

Heidegger, Strauss, and the Premises of Philosophy: On Original Forgetting

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Viewing the Premises

Richard L. Velkley. *Heidegger, Strauss, and the Premises of Philosophy: On Original Forgetting*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011. 203 pp.

One of the signal merits of Richard Velkley's *Heidegger, Strauss, and The Premises of Philosophy: On Original Forgetting* is that it makes impossible any further contention—by readers of Heidegger and Strauss respectively—that the philosophical relationship between the two thinkers is insignificant or irrelevant. Moreover, Velkley's book shows that Strauss' critique of Heidegger is actually of a piece with certain affirmative philosophical views that he learned from Heidegger (both directly and indirectly). The aim of this review is to show the importance of Strauss for Heidegger research.¹

If readers of Heidegger know nothing else about Strauss' view of Heidegger, they are familiar with the following passage (given by Strauss in 1970): "[Heidegger's] key term is 'resoluteness,' without any indication as to the proper objects of resoluteness. There is a straight line which leads from Heidegger's resoluteness to his siding with the so-called Nazis in 1933."² Another great merit of Velkley's book is to unpack this critique in a philosophical, rather than political, manner. In so doing, Velkley shows both the shared philosophical trajectory to which Heidegger and Strauss belong and the substantive issues that divide them. At stake is nothing less than the differing conceptions of philosophy as a way of life. These conceptions can be given an initial indication through juxtaposing Heidegger's statement to the effect that the role of philosophy today is "not to talk about questions, but to act questioningly"³ with Strauss' statement that "today it is perhaps better... to overstate Plato's thesis regarding the disproportion between philosophy and politics than to follow the beaten path by failing to see a problem in the relation between philosophy and politics."⁴ Simply put, what divides Heidegger

¹ In a companion review-essay on Velkley's book (forthcoming in *Perspectives on Political Science* 42, no. 1 [2012]), I explore the importance of Heidegger for Strauss research.

² Leo Strauss, "A Giving Of Accounts," in Leo Strauss, *Jewish Philosophy And The Crisis Of Modernity: Essays And Lectures In Modern Jewish Thought*, ed. Kenneth Hart Green (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 461; hereafter, *JPGM*.

³ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Truth*, trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 4.

⁴ Leo Strauss, *What Is Political Philosophy? And Other Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 302; hereafter *WIPP*.

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