

## The Journal of Religion

developed plan of nation building in their coffers. Most interesting in this context is Van Engen's discussion of *The History of the United States, or Republic of America* (1828), by the American educator Emma Willard (1787–1870), whose popular textbooks for women on American history, geography, and female education set the national standard for public schools and colleges throughout the young states. In her widely disseminated textbooks, the history of New England as a region became the national history of America, the descendants of Anglo-Saxon Puritans carrying the torch of civilization beyond the Mississippi into Texas and California. To be sure, Van Engen does not ignore the voices of America's indigenous populations and of African-American elites such as William Apess, W. E. B. Du Bois, Langston Hughes, and Richard Wright. They, too, sang the story of America, though in a different cadence and to a different tune.

*City on a Hill* takes us on a delightful journey through the archives of American history. In tracing the fateful journey of John Winthrop's *Modell* from its origin in obscurity to its zenith as America's founding document and beyond, Abram Van Engen points at the pitfalls of academic scholarship that ignores the archive. After reading *City on a Hill*, no one will be able to pay attention to any high-flying patriotic rhetoric without taking umbrage at the use and abuse of Winthrop's lay sermon.

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VON WUSSOW, PHILIPP. *Leo Strauss and the Theopolitics of Culture*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2020. 402 pp. \$95.00 (cloth); \$33.95 (paper).

Philipp von Wussow's book is one of the latest outputs from "The Thought and Legacy of Leo Strauss" series at SUNY Press. Structurally, it is divided into five parts, each seeking to situate a different seminal text by Strauss—or a phase in the development of his thought—within a specific intellectual and historical context. To a large extent, as the author himself admits, each of the five parts can be read on its own, independent of the others (xi). What unites the parts, however, and gives the book its thematic coherence, is an argument about Strauss's lifelong, consistent, although largely subterranean engagement with the concept of "culture," from his early career in Weimar Germany to his tenure as an eminent scholar in America in the second half of the twentieth century; for, as the author argues, "Strauss's conception of political philosophy was formed in the polemics against the notion of 'culture'" (x). Wussow recognizes that culture was never at the forefront of Strauss's writings, yet he believes that it nonetheless engrossed Strauss through the various stages—and geographic locales—of his career, due primarily to two factors: its importance in twentieth-century thought, particularly German and American, and its complex relationship with two concepts that undoubtedly preoccupied Strauss from his youth: politics and religion.

The book begins in Weimar Germany. In Part I, Wussow convincingly argues that in this early phase of Strauss's intellectual development, he was concerned with what may be called the "division of philosophy," particularly with the place of religion and the politics within the systematic whole. Wussow discusses primarily Strauss's engagement with Marburg neo-Kantianism (especially that of Hermann Cohen) and Carl Schmitt's *The Concept of the Political* (first ed. 1927; expanded edition trans. G. Schwab [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007]). He shows that while this school and this jurist may seem far removed from each other at first, both address "the order of things," so to speak. In neo-Kantianism, the question can be phrased as follows: "If philosophy is divided into the Kantian triad of epistemology, ethics, and aesthetics, what is the

place of religion?" (3). In Schmitt, the question concerns the place of "the political" among the different spheres of life (moral, aesthetic, etc.). In Part II, Wussow meticulously discusses the early work *Philosophy and Law* (first ed. 1935; see *Philosophy and Law: Contributions to the Understanding of Maimonides and His Predecessors*, trans. Eve Adler [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995]), showing how Strauss transcended these debates to find general "systematic" (cultural?) coherence in Platonic and Jewish and Islamic medieval philosophy. In Part III, Wussow examines Strauss's wartime lecture at the New School for Social Research, "German Nihilism" (1941), which he places in the context of the genre of "Genealogies of National Socialism" and interprets as an exoteric "parable on liberal education" (xix; 165). In Part IV, Wussow documents Strauss's surprising engagement with cultural anthropology and the shift from the German concern with *Kultur* to the American concern with "cultures." And last, in Part V, he turns to the article "Jerusalem and Athens" (1967) as a restatement of Strauss's most cherished principles and a response to the new "culturalism" of the 1950s and '60s.

From the introduction as well as other parts of the text, it seems that the author considers Part II, on *Philosophy and Law* (*P&L*), to be the most important contribution in this book to scholarly discussions of Strauss. And indeed, Wussow's account of the book's genesis, as well as his scrupulous interpretation of its argument and purpose, may be the most thorough to date. Future scholars will surely profit from his efforts, and it would be interesting to see what impact these will have on elevating the status of *P&L* within Strauss's oeuvre. But to me, at least, the more interesting and important parts of the book are the latter ones, concerning Strauss's American career. In these parts, Wussow seeks to break with the "continuity thesis" found in such books as Eugene Sheppard's *Leo Strauss and the Politics of Exile* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), Stephan Steiner's *Weimar in Amerika* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013)—as well as, more recently, Adi Armon's *Leo Strauss between Weimar and America* (London: Palgrave, 2019)—which argue, essentially, that Strauss remained a "Weimar Jew" throughout his life and that the concerns animating his scholarship in America remained those of his youth. "The problem with this half-canonical interpretation," Wussow observes correctly, "is that it cannot account for the profound changes in Strauss's theoretical framework *after* Weimar" (219). Whether or not Wussow's interpretations of some of Strauss's American texts are always correct could be a matter of some debate, but there can be no doubt that his independent perspective allowed him to see certain facts that were either ignored by or eluded previous scholars. Some examples include Strauss's dialogue with Ruth Benedict's *Patterns of Culture* ([1934; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005], pt. 4) and his nod toward what became known as "postcolonial theory" in his essays on relativism (pt. 5). Almost needless to say, these observations not only open new avenues in Strauss scholarship but also help bring Strauss into highly contemporary discussions.

One somewhat glaring omission by Wussow is the debate on culture that raged among young Zionists at the time and that Strauss himself discussed in the autobiographical preface to the English translation of *Spinoza's Critique of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965). Strauss was of course rather unique in his identification with Herzl's Political Zionism; most members of his milieu, however—including Buber, Scholem, Simon, and Baer—were affiliated with Ahad Ha'am's Cultural Zionism and committed to the creation of a new Jewish (or Hebrew) culture. But what should this culture look like? This question captivated an entire generation. Even a brief discussion of this debate could have added much to Wussow's narrative. In addition, the book occasionally suffers from a lack of focus. Every now and then, the reader may feel lost in the great wealth of details and subjects found herein. Yet this does not take away from the impact of this erudite, ambitious work. One leaves this book with a

## The Journal of Religion

feeling that he has received an education—not just about Strauss’s career but also about some of the most important intellectual junctions of the twentieth century. YIFTACH OFEK, *University of Chicago*.

WHEELER, DEMIAN. *Religion within the Limits of History Alone: Pragmatic Historicism and the Future of Theology*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2020. xiii+511 pp. \$35.00 (cloth).

Demian Wheeler’s *Religion within the Limits of History Alone* seeks both to document a historicist tradition of theology rooted in American pragmatism and recommend its continued relevance for contemporary issues in (primarily Christian) theology, especially concerning the theology of religions, postliberal theories of tradition, and the doctrine of God. While engaging with a large cast of naturalist theologies, Wheeler is keen to follow paths laid out by William Dean and Sheila Greeve Davaney, with inspiration from the early twentieth-century Chicago school of theology and classical pragmatism.

The first two chapters define historicism and outline a path for pragmatic theological approaches to historicism with public and naturalistic commitments. Historicism asserts that “there is nothing more basic than history itself, because everything—without exception—emerges, becomes, and expires at a particular moment of time, within discrete loci in space, and through contingent processes of interpretation” (11). Wheeler traces a typical genealogy for this mentality from Johann Gottfried von Herder and notes that the particularism and relativism of the historicist tradition risks introducing a problem of insularity exemplified by George Lindbeck’s postliberalism. Pragmatic historicism must avoid this isolating tendency, and Wheeler fleshes out a more viable approach that he dubs “particularist mutualism.”

One important grounding point that Wheeler makes in these opening chapters is that history and nature should not stand as two opposing phenomena for pragmatic historicism. Rather, he characterizes them as “near synonyms” (8) for the purposes of his study. The nature-history concept leads to a proposal for a “bigger historicism” (41ff.), which is helpfully tied to David Christian’s Big History project. By way of potential for further study, Wheeler’s work might fruitfully be extended to other work on deep history, especially as it has been taken up in theological discussions (for instance, in John Polkinghorne).

In chapter 3, Wheeler defends a version of religious pluralism he calls particularist mutualism against other pluralist options. He claims that his is a second-order model (111), but it seems clearly to be making first-order assertions—namely, that no single revelation is ultimate, that human religions do not identify god in godself, and that transcendence is intrawordly (108–9). What Wheeler aims for, and outlines in the following chapter, is a pluralism that can avoid a soteriological “metasolution” and instead identify mutual moral norms and emergent truths (134ff.).

Mutuality and emergence are themes that, when paired with historicism’s attention to cultural context, lead pragmatic historicism not to reject traditions but rather to recognize their place in constructing human faith. Wheeler’s account here of tradition “beyond amnesia and nostalgia” (145–87) is probably the portion of the book that will be most widely applicable to other theological projects, as its conclusions are recognizable from perspectives as diverse as Gadamerian hermeneutics, modernist critics of biblicism, and even, I would argue, many of the postliberals that Wheeler reads as far too authoritarian in their traditionalism. This theory of tradition is a point upon which pragmatic historicists can find common cause with other schools of thought, that is.