Alan Bloom,

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to secure the theoretical life. If the two purposes were not identical, they were intended to be complementary.

It must be remembered that this was a dispute within philosophy and that there was an agreement among the parties to it about what philosophy is. The moderns looked to and disagreed with the Greek philosophers and their heirs, the Roman philosophers. But they shared the view that philosophy, and with it what we call science, came to be in Greece and had never, so far as is known, come to be elsewhere. Philosophy is the rational account of the whole, or of nature. Nature is a notion that itself is of Greek origin and requisite to science. The principle of contradiction guided the discourse of all, and the moderns presented reasoned arguments against those of their predecessors with whom they disagreed. The moderns simply took over a large part of ancient astronomy and mathematics. And they, above all, agreed that the philosophic life is the highest life. Their quarrel is not like the differences between Moses and Socrates, or Jesus and Lucretius, where there is no common universe of discourse, but more like the differences between Newton and Einstein. It is a struggle for the possession of rationalism by rationalists. This fact is lost sight of, partly because scholasticism, the use of Aristotle by the Roman Catholic Church, was the phantom of philosophy within the old order that was violently attacked by the modern philosophers, more out of antitheological ire than by dislike of ancient philosophy. Another reason why the essential agreement between ancients and moderns is no longer clear is the modern science of intellectual history, which tends to see all differences of opinion as differences of "worldview," which blurs the distinction between disagreements founded on reason and those founded on faith.

The very term Enlightenment is connected with Plato's most powerful image about the relation between thinker and society, the cave. In the *Republic,* Socrates presents men as prisoners in a dark cave, bound and forced to look at a wall against which are projected images that they take to be the beings and that are for them the only reality. Freedom for man means escaping the bonds, civil society's conventions, leaving the cave and going up to where the sun illuminates the beings and seeing them as they really are. Contemplating them is at once freedom, truth and the greatest pleasure. Socrates' presentation is meant to show that we begin from deceptions, or myths, but that it is possible to aspire to a nonconventional world, to nature, by the use of reason. The false opinions can be corrected, and their inner contradictions impel thoughtful men to seek the truth. Education is the movement from darkness to light. Reason projected on to the beings about which at first we only darkly opine produces enlightenment.

The moderns accepted that reason can comprehend the beings, that there is a light to which science aspires. The entire difference between ancients and moderns concerns the cave, or nonmetaphorically, the relation between knowledge and civil society. Socrates never suggests that, even in the unlikely event that philosophers should be kings and possess absolute wisdom, the nature of the cave could be altered or that a civil society, a people, a *dēmos,* could do without false opinions. The philosophers who returned to the cave would recognize that what others take to be reality is only image, but they could not make any but the happy few able to see the beings as they really are. They would guide the city reasonably, but in their absence the city would revert to unreason. Or to put it in another way, the unwise could not recognize the wise. Men like Bacon and Descartes, by contrast, thought that it was possible to make all men reasonable, to change what had always and everywhere been the case. Enlightenment meant to shine the light of being in the cave and forever to dim the images on the wall. Then there would be unity between the people and the philosopher. The whole issue turns on whether the cave is intractable, as Plato thought, or can be changed by a new kind of education, as the greatest philosophic figures of the seventeenth and eighteenth century taught.

As Plato tells us, Socrates was charged with impiety, of not holding the same gods the city held, and he was found guilty. Plato always presents Socrates as the archetypical philosopher. The events of Socrates' life, the problems he faced, represent what the philosopher as such must face. The *Apology* tells us that *the* political problem for the philosopher is the gods. It makes clear that the images on the wall of the cave about which men will not brook contradiction represent the gods. Socrates' reaction to the accusation is not to assert the right of academic freedom to pursue investigations into the things in the heavens and under the earth. He accepts the city's right to demand his belief. His defense, not very convincing, is that he is not a subversive. He asserts the great dignity of philosophy and tries as much as possible to reduce the gap between it and good citizen-

ship. In other words, he temporizes or is insincere. His defense cannot be characterized as "intellectually honest" and is not quite to contemporary taste. He only wants to be left alone as much as possible, but is fully aware that a man who doubts what every good citizen is supposed to know and spends his life sitting around talking about virtue, rather than doing virtuous deeds, comes into conflict with the city. Characteristically, Socrates lives with the essential conflicts and illustrates them, rather than trying to abolish them. In the *Republic* he attempts to unite citizenship with philosophy. The only possible solution is for philosophers to rule, so there would be no opposition between the city's commands and what philosophy requires, or between power and wisdom. But this outline of a solution is ironic and impossible. It only serves to show what one must live with. The regime of philosopher-kings is usually ridiculed and regarded as totalitarian, but it contains much of what we really want. Practically everyone wants reason to rule, and no one thinks a man like Socrates should be ruled by inferiors or have to adjust what he thinks to them. What the *Republic* actually teaches is that none of this is possible and that our situation requires both much compromise and much intransigence, great risks and few hopes. The important thing is not speaking one's own mind, but finding a way to have one's own mind.

Contrary to common opinion, it is Enlightenment that was intent on philosophers' ruling, taking Socrates' ironies seriously. If they did not have the title of king, their political schemes were, all the same, designed to be put into practice. And they were put into practice, not by begging princes to listen to them but by philosophy's generating sufficient power to force princes to give way. The rule of philosophy is recognized in the insistence that regimes be constructed to protect the rights of man. The anger we experience on reading Socrates' censorship of the poets is unself-conscious, if we agree, as we willy-nilly do, that children must be taught the scientific method prior to any claims of the imagination on their belief or conduct. Enlightenment education really does what Socrates only tentatively proposes. Socrates, at least, tries to preserve poetry, whereas Enlightenment is almost indifferent to its fate. The fact that we think there should be poetry classes as well as education in reasoning helps us to miss the point: What happens to poetic imagination when the soul has been subjected to a rigorous discipline that resists poetry's greatest charms? The Enlightenment thinkers were very clear on this point. There is no discontinuity in the tradition about it. They were simply solving the problem to the advantage of reason, as Socrates wished it could be solved but thought it could not. Enlightenment is Socrates respected and free to study what he wants, and thereby it is civil society reconstituted. In the *Apology,* Socrates, who lives in thousandfold poverty because he neither works nor has inherited, proposes with ultimate insolence that he be fed at public expense at city hall. But what is the modern university, with its pay and tenure, other than a free lunch for philosophy and scientists?

Moreover, the Enlightenment's explicit effort to remove the religious passion from politics, resulting in distinctions like that between church and state, is motivated by the wish to prevent the highest principle in political life from being hostile to reason. This is the intention in the *Republic* of Socrates' reform of the stories about the gods told by the poets. Nothing that denies the principle of contradiction is allowed to be authoritative, for that is the reef against which Socrates foundered. But Socrates did not think that church and state could be separated. He would have treated both terms as artificial. The gods are believed to be the founders of every city and are its most important beings. He would not have dared to banish them in defense of himself.

The Enlightenment thinkers took on his case and carried on a war against the continuing threat to science posed by first causes that are irrational or beyond reason. The gradual but never perfect success of that war turns the desire to be reasonable into the right to be reasonable, into academic freedom. In the process, political life was rebuilt in ways that have proved intolerable to many statesmen and thinkers, and have gradually led to the reintroduction of religion and the irrational in new and often terrifying guises. This is what Socrates would have feared.

But here I am only indicating the unity of the tradition, that Enlightenment is an attempt to give political status to what Socrates represents. The academy and the university are the institutions that incorporate the Socratic spirit more or less well. Yet the existence of these institutions underlines at the same time how they differ from Socrates, who founded no institutions and had only friends. And the attacks on these institutions made first by Rousseau and then by Nietzsche are attacks on Socratic rationalism made in a Socratic spirit. The history of Western thought and learning can be encapsulated in the fate of Socrates, beginning with Plato defending him, passing through the Enlightenment institutionalizing

him, and ending with Nietzsche accusing on him. The cherishing, for two and a half millennia, of the memory of this man, who was put to death by the city for philosophizing, ends with his spiritual execution in the name of culture at the hands of the latest of the great philosophers. Both city and culture are authorized by the sacred.

The meditation on Socrates is the inspiring theme of philosophy from Plato and Aristotle, through Farabi and Maimonides, Machiavelli, Bacon, Descartes, Spinoza, Locke, Rousseau and Hegel, to Nietzsche and Heidegger. Socrates is the complementary man whose enigmatic being leads to reflection on the nature of the knowers.

The Philosophic Experience

The character of the experience Socrates represents is important because it is the soul of the university. That experience and the relation to civil society of those who have it—which is the general formula for the problem of the university—is the continuous theme of Plato's and Xenophon's writings, which give us a flesh-and-blood Socrates, presenting the ambiguous material for judging him ourselves, showing us how such a man lives, the questions he raises, the different kinds of friends he has, his relations to the rulers, the laws and the gods, and the effects he has on the world around him. This forces us to ask, for example, what influence Socrates' humiliation of the political men had on the young Alcibiades, who was destined to become prominent among them. Socrates was not the first philosopher to have collided with the city, but he is the first to have benefited from a dramatic, poetic representation of his way of life, which placed him among the heroes and permitted, or rather necessitated, reflection not only about what he taught but also about the man himself and how he fitted into the city. This rich drama of the early philosopher who came to the attention of the city because he was a philosopher, presents all the questions of freedom of thought from all the angles, without any kind of doctrinairism, and hence provides us with a fresh view of the importance and also of the difficulties of such freedom. From the *Republic,* which really takes seriously only the demands of knowledge, to the *Laws,* which gives full attention to the competing demands of political life, Socrates as perfecter and as dissolver of the community reveals

all the facets of his activity. The difficulty he and the other philosophers contend with from the law is not to be confounded with society's prejudice against outsiders, dissenters or nonconformists but is, at least apparently, a result of an essential opposition between the two highest claims on a man's loyalty—his community and his reason. That opposition can only be overcome if the state is rational, as in Hegel, or if reason is abandoned, as in Nietzsche. However that may be, we have a record, unparalleled in its detail and depth, of this first appearance of philosophy, and we can apprehend the natural, or at least primitive, responses to it, prior to philosophy's effect on the world. This provides a view of the beginning at a time when we may be witnessing the end, partly because we no longer know that beginning.

The poetry written about Socrates by Plato and Xenophon is already in the defensive mode, a rehabilitation of the condemned man. The first statement of the city's reaction to Socrates is made by Aristophanes. What luck Socrates had! Not only did he command the pens of Plato and Xenophon; he also was the central figure of the greatest work of the consummate genius of comedy. *The Clouds* often arouses indignation in those who care little for Socrates but think serious matters are not laughing matters. Socrates' fate and Aristophanes' possible contribution to it trouble them. But Socrates was probably not of their persuasion. He laughed and joked on the day of his death. He and Aristophanes share a certain levity. Aristophanes does present a ridiculous Socrates and takes the point of view of the vulgar, to whom Socrates does look ridiculous. But Aristophanes also ridicules the vulgar. Reading him we, indeed, laugh at the wise as do the ignorant, but we also laugh at the ignorant as do the wise. Above all we laugh at the anger of the ignorant against the wise.

The Socrates of *The Clouds* is a man who despises what other people care about and cares about what they despise. He spends his life investigating nature, worrying about gnats and stars, denying the existence of the gods because they are not to be found in nature. His maps have only a tiny dot where Athens looms large to its citizens. Law and convention *(nomos)* mean nothing to him, because they are not natural but man-made. His companions are pale-faced young men totally devoid of common sense. In this academy, which has established itself in the free atmosphere of Athens, these eccentrics carry on their activities without appearing to be other than harmless cranks. They are poor, without any

fixed means of support. Socrates receives gifts and apparently countenances minor thefts, literally to keep body and soul together. There is no morality, but they are not vicious people, because their only concern is their studies. Socrates is utterly indifferent to honor or luxury.

Aristophanes recaptures for us the absurdity of a grown man who spends his time thinking about gnats' anuses. We have been too persuaded of the utility of science to perceive how far the scientist's perspective is from that of a gentleman, how shocking and petty the scientist's interests appear to a man who is concerned with war and peace, justice, freedom and glory. If science is just for curiosity's sake, which is what theoretical men believe, it is nonsense, and immoral nonsense, from the viewpoint of practical men. The world loses its proportions. Only Swift has rivalled Aristophanes in picturing the comedy of science. His description of a woman's breast seen through a microscope shows what science means, not in order to denigrate science but to make clear the harsh disproportion between the world most men cling to and the one inhabited by theoretical men.

What Aristophanes satirizes is the exterior of science, how the scientist appears to the nonscientist. He can only hint at the dignity of what the scientist does. His Socrates is not individualized; he is not *the* Socrates we know. He is a member of the species philosopher, student of nature, particularly of astronomy. The first known member of this species was Thales. He was the first man to have seen the cause of, and to predict, an eclipse of the sun. This means he figured out that the heavens move in regular ways that accord with mathematical reasoning. He was able to reason from visible effects to invisible causes and speculate about the intelligible order of nature as a whole. He at that moment became aware that his mind was in accord with the principles of nature, that he was the microcosm.

This moment contains many elements: satisfaction at having solved a problem; pleasure in using his faculties; fullness of pride, more complete than that of any conqueror, for he surveys and possesses all; certitude drawn from within himself, requiring no authorities; self-sufficiency, not depending, for the fulfillment of what is highest in himself, on other men or opinions or on accidents such as birth or election to power, on anything that can be taken from him; a happiness that has no admixture of illusion or hope but is full of actuality. But perhaps most important for Thales was

seeing that the poetic or mythical accounts of eclipses are false. They are not, as men believed prior to the advent of science, a sign from the gods. Eclipses are beyond the power of the gods. They belong to nature. One need not fear the gods. The theoretical experience is one of liberation, not only negatively—freeing the thinker from fear of the gods—but also positively, simultaneously a discovery of the best way of life. Maimonides describes the experience of the philosophic use of reason as follows: "This then will be a key permitting one to enter places the gates to which were locked. And when these gates are opened and these places are entered into, the soul will find rest therein, the eyes will be delighted, and the bodies will be eased of their toil and of their labor." What had previously been checked in man's soul comes into full play. Freedom from the myths and their insistence that piety is best permits man to see that knowing is best, the end for which everything else is done, the only end that without self-contradiction can be said to be final. The important theoretical experience leads necessarily toward the first principles of all things and includes an awareness of the good. Man as man, regardless of nation, birth or wealth, is capable of this experience. And it is the only thing men surely have spiritually in common: the demonstrations of science come from within man, and they are the same for all men. When I think the Pythagorean theorem, I know that what is in me at that moment is precisely the same as what is within anyone else who is thinking that theorem. Every other supposedly common experience is at best ambiguous.

Some of this experience still remains within the contemporary natural sciences, and it has a fugitive existence within the humanities. The unity of it all is hardly anywhere to be found or appreciated because philosophy hardly exists today. But it was always understood by philosophers, because they share the experience and are able to recognize it in others. This sense of community is more important for them than any disagreements about the final things. Philosophy is not a doctrine but a way of life, so the philosophers, for all the differences in their teachings, have more in common with one another than with anyone else, even their own followers. Plato saw this in Parmenides, Aristotle in Plato, Bacon in Aristotle, Descartes in Bacon, Locke in Descartes and Newton, and so on.

The tiny band of men who participate fully in this way of life are the soul of the university. This is true in historical fact as well as in

principle. Universities came to be where men were inspired by the philosophers' teachings and examples. Philosophy and its demonstration of the rational contemplative life, made possible and, more or less consciously, animated scholarship and the individual sciences. When those examples lost their vitality or were overwhelmed by men who had no experience of them, the universities decayed or were destroyed. This, strictly, is barbarism and darkness. I do not mean that philosophers were ordinarily present in universities any more than prophets or saints are ordinarily present in houses of worship. But because those houses of worship are dedicated to the spirit of the prophets and saints, they are different from other houses. They can undertake many functions not central to that spirit, but they remain what they are because of what they look up to, and everything they do is informed by that reverence. But if the faith disappears, if the experiences reported by the prophets and saints become unbelievable or matters of indifference, the temple is no longer a temple, no matter how much activity of various kinds goes on in it. It gradually withers and at best remains a monument, the inner life of which is alien to the tourists who pass idly through it. Although the comparison is not entirely appropriate, the university is also informed by the spirit, which very few men can fully share, of men who are absent, but it must preserve respect for them. It can admit almost anyone, but only if he or she looks up to and can have an inkling of the dignity of what is going on in it. It is itself always in danger of losing contact with its animating principle, of representing something it no longer possesses. Although it may seem wildly implausible that this group of rare individuals should be the center of what really counts for the university, this was recognized in the universities until only yesterday. It was, for example, well known in the nineteenth-century German university, which was the last great model for the American university. However bad universities may have been, however extraneous accretions may have weighed them down, there was always a divination that an Aristotle or a Newton was what they were all about.

The philosophic life is not the university. Until the nineteenth century most philosophers had nothing to do with universities, and perhaps the greatest abhorred them. One cannot imagine Socrates as a professor, for reasons that are worthy of our attention. But Socrates is of the essence of the university. It exists to preserve and further what he represents. In effect, it hardly does so anymore. But more important is the

fact that as a result of Enlightenment, philosophers and philosophy came to inhabit the universities exclusively, abandoning their old habits and haunts. There they have become vulnerable in new ways and thus risk extinction. The classical philosophers would not, for very good reasons, have taken this risk. Understanding these reasons is invaluable for our peculiar predicament.

Although the philosophic experience is understood by the philosophers to be what is uniquely human, the very definition of man, the dignity and charm of philosophy have not always or generally been popularly recognized. This is not the case with the other claimants to the throne, the prophet or the saint, the hero or the statesman, the poet or the artist, whose claims, if not always accepted, are generally recognized to be serious. They were always present, apparently coeval with civil society, whereas philosophers appeared late on the scene and had to make their way. And this has something to do with the problem, but it may be symptom rather than cause. I doubt that the people have much greater access to the typical experiences of prophets, kings and poets than to those of the philosophers. Great imagination, inspiration, intrepidity in the pursuit of glory are further from the ordinary lives of ordinary men than is the experience of reasoning found in the practical arts in daily use, like farming, building, shoemaking, and which is despised by the higher men. Socrates always has to remind his aristocratic interlocutors of these crafts and uses them as models of the knowledge aristocrats lack. But this may indicate part of the difficulty: the people want something higher, something exalted, to admire. And certainly Socrates' person, at first sight anyway, does not provide such an object of admiration, as Aristophanes' comedy makes abundantly clear. Moreover, and more important, the prophets, kings and poets are clearly benefactors of mankind at large, providing men with salvation, protection, prosperity, myths and entertainment. They are the noble bulwarks of civil society, and men tend to regard as good what does good to them. Philosophy does no such good. All to the contrary, it is austere and somewhat sad because it takes away many of men's fondest hopes. It certainly does nothing to console men in their sorrows and their unending vulnerability. Instead it points to their unprotectedness and nature's indifference to their individual fates. Socrates is old, ugly, poor, of no family, without prestige or power in the city, and babbles about Ether's taking Zeus's place.

The kings praised by poetry and illustrated in sculpture are ambigu-

ous. On the one hand they seem to exist for their own sake, beauty in which we do not participate and to which we look up. On the other hand, they are in our service—ruling us, curing us, perhaps punishing us, but for our sakes, teaching us, pleasing us. Achilles is perfection, what most men can only dream about being, and is therefore their superior and properly their master. But he is also their warrior protector, who in order to save Greece overcomes the fear of death that other men cannot overcome. All the heroes are in the business of taking care of and flattering men, the *dēmos,* receiving admiration and glory as their pay. In some sense they are fictions of civil society, whose ends they serve. Not that they do not do the deeds for which they are praised, but the goodness of those deeds is measured, alas, by utility, by the greatest good of the greatest number. The statesman possesses virtues that are supposed to be good in themselves; but he is measured by his success in preserving the people. Those virtues are means to the end of preservation, i.e., the good life is subordinate to and in the service of mere life. If the theoretical life is a good way of life, it cannot, at least in its most authentic expression, be, or seriously be understood to be, in the city's service. It therefore has an almost impossible public relations problem. Socrates hints at this in his *Apology* when, ridiculously—since he was never angry and since he distinguished himself as a soldier exclusively in retreats—he likens himself to Achilles.

The defenselessness of philosophy in the city is what Aristophanes points out and ridicules. He, the poet, has much sympathy with the philosopher's wisdom but prides himself on not being so foolish. He can take care of himself, win prizes from and be paid by the people. His stance is that of the wise guy in the face of the wise man; he is city smart. He warns the philosophers and proves prophetic in comically portraying the city's vengeance. The generation of great men who followed Socrates, including Plato, Xenophon and Isocrates, took the warning very much to heart. Philosophy, they recognized, is weak, precisely because it is new, not necessary, not a participant in the city's power. It is threatened and is a threat to all the beliefs that tie the city together and unite the other high types—priests, poets and statesmen—against philosophy. So Socrates' successors gathered all their strength and made a heroic effort to save and protect philosophy.

Socrates in Aristophanes' story minded his own business, was the

subject of rumor and ridicule, until a father who was in debt because of his son's prodigality wanted to free himself of his obligations. Socrates' atheism was the right prescription for him, insofar as it meant that he need not fear Zeus's thunderbolt if he broke the law, if he perjured himself. The law is revealed to be merely manmade, and hence there is no witness to his misdeeds if he can escape the attention of other men. Philosophy liberates this foolish old man. His son, too, is liberated, but with the unexpected consequence that he loses reverence for his father and his mother, who are no longer under divine protection. This the father cannot stand and returns to his belief in the gods, who it turns out protect the family as well as the city. In a rage he burns down Socrates' school.

Aristophanes was prescient. The actual charges against Socrates were corrupting the youth and impiety, with the implication that the latter is the deepest cause of the former. And whatever scholars may say about the injustice of Aristophanes' or Athens' charges, the evidence supports those charges. In the *Republic,* for example, marriages are short-term affairs arranged only for reproduction, the family is dissolved, wise sons rule over and can discipline unwise fathers, and the prohibitions against incest are, to say the least, relaxed. The reverence for antiquity is replaced by reason, and the rule of fathers and the ancestral are disputed. This follows immediately from Socrates' procedures, and it entered into the bloodstream of the West, one of the innumerable effects of philosophy that, for better or worse, are to be found only there. Angry fathers are one of the constituencies mortally hostile to Socrates, who was not trying to achieve this result, or to reform the family. His example and the standards of judgment he invoked simply led to it.

Socrates collided not with culture, society or economy but with the law—which means with a political fact. The law is coercive. The human things impinge on the philosophers in the form of political demands. What philosophers need to survive is not anthropology, sociology or economics, but political science. Thus without any need for sophisticated reasons, political science was the first human science or science of human things that had to be founded, and remained the only one until sometime in the eighteenth century. The stark recognition that he depended on the city, that as he looked up to the heavens he lost his footing on the ground, compelled the philosopher to pay attention to politics, to develop a philo

sophic politics, a party, as it were, to go along with the other parties, democratic, oligarchic, aristocratic and monarchic, that are always present. He founded the truth party. Ancient political philosophy was almost entirely in the service of philosophy, of making the world safer for philosophy.

Moreover, the law against which Socrates collided was the one concerning the gods. In its most interesting expression the law is the divine law. The city is sacred, it is a theological-political entity. (This is, by the way, why the *Theological-Political Treatise* is for Spinoza *the* book about politics.) The problem for the philosophers is primarily religion. The philosophers must come to terms with its authoritative presence in the city. Socrates in the *Apology* makes some suggestions as to how the philosopher must behave. He must deny that he is an atheist, although he remains ambiguous as to the character of his belief. Any careful reading of the *Apology* makes clear that Socrates never says he believes in the gods of the city. But he does try to make himself appear to be a sign sent from the gods, commanded to do what he does by the Delphic god. Nonetheless he is condemned.

He states his problem succinctly in explaining his way of life to his jurors:

> If I tell you that I would be disobeying the god and on that account it is impossible for me to keep quiet, you won't be persuaded by me, taking it that I am ironizing. And if I tell you that it is the greatest good for a human being to have discussions everyday about virtue and the other things you hear me talking about, examining myself and others, and that the unexamined life is not livable for a human being, you will be even less persuaded.

The people recognize Socrates' irony, his talking down to them, and see how implausible his religious claims are. His irony appears as irony and is therefore not successful. But the truth, unadorned by the Delphic cover, is incomprehensible, corresponding to no experience his audience has. He would be closer to success in sticking to his first story. One can from this very description analyze the political situation. There are three groups of men: most do not understand him, are hostile to him, and vote for his condemnation; a smaller but not inconsiderable group also do not understand Socrates but glimpse something noble in him, are sympathetic to

him and vote for his acquittal; finally, a very small group knows what he means when he says the greatest good for a human being is talking about —not practicing—virtue (unless talking about virtue is practicing it). The last group is politically inconsiderable. Therefore the whole hope for the political salvation of philosophy rests with the friendliness of the second group, good citizens and ordinarily pious, but somehow open.

And it was to such men, the gentlemen, that philosophy made its rhetorical appeal for almost two thousand years. When they ruled, the climate for philosophy was more or less salubrious. When the people, the *dēmos,* ruled, religious fanaticism or vulgar utility made things much less receptive to philosophy. Tyrants might be attracted to philosophers, either out of genuine curiosity or the desire to adorn themselves, but they are the most unreliable of allies. All of this rests on a psychological analysis that was forced on the philosophers, who had previously not paid much attention to men or their souls. They observed that the most powerful passion of most men is fear of death. Very few men are capable of coming to terms with their own extinction. It is not so much stupidity that closes men to philosophy but love of their own, particularly love of their own lives, but also love of their own children and their own cities. It is the hardest task of all to face the lack of cosmic support for what we care about. Socrates, therefore, defines the task of philosophy as "learning how to die." Various kinds of self-forgetting, usually accompanied by illusions and myths, make it possible to live without the intransigent facing of death—in the sense of always thinking about it and what it means for life and the things dear in life—which is characteristic of a serious life. Individuals demand significance for this individual life, which is so subject to accident. Most human beings and all cities require the unscientific mixture of general and particular, necessity and chance, nature and convention. It is just this mixture that the philosopher cannot accept and which he separates into its constituent parts. He applies what he sees in nature to his own life. "As are the generations of leaves, so are the generations of men,"—a somber lesson that is only compensated for by the intense pleasure accompanying insight. Without that pleasure, which so few have, it would be intolerable. The philosopher, to the extent that he really only enjoys thinking and loves the truth, cannot be disabused. He cherishes no illusion that can crumble. If he is comic, at least he is absolutely immune to tragedy. Nonphilosophic men love the truth only

as long as it does not conflict with what they cherish—self, family, country, fame, love. When it does conflict, they hate the truth and regard as a monster the man who does not care for these noble things, who proves they are ephemeral and treats them as such. The gods are the guarantors of the unity of nature and convention dear to most men, which philosophy can only dissolve. The enmity between science and mankind at large is, therefore, not an accident.

This hostile relationship between the prevailing passions of the philosopher and those of the *dēmos* was taken by the philosophers to be permanent, for human nature is unchanging. As long as there are men, they will be motivated by fear of death. This passion is primarily what constitutes the cave, a horizon within which hope seems justified. Serving the community that lives in the cave, risking one's life for what preserves life, is honored. Vulgar morality is the code of this selfish collectivity, and whatever steps outside its circle is the object of moral indignation. And moral indignation, not ordinary selfishness or sensuality, is the greatest danger to the thinker. The fear that the gods who protect the city will be angered and withdraw their protection induces ecstasies of terror in men and makes them wildly vindictive against those who transgress the divine law. In the *Apology,* Socrates explains why he, such a good citizen, stayed out of Athens' political life. When he presided in the Council he refused to put to the vote—and was overridden—a motion to put to death the commanders of Athens' greatest naval victory because they had prudently refused to try to pick up the bodies of their dead from the water due to a storm that endangered the living. But divine law required the recovery of the bodies, and moral rage insisted on capital punishment for the commanders. Mere prudence cannot override the sacred. Socrates' philosophy has more in common with that prudence than it does with the popular moral fervor, which also caused his death, essentially for putting the prudent above the sacred. This fervor Socrates took to be the substrate of civil society, which would always in the end overpower and deform reason in civil society. Thus there are two possibilities: the philosopher must rule absolutely, or he, "like a man in a storm when dust and rain are blown about by the wind, stands aside under a little wall." There is no third way, or it belongs only to the intellectual, who attempts to influence and ends up in the power of the would-be influenced. He enhances their power and adapts his thought to their ends.

The philosopher wants to know things as they are. He loves the truth. That is an intellectual virtue. He does not love to tell the truth. That is a moral virtue. Presumably he would prefer not to practice deception; but if it is a condition of his survival, he has no objection to it. The hopes of changing mankind almost always end up in changing not mankind but one's thought. Reformers may often be intransigent or extreme in deed, but they are rarely intransigent in thought, for they have to be relevant. But the man who fits most easily into the conventions and is least constrained by struggle with them has more freedom for thought. The real radicalism of ancient thought is covered over by its moderation in political deed, and this misleads many modern scholars. The ancients had no tenure to protect them and wanted to avoid the prostitution to which those who have to live off their wits are prone. There is no moral order protecting philosophers or ensuring that truth will win out in the long, or the short, run.

So philosophers engaged in a gentle art of deception. There is no leaving civil society, no matter what Thoreau may have thought. But they cannot avoid being noticed. They are different. Therefore philosophers allied themselves with the gentlemen, making themselves useful to them, never quite revealing themselves to them, strengthening their gentleness and openness by reforming their education. Why are the gentlemen more open than the people? Because they have money and hence leisure and can appreciate the beautiful and useless. And because they despise necessity. Nietzsche said with some good reason that ancient gentlemen despised eating and sexual intercourse because these acts are forced on them by their animal nature, and they had the pride of the free. And although they tend to be reverent, they can be irreverent, and certainly are less prone to religious fanaticism than the many, because they are less in the grip of fear.

Aristotle in his *Ethics* shows how the philosopher appears as the ally of the gentlemen, speaking to them about the noble deeds that are their specialty (not his). All he apparently does is clarify for them what they already practice. But he makes slight changes that point toward philosophy. Piety is not even included in the list of the individual virtues. And shame, a quality of the noble and a great enemy of reason, is mentioned only in order to be banished from the canon. The virtuous man has nothing to be ashamed of, says Aristotle—an observation that fits Socra-

tes' view of himself but is not typical of gentlemen. And gradually Aristotle turns his readers' attention to the theoretical life, not by seriously theorizing with them but by pointing to the direction in which it lies. He makes it godlike and the completion of their own incompleteness, which they used to achieve by admiring Achilles and revering the Olympian gods. Now they admire the theoretical men who contemplate a thinking god. It is an open question whether the gentleman grasped the essence of philosophy less accurately in this way than does the modern man who respects the scientist because he provides him with useful things.

Similarly in his *Poetics,* Aristotle explains to gentlemanly lovers of the theater what tragedy is and what they get from it. But here too he changes things a bit. The poet is not, as Homer presents himself, inspired by the Muses but is an imitator of nature, i.e., of the same thing the philosophers study, and hence does not depict a world alien to the one studied by philosophy, or one that results from causes in conflict with those admitted by science. Aristotle explicitly connects poetry with philosophy. And the end, the final cause, of tragedy is said to be the purgation of pity and fear, the two passions that combined lead to enthusiasm, religious possession or fanaticism. Socrates had attacked the poets for appealing to those passions that make men ecstatic from terror at what they can suffer and their unprotectedness in their suffering. It is just here, according to Socrates, that reason should be invoked, to face the necessary, to remind men of the order in things that exists in spite of the accidents that happen to them individually. Pity and fear cry out for satisfaction, for attention, for being taken seriously. Above all, the world men incline to see is full of benevolent and malevolent deities who take their cases seriously. Poetry to succeed must speak to these passions, which are more powerful than reason in almost all men. Because poetry needs an audience it is, in Socrates' view, too friendly to the enemies of reason. The philosopher has less need to enter into the wishes of the many or, as the wise of our time would put it, into the drama of history, or to be *engagé.* This is why Socrates heightens the enmity between philosophy and poetry.

Aristotle, actually following Socrates' lead, suggests that the poet can be the doctor of mortals who are so mad as to insist they should be immortal. The poet, not the philosopher, can treat the passions that are dangerous to philosophy, which Socrates had to his great cost ignored. He

can arouse these passions in order to flush them out of the soul, leaving the patients more relaxed and calmer, more willing to listen to reason. Aristotle tells the poets they should present heroes who deserve their fates, whose sad ends are plausibly attributable to a flaw in their characters. Their suffering, while pitiable, is not promiscuous, a reproach to the moral order, or the lack of one, in the world. The effect of such drama would be to make men gentle and believers in the coherence of the world, in the rational relation of cause and effect. They are not made reasonable by this but are saved from hatred of reason and more disposed to accept it. Aristotle does not attempt to make scientists out of gentlemen, but he tempers their prevailing passions in such a way as to make them friends of philosophy. Socrates does much the same thing in the *Apology* when he addresses those who voted for his acquittal and tells them *myths* that tend to make death seem less terrible. The tales are not true, but they reinforce the gentleness that kept them from fearing and hence condemning Socrates. Socrates criticizes poetry in order to encourage it to be an ally of the philosophers instead of the priests.

Thus philosophy's response to the hostility of civil society is an educational endeavor, rather more poetic or rhetorical than philosophic, the purpose of which is to temper the passions of gentlemen's souls, softening the hard passions such as anger, and hardening the soft ones such as pity. The model for all such efforts is the dialogues of Plato, which together rival the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey,* or even the Gospels, introducing a new hero who excites admiration and imitation. To introduce a new hero, a new taste has to be established, and the taste for Socrates is unique, counter to all previous tastes. Plato turns the personage of *The Clouds* into one of those civilization-constituting figures like Moses, Jesus or Achilles, who have a greater reality in men's souls than do their own flesh-and-blood contemporaries. As Achilles is said to have formed Alexander the Great; Alexander, Caesar; and Caesar, Napoleon—reaching out to one another from the peaks across the valleys—so Socrates is the teacher of philosophers in an unbroken chain for two and a half millennia, extending from generation to generation through all the epochal changes. Plato insured this influence, not by reproducing Socrates' philosophy, in the manner of Aristotle or Kant, but by representing his action, more in the manner of Sophocles, Aristophanes, Dante and Shakespeare. Socrates is made to touch the prevailing passion of each of the different kinds of soul in such

a way as appear to be divinatory of their longings and necessary to their self-understanding. There are dialogues that touch the pious; some move the ambitious and the idealistic; others excite the erotic and still others the warriors and the politicians; some speak to the poets, others to the mathematicians; lovers of money are no more forgotten than are lovers of honor. There is hardly anyone who is not made indignant by one aspect or another of Socrates' discourse, but there is also hardly anyone who is not moved and heartened by other aspects. Socrates stated the case for all human types better than they could have stated it for themselves. (He, of course, also stated the problem with each of those types and their aspirations.) Plato demonstrates the need for Socrates and in so doing makes the need felt in his readers. It is not only Alcibiades who felt incomplete without Socrates.

In almost no case was there a total conversion of a man. Certainly none is ever depicted in the dialogues. Plato himself, and a few others, were converted to philosophy, and their self-discovery was possible because Socrates was more or less tolerated in Athens. The toleration of philosophy requires its being thought to serve powerful elements in society without actually becoming their servant. The philosopher must come to terms with the deepest prejudices of men always, and of the men of his time. The one thing he cannot change and will not try to change is their fear of death and the whole superstructure of beliefs and institutions that make death bearable, ward it off or deny it. The essential difference between the philosopher and all other men is his facing of death or his relation to eternity. He obviously does not deny that many men die resolutely or calmly. It is relatively easy to die well. The question is how one lives, and only the philosopher does not need opinions that falsify the significance of things in order to endure them. He alone mixes the reality of death—its inevitability and our dependence on fortune for what little life we have—into every thought and deed and is thus able to live while honestly seeking perfect clarity. He is, therefore, necessarily in the most fundamental tension with everyone except his own kind. He relates to all the others ironically, i.e., with sympathy and a playful distance. Changing the character of his relationship to them is impossible because the disproportion between him and them is firmly rooted in nature. Thus, he has no expectation of essential progress. Toleration, not right, is the best he can hope for, and he is kept vigilant by the awareness of the basic fragility of his situation and that of philosophy.

Socrates allies himself with those who are powerful in the city and at the same time fascinated or charmed by him. But the charm only endures so long as he does not confront their most important concerns. Crito, the family man, thinks of Socrates as a good family man. Laches, the soldier, thinks of Socrates as a good soldier. Those who get angry at Socrates and accuse him always see something the more gently disposed miss. Thrasymachus sees that Socrates does not respect the city. He sees the truth about Socrates, but he cannot, at least in the beginning, appreciate him. The others appreciate him, but partly because they are blind to what is most important to him. This provides the model for the political tactics followed by the philosophers from Plato up to Machiavelli. None was primarily political, for there was a definite limit on what one could expect from politics, and it was essential not to make the pursuit of the truth dependent on what is politically relevant. Politics was a serious study to the extent that one learned about the soul from it. But the practical politics of all the philosophers, no matter how great their theoretical differences, were the same. They practiced an art of writing that appealed to the prevailing moral taste of the regime in which they found themselves, but which could lead some astute readers outside of it to the Elysian Fields where the philosophers meet to talk. They frequently became the interpreters of the traditions of their nations, subtly altering them to make them open to philosophy and philosophers. They were always suspect, but they also always had their well-placed friends.

For this reason the form and content of the writings of men like Plato, Cicero, Farabi and Maimonides appear very different, while their inner teachings may be to all intents and purposes the same. Each had a different beginning point, a different cave, from which he had to ascend to the light and to which he had to return. Thus they appeared to be "relevant" without forming their minds to the prejudices of the day. This protected them from the necessity or the temptation to conform to what is most powerful. Classical philosophy was amazingly robust and survived changes as great as are imaginable, such as that from paganism to the revealed Biblical religions. Marsilius of Padua was as Aristotelian as was Aristotle, proving that the problems are permanent but their expressions are changing. We moderns think that a comparatively minor change, like that wrought by the French Revolution, necessitates new thought. The ancients held that a man must never let himself be overcome by events

unless those events taught something *essentially* new. They were more intent than were any men before or since on preserving the freedom of the mind. This was their legacy to the university. They, however, never let the principle become a dogma and never counted on its having any other ground than their wits. They were ever mindful of the responsibilities and the risks of their enterprise.

In sum, the ancient philosophers were to a man proponents of aristocratic politics, but not for the reasons intellectual historians are wont to ascribe to them. They were aristocratic in the higher sense of the word, because they thought reason should rule, and only philosophers are fully devoted to reason. But this is just a theoretical argument, since philosophers never really do rule. They were aristocratic in the vulgar sense, favoring the power of those possessing old wealth, because such men are more likely to grasp the nobility of philosophy as an end itself, if not to understand it. Most simply, they have the money for an education and time to take it seriously. Only technology, with its attendant problems, makes universal education possible, and therefore opens the prospect of a different kind of relationship of philosophy to politics.

The Enlightenment Transformation

The thinkers of the Enlightenment, as I have said, reproached all earlier philosophers for their powerlessness to help men and themselves. The *Republic*'s formula, that power and wisdom must *coincide* if evils are ever to cease in the cities, is the perfect expression of what the Enlighteners meant. The necessary unity of power and wisdom is only a coincidence for the ancients, i.e., dependent on chance completely out of the philosopher's control. Knowledge is not in itself power, and though it is not in itself vulnerable to power, those who seek it and possess it most certainly are. Therefore the great virtue for the philosophers in their political deeds was moderation. They were utterly dependent on the prejudices of the powerful and had to treat them most delicately. They subjected themselves to a fierce discipline of detachment from public opinion. Although they inevitably had to try to influence political life in their favor, they never seriously thought of themselves as founders or lawgivers. The mixture of unwise power and powerless wisdom, in the ancients' view, would

always end up with power strengthened and wisdom compromised. He who flirts with power, Socrates said, will be compelled to lie with it.

The uncompromisable difference that separates the philosophers from all others concerns death and dying. No way of life other than the philosophic can digest the truth about death. Whatever the illusion that supports ways of life and regimes other than the philosophic one, the philosopher is its enemy. There can never be a meeting of minds on this question, as both ancients and moderns agreed. It seemed only natural to the ancients to find their allies among the vulgarly courageous, i.e., those willing to face death with endurance and even intrepidity, although they required unfounded beliefs about the noble, which made them forget about the good. They share the common ground with the philosophers on which something higher than *mere* life rests. But they have no good *reason* for their sacrifice. Achilles' laments and complaints about why he must die for the Greeks and for his friend are very different from Socrates' arguments and the reasoning that underlies them for accepting death—because he is old, because it is inevitable, and because it costs him almost nothing and *might* be useful to philosophy. Anger characterizes Achilles; calculation, Socrates. Whatever sympathy there might be between the two kinds of men is founded, to speak anachronistically, on Achilles' misunderstanding Socrates.

The extraordinary device contrived by the new philosophy that produces harmony between philosophy and politics was to exchange one misunderstanding for another. *All* men fear death and passionately wish to avoid it. Even the heroes who despised it do so against a background of fear, which is primary. Only religious fanatics who believe certainly in a better life after death march gaily to death. If, instead of depending on the rare natures who have a noble attitude toward death, which goes against nature's grain, philosophy could without destroying itself play the demagogue's role—i.e., appeal to the passion that all men have and that is most powerful—it could share in and make use of the power. Rather than fighting what appears to be human nature, by cooperating with it philosophy could control it. In short, if philosophy should be revealed to man not as his moral preceptor but as his collaborator in his fondest dreams, the philosopher could supplant priest, politician and poet in the affection of the multitude. This is what Machiavelli meant when he blamed the old writers for building imaginary principalities and republics