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978-1-107-09303-4 - The Crisis of German Historicism: The Early Political thought of Hannah Arendt and Leo Strauss

Liisi Keedus

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THE CRISIS OF GERMAN HISTORICISM

Hannah Arendt and Leo Strauss – two major political thinkers of the twentieth century, both of German-Jewish background and forced into exile in America – were never friends or intellectual interlocutors. Yet they shared a radical critique of contemporary idioms of politically oriented discourses and a lifelong effort to modify reflective approaches to political experience. Liisi Keedus reveals how Arendt's and Strauss's thinking about political modernity was the product of a common intellectual formation in Weimar Germany, by examining the cross-disciplinary debates guiding their early work. Through a historical reconstruction of their shared interrogative horizons – comprising questions regarding the possibility of an ethically engaged political philosophy after two world wars, the political fate of Jewry, the implications of modern conceptions of freedom, and the relation between *theoria* and *praxis* – Keedus unravels striking similarities, as well as genuine antagonisms, between the two thinkers.

LIISI KEEDUS is a research fellow at the Erik Castrén Institute of International Law and Human Rights at University of Helsinki. She is affiliated with Tallinn University and the Boccaccio Intellectual History Programme at the European University Institute, Florence.

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*Dedicated to the memory of Uku Masing (1909–1985),
a scholar, a poet, and a free man*

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