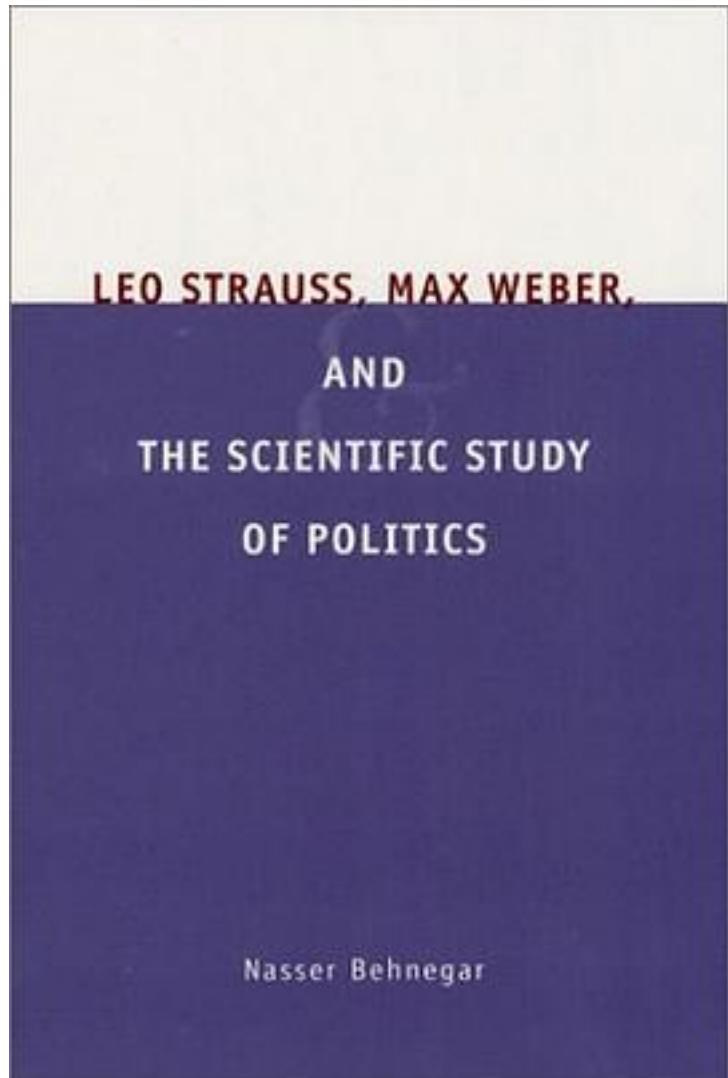


Leo Strauss, Max Weber, and the Scientific Study of Politics



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Can politics be studied scientifically, and if so, how? Assuming it is impossible to justify values by human reason alone, social science has come to consider an unreflective relativism the only viable basis, not only for its own operations, but for liberal societies more generally. Although the experience of the sixties has made social scientists more sensitive to the importance of values, it has not led to a fundamental reexamination of value relativism, which remains the basis of contemporary social science. Almost three decades after Leo Strauss's death, Nasser Behnagar offers the first sustained exposition of what Strauss was best known for: his radical critique of contemporary social science, and particularly of political science.

Behnagar's impressive book argues that Strauss was not against the scientific study of politics, but he did reject the idea that it could be built upon political science's unexamined assumption of the distinction between facts and values. Max Weber was, for Strauss, the most profound exponent of values relativism in social science, and Behnagar's explication artfully illuminates Strauss's critique of Weber's belief in the ultimate insolubility of all value conflicts.

Strauss's polemic against contemporary political science was meant to make clear the contradiction between its claim of value-free premises and its commitment to democratic principles. As Behnagar ultimately shows, values--the ethical component lacking in a contemporary social science--are essential to Strauss's project of constructing a genuinely scientific study of politics.

作者介绍:

My general interest is no different from that of any other political scientist, namely, to understand political reality. But given the state of affairs of political science, I have made the question of the proper approach to the study of politics the theme of my thought. This involves studying the classical, modern empiricist, positivistic, and post-modern approaches to the study of social affairs. I have extensively studied Leo Strauss, Max Weber, Friedrich Nietzsche, and David Hume. Since the main obstacle to the actualization of a genuine science of politics is the acquisition of knowledge of values, my work involves reflection on the question of relativism and the conflict between this-worldly understanding and the understanding given by divine revelation. The last theme has led me to consider how Islamic philosophers have understood the place of philosophy within the context of the Quran.

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