

political authority in the popular sovereignty of the New England town, where citizens recognize that their personal interest will most fully be served by pursuing the general interests of the collectivity. At the same time, he emphasizes Tocqueville's unveiling of an additional layer of democratic horizontal authority created involuntarily by citizens as they acquiesce in their ideas, opinion, and religious beliefs to "the superior wisdom of the Public" (p. 71) and its numerical ally, the Majority. Jaume rightly captures Tocqueville's concern that this subservience to public opinion will inject constant tension into a democracy, as it not only sets horizons and reaffirms stability but also can quickly mutate to new forms of despotic control. He portrays Tocqueville as moralist doing his part to confront such threats by using an array of rhetorical strategies to ennoble democracy, rechannel its passions, moderate its preoccupation with material possessions, spiritualize its politics, and seek, in his own words, "to exalt men's souls, not to complete the task of laying them low" (p. 225). In doing so, Jaume argues, Tocqueville also satisfies his personal goals as an aristocratic writer in a democratic age who appeals to all democratic citizens' natural propensity for poetry by arguing for the preciousness of their free will, individual reason, human dignity, and potential for grandeur.

In his concluding synthesis in Part V, Jaume claims to discover Tocqueville the man hidden behind the curtain or veil he has constructed for himself in his book. This concluding portrait is a disturbing one. He finds, he believes, a Tocqueville imprisoned by his aristocratic prejudices, nostalgic for the values of the feudal aristocracy and medieval commune, and riven with contradictions as he attempts, consciously and unconsciously, to convert "historical 'memory' into a present-day program of reform" (p. 292). Rather than take seriously Tocqueville's own surprise at his own discoveries in America of multiple forms of associational life that could provide a modern-day program of democratic resistance to democratic despotism, Jaume portrays him searching futilely in a vanished past for a "source of inspiration" for future democrats (p. 292). Ultimately, Tocqueville is "unclassifiable" politically (p. 326), "self-delusion[al]" (p. 299n) in characterizing his own archival studies, and a mystery even to himself—a conclusion that is depicted visually on Jaume's book's cover in the defacement of Théodore Chassériau's famous portrait.

Thus stripping Tocqueville of his own persona as an impartial arbiter of the emerging democratic era and a new kind of political liberal within it, Jaume strips him as well of his creativity and resourcefulness as a researcher and observer par excellence of American institutions, laws, and mores. I have already commented on Jaume's eschewing of commentaries by other scholars; he also blithely announces that he has chosen to dispense with the examination of any of Tocqueville's American sources (pp. 12–13). Why read sources from America, he appears

to ask, when Tocqueville's book was on a foreordained path from 1833–34 when its author was "already in possession of the keys to his analysis *thanks to family tradition*" (p. 300)?

Jaume is not the first to make claims of Tocqueville's nostalgia and self-deception, although he is perhaps the first to do so with principal reference to *Democracy in America*. General readers and scholars will be challenged by his book to explore for themselves whether Jaume's partial and harsh judgment of Tocqueville the man is supported by his partial and bifurcated research.

**Leo Strauss and Anglo-American Democracy:**

**A Conservative Critique.** By Grant N. Havers. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2013. 262p. \$37.00.

**The Enduring Importance of Leo Strauss.**

By Laurence Lampert. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013. 360p. \$55.00.

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— Rodrigo Chacón, *Harvard University*

Leo Strauss is said to have kept a picture of himself on his desk. Hailing from his days as a young soldier, it symbolized his vocation as a fighter against dogma. That vocation resulted in a polemical style of thinking that turned him equally against skeptics, believers, atheists, conservatives, and liberals, leaving his readers confused about his true intentions, incapable of rising to the insight that he was perhaps a philosopher. Despite the opacity of his intentions, Strauss's works have been profitably read by scholars of varied persuasions—from Claude Lefort to Carl Schmitt to Willmoore Kendall. The two books under review are part of that reception, which reflects Strauss's antidogmatic self-understanding.

Laurence Lampert and Grant N. Havers offer contrasting interpretations of Strauss's enduring importance. Lampert reads Strauss as the rediscoverer of an ancient art of writing which holds the key to a new history of philosophy. The gist of the argument is the controversial view—which is more and more widely accepted, notably in recent work on Machiavelli (Erica Brenner) and Nietzsche (Maudemarie Clark and David Dudrick)—that the great philosophers wrote exoterically, indicating their true teaching between the lines. What Lampert adds, his own enduring contribution, is a powerful argument supported by a wealth of evidence. Beginning with "Strauss's Recovery of Exotericism" (Part I), a thrilling account of Strauss's 1938/9 correspondence with Jacob Klein detailing his discovery of exoteric writing in Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, and Maimonides, Lampert's argument follows the arc of Western thought, from "The Socratic Enlightenment" (Part II) to "The Modern Enlightenment" (Part III). Each part consists of

expert and original readings of Strauss's pivotal works, from the 1935 "Introduction" to *Philosophy and Law* to "What Is Political Philosophy?" (1954) to the final "Note on the Plan of Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*," written in 1973.

Perhaps the most striking evidence of exoteric writing comes from Strauss himself. To judge from his correspondence, Strauss held rather different—even opposite—views from what his writings suggest (cf. pp. 17, 90). Thus, for example, ancient "gentlemanship" (*kalokagathia*) is not, or not only, the model to which the politically gifted should aspire. It was also a "swear word" in the Socratic circle—hence, presumably, something to be avoided: in Strauss's words, "something like 'philistine' or 'bourgeois' in the nineteenth century" (letter to Jacob Klein, February 16, 1939, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 3, p. 568). Similarly, the life guided by divine revelation is not a serious alternative for philosophers (p. 50). Strauss's praise of the political and religious lives is rather exoteric—part of a long tradition of "politics for philosophy" (p. 114), which extends from Socrates' rhetorical construction of a "teleotheology" to Nietzsche's invocation of new gods divinizing earthly life.

Although the subtlety of Lampert's argument cannot be conveyed here, its effect is to challenge the Heideggerian account of Western thought as an "ontotheological" destining, in which the very attempt to understand what entities truly are (ontology) generates a corresponding conception of the highest entity that best embodies that truth (theology). Against this view, Lampert suggests that already the first "teleotheology," which established the rule of Platonic "ideas," was a deliberate philosophical-political project. Ever since then, Platonic political philosophers have sought to advance "the simply highest and best"—philosophic knowledge of the True—through "the common highest and best"—religion and morality. As part of this tradition, Strauss's own teleotheology of natural kinds, which ranks "the philosopher" above "the gentleman" and "the vulgar," Lampert implies, must be understood as exoteric. If Straussians still believe in a natural order of eternal kinds, this is because Strauss misjudged the spiritual situation of the present (cf. p. 72). It is simply no longer prudent or wise to arm students with a conception of the whole that demands ignorance of modern natural science (pp. 204, 233).

*The Enduring Importance of Leo Strauss* poses a serious challenge to readers of Strauss who have long sought to understand his philosophic position. In Lampert's reading, Strauss was—or became—ultimately a Nietzschean (cf. pp. 215, 269). He was also a new kind of antihistoricist historian, who undermined the dogma that truth is "socially" or "historically" constructed. Indeed, reading Lampert's superb chapters on Xenophon, one cannot fail to wonder how Xenophon's freedom of thought, as

displayed in his art of writing, may have exceeded ours despite—or rather because—of the modern imperative to "always historicize!" If it turns out to be true that philosophers were able to bracket or suspend the prejudices of their times to let the phenomena show themselves from themselves, then their thought may contain an unexplored wealth of subversive insights (cf. pp. 126, 171, 184, 234). That holds true of Strauss himself, in whom Lampert finds resources for developing seemingly anti-Straussian arguments concerning the "logical link between monotheism and inhuman actions" and the necessity of a "comprehensive ecological way of thinking and acting" that is also sensitive to difference (pp. 236, 300, 308).

This is most exciting and enlightening, I believe. Lampert may prove Hans-Georg Gadamer right that to understand at all (in this case, Strauss) is to understand (him) differently. It is therefore puzzling to find the ontological pluralism and perspectivism presupposed in Lampert's argument (cf. p. 34)—which is also consistent with his two main sources, Strauss and Nietzsche—undermined by the thesis that there is one Great Tradition of philosophy united by its insight into "the True" (pp. 279, 288). As the recent work of Richard Velkley suggests, rather than beginning from a Nietzsche that is often indistinguishable from Kant (pp. 99, 148, 209, 281, 303), Strauss began from Husserl and Heidegger as retrievers of the Aristotelian question of being (cf. pp. 191, 34). Accordingly, the ultimate "ground" of his thought, I would argue, were the phenomena themselves, which may be interpreted for "conservative" ends—for example, the evidence that there *are* "gentlemen" concerned with honor and "vulgar" beings concerned with gain—as well as for subversive ends—for example, the evidence that nature is becoming, erotic striving, or will to power (cf. pp. 142, 280).

Havers's is a different Strauss, whose enduring importance is political (p. 66). Strauss made it possible to support the cause of "Anglo-American democracy" on grounds that transcend it, famously, on "classical" natural right. Against his "leftist" critics, Havers argues that Strauss's efforts to this effect were sincere (pp. 14, 21). Indeed, as Havers persuasively shows, Strauss had a "lifelong interest in defining what is universal" (p. 30) and in defending "the classical teaching that by nature all human beings can understand the good" (p. 134). And yet—this being the core thesis of *Leo Strauss and Anglo-American Democracy*—Strauss's universalism does more harm than good (pp. 14–15). It fuels a neoconservative ideology of global democracy building; it glorifies an ancient past that was anything but humane; and it undermines the true foundations of Anglo-American democracy, which are historicist—specifically, English—and, above all, Christian-Protestant (pp. 16, 59, 168).

In six densely researched chapters, Havers shows how Strauss's thought supports political views that range from right to left. Against the widespread view that Strauss was a conservative, Havers argues that he was, in key respects, an egalitarian (since the good is in principle intelligible to all) and even a "leftist" (pp. 38 f., 131). Thus, his thought disarms the value neutrality of modern rationalism following the "hermeneutics of suspicion" of Marx, Nietzsche, or Freud and exposes the pseudo-Christian foundations of modern liberalism as "bourgeois" ideology (cf. pp. 86, 163, 77, 69). This is meant as a warning to conservatives who have found an ally in Strauss (pp. 123, 139). To this end, Havers deploys his own hermeneutics of suspicion to cast doubt on the foundations of Straussian thought. Exposing the tensions (and absurdities) inherent in the attempt to hellenize the American founding, Havers argues that Straussians have been driven by a love of abstractions—for example, Churchill as "pagan warrior"; the (oxymoronic) "Christian gentleman" as model—that fly in the face of historical knowledge (p. 120).

Like Lampert, Havers draws on Strauss to critique Straussianism. In contrast to his followers, who think they can (and must) appeal to Aristotle in their fight against both slavery and abortion, Strauss had a keen sense of the conflicting claims of religion, politics, and morality (cf. pp. 58, 154). He also understood, with Nietzsche—and Jürgen Habermas—that the quasi-religious utopianism of progressive politics cannot ignore its roots in the Judeo-Christian heritage (pp. 165, 161). Yet, against Strauss, Havers does not seek to preserve that heritage as a challenge to rational thought but as an essential and irreplaceable "leavening influence" on politics and society (pp. 10, 168).

Readers of Havers will be right to suspect, or dismiss, a defense of the Anglo-American-Christian West that is as sharply critical of historical abstractions as it is proud of its own. But Havers succeeds in a way that is less grand, and more useful: to provide one of the most thorough critiques to date of the political uses and abuses of Strauss's thought.

#### **Define and Rule: Native as Political Identity.**

By Mahmood Mamdani. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012. 168p. \$29.95.

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— James D. Ingram, *McMaster University*

In a series of books starting with his 1996 *Citizen and Subject*, Mahmood Mamdani has turned repeatedly to colonial history to denaturalize what are often taken to be primordial political identities in the postcolonial world, revealing them to be legacies of empire. In so doing, he has made major contributions to a number of fields, from comparative politics to anthropology, African studies, and history. At the same time, he has established himself as

a public intellectual, a rare scholar whose work regularly finds an extra-academic audience, and this in two very different contexts, in the "South" as well as the "North." While Mamdani's work is rich in lessons for political scientists and political theorists in particular, it has generally been assessed under other (sub)disciplinary headings, making the present task particularly welcome.

To be sure, *Define and Rule*, which originated as the 2008 Du Bois lectures at Harvard, fits the rubric of theory better than his previous offerings in at least two respects. On the one hand, it is shorter and more general, forgoing detailed historical exposition and drawing conclusions that apply *mutatis mutandis* to the whole postcolonial world—which is to say, nearly everywhere. On the other hand, it places more weight on political ideas. In broad outline, it performs in narrow compass what Mamdani has been doing at greater length for decades: It shows how categories that structure postcolonial politics—in this case, "native" and "settler"—were created by high imperialism. As he tells it, around the midpoint of the nineteenth century, British and, more broadly, European imperialism underwent a crisis. The 1857 Indian rebellion, echoed in Jamaica, Sudan, and elsewhere, exposed the failure of the Utilitarian/evangelical mission to "civilize" the natives. Into the breach stepped a new theory of colonial governance developed, above all, by the English jurist Sir Henry Maine. According to Maine, the East India Company had misjudged in applying English-style civil law to Indians, who were used to being governed instead by custom—for him, the key difference between modern, progressive peoples and backward, stagnant ones. His solution, soon adopted, was a shift to "indirect rule": Each cultural or religious group should be governed by its own traditional codes, administered where feasible by community elders (overseen, naturally, by the colonial power). In this way, Mamdani explains, "the colonial mission shifted from civilization to preservation and from assimilation to protection" (p. 28).

To this point, Mamdani's tale overlaps with that told in greater detail by Karuna Mantena in *Alibis of Empire* (2010), published after he gave the Du Bois lectures and now the authoritative account of Maine's contribution to the political theory of empire. Mamdani tips his hat to Mantena, but explains that his aims differ from hers in two ways. The first is methodological, and corresponds roughly to the difference between intellectual history and genealogy, or between the history of arguments and that of power-knowledge regimes—crudely, between Quentin Skinner and Michel Foucault. Where Mantena focuses on justifications for empire, Mamdani is principally interested in how Maine's paradigm introduced a "new and modern technology of rule" (p. 43), which he elaborates in the book's second part. Colonial populations around the world were assigned to reified groups defined by the imperial power, then subjected