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Book Review

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Leo Strauss: An Intellectual Biography

by Daniel Tanguay

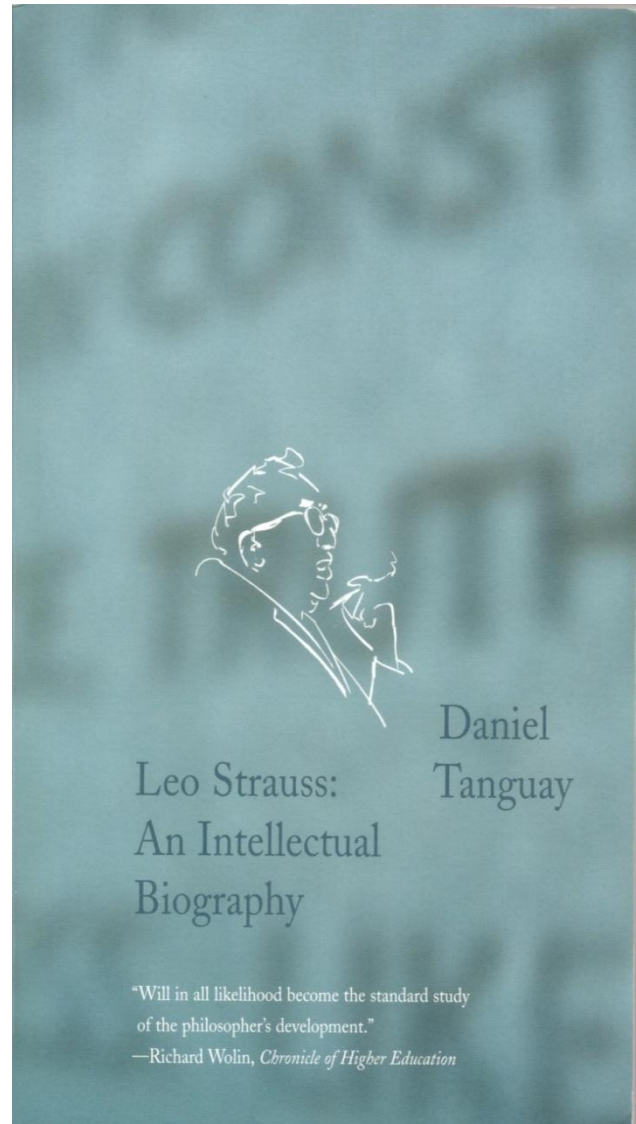
London, 2007

272 pages

ISBN 9780300172102

This book is about one of the most influential political philosopher, Leo Strauss. Its writer Daniel Tanguay presents the development of Leo Strauss's thought from especially thirties and forties. It clarifies not just how Leo Strauss thinks about twentieth century political philosophy but also enable to us with critical outlook about modern political philosophy and its problems.

Apart from Introduction, the book consists of four main titles about Leo Strauss's thought. First title is "Zionism, Orthodoxy, and Spinoza's Critique of Religion" which is about the first problems Leo Strauss deals with especially at the beginning of his academic studies. Through considering Zionism, Orthodoxy and Spinoza's critique of religion, Strauss begins to cope with the conflict between reason and revelation issue, also known as Theologico-Political Problem, which will be the main subject during his all-academic life. Especially through studies of Spinoza, we see that Leo Strauss returns to medieval and ancient philosophy in order to understand old explanations about reason and revelation generally. Moreover, the conflict between reason and revelation Strauss identifies the critical status of philosophers and prophets in relation to society. So, the book considers these issues under second title "Prophet and Philosopher". Under this title, the writer presents how Strauss deals with medieval philosophy, especially Islamic and Jewish philosophy, in relation to Greek philosophy. We see that the writer presents Strauss's intellectual journey which considers about Islamic philosophers, especially Farabi, and Maimonides effectively. The reader easily finds how Farabi has crucial role in shaping the idea of esotericism in Leo Strauss's thought. Under the same title reader also finds how Islamic philosophers have relation with each other and with Maimonides and Greek philosophers on discussions about prophetology, Platonism and the relationship between philosophy and law mainly.



After medieval and ancient content of theologico-political problem, the book considers the same subject in enlightenment and modern era. The book mentions the influence of Thomas Hobbes on Leo Strauss's thought and discusses natural right and natural law issues under the same content. So the reader finds modern solution with the contribution of Machiavellian views to theologico-political problem. Moreover the writer also points out discussions of Thomas Aquinas especially in terms of natural right and natural law in relation with theologico-political problem. After the presentation of theologico-political problem, the book considers its Strauss's metaphoric title "The Conflict Between Jerusalem and Athens" as last title. As Jerusalem designates "religion" and Athens shows "philosophy" in Strauss's thought, the book considers the conflict between them from the point of Jewish, modern and Greek philosophy. The reader finds especially Bible-philosophy conflict which is in Leo Strauss's thought never ending one, and how each side fights against each other continuously through the history.

The book ends with concluding remarks of the writer about the whole Leo Strauss's thought. Although Leo Strauss's philosophy is very complex especially in terms of so many different titles and subjects, the writer is good in organizing and presenting it in easily followed way. The book can be beneficial for who wants to understand Leo Strauss's thought in well-coordinated way. But also the book can be useful for academic studies as a good reference point.