

Leo Strauss and the Establishment of Esoteric Philosophy

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Abstract

This paper deals with Leo Strauss'

s orientation towards establishing a political philosophy that builds on secrecy and mysticism. According to Strauss, there are several risks included in such a call that is based on Plato, Aristotle and Farabi:

- (1) It outruns specialization to esoteric intention.
- (2) It goes beyond specialization to scorning leaders and audience.
- (3) It pretends that only a caste; i.e., philosophers, have the truth.
- (4) It lays bases for a political, mythological and cognitive system that goes beyond the cognitive aristocracy.

This paper deals with the risks of Straussian philosophy that forms a puritanical picture for itself. This is based on the article he entitled "What Is Political Philosophy?". Strauss defines political philosophy as the real attempt to know the political nature of things and to know the utopian political system. In other words, such a hierarchy in ruling, which is hyper authoritarian elitist according to Strauss, bases on replacing "Knowledge" for mere "Opinion and Belief". This is what Strauss calls "the nature of things" which gives the philosopher the right now only to divide the rule to philosophers, leaders and bugaboos, but also to assign philosophers as the only knowers of Truth since it is only the political philosopher who does not get satisfied with raising questions about justice or law. A political philosopher, nonetheless, leaps over such small parts to raise questions over what would be of a political nature, what limits there are for all political matters, or what link political life has with the comprehensive total.

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For the paper in Arabic see pages (481-505).

This totalitarianism that monopolizes the truth justifies the act of philosophers in monopolizing politics because knowing the political nature of things, as Strauss puts it, is not a sufficient condition for the establishment of philosophy or politics since it has another political target, at the same time, which is knowing the aspects of the utopian system. This is, in fact, what distinguishes political philosophy which is an activity that is semi-empirical and differs from the political theory that is mere theoretical contemplation.