance in honouring the gods, or one's parents: no one could ever render them the honour they deserve, and a man is deemed virtuous if he pays them all the regard that he can. (1163b12-19)

LS: Yes, let us stop here. Do you notice here something with a view to what we have read before? Let us limit ourselves to the question of the gods. Men owe the gods much more than they can pay to them, and what is the consequence?

Mr. Reinken: He honors them.

LS: Yes, but still he cannot honor them as they deserve.

Mr. Reinken: He is constantly in debt to them.

LS: That is true. But still, how much will he honor them? Is he obliged to honor them? As much as he can. Of course, part of the honoring is sacrifices, naturally, and he will sacrifice as much as he can, i.e., the rich man will sacrifice more, the poor man will

sacrifice less. Yes, but [this relates to] what we have here seen before in the chapter on munificence: there it appeared that only the rich man can honor the gods properly. This is now corrected. Everyone can honor the gods properly, i.e., within the limits of his power. Why this correction occurs here I am not able to say, but perhaps it has also something to do with the questioning of the *polis*. The *polis* is somehow tempted to respect[19] the rich [more] than the poor, those who can honor the gods on a big spectacular scale [more] those who cannot do it. Now after we have become somewhat doubtful of the *polis* and its overall perfection, we may also restore the truth or the sober view regarding honoring the gods. That is a possible explanation. Yes?

Student: It might be said that this also prepares the way for what is said in book 10, that there the man who contemplates, who is most indifferent to possessions, is the most beloved of the gods.

LS: Yes. That's quite true. So there is even this correction. Yes. Now we have a few minutes left, and I have prevented discussion as much as I could because I thought we should finish our survey of the book. Mr. Burnam?

Mr. Burnam: What about the difficulty we stated at the beginning of the discussion on the nonvirtuous man?

LS: You mean to say the two gangsters who are genuine friends.

Mr. Burnam: Yes, okay. You can say that they're friends.

LS: Not strictly speaking, but [you can] in a way, [because] Aristotle, I believe, would say[20] the basis of their friendship is admiration for some rudimentary virtues. They are friends *qua* good. They are good in a very questionable sense, but what they admire each other for are things which in themselves are good: cleverness and energy, courage, whatever you call it. These are in themselves good things. They take a very narrow view. They have justice among themselves surely, but they have a very narrow view of justice insofar as there are no relations of justice between them and their fellow citizens.

Mr. Burnam: Well, suppose you took the case of a skillful administrator or something of that sort. He admires another administrator or another bureaucratic institution that administers well.

LS: Do you mean to say we should not grant to administrators what we just granted to gangsters? I mean, that is really a very misanthropic view.

Mr. Burnam: No, but I mean wouldn't it then imply that this treatment of friendship assumes some sort of teleological view of different men?

LS: Yes, well, that is clear, but you can state it simply. Use perhaps a somewhat less obnoxious term and say a hierarchic view. There is one form, true friendship, the perfect friendship, *teleia philia—telos* occurs in the translation—the perfect friendship. Now

compared with that, all other forms are imperfect forms to various degrees and, as Plato would put it and Aristotle to some extent even too, imitations of the true friendship. And what we ordinarily call friends are always imitations of true friendship. The true friendship would be extremely rare, because the good man in the full sense as Aristotle understands him is of course also extremely rare, so that there would be a kind of (almost) continuity from the perfect friendship, what they would now call an ideal, down to these gangsters to whom I referred.

Mr. Burnam: But see, the theoretical justification of that hierarchy has not been given in the *Ethics*. That's what I was aiming at. There are quite a lot of things here but—

LS: But of course it has been given. Why is the perfect friendship the true friendship? You could say Aristotle said it even too often; he repeats this point all again. The only true friendship is that based on virtue. And of course why is virtue the highest? That was stated in book 1, but in other ways also in these following books.

Mr. Burnam: Well, in book 1 it was not shown theoretically that—the hierarchy was only very vaguely described in theoretical terms.

LS: Yes, but there was this difficult argument, that man being a being of a peculiar kind must have a perfection of its kind. You remember? That's virtue. Now he arrives at the popular and generally accepted view that the perfection of man is moral virtue indeed only by his subsumption of a minor premise given by popular opinion and not derived theoretically. Do you remember that? You remember this key argument roughly in the middle of book 1. We discussed that at that time. Yes, that is quite true; but still, however difficult this argument may be and [however] questionable it may be, this was simply the basis of everything that followed. And there was a kind of indirect confirmation of this syllogism of book 1 by the detailed description of the various virtues, where Aristotle, say, at the end of book 5, simply says, "Now do you know of any perfection, disregarding intellectual perfection,[21] which is missing?" Is this not a complete description of the good man?

Mr. Burnam: But it's not a theoretical justification of the hierarchy. It's a different kind of justification. It's not a deduction.

LS: That's true. But the question was then always this: Does not a theoretical justification run the risk of making moral virtue a means for an end? And there is something in us which hesitates to do so. In other words, that's not a mere academic difficulty [but a] very serious difficulty. Doesn't it always come down to this, that moral virtue being a means to an end means that it is legitimate to raise the question, Why be decent? And if a man raises this question, "Why should I be decent?" he has already ceased to be decent. To that extent it is really a closed circle. This difficulty I think Aristotle recognizes and acts on[22]. That ultimately a theoretical deduction would be necessary I believe is correct, and Plato acts on that, and I think in Aristotle you have it in a very indirect way. If you work through the whole *Ethics* and the whole *Politics* you would find that argument. You would find the argument that there are these two ends of

man as a rational animal—*polis* and thinking—and both require in different ways and to different degrees the moral virtues. And also the moral virtues as Aristotle described them are not explicable in terms of one of these ends only. I repeat that, what I have often said: these two ends call for moral qualities which are almost the same, but not identical. Yes, but both ends are always effective. They always beckon a man. And therefore the means for them, if you can call the moral virtues means, grow into each other, *concrescere* in Latin. The concrete moral virtues are these described in books 3 to 5. I don't think that one can go beyond that without abandoning the whole Aristotelian work. I think that is what he is driving at. But for practical purposes, for political purposes, it is perfectly sufficient to look at these virtues described in books 3 to 5 as, as it were, the goddesses, statues at which the legislator must look in order to build up his *polis*. And he doesn't have to go behind them as statues, as forms, in order to understand his work, what he has to do.

You see, the difficulty one can state as follows: the whole history of political philosophy is in a way an indirect proof of the wisdom of Aristotle's procedure. It is extremely simple to say the moral virtues are means for living together, for peaceful and prosperous living together, [as do] Hobbes and Locke, and the Utilitarians and so on. Yes, but that means of course a difficulty which I pointed out on a former occasion. The *polis* can, as it were, suspend its moral orientation when it is not useful; in other words, Machiavelli's point. If everything is fine and goes easy, by all means, but if the going gets rough, disregard them. Only cleverness and energy are those virtues which are required under all conditions. All others are questioned and you have no guarantee in principle that the *polis* will live up to more than mere survival plus prosperity. And therefore the *polis* must be considered as being in the service of something higher, and the only practical form in which this can be done is it must be understood as being in the service of moral virtue.

Mr. Burnam: Well, what I was wondering is, for purposes of action a theoretical ethics is not necessary. I would agree with Aristotle's argument on that point. But for purposes of theory is a theoretical ethics possible even? That's a rather different question.

LS: Yes. I think the best man to address this question to would be Aristotle himself. Now which were the alternative—I mean, I believe he discusses this question, this theoretical question to some extent in his discussion of pleasure, because hedonism in the ordinary crude sense of the term is of course the denial that there is something intrinsically noble, higher than the merely pleasant. And part of[23] [that] discussion we have seen in book 8 and the rest we [will] see in the first half of book 10. And to some extent Aristotle's analysis of pleasure is a theoretical justification of the point of view of the noble as distinguished from the pleasant. Very briefly: we cannot take our bearings by the pleasant, because the pleasant is essentially secondary. This is very roughly what he tries to say. Therefore hedonism is as such a theoretically unsatisfactory assertion. This is the only thing, I believe, which he actually does [say] to satisfy your requirement, but he is speaking to people who take it for granted that the noble is higher than the pleasant. But he does face it to some extent in the first half of book 10, and let us see whether this is of any help. Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: The thing I don't understand, against you, is that you stated this point that the minute you question, "Why decency?," [it] falls into an indecent act. But I don't see this . . .

LS: Well, you can state it as follows: How can a decent man raise the question, "Why decency?" That's your question.

Mr. Butterworth: No, I think that's your question, and I don't see why a man is indecent if he raises that.

LS: Well, think of a concrete situation. You are in a situation. What shall you do? All kinds of advice is given to you, some decent, others indecent, and it seems to be the simplest in a given case to do the indecent thing. And then if you begin to deliberate, you [suddenly] ask, "Why not the indecent thing?"[24] Something has gone wrong. But I believe I can answer your question. Indeed, that's the only practical way in which it can be answered, and that is this: there are always people around who raise that question, explicitly or implicitly. In literate society there are always plenty of people, intellectuals, who in fact raise the question, "Why decency?"And there these people must be answered, I mean, at least in a liberal society. In a nonliberal society, one will simply say they will be sent to some farm. I read a story this morning, a remark of Khrushchev about similar men. People are "sent free": they get a free ticket to Siberia, something of this kind. But in a liberal society it must be argued out, and there you have it. So the decent men are compelled to reply to the clever indecent. At least on the basis of the Platonic dialogues we know that, and therefore it becomes necessary and legitimate.

Mr. Butterworth: The thought you have ended with is that the decent man who is trying to defend decency also has to ask that question.

LS: Yes, sure. That is what I mean. Yes, but there is a difference, is there not, [depending on] who takes the first step?

Mr. Butterworth: Yes, but it would seem to me that, as you stated it before, it was all black and white, because if a man asks, "Why decency?" then he is indecent.

LS: Yes, but still, there is nevertheless something to that and I believe you will never be able to understand Kant if you do not see this point: that in a certain sense there is no possibility of a derivation or deduction of morality from nonmorality. That is exactly Kant's point. Certainly Kant had to give a long theoretical argument to prove the impossibility of such a deduction by proving, allegedly, the impossibility of a theoretical metaphysics. But when you read his more popular introductions, like the *Foundation for the Metaphysics of Morals* and how it begins, where he does not go into these deeper theoretical questions, the power of his moral appeal is due to this fact, to this simple

appeal. Morality is not deducible because it cannot have any [. . .] but itself.[xxxviii] Miss Huckins?

Ms. Huckins: Would you say there is no theoretical justification for moral virtue unless you assume decency?

LS: Well I can give you this answer—I don't know whether it will satisfy Mr. Butterworth: that for the gentleman as gentleman the question does not arise, but the gentleman as gentleman is not the highest man according to Aristotle. For Kant, honest man as honest man is the highest man. By the way, Plato knew that problem also very well, because in the famous speech of Glaucon in the second book of the *Republic*, Glaucon's notion of the just man is that of a man who has no other quality except being just.[xxxix] I mean, he takes some verses of Aeschylus which are used by Aeschylus in praise of the virtuous man, and when he speaks of his shrewdness, of the just man's shrewdness, Glaucon applies that to the unjust man because he wants to have a just man who has no quality other than being just. No other quality. And he demands from Socrates the proof that the just man thus understood who has no quality other than being just is the highest human being. That is the reformulation of what Glaucon demands, and Socrates never delivers that good because he cannot deliver it. He must admit that a man who, in addition to being honest, knows also what he is doing is superior to the man who is merely honest. And Kant is led into various absurdities, I believe, by his argument. Kant must assume that a ten-year-old child (he says so in the . . .[xl]) can settle a very difficult, complicated moral question immediately. There is no question, where[as] mature people of experience would say, "Oh well, it is not as simple as that." But that's a necessary consequence [of] the importance which reasoning, calculating, cleverness, play[25] [in] morally good decisions. But, on the other hand, we all understand, I believe, the temptation to dismiss the relevance of cleverness for decency. I think we all understand that, and yet there is something not thought-through. It is very intelligible to action. In other words, innocence of doves is not enough. You also need certainty and wisdom, but we understand the people who like to forget about certainty and wisdom. This is nevertheless a narrow view, and here you see that even in this respect there is no disagreement between Aristotle and the New Testament: in *this* respect. But on the other hand, the temptation—and this point, [that] the simple man with his moral sense knows infinitely better, has an infinitely better knowledge than all the sages and fellows, was of course a crucial element in the development of modern democratic ideology. You can easily see that. That is one of the most massive consequences of Rousseau. You know? Then every man is morally as competent, or can be as competent as everybody else. Unfortunately it is not so simple, and therefore we need government and other unpleasant things, schools. Good.

[xxxviii] See, for instance, the concluding sentences of the *Foundation for the Metaphysics of Morals*: Immanuel Kant, *Ethical Philosophy*, trans. James W. Ellington (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett, 1983), 62.

[xxxix] Cf. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 128f.

[xl] The transcriber notes: "inaudible title."

[1] Deleted “right in the beginning.”
[2] Moved “is.”
[3] Moved “a lasting friendship.”
[4] Deleted “any more.”
[5] Deleted “but.”
[6] Deleted “and.”
[7] Deleted “than.”
[8] Deleted “and.”
[9] Deleted “they.”
[10] Deleted “deviating from it.”
[11] Deleted “to participate.”
[12] Deleted “b12.”
[13] Deleted “such.”
[14] Deleted “it is.”
[15] Deleted “it.”
[16] Deleted “the.”
[17] Deleted “it.”
[18] Deleted “was there.”
[19] Moved “more.”
[20] Moved “because.”
[21] Deleted “of any perfection.”
[22] Deleted “it.”
[23] Deleted “the.”
[24] Moved “suddenly.”
[25] Deleted “for.”

Session 15: June 6, 1963
Philosophical friendship and the friend as another self
(Book 9)

Leo Strauss: The issue of philosophy and the theoretical life is present here in this book, perhaps more than ever before. I did not quite understand your answer or your understanding of Aristotle's answer regarding the question: Does philosophy require friendship?[i]

Student: Well, I'm not really sure of that either. I can't really see any final answer . . .

LS: I think whether that's the last word or not, here in this discussion the philosopher does need friends or cities, for reasons partly given by him. Now your paper had one massive defect. There is one discussion which you skip. I mean, everyone is free to skip whatever he likes, but you skipped in a way the most important part. You brought it in; you couldn't help bringing in it. Now what is the most massive discussion of book 9?

Same Student: Whether you can be a friend of yourself.

LS: Whether you can be a friend of yourself. And in Greek that's almost the same thing as self-love . . . But you quoted that passage: we love the friend almost as much as ourselves. Now what is the contradiction regarding beneficence which you mentioned, and which I did not quite understand?

Same Student: [. . .]

LS: Yes, that is a difficulty, but I believe it is not the one which you mean because the relation [of a benefactor to the benefited is an unequal relation],[ii] but we learned that friendship in its highest form is a relation among equals. Now there is this difficulty behind it. But this paper was quite satisfactory.

Now I have to say a few words about some papers. The first is that of Mr. Gelblum, with which I was greatly pleased. I would only like to make a few points, because you can't read my handwriting. You say, "Beginning with book 7 the whole discussion of the matter of human virtue and thus that of human happiness is taken up again from the beginning." This is literally true, as is shown by the very beginning of book 7: "making another beginning."

[i] Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.
[ii] Brackets appear in the original transcript.

Mr. Weiss, your paper is also satisfactory. “The distinguishing factor of true friendship, i.e., the expression and feeling of affection for one another, does not guide the movement of the discussion in book 8.” That’s right and it is very necessary to mention that, but it is of course not something forgotten. “Aristotle says with friendship it is as it is with the virtues. He does not say as it is with the other virtues. This further reinforces the point made above that Aristotle in this book does not deal primarily with friendship as one of the virtues.” Again, that is very sound. And the last point, “If friendship is necessary for comfort in the *polis* it must in the main be friendships of the lower sort . . . precisely those friendships in which equality of benefits is a real point of dispute between the friends.” That is again true. That is only a connection between the fact that friendship is not a virtue proper and friendship proper is not political. Do you see the connection? Friendship is not a virtue proper, and friendship proper is not political. Do you see the connection? The virtues and the *polis* are somehow coextensive. Yes.

And then Brother Chrysostom, who wrote on the ninth book but cannot be here next time. “Aristotle in his discussion of friendship is not meaningful unless it is seen in terms of his stubborn look out for a possible breakthrough toward the uppermost.” That’s very well put. I mean, he looks somewhere all the time, and only in friendship it becomes particularly noticeable how it tends toward the theoretical life. The term “breakthrough” is perfectly acceptable to me . . . “Though both friendship and honor are said to be the greatest of external goods, friendship perhaps enjoys a slight edge in one respect. Since a man is related to his friend as he is to himself, a good man can appreciate a friendship as simply as he appreciates himself, while the nature of honor is such that he is forced to appreciate and depreciate honor at the same time.” That is very well put. Only the text: he seems to say both friends and honor are the greatest of external goods, but if you look at the pure text, because you never can tell what the translators do, there is a certain difference. In the case of friendship, he says it is *thought* to be the greatest external good; in the case of honor, [there is] no qualification. So in other words, whether friends are an external good is not so sure. It is in a way an internal good, for reasons which become clear. And I think you state exactly what Aristotle means. An excellent man can measure his worth fully in friendship, whereas the same cannot be said of honor. Honor accentuates inequalities; friendship, equalities. And the subtle shift of accent from honor to friendship would [. . .] in a new and higher plateau of well-being. “Unlike the bad man who is at odds with himself as though his soul were cut up in pieces and warped, the virtuous man is integral and not fractional. He is amicably disposed toward himself because he is not labored with repentance and his soul is not rent with faction. He is in short a psychiatrist [. . .]” Nothing could be truer . . . Then you contrast Aristotle with Descartes and Hobbes. “Magnanimity matters to Descartes not as a crown of virtues in Aristotle’s sense” because for Descartes magnanimity is a passion which is the source of all virtues. “Hobbes also cannot include friendship among the pleasant things in life.” Well, he wouldn’t trust it. “Aristotle sees a certain analogy between lovers and friends . . .” No, this I pass over. This is, I believe, questionable. There is another passage which I thought also valid. Oh yes: “Hobbes’s man is too preoccupied with his grim

pursuit of pleasure." This I think is very well put. That's true. Have you ever seen a portrait of Hobbes? Grim. Good.[iii]

Now Mr. Butterworth has a question. "Speaking of intelligence, Aristotle says it is that which apprehends first principles. He never sets down the standard by which this apprehension might be controlled. In fact, he says at one point intelligence apprehends definitions which cannot be proved by reasoning. Doesn't this mean that the greater part of the principles which intelligence gives us are assumptions? If the *Ethics* is primarily an inductive book, i.e., drawing its conclusions by building on principles supplied by intelligence, is it not then fundamentally questionable?" Yes, these are two entirely different questions. The principles from which the *Ethics* starts are not these principles which intelligence apprehends, number one. Now as for the principles which intelligence apprehends, say, man, dog, cat, courage, justice, these are—now let us leave it at the simple formulation of Aristotle and not go into that, that this is always presupposed and cannot be demonstrated. But a negative form of demonstration is always possible and necessary, namely, defending them against people who question them. So when Aristotle says man is a rational animal and someone says "No, that is wrong" (I have read that: "man is the *homo faber*, the animal *faber*, the fabricating animal"), then Aristotle would say, "All right, but what does fabrication presuppose, my dear fellow?" Or someone says, "Man is not the being which possesses reason but the animal which produces verbal symbols, whereas other kinds of symbols can also be produced by monkeys." I believe he would say: "Can you tell me what verbal symbols in contradistinction to other symbols are? Do they not presuppose something like concepts or universals, i.e., something which is specifically rational?" And so on. That is by no means arbitrary. One can say this—that is, I believe, true of Plato and Aristotle in the same way as a whole: no *nous*, intelligence, without *logos*, and no *logos* without *nous*. These go together. *Logos* without *nous*: that is in a way what modern science wants to be. *Nous* without *logos* is mysticism.

Mr. Butterworth: Yes, but if you admit that man is a rational animal and so on, aren't these assumptions?

LS: Yes, but they are assumptions in here, for example, in this book. But these are not arbitrary assumptions. Let us take a simple example and let us not get involved in any Aristotle scholasticism. Did you ever hear the expression "a pattern"? Yes. All right, you look at all kinds of statistics. Statistics are produced only by *logos*. No intelligence is required. You see here relations, and then suddenly you see a pattern. That is *nous*: the perception of the pattern as distinguished from the simple putting together . . . An insight which is of interest has always a certain element of subtleness. I mean, where you see not the mere fact, the wholly brute fact which merely disturbs you—which is of course a very healthy disturbance but which in itself is merely disturbing—but you understand. You see a whole of sorts, and this is a phenomenon which Aristotle had in mind when speaking of *nous*, intelligence.

[iii] The transcriber notes: Strauss "turns to a discussion of arrangements for the Vico seminar in autumn quarter—omitted."

Mr. Butterworth: But when you speak of this pattern you've moved to another area, and I contest this, whether there is such a thing.

LS: Yes, sure. That you have to do in one way or the other all the time. Well, look, how does he proceed when he tries to find out what courage is? Or I think the discussion is more dialectical later in the discussion of continence, if I remember well, and also friendship, where he looks around [at] what he or many gentlemen know or claim to know. And then there are difficulties, and these difficulties lead to a qualification or a modification of the primarily-known views. And gradually a view is reached which covers all that is sound in these opinions and [there are] no loose ends left. Then you know that's it. But in a way this guided you already from the beginning; you had an inkling of that whole before. Good. Yes?

Student: In the case of several patterns, how do you determine among those which pattern is the essential pattern? That is, John Smith is a ditchdigger and a man and an animal. How do you distinguish that most he is a man and not a ditchdigger or an animal?

LS: I suppose in certain contexts it would be only interesting that he is a ditchdigger. But what is ultimately important, I think, for an understanding, is that he is a human being, morally and even theoretically. Morally because he would claim some rights ultimately on the ground that he is a human being, and theoretically because ditch-digging cannot be understood, at least what he is doing, except as some kind of human [. . .] That is not arbitrary. I mean, in other words, the question which you raise, theoretically stated, is: why is substance the primary category and not quality, quantity and so on? Because all the others presuppose substance whereas substance as such does not presuppose the others. A man may be tall or short, black or white (you know, this kind of thing), male or female. It may be here or there or now or then. But in all cases it is man; it is a human being.

Same Student: He's also in all cases a mammal or a vertebrate.

LS: All right, very good. That is a very good point. Then the question arises: What is the true substance? Is it such things like man, cat, what Aristotle calls the indivisible *eidos*, or is it such a thing like mammal, which is divisible into the various kinds, the species? Only the species, not the *genera*, are true substances, is Aristotle's answer.

Same Student: What about the teaching of modern biology that species change over time?

LS: This is not immediately relevant to that, because whatever modern biology may teach it doesn't deny the existence of species. It differs from Aristotle regarding the origin of the species. Now honestly, that was the title of Darwin's book, *The Origin of the Species*. Aristotle denied that the question makes sense, because the species are sempiternal. Man generates man; no monkey can generate a human being. Aristotle of course would have made it very simple and said, "All right, let us have two monkeys of different sexes: let us look at their offspring." And surely he would swear that it wouldn't

be a human being, and I believe he would be right. They tell us that there are *n* intermediates between the finest monkey in the world and, let's say, the most moronic human being. But of course you know that all these links have a wholly questionable character. No, I do not deny that this issue of course ultimately arises, and this is the point where Socrates branches off from the others and Aristotle as a consequence. Does the whole consist of essentially different parts, or is it ultimately differences of degree—as for example the atomists, where the atom is prior, and they said every being is a composite of atoms and a different kind of composite so that fundamentally there is a fundamental homogeneity. And that is questioned. This question of course must be faced, but it is not affected fundamentally by the fact that there may have been an evolution, because then we would go into the question of what evolution means.

Same Student: [Regarding mutation.][iv]

LS: Yes, sure. Well, mutation is already very much. Mutation means a qualitative change, doesn't it?

Same Student: Well, creatures who would seem to be men in every respect except for the fact that they can't breed . . .

LS: I cannot say anything because I do not know that there is such a case. Let us wait until they land on one of the inhabited planets [to see] whether there are such things. I wouldn't know what to say. I couldn't answer your question. I'm sorry.

Student: [Contrasting Aristotle and Kant regarding categories, among other things. Mostly inaudible.][v]

LS: I'm sorry, that is an infinite question, and we have to discuss book 9. Now let me say only one word; I'll try to state it as simply as I can. Aristotle starts from the completed universe and not from the universe as it has come into being, and there is something methodically absolutely sound in that. You cannot explain the genesis of anything if you do not know *that* anything first. Now then the question is: How does Aristotle know that we live in the completed or perfected or finished universe? And then he would say: Because there are human beings who can think. A universe without thinking men is in a way a desert, and it becomes alive only if it is apprehended as what it is. Some apprehension the animals have, the other animals, but they don't apprehend it as a whole. And this surely is beyond the competence of the biologist, although he may have some subsidiary things of some interest. I must leave it at that. But surely never let us forget this question.

Now in book 9 Aristotle continues his treatment of friendship, and we must see the discussion, as all the papers have done, in the context of the whole book, in the ascent from the most undeveloped and primary notions to the fullest possible understanding, possible in this context, of the theoretical life. And we are much closer to that end in

[iv] As noted by the transcriber.
[v] As noted by the transcriber.

book 9 not only in space but also in substance. Surely friendship is closer to the theoretical life than moral virtue as such. Friendship is higher than justice, than universal justice, but justice is *the* social virtue. Hence one would expect that the perfect friendship is the *polis*, that which holds the *polis* together, but this is not so. Friendship is higher than the *polis*, and some indications to this effect were given in book 8. The same thesis, incidentally, is also presented in Xenophon's dialogue *Hiero*, that friendship is higher than the *polis*, on the basis of a much simpler argument indeed.[vi] Now let us turn to the beginning of the book, Mr. Reinken.

Mr. Reinken:
In all dissimilar friendships, it is proportion, as has been said, that establishes equality and preserves the friendship; just as, in the relations between fellow-citizens—

LS: Yes, "as in the political friendship."[vii]

Mr. Reinken:
in the political friendship,[viii] the shoemaker receives payment for his shoes, and the weaver and the other craftsmen for their products, according to value rendered. In these business relationships then a common measure has been devised, namely money, and this is a standard to which all things are referred and by which they are measured. (1163b32-1164a3)

LS: Let us stop here. So we learn here in passing that the political friendship, the friendship uniting fellow citizens, is unequal, heterogeneous. But in the eighth book he seems to have suggested that political friendship is the analogon of fraternity proper, and fraternity is the relation of brothers, which would seem to be a homogeneous friendship as distinguished from the parent–children relation. Aristotle refers here back to the discussion of justice as reciprocity in the fifth book; and this reciprocity has its place in exchange alone, as is shown here by the examples, and that would seem to be the subpolitical. Yet there is a passage in the *Politics*, 1261a22, following, which shows you that reciprocity has also a strictly political side. I'll read it to you in Barker's translation.[ix]

"A consequence follows [from this conception that the *polis* is composed of different elements, mutually exchanging different services in virtue of different capacities]. It is that the well-being of every polis depends on each of its elements rendering to the others an amount equivalent to what it receives from them. This is a principle already laid down in the *Ethics*. It is a principle which has to be observed even among free and equal citizens [in spite of the fact that as such they appear to be identical in kind]," and not different in kind as a shoemaker and a weaver. While they must be different in kind in their capacity as citizens, "they cannot all rule simultaneously; they must therefore each have office for a year—or . . . for some other period. In this way it comes about that all

[vi] See Xenophon, *Hiero*, 3.1–9.
[vii] Strauss retranslates "*en tē politikē*."
[viii] In Rackham's translation: "between fellow-citizens."
[ix] The transcriber notes: "Page 41 of the Barker translation, paragraph 4."

are rulers [in turn], just as [all would be shoemakers and carpenters in turn][x] if shoemakers and carpenters changed their occupations, and the same men were not always shoemakers and carpenters. It would be better indeed if the principle followed in the arts and crafts," namely, that each should stick to his craft, "were also applied to the affairs of the political association," i.e., there should be no switch between ruler and ruled, "and from this point of view it is better for the same men always to be rulers wherever possible. But where this is impossible, through the natural equality of all the citizens," i.e. if there are no outstanding men among them, "and also it may be argued too, because justice requires the participation of all in office (whether office be a good thing or bad)—there is yet an imitation of it, or an approximation to it, if equals retire from office in turn and all are, apart from their period of office, in the same position."[xi]

Rule among free and equals is an artificial thing. If they are all equal, that "A" should rule now is an artificial thing. We just lay it down, rule for one year or rule for four years, whatever it is. We think expediently. Now this artificiality, which is necessary if there are no natural unequals, is the political equivalent to money, money in exchange. Just as exchange doesn't become possible without the invention of money, rule among equals doesn't become possible except by some other *nomos*. In both cases the shoemakers and carpenters are artificially equalized.

Now this passage sets[1] beyond all doubt that the political friendship is not friendship proper because of the crucial significance of *nomos*. In the immediately following passage Aristotle turns to a much more natural form of friendship, and that is erotic friendship, because people fall in love with one another without being told to do so, although there may be societies in which it becomes a convention that if a boy doesn't date a girl or if the girl isn't dated that is a defect, and therefore they will date and be dated merely by convention. But this is not the natural thing; I mean, you can rightly say being dated is not falling in love, and falling in love is not something which *nomos* as such can regulate. Now this erotic friendship is also between unequals, but here the possibility of equalizing claims by money does not exist. I mean, if one is not loved by the other, the other cannot simply say, "Well, I [will] give you so much money and then you will be pleased." The mutual recriminations among lovers of different ages—this is here the point, he has obviously here in mind homosexual love—and this leads Aristotle to mutual recriminations among sophists and their pupils because [in that case] there[2] [are] also older and younger people, with some irony against the sophists. But there is one implication [of this] which was seen by Thomas Aquinas, namely, that Protagoras is not a sophist because he didn't behave that way, in the way in which sophists behave.[xii] This only in passing. Now we go on in 1164a33. This is the same chapter.

Mr. Reinken:
But in the cases where no agreement is come to as to the value of the service, if it is proffered for the recipient's own sake, as has been said above, no complaint arises, for a

[x] Brackets appear in Barker's translation.
[xi] Aristotle, *The Politics of Aristotle*, trans. Ernest Barker (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), 41–42.
[xii] Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, §1765.

friendship based on virtue does not give rise to quarrels; and the return made should be in proportion to the intention of the benefactor, since intention is the measure of a friend, and of virtue. This is the principle on which it would seem that payment ought to be made to those who have imparted instruction in philosophy— (1164a33-b3)

LS: Literally, "to those who have been participating in philosophy."

Mr. Reinken:
for the value of their service is not measurable in money, and no honour paid them could be an equivalent, but no doubt all that can be expected is that to them, as to the gods and to our parents, we should make such return as is in our power.

When on the other hand the gift is not disinterested but made with a view to a recompense, it is no doubt the best thing that a return should be made such as both parties concur—

LS: And so on. Let us leave it here. You see here from this that the friendship according to virtue is not identical with the philosophical association, but the latter is a species of the former. This is of course a different case from the political friendship discussed at the beginning; [that is followed by] erotic friendship, and then this kind of philosophic friendship. In 1164b22, at the beginning of the next chapter.

Mr. Reinken:
Other questions that may be raised are such as these: Does a man owe his father unlimited respect and obedience, or ought he when ill to take the advice of a physician, and when electing a general to vote for the best soldier?

LS: And not for his father. Yes. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
and similarly, ought he to do a service to a friend rather than to a virtuous man—

LS: You see here Aristotle follows the ordinary views that a friend need not be a virtuous man. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
and ought he to repay his obligation to a benefactor rather than make a present to a comrade, when he is not in a position to do both?

Now perhaps with all these matters it is not easy to lay down an exact rule— (1164b4-28)

LS: And so on. So you see the statement of cases regarding friendship which Aristotle will discuss in the sequel. The question of the father is particularly striking because according to the premise one owes the father most of all human beings, and here obviously that doesn't mean that you should listen to him regarding medical treatment,

even if he is stubborn and says you have to take this pill. This would not be rational. Let us read only 1165a12, only the general statement. "As has often been said."

Mr. Reinken:
Hence, as has been frequently remarked already, discussions about our emotions and actions only admit of such degree of definiteness as belongs to the matters with which they deal. (1165a12-14)

LS: In other words, the precise line within which you ought to obey your father as a grown up son cannot be given. In some situations it may be good to vote for your father if he wants to be general. It may happen, but ordinarily of course it would not. Good. Yes, and in the sequel there comes also[3] this question: whether one should help, in case of need, the wiser man or rather the more close akin, the closer akin. Well, in the extreme case the father, of course. Should one help more one's father or one's teacher? You know this kind of question, Rabbi Weiss. In Jewish passages that question is discussed. Yes. I refer you to a parallel to this question in Plato's *Laws* where Plato leaves it undetermined—leaves undetermined the order of rank between honoring one's soul or honoring one's parents. I can now quote myself on this subject, in the *History of Political Philosophy*, on page 58.[xiii] Yes, and in the context of this [. . .] Aristotle also discusses the dissolution of friendship, and especially a most delicate case in 1165b23, following, which we might read because I think we should also have as many specimens as possible of Aristotle's way of treating these matters, although the passage is not difficult to understand in itself. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
On the other hand, suppose one friend to have remained the same while the other has improved, and become greatly the superior in virtue: ought the latter to keep up the friendship? Perhaps it is out of the question; and this becomes especially clear when the gap between them is a wide one, as may happen with two people who were friends in boyhood. One may have remained a boy in mind, while the other is a man of the highest ability; how can they be friends, when they have different tastes and different likes and dislikes? They will no longer even enjoy each other's society; but without this, intercourse and therefore friendship are, as we saw, impossible. But this has been discussed already.

Are we then to behave towards a former friend in exactly the same way as if he had never been our friend at all? Perhaps we ought to remember our past intimacy, and just as we think it right to show more kindness to friends than to strangers, so likewise some attention should be paid, for the sake of old times, to those who were our friends in the past, that is, if the rupture was not caused by extreme wickedness on their part. (1165b23-36)

LS: Yes. This applies of course also and especially to the philosopher and his family. Think of Socrates's thin relations to his kin in Plato; that would be an example. But the

[xiii] Leo Strauss, "Plato," in *History of Political Philosophy*, eds. Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey, (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1963).

statement is perfectly intelligible in itself and I think it is of wonderful delicacy. Now let us turn to the next chapter. This chapter and [others] later on deal with self-love, and these are really the most important chapters in the book. Now let us begin at the beginning of 1166a.

Mr. Reinken:
The forms which friendly feeling for our neighbours takes, and the marks by which the different forms of friendship are defined, seem to be derived from the feelings of regard which we entertain for ourselves. A friend is defined as (*a*) one who wishes, and promotes by action, the real or apparent good of another for that other's sake; or (*b*) one who wishesthe existence and preservation of his friend for the friend's sake. (This is the feeling of mothers towards their children, and of former friends who have quarrelled.) Others say that a friend is (*c*) one who frequents another's society, and (*d*) who desires the same things as he does, or (*e*) one who shares his friends' joys and sorrows. (This too is very characteristic of mothers.) Friendship also is defined by one or other of these marks.

LS: Yes, let us stop here for one moment. You see here, Mr. Lyons, the mothers come in again, so they are crucial. We will take this up later. Now this is a summary on friendship, and maternal love is in a way the most natural love, which will also be explained later. Now this has been emphasized before. The origin of friendship is the friendship for oneself. This is the fundamental friendship and in a way also the highest friendship. The question is, then, what is that primary friendship? What is that self? Let us continue.

Mr. Reinken:
But each of them is also found in a good man's feelings towards himself (and in those of all other men as well, in so far as they believe themselves to be good; but, as has been said, virtue and the virtuous man seem to be the standard in everything). For (*d*) the good man is of one mind with himself, and desires the same things with every part of his nature. Also (*a*) he wishes his own good, real as well as apparent, and seeks it by action (for it is a mark for a good man to exert himself actively for the good); and he does so for his own sake (for he does it on account of the intellectual part of himself, and this appears to be a man's real self). (1166a1-18)

LS: Let us stop here. Yes, all right, "real self" is of course not Greek: "and that, the intellectual part, seems to be each one's."[xiv] Literally translated, "each," "which one"—what you would say, "which man himself." A man as himself is his intellectual part, not his nails or ears, although they in a way belong to him. Now in order to explain that friendship for oneself is the primary friendship, Aristotle starts from the good man, because only in the good man can this become clear. The good man is in agreement with himself, which cannot be said of the bad man. His whole soul, i.e., all its parts, strives for the same. All these parts are friends. He does the good things for the sake of himself, i.e., for the sake of his intellectual part, and that intellectual part is thought to be he himself.

[xiv] Strauss retranslates "*hoper hekastos einai dokei*."

The other parts of him are the friends of his highest part and his highest part is also the friend of his lower parts. That seems to be implied. Now let us go on where we left off.

Mr. Reinken:
Also (*b*) he desires his own life and security, and especially that of his rational part.

LS: Yes, "that through which he thinks."[xv] Now here he uses the word connected with *phronēsis*, in Aristotle practical wisdom, whereas before he had used *dianoia*. Now go on.

Mr. Reinken:
For existence is good for the virtuous man; and everyone wishes his own good: no one would choose to possess every good in the world on condition of becoming somebody else (for God possesses the good even as it is), but only while remaining himself, whatever he may be; and it would appear that the thinking part is the real self—

LS: Yes, here is *nous*; so that the good man wishes to live and be preserved, and in the highest degree he wishes this for that by which he thinks. In other words, he would prefer to lose a leg by amputation than to become insane or to become senile. I believe everyone sees that. Or to have a liver taken over, or to lose an eye or what not. This is the fact which Aristotle means. For the good man it is good to *be*. But now Aristotle enlarges it and speaks of everyone, i.e., not only the good man wishes to have the good things in the highest possible degree. Everyone wishes to be a god. A god is supposed to possess all the good things. No, says Aristotle, everyone wishes to possess the good things while remaining a human being. This is also true of the good man. He wishes to remain a human being. Hence the best in him will not be so radically distant from the other part in him that he could not be a friend with himself. You remember the statement, a god cannot be a friend of a human being because of the radical distance. But since he wishes to remain a human being, the distance will not become extreme. Both parts of him are himself, but to the highest degree the thinking part *is* himself. So in other words, you cannot disregard the body. Man can be a friend to himself because of his inner duality. That is a key point, I believe. Whether you say body–soul or soul–mind is not developed here. The question arises: Can a simple being, a simple being like a god be a friend to himself? The discussion of the inner duality of man occurred at the end of book 7, in 1154b20 to 31, which you can read. Now let us go on where we left off.

Mr. Reinken:
the thinking part is the real self, or is so more than anything else. (1166a18-23)

LS: Yes. So in other words, the others are not simply to be disregarded. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
And (*c*) the good man desires his own company; for he enjoys being by himself, since he has agreeable memories of the past, and good hopes for the future, which are pleasant too; also his mind is stored with subjects for contemplation. And (*e*) he is keenly

[xv] Strauss retranslates "*touto hō phronei*."

conscious[xvi] of his own joys and sorrows; for the same things give him pleasure or pain at all times, and not different things at different times, since he is not apt to change his mind.

LS: Yes, let us stop here. Again, these are all applications of what we generally say about friends to the individual: that there can be a kind of sharing of pleasure or pain of the various parts in us. But here again we must not forget the issue of the gods. Does a god feel pain with himself? You know this. What did he say? How did he translate [*sunalgei*]? "Share in pain." Does a god share in pain with himself? Go on.

Mr. Reinken:
It is therefore because the good man has these various feelings toward himself, and because he feels toward his friend in the same way as towards himself (for a friend is another self), that friendship also is thought to consist in one or other of these feelings, and the possession of them is thought to be the test of a friend. (1166a23-33)

LS: Yes. Now in other words, friendship with others is possible because the friend is another self—in a way, yourself again. By the way, Mr. Lyons, that confirms your paper, as you can see. But I would mention here only one implication which Aristotle of course did not intend, but which we can hardly help observing. Aristotle says here by implication one can love others only insofar as they are like oneself. One can love only those others who are like oneself. One can love only one's friends like oneself. Does this ring a bell?

Mr. Lyons: To love your neighbor as yourself.

LS: Yes, exactly. Sure, that's the difference. In other words, it is an implicit rejection of the biblical love of the neighbor. That is clear because the Bible does not presuppose affection. I mean, you are to love people for whom you have no affection, whereas Aristotle presupposes this high degree of concern only when affection is present. Yes?

Student: [To the effect that heterosexual love seems to rest on pleasure.][xvii]

LS: Oh, no, the *erga*, the actions, the management of the household, upbringing of children. Oh, no. No, no, Aristotle wouldn't go in for that. He would not reject or exclude it, of course, but the purpose is in the first place the upbringing of children. That's Aristotle's formula.

Same Student: But the friendship is inegalitarian.

LS: Yes, it is not quite equal between man and woman according to Aristotle, I'm sorry to say. Yes?

[xvi] In Rackham's translation: "And (*e*) he is keenly conscious."
[xvii] As noted by the transcriber.

Student: Can one say that the friendship that one man has for another because he is like himself must be higher than the friendship which a man has for himself, because it is a friendship of unequal parts, higher and lower?

LS: Yes. Well, we will come to that later, because Aristotle in the immediate sequel makes clear that he will take up the question of love of oneself later on. This is only the first discussion.

Student: Can you explain why to love others like oneself is a rejection of the Bible?

LS: Yes, because the Bible also says love thy neighbor like thyself . . .

Same Student: It's not a rejection. They are two different relationships.

LS: Yes, but still, if you think that through, explicitly it is not a rejection. Aristotle didn't know the Bible; he couldn't reject it. But if you think it through, what he understands by friendship as appears from this passage, then you will see that the biblical notion would be excluded. But let us go on and see the further development. In the sequel Aristotle makes clear at some length that the bad men cannot be friends with themselves, and therefore[4] [they cannot be friends] with others. That only confirms the general statement. Let us only read the end of the chapter, b25 to 29.

Mr. Reinken:
Thus a bad man appears to be devoid even of affection for himself, because he has nothing lovable in his nature. If then such a state of mind is utterly miserable, we should do our utmost to shun wickedness and try to be virtuous. That is the way both to be friends with ourselves and to win the friendship of others. (1166b25-29)

LS: Yes. Now admonitions of this kind are quite rare in the *Ethics*. It concludes the chapter on friendship for oneself as the origin and, in a way, the end of all friendship. It corresponds to the thought expressed in book 1 that the noble and just things are by nature the most pleasant things, but now friendship with oneself and others makes moral virtue worthwhile. You have now that premium, if I may say so, which was never stated. What we heard only was [that] it's noble to do the noble and just things, and here we learn now what it means that moral virtue is *the* requirement of happiness: inner peace, and peace and more than peace with some other men can be obtained only on the basis of moral virtue. Now before Aristotle continues the question of self-love he inserts three chapters dealing with benevolence, concord, and beneficence. These are phenomena akin to friendship but not friendship, especially good will: you wish a man the best. You don't have to know him and he doesn't have to know you. Aristotle calls it a kind of lazy friendship. You wish him the best; you don't do him the best. More important for our purpose is the section on concord in the chapter after that.

Concord, *homonoia* in Greek, is not the same as *homodoxia*, having the same opinion. You may have the same opinions as someone else[5] [but] one cannot say you are in concord. For example, two mathematicians have the same opinions about the

Pythagorean theorem, and no one would say they live in concord. Concord requires that those who are in concord know of each other's view, and that the object is the human, the useful, and not the heavenly things or mathematical objects and so on. Let us read 1167a28. "They are in concord regarding the things to be done."

Mr. Reinken:
Concord is said to prevail in a state, when the citizens agree as to their interests, adopt the same policy, and carry their common resolves into execution. Concord then refers to practical ends, and practical ends of importance, and able to be realized by both or all the parties: for instance, there is concord in the state when the citizens unanimously decree that the offices of state shall be elective, or that an alliance shall be made with Sparta, or that Pittacus shall be dictator (when Pittacus was himself willing to be dictator).

LS: Yes, because if he refuses to accept if elected there is no concord. Good. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:
When each of two persons wishes himself to rule, like the rivals in the *Phoenissae*, there is discord; since men are not of one mind merely when each thinks the same thing (whatever this may be), but when each thinks the same thing in relation to the same person—

LS: Well, an example: they may agree like Francis I and Charles V agreed. As Francis put it, "What my brother Charles wants I too want: Milan." You know, that is of course not concord. Good.

Mr. Reinken:
for instance, when both the common people and the upper classes—

LS: Yes, this disgraceful thing. That's the same *epieikeis*, the word used all the time for the moral men or the gentlemen. Let us be literal. I mean, let us not improve on Aristotle. Yes. Good.

Mr. Reinken:
when both the common people and the gentlemen wish[xviii] that the best people shall rule; for only so can all parties get what they desire.

Concord appears therefore to mean friendship between citizens, which indeed is the ordinary use of the term; for it refers to the interests and concerns of life.

Now concord in this sense exists between good men— (1167a28-b5)

LS: No. It exists "in the gentlemen." Although it is agreement between the gentlemen and the *dēmos*, it resides in the gentlemen. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

[xviii] In Rackham's translation: "when both the common people and the upper classes wish."

since these are of one mind both with themselves and with one another, as they always stand more or less on the same ground; for good men's wishes are steadfast, and do not ebb and flow like the tide, and they wish for just and expedient ends, which they strive to attain in common. The base on the other hand are incapable of concord, except in some small degree, as they are of friendship, since they try to get more than their share of advantages, and take less than their share of labours and public burdens. (1167b5-13)

LS: And so on. They are terrible. Yes, we don't have to read the details. So concord is political friendship, which means that friendship proper is not the bond of the city. The bond of the city is this, is concord, and it exists in the gentlemen as distinguished from the *dēmos*. The *dēmos* and the low class people, morally low class, are used here synonymously. Any reader of Aristotle, of the *Politics*, should know that. Yes. But of course not all gentlemen are friends, for gentlemanship is only a necessary but not a sufficient condition of friendship, as we have seen before. Yes?

Student: Could you say that the next two sentences are the basis of modern political science?

LS: Pardon?

Same Student: That the two following sentences where he is speaking about the base would be the basis of the city in modern political science?[xix]

LS: I know that. Well, did we not discuss it when we spoke of men like Hobbes, Locke.

Same Student: [. . .]

LS: I believe that it does. Every moment, every time and place is good enough for seeing something, but I think some of you have seen it before. Good.

Now then he turns to the subject of beneficence, which is of course more than benevolence: doing good to someone else. Now Aristotle gives us his first impression at the beginning, 1167b17.

Mr. Reinken:
Benefactors seem to love those whom they benefit more than those who have received benefits love those who have conferred them; and it is asked why this is so, as it seems to be unreasonable. The view most generally taken is that it is because the one party is in the position of a debtor and the other of a creditor; just as therefore in the case of a loan, whereas the borrower would be glad to have his creditor out of the way, the lender actually watches over his debtor's safety, so it is thought that the conferrer of a benefit—

[xix] Rackham's translation reads: "And while each desires this for himself, he spies on his neighbour to prevent him from doing likewise; for unless they keep watch over one another, the common interests go to ruin. The result is discord, everybody trying to make others to do their duty but refusing to do it themselves."

LS: You see how tough Aristotle can be, Mr. Johnson; you see how tough. He knows the things which Harold Lasswell knows. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:
wishes the recipient to live in order that he may receive a return, but the recipient is not particularly anxious to make a return. Epicharmus no doubt would say that people who give this explanation are 'looking at the seamy side' of life; but all the same it appears to be not untrue to human nature, for most men have short memories, and are more desirous of receiving benefits than of bestowing them.

But it might be held that the real reason lies deeper—

LS: Yes, let me say, "It could seem that the cause is more natural," has a deeper root in nature than that.[xx] In other words, this is a crude, superficial explanation which people give; it doesn't go to the root of the matter. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
and that the case of the creditor is not really a parallel. With him it is not a matter of affection, but only of wishing his debtor's preservation for the sake of recovering his money; whereas a benefactor feels friendship and affection for the recipient of his bounty even though he is not getting anything out of him and is never likely to do so.

LS: So in other words, in the case of the creditor it is mere calculation. It has no deeper thing. But in the case of the benefactor it is deeper, and that he explains. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
The same thing happens with the artist: every artist loves his own handiwork more than that handiwork if it were to come to life would love him. This is perhaps especially true of poets, who have an exaggerated affection for their own poems and love them as parents love their children. The position of the benefactor then resembles that of the artist; the recipient of his bounty is his handiwork, and he therefore loves him more than his handiwork loves its maker. The reason of this is that all things desire and love existence; but we exist in activity, since we exist by living and doing; and in a sense one who has made something exists actively, and so he loves his handiwork because he loves existence. This is in fact a fundamental principle of nature— (1167b17-1168a9)

LS: No. "But this is natural."[xxi] This comes from nature, not from calculation.

Mr. Reinken:
what a thing is potentially, that its work reveals in actuality. (1168a10)

[xx] Strauss retranslates "*doxeie an physikōteron einai to aition*."
[xxi] Strauss retranslates "*touto de physikon*."

LS: Yes, let us stop here for one moment. Now how can this phenomenon that the benefactor is more concerned with the benefited than vice versa be understood as a natural phenomenon? The maker in act, I mean not only in potency, is in a way the work. As we say, he lives in his work not only while working but also while the work is completed. Shakespeare lives in the plays. It makes sense to say, it's not merely metaphoric.[6] Both the benefactor and the benefited love themselves, but the love of the benefactor extends to the benefited as an extension of his self-love, whereas there is no vice versa relation, no opposite relation, in the benefited because he is only the recipient. He doesn't live in the work as the benefactor does. You see here the difference between Aristotle and, say, Hobbes regarding self-preservation, existence, life. It's never mere life for Aristotle, or hardly ever. To be, to preserve oneself, means to preserve oneself as a living being and living *human* being: to be in activity, in work, as a human being. The Greek word which Aristotle uses here is *energeia*. This is of course the origin of our word "energy," which means something very different. Now this, [*en*], means "in," and this, [*ergon*], is "work" or ""activity": the "being-at-work," the "being-in-the-work." The lyre player when he plays the lyre is *energeia* a lyre player. When he does not play the lyre he is only potentially so. And this, *to be*, in an emphatic sense means for Aristotle to be at work in the manner belonging to the being concerned. Say, to be as a human being means to be at work as a human being, to activate the human potentiality.

Student: Excuse me, I've forgotten what Hobbes's position was.

LS: Well, no, he doesn't define—simply to be, to live. It is undefined. Aristotle knows that too. He speaks of that in the third book of the *Ethics*, that mere living has some sweetness in it. But that is not sufficient for Aristotle. We tend by nature to be and to be as human beings, to act as human beings and to enjoy our actions, to enjoy our activities as distinguished from the sensual pleasures. Not that we do not enjoy the sensual pleasures, but these are not the only and not the highest ones. Therefore good deeds, good actions, are by nature more pleasant than sensual pleasure, because this goes deeper to the root of our being. Now Aristotle develops then in the sequel, among other things, that the toil and pains going with activity do not contradict this fundamental pleasure going with doing our own work. Let us see.

Student: Would it be going too far afield to say that in a different tone and style the thought raised here is what Nietzsche says partly in *The Will to Power*?

LS: Yes, well, the point of view is very different because there are no ends for Nietzsche. There are no natural ends for Nietzsche.

Now if this is so, incidentally, if this is so that the benefactor loves the benefited more than the benefited loves the benefactor—or let us use now benefactor and lover synonymously for reasons which we will see: Who will be the greatest lover of the *polis* from this point of view? Yes? Who, Mr. Erickson?

Student:[xxii] The legislator.

[xxii] The transcriber notes that it is not Mr. Erickson.

LS: Not good enough.

Same Student: The ruler?

LS: Not enough.

Same Student: The founder.

LS: Exactly. It's his work. The only man who can say that the *polis* is his work is the founder. This is surely what is implied, and this is the tacit argument of the *Republic*, of Plato's *Republic*. [It] is exactly this. The tyrant is only at best the owner of the city—"at[7] best" in quotation marks—but he is never the man to whom the city owes its being.

Now in the next chapter Aristotle returns to the question of self-love. In the first statement the key point was this: the inner duality of man is the reason why man can be a friend to himself. In the second statement this is not explicitly repeated but it remains implied. Aristotle begins with a difficulty: people both blame self-love and praise it, blame it as egoism and praise it nevertheless. This is the situation. And here is the point where there is only one passage which we should read, 1168a35.

Mr. Reinken:
But the facts do not accord—

LS: Yes, "the facts disagree with these speeches" depreciating egoism.[xxiii] Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
nor is this surprising.

LS: "Nor is this unreasonable," *alogos*; *logoi*, *alogos*.[xxiv] Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
For we admit that one— (1168a35-b1)

LS: No, no. "For people say." People say.[xxv] Now that's very interesting. Aristotle has here given certain speeches, and then he says these speeches are contradicted by the facts. And now instead of giving us the facts, he gives us other speeches. Is it not strange? Absolutely unintentionally, I had explained that without thinking of this passage in a study of Machiavelli. I'll just read it to you.

"While all men praise goodness, most men act badly. It seems that the error contained in what is generally said can be recognized by simply confronting the manifest speeches [what people say—LS] with the equally manifest deeds. But the deeds which contradict

[xxiii] Strauss retranslates "*tois logois toutois ta erga diaphōnei*."
[xxiv] Strauss retranslates "*ouk alogōs*."
[xxv] Strauss retranslates "*phasi*."

the speeches praising goodness do not prove that those speeches are untrue, i.e. that men ought not to act virtuously; the deeds by themselves prove merely that most men do not in fact act virtuously."[xxvi]

Here of course the passage does the opposite. I mean, the fact that men are not simply selfish doesn't contradict that; it simply means men are unreasonably suckers. That wouldn't be of any interest. "Yet the way in which men mostly act is also expressed by speech. Hence, the laudatory speeches contradict each other."[xxvii] And now you can apply this here. Men blame egoism, self-love in the sense of egoism, but in fact they are not so egoistic. All right, then one could simply say they are not intelligent enough to be egoistic, are not tough enough. But they also praise, say, another kind of self-love conflicting with the first, and the contradiction of their speeches shows that there is a real problem. Yes. Now he solves the question, this fact that people both praise and blame self-love, in the most simple way: by a distinction, by distinguishing one kind of self-love which is good and one [which][xxviii] is bad. Now let us begin at b15, following.

Mr. Reinken:
Those then who make it a term of reproach call men lovers of self when they assign to themselves the larger share of money, honours, or bodily pleasures; since these are the things which most men desire and set their hearts on as being the greatest goods, and which accordingly they compete with each other to obtain. Now those who take more than their share of these things are men who indulge their appetites, and generally their passions and the irrational part of their souls. But most men are of this kind. Accordingly the use of the term 'lover of self' as a reproach has arisen from the fact that self-love of the ordinary kind is bad.

LS: Yes, because the many are bad.

Mr. Reinken:
Hence self-love is rightly censured in those who are lovers of self in this sense. And that it is those who take too large a share of things of this sort whom most people usually mean when they speak of lovers of self— (1168b15-23)

LS: Yes, do you see that? The many who are so selfish in the bad sense yet praise those who are selfish in the good sense. In other words, you find more people who know something of virtue than people who are virtuous. Yes. Good. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:
For if a man were always bent on outdoing everybody else in acting justly or temperately or in displaying any other of the virtues, and in general were always trying to secure for

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[xxvi] Leo Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 237. The second sentence Strauss begins: "It seems that the error contained in what is generally and publicly said."
[xxvii] Leo Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 237.
[xxviii] Brackets in original transcript.

himself moral nobility, no one would charge him with love of self nor find any fault with him.

LS: In other words, if he wants to have more good deeds, to do more good deeds, than anybody else, people wouldn't call him an egoist, although Aristotle says in a deeper sense he is, of course, egoistic. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:
Yet as a matter of fact such a man might be held to be a lover of self in an exceptional degree. At all events he takes for himself the things that are noblest and most truly good. Also it is the most dominant part of himself that he indulges and obeys in everything.

LS: Yes, now let us stop here. I think the thought is very clear. The most egoistic man is the virtuous man, in a sense. Plato or Socrates presents this in a—how shall I say?—less pleasing manner, and the word which they use is love of gain, [*philokerdeia*].[xxix] Love of gain is of course—was regarded as something very low. Very low, love of gain. And the difficulty is this, that rightly understood the most virtuous man is the greediest man in the world because he is most eager to get the most of the highest good. You see? From this point of view there is, then—this is the same thought. Now why can such a man be said to love himself to the highest degree? Because a man himself is what is the highest in him. Now the immediate sequel.

Mr. Reinken:
But (*a*) as in the state it is the sovereign that is held in the fullest sense to *be* the state, and in any other composite whole it is the dominant part that is deemed especially—

LS: In other words, if you say the *polis* has done something or the country has done something, in fact you mean the government, so the highest, the most authoritative part. And the same applies to the individual. The individual is primarily the rational part, just as in the *polis* the *polis* is primarily the government. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
to be that whole, so it is with man. He therefore who loves and indulges himself is a lover of self in the fullest degree.[xxx] Again (*b*), the terms 'self-restrained' and 'unrestrained' denote being restrained or not by one's intellect, and thus imply that the intellect is the man himself. (1168b25-1169a1)

LS: Yes, now what is that self-restraint? I believe I translated it formerly by continence. Aristotle here vindicates continence, which was previously presented to us as lower than virtue. I believe that is crucial for the understanding of the book as a whole, because book 7, the new beginning, started with the discussion of continence as distinguished from virtue. Now why is this necessary? The following thought occurred to me. The most

[xxix] There is a blank space in the transcript; the transcriber notes that Strauss provides the Greek word.
[xxx] In Rackham's translation: "He therefore who loves and indulges the dominant part of himself is a lover of self in the fullest degree."

extreme statement in favor of the of the virtuous man, the gentleman, occurred in the section on the sense of shame at the end of book 4,[8] where it was said he has no sense of shame because he does not do anything improper or wrong. You remember that. So he is not tempted ever. The continent man is the man who is tempted but does not succumb. But there is this difficulty. When he spoke of this perfect gentleman at the end of book 4 he said there are two kinds of proper things: proper in themselves and proper by *nomos*, by convention. And Aristotle says that doesn't make any difference because the perfect gentleman will not do anything improper, whether it is intrinsically improper or merely conventionally improper. But now this creates a great difficulty. If something is bad merely by convention, it is absolutely impossible not to be tempted to do it. For example, a man may be tempted for a second to drive left when he should drive right. The only point of interest is that he doesn't drive left. And therefore this is, I think, an indication of the difficulty regarding the concept of the perfect gentleman and that it might be more practical to be satisfied with something like the continent man. But this only in passing. Now we have to read a few more passages in this chapter which are also of broad importance: 1169a16. Oh—a revolution![xxxi]

Student: I was wondering if you could repeat that. I just didn't follow it. If it's bad only by *nomos*, it's impossible not to be tempted?

LS: Yes.

Same Student: Why?

LS: I mean, if something is merely conventionally bad—in other words, it has no intrinsic, no natural basis—there cannot be a natural pleasantness in striving for the opposite. I use my simple example: something that is clearly conventional, like driving left and right. You can make it a second nature so that it can never occur to you, but assuming you were tempted because the habit was not very strong or you don't drive frequently or whatever it may be, no one would blame a man. And, say, if a man had the temptation each time to do something which is only conventionally bad, say, one of the rules of the table . . . If he [did] the improper thing, I imagine one could say you should be awake.

Same Student: It couldn't be said if it is merely conventionally bad that the opposite would be pleasurable.

LS: I think it is unreasonable to expect that a man should be perfectly free from a temptation to do it or not to do it.

Student: I think it shows that the observance of the conventionally proper, what is strictly conventionally proper, proceeds out of friendship among the gentlemen as much as the justice. To wear black to a funeral is a mark of respect, and it is not by nature noble

[xxxi] The transcriber notes: "The remark was a reaction to looking up to find a flood of raised hands."

to wear black at a funeral: other nations wear white. But a gentleman would not think of turning up—

LS: Of course not. But that he could be tempted to wear white—

Same Student: No, he would not be tempted to desecrate the funeral of his friend.

LS: No. I do not know which people they are who wear white . . . [xxxii]

Student: The thing that I don't understand is now continence and incontinence are here modified. This is almost a third modification if book 7 introduces a new start and modifies that very severe teaching of books 2 to 5. Would you say, then, that now in book 9 there would be another new start?

LS: No, no, no, no. In a way, it's the same. *The* theme from book 2 on, at the latest, was moral virtue; from book 7 to 9, continence, which is lower than moral virtue, and friendship, which is higher.

Same Student: Now are you suggesting that continence is being brought up to a higher status?

LS: No, no. It would only mean—well, if I may use a bad modern word, books 7 to 9 are more realistic in this sense, both in speaking of something which is lower than moral virtue (continence) and in speaking of something which is higher than moral virtue (friendship). Now let us turn to 1169a16.

Mr. Reinken:
With the bad man therefore, what he does is not in accord with what he ought to do, but the good man does what he ought—

LS: Yes, the good man, *epieikēs*. You can also translate this as the gentlemen.

Mr. Reinken:
the gentleman does what he ought, since intelligence always chooses for itself that which is best— (1169a16-17)

LS: Literally, "since *every* intelligence," *pas nous*, "chooses what is best for itself, and the gentleman obeys the intelligence."[xxxiii] Now let us stop here for a moment. This is a vindication of true self-love, because every *nous*, every intelligence, chooses the best for itself. The *nous* is not identical with the gentleman. The gentleman obeys the *nous* . . . but there is no possibility of blaming the *nous* for choosing the best for itself. He cannot help but choose the best for himself. Let us see how he goes on from here.

[xxxii] The transcriber notes that there was a brief inaudible exchange.
[xxxiii] Strauss retranslates "*pas gar nous haireitai to beltiston heautō, ho d' epieikēs, ha peitharchei tō nō*."

Mr. Reinken:
But it is also true that the virtuous man's conduct is often guided by the interests of his friends and of his country, and that he will if necessary lay down his life in their behalf.

LS: Let us stop. The country is of course "fatherland," *patris*. Now before we come to that, he speaks here now no longer of the *nous*, of the intelligence. The intelligence cannot die for the friends, for the fatherland, but only the gentleman or the good man. So while the gentleman obeys the *nous*,[9] [and] *nous* chooses what is best for[10] [him], he will also do many things for others. That's different. For his friends and for the fatherland. This is the only time in which the term fatherland occurs in the *Ethics*, and if *the* Aristotle index by [. . .] is of any use, [it is also] the only time when it occurs in the works of Aristotle.[xxxiv] So it has to be considered very carefully. You remember that it did not occur where it should have occurred, in the section on courage. We were struck by that. He would do everything by dying for it. Yes. Yes?

Student: It sounds here as though this is fundamentally the same as Plato's *Republic*, namely, the guardians where love of one's own is the same as love of country.

LS: Yes, but there is here—let us see how the argument proceeds. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:
For he will surrender wealth and power and all the goods that men struggle to win, if he can secure nobility for himself; since he would prefer an hour of rapture to a long period of mild enjoyment, a year of noble life to many years of ordinary existence, one great and glorious exploit to many small successes. And this is doubtless the case with those who give their lives for others—

LS: Yes, "doubtless" is one of these cases. What he says is "perhaps."[xxxv] But we never know in such cases: Is this the polite, urbane expression of certainty, or is it literal? That we never know. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
thus they chose great nobility for themselves. Also the virtuous man—

LS: No, let us go on in 32, a bit later.

Mr. Reinken:
It may even happen that he will surrender to his friend the performance of some achievement— (1169a18-33)

LS: "Actions."[xxxvi]

[xxxiv] Possibly Hermann Boritz's *Index aristotelicus* (Berlin: Reimer, 1870). Strauss's qualification may relate to the fact that this index omits *patris* altogether, wrongly indicating that the word never appears in Aristotle's corpus.
[xxxv] Strauss retranslates "*isōs*."
[xxxvi] Strauss retranslates "praxeis."

Mr. Reinken:
actions, and that it may be nobler for him to be the cause of his friend's performing them than to perform them himself.[xxxvii]

Therefore in all spheres of praiseworthy conduct it is manifest that the good man takes the larger share of moral nobility for himself. In this sense then, as we said above, it is right to be a lover of self, though self-love of the ordinary sort is wrong. (1169a33-b2)

LS: Yes. Very well. So in other words, his willingness to give more to the others, to the friends, applies not only to such low things as money and honors. It applies even to noble deeds. Say, only one man can perform a very dangerous mission. Both [men] are eager to do it and he is willing—yes, well, this must not be understood cynically—but he is prepared to give this greatest possibility of distinction to the other. A question: What about knowledge? What about knowledge, if it is not action but understanding?

Student: I was just thinking that. When you love truth above friends, you can sacrifice the good for a friend but you can't really sacrifice the true for him.

LS: Yes, this is also perhaps true, but the more simple thing: the question cannot arise here. An action may be unshareable. Insights are necessarily shareable. This highest possibility of conflict, the noblest, regarding the noble deed, exists only in the sphere of action. The highest form of conflict cannot exist in the sphere of thought because of the essentially shareable character of understanding. And this is the tacit transition to sharing insights: a friendship regarding common thinking, as distinguished from common action. Mr. Flaumenhaft?

Mr. Flaumenhaft: What about the case of a poor family in a town where there's a great philosopher at the university, and one of the brothers goes to work knowing that he's foregoing the leisure and the time to study in order to send the brother to sit at the feet of that philosopher?

LS: Yes, well, that is a complicated question. I mean, if he is the one by nature more fitted, then it is an action of questionable wisdom. Is it not? But if it is merely a matter [of] who should go to college to the greater benefit of the family's finances, that is not an interesting question.

Mr. Flaumenhaft: I mean, if you take brothers of equal ability . . .

LS: Equal ability. Yes. I don't know. They might have to toss coins, because it would amount to a form of tossing coins. I mean, if they are both equally decent people, no one would wish that the other would lose the very great good which he would get there. And what could they do in such a case? It would be tossing a coin, even if tossing a coin

[xxxvii] In Rackham's translation: "the cause of his friend performing it than to perform it himself."

consists in the fact that the parents should choose, because this would also be not necessarily a rational preference.

Student: Is it in this example that we don't talk about knowledge or insight but we talk about access, opportunity?

LS: Yes, but is not the opportunity as a very close potentiality separable from the act of knowledge?

Same Student: I think it is [. . .]

LS: Still, but the insights as such are shareable. The insights as such. But if we go into the conditions of insights that's a different question. Yes.

We are not surprised that the next chapter begins with the words, "It is controversial also regarding the happy man whether he will need friends or not." As Mr. Lane pointed out, happiness was not the theme for a very long time, but now when we approach that breakthrough, to quote Brother Chrysostom, then happiness also comes up. Good. And let us read 1169b30. Here in this chapter the question of the theoretical life almost comes to the surface. 1169b30. Do you have that?

Mr. Reinken:
And as he does not need useful or pleasant friends, it is assumed that he does not require friends at all.

But perhaps this inference is really untrue. For as we said at the beginning, happiness is a form of activity, and an activity clearly is something that comes into being, not a thing that we possess all the time, like a piece of property. But if happiness consists in life and activity, and the activity of a good man, as was said at the beginning, is good and so pleasant in itself, and if the sense that a thing is our own is also pleasant, yet we are better able to contemplate our neighbours than ourselves, and their actions than our own, and thus good men find pleasure in the actions of other good men who are their friends, since those actions possess both these essentially pleasant qualities, it therefore follows that the supremely happy man will require good friends, insomuch as he desires to contemplate actions that are good and that are his own, and the actions of a good man that is his friend are such. (1169b26-1170a4)

LS: Yes, let us stop here. The starting point is this: it is easier to contemplate others and their actions than oneself and one's own actions. Therefore, one needs friends. You see, it is a kind of contemplation, the contemplation of noble actions, which is here given as a reason. But let us see the immediate sequel.

Mr. Reinken:

Also men think that the life of the happy man ought to be pleasant. Now a solitary man has a hard life, for it is not easy to keep up continuous activity by oneself; it is easier to do so with the aid of and in relation to other people. (1170a5-7)

LS: Yes, this applies of course also to the theoretical activity. Your attention and concentration lags. Someone is there with whom you talk, and he is still fully awake and may keep you awake where you yourself could not keep you awake. And then this is developed in the sequel more fully, all [of] this theme developed in a more natural discussion, meaning a discussion dealing with the nature of things, 1170a13. To live means to be aware, to be aware either by the senses as all animals or in the higher form of man by the mind. And this awareness is heightened by joint awareness, and this is the highest reason why friendship is necessary precisely on the highest level of human life. Yes, I think—let us read 1170b, just in the middle of this long sentence.

Mr. Reinken:
and if to be conscious one is alive is a pleasant thing in itself (for life is a thing essentially good, and to be conscious that one possesses a good thing is pleasant); and if life is desirable, and especially so for good men, because existence is good for them, and so pleasant (because they are pleased by the perception of what is intrinsically good)—

LS: Yes, but "by the joint perception."[xxxviii] That's the friendship, the joint perception. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
and if the virtuous man feels towards his friend in the same way as he feels towards himself (for his friend is a second self)—then, just as a man's own existence is desirable for him, so, or nearly so, is his friend's existence also.[xxxix]

LS: Yes. This was also seen by Mr. Lane. There is a slight preference for one's own self. To that extent the "egoism" is retained by Aristotle. Yes. And let us go on where we left off.

Mr. Reinken:
But, as we saw, it is the consciousness of oneself as good that makes existence desirable, and such consciousness is pleasant in itself. Therefore a man ought also to share his friend's consciousness of his existence, and this is attained by their living together and by conversing and communicating their thoughts to each other; for this is the meaning of living together as applied to human beings, it does not mean merely feeding in the same place— (1170b1-13)

LS: Now you see the sharp distinction which he here makes: feeding together and sharing thoughts and speeches together. He doesn't speak here about the actions. That's a preparation for the discussion of the theoretical life. Yes. Now in the next chapter he raises the question whether one should have many friends or few, and the answer is [that]

[xxxviii] Strauss retranslates "*sunaisthanomenoi*."
[xxxix] In Rackham's translation: "is his friend's existence also desirable."

one can have only a few friends. And there is one passage which we should read, 1171a10. “It doesn’t seem to be possible that one can be.”

Mr. Reinken:
friendly with many people—

LS: Yes, “in an intensive way.” Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
for the same reason as it is impossible to be in love with several people. Love means friendship in the superlative degree, and that must be with one person only; so also warm friendship is only possible with a few.

LS: So you see, Aristotle distinguishes all the time between friendship and *erōs*. He does not do what Plato does;[11] [Plato] blurs the distinction. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
This conclusion seems to be supported by experience. Friendships between comrades only include a few people, and the famous examples of poetry are pairs of friends. Persons of many friendships, who are hail-fellow-well-met with everybody, are thought to be real friends of nobody (otherwise than as fellow-citizens are friends): I mean the sort of people we call obsequious. It is true that one may be friendly with many fellow-citizens and not be obsequious, but a model of excellence; but it is not possible to have many friends whom we love for their virtue and for themselves. We may be glad to find even a few friends of the sort. (1171a12-20)

LS: Yes. You see here, politically one can have many friends, i.e., many fellow citizens. Of course one must have them. If there are not many fellow citizens, it wouldn’t be a city; it would be a hamlet. But he contrasts here “politically” on the one hand, and “through virtue” on the other. The *polis* surely is not held together by friendship proper. That’s the least one would have to say. There is a minor curiosity, and then we can have a brief discussion, in the last chapter: 1172a, a few lines, just because it shows what kind of confusing things Aristotle may do. It is a simple example of that. At the beginning. That’s shortly before the end of the book.

Mr. Reinken:
this consciousness is actualized in intercourse; hence friends naturally desire each other’s society. And whatever pursuit[xl] it is that constitutes existence for a man or that makes his life worth living, he desires to share that pursuit with his friends. Hence some friends drink or dice together, others practice athletic sports and hunt, or study philosophy, in each other’s company; each sort spending their time together in the occupation that they love best of everything in life; for wishing to live in their friends’ society, they pursue and take part with them in these occupations as best they can. (1172a1-8)

[xl] In Rackham’s translation: “And (iii) whatever pursuit.”

LS: Yes. Now we see here what he says: he gives an enumeration of things which friends may do jointly, drinking together, playing dice together, having gymnastic training together, go[ing] hunting together, *or* philosophizing together. Only the two last items are connected by an "or." Now this would seem to be—well, among the millions of things which may unite friends philosophy is just one, just one and more or less the same as hunting. Or should there be a connection between philosophizing and hunting?

Mr. Reinken: I think that there is.

LS: Yes, sure. No, in Aristotle there is no example of it, as far as I remember, but in Plato that is quite common: hunting of the truth.

Mr. Reinken: They hunted for justice after they—

LS: Yes, sure. Yes. Yes, well, the most massive example is that when Plato repeats in the *Laws* the order of study given in the *Republic*; you know, the mathematical sciences and so on in the seventh book of the *Laws*. At the end, you have in the *Laws* hunting where you have in the *Republic* philosophy. That is the most obvious, but it is frequently—the term hunting for the truth occurs very frequently. Yes?

Student: It reminds me of Rousseau. There's something of a connection with *Emile*. He hunted first. He never ended up as a philosopher, that's the difficulty.

LS: But does hunting play a role in the *Emile*? Yes? I don't remember. You see how good it is to have companions. Yes, now is there any other point? We don't have much time, but a few minutes. There was a kind of rebellion at a certain moment. Mr. Dry?

Mr. Dry: That distinction between friendship and the political association: the German language is more clear here than English because we talk about friends, we don't use the word acquaintance, and German has a more special use for the word friend.

LS: Yes. Yes, sure. No, in this country "friend" is used freely in the sense of acquaintance. By the way, in Greek ordinarily you would not use it, but Xenophon, who is confronted with the grave question, "Who precisely are Socrates's friends?" is compelled to make distinctions and does in some cases use friend in the sense of mere acquaintance. But ordinarily "friend" has a more emphatic meaning. Sure. Brother Chrysostom?

Brother Chrysostom: I was wondering whether the Greeks hunted on foot or on horseback.

LS: I believe on horseback. We have here an expert in Greek hunting. Mr. Kendrick: On horseback, did they hunt on horseback?

Mr. Kendrick: Yes, they do, but they don't hunt on horseback in the hunting.

LS: Oh, they go only to the starting point of the hunt on horseback.

Mr. Kendrick: No, it's all on foot.

LS: All on foot. I see. I didn't really know that.

Student: Could you comment on this statement that *nous* or intelligence always chooses for itself that which is best? *Nous*, I thought, was a general apprehension of something.

LS: No, that is in the more precise sense, but *nous* can also be used in the broader meaning where it is all forms. Mr. Glenn?

Mr. Glenn: In this statement that conflict may exist in action but not in knowledge, in what sense is knowledge meant?

LS: Well, if there is a conflict regarding priorities of discovery, this of course can exist, but that has nothing to do with the insight itself. I mean, you may be deprived of certain honors if you are the second. You know, if someone else has found out something about, say, civic leadership in suburbs and is publishing in the next issue of the APSR[xli] and you can't come in before a quarter later. You know? Then you lose much of the distinction. But you must admit, the insight is not affected by it, only the external consequences of the insight. So men can share insights perfectly. They cannot share under all circumstances actions, because a very important action may not be able to be done except by one man. Think of astronauts. There are a few, but still in each case only one man. Or president of the United States, mayor of Chicago. There are quite a few forms of action which can be done only by one man. This cannot exist in the sphere of insight, but only the externals, priorities, you know, which does not affect the insight itself but only the [rewards].[xlii]

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[1] Deleted "it."
[2] Deleted "is."
[3] Deleted "up."
[4] Deleted "not."
[5] Deleted "and."
[6] Deleted "but."
[7] Deleted "the."
[8] Deleted "and."
[9] Deleted "which."
[10] Deleted "it."
[11] Deleted "that he."

[xli] *The American Political Science Review*.
[xlii] In the transcript: "[rewards?]."

Session 16: June 11, 1963
Happiness and theoretical activity; the wise man and the gentleman
(Book 10)

Leo Strauss: [In progress] —I'm very happy to see progress.[i] Now you started very well by reminding us of the discussion in book 1 of the three ways of life, and you said that the whole structure of book 10 reminds of this tripartition: pleasure, political life, and theoretical life. But then you said, however, book 10 does not deal with the three lives. This was the part which I could not understand.

Student: Oh. Well, I didn't mean to deny what I said first. What I mean is that if it does deal with the three lives, one would expect Aristotle to have the first part of the book about the first one, the second part about the second one, etc. But since the apparent structure is not that of the three lives, we must look for a reason why the second and third seem to come together.

LS: I see. All right, let us forget about the three lives and see. Pleasure, *polis*, contemplation: the three themes of book 10 . . . But also you emphasized the differences. For example, in the first book the posture taken toward pleasure was at least at first glance negative, and in book 10 it is positive. This is one of the great difficulties to which you referred. And what you said about the erring philosopher, that the gentleman is wiser than the erring philosopher although he is unable to defend his position, that was also very well stated. Now you interpreted the book somewhat differently than I do, but that of course doesn't mean you are wrong.

Now you were particularly concerned with the kinship between the gentleman and the philosopher. You saw, of course, the differences. You said, for example, that the philosopher is presented as a purely theoretical man in the second part. And then in the third part, when he speaks of civic duty,[ii] then the philosopher comes again to the fore, although he is hardly mentioned at first, namely, [as] the teacher of legislators. So both are political men. But the gentleman is simply political, and the philosopher is political "in a sense"—you know, as he calls his whole enterprise "a kind of" politics. Now the other point, which was very well stated: the gentleman also beholds or looks up to the gods . . . Here of course a difficulty arises, to which you alluded, because the gentleman's looking up to the gods would not be theoretical: it would be pious, and the book is silent on piety. The discussion of the gods in book 4, munificence, has nothing to do with the looking or beholding. This question cannot be settled on the basis of the *Ethics*. One would have to go into the discussion at the end of the *Politics* about the proper use of

[i] Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded. The transcriber notes that Strauss compliments the paper.
[ii] In the transcript: "civic duty (?)."

leisure.[iii] There you would find what kind of beholding the gentleman does, and this is what now would be called enjoyment of art, of music, of sculpture, and so on. So this we cannot settle on the basis of this context. And the point which was [. . .] useful was what you said that first we have the impression that the gentleman must be wealthy . . . and later on it appears that the gentleman does not have to be as wealthy as it seemed . . . So then let us turn to our discussion of book 10.

So that we will have time for that section which for us as political scientists is the most important, I propose that we start with the third part of book 10, with the conclusion. That begins in 1179a33. I remind you: the first section was pleasure, and then we had the comparison of the theoretical and the political life, and then the third is the conclusion. Now Aristotle begins this with the following remark. He tells us that we have now discussed sufficiently the virtues, friendship, and pleasure, as well as happiness. So these four subjects have been discussed. The treatment has been completed in outline, i.e., it is not exact, it is only an outline. But the whole work was meant as a teaching only in outline. So we know now what the virtues are, what friendship is, what pleasure is and so on, but in matters of action knowledge is not sufficient. This applies especially to the virtues. It is of very little use to know what the virtues are if you don't do the right things in order to become virtuous. Aristotle restores here the emphasis on virtue in the sense of moral virtues, an emphasis which had shifted in the earlier parts of book 10 to the theoretical virtues. But here we are in a difficulty. Now let us begin to read at b4, 1179b4. "Now if the speeches were sufficient for making men morally good." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Now if discourses on ethics were sufficient in themselves to make men virtuous, 'large fees and many' (as Theognis says) 'would they win,' quite rightly, and to provide such discourses would be all that is wanted. But as it is, we see that although theories have power to stimulate and encourage generous youths, and, given an inborn nobility of character and a genuine love of what is noble, can make them susceptible to the influence of virtue, yet they are powerless to stimulate the mass of mankind to moral nobility.

LS: "To perfect gentlemanship."[iv] Now of course not theories: "speeches." In other words, the speeches, as Aristotle has given them here in the book and as many other writers have given them, are not sufficient for arousing the desire for perfect gentlemanship in the many, and this is a crucial limitation valid for everything else. Aristotle discusses now how to get virtue of the many, not of the well-born, those who have by nature a desire for perfect gentlemanship. Let us go on. Omit the next. Line 16 of that. "Which speech could then." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Which speech then can reform the natures of men like these?[v]

LS: Well, not natures. "Which speech can reform men like these?" (1179b4-16)

[iii] Aristotle, *Politics* 1337bff.
[iv] Strauss retranslates "*pros kalokagathian*."
[v] In Rackham's translation: "What theory then can reform the natures of men like these?"

Mr. Reinken:
Which speech can reform men like these? To dislodge by argument habits long firmly rooted in their characters is difficult if not impossible. We may doubtless think ourselves fortunate if we attain some measure of virtue when all the things believed to make men virtuous are ours.

LS: Do you see? Aristotle is now again concerned with us, i.e., not merely the many, because we can assume that we would not count himself among the many. So now he generalizes . . . But even here this only makes the question more difficult. Perhaps speeches are of no great use in the case of any man. What then shall be done? And then he develops in the following the theme, returning to the many: the man who lives according to passion, not guided by reason, does not listen to reason but only to force. And that is the reason why laws are needed. So laws are necessary because of the weakness of *logos*. This is the theme. Now let us see what that means, in 1180a1.

Mr. Reinken:
But doubtless it is not enough for people to receive the right nurture and discipline in youth; they must also practise the lessons they have learnt, and confirm them by habit, when they are grown up. Accordingly we shall need laws to regulate the discipline of adults as well, and in fact the whole life of the people generally; for the many are more amenable to compulsion and punishment than to reason and to moral ideals.

LS: "Than to speech or the noble."[vi]

Mr. Reinken:
Hence some persons hold, that while it is proper for the lawgiver to encourage and exhort men to virtue on moral grounds—

LS: Literally, "to call men toward virtue and to drive them on for the sake of the noble."[vii] Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
in the expectation that those who have had a virtuous moral upbringing will respond, yet he is bound to impose chastisement and penalties on the disobedient and ill-conditioned— (1179b16-1180a9)

LS: "On those who are by nature less fit."[viii] In other words, those not gifted by nature or less gifted must be punished. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

[vi] Strauss retranslates "*he logō . . . he tō kalō*."
[vii] Strauss retranslates "*parakalein epi tēn aretēn kai protrepesthai tou kalou charin*."
[viii] Strauss retranslates "*afyesterois*."

and to banish the incorrigible out of the state altogether. For (they argue) although the virtuous man, who guides his life by the noble,[ix] will be obedient to reason, the base, whose desires are fixed on pleasure, must be chastised by pain, like a beast of burden. This indeed is the ground for the view that the pains and penalties for transgressors should be such as are most opposed to their favorite pleasures.

LS: In other words, he is a glutton; we must give him Spartan soup. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
But to resume: if, as has been said, in order to be good a man must have been properly educated and trained, and must subsequently continue to follow virtuous habits of life, and to do nothing base whether voluntarily or involuntarily, then this will be secured if men's lives are regulated by a certain intelligence, and by a right system, invested with adequate sanctions.

LS: No. "Having force."[x] Having strength, possessing strength.

Mr. Reinken:
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.

LS: "The law however possesses compulsory power since it is—being a speech derived from some wisdom and intelligence."[xi] So law is both. It must be, as he later says, a dictate of right reason, but this is not sufficient for the time being. The law must also have the power of compulsion. So in other words, law is a speech. Of course it is a speech. "This and this is a punishable offence" is a speech. But it is not merely a speech, it has also a compulsive power. Both are needed. Without compulsory power it would be a mere speech. It would have no teeth, in the beautiful American expression. So we have seen [that] laws would not be necessary for men who are by nature good. Now that doesn't mean what Rousseau might mean when he said that all men are by nature good, but it means those who have a natural tendency toward the noble, good natured in this sense, which doesn't mean what is now meant. Now let us turn to b3, 1180b3. We cannot read everything.

Mr. Reinken:
Public regulations in any case must clearly be established by law, and only good laws will produce good regulations; but it would not seem to make any difference whether these laws are written or unwritten, or whether they are to regulate the education of a single person or of a number of people, any more than in the case of music or athletics or any other form of training. (1180a10-b3)

[ix] In Rackham's translation: "who guides his life by moral ideals."
[x] Strauss retranslates "*echousan ischyn*."
[xi] Strauss retranslates "*ho de nomos anagkastikēn echei dynamin, logos ōn apo tinos fronēseōs kai nou*."

LS: Now here we come to the passage which I meant.

Mr. Reinken:
Paternal exhortations and family habits have authority in the household, just as legal enactments and national customs have authority in the state, and the more so on account of the ties of relationship and of benefits conferred that unite the head of the household to its other members—

LS: In other words, the speeches of the father have power in the household, and they have a greater power than laws because of the kinship, father and son, and the benefits [derived from it]. I mean, there are many kings who have been called paternal kings, but this kind of benefits is surely smaller than [the benefits][1] a child receives from his parents. Therefore in the household it is much easier to rule only by speeches, because of the nearness in kinship; but in the *polis*, there being no such kinship, it is hard to rule by mere speeches. Therefore we need laws. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:
he can count on their natural affection and obedience at the outset. Moreover individual treatment is better than a common system, in education as in medicine. As a general rule rest and fasting are good for a fever, but they may not be best for a particular case; and presumably a professor of boxing does not impose the same style of fighting on all his pupils. It would appear then that private attention gives more accurate results in particular cases, for the particular subject is more likely to get the treatment that suits him.

LS: So in other words, the reason why the education by the father is better than the education by the *polis* through laws: because the father will treat or *can* treat his children individually. The *polis* cannot do that. I mean, that would be infinitely cumbersome, laws which would be so flexible that they would be applicable to every particular case. The theme here is throughout the essential limitation of law, the theme of Plato's *Statesman*. and all these themes would be found in different formulations in Plato's *Statesman*. Now let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:
But a physician or trainer or any other director can best treat a particular person if he has a general knowledge of what is good for everybody, or for other people of the same kind. (1180b3-15)

LS: Now here another consideration comes in. Hitherto we have compared the speeches of the father with the laws, i.e., a particular kind of speeches pronounced by the *polis*. Now we turn to the arts, which also reveal themselves in speeches of physicians or[2] artisans. And they are of course in themselves superior to the speeches of the father, because the father doesn't have to be an expert in education as in music, in boxing, or whatever it may be that the teacher of boxing, the teacher of music is, because the father gets the routine by being constantly confronted with the problem of how to make a human being out of a brat, but he doesn't have a doctrine as the gymnastic teacher or

music teacher does. So then art is higher, it would seem, than what the father can do, and of course, more important[ly], the propositions of the art are general just as the laws are general. And it is here implied already: art is superior to law. But let us see 1180b16, in the immediate sequel.

Mr. Reinken:
Not but what it is possible no doubt for a particular individual to be successfully treated by someone who is not a scientific expert, but has an empirical knowledge based on careful observation of the effects of various forms of treatment upon the person in question; just as some people appear to be their own best doctors, though they could not do any good to someone else.

LS: Now let us stop here for one moment.[3] A man of experience without science or art can treat individuals who he knows better than the legislator can, because the legislator doesn't know the individuals to whom these laws will be applied. Yes. Go on, please.

Mr. Reinken:
But nevertheless it would doubtless be agreed that anyone who wishes to make himself a professional and a man of science must advance to general principles, and acquaint himself with these by the proper method: for science, as we said, deals with the universal. So presumably a man who wishes to make other people better (whether few or many) by discipline, must endeavor to acquire the science of legislation—assuming that it is possible to make us good by laws. (1180b16-25)

LS: You see, that is crucial: "assuming." That's left open. But if we become good through laws, i.e., through obeying laws, and if that is *the* way toward virtue, then we must have a legislative art. In every field the expert is superior to the layman, and especially since the true expert, say, a physician, does not only know the universals of his art, how to treat [cases][xii] of this kind in general, but[4] also has the ability to make the deviations in particular cases . . . Pure Socrates. Good. Up to this point, the argument, I believe, is clear. If we could become better through laws, one should become a man possessing the legislative art: an artisan who as such is concerned with the universals, naturally, and does not only know what might be the best laws for his community at this time in this respect (say, taxes), but who has the whole theory of legislation to fall back on at his disposal. Of course it would not be a Benthamite legislator but another one, but fundamentally the notion of Bentham is of course this. Good. Now that is clear. The next practical question: How can a man become an expert in the legislative art? Two alternatives: [first], by sitting at the feet of the statesman, the practitioner. This is tacitly denied. Again the Socratic reason. What did Pericles do? Look at his children. They were the worst citizens [. . .]. Now if he had possessed an art of making citizens good, would he not have applied it in the first place to those nearest and dearest him? And there can also be given more subtle reasons, but this is clear. One can state it more generally: because the statesman is always concerned with this particular society at this particular time. He is not as such concerned and able to elaborate the universals, what is universally true. But there is an alternative. Say politicians are out, but there are people who claim to

[xii] The transcript has a blank space here.

teach the legislative art, the art of making men good. These are the sophists. What about the sophists? Now let us turn to 1181a12.

Mr. Reinken:
On the other hand those sophists who profess to teach politics are found to be very far from doing so successfully. In fact they are absolutely ignorant of the very nature of the science and of the subjects with which it deals; otherwise they would not class it as identical with, or even inferior to, the art of rhetoric. Nor would they imagine that it is easy to frame a constitution by making a collection of such existing laws as are reputed to be good ones—.

LS: Well, he doesn't say "reputed to." "They would not believe it is easy to give laws." If you want to use a broader term: "to give a code by collecting the famous laws."[xiii] Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
On the assumption that one can then select the best among them; as if even this selection did not call for understanding—

LS: Or "judgment," let us say.[xiv]

Mr. Reinken:
judgement, and as if to judge correctly were not a very difficult task, just as much as it is for instance in music. (1181a12-18)

LS: Let us stop here. So now let us consider the sophists for one moment. The sophists identify politics with rhetoric. Perhaps they say politics is lower. What does this mean? What is rhetoric? The art of speaking, of persuasion, of making persuasive speeches. But how do they identify rhetoric and politics? They must assume that politics is the art for making men good, that men can be made good by speeches. That of course practically would be the political life. This aspect of the conflict between classical philosophy and the sophists is, I believe, generally disregarded. Here were have it. We have a more beautiful example in Xenophon's *Anabasis*, where he presents himself—you know, Xenophon, as a Greek general who saves the Greek army from the barbarians, almost founds a city in Asia Minor . . . and there is another man with him, Proxenos, who happens to be a pupil of Gorgias, the most famous teacher of rhetoric. And he is a charming little man. He is fascinated very soon with war. Now[5] he had one quality: he was excellent in dealing with the gentlemen but couldn't handle the nongentlemen. In other words, he could bring people to act nicely by praising or blaming, but he couldn't punish. And Xenophon could punish. That is the difference between the sophist or rhetorician and the pupil of Socrates. This absence of the nasty[xv]—one might say the superior toughness of Socrates I believe is generally disregarded, and it is actually crucial. The awareness of the limitation of speeches, that is a very important part of

[xiii] Strauss retranslates "*oud' an ōonto radion einai to nomothetēsai sunagagonti tous eudokimountas tōn nomōn*."
[xiv] Strauss retranslates "*suneseōs*."
[xv] In the transcript: "nasty (?)."

Socrates. So in other words, the sophists are of no use. The consequence: we can't learn the legislative art from the politician; we can't learn it from the sophist. Where can we learn it from? What would you suggest? What would you say? You know this about the age of Aristotle. What is the alternative to the sophist and the statesman?

Mr. Reinken: Aristotle.

LS: Yes, that is the rebuttal, but the first answer would be Plato or Socrates. But then Aristotle shows in the second book of the *Politics* that Plato is not good enough and therefore let us not trouble [ourselves] but let Aristotle take the trouble of becoming a teacher of legislators. And that is what he is doing in the *Politics*. Now let us read only 1181b12.

Mr. Reinken:
As then the question of legislation has been left uninvestigated by previous thinkers, it will perhaps be well if we consider it for ourselves, together with the whole question of the constitution of the State—

LS: Yes, "of the regime."[xvi] I mean, this is here understood. The laws depend on the regime, and therefore you cannot have good laws if you do not have a good regime. And therefore the primary question will prove to be the question of the regime. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
in order to complete as far as possible our philosophy of human affairs.

We will begin then by attempting a review of any pronouncements of value contributed by our predecessors in this or that branch of the subject—

LS: That is roughly book 2 of the *Politics*. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
and then on the basis of our collection of regimes[xvii] we will consider what institutions are preservative and what destructive of states in general, and of the different regimes in particular,[xviii] and what are the reasons which cause some states to be well governed and others the contrary. For after studying these questions we shall perhaps be in a better position to discern what is the best regime simply,[xix] and what are the best regulations, laws, and customs for any given form of regime.[xx] Let us then begin our discussion. (1181b12-23)

[xvi] Strauss retranslates "*peri politeias*."
[xvii] In Rackham's translation: "our collection of constitutions."
[xviii] In Rackham's translation: "and of the different forms of constitution in particular."
[xix] In Rackham's translation: "the best constitution absolutely."
[xx] In Rackham's translation: "any given form of constitution."

LS: "After having made a beginning."[xxi] So there will be a new beginning. Now this is in a very rough way the program of the *Politics*, but only in a very rough way. And one can discern that line in the *Politics*. Book 2 is implied, books 4 to 6, books 7 to 8. But book 1 and book 3, at least book 1 and book 3, are not provided. Now that doesn't mean it is necessary that Aristotle changed his mind. He could have changed it, but negatively this is the most necessary framework, book 1 and book 3. Book 3 is the most important book of the *Politics*. It is not mentioned here, because from the point of view as stated here it is not immediately evident that book 3 should have been written. I mention in passing he says one must contemplate on the basis of the collected regimes or constitutions. Now it is well known that Aristotle had such a collection of one hundred and fifty eight constitutions made, but it does not necessarily mean, in my opinion, that he refers here to a collection which he has made himself, because there were some [collections already]. The men who said one should collect—the sophists said [that]—had in a way this kind of collection. But that is a very minor question. So this is then the transition to the *Politics*. And what does it imply? Now I would like to discuss this very briefly.

[It implies] the need for laws so that we may become virtuous, but with a big question mark: Do we become good by obedience to laws, even to good laws? But disregarding this qualification, [it implies] the need for law and therefore for the art of legislation. But did we have anything about the art of legislation before in this book?

Mr. Reinken: It's related to prudence.

LS: Very good. Book 6. When he discussed there prudence, *phronēsis*, he said roughly that the most comprehensive form of prudence is the legislative . . . So it is a form of prudence, i.e., it is not an art. Prudence, you recall, is higher than art. So we can speak of [the] legislative art only in a loose sense of the word. It is, strictly speaking, a form of prudence. Now this of course implies—[i.e.], the fact that it is a form of prudence—that the laws which it produces are essentially rational. They stem from some intelligence. Furthermore, since law is a product of legislative "art"—"art" in quotation marks because it is not an art simply—law is higher than art. Now this is of course elementary. We have seen it on the first page, because the laws determine which arts are good for society and which arts are not so good for society. The laws are concerned with the common good. No art is as such concerned with the common good. So this is on the point of the argument, but then there is of course another which doesn't appear explicitly in this book but which is indicated in this book, especially in the section we have read. It becomes clearest in the second book of the *Politics* in the discussion of Hippodamus.[xxii] There it is said that law in contradistinction to the arts owes all its power to habituation, to custom. The art, say, it can be medicine—I mean, through medical treatment, [it] convinces the physician immediately . . . Laws cannot be immediately convincing because laws owe their power decisively not to their evidence but to habituation. From this it would appear that law is lower—intellectually, rationally lower—than art because it depends so much on habituation. That is in a way confirmed by what we have read in 1180b8, following. But above all, I have said hitherto that legislation is a form of

[xxi] Strauss retranslates: "*legōmen oun arxamenoi*."
[xxii] Aristotle, *Politics* 1267b21ff.

prudence, not an art. But in the light of the end of the *Ethics*, must we not say it is an art and not merely a form of prudence, since it is compared with all the kinds of the arts? And if this were true, then art as such, as shown by the highest art, the legislative art, is higher than prudence. All moral acts take place within the framework of the *polis* . . . that is to say, within the context of laws. These, if they are good laws, are the subject of the legislative art. Prudence is subservient to an art. This is of course the Socratic teaching.

Yet [there is] the other side of the picture: as we have seen, law is required only for inferior men, and it is essentially defective. And this leads to a questioning of the dignity of the legislative art as a whole: 1180b24, where he says "*if* it is true that we become good by laws." And furthermore, the highest, as we know from the preceding section, is altogether transpolitical: contemplation; and therefore [it is] of course also translegal. But, as is stated there . . . the wise man who leads a godlike life must nevertheless lead also a human life . . . and this human life of his is subject to law and is part of the *polis*. So the wise man is a man who in one respect transcends the *polis* and in another respect is subject to the *polis*. This thought I believe is not difficult to understand. I mean, what the physician does . . . is in itself wholly beyond the law in this sense, but he may drafted . . .

But since the wise man belongs to both worlds he must in each case strike a balance between the requirements of political life, the citizen's duty, and the requirements of the theoretical life. Now this kind of striking a balance, of figuring out, is the immediate requirement of wisdom. No wise man, no man of theory, can live without this kind of figuring out, which is not part of wisdom but is a requirement of his wisdom. This is the highest kind of reasoning below that implied in wisdom itself. But what is the character of this reasoning, how to strike a balance between the requirements of wisdom and the requirements of the *polis* here and now, as circumstanced as he is? What kind of reasoning is that?

Mr. Reinken: Prudence.

LS: Exactly. So from this point of view we must say prudence is higher than art because it is an immediate implication of wisdom itself. Prudence proper, which is concerned with the good of the individual, is higher than art in general and the legislative art, even [though it is] understood as a form of prudence. Yes. Good. And now, after we have discussed that, let us turn to the second, central part of this book, dealing with the theoretical life. That begins in 1176a30. Yes, Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: Regarding 1180a6 to 14, this seems to be an excursus from the regular agreement because in the next paragraphs he says, "but to resume."

LS: Yes, what do you mean by the next paragraph?

Mr. Butterworth: [Explains further.][xxiii]

[xxiii] As noted by the transcriber.

LS: "As has been said." This is not a digression. But it is clear—I mean, this is an argument which also reminds [us] of the Socratic discussion, because Socrates was accused of being good enough in arousing people toward virtue but not leading him up to it. We will find this in *Memorabilia* 1.3, the beginning, if I remember well, and you find it also in the [. . .] Plato's introduction to the *Republic* . . . [xxiv]

Now let us then turn to the central part of the tenth book, which is in a way the most important part because[6] now the subject becomes again, after an interruption of eight books, the highest good, happiness. "After we have spoken about the virtues and friendship and pleasure it remains to go through in outline, to discuss in outline, happiness, since we posit happiness as the end of human things."[xxv] Now on the basis of the first book, it follows that happiness consists in the acting according to virtue, to do the noble and serious thing. The word "serious" is used here by Aristotle, and also by Plato in this sense of the good man. I mean, there are various words for the good man in the sense of the gentleman. One of them is the serious man and it occurs to us also to do that . . . The opposite of seriousness is of course play. A life of play, the life of a playboy, is obviously not a serious life. It is not a good life for that very reason. Life is too serious to be spent in playing, and therefore this is the discussion here to begin with.

Now what then is happiness? It is the activity, the being-at-work of the best in us according to the virtue peculiar to that best. And therefore happiness consists in the theoretical activity, because this is the activity peculiar to the best in us, namely, the mind. The best is the *nous*, the mind. This by its nature rules and grasps the noble or beautiful and divine things. It is very interesting that he doesn't here speak as he did before of the beautiful and serious things but of the beautiful and divine things. This substitution of the divine things for the serious things is a kind of vindication of the playful . . . [xxvi]

Now we read in 1177a27. Aristotle proved [in] a detailed proof on the basis of generally accepted opinion that the contemplative or theoretical life is higher than the life of action. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
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 towards 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

[xxiv] The transcriber notes: "Mostly inaudible exchange regarding the large number of recurrences to Platonic thought in book 10. Dr. Strauss indicates that he hasn't made a study of this."
[xxv] Strauss retranslates the opening sentence of book 10, chapter 6, at 1176a30-33.
[xxvi] The transcriber notes: "The immediately following is off-microphone. Dr. Strauss indicated that a favorite word of Plato was education, *paideia*, which is almost the same in Greek as the word for play, *paidia*. The divine goes beyond the distinction between the serious and playful. It has no serious purposes in the way in which the gentleman has serious purposes."

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 . . . The wise man is distinguished from the just man or the other virtuous men, let us say from the moral man. The wise man as wise man is not a moral man. This is stated very clearly, more clearly than anywhere else, by Thomas Aquinas in the *Summa*, in the section dealing with the virtues.[xxvii] The only intellectual virtue which requires moral virtue is prudence. The other intellectual virtues, especially the highest of them, wisdom, do not require moral virtue. That is surely here implied. But this sentence of Thomas Aquinas, like many of these very paradoxical statements which we find in the higher literature, would need a long discussion. Does he mean that a man who would be completely prudent in every respect would be a wise man? That needs a long discussion . . . You see also here one point which hadn't become clear at all before. All moral virtues are social virtues . . . For example, continence or moderation regarding food and drink are not as such social virtues, but here it is said that all moral virtues are social virtues. Now read on, Mr. Reinken.

Mr. Reinken:
Also the activity of contemplation may be held to be the only activity that is loved for its own sake: it produces no result beyond the actual act of contemplation, whereas from practical pursuits we look to secure some advantage, greater or smaller, beyond the action itself.

LS: Yes. Now this is also a very grave statement. The exercise of the practical or moral virtues is not simply chosen for its own sake, whereas we have seen throughout the virtue of the moral man in that he chooses, say, liberality, the liberal action, for its own sake . . . Go on.

Mr. Reinken:
Also happiness is thought to involve leisure; for we do business in order that we may have leisure, and carry on war in order that we may have peace. Now the practical virtues are exercised in politics or in warfare; but the pursuits of politics and war seem to be unleisured—those of war indeed entirely so, for no one desires to be at war for the sake of being at war, nor deliberately takes steps to cause a war: a man would be thought an utterly bloodthirsty character if he declared war on a friendly state for the sake of causing battles and massacres. (1177b1-12)

LS: More literally, "if he would regard his friends as his enemies so that there may be wars and butcheries."[xxviii] Now what does this mean? Now if war were choiceworthy for its own sake, we would of course have to have war all around; not only between different cities, but within the city and even within the household and within ourselves. In the first book of Plato's *Laws* this is developed at great length. Now go on.

[xxvii] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Part 2, Q. 56, Art. 3.
[xxviii] Strauss retranslates "*ei tous philous polemious poioito, hina machai kai phonoi ginointo*."

Mr. Reinken:
But the activity of the politician also is unleisured, and aims at securing something beyond the mere participation in politics—positions of authority and honour, or, if the happiness of the politician himself and of his fellow-citizens, this happiness conceived as something distinct from political activity.

LS: This of course is clear now. I mean, we must follow Aristotle's argument. In order to understand moral virtue (its field, its extent), we must of course look at the most completed form of action, and this is the action of the statesman much more than that of any private man. Now look at that. This [life] is of course full of unrest, necessarily. It is full of unrest, whereas the activity of contemplation is in rest. But the main point:[7] [contemplation] is chosen for the sake of happiness, and happiness means here something different from the practice of the political or moral virtues themselves. Again what we have seen before: the moral or practical virtues are not in the last resort chosen for their own sake, although within a certain limit they must be regarded as choiceworthy for their own sake. Now go on.

Mr. Reinken:
If then among practical pursuits displaying the virtues, politics and war stand out pre-eminent in nobility and grandeur, and yet—

LS: You see now that is this: they stand out . . . Therefore[8] [their] limitations[9] are still more the limitations of the humbler practice of the moral virtues.

Mr. Reinken:
and yet they are unleisured, and directed to some further end, not chosen for their own sakes.

LS: Now he couldn't be more explicit, could he? They are essentially without an end. They are incomplete. They point toward something higher. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
whereas the activity of the intellect is felt to excel in serious worth, consisting as it does in contemplation, and to aim at no end beyond itself, and also to contain a pleasure peculiar to itself, and therefore augmenting its activity: and if accordingly the attributes of this activity are found to be self-sufficiency, leisuredness, such freedom from fatigue as is possible for man, and all the other attributes of blessedness: it follows that it is the activity of the intellect that constitutes complete human happiness—provided it be granted a complete span of life, for nothing that belongs to happiness can be incomplete. (1177b13-26)

LS: Yes, let us stop here. The acts of moral virtue, to repeat, are not choiceworthy for their own sake, for [even] the highest acts of moral virtue are not choiceworthy for their own sake . . .

Student: [Regarding the reference to pleasure in the passage just read.][xxix]

LS: Yes, but there is a more emphatic statement, and that is in 1169a19, when he has made the distinction between the *nous*, the mind, which chooses necessarily and only the best for itself, and the perfect gentleman, who obeys the intelligence and who therefore is also concerned with others and even willing to die for them, for the friends and the fatherland. [That is] the only mention of the fatherland occurring in the whole book. And there it is said that the good life may very well be a very short life. Now here, when he comes to speak of the highest life of man, he retracts[10] [that statement]. As he said in the first book already, the life must be fairly long . . .

Different Student: Is this really a retraction? He said before that a short happy life is preferable to a long dull life.

LS: Yes, but that goes without saying. I mean, a wholly worthless life is of course not comparable to a short and noble or fine life. But comparing a noble and short life and a noble and long life, the latter is preferable.

Mr. Reinken:
Such a life as this however will be higher than the human level: not in virtue of his humanity will a man achieve it, but in virtue of something within him that is divine; and by as much as this something is superior to his composite nature, by so much is its activity superior to the exercise of the other forms of virtue. If then the intellect is something divine in comparison with man, so is the life of the intellect divine in comparison with human life.

LS: So happiness, the being-at-work according to the excellence of the highest or best in man, means of course the true activity according to a part in man, for man is a composite being. This is the activity of the divine in man, that by which man transcends his mere humanity. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Nor ought we to obey those who enjoin that a man should have man's thoughts and a mortal the thoughts of mortality, but we ought so far as possible to achieve immortality, and do all that man may to live in accordance with the highest thing in him. (1177b26-35)

LS: Yes. The meaning of this is this: the praise of the theoretical life, of the most divine life which man can lead, contradicts certain common notions of piety, and Aristotle has to take issue with them. He does the same also in the first book of the *Metaphysics*.[xxx] The difficulty can be stated very simply as follows: according to the common notion, piety consists in doing what the gods *tell* man to do. According to Plato or the Aristotelian notion, piety consists in doing what the gods *do*, in *imitating* the gods. That is the point. Good. Now let us read a few passages in the next chapter beginning at the beginning.

Mr. Reinken:

[xxix] As noted by the transcriber.
[xxx] Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 982b–983a.

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, when we observe what is due to each in contracts and services and in our various actions, and in our emotions also; and all of these things seem to be purely human affairs.

LS: Here again, all moral virtue is radically social. Now let us skip something and turn to a24. "Theoretical virtue seems to need also the external equipment to a lesser degree." Do you have it?

Mr. Reinken:
And such happiness would appear to need but little external equipment, or less than the happiness based on moral virtue. Both, it may be granted, require the mere necessaries of life, and that in an equal degree (though the politician does as a matter of fact take more trouble about bodily requirements and so forth than the philosopher); for in this respect there may be little difference between them.

LS: In other words, for keeping body and soul together, there is not such a great difference. A philosopher may need more food than a given general. It's possible, but this doesn't apply to their activities. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
But for the purposes of their special activities their requirements will differ widely. The liberal man will need wealth in order to do liberal actions, and so indeed will the just man in order to discharge his obligations (since mere intentions are invisible—

LS: Yes, "immanifest."[xxxi] You know, you can't look into the hearts, so intentions are immanifest. You can judge men only from their actions. And [in the case of] an absolutely poor fellow who never engages in transactions of any kind because he is too poor for that, you can never see whether he is just or unjust. Well, you could of course see his justice in other matters: whether he would steal and rob and so on. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
and even the unjust pretend to wish to act justly); and the brave man will need strength if he is to perform any action displaying his virtue; and the temperate man opportunity for indulgence— (1178a9-34)

LS: In other words, let us say Mr. Profumo[xxxii] would have had the opportunity of showing moderation. Yes. Good. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

[xxxi] Strauss retranslates "*adēloi*."
[xxxii] John Profumo (1915–2006) was Secretary of State for War in Harold Macmillan's government. In 1963 he was discovered to have a relationship with the young Christine Keeler, who was also involved with the Soviet naval attaché Yevgeny Ivanov. Profumo admitted the relationship and resigned from his government positions.

otherwise how can he, or the possessor of any other virtue, show that he is virtuous? It is disputed also whether purpose or performance is the more important factor in virtue, as it is alleged to depend on both; now the perfection of virtue will clearly consist in both—

LS: In other words, even granting that intention should even be somewhat more important than the external action, both are important. And therefore we have to consider whether the man has the opportunity for acting and [whether] this opportunity requires equipment. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
but the performance of virtuous actions requires much outward equipment, and the more so the greater and more noble the actions are. But the student, 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.

LS: Yes. So the wise man needs moral virtue only? No. The moral virtue needs equipment which, so far from being necessary for wisdom, is even a hindrance to it. Therefore, also the virtues connected with these things are rather a hindrance than a help to it. Yes. Now the immediate sequel.

Mr. Reinken:
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. (1178a34-b7)

LS: Yes. The Greek word *anthrōpeuesthai*, which is very rare, is not easily translatable into English. Is there one among you who understands some German? Because I have a German expression: *Menschen*. This is a pejorative: mere men, a pejorative implication. I don't think that you can render it in English in any way.

Mr. Dry: Well, how do you use it in a sentence?

LS: *Sein menschen*, for his living as a mere human being. Yes, one point: so the moral virtues are required only for[11] [the] lower part of his being, and this is of course a depreciation of moral virtue. Now from here we understand a passage which is so difficult to understand at the end of the fourth book, when he spoke of the sense of shame and said [that] for the perfect gentleman it doesn't make any difference whether the things which he shouldn't do are base by nature or base by convention because the whole sphere is ultimately not important enough, and therefore the difference between nature and convention ceases to be as important. In the sequel it is made clear, in 1178b33, following, that the need for moral virtue is rooted ultimately in the needs of the body. Now this of course would need a long comment because one can easily show, even on the basis of explicit utterances of Aristotle here and more clearly in the seventh book of the *Politics*, that the theoretical life obviously is not possible without the satisfaction of some primary bodily needs and without society. There is for all practical purposes no philosophy possible without the *polis*, and therefore the philosopher is concerned with the

polis. But still the moral virtues as required for the theoretical life are not simply identical with the moral virtues as required for the *polis*. It is obvious that both ends require control of one's extreme desire for alcohol. I mean, you cannot fulfill your citizen duties properly if you are drunk most of the time, and still less can you think if you do that. That goes without saying. Also cowardice is very bad for thinking. If a man is a coward and is apprehensive of everything, he cannot think. But on the other hand, regarding precisely some of the more magnificent virtues like munificence and magnanimity as defined by Aristotle, they are not absolutely necessary for the theoretical life, and this has other implications. Mr. Dry?

Mr. Dry: Does the perfection of the theoretical life require friendship? If it would in itself it would seem that moral virtue could be given a slightly more elevated position.

LS: Well, who will answer that objection?

Mr. Reinken: The less he requires friends to talk with, the wiser a man he would be.

LS: But still he admits that fellow workers are desirable. Yes, but what is the absolutely devastating reply to Mr. Dry? Friendship is not moral virtue.

Mr. Dry: Yes, but somehow it seems more natural for two good men to become friends. Two wise men may not be friends. What is it that draws them together? Perhaps they both must have some moral virtue.

LS: Yes, sure. Sure, as wise men they must have moral virtue in some sense; that goes without saying, as I showed before. But whether they are the moral virtues as required by the gentleman as gentleman is another matter. Now as for the crucial importance for friendship and the difference from moral virtue: a simple illustration is offered by the Platonic dialogues. Now when you watch Socrates there in the various situations, in some cases he likes to converse with that individual and in other cases he has no choice but to converse. Now to take the simplest example which occurred to me: the beginning of the Charmides. Socrates comes back from a war, [from] the battle of [Potidaea], an Athenian defeat. And then he is back, and the first thing in the morning he goes to the gymnasium, to a training place where he finds nice and intelligent young people, and they ask him about his war experiences. And he is not interested and asks what's going on in philosophy, which has here a loose meaning. That's his question, and then it goes on. Take another example. He is accused of a capital crime. He is by law obliged to make a speech of defense and he calls this speech a dialogue, a conversation, with the Athenian *dēmos*. Now this was surely not a conversation which he sought. Or you have the conversation he has with Euthyphron, you know, when he goes out of the court building, you could say, and meets here Euthyphron and Euthyphron begins to chat with him; he is quite surprised to see Socrates in a law court. Again compulsory. Compulsory, imposed: the difference between what men gladly do and what they do merely from a sense of duty. Now what they gladly do they do better than what they do merely from a sense of duty, as Aristotle has told us all the time, and now this is the difference between a society of friends and any other society. So the men who associate are friends in order to share

the pleasures of contemplation. This is different from a trade union—I'm sorry to say, even[12] [from] a faculty.

Mr. Dry: Does one mind need another in order to reach its perfection?

LS: No. I believe, although I couldn't quote chapter and verse, that Aristotle means here not necessarily [the company] of contemporaries. There are also bad men who have left books behind which one can open and study, and that is, in a way, a conversation. It must become a conversation, otherwise you don't understand. You know, you have to raise questions, address them to Aristotle, for example, and since unfortunately he is not present you have to wait until you come to some page where he does give you an answer. That's also a conversation to that extent.

Mr. Dry: Well, certainly there's a difference between the spoken word and the written word.

LS: Oh yes, an enormous difference. But still, I mean, they belong together, because the written words are only frozen spoken words. Yes?

Different Student: You said that friendship is not a virtue for Aristotle.

LS: It's higher than a virtue.

Same Student: Because when he introduces friendship he says it is a virtue, or at least it involves virtue.

LS: Yes, well there is a certain ambiguity, but then also there are very clear passages where he says [there are] the virtues and [there is] friendship, distinguishing them. And the simple point is that the highest virtue appeared to be justice, and [recall] what he says about justice: when people are friends they do not need justice, but when they are just then there is some defect until it becomes a friendship.

Now as for the first section of the book, I do not know whether we have time for it. By the way, this is, I believe, the most theoretical part of the whole work: the discussion of pleasure in the first third of [book 10 of][xxxiii] the *Ethics*. One point I would like to mention. Friendship is discussed in the first third of book 10, and it is also discussed at the end of book 7, and in between we have the two books, 8 and 9, on friendship. This conveys the lesson that friendship is an essentially pleasant relation. And Aristotle doesn't mean of course by that the kind of friendship which is for the sake of having fun. This is not true friendship. This is here a minor matter, but genuine friendship is essentially pleasant, and this is indicated very clearly.

Yes, we can read a few points of very broad bearing and which are easily understood. At the beginning of book 10, 1172a26. Well, what is the context? Well, some people say the good is pleasure; pleasure as such is the good. Yes?

[xxxiii] Brackets in the original transcript.

Mr. Reinken:
Some people maintain that pleasure is the Good. Others on the contrary say that it is altogether bad: some of them perhaps from a conviction that it is really so, but others because they think it to be in the interests of morality to make out that pleasure is bad, even if it is not, since most men (they argue) have a bias towards it, and are the slaves of their pleasures, so that they have to be driven in the opposite direction in order to arrive at the due mean.

Possibly however this view is mistaken. In matters of emotion and of action, words are less convincing than deeds; when therefore our theories are at variance with palpable facts, they provoke contempt, and involve the truth in their own discredit. If one who censures pleasure is seen sometimes to desire it himself, his swerving towards it is thought to show that he really believes that all pleasure is desirable; for the many cannot discriminate.[xxxiv] (1172a27-b3)

LS: Yes, let us stop here. Now is this not of interest, this remark about people who say the opposite or teach the opposite of what they think? What does Aristotle say about them?

Mr. Reinken: They should be sure to be at least consistent in their actions.

LS: Yes. Now Mr. Winiarski, you smiled. You must have seen something.

Mr. Winiarski: Well, I was thinking that a man should be very careful.[xxxv]

LS: No, that's not the point. The limitation. Aristotle limits this statement to the speeches about the things existing in the passions and in action. It would not apply to other subjects. That, I think, is the point. I mean, that is in Aristotle's view literally true, what he says here, but it is a qualified statement. Then he comes back to that when he speaks shortly after of Eudoxus, a pupil of Plato, a famous mathematician who was a teacher of pleasure. His speeches were trusted, he said, because of his moral virtue rather than for their own sake, for he seemed to be moderate to an extraordinary degree. In other words, if a man of such morality says this and this about morality, you have to trust him more than anybody else because he is notorious for his [virtue],[xxxvi] which of course can lead to great errors. You see even today [that] sometimes logical positivists and such people can be extremely decent men; and look what would happen if we would argue as these contemporaries of Eudoxus did, because perhaps they can afford, because they had such a wonderful upbringing in a vicarage or somewhere, to hold these doctrines. And what would happen to us if we would hold them? Mr. Burnam?

Mr. Burnam: I wasn't clear. What statement did you say was qualified?

[xxxiv] In Rackham's translation: "for the mass of mankind cannot discriminate."
[xxxv] In the transcript: "(?)" following Mr. Winiarski's remark.
[xxxvi] Brackets in original transcript.

LS: The statement about the speeches differing from a man's convictions which are not possible.

Mr. Burnam: In that paragraph[13] [where] he only answers these views insofar as they are held by the men whose actions oppose their convictions?

LS: No, he [limits himself only to][xxxvii] speeches about actions, about moral matters. Well, to state it very simply: for example, what about the gods? No, I mean, if someone says—say, if Aristotle makes from time to time statements along the lines of the popular opinions about the gods views which he does not hold, this can never lead to this kind of contradiction because this doesn't apply to his actions. Except, of course, he would say that Aristotle would speak in praise, say, of sacrificing to the gods and [then] it would happen to him what happened to Socrates, that he was extremely rarely seen sacrificing. Yes, and then he forgot to sacrifice. That was his last thing, you know, when he said to Criton, "We forgot to sacrifice to Asclepius," and I believe part of this long story is also that he forgot to sacrifice not only this particular cock to Asclepius, but [that] he was a bit oblivious in these matters. That is incidentally confirmed by a passage in *Euthyphron* where he compares himself, if I remember well, to Menelaus, and of course not with a view to the fact that Menelaus was the husband of Helen and he was the husband of Xanthippe.[xxxviii] That is not, I think [. . .] although I would regard it as possible. Xanthippe must have had some qualities which Socrates liked. I don't believe he married her for her money; there is no evidence whatever [for that], and I don't really believe that. But the point is this: if you look up the passage in Homer you will see that Menelaus got into the troubles into which he came because he had forgotten to sacrifice,[xxxix] just like Socrates had done. But disregarding this matter, generally speaking, speeches about nonpractical things are of course of a different kind. That is what I meant. There is another passage which has something to do with that. Yes, Aristotle in a way applies this criterion to himself later on, in 1179a20. No, let us start a bit earlier. After he had quoted Solon and Anaxagoras he says, "To these speeches about the necessity of moral virtue for the wise man."

Mr. Reinken:
So our speeches[xl] seem to be in agreement with the opinions of the wise.

Such arguments then carry some degree of conviction; but it is by the practical experience of life and conduct that the truth is really tested, since it is there that the final decision lies. (1179a17-20)

LS: The payoff, we would say. So in other words, not what a wise man says about action, but what he does. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

[xxxvii] Brackets in original transcript.
[xxxviii] See Plato, *Euthyphro* 15d.
[xxxix] Homer, *Odyssey*, book 4, 351–353, 471–481.
[xl] In Rackham's translation: "So our theories."

We must therefore examine the conclusions we have advanced by bringing them to the test of the facts of life. If they are in harmony with the facts, we may accept them—

LS: Yes? Yes? Yes? Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
if found to disagree, we must deem them mere speeches.[xli] (1179a20-21)

LS: In other words, the function and significance of morality for the life of the wise man cannot be established by what the wise men say. You have to look at them and see whether it is true that they are in principle moral men. And I believe that study would prove that's true with very few exceptions. I mean, we are speaking now of philosophers, not of specialists, because there it is as little to be expected as in the case of our famous carpenter whom we discussed on an earlier occasion. There is no need for that. In the case of philosophers, I think it is generally speaking true that the genuine philosophers, especially those of whom we know most, the great men, were really very decent men. There is hardly any exception. In 1172b35—so that is again at the beginning, where we left off. Yes, now then he speaks of these two schools which he attacks, those who say pleasure is simply the good and the others who say pleasure is simply bad. In 1172b35.

Mr. Reinken:
Those on the other hand who deny that that which all creatures seek to obtain is good, are surely talking nonsense. For what all think to be good, that, we assert, is good; and he that subverts our belief in the opinion of all mankind, will hardly persuade us to believe his own either. (1172b35-1173a2)

LS: Yes, more literally, "For what seems to be to all, of that we say it is. He who destroys this conviction, this reliance (*pistin*), is not likely to say more reliable things."[xlii] In other words, there is a fundamental reliance, and if that is questioned what will come out will surely be less reliable than it. This is Aristotle himself, but it is not entirely Aristotle. The word used here, *pistis*, is of course used in the New Testament for faith, but it[14] [did not have] a religious meaning in Plato and Aristotle. I translate it by "reliance" also, because the adjective *pistos* means also a reliable man, a man you can trust. The word "reliance" is used by Plato in one of the central passages of his whole work: in the *Republic* in the divided line. You remember the divided line in the end of the sixth book of the *Republic*? Four things. [LS indicates a proportion between two ratios.] Imagemaking: sense perception, to reasoning—figuring out, to *nous*, to intellect. This is the famous proportion. Now this [sense perception][xliii] he calls—this kind of awareness he also calls reliance.[xliv] That's very remarkable. Why? Plato does not merely mean[15] that this is not simply knowledge, [although he also means that]. There is a tree. This is not strictly speaking knowledge, because knowledge is never knowledge of a mere fact but

[xli] In Rackham's translation: "we must deem them mere theories."
[xlii] Strauss retranslates *"ha gar pasi dokei, taut' einai phamen; ho d' anairōn tautēn tēn pistin ou panu pistotera erei*."
[xliii] Brackets in original transcript.
[xliv] See Plato, *Republic* 511d–e.

also of the reason, the cause. Plato means this also, but not merely. He also means these are the kinds of things on which we rely. Our reliance is on the primarily given. That is [the] simply reliable on which all men rely. For example, say, particular Greek notions, opinions are not relied upon by all men, but that on which all men rely: that is reliable. Well, the famous objection: well, we all rely—all men rely—[on the perception] that the sun is rising in the east and setting in the west, and [that] the earth stands still. And then there came the famous Copernicus, and he has shown how little reliable that is. Yes, there is something to that, but in the decisive respect it is irrelevant. We still rely on that when we take our bearings on earth and we try to find out in which direction to go; and the natural compass, we still use that. For us it is still the reliable thing, and Copernicus's work and all later work of this kind is ultimately based on this reliance: because certain consequences followed from it which didn't jibe with other things, and therefore one had to reconsider it. But the starting point always remains the same, and Aristotle is the man who took this more seriously than any other man, Plato included. And therefore he taught, among other things, the eternity of the visible universe, because nothing is more reliable in this sense than whenever we see a human being he was generated by other human beings, just as [whenever] you see a cat, he was generated by a cat. Therefore it is unthinkable, unintelligible, that there should have been a first man. I mean, try to think of evolution, this first human being among a herd of monkeys. How strange must this first have been. However dumb we suppose him to have been,[16] still he was different so radically. We really cannot think that out. Now of course that doesn't mean—that, indeed, it doesn't mean—that these reliabilities are the last word. That is a point where among other things modern science comes in, but of course modern science is not alone. There were people who doubted the eternity of the visible universe among the Greek philosophers. But that every clear understanding of anything must start from what has this character of primary reliability and universal reliability, this, I believe, cannot be denied. We must always return to that if we try to understand anything. Yes?

Student: How much of this reliability cannot even be questioned? For instance, you can question that it's really agreed that you see when you happen to be standing in this position and you can make sure that what you see—

LS: Yes, sure. But generally stated, that is the meaning of—I mean, the antipode to Aristotle is Descartes: to doubt of everything, as he called it. Whether he in fact doubted of everything is another matter, but that was the point: to find an Archimedean point outside all reliances. That was what he wanted, and in a modified and partly mitigated form this is of course what modern science does, as you see especially in the social sciences when all the reliances by which we take our bearings in life are questioned. How do you know? You know, they have not been scientifically established. But of course they rely[17] [for] their part on natural sciences,[18] which they claim[19] [are] truly reliable because it is science and not mere reliance. But then the great questions arise: To what extent is this whole science not based on fundamental hypotheses which as such are not knowledge, [but] assumptions? So I thought we should at least mention this point.

Now what is the key point of his teaching regarding pleasure? As I say, it is the most theoretical part of the whole work, and I believe it is not an accident that this is followed

with *the* statement about the theoretical life. Aristotle gives us, as it were, a specimen where he makes almost explicitly use of his *Physics*. He says "elsewhere," but he means his *Physics* and to some extent his *Metaphysics*. Now what is the key point?

Mr. Reinken: Pleasure is not a disposition; it is not really an activity but is something added to an activity.

LS: In the first place, pleasure is always secondary.

Mr. Reinken: Secondary, and yet an added bonus.

LS: Yes, but still it is, one could say, the unbought grace added to the activity. Now the hedonists say pleasure is simply the end. Aristotle denies that. He says, however, it is an end but an end which supervenes, i.e., an end which is not the primary end. Yes, bonus is not a bad word, but the unbought grace of which Burke spoke also points in the right direction.[xlv] Now every pleasure, for example, the pleasure derivative from eating, the pleasure accompanying eating, is a pleasure accompanying *eating*, the activity of eating. More generally, all pleasures are secondary, derivative; although essential to the activity, not essential in the sense that every activity is necessarily followed or accompanied by pleasure. We know there are many activities which are unpleasant. But there can be—there is a possibility in each activity, at least in every activity which is not merely instrumental, to be pleasant. And the activity is more perfect if it is accompanied by the peculiar or specific pleasure. Now what is true of the activities is then ultimately true also of the beings, because the activities of different beings, different kinds of beings, differ. The activity of a horse is different from that of a dog and from that of man, and therefore the pleasures of these various beings differ. We cannot understand pleasure properly except in connection with the constitution of the various beings. And so that when we speak about pleasures in general we have in mind, and Aristotle surely has throughout in mind, the human pleasures, the pleasures which man does not share with the brutes. And to what extent his analysis of pleasure would apply to the pleasures common to men and brutes is a difficult question. It makes most sense, what he says about pleasure, when we think of the human pleasures. Yes?

Student: What is the significance of the fact that this contradicts his teaching in book 7, in that in book 7 he said that pleasure was an activity and an end?

LS: Yes, does he say—let me see. If I remember, the most striking difference I believe, is—what does he say in book 7? What are the main points? I believe the difference [is that] in book 7 he is much less sympathetic to pleasure, I would say—that is my overall impression—than in book 10.

Same Student: Well, in book 7 he said in places it is the supreme good.

LS: In which passage? I mean, perhaps reporting someone else.

[xlv] This remark occurs in a speech on the beheading of Marie Antoinette in 1793.

Same Student: 1153b27, and even stronger than that is line 13 on the same page.

LS: Yes, but is this not still the report?

Mr. Reinken: He's refuting the third opinion that pleasure cannot be the supreme good. He says that "the supreme good will be a particular kind of pleasure."

LS: Yes. That I could not tell you now. Now let me see. Yes, that is correct. He discusses here only opinions opposed to pleasure, whereas in book 10 he discusses also the hedonistic doctrines.

Mr. Reinken: I didn't follow you. I'm sorry.

LS: No, I mean the opinions discussed in the last section of book 7 are against pleasure and in book 10 he discusses also the opinions favoring pleasure. Yes, but I'm sorry; I cannot now—to that extent surely, but—

Student: He is not asserting that pleasure is the supreme good.

LS: No, that it is the best he denies there.

Same Student: He is simply denying that this argument that there are some bad pleasures proves that pleasure is altogether bad, and even on the basis of that argument it may be the supreme good.

LS: Yes, well, my general impression is that the case for pleasure as such is more clearly and strongly stated in book 10 than in book 7. That is my overall impression. I'm sorry I cannot now prove it. Now the difficulty, for example, is this in book 10: the view which he criticizes, the Platonic view that pleasure is a motion or change.[20] Since every motion is as such incomplete, because if it were completed the motion would cease, therefore pleasure is as such incomplete. And Aristotle's point is that pleasure is not a motion, and this is based on the Aristotelian distinction between activity and motion or coming-into-being. In more precise terms, being-at-work, activity, is not coming-into-being. You go to a dance: motion, locomotion. You go from your home to the dance. But the dancing itself, while in a sense of course it is locomotion—but you are at it, at the activity. You go there for dancing, and the dancing is not meant to bring you elsewhere. That you move in dancing is not a locomotion in the primary sense of the word, namely, that you want to go from here to there. In many cases, in fact, you dance in a circle. Or take the lyre playing, because there is no locomotion involved. Becoming a lyre player, or what you do before you play: these are all changes, motions. But the lyre playing itself is the activity. There you are at work. This is absolutely crucial for Aristotle, for the whole teaching, and *this* Aristotle means in order to get rid of the Platonic dualism between simply becoming and simply being, because [such] being-at-work are activities of the full human being, the mortal human being, in which he fulfills himself, which do not point toward something which a man can never become. Whereas the impression one gets from Plato, at least in a general way, that is true, [is] that all human doings have this character

of imperfection and in this sense [are a] becoming which never comes to an end. Aristotle denies that, and therefore he says—on the basis of this he says: as sure as there is a fundamental difference between the activities and the coming-into-being of the activities, as surely it is not necessary that pleasure must be imperfect. Pleasure can be complete at each moment. Now whether Aristotle means to say this is true of all pleasures he doesn't make clear here. And I doubt this, but the difficulty, I think, can be disposed of because he is thinking only of the higher pleasures, of the specifically human pleasures, and with regard to them he indeed asserts that. Yes, but this whole passage would require a discussion of the passages in the *Physics* and the *Metaphysics* where he makes clear this fundamental difference between motion, change, and the activity. Yes?

Same Student: Is there a problem here if the activity in question is not an end in itself but only a means to some other end, like making a chair?

LS: No, the being-at-work is an end in itself. Yes? I explained that. The being-at-work. Not everything. Well, we must distinguish. There is a being-at-work of the house builder which is clearly—Aristotle uses that—which is necessarily incomplete until the house is finished, and he points to that. But, say, if people dance, that is something different, although the dance also has a certain rhythm and a certain end. This incompleteness is a radically different one from that of house building, because they dance at each point and they don't wish anything but to dance, whereas the house builders wish to get it over with. You know? Necessarily they wish to finish the house. But in the case of the activity of dancing and such things, or lyre playing, no end outside of an activity is intended. Well, if they dance in order to get a prize or so, then it is of course no longer dancing pure and simple.

Same Student: This would be in the strict sense because one could think of many ends for which dancing is only a means, such as getting acquainted.

LS: Yes, sure, and then to that extent it would cease to be merely an activity. No simple and very clear example occurs to me at the moment. Well, take hearing music. Everything you do in order to be able to hear it, to enjoy it, like learning to play or going to that place where the music is played, these are all changes. But every change leads to an end. That indeed is a key Aristotelian assertion. It points toward its completion, and what is at the point of completion is not merely negatively cessation of change, cessation of activity, but on the contrary, activity. That is the point. For us in our language we hear all the time of processes. Everything is a process. This is to begin with wholly unintelligible. But even apart from our present-day notions, it is not so easy to understand it. You see that there is no equivalent to that, for example, in Plato. It is really the peculiarly Aristotelian teaching that all change points toward a peak of activity and not toward a peak of nonactivity, of rest. Rest belongs to the same sphere as motion does. I mean, that is only, you can say, a negative state of motion. But activity belongs to a different sphere. We learn—that's a change—in order to understand, but when we understand, that doesn't mean that we are now blank. On the contrary, then we are at the peak of this particular thing. Is this clear? Understanding is an activity which is no longer a change, because a change would then be only a deterioration. You forget. Now if you

take a particular part of understanding, say, Euclidian geometry, especially in a simple school manual, this you can master, and once you have learned it you possess the mastery. The mastery consists of course in the activity, in the actual understanding. The same applies to other things too: dancing, the lyre player, or whatever you take. In other cases, in the case of the arts proper, the end in the finished house. Here the actual house now standing is not active. It is there. But in all action as distinguished from production, the end is an activity, a being-at-work. Yes?

Student: Since this is our last class, I wonder if you could return to the problem of why the wise man is not necessarily a moral man. My difficulty is understanding how a man who is truly wise would not also have pre-existing in him the necessary moral qualities.

LS: Yes, this is a very difficult question. I mean, in one sense one can say that if the moral qualities are for him only conditions for the activity of wisdom, if they are not in any way chosen for their own sake but only as that, to that extent he is not a moral man.

Same Student: He is good just as the other man is good, but—

LS: There is a discussion of this subject clearer than anything in the *Ethics*, in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, toward the end of the *Eudemian Ethics*, and I believe this is ordinarily not properly understood.[xlvi] There Aristotle makes distinction between two kinds of men. The one he calls the *kalosk'agathos*, what we ordinarily translate by perfect gentleman, the noble and good, and he is the moral man as described here. And then there is another type of man called the good man, where noble or fine or beautiful does not occur. Well, Aristotle proceeds always in this manner: he gives first a crude example. The Spartans are not perfect gentlemen, although they always claim to be, but they are only good men, i.e., they do the proper things for ulterior purposes, for the sake of Sparta . . . etc. And then he goes on, however, to state a question: Yes, but precisely if there is an ulterior purpose, what then is that ulterior purpose? I mean the true ulterior purpose for the good man, not for the perfect gentleman. The answer is knowledge of god. So you have it. The good man in the full sense is the man who chooses the right actions, the right means, in order to know the highest. That's his end. He does not choose them for their own sake. The perfect gentleman chooses them for their own sake. The perfect gentleman, for example, is liberal because he enjoys the liberal actions as such. This other man would do them only because he thinks they are conducive to his end. That's the best way of settling this subtheoretical problem. You know, he has money, he has to live with others, and the best way of doing it is, for example, to be—if he happens to have money, to be really liberal, but not as something which he does for its own sake.

Student: From what point of view are the moral virtues incomplete? The man who is a theoretical man is somehow defective from the point of view of moral virtue.

LS: From what point of view can one say the moral man is inferior to the wise man?

Same Student: Yes.

[xlvi] Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics* 1248b–1249a.

LS: Because the moral man is unable to give an account of what he is doing.

Same Student: Yes, well, that's not immediately my question. I'm wondering from what point of view the theoretical man is somehow not completely virtuous, as the moral man is.

LS: Yes, but if you say—and this makes, to begin with, very much sense, that the moral man is a man who regards the moral actions as choiceworthy for their own sake; to that extent[21] [the good man] transcends morality[22]. But on the other hand, he knows what he is doing. But it is clear from Aristotle's discussion at the end of the tenth book that for the theoretical man, his social obligations are only obligations and are not, as it were, the green pastures toward which he is by nature running, whereas the perfect gentleman is by nature running toward these green pastures. That's the difference, and that is Aristotle's understanding of the situation.

Same Student: Then it does seem that it is difficult to make an independent case for the moral virtues.

LS: No, that is the miracle; and I think that is the miracle which no one has so clearly seen, as far as I have seen, as our Aristotle. And I repeat what I said on another occasion. Here we have theory and here we have the *polis*, and the *polis* means, of course, in the best case, the gentlemen, the desirable citizens, acting. Now you cannot engage in contemplation without . . . other conditions, without eating and drinking. This applies of course to both. Aristotle in his wisdom says regarding food and drink [that] there is no essential difference between the two. You know this. A theoretical man may need even a bit more food than a general, and vice versa. That is wholly irrelevant . . . Now the activities, the actions, the moral virtues: both need the moral virtues. I mean, take the crudest view of the situation: a man who wishes to think cannot be always drunk and afraid of everything and have a bad conscience because he hasn't paid his bills, and so on and so on. That is clear. In this respect, there is no difference. Both must be somehow decent. But the moral virtue as required by[23] [the intellect],[xlvii] and on the other hand as required by the *polis* are not identical, but they overlap to a considerable extent and so that in a crude inspection they appear to be identical, but in closer analysis it is not so. We saw a beautiful example in the discussion of magnanimity, where parts of it were simply valid only for the perfect gentleman and surely not applicable to the theoretical man, but there was also something in it. It was true of the perfect gentleman, he must be concerned with honors. The theoretical man is as such not concerned with honors, and this leads to an open break. So they overlap to a large extent, but they are not simply identical. But there appears a crude union. So these two rivers flow into the same sea, fed by theory on the one hand, and by the *polis* on the other. Let us call that moral virtue, [i.e. the sea].[xlviii] I do not know whether that is the best picture you can draw, but it is

[xlvii] In the transcript: "will (?)." The above substitution is meant to reflect the apparent thought of this sentence, which turns on the contrast between the requirements of the theoretical life and the requirements of the city.
[xlviii] Brackets in original transcript.

sufficient for the purpose. Now this is then in a way a somewhat spurious union because of the heterogeneity of the two sources, and yet this unity is not simply spurious because there is a profound connection between theory and the *polis*, [but] not that the theory requires the *polis* and the *polis* requires theory. This, by the way, is also not altogether unimportant. But the main point: man is the animal which possesses *logos*: reason, speech. Reason, intellect, theory; speech, society, *polis*; and therefore the one root of both [theory and the *polis*] is the nature of man.[xlix]

Aristotle's empirical proof of this is that he gives a description of the virtues and asks: Is that not so? Don't you recognize men whom you know or praise, defects which you blame? The greatest difficulty we have is in understanding magnanimity or the magnanimous man. Because of the fact that feudal notions have gone, that is no longer intelligible to us. Also in the analysis of courage: the complete silence about courage in the context of the *polis*. Aristotle speaks of courage on the battlefield but makes no reference to the *polis*. Political courage is a lower form. Certain indications are given of that.

We talk about moral virtue, but who was the first to coin that term? Aristotle. Plato never speaks of it . . . For Plato, genuine virtue is possessed only by the philosopher. All other virtue is vulgar virtue. Regarding vulgar virtue, it is said in the *Phaedo* that the nonphilosophic man is courageous out of cowardice, fear of bad reputation, great pains etc.; i.e., [it is] a modification of the ordinary vulgar concern with bodily pleasures or at best reputation.[l] Only the man fully dedicated to the genuine is the one who has an inkling of the genuine, i.e., the philosopher. We only have to think of Nicias. From Plato's point of view, he has vulgar virtue. That is implied but not said by Thucydides. He does what is thought to be virtue, customary virtue.

The harsh doctrine of Plato is contradicted by the facts as presented. Every reader of the *Republic* is charmed by Cephalus: a wonderful old man, wealthy, the pillar of society, etc. Life would be terrible without a reasonable supply of such people. What Aristotle means by moral virtue is something like this. It is not based on understanding but on habituation. Plato applies X-rays. The virtue of Cephalus becomes questionable. He is not a hoodlum, but according to book 10 of the *Republic* the best-bred gentlemen who have virtue without philosophy would choose in the next life the life of the tyrant, i.e., in their inner heart they are not converted by truth. Plato shows this by the presentation of his characters: charming on the surface but, like Charmides, they become tyrants.

Aristotle says, no, you cannot have political life on this basis. I will make clear what we mean when we call a man a gentleman, even if there never was one. That is what we mean. Let us build and adorn that statue of the just man. He does it thoroughly. He gives each virtue as popularly praised, and this is not meant to be a mere noble lie: it is there. But the background, the deeper context, Aristotle does not make clear. For our purposes

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[xlix] The transcriber notes: "At this point the tape ran out. What follows is an almost literal paraphrase of the remainder of the session, taken from stenographic notes."

[l] Cf. *Phaedo* 68d.

it is necessary to know only the "that," not the "why." The "why" comes in the latter half of the book.

Student: Is the perfect gentleman in a sense a deficient philosopher?

LS: Yes, or mutilated, *manqué*. If he would understand himself, he would be a philosopher. The difficulty is with the men of the higher arts. They also have something akin to philosophy, as is indicated by book 2 of Plato's *Laws*. For example, a carpenter: by definition he is not a gentleman, but he has something which the gentleman lacks [and] which distinguishes the gentleman from the philosopher, and that is exactness. The gentleman who is exact is a pennypincher. The Aristotelian point of view is that there is a variety of human pursuits. They all point without being aware of it towards their completion. They all flow together. The gentleman, the lover, the *technē*: all these fully understood are philosophy. This is not sophistry; Aristotle means it seriously. Man has one end. On a lower level this splits into other ends.

Same Student: This leads to the problem of piety, due to the fact that the gentleman takes as a standard piety. If piety from the philosopher's point of view is like the noble lie . . .

LS: Not quite. Piety is understood as knowledge of the highest, knowledge of god. This leads to this conclusion for Aristotle: piety is not a virtue. It is [a virtue] in the *Republic*: wisdom, courage, justice, moderation, piety. But it is dropped later on. Piety in the form of worship is not there.

Same Student: It seems that Aristotle in a sense subscribes to a limited relativism. The philosopher regards the moral virtues as means while for most men there is really a sense in which they are an end.

LS: That the same thing is not right or fit for all, is this what you mean by relativism? Relativism today means something below serious discussion, that *all* preferences are merely arbitrary. If you mean that absolutism means there is one and only one set of rules absolutely binding equally on all men, and every deviation from that view is relativism, then Aristotle is a relativist.

Same Student: How does Aristotle indicate that the moral virtues are desirable in themselves?

LS: Aristotle moves within the horizon of most men. Towards the end, Aristotle removes the "screen" and shows there is something above it: contemplation. The bulk of the work is devoted to the moral virtues. That is demanded by the practical character of the book. It is meant to influence all literate people. Most of them are not willing or able to become theoretical men.

Same Student: . . . How does Aristotle stand regarding the situation at the beginning of the *Minos*? The possibility that these things come into being not by *logos*, but in an unknown way.

LS: Do you mean that for the perfect gentleman the various noble and just things as described in books 2 to 5 are simply noble or choiceworthy? But he is not able to give an account. To that extent, there is no reason. Reason is not operative, or only on the basis of the acceptance of these noble and just things. For him they are the irrefutable principles. In the *Minos* the fact is that we do not know *how* they come into being.

Same Student: [Regarding laws.][li]

LS: The gentleman can distinguish between good and bad laws, between civilized and the savage society.

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[1] Deleted "that which."
[2] Deleted "the."
[3] Deleted "but."
[4] Deleted "he."
[5] Deleted "and."
[6] Deleted "it is clear."
[7] Deleted "it."
[8] Deleted "the."
[9] Deleted "of them."
[10] Deleted "it."
[11] Deleted "his."
[12] Deleted "than."
[13] Deleted "that."
[14] Deleted "was not."
[15] Moved "he also means that."
[16] Deleted "but."
[17] Deleted "on."
[18] Deleted "of."
[19] Deleted "that it is."
[20] Deleted "and since."
[21] Deleted "he."
[22] Deleted "the good man transcends that."
[23] Deleted "will."

[li] As noted by the transcriber.