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0521599369 - Hannah Arendt and Leo Strauss: German Emigres and American Political Thought after World War II

Edited by Peter Graf Kielmansegg, Horst Mewes and Elisabeth Glaser-Schmidt

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Hannah Arendt and Leo Strauss: German Emigrés and American Political Thought after World War II is an examination of intellectual migration from Europe to the United States and the resulting influence of European scholars on both the American academy and their home countries after 1945. This collection presents essays by German and American political scientists on Hannah Arendt's and Strauss's émigré experience and their philosophical work in the United States. The authors discuss Arendt's and Strauss's intellectual contributions to American political science as well as the evolution of their respective oeuvres that grew out of the emigration experience. As demonstrated here, the flight from totalitarianism, the Jewish experience of National Socialism and the Holocaust, and the critical transference of German political philosophy to the United States furthered a distinctive interpretation of American political philosophy.

This volume, which concludes with a roundtable discussion, also suggests common themes in the work of the two philosophers. Though in different ways and not uncritically, both of these philosophers viewed the contemporary American system as the antithesis to European totalitarianism. Finally, their émigré experience not only influenced their American work but also had a fundamental impact on the formation of the discipline of political science in Germany after the war.

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GERMAN ÉMIGRÉS AND AMERICAN
POLITICAL THOUGHT AFTER
WORLD WAR II

Edited by

PETER GRAF KIELMANSEGG

HORST MEWES

ELISABETH GLASER-SCHMIDT

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Contents*

| | |
|----------------------|-----|
| Preface | vii |
| List of Contributors | ix |

| | |
|--|---|
| Introduction <i>Peter Graf Kielmansegg</i> | 1 |
|--|---|

PART I. HANNAH ARENDT

| | |
|---|----|
| 1 Hannah Arendt and the Theory of Democracy: A Critical Reconstruction <i>Helmut Dubiel</i> | 11 |
| 2 The Questionable Influence of Arendt (and Strauss) <i>George Kateb</i> | 29 |
| 3 Hannah Arendt: A German-American Jewess Views the United States – and Looks Back to Germany <i>Ernst Vollrath</i> | 45 |

PART II. LEO STRAUSS

| | |
|---|-----|
| 4 Reflections on Leo Strauss and American Education <i>Timothy Fuller</i> | 61 |
| 5 Leo Strauss: The Quest for Truth in Times of Perplexity <i>Jürgen Gebhardt</i> | 81 |
| 6 Leo Strauss and Martin Heidegger: Greek Antiquity and the Meaning of Modernity <i>Horst Mewes</i> | 105 |
| 7 Leo Strauss: German Origin and American Impact <i>Alfons Söllner</i> | 121 |
| 8 The Modern World of Leo Strauss <i>Robert B. Pippin</i> | 139 |

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Edited by Peter Graf Kielmansegg, Horst Mewes and Elisabeth Glaser-Schmidt

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

vi

Contents

PART III. ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

| | |
|---|-----|
| Discussion | 163 |
| <i>The Influence of German Philosophy</i> | 163 |
| <i>The American Experience</i> | 171 |
| <i>Views on Democracy</i> | 182 |
| | |
| Select Bibliography of Works by Arendt and by Strauss on Modern Political Science and Philosophy <i>Elisabeth Glaser-Schmidt</i> | 191 |
| Index | 201 |

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Preface

The essays gathered in this volume were originally read and extensively discussed at a three-day German-American conference held at the University of Colorado, Boulder, in early September 1991. The purpose of the conference had been to look at Hannah Arendt and Leo Strauss as German émigrés to the United States, and to assess the impact of this fact upon their political philosophies. This entailed, first, the examination of their respective German (or Central European) intellectual and educational backgrounds, as well as their political dispositions and experiences. It meant, second, relating their formative German backgrounds to the further evolution of their political philosophical views and experiences in the United States. And it meant, finally, attempting a judgment as to the definitive traces left by these various experiences upon the mature versions of Arendt's and Strauss's political philosophies.

Consequently, the main purpose of this volume is not a detailed analysis of all the recent literature on Arendt and Strauss published mainly in American journals. The conference participants were fairly evenly divided between political theorists and intellectual historians. Some approached Arendt and Strauss primarily from a point of view rooted in the history of modern German political philosophy. Others chose to assess the significance of their intellectual development from the perspectives of their fully developed philosophies, or in some instances to gauge the contribution of these philosophies to modern Western democratic theory. As a result, this collection of essays represents a great variety of often conflicting views, and to that extent reflects the original purpose of the conference.

Our gratitude goes both to the participants of the conference as well as to its sponsors. Participating were (in alphabetical order): Simone Chambers (Colorado), Helmut Dubiel (Frankfurt), Timothy Fuller (Colorado College), Jürgen Gebhardt (Erlangen), Elisabeth Glaser-Schmidt (German His-

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

viii

Preface

torical Institute), Thomas Hollweck (Colorado), Bonnie Honig (Harvard), George Kateb (Princeton), Peter Graf Kielmansegg (Mannheim), Hartmut Lehmann (German Historical Institute), Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr. (Harvard), Athanosios and Gail Moulakis (Colorado), Robert B. Pippin (San Diego), Alfons Söllner (Berlin), and Ernst Vollrath (Cologne). The main sponsors were the German Historical Institute, Washington, D.C.; the Max Kade Foundation; the Goethe Institute of San Francisco; and the University of Colorado, Boulder.

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Contributors

Helmut Dubiel is a professor of sociology at the Universität Giessen and co-director of the Institut für Sozialforschung, Frankfurt. With Günther Frankenberg and Ulrich Rödel, he has most recently published *Die demokratische Frage* (1990). He is currently working on a book about political philosophy after the fall of communism.

Timothy Fuller is a professor of political science and the dean of Colorado College. He has published extensively on Hobbes, Michael Oakeshott, and on contemporary issues in political philosophy. Recent publications include *The Voice of Liberal Learning: Michael Oakeshott on Education* (1989), "The Idea of Christianity in Hobbes's Leviathan" (*Jewish Political Studies Review*, 1993), and *Michael Oakeshott on Religion, Politics, and the Moral Life* (1993).

Jürgen Gebhardt is a professor of political science and the director of the Eric Voegelin Library at the Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg. He has published extensively on political theory, history of political ideas, and comparative politics. His most recent book is *Americanism – Revolutionary Order and Societal Self-interpretation in the American Republic* (1993). He is currently working on *The Interrelationship of Politics and Religion in Modern Society* (forthcoming).

Elisabeth Glaser-Schmidt is a research fellow at the German Historical Institute, Washington, D.C. Her most recent publications include *Amerikanische Währungsreformen in Ostasien und im karibischen Raum, 1900–1918* (1988), and *German and American Concepts to Restore a Liberal World Trading System after World War I* (forthcoming). She is currently working on a history of German–American business and political relations within the framework of the world trading system in the interwar period.

George Kateb is a professor of politics at Princeton University. His work is in the field of political theory. His most recent books are *The Inner Ocean: Individualism and Democratic Culture* (1992) and *Hannah Arendt: Politics, Conscience, Evil* (1984). His current work is on the moral and political philosophy of Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Peter Graf Kielmansegg is a professor of political science at Universität Mannheim (1985 to the present); he has also taught at the Universität Köln (1971–85) and Georgetown University (1976–77). Between 1977 and 1981 he was vice president of the German Political Science Association. His most recent books include *Lange Schatten* (1989) and *Das Experiment der Freiheit* (1988).

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Frontmatter[More information](#)

x

Contributors

Horst Mewes is a professor of political science at the University of Colorado, Boulder, and, since 1979, also visiting professor at Universität Tübingen. He studied political philosophy at the University of Chicago with both Leo Strauss and Hannah Arendt. With Jürgen Gebhardt, he was awarded a major grant in 1993 from the German government to study recent German and American writings on democratic theory. In addition to *Einführung in das politische System der USA* (2nd ed., 1991), he has published articles in *Social Research*, *Political Science Review*, *Telos*, *German Critique*, and *Zeitgeschichte*.

Robert B. Pippin is a professor of social thought and philosophy in the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago. He has published extensively on the modern European philosophical tradition. His books include *Kant's Theory of Form* (1981), *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness* (1989), and *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem: On the Dissatisfaction of European High Culture* (1991). He is currently working on a book about Hegel's ethical thought.

Alfons Söllner is a lecturer in political science at the Freie Universität Berlin and research assistant at the Zentrum für Antisemitismusforschung, Technische Universität Berlin. He has published extensively on twentieth-century political thought and the emigration of German scholars after 1933. He has recently published *Peter Weiss und die Deutschen* (1988) and, with Herbert A. Strauss, has co-edited *Die Emigration der Wissenschaften nach 1933* (1991). He is currently working on asylum policy and xenophobia in Germany.

Ernst Vollrath is a professor of philosophy at the Universität Köln. For many years he was the Theodor Heuss Professor at the New School for Social Research. He has published widely in philosophy and political theory. His most important books are *Die Rekonstruktion der politischen Urteilskraft* (1977) and *Grundlegung einer philosophischen Theorie des Politischen* (1987). He has also published articles in German and English on Max Weber, Carl Schmitt, Martin Heidegger, Hannah Arendt, and the "critical theorists."