

# Introduction

## *The Significance of Strauss's Notebook on Plato's Euthyphro*

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### THE CURIOUS ABSENCE OF THE *EUTHYPHRO*

Among the philosophers of the twentieth century, Leo Strauss (1899–1973) stands out because he turned his most serious attention to the relationship between “Athens” and “Jerusalem.” Directly or indirectly, the tension between Socratic philosophy and revealed religion is at issue in all of Strauss’s writings. As he himself noted, “the theologico-political problem” remained “*the theme*” of all of his “investigations.”<sup>1</sup> Plato’s *Euthyphro*—*the* Platonic dialogue on piety—is, therefore, most relevant to Strauss’s theme. What is more, that dialogue played a central role in Strauss’s understanding of “what philosophy is or what the philosopher is”: the *Theaetetus-Sophist-Statesman* trilogy of dialogues articulated one pole or charm that philosophy was to resist while the *Euthyphro* represented the other.<sup>2</sup> The study of the dialogue also enhanced Strauss’s understanding of certain modern tendencies and in particular assisted him in his critical examination of a new, religious kind of political science.<sup>3</sup>

It is striking then that a discussion of the *Euthyphro* is almost completely absent from writings published by Strauss. While in his work from the early 1930s he refers occasionally to a specific passage in the dialogue (7b–d) to highlight the nature and subject of all fundamental disagreements, references to the dialogue are rare even in places where one would expect them,

such as *The City and Man* and *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy*.<sup>4</sup> In his courses and seminars, too, he rarely discusses the *Euthyphro*.<sup>5</sup> While Strauss lectured twice on the *Euthyphro* (about which more below), he taught the dialogue only once, in the spring semester of 1948 at the New School for Social Research in New York.<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, this course took place before there were common class recordings and transcriptions.<sup>7</sup> As far as we know, no one alive today attended that course, and no written record by any students is to be found.

#### STRAUSS'S *EUTHYPHRO* NOTEBOOK

And yet we have something even better: Strauss's own notebook containing a detailed commentary on the dialogue. On thirty-two pages, most of which are accompanied by additional commentary on the verso pages, of a spiral "Pen-Tab" notebook, Strauss gives a line-by-line interpretation of the *Euthyphro*. The running commentary on the text is frequently interspersed with long summaries of the argument and the action of the dialogue. In all likelihood, these summaries served as Strauss's introductions to the individual sessions of the seminar he taught in 1948. This course had the heading "Readings in Philosophy: An Introduction to Philosophy, Especially Political Philosophy" and the following description: "The primary aim of this course is to show students how to read a philosophical classic. Interpretation of two of the smaller Platonic dialogues."<sup>8</sup> Judging by the contents of the notebook, including the sheets and notes inserted in it,<sup>9</sup> the course may have included, in addition to a thorough consideration of the *Euthyphro*, a brief discussion of the problem of piety in the first book of Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, an examination of Plato's *Apology of Socrates*, and a close reading of Plato's *Crito* (a line-by-line commentary on the *Crito* immediately follows the *Euthyphro* commentary in the notebook).

On two sheets included in the archival folder containing the *Euthyphro* notebook, Strauss discusses the history of ideas in a way that leads up to the question of Socrates's piety. The history of ideas is "the account, in chronological order, of the changes in human thought concerning the whole of human life or concerning the whole *tout court*." Such history deserves "methodical priority" over the sociology of ideas or any other explanation of ideas because "one cannot explain a thing before one knows what the thing to be explained is." "Interpretation has to precede explanation." But if the history

of ideas is “centered around history of philosophy,” “what is the relation of history of philosophy to philosophy itself?” Philosophy is “the attempt to replace opinions about the whole by science, or evident knowledge, of the whole,” which means that “philosophy itself is a-historical.” But the fundamental difference between history and philosophy is no longer recognized: “today we are confronted with a fusion of philosophy and history”; “today, it seems impossible to carry through the distinction between philosophy and history.” In trying to understand this fact, “one is eventually driven to assume a fundamental difference between modern thought and pre-modern thought.” In delineating the peculiarity of premodern thought, Strauss takes up Socrates, “a turning point” in the history of political thought. Socrates “turned from the universe, from the divine things to the human things.” He did this, according to this account by Strauss, “for reason of piety: he was the founder of an emphatically pious, ‘religious’ tradition.” “Yet, Socrates was indicted and condemned and executed for his impiety. Should there be a connection between the emphatically pious presentation of his teaching and the fact of his condemnation? The question is usually not even raised: the prevalent teaching is to minimize the importance of the impiety charge and to assume that Socrates was persecuted for reasons of no fundamental nature.” Strauss notes that Plato’s *Apology of Socrates* shows that Socrates “did not believe in the gods worshipped by the city of Athens,” though this is “somewhat disguised by the story of the oracle in Delphi.” This “does not mean that Socrates was an atheist, of course—but it certainly means that he was not a martyr for his convictions, a religious zealot. His relation to the public was totally different from that of a religious zealot.” It is through such considerations that Strauss would have presented to his students the need for an interpretation of the *Euthyphro*.<sup>10</sup>

#### STRAUSS’S “SHIPWRECK”

Apart from this historiographic motive, Strauss had his own interest—as a philosopher, not only as a historian of ideas—in an interpretation of the *Euthyphro*. To explain the nature of Strauss’s interest in the dialogue, it might help to go back two years. The summer of 1946 was a period of rethinking for Strauss, a period in which he experienced what he himself calls a “shipwreck,” “a radical dissatisfaction” with himself.<sup>11</sup> The rethinking was spurred or facilitated by Strauss’s confrontation with Kierkegaard

and Pascal, who made him realize he needed to reexamine the basis of the philosophical life.<sup>12</sup> The reconsideration would eventually lead to the conclusion, indicated in a lecture in 1946, that a “philosophy which believes that it can refute the possibility of revelation—and a philosophy which does not believe that: this is the real meaning of *la querelle des anciens et des modernes*.” Strauss implies that it may have been the ancients who believed that such a radical refutation was possible.<sup>13</sup> It is hard to imagine a better way to explore this provocative possibility than by studying closely Strauss’s commentary on the *Euthyphro*.

While Strauss’s 1948 “Reason and Revelation” lecture is likely the best expression of his rethinking and his overcoming of the “shipwreck,” his notebook on Plato’s *Euthyphro*—dating from the same year—is a remarkable testament to his endeavor to unfold the meaning of both philosophy and revelation. In a note from August 11, 1946, Strauss wrote that “the topic ‘Socrates’ and ‘Introduction to pol[itical] philos[ophy]’” had become much less important than “*Philosophy and The Law* or (perhaps) *Philosophy or The divine guidance*.”<sup>14</sup> The *Euthyphro* notebook, however, shows that these themes belong together. The question of Socrates’s piety and his stance on orthodoxy is closely related to the question of whether any traditional doctrine can be absolutely binding. While the *Euthyphro* notebook refers to monotheism or the Bible only occasionally (as does the posthumously published *Euthyphro* lecture in which Strauss warns against seeing philosophy “through Biblical glasses,” though he also allows himself to refer to “our Saviour” by way of a quotation from Thomas More, see p. 94), Strauss writes, and underlines, the following sentence at the top of a sheet (inserted in the notebook) with the heading, “Plan of exposition of idea of *Euthyphron*”: “Restate the whole argument with a view to monotheism.”<sup>15</sup>

It seems to have been during this period of 1946–48 that Strauss thought through the questionableness, and established the solidity, of the natural certainty of things, as well as grappled intensively with the problem of intelligibility and ideas: “there must be necessity at the bottom of arbitrariness: there must be ideas determining even the will of God” (p. 39). Both the *Euthyphro* notebook and the posthumously published *Euthyphro* lecture deal directly with the question of intelligibility and the permanence (or lack thereof) of the class character of things.<sup>16</sup> This question is related to but not the same as the questions that arise from the first definition of piety in the

dialogue (to be pious is to imitate the gods): What is a god? What is the most perfect being?

#### THE CORE ISSUES OF THE NOTEBOOK

The notebook raises these questions and treats them within the framework of the “problem of justice” and the “problem of piety”; these two problems are present as headings throughout the notebook (along with that of “Socrates’s crime”). The relation between these two problems, in turn, accounts for Plato’s art of writing or the second, subordinate pair that structures Strauss’s notebook: the argument and the action of the dialogue in their interrelation. But perhaps the most significant feature of the notebook is its treatment of the relation of philosophy to justice. In the notebook, after remarking that “the only possible premise” is that the gods give all good things to men “out of pure kindness” (rather than because the gods need men’s services), Strauss emphasizes that what “ultimately counts” is “justice proper”: the gods demand men’s gratitude to them in order to train men to be grateful to their fellow human beings. If we take this as a provisional indication of the relation of justice to piety, we can now highlight a related remark on the relation between philosophy and justice: “While in itself philosophy is primary, πρὸς ἡμᾶς [for us] justice is primary.”<sup>17</sup> What is this “primacy of justice”? Strauss explains, “philosophy requires a certain preparation, a moral preparation, in fact, a conversion of the whole soul → all Socratic dialogues present this preparation (various stages) or rather they assist us in our preparation: how we can acquire a philosophic attitude—what obstacles we have to overcome in order to become philosophers—from what claims we have to liberate ourselves if we want to become philosophers.” The meaning of the primacy of justice is that the philosophical life requires and presupposes the overcoming of “the prejudices nourished by the passions, by our self-assertiveness,” prejudices that lead to misconceptions concerning the (in)justice of divine worship and of divine punishment.<sup>18</sup>

The posthumously published lecture, for which the notebook is a kind of matrix, covers much of the same ground as the notebook with regard to these core issues. The notebook, however, is more emphatic and clearer about the greater and more evident need for philosophizing than for justice

or piety; the notebook all but begins with the radical question “why philosophy?” and later raises explicitly the questions “why piety?” and “why justice?” whereas the lecture does not do so. In the notebook, Strauss underscores that “the one thing needful is to philosophize,” while in the lecture he never mentions the evident need for philosophy and rarely even speaks of philosophy (though he does so very conspicuously when he raises the question of the piety of the philosopher). Finally, the notebook is more explicit about the implication of the ignorance and injustice of the gods, and hence it explains the arguments about making an angry being worse by appeasing that being, about the absurdity of the high serving the low, and about the questionable wisdom of administering (divine) punishment by inflicting misfortunes on human beings. Only in the notebook does Strauss underscore, having gone through these arguments, that “the pious has no other reason than the inscrutable will of the gods” (making this point three times).<sup>19</sup>

#### THE HISTORY OF STRAUSS'S *EUTHYPHRO* LECTURES

Having provided these initial suggestions as to the philosophic significance of the notebook (see part II, chapter 1 below), we now turn to the historical background of the posthumously published lecture that grew out of the 1948 notebook.<sup>20</sup> In February 1952, Strauss delivered a lecture, “Plato’s *Euthyphron*,” at St. John’s College, Annapolis.<sup>21</sup> Various typescripts based on a now lost recording circulated widely among students and friends beginning in the mid-1950s.<sup>22</sup> It appears, however, that the 1952 lecture was not the first occasion on which Strauss spoke publicly about the *Euthyphro*. In a letter to a fellow student from August 13, 1951, Leo Weinstein—one of Strauss’s closest students at the time—mentions an article Strauss planned to write on Plato’s *Euthyphro* “based on a lecture he delivered last fall” (placing it in the fall of 1950). While nothing more is currently known about this first lecture, a set of handwritten notes among Strauss’s papers bears the heading “Ad lecture on *Euthyphron*.”<sup>23</sup> It is likely that these notes form the basis of the earlier of the two lectures. Even though the draft for the first lecture resembles in some important features the second lecture (from 1952), Strauss here follows the notebook more closely both in language and in substance. The earlier lecture therefore marks an important intermediate step in the development of Strauss’s presentation of the *Euthyphro*. As a

kind of summary, the 1950 lecture compiles many of the results of Strauss's 1948 notebook. At the same time, it does not make any use of what may be the rhetorical hallmark of the 1952 lecture: the concept of an "irritating half-truth."<sup>24</sup> In light of Strauss's outlines for the lecture,<sup>25</sup> it becomes clear that the second lecture comes closer than the first to what Strauss might have seen as the right way of understanding the argument and the action of Plato's *Euthyphro*. One might object that the fact that Strauss never published an essay on the *Euthyphro* indicates that he was not satisfied with his reading of the dialogue. This is, however, only part of the story.

Strauss considered publishing an essay on Plato's *Euthyphro* on at least three occasions and in at least three different books.<sup>26</sup> He first raised the possibility of making his interpretation public in the early 1950s. In the aforementioned letter from August 1951, Leo Weinstein reports that Strauss was entertaining the idea of including in the planned *Persecution and the Art of Writing* "articles on Maimonides, Spinoza, Persecution, classical political philosophy," and "perhaps a new one on P.'s *Euthyphro* based on a lecture he delivered last fall."<sup>27</sup> Had Strauss followed through with this plan, the essay on the *Euthyphro* would have been his first published piece devoted to an interpretation of a Platonic dialogue.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, *Persecution and the Art of Writing* would have been a book of a very different character than the one Strauss ultimately published under the same title: including "On Classical Political Philosophy" (1945) and the lecture on the *Euthyphro* would have broadened visibly the historical scope of the book and the argument it unfolds. It is also likely that the article on the *Euthyphro* Strauss had in mind for *Persecution and the Art of Writing* would have been somewhat closer in character to the first (1950) than to the second lecture (1952): while the early lecture contains an explicit discussion of the hermeneutical challenges of Plato's dialogues as well as of the political and moral reasons for the indirect way of teaching and writing employed by Plato, the later lecture is almost completely silent about these topics.<sup>29</sup>

In 1956, Strauss's interest in publishing an essay on Plato's *Euthyphro* reemerged.<sup>30</sup> Fred D. Wieck,<sup>31</sup> a fellow émigré from Berlin and one of the major figures in US academic publishing after the Second World War, had approached Strauss with the idea of publishing Strauss's 1950 lecture series "Jerusalem and Athens"<sup>32</sup> as a book with the University of Michigan Press, where he served as the director.<sup>33</sup> Strauss not only immediately responded favorably to Wieck's plan but in March 1957 even signed an advance contract

for the project that was approved by the executive board of the press.<sup>34</sup> According to Strauss's plan, the projected volume, titled *Jerusalem and Athens*, was to include the eponymous lecture series that had drawn Wieck's interest as well as the then-unpublished lecture "On the Interpretation of Genesis"<sup>35</sup> and, finally, the lecture "On Plato's *Euthyphron*."<sup>36</sup> This combination of the three different lectures indicates the central role Strauss assigned to the *Euthyphro* for his articulation of the proper relation of revealed religion and philosophy. The first chapter of *Jerusalem and Athens* would have presented the issue in question from both sides, as it were; the second chapter would have treated the Bible on its own terms; and the third chapter undoubtedly would have attempted to understand, as Strauss puts it at the end of his 1952 lecture, "philosophy as it is," that is, it would have attempted to avoid seeing philosophy "from the outset through Biblical glasses."<sup>37</sup> Strauss's intention to present the duality of "Jerusalem" and "Athens" in this tripartite manner—as opposed to a monographic treatment of the issue—was so firm that he consented to the abandonment of the entire project when Wieck demanded a "single treatment of the single theme." The three lectures seem to belong so closely together that Strauss even refused Wieck's generous offer to publish the lecture series "Jerusalem and Athens" on its own as an exceptionally short book.<sup>38</sup>

Almost a decade after the failed project with the University of Michigan Press, Strauss again considered publishing his lecture on Plato's *Euthyphro*. In a letter to Allan Bloom from July 21, 1967, Strauss writes, "I just thought of my lecture on the *Euthyphro*. Is there any chance of it being published? Or should I consider publishing it as a part of *Liberalism Ancient and Modern*?"<sup>39</sup> It is unclear why the idea to publish "On Plato's *Euthyphron*" on its own or in the context of the planned collection of essays came to nothing yet again. Unlike *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, *Liberalism Ancient and Modern* would not have dramatically changed in character by the inclusion of an essay on the *Euthyphro*, since Plato is already represented in that book by a chapter on the *Minos* (with its treatment of piety) as well as by a discussion of the *Protagoras*.

It is possible that Strauss hesitated about publishing the lecture because it is too radical or far-reaching on the question of reason and revelation, though it is less so than the notebook. As Strauss puts it in the lecture, "the *Euthyphron* is an unusually radical dialogue" and it "suggests the most uncompromising formulation of the problem of piety,"<sup>40</sup> though in the



lecture itself Strauss is relatively reserved about identifying and spelling out the problem. In the notebook Strauss repeatedly refers to the problem (six times), but it is only in the additional private notes (perhaps not delivered in class) that Strauss states the problem directly and comprehensively: “Problem of piety: Piety = right attitude to the gods—but anthropomorphic gods are essentially hostile to each other → they are unjust → piety and justice are incompatible. But what about non-anthropomorphic gods? No piety possible or required. Above all: They would be just by participating of justice—hence be less just than αὐτό τὸ δίκαιον [the just itself].”<sup>41</sup>

#### THE PRESENT VOLUME

In addition to the 1948 notebook (together with a selection from Strauss’s separate notes on the *Euthyphro*), this volume includes the draft of the first lecture on the *Euthyphro* (1950), outlines for the second lecture (1952), and the text of the second lecture itself. We also make available Strauss’s marginalia to the *Euthyphro* in his copy of the Burnet edition of Plato. The marginalia almost certainly date from the period of the composition of the notebook (see Strauss’s reference in the notebook to a note in his own copy of the *Euthyphro*). Strauss’s editorial decisions in his annotations (e.g., salvaging ὀρθῶς [correctly] at 4b1 and εἴρηται γάρ [for that is what I said] at 7b1) conform with the translation by Seth Benardete, also featured (with minor revisions) in the present volume.<sup>42</sup> The volume also includes a commentary on the *Euthyphro* part of the notebook by Hannes Kerber, comments by Svetozar Minkov on Strauss’s *Crito* notes, and an essay by Wayne Ambler on Strauss’s interpretation of the *Euthyphro* in the second lecture.

#### Notes

1. Preface to the American edition of *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes: Its Basis and Its Genesis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), paragraph 3. See the letter to Gershom Scholem (November 17, 1972): “I am glad that you received my two books on Xenophon’s Socrates. They are not the last thing I have written, but I believe they are the best and part of it may be of interest to you. They develop at some length, if not *eo nomine*, what I indicated in *The City and Man* p. 61 regarding the difference between Socrates and The Bible”

(Leo Strauss, *Gesammelte Schriften* [GS], 3rd edition, ed. Heinrich Meier [Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2022–], 3:764–65).

2. *What Is Political Philosophy? and Other Studies* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1959), 39–40. In a letter to Seth Benardete from October 25, 1954 (which also mentions that Strauss and Benardete had studied the *Euthyphro* together; see nn. 19 and 42 below), Strauss writes that the

two dialogues [*Sophist* and *Statesman*] together are of course the φιλόσοφος

[philosopher]. It seems to be that the Platonic notion of “philosophy” is nowhere as clearly indicated as in the 2 dialogues taken together. Philosophy is striving for knowledge of the whole; but the whole consists of parts; we have only knowledge of some parts, and hence imperfect knowledge of these very parts. . . . We may call, not the τέχναι [arts], but the thought charmed by the τέχναι [arts], σοφιστική [sophistry]. At the other pole, we find another charm: the charm caused by the awareness of the whole which is divined from awareness of the parts—“mysticism,” the εὐσέβεια [piety] of the *Euthyphro*. Something is sensed in εὐσέβεια [piety], but it is falsely articulated. Philosophy is the right mean between cocksure (ἀνδρεία [courage]) sophistry and fearing and trembling (σώφρων [moderate] εὐσέβεια [piety]).

See also, in Strauss's posthumously published lecture (1952) on the *Euthyphro*:

When speaking of the nature of the philosopher, i.e., on the most exalted level of the discussion of morality in the *Republic*, Socrates does not even mention piety. In spite or because of this, there is no Platonic dialogue devoted to wisdom. Yet wisdom is a kind of science, and there is a dialogue devoted to science, the *Theaetetus*. Now the *Euthyphron* and the *Theaetetus* belong together, not merely because they deal with particular virtues, but also because they are contemporaneous: the two conversations take place about the same time, after the accusation and before the condemnation. (See I.2, p. 81 below)

The *Euthyphro* and the *Theaetetus* take place on the same day; the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* take place on the next day.

3. In considering Eric Voegelin's 1952 *New Science of Politics*, Strauss notes, “Voegelin's contention: political things can be understood ultimately only as representing transcendent reality—i.e. not as attempts of human beings to order their affairs in regard to the happiness = the end of man as knowable to man →

absorption of political things by religions—just as in other modern theories, political things lose their identity by being absorbed by sociology or psychology or psychoanalysis. Also: absorption of philosophy or science by religion or theology (→ classical philosophy is the explication of the religious experience). The only basis for that: kinship between experience and *noēsis*—but: *noēsis*, *logismos* ≠ the division of ‘experience’ from *logismos* in Voegelin = return to position of *Euthyphro*” (“Leo Strauss' Anmerkungen zu Eric Voegelins *The New Science of Politics*,” presented by Emmanuel Patard in *Glaube und Wissen: Der Briefwechsel zwischen Eric Voegelin und Leo Strauss von 1934 bis 1964*, ed. Peter Opitz, with the collaboration of E. Patard [Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2010], 145). Strauss devoted a considerable part of his “Basic Principles of Classical Political Philosophy” Autumn 1961 course to a consideration of Voegelin's position.

4. “Notes on Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*,” in Heinrich Meier's *Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss: The Hidden Dialogue*, trans. J. Harvey Lomax (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 114, and *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes: Its Basis and Its Genesis*, 141, 143. *The Argument and the Action of Plato's “Laws”* has an important remark on the synonymous use of εὐσέβεια and ὁσιότης in *Euthyphro* 5c9–d7, but it contains no elaboration. One would expect that *On Tyranny*, which has a chapter entitled “Piety and Law,” would have a reference to the *Euthyphro*, especially since *On Tyranny* contains references to at least fourteen Platonic dialogues, but that is not the case.

5. In lecture 12 of the 1962 “Natural Right” course Strauss stresses the lasting historical significance of the *Euthyphro* in referring to Francisco Suarez: “He [Suarez] fights against two fronts, as far as the natural law teaching is concerned. One front, one school which he fights, says that nothing is good and bad intrinsically but only qua commanded or forbidden by God. This is a very old question—the Platonic dialogue called *Euthyphro* where this question is discussed in this form: do the gods love the just because it is intrinsically just or is the just just because the gods established it as just? This is fundamentally the same question.

The other wing against which he fights says the realization that something is intrinsically good or bad is the natural law. In other words, the natural law is the same as natural reason, a view to which you find an allusion, incidentally, in Locke's *Civil Government*, somewhere. So no extrinsic cause outside of man's natural reason is required for making it a natural law." See, for further references, <http://leostrauss.transcripts.uchicago.edu/query?report=concordance&method=proxy&q=euthyphro> (in one of which instances Strauss compares Euthyphro to Tartuffe).

6. *New School Bulletin* 4, no. 37 (May 12, 1947): 38. Cf. also *New School Bulletin* 5, no. 1 (September 1, 1947): 49. It is possible that there was a previous lecture course on the *Euthyphro* as Strauss's student David Lowenthal wrote in an email to the editors on May 29, 2017: "My first course with Strauss in 1945 [*sic*] was on the combination of *Apology* and *Crito* with *Euthyphro*. It was a lecture course, not a seminar."

7. Strauss's students began to record and transcribe his courses not much earlier than the winter quarter of 1954; it appears that before that students only typed up their notes. The collection of those audio files and transcripts is substantial: of the thirty-nine courses Strauss taught at the University of Chicago, 34 were recorded and transcribed; after Strauss left Chicago, courses taught at Claremont Men's College and St. John's College were also recorded, a practice that continued until his death in 1973. Starting in 2014, the existing audio files were made available on the Leo Strauss Center's website (<http://leostrausscenter.uchicago.edu/courses>).

8. *New School Bulletin* 4, no. 37 (May 12, 1947): 38.

9. Leo Strauss Papers, box 18, folder 15, Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library. See below, appendix 1, for a sample of some of the more striking passages in the additional notes.

10. For a full transcription of Strauss's considerations, see appendix 1 below (note 16), pp. 107–9.

11. Strauss to Karl Löwith, August 15, 1946 (GS, 3:660).

12. "Impressed by Kierkegaard and recalling my earlier doubts, I must raise the question once again and as sharply as possible whether the right and the necessity of philosophy are completely evident" (archival note from August 11, 1946; Heinrich Meier, *Leo Strauss and the Theologico-Political Problem* [Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2006], 29). In the fall of 1947, Strauss taught a New School seminar on "Philosophy and Revelation" that had Pascal and Kierkegaard, among others, on the syllabus. Some of Strauss's notes on Pascal are found in Leo Strauss Papers (box 20, folder 10).

13. "Notes on Philosophy and Revelation" in Meier, *Leo Strauss and the Theologico-Political Problem*, 177. The implication is made clear in a note related to Strauss's study of Spinoza in connection with the 1946 "Jerusalem and Athens" lecture. Strauss explains:

1) Modern philosophy has to admit the limitation of philosophy; it cannot maintain the possibility of refuting revelation, whereas classical philosophy does not admit this limitation of philosophy and it does maintain the possibility of refuting revelation. Why? 2) Classical philosophy implies natural theology—it does not suspend judgment on God, as the "critical" or "positive" philosophy of modern times must. It is true, modern philosophy prior to Kant had natural theology and attacked sometimes, on the basis of that natural theology, revelation. But: the classical concept of natural theology differs from the traditional and modern one as follows—it consists of two parts: a) elaboration of what "God" means—antedates philosophy proper, is practically identical with fundamental reflection of philosophy; b) demonstration of existence of God—as the culmination of philosophy. a) question of right life—σοφία [wisdom]—idea of σοφός [wise one]: the σοφός' [wise one's] pity for the μωροί [fools], no strict demands on them, indifference to them—connection between love and need → God ens perfectissimus [most perfect being] = sapientissimus [most wise]

cannot be the God of the Bible. God of the Bible presupposes cosmic significance of man's conduct—a fantastic, if intelligible, presupposition. b) since rejection of revelation precedes philosophy, it does not determine the structure and task of philosophy—it does not compel philosophy to be dogmatic—modern philosophy wants to exclude a priori the possibility that there is place left for revelation → system: identity of φύσει πρώτα [first things by nature] with πρώτα πρὸς ἡμᾶς [first things for us] (idea Dei [idea of God] = origins and foundations totius naturæ sunt notissimæ [of the whole nature are most knowable]). For classical philosophy, the argument against revelation was the actual life of investigation, not any specific arguments which could always be questioned. (Leo Strauss Papers, box 16, folder 11)

14. Meier, *Leo Strauss and the Theologico-Political Problem*, 291 (the note has been transcribed and translated by Heinrich Meier). The 1948 lecture is found on 141–67 of the same volume.

15. One might mention that Strauss's interpretation of Xenophon's *Hiero*, which appeared in the summer of 1948 as *On Tyranny* and has as its final chapter the subject of "Piety and Law," also confirms this connection among the themes of "Socrates," "Political Philosophy," and "Philosophy or the Divine Guidance."

16. The Leo Strauss archive at the University of Chicago Library contains a number of notes by Strauss on Husserl, Heidegger, sense perception, the religious question, and the ideas. For example:

The reflection leading to realization of fundamental character of αἰσθητά [perceptibles] disposes of the religious problem. This reflection is pre-philosophic, in so far as in it and through it the constitution of philosophy takes place. More precisely: it excludes the possibility of asserting theism on any but theoretical grounds, i.e. on any grounds other than the teleological character of the φύσει ὄντα [beings by nature]. By its analysis of the ἀθρώπινα [human things],

it excludes the moral and the "existential" grounds. The fundamental (and hidden) reflection of the classics is something like a critique of practical reason as in any way justifying "postulates."

Leo Strauss Papers, box 18, folder 2. Strauss's reflections on Husserl and Heidegger seem to have been an integral part in Strauss's survival of the "shipwreck."

17. See appendix 2 below, p. 112.

18. See appendix 2 below, p. 112. The use of the dialogue form is related to this movement and the "essential limitation of teaching" as Plato's teaching "cannot be understood without a previous conversion of the whole soul."

19. I, 1 below, pp. 55, 57, 58. One should not forget, of course, the notebook's literary character. Strauss was not ready to include even the finished 1952 lecture on the *Euthyphro* in either *Liberalism Ancient and Modern* or *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy*, though he considered doing so in both cases. In a letter to Joseph Cropsey from March 24, 1971, Strauss writes, in response to Cropsey's "conceit that I should bring together my Platonic studies," that "I cannot reprint the Plato-chapter of the *History [of Political Philosophy]*, for the section on the *Republic* in a revised and enlarged form forms already part of *The City and Man*. Also what I wrote on the *Euthyphro* is a lecture, not an interpretation, and I overlooked a very important point of which I became aware only lately. But I would include an essay on the *Euthydemus* which requires only a slight revision. And I might write an interpretation of the *Euthyphro*." The "very important point" is mentioned a few months later (September 25, 1971) in a letter to Benardete: "If I should succeed in completing my essay on the *Laws*, I would like to re-study the *Euthyphro* (I have not been attentive to the difference between ὁσιότης [holiness] and εὐσέβεια [piety]. Do you know of any recent commentary or study at which I might have a look?" In the Benardete translation of the *Euthyphro* we have included in this volume, we have preserved the difference, which Strauss himself does not preserve in his notebook commentary; he himself never uses the English "holy" or "holiness" in the notebook, though he refers to

ἁγιος as “hallowed” on the first page. As for the significance of that difference, see n. 2 above and this comment, again in a letter to Bernadette (January 15, 1972): “I just came across the passage in Nietzsche about the non-holiness of the Greek gods (≠ Biblical God): *Morgenröthe* aph. 68. Jenny [Strauss Clay] drew my attention to Nägelsbach’s *Die Homerische Theologie* who makes the same point with much greater detail but with much less incisiveness.” See also session 9 (April 19, 1972) of Strauss’s course on Nietzsche at St. John’s College. (It may be worth considering why Strauss, in the 1940s or the 1950s, would have omitted stressing the difference between the pious and the holy. He wrote a review of Rudolf Otto’s *The Holy* as early as April of 1923 [GS, 2:307–10]. Otto does not refer to the *Euthyphro*, but only to the *Timaeus* and the *Republic*.)

20. The lecture was first published in a more heavily edited form and on the basis of one single typescript in *The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism*, ed. Thomas Pangle (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989) 187–206. A critical edition based on two different typescripts was published in *Interpretation* 26, no. 1 (Fall 1996), ed. David Bolotin, Christopher Bruell, and Thomas Pangle, 5–23. The lecture, rather than being untitled, was called “On Plato’s *Euthyphron*,” as appears from one of the typescripts and, more important, from an unpublished preface (see below, n. 36).

21. The date of the lecture appears from a preface by Joseph Cropsey to a planned collection of Strauss’s essays on the relation of philosophy and theology (see below, n. 36). It can be corroborated by the report on Strauss’s lecture by Edward Bauer in the *St. John’s Collegian* (May 1952): 22–23, as well as the catalogue issue of the *Bulletin of St. John’s College in Annapolis* (March 1952): 29.

22. In a letter to Leo Weinstein, Robert Horwitz mentions “an hour and a half lecture on the *Euthyphro*” (June 15, 1954). About a month later, he reports, “Kennington did the *Euthyphro*, which is being mimeographed by [Robert] Goldwin now” (July 12, 1954). (These letters are found in the Leo Weinstein archive which is in the possession of Stuart D. Warner. We thank Professor Warner for making these letters available to us.) The

transcript was circulated widely. For example, Alexandre Kojève received a transcript of Strauss’s St. John’s lecture on the *Euthyphro* from Robert G. Hazo in early April 1957. In his letter to Strauss from April 11, 1957, Kojève writes, “Although I had not reread the *Euthyphro* for a long time, I remember the text quite well. I had the impression that your interpretation is entirely correct” (*On Tyranny: Including the Strauss-Kojève Correspondence*, ed. Victor Gourevitch and Michael S. Roth [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013], 265). On February 28, 1956, Strauss writes to Joseph Cropsey, “Mr. George Tovey is willing to lend you a copy of my lecture on the *Euthyphron*. Perhaps you will take up the question soon after having read my lecture” (see also letter of April 20, 1956); the letters are housed in the Strauss archive, though they have not yet been catalogued.

23. See below, appendix 2, pp. 111–18.

24. Compare I.2 with II.3 below.

25. See appendix 3 below.

26. See also n. 19 above.

27. “On Classical Political Philosophy” first appeared in February 1945 in *Social Research* 12, no. 1 (1945): 98–117. It was eventually included in *What Is Political Philosophy?* (1959).

28. Strikingly, the first time Strauss published extensive interpretations of Platonic dialogues was in the Plato chapter in *History of Political Philosophy*, ed. Joseph Cropsey and Leo Strauss (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1963). Cf. “Farabi’s Plato,” *Louis Ginzberg Jubilee Volume* (New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1945), 357–93; “On a New Interpretation of Plato’s Political Philosophy,” *Social Research* 13, no. 3 (1946): 326–67; and “How Fārabi Read Plato’s *Laws*,” in *Mélanges Louis Massignon* (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1957), 319–44—the only other Strauss texts published before 1963 that have Plato’s name in their title.

29. One might add that the whole premise, or ploy, of the later lecture—to speak, for example, of the “irritating half-truth” that “piety is superfluous” (or exaggerated)—may have been a theme of *Persecution and the Art of Writing*. The equivalent in “The Literary Character of the *Guide for the Perplexed*,” in *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Glencoe:

Free Press, 1952) is "an excellent justification of ascetic morality—for what Maimonides would call 'exaggeration'—and in particular for an ascetic attitude toward sexuality" (76); in Strauss's own marginalium to this passage he cites *Euthyphro* 12c3–d4.

30. For what follows, see Hannes Kerber, "Jerusalem and Athens' in America: On the Historical and Biographical Background of Leo Strauss's Four Eponymous Lectures from 1946, 1950, and 1967, and an Abandoned Book Project from 1956/1957," *Journal of the History of Modern Theology/Zeitschrift für Neuere Theologiegeschichte* 29, no. 1 (2022): 90–132.

31. Friedrich Otto Kent Wieck (1910–73) was born in Berlin as the second son of the writer Luise Wieck-Dernburg. He graduated from the University of Berlin Law School in 1932 and emigrated to New York in 1935. After leaving the US Army in 1946, he became the social sciences and humanities editor at the University of Chicago Press. From 1954 to 1961 he served as the director of the University of Michigan Press. He then became a senior editor with Harcourt, Brace & World and held a similar position with Harper & Row from 1962 to 1967. Having served for two years as the director of the National Translation Center at Austin, Texas, he became the director of the University of Pennsylvania Press in 1969, where he remained until his death in November 1973. He is also the translator of Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker's *The History of Nature* (1949) and cotranslator of Heidegger's *What Is Called Thinking?* (1968).

32. On October 25, November 1, and November 8, 1950, Strauss delivered a series of lectures on the topic "Jerusalem and Athens" at the Hillel Foundation at the University of Chicago. Cf. "Leo Strauss's *Jerusalem and Athens* (1950): Three Lectures at Hillel House, Chicago," *Journal for the History of Modern Theology / Zeitschrift für Neuere Theologiegeschichte* 29, no. 1 (2022): 132–73. Strauss returned to the same topic at the same place for a series of lectures called "Progress or Return?" on November 5, 12, and 19, 1952 (transcripts of the three "Progress or Return?" lectures have been published by Kenneth Hart Green in *Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity* [Albany: SUNY Press, 1995], 87–136). As far as we know, the first time Strauss spoke publicly

on "Jerusalem and Athens" was on November 13, 1946, in the General Seminar at the New School for Social Research. The surviving typescripts of the 1946 and of the 1950 "Jerusalem and Athens" lectures differ in crucial respects from the one published under the same title in 1967 (which in turn is based on two lectures delivered at the City College of New York on March 13 and 15, 1967). See Meier, *Leo Strauss and the Theologico-Political Problem*, xvi.

33. In his letter of October 24, 1956, Wieck writes, "Herbert Paper of Michigan, whom you know, I believe, told me about the series of lectures you delivered at the Hillel Foundation some time ago, under the title 'Athens and Jerusalem.' I believe they are on tape recordings at the Foundation, and I have written to Rabbi [Maurice] Pekarsky asking him whether we could borrow the tapes for transcription. I am hoping all the while that you would be agreeable to prepare them for publication if we could put a transcript in your hands." Leo Strauss Papers, box 3, folder 18. Unfortunately, Strauss's letters to Wieck have not been found. The University of Michigan Press does not have an author file labeled "Strauss, Leo" or "Leo Strauss."

34. In a letter of February 21, 1957, Wieck writes, "I am now prepared to offer you an advance contract for *Jerusalem and Athens*, the manuscript to be delivered when you specify it and as long as you specify, with a royalty of 10% of the listed price on all copies sold, and with an advance against these royalties in the amount of \$1,500, payable when the agreement is complete." As appears from Wieck's letter of November 4, 1957, Strauss eventually agreed to reduce the originally contemplated sum to \$750 because of the shortness of the manuscript. Still, this was a staggering sum in a period in which paperback books often cost in the range of \$0.35, and cloth books might cost as much as \$2.00. According to Dr. Ellen Bauerle, the current executive editor of the University of Michigan Press, an equivalent amount now would be in the tens of thousands of dollars, unusual for a university press, to say the least.

35. Strauss gave his lecture on the Book of Genesis on January 25, 1957, in the Works of the Mind Lecture Series at the University of

Chicago. It was published posthumously for the first time in the January–March 1981 issue of *L'Homme: Revue française d'anthropologie*.

36. The book's contents appear from the preface for *Jerusalem and Athens*, written by Joseph Cropsey, which can be found in the University of Chicago's Leo Strauss Center (Foster 303) in a folder with the label "Jerusalem & Athens—Projected book," containing what must have been a draft version of the manuscript sent to the University of Michigan Press. The preface reads:

The contents of this volume consist of adaptations of lectures delivered by Professor Leo Strauss under various circumstances during the last decade. The chapter "Jerusalem and Athens" has been prepared by taking under consideration a lecture on that subject given in November, 1946 at the Graduate Faculty, New School for Social Research, New York, and two series of lectures given at the Hillel Foundation's Jewish Student Center, University of Chicago, in October–November, 1950, and November 1952. "On the Interpretation of Genesis" is taken from a lecture in the "Works of the Mind" series given at University College, The University of Chicago, January 25, 1957. "On Plato's *Euthyphron*" is based upon a lecture given at St. John's College, Annapolis, in February 1952. The appearance in print of matter that was composed and solely intended for utterance in the public lecture hall represents an accession by Professor Strauss to repeated requests that he allow some of his statements on the relation of theology and philosophy to be formalized and collected in one place. For the form of the immediate manuscript of this volume as it went to the press, I am entirely responsible. The indispensable assistance of the Rockefeller Foundation to the preparation of this book is gratefully acknowledged. Joseph Cropsey.

37. "On Plato's *Euthyphron*," p. 94 below.

38. After Strauss pulled back the manuscript at the beginning of November 1957, Wieck writes in a letter of November 6, 1957:

What went wrong, I believe, is simply that we were thinking of one kind of manuscript, you of another. I certainly was thinking not of a volume of essays, however closely related, but of a single treatment of the single theme on which you delivered the lectures at the Hillel Foundation in Chicago. . . . I still think it a great pity that you did not expand these three lectures in themselves to normal booklength. Even as it stands, the essay "Jerusalem and Athens" would, I believe, make a very solid although very short book. Which, to be sure, does not solve the problem of the publication of the other two essays. But be that as it may, I don't see right now any other choice but letting you have your manuscript back. I am sending it separately. It goes with my sincere regrets.

That Wieck had taken an extraordinary interest in the project is evident from his letter on March 21, 1957, after Strauss had signed the contract: "I have done everything I could, and yet there is not a single book in my past or in my future as far as I can see it now, which could match in importance your *Jerusalem and Athens*. All the books I recall and now hope for lack ultimate conviction because they make only one-half of the case, avoid the tension, beg the true question. They provide fighting equipment at best, but none of them provide sustenance. Your book does."

39. In private possession.

40. Part I, chapter 2, p. 92 below.

41. Appendix 1, n. 6, p. 100 below. See pp. 1113, 86–87, and 124.

42. The translation was originally meant for the Agora Series at Cornell University Press. Benardete recalls that Strauss's 1952 lecture on the *Euthyphro* grew out of a tutorial he had with Strauss (see *Encounters and Reflections: Conversations with Seth Benardete*, ed. Ronna Burger [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002], 41). Benardete and Strauss had a long-standing discussion of the *Euthyphro*. See, e.g., Strauss's letter of October 1, 1961: "I almost finished reading *Civitas Dei* I–VIII—very little in it—except a confirmation of the point which occurred to us in *Euthyphro*—viz. that

S[ocrates] unhesitatingly attacks the poetic theology but is very cautious re: civil theology, although the latter teaches in substance the same as the poetic one (V 5–6, 8–9—cf. also V 1).” Or September 23, 1953: “the section [of Machiavelli’s *Discourses on Livy*] beginning with ‘uomini’ [men] (I 46–59) deals in fact with religion: an emphatically human virtue, as we know from the *Euthyphron*.” See also the mention of the *Euthyphro* in the context of a letter on Plato’s *Symposium* (November 14, 1959): “The *Symposium* is the only dialogue explicitly devoted to a god; the *Epinomis* is devoted to the cosmic gods. The *Symp.* abstracts from the cosmic gods; it leads therefore just as the *Euthyphron* to an atheistic conclusion (Soc.’s hybris).”