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# CLAREMONT

REVIEW OF BOOKS

*A Journal of Political Thought and Statesmanship*



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Michael M. Uhlmann, and Thomas G. West**

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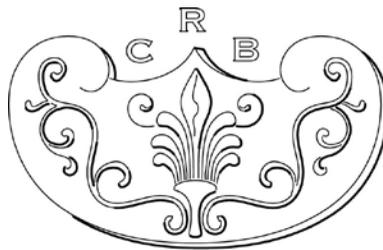
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IN MEMORIAM

## HARRY V. JAFFA, 1918–2015

*Harry Victor Jaffa died at the age of 96 on January 10, 2015. The Claremont Institute for the Study of Statesmanship and Political Philosophy was founded by a few of his students in 1979, and he served on the Institute's board of directors from its inception. He was named a distinguished fellow of the Institute in 1989. The mission of the Claremont Institute, to recover the political philosophy that animated the American Founding and to revive the statesmanship that made it possible, is part of what Jaffa called "the scholarship of the politics of freedom." We attempt to live up to the standards of that scholarship, and that politics, in the Claremont Review of Books. In the spirit of that scholarship Jaffa contributed to, and occasionally criticized, the CRB from the beginning.*

*His funeral was held in Claremont on January 16. His students Michael Uhlmann, Edward Erler, Thomas West, and Larry Arnn delivered versions of these eulogies there. Michael Anton offers reminiscences of a more recent student.*

### Sure-footed Intellectual Grace

by Michael M. Uhlmann

**W**E KNEW THIS DAY WAS COMING; indeed, we have known it for a long time. Given Harry's remarkable longevity, however, and his even more remarkable stubbornness and mental trim until almost the very end, there were times when the inevitable didn't seem so inevitable after all. Now that the final curtain has fallen, it is apparent that life without Harry is going to take some getting used to. He was more than a great teacher; he was an omnipresence in the lives of his students—in my own case, for nearly half a century. And what a presence! At once avuncular, warm, gentle, humorous,

didactic, inquisitive, impatient, importunate, stern, argumentative, and exhausting.

I take my text for the day from a medieval aphorism that, according to Leo Strauss, originally applied to Aristotle. *Solet Jaffa quaerere pugnam*. To reassure those whose Latin is as rusty as mine, that translates as "Jaffa is accustomed to seeking a fight." I have replaced Aristotle's name with Jaffa's, a change that would please Harry—perhaps too much so. In any event, the aphorism aptly describes the man we bury today. Harry Jaffa was nothing if not quarrelsome. Some people knew only that side of him. But this complicated man was hardly so monochromatic.

I first met Harry in the fall of 1965 in Chicago at a meeting of the Philadelphia

Society. He, I, and the late James Jackson Kilpatrick had been asked to address a then very hot topic in American politics: the right to dissent. In law school the year before, I had studied and written about the Supreme Court's treatment of the subject. Despite what I thought was exhaustive research, nothing had prepared me for Harry Jaffa, who gently pointed me toward a deeper understanding of legal obligation than anything I had previously encountered.

I have no specific recollection about what he, I, or Kilpatrick said during our formal presentations. I do recall rather vividly what happened afterwards, which proved to be the most important part of the day. It consisted of my sitting across a restaurant table from Har-

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ry as he placed his personal stamp upon the universe. What a flood of words and ideas! Whole paragraphs, pages, books, and libraries came tumbling out, on everything from the Goldwater campaign and the future of the Republican Party, to the virtues and vices of *National Review* and the burgeoning conservative movement, to Shakespeare as political thinker, to the centrality of natural right in the American political tradition, to the greatness of Leo Strauss, the American Founding, Abraham Lincoln, and Winston Churchill.

I had never encountered anything like this in my life. There was no finger-wagging, only an endless stream of learned reflections, for the most part gently delivered, one thought begetting another in a long chain of reasoned discourse, which, if one followed the links (which I was barely capable of doing), connected the condition of America circa 1965 to forgotten lessons taught by Aristotle. The afternoon ended with Harry saying to me, "You know, the kinds of questions you're interested in studying really can't be answered by examining law books and court decisions. Why don't you come to Claremont to study the real thing?"

**W**HAT FOLLOWED INVOLVED MANY long conversations with Harry, who simply wore me out until I said yes. He did one thing more: he made it financially possible for me to undertake graduate study, thanks to his intervention with the Earhart Foundation and, later, with Henry Salvatori. I came away from our first long encounter in Chicago with two distinct impressions: first, that this was one of the most brilliant men I had ever encountered or likely would ever encounter; and second, that he was a kind man—tolerant of my ignorance, God knows, and unfailingly generous with his time. Before meeting Harry, I had poked around in—"read" would be too strong a word—his *Crisis of the House Divided*, but as a more or less standard-issue Yale graduate of that era, one who had concentrated in history and literature and avoided all political science courses, I hadn't a clue about the book's novelty or significance. I had also nibbled at Leo Strauss's *Natural Right and History*, but, again, had only the faintest idea about the meaning or importance of political philosophy, the battle between the ancients and the moderns, the theological-political problem, or for that matter *any* of the other grand questions that would consume the next four years of my life. I was, in short, an authentic ignoramus. What Harry saw in me I cannot altogether say, but I am grateful beyond measure that he saw *something* worthy of his attention.

The brilliance and kindness I first encountered in Chicago were on even more abundant display after I arrived in Claremont. Harry and Marjorie could not have been more generous. Their house on Baughman Avenue became the graduate students' home away from home. Food and drink were always available and in abundant supply, as was conversation, whether in the living room or in Harry's cramped study down the hall. I was joined in these intellectual revels by a sizable group of others who had already been lured to Claremont, or soon would be, by Harry's Socratic charm. Unlike me, most of them were deeply versed in political philosophy before they got here, and they were more than kind in helping me along. For that, too, I am grateful.

**H**ARRY'S CLASSROOM TEACHING WAS anything but exciting and only occasionally connected to the specific readings for the week. But that didn't matter much. We came to hear him explain the meaning of life, and to watch him weave his magic that, as I say, connected contemporary America to Lincoln to the founding to Shakespeare to the ancients, with a sure-footed intellectual grace that took our breath away. As inspirational as that could be, the most enduring part of his teaching occurred not in the classroom, but in one-on-one (or small-group) sessions in his office and, more importantly, in his writing. I have reread many of his essays and come away each time with new insights. I recently began my third reading of *A New Birth of Freedom*, and one of these days I'm going to find my dog-eared copy of *Crisis*, with its broken spine, loosened pages, and 50 years' worth of marginalia.

Harry's skill as a writer is not often remarked, but it should be. His prose is powerful, crisp, uncluttered, often eloquent, and for many of us logically compelling. He eschewed the passive voice whenever possible, and harbored deep suspicions about the mischief of adjectives, which, he rightly said, subverted the power of nouns. He was altogether too fond of exclamation points, a habit of his I tried but failed to cure. Like everyone else, I was even a greater failure on those occasions when I tried to tone down his more acerbic rhetoric. All of us ground our teeth at some of his *ad hominem* excesses. Certainly both Harry's reputation and the world would be better off without them, but as I say, *solet Jaffa quaerere pugnam*. I think—I certainly hope—that in the fullness of time, his acerbity will not deter future students from absorbing his substantive arguments.

The *New York Times* gave him generous space—for the *Times*—in its obituary notice.

But rather too much of it was taken up with the controversy surrounding the acceptance speech he drafted for Barry Goldwater's nomination in 1964. For many, that's how it will ever be. Their number includes some of his old friends who also studied under Strauss, and who believed that Harry's political ventures were, to say no more, a lapse in good judgment. Many, I suspect, were Democrats of the old school who wanted all presidential candidates to sound like Adlai Stevenson. They later switched their allegiance to John F. Kennedy, which was certainly an improvement, but the idea of supporting the party of Lincoln in the '50s and '60s was probably outré. The idea of supporting Goldwater was thought breathtakingly foolish. And the infamous "Extremism in the defense of liberty..." line was, well, utterly beyond the pale. (One friend, so the story goes, sent a telegram that read, "Dear Harry: Great speech. Nothing wrong with it that 10,000 carefully chosen words couldn't explain.") More seriously, some of his friends thought it dangerous to mix politics and philosophy in this way; others thought it an unfortunate distraction from the real business of exploring the truth.

**T**HIS IS NOT THE TIME TO REHASH THIS controversy, concerning which Harry has already given a robust (if not entirely compelling) defense. This much needs to be said, however. He saw early on, and before anyone else save perhaps Strauss himself, the deep fault line that was beginning to open in American politics, which, unless checked, might radically alter the defining principles of the regime. For Harry, the fault line appeared most dramatically in the softening of the Democratic Party's disposition in the Cold War. While many of his friends, as I say, were still enamored of Franklin Roosevelt's party, Harry was already moving toward the GOP. He realized that the remnant of Lincoln's party offered little to commend itself, but, in contrast to the Democrats, at least it seemed to offer the promise of a respectably conservative alternative to an unlimited government at home and a lowering of our guard against Soviet Communism abroad. If the West were to survive, Harry convinced himself, it would need a political vehicle, embodied in a reinvigorated Republican Party.

Say what one will about the Goldwater speech, the ensuing decade tended to confirm Harry's prescience about the state of American politics. Eight years later, the Democrats nominated George McGovern and embraced the agenda of the New Left; and the trend has accelerated ever since. FDR's party today in both domestic and foreign policy is virtually defined

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by a rejection of everything that was once celebrated, without apology or embarrassment, under the banner of American exceptionalism.

**F**INALLY, PERMIT ME A FEW THOUGHTS on Jaffa's astoundingly productive scholarly life. The most enduring part of the Jaffa legacy, I think, will consist in two remarkable, interconnected achievements. The first is his attempt to recover and reconvey the true meaning of the Declaration of Independence, which had been buried beneath layers of historicist dust and detritus. The second is his discovery and articulation of Abraham Lincoln's statesmanship, which had also been hidden from view by political cynicism and historicist cant. The two achievements, taken together, opened a new way of thinking

about the American Founding and the slavery crisis, one that will enable future generations of students to see and to savor the nobility and superiority of the American proposition. When one considers the condition of American political and historical scholarship when *Crisis of the House Divided* was published in 1959, these achievements are stunning accomplishments and, in my view, unmatched in the annals of modern American scholarship. Whether they will survive the nihilist wave that now threatens to break upon us, we cannot know. But if not, that will certainly be no fault of Jaffa's. And if the regime does withstand the assault, he will deserve full marks for teaching us how to man the battlements.

In the meantime, let us recall the words spoken by Abraham Lincoln in his eulogy

to Henry Clay. They may be fittingly said of Harry Jaffa as well: "He loved his country partly because it was his own country, but mostly because it was a free country, and he burned with a zeal for its advancement, prosperity, and glory, because he saw in such the advancement, prosperity, and glory of human liberty, human right, and human nature."

With your permission, I should like to close with a blessing: may the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob smile upon Harry Jaffa and grant his soul eternal rest in the garden where the citizens of Jerusalem and Athens are forever joined in harmonious conversation about whatsoever things are true.

*Michael M. Uhlmann teaches political science at Claremont Graduate University.*

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### A Lifelong Seminar

by Edward J. Erler

**I**T WAS NEARLY 50 YEARS AGO THAT I arrived in Claremont to study with Harry Jaffa and his teacher, Leo Strauss. The first course I took from Dr. Jaffa was a year-long seminar on Plato's *Republic*. We made our way through the first two (of ten) books—this was my introduction to close textual reading. When he set his mind to it, few were better at it than Jaffa. I subsequently took other seminars on Plato from him, as well as courses on Aristotle, Shakespeare, and Abraham Lincoln. The breadth of his interests and the depth of his understanding were on constant display in these seminars. Jaffa also introduced me to Professor Harry Neumann, who taught philosophy at Scripps College and at the Claremont Graduate School. I took several seminars from Professor Neumann, who was a first-rate Nietzsche scholar. Jaffa and Neumann gave a joint seminar every year for at least ten years. Since my own teaching career allowed me to live in Claremont I was able to attend many of those seminars. Although the topics varied, it was always a debate between Aristotle and Nietzsche, and it took place at the highest level—without polemics or acrimony. For me, it was a wonderful experience, listening to perhaps the most profound students of two of the greatest philosophers.

Jaffa also introduced me to competitive cycling, and we spent many hours training and racing together. We were neighbors and became friends, and eventually, in his declining years, I became the trustee of his estate. It was

a marvelous journey: a lifelong seminar with an outstanding political philosopher.

Jaffa's essay on "The Unity of Tragedy, Comedy, and History: An Interpretation of the Shakespearean Universe" alone is sufficient to secure his place as a preeminent interpreter of Shakespeare. And his early essay on Aristotle, published in the original edition of the *History of Political Philosophy* edited by Strauss and Joseph Cropsey, and his first book, *Thomism and Aristotelianism*, might have launched a career as an outstanding commentator on that philosopher's work. But he saw a more urgent task in directing himself to the study of America, and he was the first of Leo Strauss's students to do so.

Strauss wrote in the context of the "crisis of the West." Jaffa extended his teacher's analysis to the "crisis of America." Indeed, it was his contention that "the crisis of American constitutionalism" is "the crisis of the West." This view, which he vigorously defended in the 1990s, seems particularly relevant today as America enters what some scholars have called the "post-constitutional era" and the West lapses into paralysis, seemingly uncertain of its purpose and unable or unwilling to defend itself against its enemies. Strauss had written that the "unresolved contest" between reason and revelation "is the secret of the vitality of Western civilization." Jaffa argued that the American Founding preserved this "vitality" by separating church and state, recognizing equally the claims of both reason and revelation and thereby making constitutional government possible by excluding sectarian issues from political life. "In this way," he wrote, "the

very differences between Jerusalem and Athens become the highest ground of harmony and peace." If Jaffa is correct—as I am convinced he is—the American Founding, and only the American Founding, preserves the vitality of the West.

**J**AFFA'S BEST KNOWN WORK IS *CRISIS OF the House Divided: An Interpretation of the Lincoln-Douglas Debates*. Historians and political scientists, of course, had acknowledged the existence of the debates, but no one before had believed that they were worthy of extended analysis. Jaffa discovered in the Lincoln-Douglas debates the key to understanding the very soul of American politics. The soul of America was exposed in its greatest crisis, and the debates were the prelude to that crisis. Jaffa believed that Lincoln's election and the statesmanship he displayed in leading the Union to victory in the Civil War had restored America's founding principles, but he believed, too, that Lincoln had in some sense re-founded America on a higher, Aristotelian level, countering the corrosive elements of modernity that Jaffa believed had been inevitably present in the founding.

In his last major work, *A New Birth of Freedom: Abraham Lincoln and the Coming of the Civil War*, published in 2000, which I regard as his *magnum opus*, Jaffa revised his opinion of the American Founding. What led him to this revision, I believe, was a better understanding—a deeper understanding—of what Leo Strauss called the "theological-political question." *New Birth* is an extended, profound, and subtle rehearsal



of that important question—the primary question that confronts political philosophy. Those Aristotelian elements he thought had been imported into our politics by Lincoln, he discovered had always been present in the founding. For Jaffa, the American Founding cannot be understood simply as an expression of modern natural right. There are elements of classic natural right present in the founding that insulated it from modernity’s most corrosive effects.

**I** BELIEVE THIS IS THE BOOK—OR NEARLY the book—that Strauss himself would have written had his primary concern been the crisis of America rather than the

crisis of the West. Many of Jaffa’s critics have argued that America is a thoroughly modern regime based on low but solid principles—it is Machiavelli and Hobbes, they argue, who define America’s character. Jaffa came to realize that the important distinction in the history of political philosophy was not so much between ancients and moderns as it was between reason and revelation. Modernity, of course, attacked both reason and revelation as sources of moral and political authority; the American Founding, as elucidated by Harry Jaffa, appealed to both reason and revelation as its authoritative ground—“the laws of Nature and of Nature’s God.” Thus, the founding, properly understood, provided the great-

est antidote to modernity’s worst elements. This was Jaffa’s deepest reason for defending the founding. He devoted almost his entire career to explaining its character. His text has been the Declaration of Independence; his many books and articles are the *Guide of the Perplexed* for those who seek to understand America’s origins and its principles.

His friends, his family, and his fellow citizens mourn the loss of this great man, this political philosopher, this remarkable American.

*Edward J. Erler is a senior fellow of the Claremont Institute and professor emeritus of political science at California State University, San Bernardino.*

## The Problem of the Best Political Order

by Thomas G. West

**I** AM GLAD THAT OTHERS ARE TALKING about Jaffa the man. For me, the main thing was always Jaffa the writer and thinker. Although he was always completely generous to me and my family, the thing I am most grateful for is nothing personal. It was his brilliant interpretation of America and his analysis of the problem of the best political order.

Jaffa’s intellectual point of departure was his encounter with Leo Strauss. I believe that in Jaffa’s mind, that was the most important thing that ever happened to him, with the exception of his marriage and family.

Strauss taught Jaffa two big things. First, political philosophy is possible. Contrary to the almost universal opinion of that day, there is a rational case for natural right—the idea that there is such a thing as justice that is true for all men and all times. Strauss convinced Jaffa that the best case for natural right is found in the classical philosophers. Thus his lifelong interest in Plato and Aristotle.

Second, Strauss convinced Jaffa that the American Founding was defective. I’ll exaggerate for the sake of clarity by summarizing Strauss in this way: the founding was based on Locke, Locke was a follower of Hobbes, Hobbes followed Machiavelli, and Machiavelli grounded politics on low self-interest. But Strauss left Jaffa with a problem: if the classics are the standard for us today, and if America was based on a rejection of the classics, then is there any way America can be defended?

Jaffa’s good friend Harry Neumann used the term “pre-Jaffa Jaffa” to characterize his scholarship up to 1975. Like other Straussians, Jaffa at first tried to defend America by looking for something in the regime that ennobled its supposedly low beginnings. Harvey Mansfield thought he had found it in the U.S. Constitution, which in his view created a “constitutional culture” that rescued America from the dangerous consequences of the “half-truth” of equality in the Declaration of Independence. The pre-Jaffa Jaffa also found the ennobling of America in something outside the Declaration. In *Crisis of the House Divided*, Lincoln’s statesmanship transformed Thomas Jefferson’s Lockean “enlightened self-interest” into a lofty moral goal.

Sometime around 1975 Jaffa, as it were, became Jaffa. His long rethinking of the founding took place in three stages. The first was exemplified by his book *How to Think About the American Revolution*. Various conservative intellectuals—Willmoore Kendall, George Carey, and M.E. Bradford, among others—had denied that the founding was based on Lockean natural rights. Martin Diamond had claimed that the Declaration of Independence provides almost no guidance regarding the structure of government. Jaffa easily proved them wrong. More important, he showed how the founding principles of equality and liberty were—if understood as the founders and Lincoln did—*conservative* principles. He meant that these principles once were, and could again become, the basis of a good society.

Jaffa’s revised approach meant that he no longer needed Lincoln to vindicate America. The founding could be defended on its own terms.

More recent conservatives often seem to share the reservations of those with whom Jaffa tangled in the 1970s. In several of the Jaffa obituaries written by conservatives, Jaffa’s *Crisis* is highly praised, while his post-1975 writings either are not mentioned at all or are passed by with minimal remark. Most conservatives, to say nothing of liberals, have their doubts about the founders’ political theory of natural rights.

**T**HE SECOND STAGE OF JAFFA’S REASSESSMENT occurred in the Reagan years, when liberal attacks on the family and on the Christian Right grew more and more strident. Jaffa became increasingly interested in the fact that the founders were pro-morality, pro-religion, and pro-heterosexual marriage. Some scholars were arguing that the founding was an incoherent amalgam of non-Lockean moral and religious traditions with Lockean natural rights. Jaffa disagreed, insisting that the founders’ understanding was perfectly coherent. Without citizen virtue, they maintained, government cannot secure the people’s natural rights. Some of Jaffa’s writings from this period appear in his 1984 book, *American Conservatism and the American Founding*.

For conservative intellectuals like Allan Bloom and Robert Bork, the principles of the founding were ultimately destructive of everything good and decent in America—a time bomb unwittingly planted by the founders themselves. The radicals of the 1960s, Bloom wrote in his 1987 bestseller, *The Closing of the American Mind*, “absolutized and radicalized” the ideas of equality and freedom that were “inherent in our regime.” Jaffa was able to refute that claim because he had rediscovered the moral dimension of the natural rights doctrine.



The third and final stage of Jaffa's understanding was reached in the late 1980s. In "Equality, Liberty, Wisdom, Morality and Consent in the Idea of Political Freedom," published in 1987 in the journal *Interpretation*, not only is the founding defensible, not only is it moral, but now it is the founding itself which is the standard of noble politics in the modern world. The full expression of his mature understanding of America (and not merely of Lincoln) appears in what I regard as his most insightful book, *A New Birth of Freedom*.

**F**AR FROM BEING OPPOSED TO THE CLASSICAL understanding of politics, the American regime is *required* by it—in the conditions of the modern world. Jaffa argued that the classical political teaching of Aristotle had to be modified after the rise of Christianity, because the new religion had severed the old connection between the city and its gods. In a world dominated by a universalistic religion, a new ground for political obligation had to be found that was not tied to religious authority. That was the law of nature and of nature's God.

The founders' doctrine of toleration eliminates salvation of the soul as an end of politics. Paradoxically, political life is thereby el-

evated, by removing from it a leading source of its degradation—namely, persecution arising from the conviction of one's own sanctity. The founders' doctrine also elevates politics by announcing a sacred cause, the cause of liberty, which elicits the noble virtues of statesmanship and citizenship. The social compact theory challenges men to live up to its moral demands, which require concern for others (respecting their rights) and self-restraint (the virtues of parents and citizens).

Those who complain that the founders reduced life to mere self-preservation neglect what they actually said. The purpose of politics, as the Declaration proclaims, is "safety and happiness." These, Jaffa writes in *A New Birth of Freedom*, "are the alpha and omega of political life." That is, "liberty and property come to sight as means to the preservation of life, but their enduring worth is in the service, not of mere life, but of the good or happy life.... [I]t is the natural order of these wants, directed toward their corresponding natural ends, that constitute the architectonic principles of a society arising out of compact, properly understood."

Here, Jaffa brings the political theory of the founding back around to the classical concern with philosophy as the best life. The soul of a true American has a higher destiny

than mere preservation or acquisition, though there is a place in America for these, too.

Speaking for myself and for the many others who have learned so much from this man, let me say: thank you, Harry.

As a footnote, I would add that in my view, Jaffa could have made his argument more convincing if he had lavished on Locke the same assiduity and insight that he gave to Lincoln and the founders. But Jaffa left the task of re-assessing Locke to others. Michael Zuckert correctly identified this lacuna in *The Truth about Leo Strauss* and wondered why Jaffa had never addressed it. My own response to Zuckert's challenge is this: Strauss grossly distorted Locke for justifiable pedagogical reasons in his most exoteric anti-Lockean statements. Strauss's ultimate assessment of Locke was much more sympathetic (see chapter 8 of *What Is Political Philosophy?* and chapter 2 of *Liberalism: Ancient and Modern*). Locke was not an Aristotelian, but his thought was far more attentive to the moral and religious prerequisites of constitutionalism than one would gather from a superficial reading of Strauss.

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## Understanding the Good

by Larry P. Arnn

**W**HEN I MET HARRY JAFFA IN THE summer of 1974 he was wearing a white shirt and black socks and a pair of boxer shorts. Peter Schramm, a fellow grad student who five years later would become the Claremont Institute's first president, had done me the honor of asking me to go pick up Jaffa (I was newly arrived) and take him to the first class of the semester. Jaffa didn't fully remember that he had a class...or who I was...or what the class was about. And I thought, "Goodness, what have I done?"

I remember everything he said in that first class. It was on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. We spent the whole semester, and we never got out of Book I, but read that very carefully. He began the class, "When men get to be old men like me [and I'm now older than he was then], they make a list of the hundred greatest books. But life is too short to read a hundred books. No one can know a hundred great books." He said, "I have a list of the three greatest books." The rest was a little cryptic: "Aristotle's *Politics* would require some translation to be fully

relevant to modern times"; it seemed to be excluded. "The Bible is its own kind of book"; it seemed to be excluded. "Plato's *Republic* would have to be on any such list." Then he said, "Shakespeare," and something about his writing both tragedy and comedy. Then he held up the *Ethics* and said, "This is a perfect book." Right away one saw that there are some things so precious and rare that you must give your life to them to know them. And there can only be a few. And that to live a good life is to live that way. That was the first thing I learned from him. Also we learned that family was important because understanding starts and also ends with understanding of the good, including the great good of family life. His love for his wife, Margie, and his children and his grandchildren was constant and intense.

There are three things, I think, that I have had a special opportunity to see in Harry Jaffa, and I'm going to describe two of them. I'm not going to talk about Churchill, because I must not speak about me except to say that Professor Jaffa set me thinking about Churchill and introduced me to Martin Gilbert. I have studied Churchill for 40 years and discovered Professor Jaffa was right about him.

**I**N THE SUMMER OF 1976, ONE OF THOSE pivotal moments came that Tom West described so well. I would ride bikes with Jaffa, most days with Ed Erler, and I would before or after go to his house and sit and listen to him read for an hour or two from this paper he was writing. The paper was above all about Irving Kristol. He was in that year discarding a certain orthodoxy that had prevailed, and Irving Kristol was part of that. This orthodoxy had affected *Crisis of the House Divided*, which he wrote under the influence of fellow students of Strauss, e.g., Martin Diamond and Walter Berns, who had written about the founding. But in the years that passed he had been reading it himself, and the bicentennial lecture that Kristol gave in Independence Hall for the American Enterprise Institute had set him off. "This is wrong," he said. I think he wrote 136 pages, if memory serves, for a paper to give at the American Political Science Association's annual meeting on a panel of which Irving Kristol was the chairman. (The paper would eventually become the core of his book *How to Think About the American Revolution*.) There were 400 people there; the room was packed. And



I will always remember Professor Jaffa best as he was reading that paper to me. Sometimes he would stand up and march around. And then as he was giving the paper at the panel in San Francisco—it was one of the most exciting things I've seen in my life. He was vibrant and full of energy. It was electric.

I met Martin Diamond for the only time in my life outside the room where that panel was held, and he didn't come in. I mentioned it to Professor Jaffa later. I thought it was disappointing that he didn't come in. He should have come in. And Jaffa's response was, "Of course he didn't come in." After Jaffa's paper, Irving Kristol said, "I don't understand this, Harry. I've been learning from you for 30 years." And Jaffa sprang to the podium—it looked like he reached it in a single step—and exclaimed, "Yes, but you didn't understand, Irving!"

He wasn't always exciting in class. He wasn't very organized. Yet sometimes there would be a class and you would walk out to be surprised that it was dark, because we'd been there an hour and a half too long and nobody had noticed.

It came to a head in that summer of 1976 and the paper that he gave, and it's the reason he became notorious, also famous if you look at the obituaries lately. I think those were earth-shaking days, and if we are able to save our country, which we must, I think that those days will be there at the foundation of saving it. And I think if we don't, we can at least understand it better, and then later, when somebody gets another chance, they can look at that.

**T**HE SECOND THING I'LL MENTION OF which I have firsthand knowledge: I have been ordered about by Professor Jaffa perhaps more than any other living man has been. It fell to me to manage the Claremont Institute for a long time. Professor Jaffa regarded it as his own, as he was right to do. And so there's no estimating the hours that I've spent listening to him tell me what to do. I came to think of him as having a grand strategy. I often disagreed with him, often didn't do what he said, but it was always interesting to hear him. We had a couple of conflicts—three I can think of—and two of them started down that road where he'd write you a letter, quote something you said, and invite you to answer him; then he'd write about that answer; then you'd be at war with him. And he'd humiliate you or make you agree, or both. And I still have those letters, every letter he ever wrote me, and the ones I wrote back to him, and in those cases I wrote back in the same spirit (I've looked at them lately). I'd write him back and say,

Dear Professor: I do in fact agree with you about this point. And it just so happens to fall to me to decide what's to be done about that agreement. It is a responsibility of mine. And you cannot take that from me. And therefore you cannot have the authority, and I have not been taught by my teachers to cower.

I've written things like that to him twice, and both times he called me immediately upon reading it, and he said—first words both times, I'll remember them till the day I die—"Very good," he said. The crisis was over.

It proves, by the way, that he was not a bully, or a bad man. Once Ursula Meese sat next to me at breakfast at a conference right before her husband, Ed Meese, walked up and sat down, and her first words were, "Good morning. Harry Jaffa is a bad man." And I said, "No ma'am, he is not." She said, "Well, how can he say these things about my husband?" And I said, "Well, some of those things that he said about your husband I don't agree with—as you know, I wrote something about it—but he actually is right about the point about the Declaration of Independence, and he will stand no departures." Ed was sitting there and said, "Explain that." And I said, "Well sir, you have given two speeches about the Declaration of Independence, and they are mutually exclusive, as Professor Jaffa has pointed out, and that means that you can't be right in both places, and he's daring you to state which, and he's even trying to force you to state which, which is his way." And Ed Meese, who's a very gentle and fine man, said, "Well, there may be something to that." Ed, I should say, was a friend of mine then and is today, and he has done service that makes it a privilege to be his friend.

**O**VER THAT ISSUE PROFESSOR JAFFA called me on the phone one time and said he had decided that as president of the Claremont Institute I had to write an introduction to something he had written. I agreed to do it and I did write it. And in the introduction (you can go look it up) I agree with Professor Jaffa, but he didn't like the admiring tone that I took about Ed Meese. He wanted it to be more like *his* tone. He mentioned this to me two or three times with insistence. And then one day he called—I was sitting in my office on First Street—and he talked and talked, and I started timing it. I had him on the speaker phone and I was working. And he talked for 40 minutes without interruption. And he did a rare thing: he said "damn it" twice, into the

phone. He finally ran down a bit and stopped. And I said, "Have you finished?" And he said, "Yes." And I said,

Professor, I will answer you briefly. You've called me up and you've actually cursed at me, which you usually don't, and you've told me that I have to do something. And I reply that I do not.

And I put the phone down. I got home that night, and he called up, as he often did, and I can mimic the tones in the voice when he talked on the phone, especially his greeting, "Larry?" And I said, "Professor." And he said, "This is the queen calling." And I said, "The queen?" He said, "Yes. You're the prime minister. You get to do what you want, but you have to spend time talking to the queen." And I said, "What would the queen have with me tonight?"

Running the Claremont Institute was like the way Professor Jaffa described the situation of the the Jews: one is chosen, and this is hard duty—one of his favorite things to say.

**W**HY DID HE CARE ABOUT THIS? I think the answer is the same as the reason he cared about Abraham Lincoln and Winston Churchill. He loved them with all his heart. They were causes to him. I think I can put the argument together. The question of the good is the first question. I think it issues, if one can find it, in beauty and truth. I think that one approaches it through the law, which makes the authoritative statements in any human community. I think that we humans, even so great a human as Harry Jaffa and his greatest heroes, can't really comprehend all of nature. We approach it through our good and our own place in nature, and so he thought that his job was to put together an argument to vindicate the goodness of the heroes who made our country and its institutions so that there could still be civilization and freedom and justice, after the time that philosophy had gone off the rails so badly that it led one of the greatest thinkers in the 20th century to join the party in Germany that had sought the life of Professor Jaffa's teacher. I think that like Leo Strauss, Professor Jaffa sought to solve that problem. And I think that he had a soul, the only one I've ever met among thinkers, that was big enough to address itself to that problem. And we are less without him. And we thank God for him.

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