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## REFLECTIONS ON A DISCIPLINE\*

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Presidential addresses in our Association frequently discourses on the state of our discipline. In the past twenty years nine presidents have reflected on its status, trends and needs. It would be presumptuous for another president to return to the topic now if the moment did not validate the need. After a period of novel developments, accompanied by uncertainties and tensions, there is need to reemphasize our community of interest and our common obligation.

It is a community extending across diversities and an obligation with many components. The study of the science and art of government has many facets which reflect search in that eternal triangle of science, values, and utility.

### I

In the beginning it is well to remark that we are constantly drawn toward two poles in a dual quest. We would like to find verifiable propositions or working assumptions about political activity which, like the law of gravity or the laws of motion, transcend time, and technology and culture variations. We would like even to extend our vision further: just as the biologist seeks for the origins of life and the astronomer for the initial creative impulse for the universe, we want to know if there is a universal plan in history and a destiny for man.

Such cosmic vision must be based on the assumption of some constants in human behavior, such as self-love; or in human relations, such as power; or in natural morality, such as justice. Yet grasp for certainty fades as we wonder whether all such things are relative to environment, and hence whether ecology and the search for the laws of change must be the

centers of inquiry. As we contemplate how such great cultural changes as the secularization of thought in the Enlightenment, or such tremendous physical events as the discovery of America have upset the assumptions of thought, and as we try to think of what nuclear energy, automation and the dominion of scientists may mean, we are humble before the task of building an endurable science of politics.

Yet humility cannot turn us from the task. We will, as Arthur Holcombe did in his presidential address to this Association, seek for knowledge that does not evaporate with our time and our culture, and which will also guide us somewhat in our present.

At the other pole we work with the realities and the problems of our day. We seek knowledge of contemporary systems and subsystems or of the behavior of men within them. The search shifts to another level—from that of Plato and Hobbes to that of de Tocqueville and Bryce. Or it shifts from general systems to particular features within a system—for example, to the details of the operation of cabinet systems, the interpretation of the due process clause, the reasons why Americans vote as they do, or the techniques by which pressures are exerted in democratic systems. Likewise, we struggle with problems within systems, such as national security, metropolitan organization, and civil rights. All the while, the study tends to reflect contemporary American concerns and to turn inward to American problems.

It is at the second pole that most of our American political science study has been conducted in the past. The cultural influences flowed from the watersheds of ancient Mediterranean civilization to the tributaries of Western European evolution and on to the broad stream of American political institutions—and here we took our position and viewed the banks around us. In the twentieth century our

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political science became increasingly culture-bound, American-focused and problem-oriented.

Many causes contributed to these developments. There was the natural concern for things contiguous to us and affecting our own lives; there was physical and language isolation; and there was the wondrous American heritage and the thrill of its unfolding. In addition, there were two practical influences. First, it has been a responsibility of political scientists to educate people for the tasks of citizenship in a country where government, as Madison said, "derives all its powers directly or indirectly from the great body of the people." This is a tremendous responsibility and one which we must forever cherish—for we will believe, as Francis Lieber stated in his inaugural address at Columbia University, that one who studies political science "will be better prepared for the grave purposes for which the country destines him, and a partner in the great commonwealth of self-government." The other influence was concern with improvement of political arrangements. American political science has been policy-oriented in the broadest sense. Its practitioners have been interested in research and counsel on the problems of political organization and process and of substantive policy. This too is an important responsibility, not to be taken lightly simply because it carries one into applied science or because it calls for prescriptive suggestion in advance of fully tested knowledge.

The second World War became a turning point from American provincialism. Political science itself exploded into the world arena. The study of comparative government leaped quickly beyond old borders. Asia and Africa became as significant for study as Europe and the Americas. American-oriented students of public administration became students of comparative administration. Thus, for example, a student of things American, and interested in field administration, has now studied this subject in South Asian, French, and African settings.

This explosion shows how time-restricted is our study of political science. When our own social revolution of the 'thirties was substantially completed, and our constitutional crisis of the same period was resolved, and war and its aftermath created new world-wide American problems, then our political science was expanded.

What is significant is that the expansion has created opportunities for a broader-visioned political science. Neither Aristotle, nor any scholar or group of scholars since him, has had

comparable opportunities for cross-cultural study. And with the rapidity of change, time is compressed within the span of vision of the scholar. In the extended dimensions of study we may hope for discovery of new basic identities and regularities, and of bases for propositions about universal political realities. If conclusions about these realities have something less than eternal validity, it may yet be that study will move in an intermediary area between the two poles of the past. And that for the limited future for which we may have some vision, our knowledge will be more complete and our capacity for policy formation more adequate.

## II

There have been other eruptions in our discipline in the postwar period so explosive as to reflect an unprecedented intellectual ferment. At the base of these eruptions is the consciousness that our search is for reality, for the substance rather than the mere forms of political activity. Such names as Ostrogorski, Wallas, Beard, Merriam, Lippmann, Holcombe, and Herring will remind us that there were precursors of the ferment, and will remind us also that search for reality, for the depths of political meaning, will flourish only in a free and open society.

One set of eruptions has produced a group within our midst called behavioralists—a loose term but one which describes a set of attitudes. The behavioralist focuses his attention on persons acting politically instead of on institutions, events or ideologies, though some incarnate the group and give it a position similar to that previously held by institutions. The behavioralist has been interested also in methodology, seeking on the one hand for preciseness and empirical testing characteristic of exact science and on the other for systematic theory. He uses contemporary data. He finds common grounds of interest with psychologists, sociologists, and cultural anthropologists—groups that are also interested in human behavior.

Another eruption has been the case-study approach. A case study is a kind of history. It is short-span, intensely developed, sharply focused history. It is a capsule of reality. It may be designed and prepared as rigorously as a scientific experiment. Though the original aim of case-study writers was to supply a new teaching technique, the cases have deepened the perception of the scholar. Although individual cases do not provide generalizations, they do increase knowledge. Many regard the cases as better indicators of behavior than the artificial models, working hypotheses, and quanti-

tative measures of partial reality used by those normally called behaviorists.

These elements of novelty in approach should not cloud our realization of the value of the intuitive grasp of those who have broad awareness and deep perception of political process. Those who worked in administrative positions during World War II acquired understanding of nuances of behavior of men in organizations, and this understanding transformed the study of public administration from formalism to grasp of living reality. Experience and a more vital literature have enriched concepts and generalizations through the whole field of political science. Through perception Arthur Macmahon could place consensus beside choice as an objective in decision making, Ernest Griffith could see the legislative process as whirlpools of activity, Herbert Simon could see organization as wheels within wheels within wheels, and Robert Dahl and Charles Lindblom could define the price system, hierarchy, polyarchy and bargaining as central socio-political processes. Our very search for meaningful categories of study—the group, clienteles, decision making, communications, national interest—has been evidence of and contributor to the ferment of thought.

Nor should we overlook the freshness and versatility in use of traditional methods. The intuitive grasp of a descriptive study like V. O. Key's *Southern Politics* should remind us that not all analysis of this type will be hyperfactual and unimaginative. The "uses of history" have been once again revealed in Leonard White's monumental volumes on administrative development and in biographical and historical accounts reflecting wartime experience. The ability of reason to spin out new theory from a background of familiar knowledge is potently exhibited in books like David Truman's *The Governmental Process*. The opportunities for institutional analysis to move fruitfully in new directions is shown in the last two presidential addresses before this Association—by Presidents Cole and Swisher.

I think it is helpful to ponder in this connection the youth and growth of the concentrated study of political science. This Association is younger in years than your speaker; and when at a point not quite midway in its history he completed his graduate work, it had a membership about one-fourth that of the present. Anyone who has practiced in this profession through this second half knows that our discipline has grown richer in concept, routes to reality, and descriptive and theoretical analysis.

Yet we are conscious of hazards. One of

these has been the threat that our various lateral affinities would destroy our consciousness of community, and indeed of purpose. Public administration, international relations, and public opinion have been sub-areas of study in which the outward tug has sometimes seemed stronger than the inward. More recently, methodological involvement and unities of substantive interest in human behavior have led many in our group toward absorption in a general behavioral science. Even the scheduling at this meeting of a panel on "The Business Firm as a Political Order" may indicate, not merely that we may learn from lateral fields, but that we are not sure of our boundaries.

The reply is that though the concepts "public," "political" and "authority," which lie at the core of our discipline, are vague in their outer dimensions, they are clear and strong at the center. The vitality of the realities which they describe has been sufficient in the past to insure a loose integration of interest. Moreover, though the various new lateral affinities may, like those of law, economics and philosophy from earlier days, draw some in our midst into closer communities of interest with other groups than our own, it may still be expected that political science can profit, as it has in the past, from its dependence upon other disciplines. Political science is an integrating focus, but it draws its methodology and data from other disciplines. Its strength as a field is dependent upon the continued consciousness that public action is of great significance and also that there is something different about administration, human behavior, opinion, intercultural relations, or other facets of human activity when these are "public" or "political."

A second hazard is that we may fail to appreciate the value of a variety of approaches to knowledge about public affairs. This may result from a kind of myopia of specialization—not the myopia of subject-matter study but that of methodological approach. We are split into groups which, while they seek understanding of the same processes, often do not recognize complementary values in different approaches. Paul Appleby once said that "the division of labor among thinkers itself becomes a kind of separation of powers." We now face a division on techniques more threatening to our unity than specializations in subject-matter interests. This may be accompanied by an exaggeration of differences by the labels we affix. We are all in a sense behaviorists to the extent that we are realists. We are all likewise institutionalists, for we will recognize that institutions may create new roles for human beings, and in this way modify behavior patterns. We may all

wish to be scientists, though perhaps not one among us would make himself mute by refusing to generalize beyond propositions which could be verified scientifically.

Currently, the greatest danger is perhaps the distortion of emphasis by the expectancies from what are called the methods of science—the development of systematic theory based on propositions validated by empirical analysis. There has been so much debunking of historicism, hyperfactual descriptionism, and formalistic institutionalism that the challenge now is for a renaissance of belief and demonstrations of fruitfulness in older pathways to understanding. The “new science,” and its current handmaiden—the study of contemporary human behavior—may, however, be embraced more enthusiastically than hardheaded expectancy can justify.

The great hopes for contributions by the “new science” to our discipline will be realized most largely if tempered by recognition of dangers. The least of these dangers, in my judgment, are faddism, extremism and jargon creation; for these, we may hope, will fade and leave a hard core of contribution behind. A larger danger is that we will overconcentrate our energies on things to which the methods of science can be adapted, sacrificing thereby the pursuit of other studies. There is the particular risk that we will overlook the analysis of experience in different time spans and of factors of continuity and change as they have shaped the political activities of men. There are further dangers that we will draw our profession away from practicality, and that by adopting a stance of positivism we will contribute to the idea that “what is” is the standard of “what should be.”

Even though computers, sampling and other technologies make it possible to consider large bodies of data and multiple variables in particular situations, I venture the suggestions that empirically tested generalizations will not establish a predictive base for most of the multifarious political situations which protrude upon our attention; that the gap between what we can explain to our full satisfaction with respect to small-scale problems or precisely definable situations and what we need to know in large, complex problem settings with numerous and disparate variables will be disappointingly large; that the perception of men in different time spans, restudied with new perspectives, will continue to fertilize the roots of political science; that the utility of the “new science” will be the double service of providing us with a core of modest propositions of utility in some, though not all, areas of intellectual inquiry and of driving us toward more precise

thinking in all of our approaches to knowledge.

These are no mean functions. They are sufficient to justify hearty and discriminating reception of the “new science” by members of our discipline, but they are insufficient to force into discard the less precise methods of history and institutional analysis or the sheer artistry in intuitive grasp which characterizes the work of the knowledgeable and imaginative thinker. Even gathering and interpreting data requires a perspective not furnished by the data themselves.

At this time it appears that our most sanguine hope must be that we will be wise in countless ways. We may reach to all disciplines which can supply relevant data about government, including law, geography, history and economics, as well as psychology, sociology and cultural anthropology. We may hope that enrichment and sharpening of perception will come from a variety of approaches to reality. We may, while we still know so little, be humble, tolerant, and open-minded.

### III

The move toward scientism has made it more essential to define the role of political philosophy in the study of political science. When we speak of political philosophy we include the study of ideologies, the search for normative theory, the quest for values. We move into the realm of evaluation and into what is ultimately a moral discourse. In this realm we are concerned with what ought to be or what might better be, in contrast to the *status quo*.

Even the most ardent advocate of scientism will see the inevitability of value projections in his study. For one thing, in a social science values are part of the basic data of study. Value judgments become patterns of belief, and whether these become “rules of the game” as David Truman puts it, or are contending patterns, they are part of the factors in the sequence of causes, results, more causes and more results. The other thing is that the researcher is never so objective—so culture free, so oblivious to utility—that he chooses his subject, organizes his data, and draws his conclusions without intrusion of value assumptions. The very effort to exclude value judgments is a kind of implicit assumption that the data of science have intrinsic value only, that they constitute an end in themselves, and are not to be sought because they are means for the accomplishment of ends and values not furnished by the data. This results in a further implicit assumption that explanation of things, not change in things, is the function of the scholar. Positivism is, therefore, a conservative stance for the scholar. The positivist would be interested in

discovering a law of gravity, but not in whether it would be useful for man to counteract it by a parachute or by some built-in arrangements to prevent the top half of a bikini from falling to the ground.

The more fundamental reason, however, for quest for values is that this is part of the pursuit of truth. Men need not assume that there is no constancy in nature, either in the relation of causes to effect or in guidelines for human conduct. To seek uniformity in one case leads toward systematic theory, in the other toward normative theory. Both are parts of a quest, and though certainty may expire in each case at a circumference with short radius, hope will forever spring that the radius is more than zero and can be extended by study.

There are tough questions of value which are enduring parts of the subject matter of politics, and which must excite the curiosity of the scholar of political science who thinks profoundly about his subject. Man is everywhere in chains; what can make this legitimate remains as central an inquiry of political science as when Rousseau propounded it. What is justice is equally pivotal in the political science quest. These are questions of relevance whether one is studying dictatorship, civil rights, the national state system, or other significant aspects of political power.

There is danger that out of the comfort of the American consensus on goals, or the despair of improvement of the prospects for man, or the shallowness of curiosity, the attention of the political scientist will be drawn only to circumstantials. A science of circumstantials would be no more comforting to the modern mind than metaphysical theory. But it may be the hope of the political scientist that he will find truth beyond the first and short of the second. And in this day when Orwell's spectre of what man can do to man with the use of the tools of science is before us, the increased relevance of philosophical inquiry is evident.

The suggestion is sometimes made that though these questions of value are important, they should be the province of the discipline of philosophy or religion and not that of political science. Three answers, separately and cumulatively, are convincing. The first may be stated negatively: if political scientists do not give attention to basic value questions, is there any assurance that these will receive adequate attention? Or positively: this is inherently and unavoidably part of the inquiry undertaken in the study of government. It is part of the search for truth about things political, particularly about man's power over man.

The second answer is that the competence both of those who study the "is" and of those

who study the "ought" may be increased by knowledge of the other domain. Profound understanding of the central issues of morality raised in political philosophy should provide some guidelines of relevance for the student of political behavior. Knowledge about political behavior should give some tone of reality to the conclusions about political morality of the political philosopher. This factor of mutual advantage suggests that there should be firm interlinking between the study of political behavior and political philosophy, between the search for systematic theory and the search for normative theory—indeed, even, that the most productive work may often be anticipated from those who work in both domains.

The third answer is that there is a middle ground of "what may be" which may have joint relevance for both types of inquiry. The juncture of the "is" and the "ought" in the "may be" is a legitimate concern for the behavioralist and for the philosopher. It unites the two in a common interest in utility on which I shall have more to say presently.

In the meantime, it is appropriate to note that the foregoing remarks reveal the only dependable safeguards against excesses of moralism, which may be as great a hazard as the excesses of scientism. It is idealism without realism and without practicality that constitutes the hazard. It is only knowledge of "what is" and "what has been" and concern with "what may be" that can prevent the search for "the ought" from going into sheer subjectivity and fantasy.

The foregoing discussion also provides clues to the answer to the question: what shall we do with the classics, *i.e.*, the great books of the past? They are, it may be noted first, part of the data of politics. We are told that Locke's *Second Treatise* is one of the causative factors in the evolution of the American political system, and Louis Hartz has recently enlarged the description of Locke's influence. Classics, then, may be studied, not for their truth, but for their influence. They also contain some systematic theory and some intuitive grasp of realities of political behavior. They may be studied for the conclusions they suggest about such behavior. Finally, they may be studied for the abiding questions of moral significance which they present. It is not too much to say that no person is really literate about political science unless he has become conscious of the timeless issues presented by Plato and Rousseau, among others, and that his knowledge about those issues will probably be superficial unless he has moved through the profound classical texts. New methods of study, more systematic and less historical, may be in order for the classics,

but escape from their study may be escape to superficiality and circumstantiality.

#### IV

Reference to "what may be" recalls the emphasis on policy in political science study. As was noted earlier, political scientists have been interested in the utilization of their knowledge for the improvement of mankind's lot. They have served their governments in official positions or as consultants, they have worked in institutes devoted to the practical application of knowledge, and they have in their studies and publications focused their knowledge and sense of purpose on problems of concern to their generation.

In a policy science, utility takes its place beside science and morality. The problems facing man, currently or over time, determine choices of subjects for inquiry and give meaning to the search for knowledge and morality. Conversely, the sense of concern which animates anyone except a scholastic eunuch or a cynic propels the scholar toward use of his knowledge for human welfare.

As I look at the function of the American political scientist, as it has been or as it may be, in the policy role, I see three characteristics which in their total impact give him a distinctive position and make his science indeed the master science.

First, he is profoundly aware of the complexities of the problem-solving process. He senses the inescapability both of continuity and of change—of heritage and of contemporary need. He appreciates the respective roles of conflict, consensus, and choice in a free society. He has deliberated on the complementary functions of expert, politician, and citizen. He has imbibed the spirit of administrative and political due process. In sum, his political science knowledge, if it has sunk its tap roots in his thought, will have provided comprehension and balance to serve his judgment.

Second, the political scientist is concerned with feasibilities. His study of politics and administration gives him a consciousness of limits and possibilities. His digging leads inevitably into earthy foundations, into organic and human obstinacies, into rigidities which impede human ingenuity. It leads him also to the discovery of areas of pliability in social fact and human purpose—areas in which those who must solve problems will find opportunity for constructive solution.

The political scientist has had some theoretical models, such as the organismic theory of the state, separation of powers, and executive integration; but these have not dominated his

thought to the same extent that high-vaulted equilibrium theories have constrained the thought of economists. As the political scientist has turned to applications, he has tended to become downright practical.

Finally, and most distinctively, his peculiar competence is in the evaluation and construction of institutions. It is in the structuring of organization and process to channel prevailing ideas or to serve as shells within which conflict, consensus and choice can operate. It is in constitutionalization—in the preparation of frameworks within which the business of society can be conducted.

The political scientist may have, in addition, an important role in substantive policy development. This has been true in such areas as international policy and resources policy, and it may be true in the future in economic policy. It may be, however, that his role here should be to search for elements of policy so basic that they carve channels within which future policy is developed, and hence that his function is similar to that in the creation of institutions. The crucial point is that political science deals with the arrangements under which men live in political order; and hence whatever may be required in knowledge about individual and group behavior, political science in its largest dimension will be focused on these arrangements for political order. The constitution, in the largest and broadest sense of the enduring institutions and public policies, is the political scientist's central concern, and the process of constitutionalization is the heart of his utilitarian role.

There is, it may be alleged, danger that the utilitarian objective will conflict with the search for a durable science and an enduring morality. There is always the danger that attention to today's problems will narrow scope and vision in study. There is danger that scientists will become captives of their time. This, of course, is in large measure, unavoidable—as the history of our discipline shows. It is, however, something we will strain against.

This, as I have indicated earlier, is less a problem today than it has ever been before. The explosion of political science into the world-wide arena has brought us into contact with problems of revolutionary change, intercultural relations, and national and international structuralization so vast and diversified that work on their solutions will expand the search for basic meanings. Even within our own borders, where solutions are only ameliorative, the confrontation of new problems of urban living, civil rights, and economic change and stability will have the same effect of broadening

rather than narrowing perspectives. If work in such problem areas does not lead away from the search for theory, systematic and normative, then a veritable renaissance in study may indeed be possible.

One other danger is that we may overaccentuate our activism. This, however, need not be a great danger, for it has its own correctives. We cannot be, we do not have the power to be, what we should not be. We will not be philosopher-kings. In a pluralistic society political scientists should not and cannot constitute a priesthood which tells the people what they ought to do. We can only bring what knowledge we possess and what sense of purpose our study has bestowed to the society in which we live. We can, in addition, keep alive the great debates over moral purpose and political process which should go on in a free society. And it may be our hope that what learned men have learned about what is possible and good, or what they have learned should be avoided, will be useful to free men who finally make their own decisions.

## V

It is in eclecticism encompassing science, morality, and practicality that political science has been rooted and has grown vigorously in the twentieth century. It is in such eclecticism that the clues to policy in our own house must be found. As our curricula, particularly in the graduate centers, are restudied and revised, it may be hoped that means can be found whereby the trinity of purpose can prevail in educational practice.

The education of our successors should be as inclusive as the challenges to the workers in the discipline. Certainly the developments of the past fifteen years have shown the importance of knowledge of methodology. The political scientist must learn the tools of research applicable to his field. This must be training in all the methods by which understanding can be gained in his peculiar field of political science—the traditional methods of historical and documentary research and the newer methods of assembling and analyzing contemporary data.

Yet this is all preliminary. The scientist does not study laboratory technique merely for the purpose of being a skilled technician, nor does the student of law study legal bibliography and methods of legal research as ends in themselves. We may indulge the hope that we will move toward a period of maturity when we will know enough about the value of new techniques so that experimentation on methodology will give way, in large measure, to the use of technology in exploring for substance.

As for substance, it must be our aim to provide the student an opportunity to see what man's inquiries have revealed about political activity and about standards of political morality. He must learn something of what research into contemporaneous data reveals about political, including institutional, behavior. He must assimilate what seems truthful and meaningful whether obtained by quantification and empirical testing or by the keen perception of the educated observer. This contemporaneous study, however realistic, will nevertheless be nearsighted and one-eyed unless vision is spread to other time spans through study of political evolutions, to different cultures through study of comparative political behavior, and to issues of political morality through study of the profoundest literature. This may suggest some turnabout in curricula—a greater emphasis on breadth of knowledge in political science. It suggests that whatever specialties may be selected by the young political scientist for concentrated study over the long span, and whatever advantages he may obtain from study in other disciplines, the task of the graduate center in political science is to produce, insofar as possible, a person who is literate in the broad span of political science knowledge.

A final element in graduate education will be development of competence for problem-solving in some arena where the near future demands further or new constitutionalization of political activity or new public policy. Political scientists must serve their time, even though they may not yield to it. The challenges of the future for their help in such diverse fields as metropolitan problems, institution creation in developing countries, and policy elaboration in international relations will be tremendous. But while serving their time, or preparing to serve it, they will supplement, sharpen, and bring to meaningful focus the knowledge gained by other means. The search for a practicable solution to a problem should increase awareness of the distinction between fact and theory, between means and values, between the *status quo* and what "ought to be," and between what "ought to be" and "what may be." It should increase competence for teaching, research, and practice. It is desirable, therefore, that each student should have to meet the challenge of trying to find solutions for problems, and that, as John Gaus suggested in his presidential address to this Association, each political scientist should grapple with a policy problem.

These approaches in graduate education—both extensions of our traditional practice and response to the new ferment—should maintain the three-point perspective of science, morality,

and utility. I express the hope that such a perspective will support a community of interest and a capacity for discharge, in reasonable measure, of our great obligation. We will, unavoidably and purposely, be moralists; but we will be aware of our moralism and will be restrained by a sense of feasibility, by knowledge about human adventures, and by tolerance arising from a double heritage—that of a pluralistic Western civilization and that of the searcher for truth. We will be policy developers;

but policy developers with knowledge both of our abilities and of our limitations, and with loyalties both to our society and to truth as it is established or believed. We will be scientists; but scientists guided by awareness of the relevance of scientific data to moral purpose and to the solution of human problems, and by consciousness of the many and varied routes to knowledge in a social science. Not in any single one of these elements of perspective, but in all, will political science be whole.