Introduction

In the nineteenth century, French grapevines put at risk by phylloxera were grafted onto healthy American rootstock resistant to this plague so that they might be saved from destruction, then brought back to Europe when it had become safe. So, in the twentieth century, political philosophy, uprooted from European soil by toxic homegrown ideologies such as communism and National Socialism, was taken to America by exiles such as Leo Strauss, Eric Voegelin, Hannah Arendt, and Thomas Molnar and transplanted onto the healthier rootstock of American democracy. In saying that it is time for this tradition to return to Europe, we are not motivated by utopian fantasies about the condition of Europe today. Rather, we hope that the relative freedom of speech afforded to us in the present age (it is a question how exactly it relates to freedom of thought and whether it may threaten it in some ways) will make possible a renaissance of the great books, which these scholars encouraged us to read and provided inestimable guidance in our so doing, as well as of political philosophy itself. Strauss said that even if we have become accustomed to speak, in a debased manner, of the so-called political "philosophies" of "vulgar impostors like Hitler," authentic philosophising about politics is unusual and cannot be taken for granted.

In 1957, Strauss said that "political philosophy" has in fact two meanings. The expression has a foreground meaning, if "philosophy" designates the manner of treatment and "political" the subject treated. In this sense, political philosophy is the philosophical study of politics. But it also has another, arguably deeper, meaning if "political" designates the manner of treatment and "philosophy" the subject treated. In this sense, political philosophy is the political presentation of philosophy itself in the ancient sense of a comprehensive way of life dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge of questions of fundamental importance. In academic departments of philosophy or political science today, it is almost always understood in the former sense. However, when the tradition of political philosophy was established in ancient Greece, and articulated in

books such as Plato's *Republic*, Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, and Aristotle's *Politics*, it was *also* understood in the latter sense. That presentation of the philosophical life implied it is neither a life so exalted that it has nothing in common with the other ways of life prevalent in the polis nor, on the other hand, simply in harmony with the life of the polis. Instead, the philosophical life emerges in a contest *with* them in order to demonstrate its superiority *to* them. These two senses were often interwoven in the same text in artful, prudent, and even comical ways.

The journal will examine both senses of political philosophy, both as understood at the origins of this tradition in ancient Greece and as they have been developed and transformed in the subsequent centuries. These centuries have seen the codification of political philosophy in the schools of the Roman Empire, which preserved its founding texts at the risk of transforming their central theses into doctrines or even slogans. They have seen the rise of revealed religion (Christian, Jewish, and Muslim) and the reception of political philosophy in this context, sometimes by writers who accepted one of these religions sincerely, in their hearts, and sought to use philosophy as a "handmaiden," but also by those who were privately skeptical of revealed religion and indicated this skepticism between the lines of their books while exoterically accepting its rule. These centuries have seen the transformation of political philosophy in the early modern period and the Enlightenment from a primarily (although not exclusively) contemplative and theoretical pursuit to a politically ambitious, aggressive, and transformative enterprise and the globalization of political philosophy in the late modern period. The universal aspirations of political philosophy have made it relevant throughout the world, but it has always preserved a connection to its origins in ancient Greece and in a variety of ways managed the duality of its particular origins and its universal aspirations. Each change it has undergone over the centuries has presented it with peculiar challenges, as well as unexpected opportunities.

Our journal is conceived as a forum for scholarship on the great books in the history of political philosophy broadly construed, from ancient classics by such thinkers as Plato, Xenophon, and Aristotle, to medieval classics by such thinkers as Al-Farabi, Maimonides, and

Aquinas, to early modern classics by such thinkers as Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Rousseau and late modern classics by such thinkers as Hegel, Tocqueville, and Nietzsche. We know that these books retain their value today and provide the basis for a philosophical education worthy of the name. Rather than being mere rationalizations of their authors' prejudices, they achieved their enduring status through their comprehensive intentions and their mastery of language and thought. We intend also to publish interpretations of great poets, such as Homer, Dante, and Shakespeare, who articulated subtle and profound thoughts through pleasing tales, whose popular appeal established their fame even as their authors concealed their deeper intentions from much of their audience. Strauss said that Xenophon had the courage to pass through the centuries in the guise of a fool; something similar might be said about many celebrated poets, playwrights, and novelists. Although we focus on the interpretation of great books of enduring relevance, we do so not for purely antiquarian reasons, but because there are perennial problems that take different forms in different times and places but resurface wherever there is political life.

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