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*Recovering Hegel from  
the Critique of Leo Strauss*

THE VIRTUES OF MODERNITY

Sara MacDonald  
and Barry Craig



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To Patrick, Mary, and Catherine





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# Preface

We have both been fortunate to have good teachers throughout our respective educations. To one of us, while an undergraduate student at St. Thomas University, political philosophy was introduced by Professors Rick Myers and Patrick Malcolmson. This introduction, which included the first reading of Leo Strauss, was deepened during graduate study at Fordham, through the guidance and help of Mary Nichols, Michael and Catherine Zuckert, and Michael Davis. While both scholars are generally counted as “Straussians,” the breadth of their thought, as well as their intellectual generosity, encouraged students to look beyond any narrow ideological approach. Thus, it was there also that Hegel became an object of study. To the other of us, Leo Strauss was introduced via the many hours spent in and out of class with the Canadian political philosopher George Grant, an ardent admirer of Strauss’s work and equally ardent critic of Hegel. Hegel was introduced by Grant’s colleagues Wayne Hankey and James Doull, the latter a relatively unknown Canadian thinker, who was nevertheless once described by Emil Fackenheim as “the only Hegelian.” Now, from a distance of some thirty years, the depth and rigor of their scholarship is even more impressive. Since our initial respective exposures to Strauss and Hegel, a couple of decades of intellectual ferment, and countless conversations over glasses of wine, have led to this present work.

While the ancient world has its attractions, and indeed, in our view, though the thought of Aristotle, and especially Plato, remains the source of understanding out of which all subsequent western thought has grown, and without which none of subsequent western thought can be truly comprehended, we cannot accept the ancient social order in which such thought was born. Leo Strauss was initially attractive to us, as he has been to countless others, because he was unafraid to cast a critical eye on many of the intellectual sacred cows of modernity. His radical reappropriation of ancient thought and his idiosyncratic readings of the history of philosophy caused us to challenge our own preconceptions and unexamined assumptions about the world in which we live. Questioning whether or not democracy was simply good, or whether freedom and equality were, by themselves, adequate conditions for human flourishing was both challenging and exhilarating at the same time. In Strauss the challenge of historicism and its effects on the possibility of knowledge or truth was presented in a clear and provocative manner.

And yet, we both had long harbored an unsettling apprehension that this conservative critique of modernity, while justified in many particulars, was incomplete, if not simply wrong, in some fundamental way. The progress of women's right alone, let alone the abolition of slavery and the recognition of other fundamental and universal human rights seemed to us such undoubted goods and so clearly products specifically of modernity that we could not ultimately remain satisfied with Strauss's account. Thus, about a decade ago, we began putting together the argument of this book. While one of our teachers, Robert Crouse, once wisely cautioned against enshrining any one philosopher as possessing the absolute truth, we nevertheless believe that Hegel had a more complete account of the end and purpose of human life than any thinker before or since. That is because Hegel labored to produce a philosophic system that included both the objective and absolute together with the subjective elements of reality. Despite the many limitations of Hegel's thought, some caused by the particularities of his own historical epoch or the incompleteness of his historical and cultural scholarship, he offered the best opportunity for uniting what was good about the thought of Greek antiquity (i.e., an account of transcendent truth and human virtue) with what was best about the spirit of modernity (i.e., human freedom and individual subjectivity).

The history of Hegelian scholarship, as is well known, is a tale of disagreement and division. For the most part, and this began immediately upon Hegel's death, the camps of interpretation have been divided between the Left and the Right of the political spectrum. Uncomfortable with the absolute forms of either ideology, we instead found in Hegel a middle ground (we are far from the first to discover this) which offered a way out of the polarization of political thought, and indeed, contemporary culture wars. This reading, which owed much to the thought and writings of James Doull, recovered the objective side of Hegel's thought while insisting on the value of his insistence on subjective freedom. That he took seriously Hegel's religious thought perhaps offers a partial explanation of why Doull's own work was not embraced in the mainstream of contemporary western philosophy. Rather than opposing duty and rights, law and freedom, or objective truth and subjective feeling, Doull demonstrated that Hegel's thought brought together those opposed sides as not only compatible but necessary elements of the whole. From this, it is possible for a conservative who values the thought of Plato and his account of the Good to see the necessity of freedom and individual self-consciousness if this idea is to be manifest in the world.

As is clear from the many references in the text to the work of others, we recognize that elements of this argument have been advanced by other scholars, both within and outside of the Straussian school and across various strands of the Hegelian schools. Hopefully, in this book we have succeeded in gathering up many of these elements and present-

ing them in a way that is at once accurate and fair as well as clear and accessible both to non-specialist readers and to students of political philosophy who have an interest in the thought of both Hegel and Strauss. In our efforts towards clarity and accessibility, we have necessarily resisted engaging in depth many of the technical aspects of Hegelian thought. Given the widely divergent interpretations that surround both thinkers, we are cognizant that some of the interpretations we have advanced, of both Hegel and Strauss, and some of the conclusions we have drawn with respect to contemporary social and political developments, will not go without criticism. However, at the very least, it is our hope that we have offered something new to the conversation and have enabled a reconsideration of one element of contemporary political philosophy.

In addition to the debt of gratitude we owe to our own teachers, mentioned above, over the decade that we have been discussing and then writing this book, we have been helped by many people, not least many of our students, who have assisted with research, proofreading, and the kinds of arguments that inspire us to think more deeply and engage our own presuppositions from fresh angles. Among these many students, we owe particular thanks to Mark Adams, Ted Jones, Matt Dinan, Vivien Zelazny, Nathan McAllister, Ruthie Luff, Chelsea Ogilvie, Lacey Texamo, and Amanda Jardine. We have been supported throughout this process by our own institution, St. Thomas University, which has supplied us with time and funding to allow us to pursue our research. Finally, we wish to thank Patrick, Mary, and Catherine who, over the time we have been preparing and then writing this book, have moved from being children to teenagers and then young adults. They were at times sources of inspiration, or at least distraction, when it was most helpful. As many have learned before us, Hegel's complexity can become all consuming, and regular reminders of the "real world" recall us to why we were attracted to the love of wisdom in the first place. To us, philosophy is not merely abstract or analytical in nature, but the means to understand the most profound truths of the human condition. This understanding can then inform the impulse to contribute to a more just and charitable society.



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# Introduction

In recent years much attention, both scholarly and popular, has been paid to the work of Leo Strauss. Born in 1899 in Hesse, Germany, to an observant Jewish family, Strauss completed a PhD at University of Hamburg (1921). His subsequent studies and work in philosophy and political philosophy brought him into contact with Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and, as we shall see, Alexander Kojève. Strauss's contributions to the field of political philosophy have been significant in terms of the strength and diversity of his publications ranging across ancient, medieval, and modern political philosophy. A strong following of devoted students continue in his footsteps and his influence on contemporary American political philosophy has been profound.

This influence has also been the basis for significant attacks against Strauss both in terms of his methodology and his perceived political influence. Most recently Strauss has been condemned as the intellectual father of the neoconservative movement and the political reign of George W. Bush. Many of the attacks against Strauss and his students have been extreme and personal in nature. For example, one of Strauss's most vocal critics, Shadia Drury, has gone so far as to declare, "The trouble with the Straussians is that they are compulsive liars."<sup>1</sup> Allegations such as these have resulted in several strong defenses of Strauss as a thinker and mentor.<sup>2</sup> It is not the purpose of this book to enter into that fray. We are neither students of American politics nor close enough to the inner circle of Straussians to be able to adequately comment on either. Nonetheless, we do believe that many of the attacks against Strauss's work are unfounded, and we have been fortunate to learn a great deal from his close analyses of many of the West's most influential philosophic texts as well as from the many works of his students and associates.

Our argument, however, is not wholly disconnected from the recent debate, nor is it uncritical of Strauss. One of the many judgments levied against Strauss and his followers is that their reading of the history of philosophy encourages a conservative political agenda that is elitist and tyrannical. We believe that these claims are overstated. Yet it is clear that Strauss was critical of particular trends in modernity, specifically, its emphasis on individual subjectivity and unlimited freedom. The philosophy of G.W.F. Hegel, Strauss suggests, contributed significantly to the wrongful path of modernity. Virtue, Strauss argues, should take precedence over freedom in one's private and political life. Modern people ought to

look to antiquity, he argues, as it provides an alternative and perhaps even better model of the highest human life.

At the same time that interest in Leo Strauss has increased, there has been an unrelated renewed interest in the philosophy of Hegel. While some conservatives look to Strauss as perhaps a means to salvage the modern world from its ills, other scholars have re-engaged Hegel's thought to determine if it might yet have any relevance to the contemporary order.<sup>3</sup> While Strauss viewed Hegel's thought as indicative of much that is wrong with liberalism and modernity, for many contemporary thinkers, Hegel's position is not liberal enough. Hegel's emphasis on an objective rational principle, the nature and power of the state, his particular treatment of the inequality of men and women, and the necessity of war, all seem to suggest that Hegel's thought is the by-product of a now rightly forgotten earlier age.

Yet neither Strauss's conservative criticisms nor those stemming from more liberal thinkers are fair to the fullness of Hegel's project. Siding fully with neither the right nor the left, Hegel seeks to show that the principles of each side can only be fulfilled when they are reconciled with what seems to be their opposite part. Wisdom and virtue, on the one hand, and freedom and diversity, on the other, are mutually dependent.

This book examines Strauss's critique of modernity in light of Hegel's philosophic defense of the same. In so doing, we hope to reveal that many of the virtues of the ancient world that Strauss and other conservatives have feared as lost can only properly be present when individual particularity and subjectivity are recognized and fulfilled. Despite the strength of Strauss's critique, we will argue that Hegel's thought regarding the nature of modernity addresses and even satisfies many, if not all, of Strauss's concerns. In the process we will necessarily shed light on the other side of the debate. For those who would stress Hegel's conservatism, rightly attending to Strauss's criticisms of Hegel brings to the light the essentially liberal nature of Hegel's thought. In the end, we agree with Hegel: virtue and freedom are not opposed, but each is necessary for the other. In the following chapters we will delve into the similarities and differences of the philosophic accounts of Strauss and Hegel. For the purposes of an introduction, however, we will briefly state the position of each, setting the stage for the debate that will follow.

## THE ANCIENT QUEST FOR WISDOM AND VIRTUE

In determining the best life for a human being, Strauss narrows the possibilities to two: the philosophic life and the life of ethical virtue, as exemplified, Strauss says, in the life of the gentleman. Largely in agreement with Aristotle's argument in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Strauss suggests that the highest human life will be one that most appropriately uses the best



part of our natures.<sup>4</sup> Insofar as reason is judged as being what most distinctively marks a human being in relationship to other natural beings, the best human life will be one that most appropriately makes use of our rational faculty, seeking to understand the truest of things. Initially, it seems that Strauss judges the life of wisdom as the best human life. Focused on what is eternally true, the wise person's happiness would be most stable and he would be most content. However, Strauss also notes that what is actually best must not exist only hypothetically, but in reality. In this light, a life of wisdom cannot be the best life, for, as we shall see, Strauss argues that the absolute is ultimately inscrutable to a human intellect. As such, Strauss judges the achievement of human wisdom as impossible. Nonetheless, he argues, one might seek to know, and in seeking one might gain some understanding and some relative degree of happiness. Socrates may only know that he knows nothing, but at least he knows that.

The idea that the life of the philosopher might be the best possible life is complicated when we recognize that the insufficiency of human nature makes life in a community necessary. People are not just rational beings; they are rational animals, and the animalistic side of human existence, i.e., the body, requires a great deal of care. The time and effort it takes to simply remain alive is time and effort that cannot be spent in contemplation. Life in a community alleviates some of this stress, but also adds difficulties of its own. Now, in addition to attending to the health of their bodies, individuals must also think about the health of their communities, if only for the sake of their continued well-being.

In recognizing the need for communities, Strauss argues a potentially second-best life emerges—the life of the *kaloï kagathoi*, those who are beautiful and good, the gentlemen. In the gentleman, Strauss argues that ethical activity rather than contemplation is prominent. The gentleman uses reason to govern himself, particularly his appetitive self, and seeks to assist in governing others through active participation in his city. Given the necessity of living in community, and the emphasis that the gentleman places on rational activity, the public life of a gentleman, or statesman, competes with the happiness of the philosopher.

Ultimately, Strauss sides with the philosopher. While the philosopher will never reach the truth and, hence, will always be unsatisfied, a gentleman has to serve the city he governs and he depends on the city—a thing that is divided and mutable—for his happiness. Such a person leads a life “of perpetual business, care and trouble.”<sup>5</sup> The philosopher, alternatively, serves and depends on no one, other than the truth, and is as free as is humanly possible.<sup>6</sup> While the circumstances of a city and the affections of people change and cannot be counted on, the truth, while impossible to fully grasp, always remains the same. The philosopher, aware of his progress on the path to truth, can derive pleasure, satisfaction, and hap-

pinness from the knowledge that he is closer to the end he seeks than he was before.<sup>7</sup> The political life cannot afford this level of certainty.

There is the additional question of the relative virtue possible within these lives, for "true happiness . . . is possible only on the basis of excellence."<sup>8</sup> Political virtue, Strauss says, is qualified. A gentleman is virtuous, at least in part, because he seeks to be honored, if not by everyone, then at least by those capable of doing so.<sup>9</sup> We are to understand that true virtue lies in doing what one ought to do, regardless of the consequences, and regardless of whether one's virtuous deeds are recognized. Insofar as he seeks to be honored for his virtue, the gentleman is not virtuous in the fullest sense. The philosopher, however, seeks the good, in and of itself, regardless of whether his achievement is recognized by others. The true philosopher seeks wisdom for its own sake.

Finally, Strauss concludes that the relative dependence of the gentleman, in contrast with the independence of the philosopher, means that the philosopher is more likely to act properly in his relationships with others. Strauss writes, "Since the wise man does not need human beings in the way in which, and to the extent to which, the ruler does, his attitude toward them is free, not passionate, and hence not susceptible of turning into malevolence or hatred . . . the wise man alone is capable of justice in the highest sense."<sup>10</sup> While we might object that the philosopher, who seems to care for nothing other than the truth, seems cold, Strauss suggests that this coldness is a virtue. The philosopher will be moved by neither sentiment nor petty desire when dealing with others. The gentleman, alternatively, is tied to the city so that no matter how he might seek to govern his desires, there is the chance that his motivation will be less than objective.

In the contest between the gentleman, or statesman, and the philosopher, Strauss declares the philosopher the clear victor. Yet, he also concedes that the life of the gentleman is a more likely option for more people and a close second with respect to relative virtue and satisfaction. Moreover, Strauss understands that the habituation of the gentleman to virtue and the common good makes him open to the possibility of philosophy. However and crucially, Strauss also notes neither the life of the true philosopher nor that of the gentleman is encouraged within modernity. Instead, by accepting the main tenets of historicism, modern philosophy has jettisoned even the idea of an objective truth. All truth is now subjective and so all people can now be "philosophers."<sup>11</sup> Correspondingly, the political world's endorsement of freedom as at the heart of human nature and, therefore, at the heart of justice, means that all activities, with the exception of those that might infringe on other freedoms, are equally valued. All people might thus be "gentlemen." Needless to say, for Strauss, these modern philosophers and gentlemen fall far short of the original and true form of these lives properly understood.

## MODERN FREEDOM

Hegel, alternatively, sees modernity as having progressed beyond the position of the ancient world. Recognizing the truth inherent in ancient philosophy, Hegel understands the place of virtue and philosophy in the best human life. Nonetheless, Hegel says that antiquity erred in preferring only the objective and universal element in human nature to the detriment of human nature as it particularly and subjectively exists. While a few people, perhaps, could be satisfied in knowing that they have done or sought the good regardless of the demands of their more particular desires, most people, Hegel understands, could not. Instead, faced with objective demands that they act in accordance with what is objectively best, even if that means sacrificing all of their own particular aims and interests, the majority of people will find other means, often subversive, to satisfy their desires.

Even further, Hegel writes that disregarding subjectivity as a necessary and even positive part of human consciousness, the ancient order failed to understand human nature and the best human life. Hegel agrees with the ancients that the capacity for thought and rational activity are fundamentally part of what it means to be human. Yet to recognize the complexity of a human life, all elements of the human nature must be fully accounted for.

Modernity, Hegel argues, advances beyond the limited vision of antiquity by appreciating the role of individual subjectivity. Politically, this understanding is expressed in the promulgation of laws that protect human rights. Recognizing that individuals are diverse, liberal democratic regimes presuppose that justice requires the free expression of these differences. Such regimes understand that people will choose different paths based on their particular talents and interests, and that most, if not all, of these choices will be appropriate and rational despite, and even because of, the differences that inspire them. In so doing, these political communities signal that they recognize the capacity of individuals to make rational choices with their freedom.

While Strauss argues that modernity has gone too far in promoting subjectivity over and against the recognition of any objective good, Hegel disagrees. Instead, Hegel argues that modernity allows for the possibility of a fully actualized ethical life, a possibility, he says, that is not present in antiquity. Unlike the ethical life of antiquity where unreflective custom dominates, in modern ethical life, or *sittlichkeit*, Hegel, according to Allen Wood, describes "a rational institutional structure, whose rationality makes it desirable by individuals as an end in itself, and not merely as a means to individual good."<sup>12</sup> Ethical life combines the particular tastes, desires, and talents of individuals with an objectively true and good order. By recognizing, protecting, and incorporating individual choices and preferences, modern political communities encourage individuals to rec-

ognize the goodness of these communities and support them. This, Hegel suggests, is more than “enlightened self-interest,” where one concedes the existence of the larger whole because it is of some benefit to oneself. Instead, Hegel argues that, in a modern ethical state, individual preferences and desires are transformed or broadened such that these individuals take up what is good for the whole alongside what might be good for themselves.

In a liberal democratic regime, individuals perceive their true nature as manifested in the objective institutions and laws of their political communities. In their protected rights, they see the inherent truth of their subjective and particular lives. At the same time, they understand that they can be trusted with the execution of these particular preferences not because these choices are unimportant, but rather because these individuals are also rational, thinking beings. The onus is on them to reasonably execute their preferences. Seeing themselves in the objective order of their political communities, and finding themselves inherently satisfied therein, these individuals should also recognize the rationality and goodness of their political orders and begin to see its ends as consistent with their own. Rather than leading to a state of decadence and corruption, Hegel believes that modernity can be the source of virtue and happiness.

Although Strauss seems primarily pessimistic about the modern project, there are aspects of his understanding of the best life that seem more closely aligned with modernity than he publicly states. Moreover, Strauss is not entirely negative with respect to Hegel’s thought, referring to Hegel in one instance as “the outstanding philosopher of the nineteenth century.”<sup>13</sup> And also noting that: “Hegel returned from the philosophy of reflection to the higher vitality of Plato and Aristotle.”<sup>14</sup> This has led some commentators to suggest that although subtle about his agreement with many modern things, Strauss was not a proponent of the ancient world over and against the modern.<sup>15</sup> We do not want to make that argument; instead, we will take Strauss’s position at face value. According to Strauss, ancient political thought and the world that it created are preferred to the modern equivalent. If this is an accurate assessment of Strauss’s thought, we believe it relies on a false dichotomy—that political freedom and virtue are irreconcilable. In contrast, Hegel’s view of modernity provides a more optimistic and, indeed, truer picture. For, Hegel agrees fundamentally with Strauss’s interpretation of the main tenets of ancient philosophy and, in addition, provides a foundation for the philosophic freedom that Strauss agrees is the best possible option. Yet this is a resolution that Strauss denies or avoids.

## CHAPTER OUTLINE

While we believe that Strauss and Hegel agree on many significant points, we also think that Hegel's philosophy and the modern world offer a superior vision of human ends and human community than either that of antiquity or the vision presented by Strauss. Strauss may have endorsed liberal democratic regimes as being the best possible political communities; yet, philosophically, he preferred ancient thought and inevitably this kind of conservatism makes its way, intentionally or not, into the political force of his writing. Even within Strauss's essays it is relatively easy to see a conservative political pattern emerge and it is perhaps not unfair to draw this to the forefront given that Strauss believed and argued that philosophy shapes the basis of our political and moral existences.

For example, in a letter to Karl Löwith, a young Strauss writes, "Just because . . . right-wing Germany does not tolerate us [the Jews] says nothing against the principles of the right. To the contrary, only on the basis of the principles of the right—fascist, authoritarian, imperial—is it possible, with decency and without the ridiculous and pitiable appeal to the 'unwritten rights of man,' to protest against this shabby nuisance [i.e., Hitler]." <sup>16</sup> While Strauss's position seems to have moderated through the course of the war and his life in America, Steven Smith observes, "This letter has been widely discussed . . . as evidence of a strong authoritarian streak in Strauss's thought. This judgment may not be altogether false." <sup>17</sup> In an essay on the crisis facing modernity, Strauss favorably describes a similarity between the classical view and a faithful observance of the Bible, writing that each agrees "that the proper framework of morality is the patriarchal family, which is, or tends to be, monogamous, and which forms the cell of society in which free adult males, and especially the old ones, predominate." <sup>18</sup> The politically conservative conclusions that one might draw from such a statement are obvious. It is then not surprising that students or followers of Strauss have often been identified as associated with conservative political agendas. <sup>19</sup>

In disagreement with Strauss, we will argue that Hegel's philosophy offers an approach to liberal democratic politics that is in fact more conducive to the happiness and virtue of its citizens than that envisioned by either the ancients or by Strauss. Recognizing the true particularity of human nature, the Hegelian political order includes human beings in all of their natural diversity. In so doing, it encourages and endorses their rational participation within the whole. We believe that Strauss either misconstrued or disagreed with Hegel's project on several important, and connected, grounds. The following chapters will examine Strauss's position, and try to give as clear a response as possible in light of Hegel's argument.

Although seemingly critical of Hegelian thought, it is Hegel's thought as read through the lens of Alexander Kojève that Strauss finds most disquieting. In chapter 1 we will outline Kojève's understanding of Hegel as well as his vision of the nature of modernity. Although Kojève, like Hegel, is a proponent of modernity, the account he has of the modern world differs dramatically from what Hegel understood. With this perspective of modernity accounted for, we will explore the elements of this argument that Strauss disagrees with before we turn our attention in the later chapters to how Hegel might have potentially responded. In brief, Strauss argues that this account of Hegel's philosophy unleashes human desire and ultimately results in an empire, the very nature of which will be either tyrannical or altogether unsatisfactory for human existence. As a result, Strauss is able to see even the nihilism of Nietzsche as a welcome break from Hegelian mediocrity.

While Strauss's particular critique of Hegel's account of modernity is generally acknowledged in scholarship, in the second chapter we will argue that the roots of Strauss's divergence from Hegel's thought lie in metaphysics rather than in politics or ethics. In our interpretation of Hegel's metaphysical foundations, we are in agreement with Wood who argues:

it is not as though Hegel's social philosophy drives us back to the categories of metaphysics as to some source of esoteric wisdom. The point is rather that Hegel sees his metaphysics as the foundation of a philosophy that deals with the modern predicament because his own deepest response to the modern predicament is a response on the level of metaphysics . . . Hegel seeks to overcome alienation by rationally reconciling us to the world, comprehending a divine reason, akin to our own, immanent in it.<sup>20</sup>

The primary difficulty with Strauss's understanding of Hegel is that Strauss believes that Hegel envisions a wholly secular world, or a world where there is no recognized relationship to, or dependence on, a universal metaphysical principle. It is our contention that Strauss's unwillingness to accept, or at least acknowledge, Hegel's claims about Christianity and Christian philosophy largely account for Strauss's misunderstanding of Hegel. While Strauss accepts Kojève's presentation of Hegel's "religious" position, Strauss's own tendency to radically separate religion and philosophy is what makes him susceptible to Kojève's arguments.

Next, as will be discussed in the third and fourth chapters, we address what is perhaps the most significant criticism lodged against Hegel: that the perfect ethical order he argues in favor of has not yet come into existence. Even if we reject Kojève's argument necessitating the world homogenous state, do we not have to admit that the modern order is not all that ethical? In partial agreement with this critique, we argue that the contemporary world represents, in large part, the penultimate stage of

morality that Hegel describes as preceding the state of ethical life. We have not yet achieved, in any complete way, the highest stage of ethical life that Hegel depicts. However, as we will argue in the fourth chapter, there are indicators in the modern world that show we are progressing to a more ethical state, one that is closely aligned with Hegel's vision.

Strauss's thought has gained considerable negative attention in recent years, and while many of the criticisms against his arguments are ultimately unfounded, it is possible to discern the source of these concerns. The conservative nature of Strauss's thought and the seemingly unbridgeable gap between the politics of the far right and far left leaves many of the clerics in this debate preaching only to choirs of the converted. We think that Hegel's thought, if attended to, could serve to reconcile some of these estrangements, or at least assist in ensuring that the separation is amiable. Hegel is an unqualified supporter of modernity and the messiness this entails. At the same time, he believes that it is this world that will bring to fruition many of the most important aspirations of the ancients. Freedom, virtue, and philosophy, Hegel argues, are inseparable and one who would practically limit the first will necessarily concede the loss of the other two. Neither Hegel nor Strauss imagines that all people will use their freedom well and become virtuous and thus philosophic. Instead, Hegel argues that the contemporary world confirms that people will be drawn to lives of greater decency and enlightenment if given greater practical freedom, an idea with which we agree. One might charge that this is a naïve or nearsighted thought. As Hegel, however, tells us, "reason is the rose in the cross of the present."<sup>21</sup> Despite, and even because of, the weaknesses associated with the inevitable imperfections and tremendous failings of any world at any time, we are given a way to see what is true and our path forward.

#### AUDIENCE

This book is primarily aimed at scholars in political science or political philosophy who have an interest in the work and influence of Leo Strauss, those who are concerned that the modern world may not be as conducive to virtue or true human happiness as previous eras, as well as those who are interested in defending the modern world. Given the possibility that not everyone in our target audience will be as familiar with Hegel's writing, we have tried to explicate our understanding of Hegel's argument in as clear and jargon-free a manner as possible. While we have sought to clearly indicate where we stand in the recent scholarly debates concerning Hegelian interpretation, we have tried not to get bogged down in the minutiae of these debates. Instead, we indicate the various sides of the debates in question, explain our position, and then move

forward. Additionally, scholars of Hegel should find our application of Hegelian thought to contemporary issues to be of interest.

## NOTES

1. Shadia Drury, "Saving America," Evatt Foundation, last modified September, 2003, <http://evatt.org.au/papers/saving-america.html>.

2. Further critiques of Strauss include, William H. F. Altman, *The German Stranger: Leo Strauss and National Socialism* (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2010); Shadia Drury, *Leo Strauss and the American Right* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999); Ann Norton, *Leo Strauss and the Politics of American Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004); and Earl Shorris, "Ignoble Liars: Leo Strauss, George Bush, and the Philosophy of Mass Deception," *Harper's Magazine*, June 2004, 308:1849, 65–71. Defenses or reconsiderations of Strauss's thought include Peter Minowitz, *Straussophobia: Defending Leo Strauss and Straussians against Shadia Drury and Other Accusers* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2009); Thomas Pangle, *Leo Strauss: An Introduction to His Thought and Intellectual Legacy* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2006); and Catherine and Michael Zuckert, *The Truth about Leo Strauss* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

3. For instance, in the past five years alone, the following is a selection of only a few of the scholarly books that have been written on the question of Hegel's continued relevance, Andrew Buchwalter, *Dialectics, Politics, and the Contemporary Value of Hegel's Practical Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 2012); Katerinia Deligiorgi, *Hegel New Directions* (Chesham, Bucks: Acumen, 2006); Thomas Lewis, *Religion, Modernity, and Politics in Hegel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Lydia Moland, *Hegel on Political Identity: Patriotism, Nationality, Cosmopolitanism* (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 2011); Frederick Neuhouser, *Foundations of Hegel's Social Theory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000); Robert C. Sibley, *Northern Spirits: John Watson, George Grant, and Charles Taylor: Appropriations of Hegelian Political Thought* (Montreal: McGill Queen's University Press, 2012); Slavoj Žižek, Clayton Crockett, and Creston Davis, *Hegel & the Infinite: Religion, politics, and dialectic* (New York: Columbia Press, 2012).

4. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, Co., 2000), 1177a, 15–20.

5. Leo Strauss, "On Tyranny," in *On Tyranny* (New York: Free Press, 1991), 84.

6. *Ibid.*, 84 and 91.

7. *Ibid.*, 101.

8. *Ibid.*, 82.

9. *Ibid.*, 101.

10. *Ibid.*, 91. See also 99.

11. Leo Strauss, "On Aristotle's Politics," in *The City and Man* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1964), 37.

12. Allen W. Wood, *Hegel's Ethical Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 1999.

13. Leo Strauss, "Political Philosophy and History," in *What is Political Philosophy? and Other Studies* (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1958), p. 58.

14. Leo Strauss, "What is Political Philosophy," in *What is Political Philosophy*, 51.

15. Victor Gourevitch, "Philosophy and Politics, I," *The Review of Metaphysics* 22 (1968): 58–84; 281–328. For an interesting account of the Strauss's thought in relationship to the American regime, see Zuckert, "The Truth about Leo Strauss."

16. As quoted in Steven Smith, "Leo Strauss: The Outline of a Life," in *The Cambridge Companion to Leo Strauss* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 19.

17. Smith, "Leo Strauss: The Outline of a Life," 19–21.

18. Leo Strauss, "Progress or Return," in *The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism* (Indianapolis: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 247.



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