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THE FUNCTION OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

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QUITE RECENTLY the head of an eminent Oxford College, in an after-dinner speech, remarked that he had delivered a course of lectures in the History School in Oxford. He subsequently, being a lawyer, delivered the identical course, on the State, Sovereignty and the rest, in the Law School. There was then a shortage of teachers in the School of Philosophy, Politics and Economics, and he was invited to deliver a course. "But on what?" he asked. "Just deliver your old course over again," was the answer, "it will do." This easy and, in my opinion, slightly unprofessional attitude is encouraged by the view of the late Oxford historian and philosopher, Professor Collingwood, that there is something to be called "classical political theory," beginning oddly with Machiavelli and ending with Rousseau, and that what the students needed was to be taught "gobbets" of that. If there is at the present time a lethargy of responsible political thought, not least in Britain, the cause may perhaps be found in this vicious doctrine, which indicates that all the major issues have already been stated and the lucid answers given in the past; and that all that is required now is endless academic gnawing of the small bones of Kant. Coupled with this retrospectiveness in theory is a tendency, encouraged by Professor Denis Brogan, to confound political science with history. In Canada it seems also, miscalled political economy, to have fallen into the claws of the economists, and to be put into the pot to make a Marxian stew.

Further, we all know of the endless and wearisome discussion among the historians about whether history is a branch of literature, with some of the imagination knocked out, and whether the job of Clio is to be a Muse that amuses. We can insist, as does Dr. David Smith of Stanford, that political theory should be "literary in form" and even provide a unified philosophical picture. I would add that there sometimes seems, in the joint

attack on political science, to be a certain unwarranted fusion or confusion between history and philosophy. As I hope to explain elsewhere, I am personally extremely skeptical about any one public philosophy emerging or being able to emerge. Again, rather changing our emphasis, we can say with Mr. Harry Truman that (as he learned long ago in Kansas City) "politics is only an art," if not a craft; and hence political theory is merely the literature of it. In reply I would not only admit, but stress, that the approaches to, and presentation of, the problems of politics and sociology do and should change. The notion that there is one "classical" political theory or philosophy of history, even that of Kant or Windelband, not to speak of Locke and Rousseau, which we must hash over again and again, is false and dangerous. I tried to make this clear in my *Principles*. Indeed I cannot see that Windelband or Rickert has contributed much that is useful to social theory, but rather *tief* obscurity; and Max Weber seems to have contributed most when he departed from this theme and approached the precise analysis, e.g., of power. But this welcome to new approaches can assume a goal in a unified scheme or general theory of the subject, and is not at all the same thing as suggesting that the best kind of political theory, with most "insight," will be just a collection of apothegms and rags from the rag-bags of politicians' memoirs. The idea is that good political theory should be a kind of Book of Wisdom written by Rochefoucauld, a variant of *The Political and Miscellaneous Thoughts of Lord Halifax*, "the Trimmer." I have perhaps spent as much time in direct touch with political goings-on as have most. Art and aphorisms have indeed their place. I will suggest two. "The other name for an aphorism is a half-truth." And "Wit is the joy of the intellectual, the ruin of the politician and the harlot of science." Nevertheless, do not let us, I beg, ever imagine — let us be too good Platonists to imagine — that the architectonic theme of political theory should ever be reduced to the level of an art or of apothegms and anecdote or of a good Tolstoian novel. . . .

As against all this I want to put in a claim that we treat political science seriously. It is admirable to bear in mind what we can learn from anthropology, as well as from history. I hold that there is no intellectually defensible distinction to be made from sociology. I applaud and celebrate the tradition of Graham Wallas and the thesis of Bryce that the foundation of political science is to be found in psychology, although the eminent professor of political science, Dr. Herbert Marcuse, at Brandeis University, may here go perhaps a shade too far, away from the academic waste land, into the Freudian dark forest, and forecast a day when, as Shakespeare says in *The Tempest*, all will be idle and (as Shakespeare adds in Anglo-Saxon monosyllables) their morals but so-so. But our first duty is to attend to the maturing of our own professional subject, which I like to call Pure Politics.

In part indeed I am making a plea for the revival of the fruitful approaches of the great Utilitarian School (not to speak of earlier authentic scientific explorations that stretch back to Aristotle himself, in his theory of revolutions) which was smothered, on the one hand, by the historians and, on the other, by the neo-Hegelians, to whom, in reaction, the Vienna Circle and Empirical Analysis have succeeded. But, in another sense, there has here on this continent within the last thirty years been a new beginning, with which the name of Harold Lasswell, President of the American Political Science Association in 1956, is not disconnected. Although he and I may have our differences in small matters, of the validity of that approach, once so criticized and now increasingly accepted, I have no doubt.

When I use the words "Pure Politics" I do not wish to be misunderstood. Some appropriate this phrase for what is otherwise called psephology, very much a subdivision. Others may assume that I want to set up some kind of ivory mathematical tower, apart from the world of practice. Quite the contrary is the case. The Historical School, which rose, proclaimed in its philosophy — and it had a philosophy — by the mouths of Burke and Savigny, against the theologians, the philosophers and *philosophes* and abstract rationalists, is now petering out, rather as the novel is petering out. It ends either in national sagas as told by Sir George Trevelyan, Clio seeking to amuse and uplift, with some mutterings from the sterner historians about "secondary sources," or it ends in historicism and the marshes of historical relativism. The work of Toynbee, for all its defects, rises (as says Professor Barraclough) in response to the public demand of those "eager to know what it is all about" and the national appreciation of urgency in the reply.¹ If, again to quote Barraclough, "the amateurs and propagandists are not to be left in possession of the field," then, along with those who can improve on the older wrong perspectives in history, the psychologists, sociologists and political scientists must come into their own, as being of as much national indispensability in the days of "the battle for the minds of men" as the economists. But assuredly this attention to the general theory, which Professor Talcott Parsons most truly says is the index of the maturity of any science, does not exclude attention to facts, to experience, to the actual way in which things happen.

Knowledge of this is to be gained here and now in factory, in council chamber and in polling booth. The best advice, against "metapolitics," to give the student is: "Don't talk about 'Capitalism' and 'Socialism,' Sovereignty and Authority; go and look at what actually happens." Politics, which I define in the Aristotelian sense, can be divided into three parts, one of which is the practice or art of it. I would be unwilling to say, with ex-

¹ For further comments on this, see my article in *Toynbee's History*, edited by Professor M. F. Ashley-Montagu (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1956).

President H. S. Truman, addressing the Pilgrim Society in London, that the art is the only section that matters. But it is embarrassing to be asked, as were recently the American political scientists in Washington by the Hon. Howard Pyle, how many had run for public office and how many had won.

The other two parts are Political Science and Political Philosophy, which together make Political Theory. Without laying any pedantic emphasis upon the distinctions, it may be said that some of the most fruitful developments in science can be expected in the borderline areas, e.g., between Political Science and Psychology or between Political Science and Sociology. I am aware that some people identify political theory with political philosophy and even doubt the existence of any political science as more than bogus. Others, such as Professors Hans Morgenthau, use political science in their own sense as interchangeable with political theory. I make no apology for my own distinction, which is accepted in other disciplines. Roughly the distinction is between the realm of ends and values and the realm and study of means. This distinction would be quite invalid if it were understood to deny that all human conduct was shaped by choices and permeated by values. This is so far true that it applies also in the fields of the economist, the historian and, as Professor Michael Polanyi has brilliantly shown, of the physicist himself, who is guided by valuations in selecting his problems and methods. In short the argument proves too much.

However — and this is where the Utilitarian approach differed sharply from the neo-Hegelian one of “concrete universals” — all the sciences develop by deliberate abstractions; by methods of which the test is whether they, however schematic, are actually useful in gaining new controls and detecting patterns; by, as Henri Poincaré said, the calculated use of hypothesis. For purposes of political science we are not concerned to discuss what is, in Lippmann’s phrase, “the Good Society.” Our practical problem today is not whether a free society may not, to our own satisfaction, be abstractly preferable, but whether a dictatorial society has not more aptitude for power, even in propaganda, and how this technical advantage may be technically met. We are concerned to discuss how, assuming the people in fact wills to get to x , or y , in fact it can get to x , or y . Just as the physician leaves to the philosopher whether health is a good thing, so the political scientist can leave to the political philosopher whether democracy is a good thing or whether it is a good thing that the majority will shall be carried out. This is not for a moment to depreciate the importance of the task of the political philosopher. It only says that the task of the political scientist (who may indeed be the same man: I am both myself . . .) is different. Ideally, as was said recently at the Evanston Conference, the political theorist should be *both*; but the methods of the two departments

are different. The scientist, of course, on the basis of his major hypothesis, may even recommend propaganda that will change popular values. He does not speculate but changes. The philosopher, who does speculate, can deny the hypothesis (as I often wish he would with our professional psychologists and intelligence testers, who assume that "quickness" is all, or "success"), and condemn the successful propaganda as wicked. His test is not success, unless he is a pragmatist. It is my view that great confusion will be avoided, great advance made, and that we shall escape from the curse alike of the anecdotalist and of the party political pamphleteer parading as political scientist — and here I include many from Marx to Laski — if we make this distinction, although provisional, yet sharp.

It is tempting to compare this distinction with Bentham's distinction between the "descriptive" and the "evocative." But indeed it is not the same. Both branches of political theory require, as prolegomena, a little application of logical analysis to their language, so that A remains A, and does not become A'. At present the emotion-charged language of politics, with a dozen or more different meanings to such words as "liberty" (for which men will fight, but which they will not define), "democracy," "sovereignty," is the language of rhetoric. In this ambiguity, it will be remembered, the party politician has a vested interest since, by its formulae, he can induce voters who disagree with each other to support him to victory — which, at a certain level, is the object of "politics," one of the most ambiguous words of them all.

Once we apply in political theory the precision which political science at least will require, we can expect advance. To take the word "politics" alone and its delimitation, we shall decide that we must distinguish between the traditional and episodic and the permanent and structural. The sovereign state and the national state alike came into being at a certain period in history. There is (and here we agree with Toynbee, but also with MacIver) no reason whatsoever to regard such evolutionary forms as permanent. Hence politics is not limited to their study, but is rather the study of that structure of social controls out of which they spring but of which there are many other forms, in churches and their "ecclesiastical polity," unions, cities, international organizations, even family authority, all no less "political" or worthy of examination than municipal or state government, and some far more distinctive of our times — which are not those of the seventeenth or nineteenth centuries. Beneath the structure we may detect functions indeed, common to the whole field, resting on the natural laws of human nature, and determinant of the shape which even the broadest structures take. If our task is to examine social controls, we may find that the practical nature of the balance and moving equilibrium in the market between liberty and authority is better indicated by quantitative studies in

the factories than by meditations on the principles of statute law. The personnel officer and the industrial relations expert are also politicians, and more important than most. And it is misleading, and does not lead to human success, to label industrial relations as "economics." The student has got to learn to study politics in civil, ecclesiastical, industrial, international and social-familial life in order to appreciate the actual functions of control. These functions may cross the conventional lines of division. Government is a name for control. There are other effective forms of government than the civic. And it is *petitio principii*, as Toynbee indicates, to suppose that the only kind of effective government is *vis coactiva*, coercive secular power.

My object is not to take the student up into high places of an unbounded empyrean from which he can view a big buzzing, booming, confusing world of indiscriminate "facts." But my object is to break the bonds of conventional and academically traditional categories, to take the subject seriously and to encourage vital and functional thought. Not for a moment do I wish to depreciate the necessary Linnaean labors of cataloguing data or not to praise the man who exactly shows that, contrary to government statistics, there are x counties in the state of Minnesota and not y . This is honest, scholarly, needful work. Further, there is always need for more and more field studies which reveal conclusions at which we could never have arrived a priori. What I do wish to say is that conventionality in fundamental categories, in ossified clichés taken uncritically for axioms, stagnates political theory and impedes political science. We want a *novum organon*, a *scienza nuova*. The political scientist has every use for economic, as for psychological, theory as a guide. There is still here much to be learned from Marx, himself one of the most practically powerful of "general theorists." And I agree with Marx that we ought to be able to advance beyond the school of the "informed guess." On the whole it seems that Marx is more practical.

One can go further by way of illustration. Not only can we define the fields of Political Science and Sociology (and I decline to accept a difference) as that of social controls. We can proceed upon the hypothesis that these controls are largely shaped by an actual appetite for power in decisive men, in order to secure their freedom to execute their will and wish. We may then (differing here from Professor Morgenthau) proceed to distinguish between various forms of power, of which only one is the obsession with dominative power as distinct from rational security, the former springing from fundamental distrust of an alienated world and suspicion, reaching to neurosis, and neurotically convinced that the only safe relation is that of over and under, repressor and repressed. We may note how impregnated to excess is our current autonomous state system, which can

only be authentically autonomous in one or two giant cases, with this pre-occupying concern with domination such that the national economies are wrecked in order to maintain an archaic system of isolated defense and of political machinery. This, primarily designed functionally "to maintain the civil peace," is now of itself quite incapable of maintaining it. Our conventional political thought chiefly serves to perpetuate, not least among the half-educated and practical, these harmful and stereotyped treatments of the issues.

Further yet, the professor of Brandeis University, Dr. Herbert Marcuse, to whom I have already referred, speculates that, with the coming of peace, automation, freedom from want, and full leisure, the world can veritably wallow in erotic indulgence, doubtless commercially developed in innovations in pleasure, and uninhibited by the primitive repressive influences of a monogamic-patriarchal society, founded on scarcity and fear. Although within the limits of my competence I disagree with Professor Marcuse — and would even say that some day we shall require the immense discipline required physically to conquer the stars or otherwise to enable the perhaps overpopulated planet to live without race wars — this does yet raise in acute form the problem of spiritual authority and education in leisure and, alternatively, of Mr. Archibald MacLeish's so-called American Proposition of democracy, where all opinions are born free and equal, and every free man has a right to act on his own views and think what he refreshingly well pleases. Whether this spiritual or educational authority shall relate itself to a revived natural law or to bourgeois parliamentary sovereignty, which can spell cabinet or party control, or to the sovereignty of the people, as ascertained in the old way by plebiscite or poll, is something else again. These are serious and fresh issues. If political theorists have no answers, so much the worse. Assuredly there is no lack of questions, practically important for our times, which are presented for the political theorist who is prepared for the Argonaut adventure of new approaches instead of sailing the conventional seas which take as permanent and beyond examination precisely what has to be examined in its prime assumptions. I would add that, if too much of our political theory is conventional, retrospective and historical, the sociologists often suffer from the like fault of uncritical acceptance of current democracy, of testing conduct by business success, and of praise for keeping on good terms with the Joneses. It has been dieted too exclusively on the heavy, domestic pastry of Dewey and Par-
rington.

I should like to outline the course of development which I would submit that political science, to be fruitful, should take. I can, however, only permit myself here a few leading remarks to stimulate discussion. The political scientist must begin by defining precisely his terms, such as "free-

dom" and "authority," which should be as much as possible stripped and clear. He will prefer phenomena for study which, as Professor Easton says, offer a large number of comparable and simple instances, even if commonplace, rather than, as with "states" and "cultures," a very limited number of highly complicated and subtle instances. Hence, with Max Weber and as leading to an understanding of functions, he will be wise to take as unit the act of control. It is not, however, my view that exploration by means of the concepts of "the actor" and "the role," adopted by Weber and also by Professor Talcott Parsons, will prove very fruitful for political science, although it may give insights for history and anthropology. Without adopting any uncritical worship of statistics, some of which can tell us everything about nothing, the political scientist will, I submit, welcome the extent to which examination of a large number of comparable cases, such as particular regulations as expressions of authority and their relative success in achieving obedience, lends itself to quantitative methods, indicated by Wallas, pioneered for by Professor Stuart Rice and now so much in vogue, alike in Stanford and in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.²

The delimitation of a field is something other than a working hypothesis in a field which, as such, is only to be retained until the lode of ore discoverable by means of it is worked out in the advancement of useful learning. The hypothesis of the drive for power as, not exclusive and unicausal, but more basic than Marx' economic determinism, was taken by Professor Lasswell and myself as our hypothesis thirty years ago.³ Admittedly it had an ancestry in Machiavelli and Hobbes but, for me at least, it had recently been fortified by Alfred Adler. At the time it was regarded as unpopular, heretical, and in the words of a London *Times* commentator "an attempt at the impossible." Today there is scarcely a book on politics coming off the press which does not bear the word "power" in its title. The contemporary danger, on the contrary, is that this word will be treated, even by eminent professors, quite uncritically and be assumed (wrongly) to be synonymous with domination. Exploration of the origins of the desire for power and its perversion, the drive for domination, carries us back into psychoanalysis and into the distrust and suspicion which, given a certain bias beyond natural innocence in the sin of man's will and self-love, hardens into hate and Cainism. The political scientist here, instead of

² One of the earliest articles I prepared for the *American Political Science Review* was on "Delimitation and Mensurability of Political Phenomena," Vol. XXI (1927), p. 255.

³ My *Science and Method of Politics* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1927) and H. D. Lasswell's *Propaganda Technique in the World War* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1927) were followed by Charles E. Merriam's *Political Power* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1934), Bertrand Russell's *Power* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1938) and B. de Jouvenel's *Du Pouvoir* (Geneva: Les Editions du Chevalle, 1947), this last being rather historical, like Ferrero's work, than schematic. The earlier work of Sidgwick, Ratzenhofer, and Bentley, not to speak of Wallas, requires mention.

taking psychological speculation as a dogma, will be wise to risk a hypothesis and see whether this points up a pattern which will justify him. Later, we can rightly refer to "a diseased society." It will be noted that contemporary psychology is totally opposed to that sharp distinction between human beings aggregated in a society under administrators and human beings as individual consciences, which is the heresy of some well-known theologians writing under Lutheran influence. I refer especially to the earlier writings of Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr. This leads to the misleading dogma of the sharp separation between the secular kingdom and the private realm of grace, sometimes called "church" and "state," which unwarrantably infects some American constitutional theory.

We may posit a desire for power in wish-gratification which, in a hedonistic utopia, would be unrestricted, so that no further process would be set up. We then have the licentiousness of perfect freedom. Indeed in a timeless Heaven for the benevolent, adjusted to Omnipotence, such freedom might be righteousness. In mundane reality at present — although, as an anarchist will insist, in very different and modifiable degrees — obstacles have to be overcome to attain gratification, and social aid obtained and even secured. From this need to *secure* freedom, and as complementary (not contradictory) to it, arises authority; and, thence, both the goods of political securities, liberties-under-law, and the costs that have to be paid in the quantitative support of law and authority. Some years ago, as a technique in the exposition of political science, I adopted an economic linguistic as helpful. I think it to be valid and useful in aiding the shaping of a satisfactory schema. The whole of political science develops from the necessary and logical tie between freedom and an instrumental, but also polar, authority, both flowing from the will for power to gratify the considered wish, just as the mechanism of economics develops from such concepts as those of supply, demand and competition.

Also, we have to accept, with Professor Weiss of Yale, something to be called a "human nature" — and certainly no Freudian would deny this, any more than any Marxian would deny a political science. There are constants of human behavior when confronted with adequately like circumstances or stimuli. We require, as Professor Lauterpacht says, a Revival of Natural Law; and this in part — I repeat in part — will be not only rational morals, but a positivistic natural law of biology and psychology, not entirely "changeable in content," but indicating to those interested, as an inflexible guide for statute law, the natures of a diseased and of a healthy society. There are laws defining the degrees of instability of a dominative society. And it is also a law that the internal liberty of a society will vary indirectly with the external pressure, active or factitious. A dominative or dictatorial society has a vested interest in such pressure.

I have distinguished the field of political philosophy. To this should perhaps be added a field of philosophy of logical political method, about the utility of which I confess to skepticism. The discussion of political philosophy, of the Good Society and of the social order which we *should* choose, as distinct from the efficient conditions of the social orders which we *may* choose, requires, to be adequate, a separate paper. Here we can do no more than recite headings for such discussion. I have denied any valid distinction between Political Science and Sociology. The attempt to make it is academically hurtful to both. So now I deny that we should rend the seamless robe of Philosophy, even if synthetic; or that we should speak of Political Philosophy as other than Philosophy with a social emphasis. Further, to discuss a philosophy of *the* good society seems to indicate the possibility of "a Public Philosophy," which some (not myself) would hold to be an un-American proposition. I agree with the Natural Lawyers that we should turn for guides to "reason and instinct." I do not yet think that we can excogitate any public philosophy which will rest upon reason alone and not also upon probable authority. "Probable authority" should not be coercive, nor indeed should perfect authority, which ideally would rest on reason. I therefore agree with Toynbee that the secular authority is, because coercive, also imperfect and secondary; and that evolution will be from "empire" to what he calls "church." I am confirmed in this, not so much by Toynbee alone, as because this view shares the respectable opinion of St. Augustine and Karl Marx—for whom, presumably, the Communist party is the new church in a classless society. Unfortunately the actual Communist party is highly coercive, indulging in what has been called "surplus-repression."

In the shaping of this probabilist human authority we do well to consult the revealing pages of History, as reinforcing "reason and instinct." Sir Ernest Barker has said this in his admirable *Traditions of Civility*, and I once endeavored to do the same in my own *History*, in which I sought, not (as some thought) to produce a textbook, but to indicate the probability of a Grand Tradition of values, as over against the Humean skepticism of my colleague, Professor George Sabine. But we require not only a history of intellectual ideas and high culture, but also of human folkways, drama and cults—and in this, I am indebted to the work of Professor Ernst Cassirer. The final question in my mind is whether the ethical judgment is not, on analysis, an aesthetic judgment; and whether students of social philosophy, after exhausting neo-Hegelianism and then Logical Positivism, as once Utilitarianism was exhausted, would not do well to turn to the works of the Cyrenaics, Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Kant, Schiller and the great Goethe, Schelling and, as touching one dogmatic phrase, Wittgenstein. It may be that the Good Society finds its forms in a timeless religious

drama which frees itself from the realm of coercion, because its treasures are not to be found in things subject to scarcity, but yet lifts men to the notion that the principle of domination can be transcended, not only partially by the liquidation of one group, but in the psyche by change; that dominative politics can be abandoned; freedom find itself in the service of direct gratification where scarcity no longer presses; and authority be lost in inspired conviction by grace of the aesthetic vision. I believe that psychology will soberly validate this conclusion, which philosophy suggests. But having brought you to the *Divina Commedia*, I must conclude by pointing out that we have here travelled a long way from political science — although, let me add, we are throughout concerned with the enigma of power, and we have travelled without losing touch with it.