

Review of: "Carl Friedrich's Path to "Totalitarianism""

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This is a brilliant discussion of Carl Friedrich's "theory of totalitarianism". The author provides a clear description of the interaction between Friedrich's academic viewpoint and his historical context, which, as the author mentioned, has been largely unexamined. I think it gives a great example of rethinking some prevailing ideas more objectively, especially those we take for granted, in the context of scholars' agenda and background. It would have been interesting to know more about why Friedrich changes his mind after the Cold War and how the tension of his theories reflects in his political action.

This article also provides a systematic account of theories of Friedrich and other relevant scholars. The author provides detailed accounts of Friedrich's different views with liberal thinkers like Max Weber, Hans Kelsen, and Friedrich Hayek. Furthermore, the article offers a valuable discussion of Friedrich's differences and similarities with theorists like Harold Lasswell, Carl Schmitt, and Hannah Arendt. The critique and response of Friedrich and his rival scholars provide readers with a clear clue of how theoretical questions are raised. I wonder also if how the key concepts, such as totalitarianism, modern state, democracy and bureaucracy, are theoretically organized in Friedrich's theoretical construction.

For someone outside the field, this piece offers a very useful discussion of scholars and academic politics. The author provides detailed accounts of Harvard's efforts to provide an academic basis for Cold War policy, Friedrich's defending democracy against the National Socialist threat, and Friedrich's academic training under Alfred Weber, Max Weber's brother, which are interesting and worth exploring. To my mind, the tension between Alfred Weber and Max Weber's political actions and their academic viewpoints are quite inspiring for understanding Friedrich's, because Max Weber also held a very conservative view on bureaucracy in his political practice. It would certainly be worthwhile to expand the discussion of Friedrich's realistic consideration of the "responsible elite" or discretionary state in comparison with Weber brothers.