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REVIEW ARTICLE

After the “Strauss wars”

The Cambridge Companion to Leo Strauss, edited by Steven B. Smith, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2009, xiv + 307 pp., £50.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-0521879026

The publication of the *Cambridge Companion to Leo Strauss* provides a welcome opportunity to take stock of recent debates about Leo Strauss. This is likely to be of interest to Jewish studies scholars in any field, not least because the single most remarkable and transformative trend in the serious scholarly engagement of Strauss in recent years has arguably been a marked shift towards a much stronger focus on Strauss’s Jewishness, in both biographical and conceptual terms, and the formative experiences to which he was exposed as a (conservative) Weimar Jew and, somewhat more controversially, as a Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany who lost most of his extended family in the Shoah.

Steven Aschheim has called it “truly remarkable” that Leo Strauss, “who by all contemporary accounts was an exceedingly shy and unworldly refugee figure, is presently being celebrated or reviled (in both the popular as well as the academic press) as perhaps the most positively or perniciously influential political thinker of our time.” Aschheim was writing against the backdrop of the still ongoing “lively, widespread (and often ridiculous) discussion ... in fringe, popular, and more highbrow organs alike, as to whether or not” Strauss was “the hidden power behind the present Bush throne, even the force behind the Iraq War.”¹ Now that the Obama administration is firmly ensconced, this particular preoccupation will most likely turn out to have been little more than a fad. As Michael Zuckert explains at the beginning of his survey of “Straussians” that concludes the volume under review, even to the extent that individuals who held responsibility in the previous administration could be shown to have had “some contact with Strauss or students of Strauss,” critics in fact never managed to demonstrate any “real connection between their political action and the thought of Strauss.” The ostensible Straussians behind Bush’s throne, in short, had “about as much to do with Strauss as owners of Levi’s, or admirers of the soundtrack to the film *2001: A Space Odyssey*.”²

Yet this is only where the problems begin. The actual Straussians, scholars and public intellectuals, in other words, with a meaningful and demonstrable commitment to Strauss’s own agenda, have in fact “broken into different, sometimes warring, camps and to a discerning eye embody much less unity of viewpoint than, say rational choice theorists or international relations realists in political science.”³ Indeed, as Zuckert demonstrates with admirable clarity, fundamental disagreements as to what Strauss’s own position on some of the questions most central to his project actually was set various sorts of Straussians apart. Focusing on Strauss’s understanding of religion, Zuckert rehearses the arguments put forward by rationalist, decisionist, zetetic

or Socratic, and faith-based Straussians; turning to issues of politics and morality, he throws the difference between Platonic and Aristotelian Straussians into sharp relief. Selective as Zuckert's survey inevitably is, it clearly bears out just "how diverse the Straussians are" and offers eloquent testimony to the fact that "in Straussian circles ... intellectual vigor and disagreement are more apparent than hardening of the intellectual arteries."⁴ This means, of course, that even if one could substantiate connections between the alleged Straussians behind Bush's throne and Strauss, on the one hand, and their input into relevant policy decisions, on the other, there simply is no one, self-evident "Straussian" position they could have sought to implement.

Nor is it possible to reconcile Strauss and the Bush administration precisely where the most obvious points of contact ought to be. As Joel Kramer explains in his discussion of Strauss's engagement with the medieval Arabic enlightenment, Strauss "first considered Greek philosophy as a source of medieval thought and read the Greeks from an Islamic point of view." Indeed, the Islamic philosopher Alfarabi "was the source of Strauss's hermeneutics and his interpretation of Plato."⁵ He was also, of course, crucial to Strauss's understanding of Maimonides. Little could illustrate more clearly "the absurdity of the view that Strauss is somehow the intellectual godfather of the Bush administration's policies in Iraq and the Middle East more generally," Leora Batnitzky points out, than the fact "that Strauss himself was devoted to revitalizing Islamic philosophy, as opposed to Christian thought, for the very sake of the future of Western civilization."⁶

That said, the *Cambridge Companion to Leo Strauss* in fact offers only very occasional explicit references to the "Strauss wars." Its main focus is on the wealth of ongoing careful scholarly engagement of Strauss that has generally drawn rather less attention than the public polemics of recent years. As the editor of this volume, Steven Smith, who has made a number of important contributions to Strauss scholarship in recent years,⁷ provides a solid and even-handed introduction and biographical sketch but it falls to Leora Batnitzky's engrossing account of Strauss's lifelong grappling with the "theologico-political predicament" to really set the stage and get the reader's juices going. While doing the readers an enormous favour, Smith's decision to place her contribution at this juncture may have done the other contributors something of a disservice by raising the bar so high. All of the subsequent chapters are solid and instructive on their own terms and perfectly appropriate for this sort of *Companion*, to be sure, but not all of them are as energetic and powerful as Batnitzky's. The contributions that stand out are William Galston's discussion of "Leo Strauss's Qualified Embrace of Liberal Democracy," Nasser Behnegar's reflections on "Strauss and Social Science," and Michael Zuckert's already mentioned survey of central debates among "Straussians."

Strauss was deeply committed to the notion that what constituted philosophy was the quest for truth, not acquired knowledge of truth. Hence, its attitude towards the certitude of truth claims had to be fundamentally sceptical. Strauss concluded from this that "wisdom cannot be separated from moderation"⁸ and his understanding of the distinctions and connections between revelation and philosophy and classical and modern philosophy ultimately configured them as a system of mutual checks and balances. As Batnitzky explains, for Strauss revelation "remains and must remain a continual moral challenge for philosophy"⁹ but at the same time "revelation's challenge to philosophy is but a challenge and never a victory."¹⁰ Similarly, "Strauss regarded the reservations of the classics concerning democracy as useful warnings against democratic complacency."¹¹ It is, after all, possible to be "a friend and

defender of liberal democracy without being a liberal democrat.”¹² As Timothy Fuller emphasises, “those who think that Strauss, insofar as he was not wholly attached to the liberal democratic tradition, must therefore have been attached to some earthly alternative that he, secretly or otherwise, advocated, have misunderstood him.” One can think “beyond” liberal democracy without a specific “project for an alternative regime in mind.”¹³

In short, unless one assumes real-existing liberal democracy to be a perfect system devoid of any risks, the fact that Strauss formulated a sustained critique of liberal democracy, in and of itself, will hardly suffice to out him as a dangerous or sinister figure. Batnitzky has made this point elsewhere in the context of her critique of Shadia Drury, whom she characterises as “perhaps Strauss’s most devoted critic.” As Batnitzky emphasises, Drury “offers almost no argument against Strauss but seems to believe instead that” she has already sufficiently discredited Strauss simply by showing that he “was at best highly suspicious of liberal democracy.” Yet, “even if Strauss were shown to be a critic of various aspects of liberal democracy, this would in no way automatically remove him from the parameters of debates about and defenses of liberal democracy.”¹⁴

In a lively exchange with Steven Smith, Drury has quite recently restated her case against Strauss. Picking up on Strauss’s much-cited contention that liberal democracy is in need not of flattery but of discerning friends and allies, Smith argued that Strauss set out to reveal “to liberalism its strengths and its shortcomings.” Strauss’s “preference for the liberal state” was “based on a careful weighing up of the pros and cons of liberalism as well as the various available alternatives.”¹⁵ Drury countered Smith’s line of argument by conceding that Strauss could, of course, be found “denouncing garden variety tyranny in the name of freedom” but the crucial point was his advocacy of “the covert tyranny of the wise.”¹⁶

Whatever the ins and outs of Strauss’s own assessment of liberal democracy may have been, the pretence that nothing could be more alien to the liberal mind than “the covert tyranny of the wise” surely justifies a profound scepticism vis-à-vis a critique of Strauss along these lines. Unless one is willing to deny flatly that such a thing as populism exists and that only qualitative criteria can distinguish it from democracy, can one ever operate without at least an implicit yearning for a “covert tyranny of the wise”? After all, where democracy ends and populism starts (or vice versa) tends to be very much in the eye of the beholder. Do not virtually all the innumerable explanatory devices with which we try to bridge the gap between populism and democracy ultimately hinge on an implicit “covert tyranny of the wise” at the very least in the sphere of concepts and definitions? To suggest that Strauss – and, perhaps more importantly, the probing questions he formulated – can be dismissed out of hand on these grounds surely amounts to precisely the sort of flattery that in fact only renders liberal democracy more vulnerable.

Interestingly enough, Smith and Drury do in fact agree on one point, namely, the centrality of his reflections on the Jewish encounter with modernity for Strauss’s thought. Smith identifies as “an important, not to say crucial, aspect of the priority of liberty ... the separation of the public from the private sphere, the state from civil society.” As Smith points out, this is a theme that Strauss emphasises “especially in the context of his treatment of the ‘Jewish Question’.”¹⁷ While Drury contests Smith’s interpretation of Strauss’s relevant remarks, she does not deny their significance. “For Strauss,” she suggests, “the situation of Jews is not improved in liberal society. And,” she then adds in what might seem a rather surprising turn, “Strauss is surely right in

cases where the society is bigoted and vicious.”¹⁸ Either way, Strauss’s grappling with the fate of modern Jewry emerges as integral to the interpretation of his thought and an issue that would seem to compel even those as critical of Strauss as Drury to read his anti-liberal proclivities against the grain.

As Aschheim has emphasised, one in any case needs to beware of “throwing ahistorical stones” in this context. Needless to say, the critique of liberal democracy has in no way been a preserve of Strauss’s. Aschheim places Strauss alongside Adorno, Arendt, Benjamin, Rosenzweig, and Scholem, who constitute a cohort of “Weimar German-Jewish thinkers” who have emerged as “central, virtually iconic, figures of Anglo-American, indeed, Western intellectual and academic culture,” and whose “present appeal derives from a number of shared characteristics.” The fact that they “were all suspicious of bourgeois conventions and liberal pieties” and “idiosyncratic in cutting through conventional left–right borders” is among these shared characteristics. Strauss may have been the only one among them to veer primarily to the political right – “whatever that may mean” – but his conservatism was “highly idiosyncratic.”¹⁹ All these thinkers were in fact “infused with – and often directly influenced by – Heideggerian themes or, at least, a post-Nietzschean sensibility.” They “all engaged in essentially postliberal rumination, posited on the ruins of, and a disbelief in, the old political and conceptual order”²⁰ and “in one way or another all these thinkers consistently critiqued and at times directly attacked liberalism and mass modernity.”²¹ This, indeed, is what connects them “to other such posthumously celebrated and inevitably problematic Weimar thinkers – Martin Heidegger, Ernst Jünger, Carl Schmitt, and so on.”²²

Aschheim’s emphases follow on from similar arguments developed by Steven Smith and David Biale. Yet before I discuss this line of inquiry further a few words as to what we might actually mean by Strauss’s Jewishness are in order. It seems beyond doubt that Strauss was a non-believer and that his contemporaries recognised him as such. Perhaps the clearest indication of this is given by Scholem’s much-cited remarks in a letter to Benjamin in the spring of 1935 in connection with his attempts to help secure a chair for Strauss at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. On Scholem’s account, Strauss’s book on Maimonides began “with an extensively reasoned (albeit entirely mad) and overt declaration that atheism is the most important Jewish watchword!” Scholem went on to explain that “I admire this morality and regret the apparently conscious and intentional suicide of such a good mind. Understandably, over here three people at most will feel at liberty to appoint an atheist to a chair that is assigned to the philosophy of religion.”²³ Or take, to add just one more illustrative snippet, Strauss’s remarks to Scholem in February 1952. “It may interest you,” he began, “that Finkelstein has established an Institute of Jewish Theology in which I am a little bit involved – perhaps,” he then added, “I will return one day after all, not in the sense of [in Hebrew script:] *teshuvah* but in the sense of *on revient toujours* ... then again,” Strauss concluded, “according to your wisdom there may be no difference between the two.”²⁴

Against the backdrop of Strauss’s recorded speech of 1962, “Why We Remain Jews,” this confronts us with something of a paradox. For in this speech Strauss stated quite unequivocally that “the rock bottom of any Jewish culture are the Bible, Talmud and Midrash ... and this is the crux of the matter ... The substance is not culture, but divine revelation.” As he himself added, this raised a question to which he himself did not then provide any sort of satisfactory answer: “What shall those Jews do who cannot believe as our ancestors believed?”²⁵ None too surprisingly, he was asked about this in the subsequent discussion. “I rejected,” he reiterated in his response,

all attempts to interpret the Jewish past in terms of a culture. Therefore the emptiness of which you complain. In other words, for me the question is: truly either Torah as understood by our tradition, or, say unbelief. And I think that is infinitely more important than every cultural interpretation, which is based on a tacit unbelief and cannot be a substitute for the belief it has given up.

Strauss did go on to concede that, "When I say 'the Jewish faith as our ancestors held it,' I do not mean that every particular belief ... must necessarily be binding." Indeed, he explained, "it offers a perfectly legitimate and sensible goal ... to restate the essence of Jewish faith in a way which is by no means literally identical with any traditional statement of principle. But," he concluded, "a Judaism which is not belief in the 'Creator of the world,' that has problems running through it."²⁶

Yet what exactly he considered the necessary irreducible core not only of Judaism but of any meaningful Jewishness-to-be was something that Strauss tended not to dwell upon. As Steven Smith has pointed out, "for all his talk of return (*t'shuvah*), Strauss has relatively little to say about the substance of Orthodoxy either as a set of beliefs or a way of life ... Perhaps it is fair to say that if Strauss speaks for Orthodoxy it is for a sect of which he remains the only member."²⁷ In short, the odds are that, by his own standards, Strauss not only lacked Judaism but also Jewishness proper. Yet at the same time his Jewish background, the experience of the Shoah, and an engagement with Jewish thinkers and traditions that clearly goes far beyond the purely academic are such a strong and palpable presence throughout his intellectual biography that it would seem nonsensical not to consider his Jewishness a major formative influence that needs to be taken into consideration when evaluating his legacy.

In his discussion of "Leo Strauss: The Philosopher as Weimar Jew," David Biale has argued that although Strauss's "skepticism with regards to politics led some to consider Strauss a political conservative by the 1970s, it is no surprise that a philosopher who defined himself as a child of the Weimar Republic should be so suspicious of political movements that make messianic claims." Indeed, "no one writing as the Nazi regime came to its end could be sanguine about the perfectibility of the political realm."²⁸ In short, "his experiences as a German Jew remained seminal for the rest of his career," and to Strauss's mind, "like the twentieth-century German Jew, true philosophy could never have a secure home."²⁹ It was only when "divorced from the singular context of German Jewish culture on the eve of the Holocaust," and, we might add, from the historical experience of the Shoah itself, that "much of his radical thought has assumed entirely different functions."³⁰ Smith too has emphasised that "Strauss's own theologico-political reflections were occasioned by experiences unique to German Jews of his generation." Indeed, "while there is no mention of the Holocaust and scarcely a mention of Hitler in *Natural Right and History* no one can doubt that its influence is present on virtually every page."³¹

We certainly need not read between the lines to establish this influence in "Why We Remain Jews" (and the record of the subsequent discussion). To be sure, much of what Strauss had to say there might pass for a distinct Jewish variant of straightforward late imperial and Weimar *Kulturpessimismus*:

There is no solution to the Jewish problem. The expectation of such a solution is due to the premise that every problem can be solved³² ...

The Jewish people and their fate are the living witness for the absence of redemption. This, one could say, is the meaning of the chosen people: the Jews are chosen to prove the absence of redemption³³ ...

The clean solutions of which people dream and dreamt have led either to nothing or to a much greater bestiality than the uneasy solution with which sensible people will always be satisfied.³⁴

Yet, it is precisely at the crucial juncture where he establishes *why* “the ‘Jewish problem’, as it is called” can be considered “the most simple and available exemplification of the human problem”³⁵ that the rupture of the Shoah is introduced. Strauss begins by explaining that “when we speak of progress, positive progress, we must also say that this progress is essentially, not accidentally accompanied by a progress in destructiveness.” He then immediately adds, “And if we look at Jewish history – we look at that history as Jews – we must say that such a thing – we have gone through terrible things – but such a thing as the Nazis has never happened before.”³⁶

At a conference on *The Legacy of Leo Strauss* in Nottingham in 2006, Richard King rather strikingly characterised Strauss as acting in some respects like “a conservative *Doppelgänger*” of Horkheimer and Adorno. This would certainly seem to ring true when it comes to the significance of the Shoah for the development of their respective intellectual agendas. Let us recall Adorno’s well-known letter to Horkheimer, written on 5 August 1940 (before the actual genocide against European Jewry had even begun). “I am beginning to feel,” Adorno wrote:

particularly under the influence of the latest news from Europe, that I simply cannot stop thinking about the fate of the Jews any more. It often seems to me that everything that we used to see from the point of view of the proletariat has been concentrated today with frightful force upon the Jews ... I ask myself whether we should not say what we want to say in connection with the Jews, who are now at the opposite pole to the concentration of power.³⁷

This is obviously not how Strauss would have put it, since he perceived this same challenge in fundamentally different conceptual terms. Even so, the fact remains that he certainly shared, as we saw, the notion that the historical experience of Auschwitz had turned “the ‘Jewish problem’, as it is called” into “the most simple and available exemplification of the human problem.”³⁸

Yet while the notion of Strauss as “a conservative *Doppelgänger*” of Horkheimer and Adorno seems a neat shorthand at first sight, one does have to wonder how much sense it makes to think of Strauss as a conservative. To my mind, Smith is entirely right in stressing that Strauss was a radical, “not ... in the colloquial and uninteresting sense of being either ‘left-wing’ or ‘right-wing’,” but “in the philosophic sense of breaking profoundly with the prevailing orthodoxies of [his] day.”³⁹ Aschheim too has emphasised Strauss’s “insistent radicalism (in the original sense of going back to and understanding texts and problems at their root).”⁴⁰ This fundamental radicalism he shared not only with Horkheimer and Adorno but also, as Smith has rightly emphasised, with Gershom Scholem.

Indeed, one might well suggest, of course, that he also shared this radicalism with the likes of Carl Schmitt and Martin Heidegger. Robert Howse and (following his lead) Michael Zank are surely right in suspecting that much of the recent German interest gravitating around Heinrich Meier’s Strauss edition owes its momentum to the fact “that he seems to represent the possibility of articulating anti-liberal political theory without recourse to any rhetorical or substantive anti-Semitism.”⁴¹ Eugene Sheppard has been slightly less diplomatic in emphasising that “Meier has played no

small part in Schmitt's rehabilitation in Germany over the last two decades, by pointing to an intimate intellectual relationship with Strauss, a German Jew."⁴²

That Strauss "clearly flirted with dangerous ideas"⁴³ in the 1920s and early 1930s is indeed beyond doubt and this is an issue that some of the accounts offered in the *Cambridge Companion to Leo Strauss* are perhaps inclined to resolve just a tad too neatly. I see no shame in admitting that on this count it may well have been not least his Jewishness that rescued Strauss from himself. In any case, however far-reaching his affinities with the anti-liberalism of right-wing intellectuals like Heidegger and Schmitt may have been prior to 1933, it is evident that Strauss subsequently saw a need to distance himself from this scene, which is more than can be said for Heidegger and Schmitt. Heidegger's entire critical engagement with the Shoah, let us not forget, never went beyond equating it first with the post-war expulsion of Germans from Central and Eastern Europe⁴⁴ and then with modern agriculture.⁴⁵ Schmitt, on the other hand, is one of the few intellectuals of stature who, rather than going along with the radical antisemitism because he liked other aspects of National Socialism, bought into National Socialism precisely because of its radical antisemitism in the first place, and was dissimulating and being opportunistic only during those periods of his life in which he temporarily refrained from making his antisemitism explicit in public.⁴⁶

That Strauss, the Jewish refugee who lost most of his relatives in the Shoah, should be singled out for his affinities with Heidegger and Schmitt, as has happened all too routinely in the "Strauss wars," is all the more ironic and disconcerting given how rarely academics and public intellectuals are in fact still inclined (if they ever were) to let the appropriation of Heidegger and Schmitt be in any serious way impaired by their active and enthusiastic participation in National Socialism and their subsequent lack of contrition and total failure to respond in any meaningful way to the Shoah. Quite illogically, in the eyes of many, Strauss's guilt by association with Heidegger and Schmitt now seems to loom larger than the very real guilt of Heidegger and Schmitt themselves.

Aschheim suggests that the "radical-redemptive, jagged, often nervous, postliberal projects" of the cohort of German-Jewish thinkers to which Strauss belongs can ultimately "be interpreted as attempts to rescue rather than merely critique the damaged Enlightenment inheritance and its tradition of free and critical inquiry."⁴⁷ In Strauss's case this does seem rather a stretch. Yet, whatever Strauss's own intentions may have been, they do not preclude us from appropriating his critique to this end. The odds are that those of us still committed to this agenda ignore at our peril the challenge he articulated, not because we have grounds to agree with him but because we need to be able to formulate a reasoned response. Meier's reasoning, in short, needs to be turned from its head onto its feet. Strauss's Jewishness cannot magically divorce the thought of the likes of Heidegger and Schmitt from its antisemitism but Strauss's case helps illustrate that the formulation of a credible critique of liberal democracy from "a right-wing position (whatever that may mean)" (to cite Aschheim again) presupposes the absence of substantive⁴⁸ antisemitism and a willingness to take the Jewish encounter with modernity seriously.

One set of documents that has featured prominently in recent Strauss scholarship, especially since its publication, along with three other correspondences, in the third volume of Meier's ongoing edition of Strauss's collected works, is his correspondence with Gershom Scholem.⁴⁹ The strong interest in these correspondences results in part from the fact that numerous Strauss scholars assume that his emphasis on the need to find the true meanings of texts by carefully reading between the lines applied not only

to the past but also the present and his own practice. He supposedly wanted “not merely to draw attention to a past conspiracy, but actually to encourage selective participation in a current conspiracy.”⁵⁰ Since “Strauss wrote in the esoteric style that he ascribed to philosophers,” the argument goes, “we need to distinguish his private doctrine from his public teaching,” and the most effective way of doing so would then be to focus on “his conversations and correspondence with friends, where he conveyed his thoughts in plain, uncoded language.”⁵¹

To my mind, there are at least two problems with this line of reasoning. Firstly, it seems to depend on some rather naïve assumptions about the degree to which we ever have unproblematic access to the literal meaning of texts. The complexities of Strauss’s texts, and the contested interpretations to which they give rise, are surely in no way unusual and until it’s proven otherwise I remain sceptical about the suggestion that they spring from some sort of artful conspiracy. Secondly, Daniel Tanguay’s warning that “the most formidable obstacle to reading Strauss arises precisely from the seduction that reading between the lines may exert on his interpreter” is surely well worth heeding.⁵² Even so, it would seem that the correspondences allow us to straddle the divide between the two schools of thought and draw on a form of evidence acceptable to both.

Steven Smith published an extremely interesting essay on the correspondence between Strauss and Scholem in 1993,⁵³ a slightly revised version of which he republished in *Reading Leo Strauss*.⁵⁴ Smith’s remarks in the introduction to *Reading Leo Strauss* seemed to imply a certain shift in emphasis on his part. In the essay itself, Smith had spoken of “a correspondence, if not exactly a friendship,” between Strauss and Scholem, “that continued well into the 1960s.” This correspondence, Smith suggested:

expresses on the surface great mutual esteem and regard. Yet this apparent esteem is implicitly undercut by their published works, in which each demonstrates scant attention to or recognition of the work of the other. Scholem’s studies make only the most passing nod to Strauss, while Strauss’s brief personal statements make no mention of Scholem whatever.⁵⁵

Establishing the significance of this essay in his introduction to *Reading Leo Strauss*, on the other hand, Smith explained that “the two maintained a friendship and correspondence virtually until the end of Strauss’s life” and characterised their correspondence as “a dialogue of the highest kind, carried out with great mutual respect.”⁵⁶ While the latter is certainly nearer to the truth than the former, Smith now seems to have reverted to his original perspective. In the biographical sketch for the *Cambridge Companion to Leo Strauss*, Smith refers to “a lifelong friendship” between Strauss and Scholem, “although one not without rivalry and occasional touches of malice.”⁵⁷ On Sheppard’s account too, “Strauss and Scholem often play cat-and-mouse games where each one playfully pokes at a perceived vulnerability of the other, but then retreats.”⁵⁸ According to Sheppard, Scholem considered Strauss a “friendly intellectual sparring partner.”⁵⁹ It seems to me that on this score both Sheppard and Smith have indeed succumbed to “the seduction that reading between the lines may exert.”

In his original essay of 1993, Smith suggested that the failure of Strauss and Scholem to acknowledge each other publicly goes “beyond the mere facts of professional rivalry or even a conflict of personalities,” and in fact points to “the most profound differences regarding their views on history, modernity, and, perhaps most

of all, Jewish identity.”⁶⁰ This statement essentially has to be turned from its head onto its feet. That they pay “scant attention” to one another in their published work is due neither to “professional rivalry” nor to a “conflict of personalities.” Yet, it is indeed very much the result of the radical opposition of their respective worldviews. In the revised version of the essay in *Reading Leo Strauss*, Smith has added a quotation from one of Strauss’s letters to Scholem as an epigraph that helps clarify this issue: “I see again that you are the only antiphilosophic contemporary – for you are consistent enough to be antiphilosophic – from whom I learn something with pleasure.”⁶¹ This is very much a recurrent theme throughout the correspondence. As early as 2 August 1933, Strauss praised Scholem for arousing his interest in Kabbalah, then adding, “albeit that sort of interest that we take in things diametrically opposed to our [own] outlook.”⁶² Or take Strauss’s statement in the letter he wrote to Scholem on 5 February 1952: “You are the first person to give me an idea of the opposite extreme that engages me.”⁶³ Only three months before his death, Strauss returned to a variation on this theme. “I owe it to you,” he wrote to Scholem on 7 July 1973, “that I gained access at all to a sphere that nature, my nature, had closed off to me almost entirely.”⁶⁴ On 23 March 1959, Strauss wrote on a more playful note, but reiterating the same essential antagonism between them:

You seem to think, and I believe rightly, that the time has now come for letting the cat – or rather her 10 invisible kittens⁶⁵ – out of your old sorcerer’s bag. I like the auras and the inaudible purrings of those of them of whom I have become aware, but they do not feel at home with me because I do not know with what to feed them, and even if I did, I am almost sure that I could not get the proper food for them.⁶⁶

Clearly, the dialogue between these two men transpired despite the radical irreconcilability of their worldviews. On Smith’s account, “for Scholem, the problem stems precisely from a surfeit of rationalism that has tried to repress everything that does not fit its categories and concepts; for Strauss it is the abnegation of reason and the denial of possibly true standards that is the root cause of the problem.”⁶⁷ On the one side we have “the defender of a kind of Maimonidean rationalism” (Strauss), on the other “the great anti-Maimonidean defender of the role of the mystical, irrational, and antinomian sources of Jewish life and thought” (Scholem).⁶⁸ In short, both effectively considered each other the exception that proves the rule, the one stimulating figure of stature and integrity that the opposing camp could muster. It is therefore difficult to see how they could have acknowledged one another as positive formative influences and little wonder that neither features prominently in the other’s scholarly expositions.

Even so, Strauss was certainly not shy about singing Scholem’s praises. In the discussion following his speech “Why We Remain Jews” in 1962, he stated that “one of the deepest Jewish thinkers now, in my private opinion ... is Gershom Scholem.” Inevitably, though, he then had to go on to explain why he considered Scholem’s endeavour as he understood it (“simply replacing God by the genius of the Jewish people,”⁶⁹ as he put it) fundamentally misguided in its ultimate consequences. In short, maintaining the level of mutual respect that clearly existed between them and mentioning each other in publications or public statements were two options that simply did not go together all that easily.⁷⁰

That Scholem’s words of praise for Strauss in their correspondence should not have been meant in earnest is also hard to believe. Take his statement in the letter he wrote to Strauss on 20 May 1950 that in the area of “*Jewish* philosophy ... original

ideas are simply not being expressed by anyone but you.”⁷¹ Nor does it seem likely that Scholem would have made serious efforts to ensure Strauss’s appointment both before and after the war had he had serious reservations about him. “I regret,” he wrote to Strauss on 4 November 1935, after the first attempt had failed:

that fate has begrudged us the opportunity of working together in Jerusalem ... We would have been closely involved with one another for much as the points of departure that we have chosen would seem to differ we clearly share an appreciation of the need to totally rewrite the inner history of Jewry/Judaism [*des Judentums*].⁷²

Inquiring on 20 January 1950 whether Strauss would accept a chair in Jerusalem, Scholem explained that “I have taken a lively interest in this matter,”⁷³ and on 27 April he showed himself “shocked and saddened”⁷⁴ when Strauss declined. Had he been sent to Chicago to pursue the negotiations, Scholem added, he was confident that he would have been able to persuade Strauss otherwise.

In his reply, Strauss complained that Scholem was not letting him off lightly, but went on to concede that Scholem was, of course, only doing his duty by being so insistent.⁷⁵ Given the context, this remark can hardly have meant that Scholem felt duty bound to pursue Strauss’s appointment even though his heart was not really in it. Quite to the contrary, Strauss clearly assumed and acknowledged that Scholem’s interest in his appointment was so serious and genuine that he essentially rated it more highly than Strauss’s personal concerns and therefore considered it his duty to give Strauss a hard time if it might still bring about the desired outcome.

To be sure, Scholem’s “shocked and saddened” response (shared by his wife) resulted not only from Strauss’s decision as such but also from the reasons he gave for that decision. Initially the main concern Strauss introduced to explain why he could not leave Chicago and relocate to Jerusalem was the fact that his wife was suffering from serious depression.⁷⁶ Subsequently he shifted his emphasis more towards “the one reason that would be valid, even if I lived all by myself.” He felt “old and exhausted” and needed all the strength he could muster to remain productive. He then went on to explain this state of affairs, offering a stark reminder of the fact that the impact of National Socialist antisemitism and the Shoah on his life was not merely of a conceptual but also of a rather sturdy and immediate biographical nature:

Due to the events since 1933 and especially as a result of the difficulties I have had since 1936 I have had to spread myself far too thinly – I am only now very gradually beginning to concentrate on the real problem: I cannot afford to interrupt this process now. Were I to do so I would be of no use to the Hebrew University anyway.⁷⁷

However sensible or inescapable he may have considered his reasons for not going to Jerusalem, the decision clearly left Strauss with regrets that by no means hinged exclusively on the academic working conditions and intellectual stimulation he may have hoped for at the Hebrew University. Following a three-week stay in “the Jewish New York,” Strauss explained to Scholem in June 1952 that this experience “gave me an idea of how much I am missing out on because I did not accept the offer from Jerusalem.”⁷⁸

Given all this it would seem a rather far-fetched suggestion that Scholem should have faked or grossly exaggerated his empathy and the seriousness of his determination to see Strauss appointed in Jerusalem merely in order to be polite. Yet while all this may remain open to interpretation, I would suggest that another element in the

correspondence establishes beyond doubt just how much respect and affection Scholem brought to his relationship with Strauss. Presumably on 17 December 1952, Scholem sent with his letter to Strauss two little fluke texts. These were based on authentic letters by Goethe that Scholem had altered to incorporate references to Strauss ("Privy Counsellor Goethe on Prof. Leo Strauss"). This was by no means unique, to be sure, and over the years Scholem wrote poems or created little texts like this, some of a more humorous, others of a more serious nature, for a number of his correspondents.⁷⁹ Yet, it seems inconceivable that he should have done anything of this sort for a correspondent for whom he did not feel a deep sense of appreciation.⁸⁰

There are at least two other dimensions of the correspondence that have drawn less attention than they deserve. I will turn in a moment to what we might call the linguistic entanglement of "Athens" and "Jerusalem" in this correspondence. But I want to begin with Strauss's evaluation of the dynamics between German Jews and non-Jews as it finds its expression in his letters to Scholem. Strauss reacted on two occasions with great enthusiasm to Scholem's comments on relations between German Jews and non-Jews. On 29 April 1970, Strauss thanked Scholem for his "generous gift." He had read it with "fascination and relish. Never before have I seen your versatility so clearly and admired you as deeply as I do now." Strauss singled out for specific comment Scholem's essay "Juden und Deutsche" (Jews and Germans). Initially published in 1966 it was reprinted in *Judaica* 2, which first appeared in 1970 and was presumably the "generous gift" in question (or at least part of it).⁸¹ "How superior," Strauss remarked, "is your commentary (in 'Jews and Germans') to everything I have ever read or heard on this matter either in our generation or the generations before."⁸² In 1965, he had responded with even greater abandon to Scholem's famous (or, as the current scholarly orthodoxy would have it, infamous) public denial of the claim that a genuine German-Jewish dialogue had transpired prior to 1933.⁸³ "Dear Scholem! Praiseworthy Scholem!" Strauss wrote on 7 August 1965. "I am writing these lines under the fresh impression of your letter about the alleged German-Jewish dialogue: nobody except you could pronounce this important and sad truth in so *totally* decent and adequate a manner. I thank you, also in the name of my wife, with all my soul."⁸⁴

Given that Scholem-bashing has become one of the cheapest and most popular tricks among revisionist historians of Jewish-non-Jewish relations in Germany, it is interesting to observe Strauss's unmitigated enthusiasm at this juncture. In fact, of course, the smugness with which Scholem's denial of the notion that a meaningful German-Jewish dialogue was abruptly cut short in 1933 is now dismissed by many out of hand is based on a mere caricature of Scholem's position. Scholem was quite explicit about the fact that he by no means denied manifold forms of interaction between German Jews and non-Jews. Nor had a meaningful dialogue failed to materialise for lack of trying on the part of German Jewry. What he did deny, though, was that the relationship between German Jewry and the non-Jewish majority population (as collective entities, so to speak) had been based on mutual respect and a genuine willingness on the part of the majority population to accept Jewry as anything other than a group that would eventually cease to be distinct. That Jews could legitimately continue to differ from non-Jews in certain ways and might have a specific contribution of their own to make to society precisely because they continued to differ was an option that the majority society had never seriously contemplated. It had never engaged the Jews in terms of "what they had to give as Jews rather than what they would have to give up as Jews."⁸⁵ Nor did Scholem deny that the urge to rectify this

situation felt by some Germans “now that it is all over” was “genuine.” It was “moving and depressing in one.” Yet whatever the motivation, the bottom line was that one could not now engage in that elusive dialogue with the dead and to suggest otherwise was sheer “blasphemy.”⁸⁶ Scholem’s argument was subtle and sophisticated, much of what he had to say remains valid to this day and one can well understand Strauss’s enthusiastic response.

This enthusiasm is in fact all the more noteworthy, given that Strauss felt partially at odds with Scholem’s analysis insofar as he claimed never to have shared the unrequited Jewish love for German culture which played so central a role in Scholem’s narrative. “My contented admiration,” Strauss wrote in 1965, “is in no way mitigated by the fact that I never shared the love for the German character. My coming from Hessian rural Jewry protected me from doing so. I quite liked the Hessian farmers who always voted for the antisemites,” he added in what might seem a somewhat surprising turn. But he then clarified that he liked them “with the self-evident caveat that, as a village Jew put it who visited us while we sat *shivah*⁸⁷ for my mother, a *goy* has no *emunah*.”⁸⁸ In response to “Juden und Deutsche” in 1970, he reiterated this difference of perspective. He wanted to emphasise his admiration, he explained, “precisely because having been born a rural Jew in Hesse etc. my feelings regarding this matter, and presumably my thoughts too, differ from yours.” He then concluded his thanks for Scholem’s “generous gift” by professing that “it is a great honour for me that you count me among your friends.”⁸⁹

Strauss clearly maintained a healthy scepticism vis-à-vis the land of his origin and its people until the very end, as demonstrated not least by a remark made less than a year before his death. In January 1973, confirming the receipt of another volume of Scholem’s collected essays, *Judaica 3*, Strauss wrote that “I cannot help sharing your admiration for the intelligence of [the German late-Enlightenment philosopher Johann Georg] Hamann [1730–88] while detesting his lousy character ... Luther, Hamann and Heidegger,” he then added, “seem to be the most conspicuous examples of high class intelligence and low class character which are probably more characteristic of Germany than any other country.”⁹⁰

Whether Strauss had always felt as coolly about Germany as his comments to Scholem seem to imply may be a moot point. The recent publication of “The Re-education of Axis Countries Concerning the Jews,” a lecture he gave during the annual meeting of the Conference on Jewish Relations at the New School on 7 November 1943, illustrates that by this time he certainly had no qualms about calling a spade a spade. “I, being a Jew,” he explained on this occasion:

cannot help thinking constantly of one basic question which overshadows all other questions: how can a Jew who has some sense of honour, be interested at all in what *Germans* think about *Jews*? I cannot disregard, I am not *permitted* to disregard, for a single moment the fact that in the whole course of human history, there has been only one political community whose basic principle, whose *raison d’être*, whose very soul was nothing but the utter degradation of Jews and Judaism ...

if the objection is made that the Nazis are not Germany, I would answer that a nation in the political sense of the term is the politically relevant, the politically efficient *part* of the nation: when in a free election, about 45% of the Germans voted for Hitler, and the other 55% were in a condition of utter confusion and helplessness, then the 45% *are* the Germans – from any political point of view. Until the Germans have purified themselves by spontaneously giving us satisfaction for the unique humiliation they have offered to us, no self-respecting Jew can, and no Jew ought to, be interested in Germany.⁹¹

He conceded that he knew of German exiles who were more optimistic in their assessment of Germany's future. "I might be prepared, or perhaps in duty bound" to share this optimism, he then added, "if I were a German, if I had ever been a German."⁹²

Finally, a few remarks on the relationship of "Athens" and "Jerusalem" in this correspondence that may add both flavour and nuance to the bigger picture of Strauss as being "intellectually and temperamentally a splitter, not a lumper."⁹³ I want to offer a few observations regarding the way in which the intimate interaction of the various traditions close to Strauss's heart and mind is reflected not only in the content of some of the letters but also in a rather telling and occasionally quite moving way on the linguistic plane. To help make sense of the following it may be worth recalling how Strauss framed this issue in his much-cited Frank Cohen Memorial Lectures on "Jerusalem and Athens" (1967). "Is there," Strauss asked, "a notion, a word that points to the highest that both the Bible and the greatest works of the Greeks claim to convey? There is such a word: wisdom." Biblical wisdom and Greek wisdom both claimed to be the only true wisdom, so that each was in fact "denying to the other its claim to be wisdom in the strict and highest sense." Confronted with the incompatibility of these two claims, Strauss continued, "we are open to both and willing to listen to each ... Yet since we say that we wish to hear first and then to act or to decide," he concluded, "we have already decided in favor of Athens against Jerusalem."⁹⁴

Spontaneously, Strauss and Scholem wrote to each other in German. From the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s in particular, an increasing number of letters, especially on Strauss's part, were written in English. The odds are that this resulted simply from the fact that Strauss's secretary would not have been able to take down German letters for him. What I am more interested in, though, are the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin snippets that recur with increasing frequency as the correspondence progresses and especially during the last years of Strauss's life. We have already seen examples of Strauss introducing Hebrew terms in Hebrew script, first in 1959, when joking that in his case *on revient toujours* might be the more accurate translation for *teshuvah*, and then in 1965, in his response to Scholem's rejection of the notion of a meaningful German-Jewish dialogue prior to 1933. A similar, essentially straightforward usage of Hebrew terms in Hebrew script recurs on a number of occasions. Confirming the receipt of Scholem's long-awaited monograph on Sabbatai Zevi in September 1973, Strauss congratulated him in Hebrew.⁹⁵ Scholem in fact seems to have been one of the last people, possibly even the last person, Strauss wrote to before his death. Writing on 17 October 1973, the day before his death, Strauss closed by wishing Scholem "and *kol yisrael*⁹⁶ everything good and *shalom uvrakhah*."⁹⁷

While this is not without interest, it is hardly intellectually exciting. Rather more intriguing are a number of instances in which different linguistic strands become closely interwoven. Strauss repeatedly cited a motto attributed to the medieval Islamic scholar and philosopher Ibn Rushd/Averroës (1126–98): "may my soul die the death of the philosophers [*moriatur anima mea mortem philosophorum*]." On 22 November 1960, for instance, Strauss commented on the first German edition of Scholem's *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*. "Never before," he wrote:

have I been so deeply impressed by your thought. You even succeeded in warming and softening my cold and hard heart – especially by chapter 4 where you bring "home" to me your message by revealing the sources of such things as some smirof of erev Shabbat which I used to sing as a child in utter ignorance of their "background." I understood perhaps for the first time the infinite attraction exercised by this deep and rich world, your home, which enigmatically and indissolubly unites the universal and the particular,

the human and the Jewish ... You are a blessed man because you have achieved a harmony of mind and heart on such a high level, and you are a blessing to every Jew now living.

“Unfortunately,” he then continued, returning yet again to the fundamental antagonism between their approaches, “I am constitutionally unable to follow you – or if you wish, I too have sworn to a flag, the oath to the flag being (in the beautiful Arabic Latin created by some of our ancestors, which to Cicero would appear to be *in ultimitate turpitudinis* [of the utmost ugliness/depravity]): *moriatur anima mea mortem philosophorum*.”⁹⁸ This then is the oath of the philosopher that Strauss has sworn, the commitment that makes him “constitutionally unable” to follow Scholem’s path. It is the motto of an Islamic philosopher who presumably exerted greater influence on both Jewish and Christian thought than on his own culture and Strauss chooses to cite it in Latin, but not without stressing that it is “the beautiful Arabic Latin created by some of our ancestors,” i.e. with active Jewish participation.

Less than three weeks before his death, in his already cited response to Scholem’s monograph on Sabbatai Zevi, Strauss reiterated his stance. Not only had he learnt “an infinite variety of [in Hebrew script:] *pratim* from the book,” he explained; Scholem had also “succeeded to a considerable extent in dispelling my doubts on ‘Messianism and Judaism’. Whether you will succeed in dispelling them *completely*, remains to be seen. Our difference,” he then went on, “is partly due to the fact that you are more of a historian than I. – In former times I would have said that I am more of a philosopher than you are.” He then again enlisted Ibn Rushd’s motto yet this time introduced it with the Hebrew formula (in Hebrew script) “*lekayem mah she’amar ibn rushd: moriatur anima mea mortem philosophorum*.” Why would he have only said this “in former times”? What follows is a joke at the expense of Hans Jonas (1903–93): “but since your friend [in Hebrew script:] *lehavdil* Jonas has embarked on a self-advertisement campaign of his being a philosopher, I prefer being a shoemaker or pants cutter.”⁹⁹

Take, on the other hand, Strauss’s letter to Scholem of 19 March 1973 (it ends with the request, “Please stay in touch: that does [me] more good than all pills”). In it Strauss hastened to reassure Scholem that “What you say about yourself holds true for me too: I continue to belong to the Jews whatever the price. But,” and this time he switched to Greek (in Greek script), “Ioudaiois pollachos legetai¹⁰⁰ as Aristo would say.”¹⁰¹ To be sure, what we are looking at here is private correspondence; these are texts that were not intended for publication. Even so, Leo Strauss’s finely tuned linguistic and philological sensibilities make the assumption almost inconceivable that all this should be pure coincidence, that he should not have reflected, at least in some measure, even on his occasionally playful use of language for exclusively private purposes. In this sense, the observations we have just made are surely intriguing. It would seem that, to Strauss’s mind, the philosopher’s creed was best expressed in Judaeo-Arabic Latin and prefaced with a Hebrew formula while a profession of Jewish identity was best qualified in Aristotelian Greek. Strauss offers what is perhaps the most fascinating example of this play with linguistic planes in a letter he wrote to Scholem on 7 July 1973. “I am now living entirely in [in Hebrew script:] *chokhmat javan* again.”¹⁰² Athens does apparently prevail; yet it would seem that this supremacy can only be aptly expressed in the language of Jerusalem.

Michael Zank may well be right in questioning whether “Strauss’s thought is driven *throughout* [my emphasis] by the desire to understand the *conditio iudaica*.”¹⁰³

That Jewish concerns in general and more specifically Strauss's own German-Jewish background and the historical experience of Auschwitz helped form his outlook in a variety of subtle yet crucial ways, however, seems to me to be undeniable and the point that one can only categorise Strauss neatly as a reactionary if one radically divorces him from this context is well made. In this sense, let me give the last word to Strauss himself. Writing to Scholem on 19 March 1973, some six months before his death, he made a remark about Maimonides that surely applies to Strauss himself in equal measure: "His conservatism is only the foreground, albeit the indeed indispensable foreground of something very very different."¹⁰⁴

Notes

1. Aschheim, *Beyond the Border*, 82.
2. Zuckert, "Straussians," 263.
3. *Ibid.*, 264.
4. *Ibid.*, 286.
5. Kraemer, "Medieval Arabic Enlightenment," 141–2.
6. Batnitzky, "Leo Strauss," 61.
7. For a convenient collection of his texts on Strauss, see Smith, *Reading Leo Strauss*.
8. Cited in Fuller, "Political Thought and Liberal Education," 262.
9. Batnitzky, "Leo Strauss," 58.
10. *Ibid.*, 60.
11. Galston, "Leo Strauss's Qualified Embrace," 214.
12. Behnegar, "Strauss and Social Science," 229.
13. Fuller, "Political Thought and Liberal Education," 253.
14. Batnitzky, *Leo Strauss and Emmanuel Levinas*, 209.
15. Smith, "Drury's Strauss," 70.
16. Drury, "Reply," 74.
17. Smith, "Drury's Strauss," 69.
18. Drury, "Reply," 73.
19. Aschheim, *Beyond the Border*, 91.
20. *Ibid.*, 92.
21. *Ibid.*, 111.
22. *Ibid.*, 92.
23. Benjamin and Scholem, *Briefwechsel*, 192–3. Smith's statement that the correspondence between Scholem and Benjamin is "one of the great literary correspondences of this or any other age" (Smith, *Reading Leo Strauss*, 43) can hardly be reiterated often enough.
24. Strauss, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 725.
25. Strauss, "Why We Remain Jews," 52.
26. *Ibid.*, 77.
27. Smith, "How Jewish Was Leo Strauss?" 13–4.
28. Biale, "Leo Strauss," 34.
29. *Ibid.*, 38.
30. *Ibid.*, 39.
31. Smith, "How Jewish Was Leo Strauss?" 14.
32. Strauss, "Why We Remain Jews," 49.
33. *Ibid.*, 60.
34. *Ibid.*, 74.
35. *Ibid.*, 73.
36. *Ibid.*, 65.
37. Adorno and Horkheimer, *Briefwechsel*, 84. For the background here cf. Jacobs, "Horkheimer, Adorno and the Significance of Antisemitism."
38. Strauss, "Why We Remain Jews," 73.
39. Smith, *Reading Leo Strauss*, 44–5.
40. Aschheim, *Beyond the Border*, 91.
41. Zank, "Beyond the 'Theologico-political Predicament'." I am grateful to Michael Zank for allowing me to cite from this paper, which is currently being revised for publication.

42. Sheppard, *Leo Strauss*, 3.
43. Smith, "Outlines," 20.
44. Marcuse and Heidegger, "An Exchange of Letters," 30–1.
45. Cf. Wolin, "Introduction," 19.
46. Cf. Fischer, "Carl Schmitt."
47. Aschheim, *Beyond the Border*, 117–8. Smith seems to be implying something similar when discussing the contention that "liberalism may be as prone to thoughtlessness as authoritarianism." With this insight, Smith suggests, "Strauss had discovered what would later become known as 'the dialectic of the Enlightenment'" (Smith, "Outlines," 27). It would be interesting to know why Smith opted to refer to "'the dialectic of the Enlightenment'" at this juncture, rather than "the 'dialectic of enlightenment'".
48. For the suggestion that Strauss may have appropriated forms of rhetorical antisemitism for tactical reasons, see Sheppard, *Leo Strauss*, 41–4.
49. Strauss, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 699–772.
50. Sheppard, *Leo Strauss*, 100.
51. Kraemer, "Medieval Arabic Enlightenment," 138.
52. Tanguay, *Leo Strauss*, 3.
53. Smith, "Gershom Scholem and Leo Strauss."
54. Smith, *Reading Leo Strauss*, 43–64.
55. *Ibid.*, 44.
56. *Ibid.*, 16.
57. Smith, "Outlines," 20.
58. Sheppard, *Leo Strauss*, 111.
59. *Ibid.*, 118.
60. Smith, *Reading Leo Strauss*, 44.
61. Cited in *ibid.*, 43; Cf. Strauss, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 740.
62. Strauss, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 700.
63. *Ibid.*, 725.
64. *Ibid.*, 769.
65. This was presumably in response to the receipt of Scholem's "Zehn unhistorische Sätze über Kabbala." On this text cf. Biale, "Gershom Scholem's Ten Unhistorical Aphorisms on Kabbalah."
66. Strauss, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 738
67. Smith, *Reading Leo Strauss*, 47.
68. *Ibid.*, 16.
69. Strauss, "Why We Remain Jews," 78–9.
70. Even so, we do know that Strauss also drew the attention of trusted colleagues like Eric Voegelin to Scholem's published work. Cf. Strauss's letter to Voegelin of 9 May 1943 in Emberley and Cooper, *Faith and Political Philosophy*, 16.
71. Strauss, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 722–3
72. *Ibid.*, 717.
73. *Ibid.*, 718.
74. *Ibid.*, 720.
75. *Ibid.*, 721.
76. *Ibid.*, 719.
77. *Ibid.*, 720.
78. *Ibid.*, 728. Strauss eventually went to Jerusalem as a visiting professor in 1954/5. The lecture series, "What Is Political Philosophy?" (1959) was a revised version of the Judah L. Magnes Lectures he gave during this stay in Jerusalem. Cf. Smith, "Outlines," 34–5.
79. Perhaps one of the most impressive and touching examples for this is the poem he wrote in 1967 in response to Ingeborg Bachmann's text "Was ich in Rom sah und hörte" [What I saw and heard in Rome]. Cf. "An Ingeborg Bachmann. Nach ihrem Besuch im Ghetto von Rom" [To Ingeborg Bachmann. After her visit to the ghetto of Rome], in Scholem, *The Fullness of Time*, 122–5; Weigel, "Gershom Scholem und Ingeborg Bachmann."
80. It seems worth quoting these little texts to give a sense of their flavour and of Scholem's technique in producing them. The first piece is based on a relatively well-known letter (27 September 1827) to the literary translator, Carl Jacob Ludwig Iken (1789–1841), discussing the third act (the so-called "Helena Act") of *Faust Part Two*. I have italicised the direct quotations. Scholem switched them around and the numbers in square brackets indicate the order in which they appear in the original letter.

[2] *Not least because of other dark passages in earlier and later poems I want to raise the following [issue]. Quite a few (!) of our experiences cannot be squarely expressed and conveyed directly. I have therefore for a long time now resorted to the means of revealing to those paying attention the more obscure meaning by juxtaposing images that mirror each other, as it were.*

My right honourable friend will soon find more about such noteworthy connections and recurrent reflections in a publication by Leo Strauss with the telling title: “Persecution and the Art of Writing.” Its still youthful author may substantiate his thesis in a somewhat surprising manner – based mainly on Jewish authors of the middling ages that for a variety of reasons are as close to him as we find them remote. Even so, [4] *the participation of such young men is indeed gratifying [3] for it bears testimony to increasing education and in so doing leads us to fresh prosperity.*

[1] *That we educate ourselves is the main demand; whence we educate ourselves would not matter if we did not have to fear that we might mis-educate ourselves by drawing on wrong models.* (Strauss, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 730)

The second piece is based on a letter (4 December 1827) by Goethe to his long-standing friend and collaborator, the composer Carl Friedrich Zelter (1758–1832), in which he comments on Sir Walter Scott’s *Life of Napoleon*:

It is indeed evident, though, that he speaks as a righteous and polite man who strives to judge the [i.e. Napoleon’s] deeds in a pious and conscientious way and carefully avoids all Machiavellianism. Yet without it one would hardly want to concern oneself with world history.

If, my loyal friend, [your work] ... should leave you the time for some not very extensive but rather difficult reading, I should like to alert you as a case in point to the studies on Hobbes and political philosophy more generally by the young Jewish Dr Leo Strauss. I recently also made the superb chap Iken aware of him. In this case freedom is an obstacle: recently he has the cranky idea of publishing in Hebrew. Your enlightened Jewesses in Berlin will hardly be able to offer you any help in understanding that. (Strauss, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 730–1)

For the originals cf. Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, 546–9, 570–2.

81. Scholem, *Judaica* 2, 20–46.
82. Strauss, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 759.
83. Scholem, “Wider den Mythos vom deutsch-jüdischen ‘Gespräch,’” and “Noch einmal: das deutsch-jüdische Gespräch,” reprinted in *Judaica* 2, 7–19.
84. Strauss, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 753.
85. Scholem, *Judaica* 2, 9.
86. *Ibid.*, 11.
87. The three italicised terms are in Hebrew script.
88. Strauss, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 753.
89. *Ibid.*, 759.
90. *Ibid.*, 766.
91. Strauss, “Re-education,” 534–5.
92. *Ibid.*, 538.
93. Smith, “Leo Strauss,” 150.
94. Strauss, “Jerusalem and Athens,” 46. For a slightly different version of these two lectures, cf. Strauss, *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy*, 147–73.
95. Strauss, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 770.
96. Here too, the italicised terms are in Hebrew script.
97. Strauss, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 771.
98. *Ibid.*, 742.
99. *Ibid.*, 770–1. None too surprisingly, perhaps, given the nature of the “Strauss wars,” the “playful and somewhat mischievous side of Strauss’s personality” (Smith, “Outlines,” 15) has most certainly drawn rather less attention than it deserves.
100. Jews are spoken of in many ways, i.e., what being a Jew actually means is open to interpretation.

101. Strauss, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 769.
102. *Ibid.*, 770.
103. Zank, "Review," 441.
104. Strauss, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 769.

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